



### Revisiting the knowing-doing gap

In our last Lucid Thought we suggested that the “age of the gifted amateur” should end and that the time has come for organisations that practice project management internally, or those that procure project management related services from consultants, contractors and suppliers, to demand that people managing projects are professionally qualified.

Of course, organisations that agree and try to put this policy into practice have some decisions to make about how they will assess performance and development needs, and which professional qualifications they will pursue. After some inspection many will begin to realise that the majority of project management qualifications are based predominantly on knowledge-based standards and outcomes.

In previous Lucid Thoughts, for example 05 which is aptly entitled ‘I taught him how to be a Project Manager; I didn’t say he could do it’, we have suggested that this is totally wrong and that standards and outcomes based on people being able to ‘do’ things are the stuff that judgements about capability should be based upon.

In the UK, the APM Practitioner Qualification and the National Occupational Standards for Project Management (and for Project Controls) are well established; but the number of people following these qualification routes is miniscule compared to the foundational

*“I work here which makes me a key stakeholder, and I think I’m great... does that count as auditable experience?”*



knowledge-based qualifications (such as APMP and PRINCE2®). They are probably even less than those taking degree or masters level qualifications offered by universities.

So why bring up this situation again in this Lucid Thought? The answer is because we spent some time last month working with project and programme professionals from around the world at the 16th GAPPS working session, hosted by the International Centre for Programme Management at Cranfield School of Management.

You can check out GAPPS – the Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards in detail at [www.globalpmstandards.org](http://www.globalpmstandards.org) but in short the purpose of the initiative is:

**To develop agreed frameworks as a basis for review, development, and recognition of local standards that will facilitate mutual recognition and transferability of project management qualifications. It is intended that the framework and associated standards are made freely available for use by businesses, academic institutions, professional associations, and government standards and qualifications bodies globally.**

*Direct quote from [www.globalpmstandards.org](http://www.globalpmstandards.org)*

You’ll already find a set of performance standards for project managers on the GAPPS site, and information on how to use them. Last month the group was progressing their work on putting together

performance standards for programme managers and they will be available soon.

The point of sharing this information is to invite you to think about how performance-based standards might be able to help you to assess yourself or your staff and therefore decide the priorities for development. Similarly, using a performance-based approach when hiring staff, suppliers, contractors or consultants is likely to be much more thorough than relying on people just having knowledge-based qualifications.

**Let's look at an example.** This is the first element of the first unit from the GAPPS project manager standard. Note there are six units in total of which all are divided into between three and five elements.

Using the example below, a project manager that only knows techniques for determining stakeholders, knows the importance of investigating and documenting stakeholder interests and considering stakeholders when making decisions is probably not much use to your organisation. What an organisation needs is someone who can ensure that stakeholder interests are identified and addressed and to assess that through demonstration or other evidence.

In order to do this we will need, as a profession, to move to a culture where knowledge-based qualifications are put in their essential but foundational place, and start to expect and demand qualifications that explicitly assess skills and capability. **When we have done this we will be in a much better place to have project managers who can actually 'do it' rather than just think they can.**

PM01 Element 1	
1.1 Ensure that stakeholder interests are identified and addressed.	
Performance Criteria	Range Statements
1.1.1 Relevant stakeholders are determined.	<b>Ensuring</b> may include performing, supervising, or directing.
1.1.2 Stakeholder interests are investigated and documented.	<b>Stakeholders</b> include those whose interests are affected by the project. This may include team members, clients, sponsors, internal and external parties, decision makers, and others.
1.1.3 Stakeholder interests are considered when making project decisions.	<b>Interests</b> may include needs, wants, expectations, or requirements. Interests may be stated or implied. Interests may be related to the product of the project or to how the activities of the project are conducted.
1.1.4 Actions to address differing interests are implemented.	<b>Addressed</b> includes acceptance as is, acceptance with modification, or rejection. Interests may be addressed without being satisfied.  The <b>relevance</b> of a stakeholder may be affected by the impact of the project on the stakeholder, by the impact of the stakeholder on the project, and by cultural or ethical considerations. Different stakeholders are relevant in different situations.  <b>Consideration</b> of interests should be done in an ethical manner.  <b>Actions</b> may include problem solving, negotiating, accommodating, compromising, collaborating, or cooperating.

Extracted from 'GAPPS (2007) A Framework for Performance Based Competency Standards for Global Level 1 and 2 Project Managers Sydney: Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards'

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