Professional Competence in Context – a Conceptual Study

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Content

- Competencies differ by role

- Components of competence

- Conceptual approaches

- Competencies differ in different contexts

- Bartram – Great 8 – generic framework

- CanMeds – Task-content framework

- Lans – entrepreneurship; contextualizing

- Du Chatenier – open innovation; generic

- Study in purchasing; role job pictures

- Osagie: Specifying the generic

- Conclusion

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Task content differs; e.g. for academic staff

1. Research
2. Teaching
3. Service

Those tasks differ by staff member, e.g.

- Graduate Assistant
- Lecturer
- Assistant Professor
- Associate Professor
- Full Professor
- Department Head
- Dean

They need to have e.g.

1. Core task technical and disciplinary knowledge

   - Apply an adequate research procedure

2. Job-related knowledge – know-how and why?

   - Carrying our various tasks that go along with the job; interactions with various stakeholders

3. Situation-specific knowledge – in what situation?

   - Assignment of ngo, CEO of university, State-Secretary of Economic Affairs

Together this is professional competence

Three components of competence

1. Technical competence: lot of technical knowledge; work-process oriented, task-related - **WHAT?**

2. Occupational competence: Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes acquired and integrated in body of knowledge – core-task oriented – integrated view on competence - **HOW-WHY?**

3. Professional competence: competence situated in practice; professional identity; pride; social context – organizational environment oriented – situated view on competence - **IN WHAT SITUATION?**

Three conceptual approaches:

1.0 functional behaviourism (the 1970s)

2.0 integrated occupationalism (1990s)

3.0 situated professionalism (2010s)

Different meaning of competence representations in different contexts

The Great Eight

- Leading and Deciding
- Supporting and Co-operating
- Interacting and Presenting
- Analysing and Interpreting
- Creating and Conceptualising
- Organising and Executing
- Adapting and Coping
- Enterprising and Performing

Meaning for

- CEO
- Board member
- Director
- Manager
- Supervisor
- Specialist
- Admin Manager
- Clerk

Meaning for

- President
- Provost
- Dean
- Head of Dept
- Tenured Faculty
- Tenure Track Fac
- Assistant

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Great eight competency framework

- Although the Great Eight Competencies framework is a generic framework, the author acknowledges that the meaning of competence is situation- or context-specific.

- Applying criterion differentiation yields better and more precise predictions.

- Advice: use a more contextual understanding and measurement of competence and performance.

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Theories related to our argument

- Agency of person and affordances of context (Gibson, 1979)

- Enablers of effectivities (Shaw, Turvey, and Mace, 1982)

- Situated cognition (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989)

- Work context as community of practice in which players interact, and share and negotiate meaning (Lave and Wenger, 1991)

- Influence of personal epistemologies on professional development (Hofer and Pintrich, 2002)

- Different expectations of key stakeholders in a professional context

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CanMEDS

- A definition of the professional roles of physicians
- A description of the roles
- The key competencies needed for the roles
- The enabling competencies for the roles

CanMEDS 2005 Framework

MEDICAL EXPERT

Roles

- Medical expert
- Communicator
- Collaborator
- Manager
- Health Advocate
- Scholar
- Professional

Description of Profession of Medical Expert

'As Medical Experts, physicians integrate all of the CanMEDS Roles, applying medical knowledge, clinical skills, and professional attitudes in their provision of patient-centered care.'

The core of the role of medical expert is the delivery of diagnostic and therapeutic interventions.

Focus on task- and content-oriented meaning of competence

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Entrepreneurial competence (Lans, 2009)

Table 3.1 Competence domains of entrepreneurial competence, together with their definitions and underlying dimensions

	Competence domains	Definition by Man et al. (2002: 132)	Underlying dimensions
1	Opportunity competencies	Competencies related to recognizing and developing market opportunities through various means.	Pro-active searching Alertness
2	Relationship competencies	Competencies related to person-to-person or individual-to-group interactions.	Teamwork Social perception Negotiating
3	Conceptual competencies	Competencies related to different conceptual abilities reflected in the behaviour of the entrepreneur.	Diagnosing problems Analysis Judgement
4	Organizing competencies	Competencies related to the organization of different internal, external, human, physical, financial and technological resources.	Personnel management Planning and organization
5	Strategic competencies	Competencies related to setting, evaluating and implementing the strategies of the firm.	Result orientation Strategic orientation Vision
6	Commitment competencies	Competencies that drive the entrepreneur to move ahead with the business.	Learning orientation Self management

Competence structure based on CFA

Table 3.3 Completely standardized solution from CFA (n=230)

Factor	Nr	Item description	Loadings
(1) Analysing	X2	I keep an eye on the main issues and thus can point out the heart of a problem (CON)	0.80
	X1	I know how to describe the problems in my enterprise (CON)	0.73
	X6	I easily separate facts from opinions (CON)	0.66
	X3	I am very aware of my own weak and strong points (COM)	0.64
	X4	I can name my business goals straight away (STRA)	0.61
	X8	I can easily look at things from various points of view (CON)	0.58
	X7	I have a clear idea of where my enterprise will be in five years (STRA)	0.51
(2) Pursuing	X14	I look for new information all the time (OPP)	0.72
	X12	I am continuously looking for new possibilities (OPP)	0.69
	X13	I am often the first to try out new things (OPP)	0.63
	X11	I accept challenges more often than colleagues in my sector (COM)	0.59
	X16	I am not easily diverted from the goals I set for myself (COM)	0.48
	X10	I often negotiate with suppliers or buyers regarding our prices (REL)	0.45
(3) Networking	X23	I have many networks outside the agricultural sector (REL)	0.60
	X21	During my presentations I can put my ideas across easily to my audience (REL)	0.57
	X19	I try to incorporate feedback from the public in my products (COM)	0.52
	X18	Co-operation with entrepreneurs in my sector is important for me (REL)	0.50
	X22	I am open to criticism from others (colleagues, employees, etc.) (COM)	0.44

Note. Between brackets the original Man et al. (2002) coding: OPP = opportunity; REL = relationship; CON = conceptual; STRA= strategic; ORG = organizing; COM = commitment.

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Context-specificity of entrepreneurial competence

- Generic competence statements as derived from the literature were *Fremdkörpers* for the farmers.

- Assessment-based follow-up interviews on specific and significant innovations linked competencies to real action, by which competencies received meaning.

- By sharing experiences contextualized interpretations of competencies were found.

Generality versus specificity of competence - Du Chatenier (2009)

- Open Innovation; Chesbrough (2003)

- Competence domains for open innovation:
  - Boundary spanning (Williams, 2002)
  - Novelty generation (Schweizer, 2006)
  - Learning (Bolhuis and Simons, 2001)
  - Negotiating (Friedman and Antal, 2005)
  - Trust (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000)
  - Coping with chaos (Eoyang, 1997)
  - Politics (Ferris et al., 2005)
  - Self-directed learning (Knowles, 1990)
  - Teamwork (Stevens and Campion, 1994)

Fragment of OI Competence Framework

Competences; is able to:	Competencies; the open innovation professional therefore . . .
Cluster 1: Self-Management (basis for other tasks)	
Be committed	Appreciates the learning domain, has the motivation to learn, has a sense of urgency, and wants to learn from others.
Govern oneself	Has self-confidence, knows what his/her qualities are, does not take the position of the underdog.
	Is aware of, and regulates, own thinking and feeling.
	Has perseverance, keeps on thinking positively, having end-goal in mind.
	Manages tensions created by multiple accountabilities, tasks and roles.

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Comments on model

- 'Be', 'has' and 'can' expressions in competence descriptions

- Stick to 'can' expressions for competencies

- Avoid term 'competences'

- Competence frameworks should be inclusive

- The framework emphases is too much on management, whereas open innovation clearly goes beyond management.

Conclusion

- This competence framework obviously suffers from generality

- Generic competence does have merit: core competencies are strong drivers of action

- The issue of generality versus specificity cannot be easily settled by stating how general or specific competence frameworks need to be. That is context-dependent.

Purchasing management

- Strategic purchasing

- Buying

Improving contextual relevance with narrative job pictures

- Typically, lists of competence statements in job profiles can suffer from alienation from practice.

- To overcome that we used narrative job pictures as thick descriptions of the job profile

- population stratification, sectoral differentiation of job tasks, formatting job profiles, and the relative value of broad job surveys versus concise in-depth focus-interviews were studied

Mulder, M., Wesselink, R. & Bruijstens, H. Chr.J. (2005). Job profile research for the purchasing profession. *International Journal of Training and Development. 9,* 3, 185-204

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Fragment of occupational profile for a task

	Occupational levels			
Task 1. Specifying the purchasing need	PM	SB	B	AB
1.1 Supporting and advising the development of functional and technical specifications of purchasing needs with the internal customer.	●	●	●	●
1.2 Supporting and advising the development of functional and technical specifications of purchasing needs with the internal customer.	●	●	●	●
1.3 Verifying whether what has to be purchased measures up to functional and technical specifications of the organisation.		●	●	●

Fragment of total competence profile

	PM	SB	B	AB
Management				
1. Developing purchasing policy	++	+	-	-
2. Managing the purch org	++	+	-	-
3. Improving the purch org	++	++	+	+

- PM = Purchasing Manager
- SB = Senior Buyer
- B = Buyer
- AB = Assistant Buyer

++ = absolutely necessary

+ = important

- = not important

-- = completely superfluous

Fragment of narrative of job profile

'**Senior buyers** have delegated responsibilities for purchasing certain products or sets of products, or they are responsible for the supplies of a certain department in the organisation. Senior buyers usually are supervising purchasers of the purchasing department. They distinguish themselves from the purchaser because of their experience and more heavy purchasing responsibilities. Purchasing managers delegate tasks to senior buyers. On the other hand senior buyers assist in the development of a departmental purchasing policy, or they support purchasing managers with developing policies on specific areas...'

Improving contextual relevance by adding task and content specificity

- Osagie et al (2014) studies the relationship between CSR policy and human resource development infrastructures.

- She identified individual competencies for CSR in order to measure the relationships between CSR policies, learning characteristics of the organization and competence development.

CSR specific competencies and descriptions

1. Anticipating future developments regarding CSR-related challenges.

"Anticipatory competence is the ability to collectively analyse, evaluate, and craft rich 'pictures' of the future related to sustainability issues and sustainability problem-solving frameworks."

2. Understanding of the interdependency between systems and subsystems relevant for CSR practice.

"The ability to understand the interactions of natural, societal, and economic processes in accomplishing the sustainable exploitation and utilisation of resources."

3. Understanding CSR drivers, CSR standards, and CSR regulations.

"Understand the principles and importance of environmental legislation and identify the authorities responsible for its enforcement."

Making CSR Competencies Domain-Specific

1. Contextualizing competence expressions by explicitly referring to the domain of CSR.

2. Including exemplary quotations of the contextualized meaning of the competencies.

3. Both add meaning to the framework in the sense that the competencies have much more contextual validity.

Conclusions

- The main argument: the meaning of competence is situation-specific or context-bound.

- It resembles the difference between semantics and pragmatism (literal meaning and social meaning).

- Competencies as literal verbal expressions of performance requirements get their actual meaning by the underlying communicative intentions.

- Competencies as written communication get their meaning as well by understanding what they imply in actual performance contexts.

Are generic competence frameworks redundant then?

- No, there is still need for generic competence frameworks.

- All generic competence frameworks have their own merits.

- They express the social expectations or even sometimes the collectively agreed requirements regarding a certain profession.

- For day-to-day use of competence frameworks a translation is necessary from the general competence expressions to the time/place-based meaning of those expressions.

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