

BT Centre Conference
22nd-23rd June 2009, Said Business School
Educating Programme Managers for the 21st Century

Developing Reflective Practitioners in Project and Programme Management

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Introduction

Conference Theme: Educating Programme Managers for the 21C

- Presentation: Developing Reflective Practitioners in PPM (45 min)
 - the 'current situation' as I see it
 - some supporting evidence
 - Schön's concept of the reflective practitioner
 - some examples of recent work at Manchester
- A personal view of the terrain and essentially ideas for discussion
- Plenary discussion (40 min)

*When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the "things" of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and in what directions the situation needs to be changed. Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we **name** the things to which we will attend and **frame** the context in which we will attend to them.*

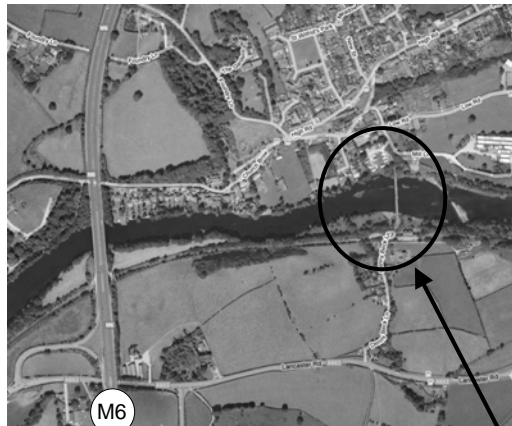
Donald Schön

Naming the purpose of professional education in PPM
as I see it

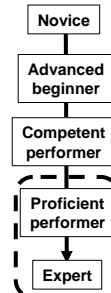
To develop (or enrich) people's knowledge
and skill in the management of projects

Ultimately, for me, it's about developing or enriching
people's KNOW-HOW rather than KNOW-WHAT

The KNOW-HOW
of driving a car in
unfamiliar situations



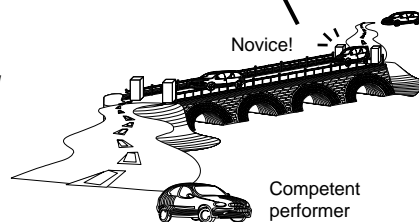
Dreyfus
learning model

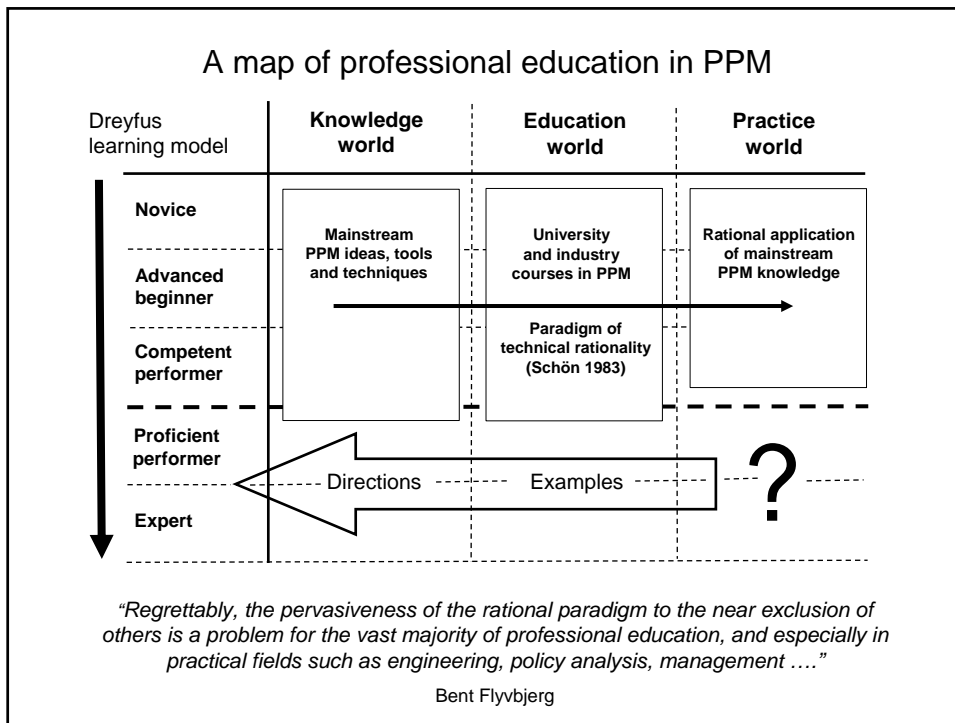


Competent
performer

*"In contrast to the competent performer,
genuine **human experts** exhibit thinking
and behaviour that is rapid, intuitive,
holistic, interpretive, and visual."*

Bent Flyvbjerg



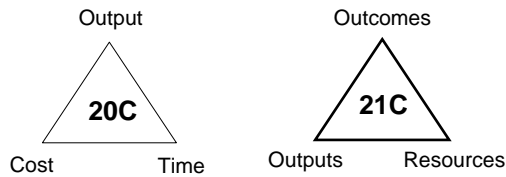


Making Sense of the Practice World

- Aerospace projects
- Building projects
- Business projects
- Business improvement programmes
- Business transformation programmes
- Civil engineering projects
- Community development projects
- Conservation projects
- Construction projects
- Consultancy projects
- Cultural change programmes
- Drug rehabilitation programmes
- Education programmes
- E-learning programmes
- Environment projects
- Health improvement programmes
- Heritage preservation projects
- Infrastructure projects
- International development programmes
- IT-related projects and programmes
- Learning and development programmes
- Management development programmes
- Marketing campaigns
- New product development projects
- Offender rehabilitation programmes
- Organizational development programmes
- PFI projects (eg. school refurbishment)
- Process improvement projects
- Professional development programmes
- Research and development projects
- Service development programmes
- Social enterprise programmes
- Staff development programmes
- Strategy implementation programmes
- Systems engineering projects
- Training programmes
- Urban regeneration programmes

Projects and programmes everywhere!

- Significant growth in project work across all sectors
- Desirable to include higher education programmes ?
- Differing views about the distinction between projects and programmes (and also portfolios)
- Strong emphasis now on **value creation** through projects and programmes



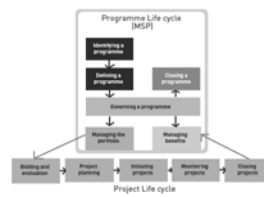
Source: Images of Projects by Mark Winter and Tony Szczepanek, Gower, 2009

- Problems of projectification and programmification

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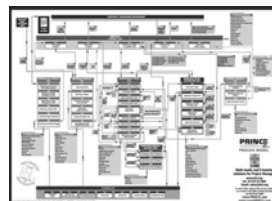
Example PPM methodologies

MSP™ for programme management



Source: Google images

PRINCE2™ for project management

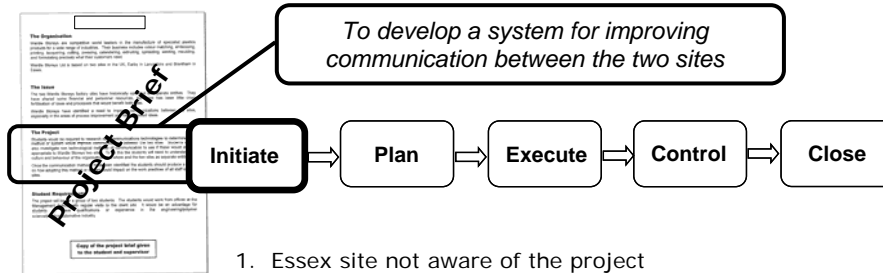


Source: Google images

A fundamental misconception about 'PROCESS'

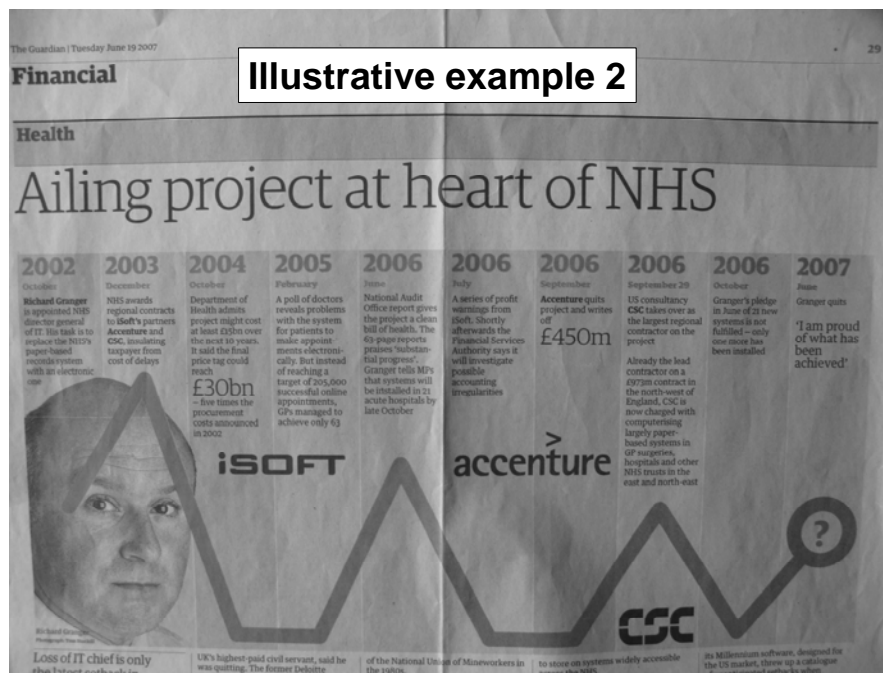
Illustrative example 1

Company X: supplier of specialist plastics products to the car industry
 Two manufacturing sites in the UK (Lancashire & Essex)



1. Essex site not aware of the project
2. Communication not seen as an issue at the Essex site
3. Communication not seen as an issue at the Lancashire site
4. MD of the Lancashire not aware of the project fee
5. Very little buy-in to the project!

Illustrative example 2



Illustrative example 3

Razing the roots

Streets of 'tinned up' terraces and communities ripped apart are the bleak result of putting the 'economic wellbeing' of town ahead of residents' needs, says **Anna Minton**

Guardian 17th June 2009



"These [terraces] are part of the government's Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder **programme**, a multi-billion pound policy launched in 2002 with the aim of tackling "areas of market failure"."

Source: www.guardian.co.uk

"It's a matter of being scattered to other parts of the borough, to Royton, Chadderton and Shaw. They're splitting families." (Maureen)

"The council takes a rather different view ... It says the aim of Pathfinder is to plough billions of pounds of investment into the area as part of "a major 15-year programme to transform homes and neighbourhoods", turning places with low house prices and low housing demand into flourishing housing markets, with a wide social mix of residents and housing types."

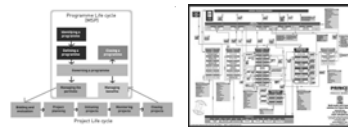
"... as with all grand intentions, it had unforeseen consequences on the ground – the first of which was riding roughshod over the community, and the second is that as soon as you start getting investors in, they're interested in the bottom line and not necessarily the interests of regeneration ... " (Paul Stinchcombe, former MP)

"It has been said, and it's been said more than once, that you'll get a better class of people. It's disgusting. It's social cleansing." (Maureen)

Multiple realities



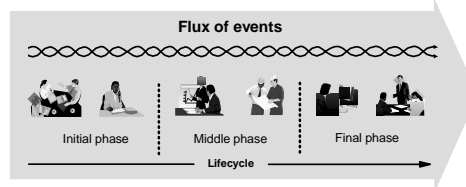
Source: Imagination by Gareth Morgan, 1993



Lifecycle frameworks can provide useful 'roadmaps' but are NOT the actual reality

The actual reality of projects & programmes

A complex **social and political process** involving various people all continually interacting and pursuing their own interests and agenda in an ever-changing flux of events



Source: Images of Projects by Mark Winter and Tony Szczepanek, Gower, 2009

What do proficient performers actually do ?

Programme Manager, Airbus

Project Management in Practice, A Personal Perspective

Presentation to Rethinking Project Management, September 2005



- ❖ "The principles have been around for 50 years
- ❖ We've all been on the training course
- ❖ We've read the book"



- ❖ A "project leader must be able to create clarity out of ambiguity"
- ❖ And must also "tolerate ambiguity"
- ❖ A "project leader does not always have hierarchical control of people, so must be able to lead by influence"

- ❖ "... success will be governed by the relationships and interactions between the people involved. There is no single correct way to lead a project ..."

"Project leaders have to do it their way applying methods and approaches that suit their personality, and the personalities of their team"

Recent Research on the Actuality of Projects

Dr Svetlana Cicmil (UWE), Project Management Journal 2006

Expert Voice: Managing in Complexity – Project Management as Practical Wisdom

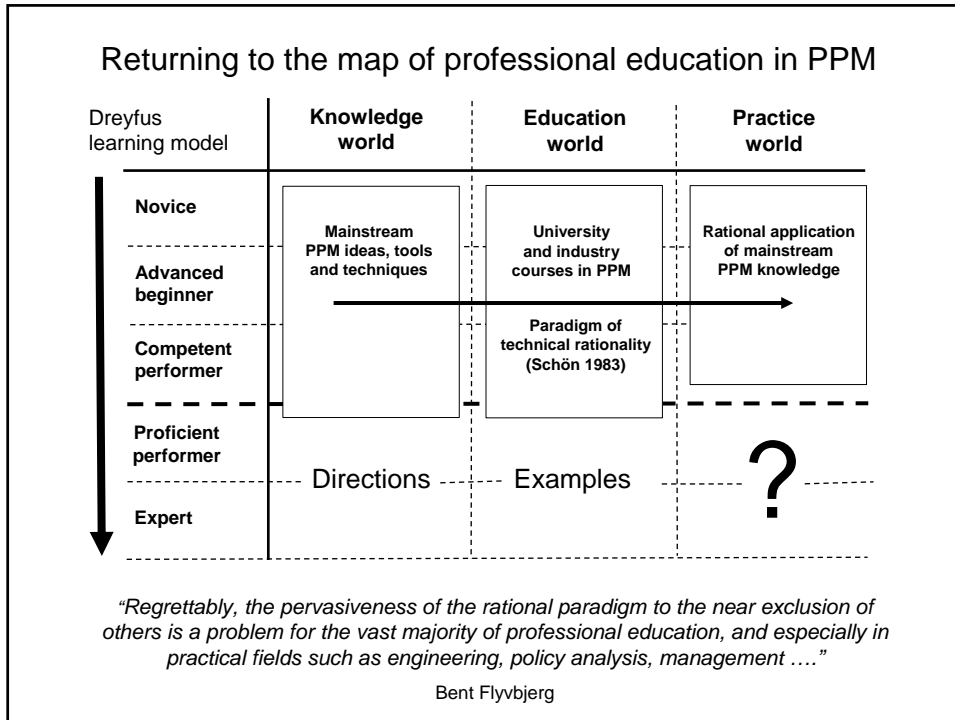


UNDERSTANDING PROJECT MANAGEMENT
 PRACTICE THROUGH INTERPRETIVE AND
 CRITICAL RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES



- ❑ Paying attention to the quality of conversations which enable action (conversational skills for persuasion, re-negotiation of original promises and plans, maintaining encouragement, motivation and confidence, etc)
- ❑ Capacity to use both *rhetoric* (facilitating conversations by introducing 'persuasive themes' that encourage new patterns of behaviour and relating) and technical or control devices (contracts, plans report documents)
- ❑ Good enough holding of *anxiety* when facing unpredictability and ability to 'think on one's feet'. ...
- ❑ Sensitivity to one's own action and self-awareness in the environments where multiple value systems and asymmetries of power have emerged under particular historic and social circumstances and often create 'winners and losers'
- ❑ Ability to face as well as to exercise power

These proposed skills of an expert project manager embrace intuition, judgement and social and political virtuosity in local contexts and can be sharply contrasted with the mainstream, conventional prescriptions for 'best practice' in project management which promote a more instrumental, technician kind of expert knowledge. (Svetlana Cicmil)



Enriching the Knowledge World of PPM

Rethinking Project Management
Directions for Future Research



Direction 1 (theory OF projects)
The need for new models and theories which illuminate the COMPLEXITY of projects

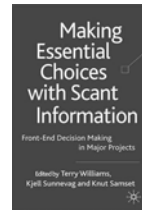
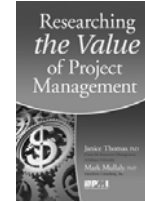
Direction 2 (theory FOR practitioners)
The need for new concepts and images for making sense of the social and political aspects

Direction 3 (theory FOR practitioners)
The need for new concepts and frameworks that focus on 'value creation' as the prime focus

Direction 4 (theory FOR practitioners)
The need for new concepts and approaches that facilitate broader conceptualisation of projects

Direction 5 (theory IN practice)
The need to move beyond developing just trained technicians' to developing reflective practitioners

Other contributions to
enriching the mainstream ...

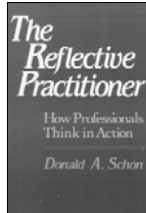


and others ...

Examples in the Education World of PPM

Developing Reflective Practitioners: Ideas and Approach

- ❑ Foundation: Donald Schön's epistemology of reflective practice



NOT about practitioners stepping back from experience to learn

How professionals think in action

"... when asked to describe their methods of inquiry, they speak of experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through"

Schön describes this as a form of 'artistry' (with its own rigour) and argues it can be developed and enriched through education and development

The Science of "Muddling Through" by Charles Lindblom, *Public Administration Review*, 1959

"... by becoming more conscious of their practice of [muddling through], administrators might practice it with more skill and know when to extend or constrict its use."

- ❑ Hence, primary aim is developing awareness and enriching capability (know-how)
- ❑ Also use the work of Checkland, Morgan, de Bono, Weick, Vickers and Claxton etc
- ❑ Action research approach: gradual development of several new products and courses

Developing Reflective Practitioners Some ideas and approaches in use at Manchester

- ❑ Reflection papers on the realities of managing projects
 - ❑ Learning about one's own approach through the work of Schön, Weick, Vickers and Claxton etc
 - ❑ Emphasis on developing self awareness and enriching capability
- ❑ Advanced courses on the management of projects (BSc, MSc, MBA, Exec Ed)
 - ❑ Core concept of deliberately working with multiple perspectives to develop (or enrich) capability
 - ❑ Structured programmes in 4 phases: awareness, acquisition, application and assessment
- ❑ A reflective dissertation for experienced practitioners (Rolls-Royce programme)
 - ❑ Traditional research dissertation not always appropriate for experienced practitioners
 - ❑ The reflective dissertation focuses on the practitioner's own professional development

Conclusion, as I see it ...

