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Competition, Comparison, Collaboration - Mapping a Pathway through Project Management Standards

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Abstract

For over a decade the Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards (GAPPS) has been providing an independent benchmark and a basis for transportability and mutual recognition of project management standards and qualifications. This presentation will provide background and current status of this volunteer driven initiative that provides a platform for global collaboration in advancing project management.

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1. Introduction

For over a decade a group of dedicated volunteers has been working through the Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards (GAPPS) to provide a bridge between the different standards for project management produced by both professional and commercial organizations. The GAPPS aims to provide an independent benchmark and a basis for transportability, transferability and mutual recognition of project management standards and qualifications. GAPPS is supported by and facilitates collaboration between government standards bodies and agencies, professional associations, corporations and academic institutions for the benefit of project management practitioners and their organizations. This paper provides a brief history of the GAPPS, and the range of resources they provide to assist individuals and organizations in assessing the complexity of their projects; assessing, recognizing and developing competence to manage projects; and making choices between standards and qualifications available.

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2. Background

Growing interest in project management and its adoption by an increasing number of organizations across a range of industries has been accompanied by a desire for practice standards that provide practitioners and organizations with guides to levels of acceptable workplace performance and qualification processes that provide employers with some assurance of the competence of staff. Many organizations that are adopting project management approaches operate globally and many project management practitioners aspire to career mobility. Hence industry and practitioners are interested not only in assurance of the appropriate competency levels but also in the applicability of standards and associated qualifications across national boundaries. Governments, concerned with ensuring an internationally competitive workforce, are also interested in mutual recognition, transferability and transportability of qualifications.

Responding to these interests and concerns, a number of standards and qualifications bodies, project management professional organizations, academic institutions and corporations have been working together to develop a framework of performance based standards for project management that will provide a basis for mutual recognition and transportability of project management qualifications. This initiative, known as the Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards (GAPPS), researches the content and coverage of existing project management standards and knowledge guides, and from this, using recognized standards development and review processes, produces performance based standards. These standards provide a neutral spine for mapping and comparison of standards produced by professional associations and other organizations.

Before embarking on a review of the history, activities and primary outcomes of the GAPPS, the nature of performance based standards will be explained.

3. Understanding performance based standards

Performance based standards are also referred to, particularly in the UK, Australian, South African and New Zealand contexts, as competency standards. The term “performance” was adopted by the GAPPS because competence is a term that “has different meanings, and ... remains one of the most diffuse terms in the organizational and occupational literature” (Robotham & Jubb, 1996). According to Woodruffe (1992, p.16), competency “seems to be used as an umbrella term to cover almost anything that might directly or indirectly affect job performance”. Apart from this general understanding of competency, there are two specific and distinct approaches that have developed, one being the Competency Model approach and the other the Competency Standards approach.

The Competency Model approach is based on the work of McClelland (1973) and McBer Associates in the United States, beginning in the 1970s and reported by Boyatzis (1982) in the early 1980s. Followers of this attribute based approach define a competency as an “underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation” (Spencer & Spencer, 1993, p.9). Inherent in the Competency Model approach is the distinction between threshold and high performance or differentiating competencies. The Competency Model approach has become popular amongst human resource professionals and most major institutions now have a corporate competency model that identifies behaviors that are considered to drive superior performance in their organization. The identified behaviors are highly contextual and do not easily form the basis for generic standards for workplace performance.

The Competency Standards or performance based approach provides the basis for national standards and qualifications frameworks of the UK (National Vocational Qualifications - NVQ), the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), and similar frameworks in South Africa and New Zealand. While the

Competency Model or attribute based approach assumes that identifiable personal attributes will translate into competent performance in the workplace, the Competency Standards approach assumes that competence can be inferred from evidence of demonstrated performance at a pre-defined acceptable standard (Gonczi *et al.*, 1993). Under the Australian Competency Standards approach, based directly on the UK model, competence is defined as:

“the ability to perform the activities within an occupation or function to the standard expected in employment” (National Training Board, 1991, p.30)

While the Competency Model approach aims to identify behaviors related to superior performance, the Competency Standards or performance based approach, in common with the majority of “standards”, focuses on threshold performance being the minimum level of performance accepted or expected in the workplace. Both of the approaches involve assessment of a different aspect of competence. Each approach has both advantages and disadvantages (Cheng *et al.*, 2003). As Heywood *et al.* (1992, p.26) point out, a comprehensive consideration of both underlying enabling attributes and of performance “will be the most fruitful”.

The following model brings together the Competency Model (attribute based) and Competency Standards (performance based) approaches to competence described above and relates it to existing standards and guides for competence in project management roles. This demonstrates the complementary nature of attribute-based and performance based approaches.

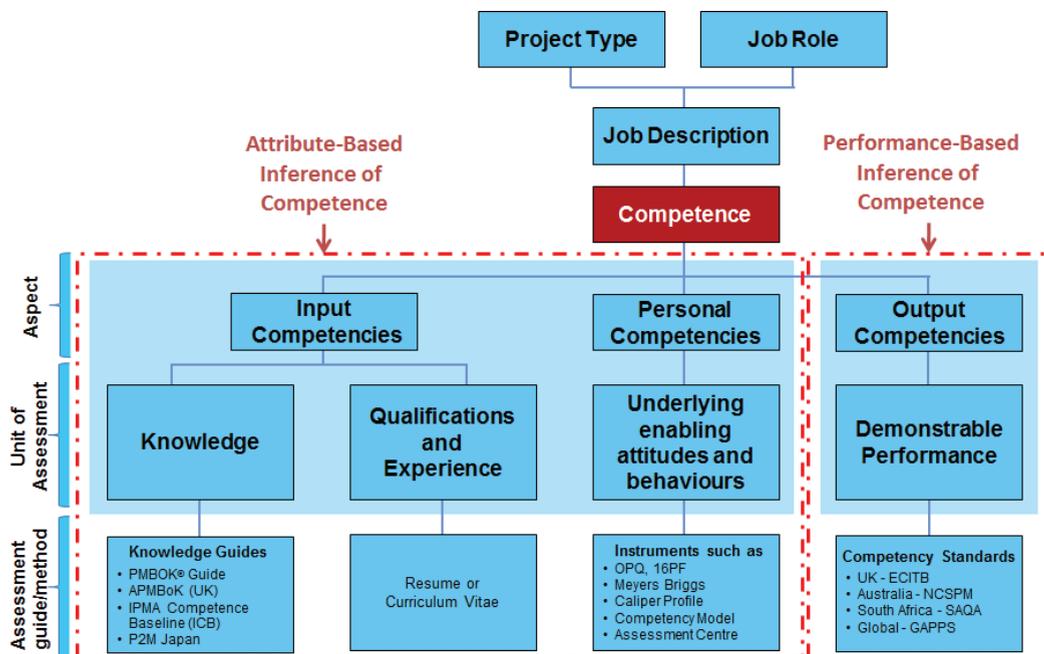


Fig. 1. Integrated model of competence for project management roles (based on Crawford, 2005)

From Figure 1, it can be seen that mainstream project management standards and certifications address either or both of the Input and Output Competencies identified. The IPMA 4 Level Certification model which uses interviews and simulations in assessment and encompasses Contextual, Behavioural and Technical Competences (International Project Management Association, 2006) offers the most holistic

approach to assessment of project management competence currently available. A distinctive characteristic of assessment against performance based standards however is that it requires evidence of demonstrable workplace performance against the criteria in the standard.

4. A brief history of the GAPPS

Development of project management as a distinct field of practice began with informal communities of practice (Wenger & Snyder, 2000) comprising people who were managing projects and decided to get together and share stories, ideas and experiences. These informal gatherings and forums for networking, exchange of ideas and information in time became the project management professional associations as we know them today.

INTERNET, now known as the International Project Management Association, IPMA, was formed in 1965 as a forum for European network planning practitioners to exchange knowledge and experience. The Project Management Institute originated in North America in 1969, as ‘an opportunity for professionals to meet and exchange ideas, problems and concerns with regard to project management, regardless of the particular area of society in which managers function’ (Cook, 1981). The UK national project management association began in 1972 as the Association of Project Managers and was subsequently renamed the Association for Project Management. The Australian Institute of Project Management was initially formed as the Project Managers Forum in 1976 (Crawford, 2004).

These communities of practice initially focused on coming together for meetings, networking and exchange of ideas. As they began to see themselves as representing a distinct “profession” of project management they began to start putting in place the building blocks of a profession (Dean, 1997) including:

- Definition of a distinct body of knowledge
- Development of standards
- Development of Certification programs

In focusing on these areas, project management professional associations have tended to develop proprietorial or vested interests in the products they have produced. This resulted in a proliferation of competing project management standards and certification programs, largely local in their origin, if not in their application. By the second half of the 1990s, members of the project management community began to realise that the nature of their community was changing as practitioners became more mobile and the scope of operations of corporate adopters of project management became increasingly global.

In October 1995, twenty-nine countries were represented at a Global Project Management Forum held in association with a PMI® Seminar / Symposia in New Orleans (Pennypacker, 1996) and the primary topic of interest was the possibility of achieving globally recognised project management standards and certification. Subsequent Global Forums, held in association with project management conferences, continued to address standards and certification but without resulting in any action that would unify development of project management standards and certification frameworks.

In an attempt at achieving progress towards global standards, the International Project Management Association (IPMA) initiated a series of Global Working Parties at a meeting in East Horsley, England in February 1999. The working parties considered Standards, Education, Certification, Accreditation / Credentialing, Research and the continuation of the Global Forum process. The Global Working Group on Standards continued to meet and accepted a framework for their work that identified those areas in which they considered project management standards to be relevant, namely:

- Projects:** knowledge and practices for management of individual projects
- Organisations:** enterprise project management knowledge and practices
- People:** development, assessment and registration / certification of people

They can be further classified as either focusing on knowledge or on description of practices, the latter being primarily in the form of performance based competency standards or frameworks intended specifically for development and assessment of project management practices in the workplace.

Attempts to foster cooperation in standards development between professional associations had been hampered by proprietorial interests in their primarily knowledge based standards and related qualifications. The Global Working Group on Standards recognised that standards development for People, in the form of performance based standards, had significant potential for a global initiative. The performance or competency based standards that had been or were in the process of development, in Australia, South Africa and the United Kingdom, were developed within the context of National Qualifications Frameworks. National standards and qualifications organisations are expected, by their governments, to collaborate with others, benchmark their standards and work towards harmonization of standards with a view to transferability of qualifications and workforce mobility in the national interest. This provided motivation for involvement. A further consideration is that promotion of project management within National Qualifications Frameworks is in the interests of legitimisation of project management as a profession.

A series of meetings were held in order to generate interest in an initiative to develop global performance based standards for project management personnel. The first of these was held in association with the IPMA World Congress in London on 25th May 2000. Further meetings were held in September, November, and December 2000 and in January, March and June 2001, primarily in London then in April 2002 in South Africa and in Berlin in June 2002 (at IPMA World Congress). During this time, Memoranda of Understanding were signed by all major professional associations and by national standards and qualifications bodies involved. The primary intention was to provide a basis for comparison of existing standards and for mutual recognition and transportability of project management qualifications.

A meeting was held in London on 23rd August 2002, sponsored by the Services SETA (Sector Education and Training Authority) of South Africa. At this meeting, a globally representative group including but not limited to those organisations that had signed the MOU, decided to formalise support for the initiative by asking organisations to pay a nominal subscription fee. Subscribing organisations would then be entitled to send representatives to three day Working Sessions at which the primary work of the initiative would take place. Working Session No 1 was held from 24th to 26th February 2003 and hosted by ESC Lille (now SKEMA Business School), France. Research in preparation for this session was conducted by the Project Management Research group at the University of Technology, Sydney. Reports from Working Session No 1 were circulated globally in March 2003 and posted on a website established for the initiative (www.globalPMstandards.org).

Feedback was sought from the global project management community on the outcomes from Working Session No 1 and incorporated in development of a draft set of performance based standards intended as a spine for use as the basis for mapping the comparability of all other standards. Over seven further three day Working Sessions (2-8) the GAPPS Project Manager Standard was developed, following accepted processes for standards development, including public review. The standard was formally released in March 2006 following formation of a GAPPS entity that could hold the copyright in order to ensure that the standard would remain freely-distributed and available to the general public.

5. Collaboration and Comparison - the ongoing work of the GAPPS

GAPPS three day Working Sessions continue to be held approximately three times a year in various parts of the world (see Appendix A for a full list of Working Sessions and locations). Central to the work of the GAPPS is the mapping of standards, using the GAPPS standards as the neutral spine. To date, the

following standards have been mapped to the GAPPS Project Manager standard:

- Australian Institute of Project Management Standards (AIPM)
- Australian National Competency Standards for Project Management (ANCSPM)
- IPMA Competence Baseline V3.0 (ICB®)
- P2M (Japan)
- Project Management Institute's PMBoK® Guide 2008
- PRINCE2 2009
- SAQA National Qualifications Level 5 Standard

With the release of the GAPPS Program Manager standard in 2011, work is progressing on mapping of the following:

- Managing Successful Programmes (Cabinet Office, 2011)
- The Standard for Program Management (PMI, 2006)

GAPPS has also published a mapping of the different assessment methods used for the various certifications and qualifications for project management that are issued by professional associations and government endorsed bodies such as universities and vocational education providers.

Incorporated in the GAPPS Project and Program Manager standards are tools for categorization of projects (the CIFTER) and programs (the ACDC)^a. As assessment against performance based standards requires provision of evidence of workplace performance, the level of management complexity of the project or program is an important factor in determining levels of competence. These categorization tools can be used independently for assessing the management complexity of projects and programs for various purposes. Rolls Royce, for instance, has used the CIFTER to assess the management complexity of their projects as a basis for assignment of project managers.

The GAPPS mapping of standards and assessment methods, as well as the GAPPS Project Manager Standard, first released in 2006 and the GAPPS Program Manager Standard, released in 2011 are available for free download from the GAPPS website (www.globalpmstandards.org). Standards for roles of Project Sponsor and Project Control Services are currently in progress.

6. The GAPPS vision: the Linux of project management standards

In the spirit of Linux, it is the intent of the GAPPS to create document (s) for which the copyright will be held by the GAPPS in order to make them available for the public to use at no cost. All of the work of the GAPPS is conducted by dedicated volunteers and the GAPPS has no paid employees or physical office. The only GAPPS presence is its website: www.globalpmstandards.org.

The vision of the GAPPS is that it is the INDEPENDENT reference benchmark for alignment and transportability of project and program standards and qualifications. The following specific objectives are shared with all attendees at the start of each Working Session to reinforce the vision and the non-competitive role of the GAPPS:

1. To facilitate, develop, approve, publish, promote, maintain and review global project management standards
2. To facilitate, develop, approve, publish, promote, maintain and review usage guidelines for project management standards
3. **NOT** to consult, advise, express opinion or develop products based upon standards and guidelines
4. **NOT** to provide training, assessment, certifications or qualifications to individuals based upon standards and guidelines

^aFor full details of these categorization tools see www.globalpmstandards.org

7. Conclusion

Primary reasons for interest in a global approach to the project management body of knowledge, standards and qualifications have been:

- Demand by corporations for standards and qualifications that are applicable throughout global operations as a basis for project management methodologies and for selection, development and deployment of project management personnel
- Demand from practitioners for global recognition and transportability of professional and academic qualifications in project management
- Concern for international competitiveness by nations, corporations, and individuals
- Potential fragmentation of an emergent project management profession due to competition rather than collaboration in development and promotion of project management standards and qualifications.

The GAPPS group explicitly recognises that there are many different approaches to the management of projects to achieve satisfactory results and that there are many different ways for project and program management practitioners to develop their competence. The GAPPS standards are intentionally generic as they are written to complement other project and program management standards including those of professional associations (eg PMBOK®Guide, IPMA Competence Baseline and associated National Competence Baselines, APMBOK, P2M, PRINCE2, MSP, The Standard for Program Management) as well as other standards such as the emergent ISO/FDIS 21500 Guidance on Project Management. All of these documents can be used in association with the GAPPS to provide further detail, underpinning knowledge and understanding or specific applications.

The GAPPS initiative encourages professional associations to use the GAPPS comparisons for benchmarking their standards and qualifications processes, as an input to review and to add or strengthen the performance based dimension. Primarily the GAPPS aims to facilitate collaboration between organizations that develop standards, assessment and qualifications for project management and to provide a platform for mutual recognition of project management qualifications.

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Appendix A. GAPPS Working Sessions, Dates and Locations

- Working Session No 1: February 2003, Lille France (ESC Lille)
- Working Session No 2: October 2003, Sydney, Australia (UTS)
- Working Session No 3: May 2004, Cape Town, South Africa (University of Cape Town & PMSA)
- Working Session No 4: November 2004, Lille France (ESC Lille)
- Working Session No 5: February 2005, Melbourne, Australia (IBSA)
- Working Session No 6: May 2005, St Petersburg, Russia (PSM Consulting)
- Working Session No 7: September 2005, London, UK (Middlesex University)
- Working Session No 8: January 2006, Singapore (SPM)
- Working Session No 9: June 2006, Boston, USA (asapm)
- Working Session No 10: October 2006, Shanghai, China (Greater China PM Association)
- Working Session No 11: May 2007, The Hague, The Netherlands (Shell)
- Working Session No 12: August 2007, Gold Coast, Australia (Bond University)
- Working Session No 13: March 2008, Tokyo, Japan (PMAJ)
- Working Session No 14: August 2008, Lille, France (ESC Lille / SKEMA Business School)
- Working Session No 15: February 2009, Pretoria, South Africa (University of Pretoria and PMSA)
- Working Session No 16: May 2009, Cranfield, UK (ICPM, Cranfield University)
- Working Session No 17: October 2009, Washington DC, USA (University of Maryland)
- Working Session No 18: February 2010, Bali, Indonesia (PTMC/APMX)
- Working Session No 19: May 2010, High Wycombe, UK (Dept of Construction & Infrastructure)
- Working Session No 20: October 2010, Darwin, Australia
- Working Session No 21: February 2011, Cape Town, South Africa (PMSA)
- Working Session No 22: June 2011, Montreal, Canada (UQAM)
- Working Session No22a: August 2011, Brighton-le-Sands, Australia (PMOZ 2011)
- Working Session No 23: October 2011, Brisbane, Australia (BG Group)
- Working Session No 24: February 2012, Dubai, UAE (BUiD)
- Working Session No 25: May / June 2012, Vienna, Austria (PM Austria)
- Working Session No 26: 8-10 November 2012, Singapore (SPM)
- Working Session No 27: 13-15 February 2013, Florida (NASA)

Competition, Comparison, Collaboration – Mapping a Pathway through Project Management Standards. Crawford, Lynn. Journal
The Application of Project Management Standards and Success Factors to the Development of a Project Management Assessment
Tool. Sanjuan, Antonio G., Froese, Thomas. Journal Project Management approach in large-scale projects – project standards form
(PMBOK guide), Program standards (PMI) and other methodologies such as: Agile project management Improvisation Systems
engineering Configuration management Approaches managed concurrently and recognizing these various approaches for enhancing
project management success. True leader in project management sense must show awareness of the various ways projects and
program can be management and should be able to move between and among these various methodologies based on the particular
project’s needs and objectives. In global business environment innovation and advancement in the global workplace can be
achieved through collaboration and shared knowledge. "Competition, Comparison, Collaboration - Mapping a Pathway through Project
Management Standards. " 15:15 16:00 PLENARY SESSION 2 : Nino Grau. "Standards and excellence in Project Management – in
whom do we trust? " 16:00 17:30. Exhibition official opening. 17:30 19:00 session 1.ze.1. IPMA Awards. Stream 5 - Legal & Stream 9
Quality in Stream 1 - PM. Contract.