Centre for Environment and Society Research

Faculty of Technology, Engineering and the Environment

Developing Consensus on the Real Estate Body of Knowledge
A Web - Based Delphi Study

Professor David Boyd, Birmingham School of the Built Environment **david.boyd@bcu.ac.uk**
Abdul-Rasheed Amidu, Birmingham School of the Built Environment **abdul-rasheed.amidu@bcu.ac.uk**
Matthew Smith, Birmingham School of the Built Environment **matthew.smith@bcu.ac.uk**

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Overview:

This is an RICS Education Trust funded research project. The main objective is to gain consensus nationally from real estate academics and practitioners in the UK on what should constitute the body of knowledge for desirable real estate practice.

The potential benefits of this project are to facilitate better alignment of real estate educational outcomes with workplace needs while also providing opportunity for comment on role extension and the scope of real estate practice.

Body of Knowledge:

A disciplinary Body of Knowledge (BoK) is a presentation of the areas of understanding, activities and behaviours which define, and provide identity to, the disciplinary area. It also allows people to train effectively in the discipline and for the discipline to develop itself. BoKs have been defined for such areas as Project Management and Radiology, but often in a fragmented way.

Real Estate is a key discipline within the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) that involves the operation of buildings as assets . Real Estate, in itself, involves many disciplines such as valuation and commercial practice which have their own identities and practices some of which overlap and some which do not.

The RICS currently uses a competency approach to defining its practice and more importantly for practitioners to demonstrate their ability to perform successfully and professionally. This competency approach is used to assess novice practitioners looking for full membership of the profession as part of the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC). The APC document lists some 40 competency areas for the RICS which the individual pathways select as core, mandatory or optional. Within these there are different levels of attainment relating to whether there is just knowledge, whether there are demonstrable skills or whether there are wider skills of being able to offer advice in the area. This competency approach operates successfully for this 'rite of passage' ac-

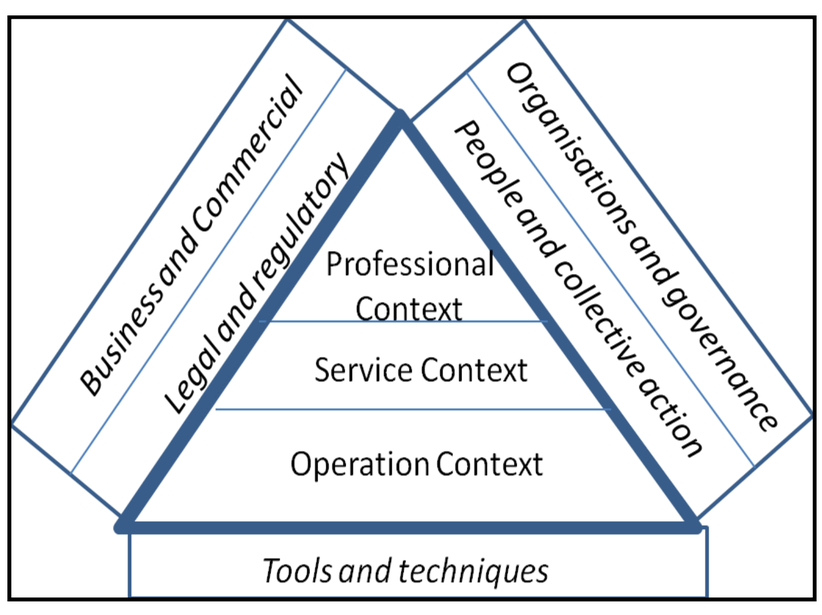
RICS the mark of property professionalism worldwide

A New View:

The Body of Knowledge considered here is different from this and can be seen as complimentary as it views the professional activities in a different way. This has not been done previously in the discipline and so is a challenging task which this research is only a pilot. Key to this research is the notion of 'practice knowledge' and how this is constructed and developed within a consensus. Focusing on practice and practice activities gives this complimentary view an application beyond the APC to more senior levels and also a framework to develop the professional and demonstrate its added value.

BoK Framework:

The framework, shown below, allows the identification of 'activity nodes' which highlight practice activities. Practice involves the 'composition' of a number of these activities into a practice engagement /event. The framework highlights the different levels of practice activity surrounded by the enabling techniques, behaviours, knowledge and constraints. Surveying involves a variety of services offered in complex, uncertain and dynamic contexts. Previous research on Real Estate BoK identified the importance of this context (Black and Rabianski, 2003). The success of this service and, indeed, the nature of the service is defined by the context as well as the independently by the profession. Thus, the different levels of practice involve different engagements with this context. All practice takes place at all three levels but individual activities may be restricted to a level.



A New Framework for a Real Estate Body of Knowledge

The surrounding knowledge domains provide the collective and historically-developed position on activities. The discipline has its own set of **tools and techniques,** some of which are unique to it. Their use is a key aspect of the operation context, and often what is promoted both in the professional and service contexts. The operation of buildings as assets is heavily influenced and constrained by the **legal and regulatory** environment. Although this is controlled by others, the professional is a key player in its operation. Similarly, clients and the service organisation itself are part of the **business and commercial** environment; thus the reason to perform the service and how this is undertaken is set here. More generally, the delivery of the service in all contexts involves **people and collective action**. This contains behaviours, some of which might be problematic, as well as possibilities of better action. Connected to this are **the organisational and governance** issue which involve the structural and procedural aspects of working collectively.

Activity Nodes:

Activity nodes are composite actions. They do not exist in isolation but can be identified and described in isolation. These are rich areas which involve judgement not just in the activity itself but in the way the activity connects with the other activity nodes. Greater expertise is demonstrated in the complexity of the activity contexts involving multiple levels and in the more effective and comprehensive composition of activity nodes.

Example of Activity Nodes in one domain of framework

Operating in Service Context	*Accountability;* *Job assessment;* *Job planning;* *Data gathering;* *Quality Assurance;* *Time planning;* *Job management;* *Reporting;* *Duty of care;* *Bidding;* *Fee collection*

Research Method:

We are seeking to validate (reject or develop) this framework and populate it with 'activity nodes' which describe actions taken within these areas. It is these activity nodes which are used to compose successful practice. The research is using a Delphi method of exploring the framework and forming the activity nodes. Delphi involves an iterative technique where a group of respondents initially work independently on the task of creating the activity nodes and placing them in the framework but on the next round are exposed to others' responses. The processes continues until there is a consensus as demonstrated by the general acceptance of a placing of nodes.