**On the Need to Record Contributions to the
Continued Development of Psychology (CDP)
Instead of Continued Professional Development (CPD)**

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John Raven,
30 Great King St.,
Edinburgh EH3 6QH

Phone: 0131 556 2912
Fax: 0131 556 3754
e-mail NOT FOR CIRCULATION: jraven@ednet.co.uk

My first reaction to the Society's "CPD *Guidelines*" that arrived last December was one of horror. On reflection, this was because what was being proposed seemed to conflict with almost everything that our research has revealed about the inadequacies of formal, knowledge-based, education and training on the one hand and what we know about the nature, development, and assessment of competence on the other.

The central problem is that, like most discussions of "education", the *Guidelines* assume that most important competence deficits stem from deficiencies in technico-rational knowledge and that these can be rectified by immersion in the mountain of non-knowledge that constitutes the "knowledge explosion". Unfortunately, the kind of technico-rational knowledge that contributes to competence consists of idiosyncratic combinations of up-to-date specialist, and usually tacit, knowledge. Failure to build up such pools of knowledge stems from an absence of the motivational disposition to do so and thus cannot be rectified by external compulsion. Furthermore, *pace* the *Guidelines*, the knowledge to be acquired cannot usually be specified in advance but is accumulated through feeling-guided adventures into the unknown.

More fundamentally, it is clear that those who compiled the *Guidelines* have accepted one of the cardinal errors made by most of those who draft policies for education and training: They understand the word "learning" to refer only to learning *content* and fail to acknowledge the importance of other kinds of learning – such as learning to lead, to invent, to put people at ease, and to create political turbulence.

Probably the most succinct way of highlighting the problem would be to summarise the work of Donald Schön (1971, 1983, 1987, 2001). In the course of his work, Schön undertook a number of remarkable studies of competence and then, in collaboration with Argyris, sought (for 15 years) to change the educational process at MIT to nurture the competencies so identified. Yet he was unable to do so because he

encountered a vast hidden network of social forces. In the end it turns out that the competencies we most need to develop as psychologists are those required to understand and intervene in that network of forces – for it is these that overwhelmingly prevent us performing our role in society effectively. Yet nowhere in the *Guidelines* is there any recognition of the importance of these competencies or how they are to be nurtured or their development recognised. Indeed, how could there be, for these social forces comprise the most important determinants of behaviour – yet psychology has somehow managed largely to render them invisible (Raven, 2002).

In this article I will summarise a wider range of research in the hope that it will whet readers' appetites to seek out the material on which it is based.

Competence is not the obverse of incompetence

It is perhaps easiest to begin to challenge the thoughtways behind the *Guidelines* by noting that, despite the fact that the competence movement is largely fuelled by the observation and experience of incompetence, incompetence is not the obverse of competence. The point was illustrated by Becher (2001): "The anaesthetist (who sought to blow the whistle on an incompetent surgeon) was sacked; the surgeon was allowed go to on killing people". Since no amount of CPD for the surgeon would have done much good, one has, perhaps, to conclude that it was the *anaesthetist's* competence that was deficient. How are people to get something done about important barriers to the effective delivery of services their organisation claims to offer? Besides noting the shift in the *criterion* of competence implied by such observations, we may note that it would seem that both competence and incompetence must be *group* characteristics and that it may be that it is on the ability to contribute in one or another of a myriad of possible, but currently largely invisible, ways to these processes that we need to focus.

Formal education and training rarely enhances competence

One of the most important assumptions made by those who compiled the *Guidelines* seems to have been that we need more education and training of the kind with which we are familiar. This assumption is challenged by the considerable amount of research brought together in Raven (1994). This indicates that formal education and training rarely enhances competence. Instead, the so-called "educational" system mainly performs *sociological* functions like controlling access to protected occupations and legitimising huge disparities in quality of life. These, in turn, have the effect of compelling most people, against their better judgment, to participate in the unethical activities of which modern society is so largely composed. (Such unethical activities include the manufacture and marketing of junk foods, junk toys, junk insurance, junk defence, junk education, and junk research.)

The nature of competence

There are now some 700 critical-incident based studies of occupational competence (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Raven & Stephenson, 2001). It emerges that competence among teachers, naval officers, medical personnel, train drivers, managers and almost every group that has been studied is mainly dependent on such

things as initiative, the ability to work with others, and the ability to get outside the immediate environment and influence the constraints which otherwise prevent people effectively performing their jobs as more narrowly defined.

The ability to deal with the swamp.

Schön captured some of these findings by saying that occupational competence depends, above all, on "the ability to deal with the swamp". Thus managerial competence involves making sense of, and intervening in, the network of social and economic forces which primarily determine the success of a business. This understanding cannot be directly derived from any book or course but must be built up by the individual him or herself, largely from "experimental interactions with the environment".

Teacher competence likewise depends on such abilities since the word "education" derives from the Latin root *educere,* meaning "to draw out". As a result, teaching competence depends not only on the ability to think about the idiosyncratic motives and talents of each child, create individualised competency-oriented developmental programmes for each pupil, and invent some way of giving each pupil recognition for the talents he or she has developed but also on the ability to intervene in a largely invisible a layered network of interacting social forces that prevent them doing these things (Raven, 1994). Those teachers who do succeed against such enormous odds are extraordinary people who have not only devoted great energy to moving themselves into positions in which they can do what needs to be done but also, painstakingly, and over a long period of time, slowly developed the competencies – strategies – needed to do their work. They spend enormous amounts of time *outside* their classrooms gaining control over the social forces which would otherwise prevent them doing what they need to do inside them. From the point of view of considering their possible CPD needs, it is important to note that it is not only the case that they did not develop these crucial competencies in the course of formal teacher training, they *could* not have done so because very few of their lecturers would have known much about how to nurture and credential such talents – or even thought it was important to initiate research in the area.

The ability to contribute in one or another of a myriad of invisible ways to organisational processes.

But the abilities required to intervene *outside* one's job in order to influence the constraints which otherwise prevent one doing it effectively are not the only components of competence that are commonly overlooked. Other important competencies may be highlighted by noting that the ability of organisations to innovate and survive depends primarily on people's ability to contribute to what Kanter (1985) has termed "parallel organisation activity". This requires everyone, from lavatory cleaner to managing director, to contribute, in one way or another – but mostly in ways generally overlooked in staff-development exercises and appraisal systems – to cultures of enterprise. Thus one person notes defects in a product or service. Another knows how to publicise that defect. Another how to set up a network that can invent ways of doing something about it. Another how to attract funding for the necessary development work … and so on. Such diverse, and largely invisible,

contributions to a culture of enterprise amount to a major component in occupational competence.

Competency deficits among psychologists

Having underlined the importance of non-technico-rational components of competence, I will now give one example of a way in which a *technico-rational* deficit contributes to gross incompetence on the part of teachers and psychologists. But then I will discuss the competencies that are required to rectify the situation!

A technico-rational deficit that undermines the competence of psychologists.

It follows from what was said earlier that one factor contributing to the gross incompetence of teachers stems from the absence of an appropriate theoretical framework, and set of tools, to help them to implement multiple-talent, competency-oriented, educational programmes. Beyond that, there are no concepts and tools to help those managing the educational system to think about the organisational arrangements that facilitate or stifle initiative and to understand, and intervene in, the societal processes that prevent schools delivering the kind of education that most members of the public would like.

The absence of these concepts, understandings, and tools is the fault of psychologists.

If one asks why we have not developed a more appropriate framework to guide the necessary developments, one becomes aware that the retention of our current inappropriate paradigm is not only driven by the well-known cluster of forces that promote the hegemony of established points of view in science (Kuhn, 1970) but also, as Shiva (1998) has noted, by the fact that the network of forces driving toward the adoption of single-factor models of "ability" is somehow linked to the sociological need for a single and unarguable criterion of merit to allocate position and status and, by so doing, legitimise social divisions which have the effect of driving everyone to participate in the unethical activities that constitute most work in modern society.

Implications for non-technico-rational competencies required by psychologists.

One implication of these observations is that, if we are to ferment the Kuhnian revolution in assessment the need for which has been noted by so many for so long, it is crucial for us, as psychologists, *as part of our professional responsibilities,* to seek to understand, and find ways of intervening in, the omnipresent social forces that overwhelmingly determine our behaviour. In other words, our competence *as psychologists* must mainly depend on the invisible things we do to contribute to collective activity, and, in particular, what we do, through our professional institutions, to influence the context in which we work.

Promoting the growth of competence

Let us now enquire into the processes through which competence is usually developed and ask how those processes might be amplified. The key concept is that of a *developmental environment.* Such environments have common features across

homes, workplaces, and schools (Raven & Stephenson, 2001). Effective parents, teachers, and managers study their children's, students', or subordinates' interests and incipient patterns of competence and create situations in which those concerned are able to exercise and develop competencies like initiative, creativity, and the ability to understand and influence their organisations and society in the course of carrying out activities (ranging from putting people at ease to creating political turbulence) that they themselves care about. They also expose those concerned to appropriate role models, in person or in literature. These role models are unusual in that they portray the normally private patterns of thinking and feeling which contribute to effective behaviour. They demonstrate how to set out into the unknown, reflect upon what one finds, and take corrective action when necessary.

If psychologists are to promote the more widespread creation of developmental environments in workplaces, whether for themselves or for others, they will need to engage with the social forces that are currently driving down both the quality of life in general and the developmental potential of workplaces in particular. Although few psychologists currently view such activity as falling within their domain of professional responsibility, it is in fact central to their competence *as psychologists*. They cannot do their jobs as more narrowly defined without engaging in it. In other words, the competence of psychologists, like that of other people, is strongly influenced by their beliefs about how their organisations and society work and their role in them. It follows that, if it is to be of much value, CPD will need to focus primarily on creating situations in which people – whether psychologists or members of other professions – can evolve more appropriate beliefs about society, how it works, and their role in it.

The proposed arrangements are not only unlikely to be useful; there is a strong possibility that they will be dysfunctional

It seems likely that many formal CPD activities offered by the Society or its Divisions will do more harm than good. This is because they will probably be designed to promote familiarity with, and adoption of, the kind of guidelines drawn up by groups like the US Joint Committee on Standards for the Evaluation of Educational Programs and Policies (1981) and the BPS Test Standards Committee. Although there is not space to make the point here, I have shown elsewhere (Raven, 1991, 1997) that the former trap psychologists into research designs that result in highly unethical conclusions. The recommendations of the Test Standards Committee promote criteria of test quality that are inimical to the development of appropriate measures of the qualities progressive educators strive to nurture. They are especially incompatible with the kinds of descriptive framework that are required to register the huge diversity of talents, or areas of competence, that can be nurtured in schools, are implied by the very word "education" (never mind "progressive" education), and are required in society (and especially for its transformation).

Of course, it can be objected that people *could*, in the course of their CPD, choose to engage in activities that would familiarise them with alternative approaches or help them to develop the competencies required to contribute to "parallel organisation" activities aiming to get such measures developed. But this is extremely unlikely – partly because the hegemony of existing "scientific" points of view renders alternative thoughtways either heretical or (more likely) unthinkable, but mainly

because the huge corporations that control the world would almost certainly promote their smartly dressed junk in such a way as to make it even more impossible than it now is for any other development programme to attract funding, never mind gain momentum.

A possible basis for a more appropriate appraisal and development system

To the best of my knowledge, the only "appraisal" system that has been developed to help identify and nurture the kinds of contributions mentioned above was that designed and piloted by Adams and Burgess (1989).

In brief, what it did was ask teachers to keep private records of the occasions on which they felt they had contributed something they were particularly pleased about to the pupils, schools, or society in which they worked. After some time they were asked if they would mind discussing these records with a friend of their own choice. In due course the network grew. What then happened was that everyone came to realise that their colleagues were serious-minded and had contributed in very diverse ways to the system. All were necessary and valuable. There was no one thing that constituted "teacher competence", let alone "excellent teaching". All these talents could be developed and used.

The painstakingly developed procedures were nevertheless rapidly consigned to oblivion by those who believed in centralised specification of teacher competence – and whose livelihoods just happened to depend on running courses to teach the "prior knowledge base" on which teacher competence could be claimed to depend. (Of course, this is but one manifestation of the operation of the hidden social forces that overwhelmingly determine behaviour that were briefly mentioned earlier and the acknowledgement of which demands a Newtonian shift in the way psychologists think about the determination of behaviour [Raven 2002].)

Summary and conclusion

It would seem to follow from the material briefly summarised here that the attempt to direct the continuing professional development needs of psychologists into anything resembling conventional courses or journal readings is likely to result in increasing professional *incompetence* concealed behind a façade of Orwellian diplomas proclaiming the contrary. The need is, above all, to seek to understand and engage with the wider social forces that determine our behaviour. It is to re-orient our psychological explanations. It is to revolutionise our ways of thinking about, and assessing, individual differences. It is to think through the question of how we can contribute to individual and societal well-being … and that means largely abandoning our attempts to colonise such things as counselling in schools and society (McKnight, 1995) and to focus, instead, on societal reform to enhance quality of life and the survival of the species.

In short, if the members of the Society are to be forced to report annually on anything, it should be on how they have contributed to the Continued Development of the Profession of Psychology – that is, on their CDP activities – rather than their CPD activities. Whereas there is very little to be gained from having our fellows record courses taken and books read, there is a great deal to be gained from having them

reflect on where the branch of psychology in which they are engaged needs to get to, what they have done in the past year to help it get there, and how they are going to contribute more effectively to that movement in the future.

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