

Dimensions of a mature quantity surveying profession

Abstract

The initiative of this article was to identify those dimensions that are important determinants in establishing and developing an instrument/indicator to measure/indicate the level of maturity of a profession, in general and the South African profession.

A questionnaire based on previous research results done by the authors (research on project management maturity) was compiled to identify and weigh the most important dimensions of a mature quantity surveying learned society. Leaders in the profession and some identified imminent professionals in South Africa, were requested to evaluate these dimensions according to the level of importance of each. Professional development work done by the South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession (SACQSP) and the Association of South African Quantity Surveyors (ASAQS) also contributed to the study. The following dimensions were selected and used for this study: education, training, mentorship, continuing professional development (CPD), research, marketing, infrastructure, law & legislation, standardisation, management practices and total quality management. The opinions of the respondents of the quantity surveying profession as a mature and learned society were also tested. A weighting of these dimensions was used to propose a maturity model for the quantity surveying profession.

After the results were analysed it became clear that respondents regarded training to be more important than qualifications, thus identifying the need to clearly define the difference between education and training. Training, marketing and management practice were also evaluated to be of similar importance. However, this did not influence the identification of the various dimensions' importance. The results showed the dimensions that are perceived to be of substantial importance for a mature quantity surveying society. Analysis of results also enabled the proposal of a maturity model for the quantity surveying profession as a learned society.

Keywords: Learned society, mature profession, maturity model, quantity surveying

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Abstrak

Die doel van hierdie studie was om daardie dimensies te identifiseer wat belangrike determinante is in die vestiging en ontwikkeling van 'n meetinstrument wat die vlak van volwassenheid van 'n professione die bourekenaarsprofessie in die besonder, kan bepaal/omskryf.

'n Vraelys gebaseer op vorige navorsingsresultate gedoen deur die outeurs (navorsing oor projekbestuur volwassenheid) is saamgestel om die gewig van die mees belangrikste dimensies van 'n volwasse bourekenaarsgeleerde-gemeenskap te identifiseer. Leiers in die profesie en sommige geïdentifiseerde prominente professionele persone in Suid-Afrika, is versoek om hierdie dimensies na gelang van die vlak van belangrikheid daarvan te evalueer. Professionele ontwikkelingswerk gedoen deur die Suid-Afrikaanse Raad vir die Bourekenaars Profesie (SARBP) en die Vereniging van Suid-Afrikaanse Bourekenaars (VSBR) het ook tot die studie bygedra. Die volgende dimensies is geselekteer en gebruik vir die studie: onderwys, opleiding, mentorskap, voortgesette professionele ontwikkeling (VPO), navorsing, bemaking, infrastruktuur, wetgewing, standardisasie, bestuurspraktyke en kwaliteitsbestuur. Die mening van respondente oor die bourekenaarsprofessie as 'n volwasse en geleerde gemeenskap is ook getoets. Die gewig toegeken aan elk van hierdie dimensies is gebruik om 'n volwassenheidsmodel vir die bourekenaarsprofessie voor te stel.

Na 'n analise van die resulte blyk dit duidelik dat respondente opleiding as meer belangrik as kwalifikasies beskou het – vandaar 'n behoefte om die verskil tussen onderwys en opleiding beter te definieer. Opleiding, bemaking en bestuurspraktyke is evalueer as ewe belangrik. Nogtans het dit nie die identifisering van die belangrikheid van elke dimensie beïnvloed nie.

Sleutelwoorde: Geleerde gemeenskappe, volwasse profesie, volwassenheidsmodel, bourekenkunde

1. Introduction

Literature on the contribution of the quantity surveying profession towards maturity currently shows a lack of awareness within areas of the profession in respect of determinants of maturity. The competencies required from a company, a nation or society depend on its context (Gasse, 2006: online).

According to The Free Dictionary (2008a: online) 'world class' are defined as: "Ranking among the foremost in the world; of an international standard of excellence; of the highest order." Nations, regions, industries and associations are continuously striving to become 'world class'. This is also true about the quantity surveying profession. The problem is, is the profession a learned mature society? This can possibly be answered by defining the concepts 'mature' and 'society' and evaluating different maturity models (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) that are required for analysing the maturities of different social systems. The Free Dictionary (2008b: online) defines society as: "a formal association of people with similar interests." Mature means: "fully considered and perfected" or "being changed over time" (The Free

Dictionary, 2008c: online). A mature society should concern itself with determinants of maturity such as learnership, education and training to be seen as a society that strive towards 'world class.'

The Project Management Group of the Wirtschaftsuniversität, Vienna, Austria initiated the research programme: *Project orientation [international]* at the beginning of 2005. The objective of the research programme was to analyse and benchmark about 350 project-oriented companies (in about 15 project-oriented nations). The models were based on the project-oriented company and management in a project-oriented society or nation. It therefore also addressed the most important elements of a project oriented nation referred to in Figure 2, in this instance reflecting South Africa. The results gained may lead to strategies on how to further develop maturity models, identified during the study, for the quantity surveying profession (Project Management Group, 2006.)

Project management maturity does not relate to function or knowledge only but is an integrated system dependent on a total measurable profile. This may also be true about the quantity surveying profession (Verster & Hauptfleisch, 2007).

The project management maturity model was used as a guide to develop a quantity surveying model. Project-oriented companies, organisations, enterprises or nations have specific strategies, structures and cultures. A maturity model may be thus divided into dimensions or processes and sub-dimensions. Various weights are allocated to the dimensions to indicate the importance of a specific dimension (Gareis, 2005: 32). This is analysed in a project-orientation maturity model as shown in Figure 1, illustrates the dimensions (processes) applicable.

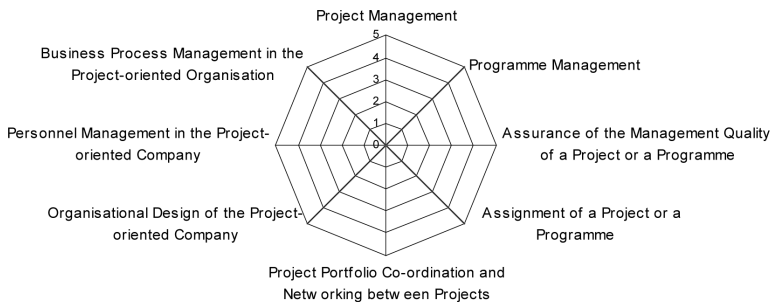


Figure 1: Project-orientated maturity model

Source: Gareis 2005: 32

This model was used as a viable structure to identify the most important dimensions of a mature quantity surveying learned society.

An organisation operates in a bigger system defined as a nation or society/association. The previous research project, describe above, also strived to provide an understanding of the maturity of a project-oriented nation. Fuessinger (2006: 3-4) proposes that the maturity of a project-oriented nation should also include the following additional project management related services:

- **Education** — Formal education programmes are provided
- **Research** — Research projects, publications and events
- **Marketing** — A national project management (professional) association (and it's activities)

The spider web model in Figure 2 shows the average project management maturities of South Africa in respect of the results obtained from the survey described above. This served as an example to establish a foundation for identifying the dimensions of a quantity surveying profession maturity model.

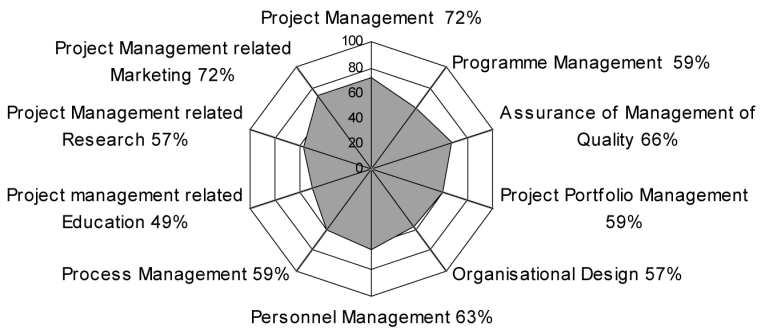


Figure 2: Average Maturities of South Africa based on the survey results (61.6%)
Source: Project management Group 2006a

Figure 2 shows that the average maturity ratio (including the three dimensions of a mature nation) for South Africa is 61.6%. South Africa shows a high maturity ratio in Project Management at 72%. Organisational Design (57%) and Project Management related Education (49%) show the lowest maturity ratios and are thus the development areas for South African organisations.

The research in respect of project management maturities of nations or societies concentrated on dimensions and processes related to key performance areas or functionalities within a specific social system. These dimensions and processes were influenced mainly by performance and perceived outcomes of the functions.

2. Research methodology

The aim of the research project done by the by the University of the Free State (UFS) was to establish the most important dimensions (elements) that may determine the level of maturity of a social system, association or specified profession specifically as a learned society. A selected group of 107 professionals, including prominent quantity surveyors, board members of the Association of South African Quantity Surveyors, members of the South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession and academics who are seen as the leaders of the quantity surveying profession were requested to complete a questionnaire. 56 Responses were received from the invited group reflecting a 52% response rate. The questionnaire was based on research by the Project Management Group Wirtschafts University of Vienna, Austria as well as research by involved researchers of the UFS (Project Management Group, 2006a; University of the Free State, 2007). The questionnaire for the project management maturity analysis was structured according to the dimensions or processes of a mature profession. Based on 11 identified dimensions that are seen as important indicators of a mature and learned society, the questionnaire consisted of 20 questions.

3. Findings

The questionnaire was answered individually by each respondent in order to determine their perceived opinion about the importance of each dimension's role and influence on the profile of the quantity surveying profession, specifically related to South Africa. However, the results may also be true in respect of quantity surveying in other social systems and/or nations and perhaps for other professions.

3.1 Education (Dimension 1)

Table 1: Education as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Average rating												Total
	1 = Not important						5 = Extremely important						
	1	2	2.5	3	3.3	3.5	3.8	4	4.3	4.5	4.8	5	
Number of respondents	0	0	2	4	1	1	11	8	12	12	3	2	56
Percentage of total	0	0	3.7	7.1	1.8	1.8	19.6	14.3	21.3	21.4	5.3	3.7	100
Average rating	4.0												

Education is perhaps the most important dimension to determine the level of maturity of a specific profession within the investigated social system per nation. This is evident in the registration policies of statutory councils, membership acceptance by institutions or associations and the level of education expected of entrants for membership or registration (RICS, 2005; 2007: online; ASAQS, 2007: online; SACQSP, 2007: online; 2007a; 2007c; CIOB, 2007: online).

In South Africa, as in many other countries, standards to be achieved by entrants are generated for each profession and for providers of education. It is important to evaluate the notion of a profession regarding education elements such as entry level qualifications, accreditation of providers, level and number of higher qualifications within the profession, and the provision of technical expertise within the system. For this reason these elements were indicated in the questionnaire.

3.2 Training (Dimension 2)

Table 2: Training as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Average rating								Total
	1 = Not important				5 = Extremely important				
	1	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	
Number of respondents	0	0	2	9	9	11	10	15	56
Percentage of total	0	0	3.6	16.1	6.1	19.7	17.8	26.7	100
Average rating	4.1								

Most professions require an in-employment (in-service) training period after qualification to ensure that candidates within adjust to practice and are trained to practice as an independent functionary profession.

The South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession (SAC-QSP) requires an in-house candidatedship of three years after obtaining a recognised tertiary qualification with some allowances for recognition of pre-qualification employment (SACQSP, 2007a; 2007b).

3.3 Mentorship (Dimension 3)

Table 3: Mentorship as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Unsure	Average rating					Total
		1 = Not important		5 = Extremely important			
		1	2	3	4	5	
Number of respondents	6	0	0	2	17	31	56
Percentage of total	10.7	0	0	3.6	30.3	55.4	100
Average rating		4.6					

The general accepted meaning of mentorship is that it is utilised to support a process of transferring knowledge and skill. Typically this entails that an older knowledgeable person imparts knowledge and skills to a younger *protégé* (Verster & Hauptfleisch, 2007).

The research aims at various interventions to uphold and promote improvement in standards regarding the development of a profession and of professionals. It is thus noteworthy that experiential training, supported by active mentoring, may be emphasised adequately. As is the case for professions such as medicine, accounting, engineering, law, etc. it is imperative that the scientific use of mentoring in developing a learned quantity surveying profession should be mandatory (Verster & Hauptfleisch, 2007).

3.4 Continuing professional development (CPD) (Dimension 4)

Table 4: Continuing Professional Development as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Average rating									Total
	1 = Not important			5 = Extremely important						
	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	
Number of respondents	1	1	2	2	5	8	13	7	17	56
Percentage of total	1.8	1.8	3.5	3.5	8.9	14.3	23.3	12.6	30.3	100
Average rating	4.0									

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is seen as one of the most important dimensions in ensuring that a profession or function within a specific society or association and the members thereof are continuously developed to keep up with the latest tendencies, skills and knowledge relevant to a specific profession. This must be done throughout professional life (Cruywagen, 2007).

Many professional bodies, councils and associations have policies in place to ensure that registered persons or members achieve the CPD requirements. Some examples are the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), International Cost Engineering Council (ICEC), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) and the SACQSP (SACQSP, 2007: online; CIOB, 2007a: online; ICEC, 2007: online; RICS, 2007: online).

Previous research indicated that 77% of the quantity surveying respondents of that specific research project conceded that some CPD was necessary for a profession (Cruywagen, 2007: 98).

The perceptions of respondents were tested to establish the level of importance of CPD, and their opinions in respect of the current number of hours per year required by the SACQSP.

3.5 Research (Dimension 5)

Table 5: Research as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Unsure	Average rating					Total
		1 = Not important		5 = Extremely important			
		1	2	3	4	5	
Number of respondents	5	1	2	8	25	15	56
Percentage of total	8,9	1,9	3,9	15,7	45,5	29,4	100
Average rating		4,0					

The research output of a specific society and its members is an important benchmark to establish the level of maturity of scholarship within a specific social system. The importance of research is underscored by noteworthy professional institutions. An education provider for instance cannot join the RICS partnership if they do not achieve the required research output (RICS, 2007a: online).

The latest requirements for accreditation of providers of quantity surveying education in South Africa also include the same level of research output as the RICS (SACQSP, 2007b). The level of importance given to research by respondents assisted with establishing the perceived importance of research as a dimension and also the

maturity of the society in understanding the role of research and the profile of quantity surveying in South Africa.

3.6 Marketing (Dimension 6)

Table 6: Marketing as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Unsure	Average rating								Total
		1 = Not important				5 = Extremely important				
		1	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	
Number of respondents	1	0	0	3	3	4	19	16	10	56
Percentage of total	1.7	0	0	5.5	5.5	7.3	34.5	29	18.2	100
Average rating		4.1								

Referring to marketing as a maturity dimension within the profession of project management, Fuessinger (2006: 3-4) defines marketing as a national project management association. For the purpose of the research project, marketing is extended to involve an established identity and status of a profession, members' standing in a society, and a marketing strategy by the profession.

During 2006 the ASAQS engaged a re-vitalisation exercise; a national co-ordinated strategic plan to replace the 1990 model and strengthen the profession's image in the market. This exercise is currently ongoing (ASAQS, 2006).

3.7 Infrastructure (Dimension 7)

Table 7: Infrastructure as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Average rating								Total
	1 = Not important				5 = Extremely important				
	1	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	
Number of respondents	0	1	2	4	5	16	16	12	56
Percentage of total	0	1.7	3.6	7.2	8.9	28.6	28.6	21.4	100
Average rating	4.2								

The creation and availability of infrastructure to support members of a profession is seen as an important element of maturity for a specific profession.

The ASAQS realised this in 1996 and the EduTech Centre was established in Port Elizabeth and later moved to Midrand (near

Johannesburg); the primary aim is to support membership in respect of education, training, CPD, technical support and the development of standard and model documentation (ASAQS, 2005: online).

3.8 Law and legislation (Dimension 8)

Table 8: Law and legislation as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Average rating							Total
	1 = Not important		5 = Extremely important					
	1	2	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	
Number of respondents	0	0	1	3	6	10	36	56
Percentage of total	0	0	1.8	5.4	10.7	17.8	64.3	100
Average rating	4.7							

Not all professions within a specific country are governed by law and legislation. The status of many professions as learned societies rely on the need of the services required by the market. Discipline and control in respect of ethics and standards are upheld by an established professional body like the RICS, ICEC and CIOB. In South Africa, the ASAQS is a voluntary organisation of members elected to join the association if they possess the required entry level (South Africa, 2000).

The quantity surveying profession is however governed by an Act. The act aims at ensuring standards and discipline in respect of the profession in South Africa (South Africa, 2000). This dimension was tested to establish its relevant importance.

3.9 Standardisation (Dimension 9)

Table 9: Standardisation as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Average rating					Total
	1 = Not important		5 = Extremely important			
	1	2	3	4	5	
Number of respondents	0	1	6	22	27	56
Percentage of total	0	1.8	10.7	39.3	48.2	100
Average rating	4.3					

The ASAQS and other professional institutions in South Africa have, separately and jointly, over many years, developed standards and

model documentation to assist the members to perform their duties and to enable the market to standardise in respect of systems, contract documentation, reporting and communication (JBCC, 2000: 9).

Standardisation as a dimension was included in the questionnaire to establish its role and influence on the profile of the profession as a mature profession and a learned society.

3.10 Management practices (Dimension 10)

Table 10: Management practices as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Unsure	Average rating					Total
		1 = Not important		5 = Extremely important			
		1	2	3	4	5	
Number of respondents	1	0	1	8	32	14	56
Percentage of total	1.8	0	1.8	14.5	58.2	25.5	100
Average rating		4.1					

The evidence of management practices within a profession may also be seen as an important determinant of a mature profession. This was true in respect of the maturity research done previously (Garies, 2005: 32; Gasse, 2006: Online).

It was therefore necessary to include management practices as a dimension in the questionnaire to establish its relative importance in respect of role and influence on the quantity surveying profile.

3.11 Total quality management (Dimension 11)

Table 11: Total quality management as dimension to determine maturity of the quantity surveying profession

Responses	Average rating					Total
	1 = Not important		5 = Extremely important			
	1	2	3	4	5	
Number of respondents	1	2	15	26	12	56
Percentage of total	1.8	3.6	26.8	46.4	21.4	100
Average rating	3.8					

The evidence of total quality management systems present within a profession to ensure the delivery of quality services to clients is seen as a dimension and determinant of the level of maturity of a profession.

It needs to be pointed out that education, training, CPD, mentorship, research and discipline within an association are related to the governing of a profession and are therefore also quality indicators.

4. Importance of dimensions

The respondents' responses to the twenty questions related to the 11 dimensions as determinants of the quantity surveying profession as a mature and learned society in South Africa are shown in Table 12 as averages of all questions answered related to each dimension.

Table 12: Importance of Dimensions

Dimension	Average on 1-5 point Likert scale	% of importance
Law and Legislation	4.7	94
Mentorship	4.6	92
Standardisation	4.3	86
Infrastructure	4.2	84
Training	4.1	82
Management Practice	4.1	82
Marketing	4.1	82
Research	4.0	80
Education	4.0	80
CPD	4.0	80
Total Quality Management	3.8	76

5. Opinion on quantity surveying as mature learned society

The respondents were requested to give their opinion on the level of maturity of the profession related to the 11 dimensions. This was a perception test only but may be valuable to understand the anticipated difference between opinion of maturity and perhaps the under-valuation by respondents of a very important dimension or determinants of a learned society.

Table 13: Opinion of respondents on quantity surveyors as a mature learned society

Responses	Unsure	Average rating						Total
		1 = Not important		5 = Extremely important				
		1	1.5	2	3	4	5	
Number of respondents	1	1	1	4	17	26	6	56
Percentage of total	1.8	1.8	1.8	7.3	30.9	47.3	10.9	100
Average rating		3.6						

6. Conclusion

The first objective of the research project was to identify the most important dimensions. It was expected that some of the dimensions and sub-dimensions would have been identified as less important. The respondents did not respond in this manner. It is important to note that the research group achieved reasonable success in identifying 11 very important dimensions of a mature learned society.

It is also proposed that some dimensions may be combined to establish a viable maturity model based on the proposed eight most important dimensions. These combined dimensions are indicated in Table 14.

Table 14: The eight most important dimensions and their importance

Eight most important dimensions	% of importance
Law and legislation	4.7 (94%)
Training and mentorship	4.4 (88%)
Standardisation	4.3 (86%)
Marketing and infrastructure	4.2 (84%)
CPD	4.0 (80%)
Research	4.0 (80%)
Education	4.0 (80%)
Management practice and quality management	4.0 (80%)

Source: Verster 2007; own table

7. Recommendations

The research previously done in respect of maturities of nations or societies concentrated on dimensions and processes related to key performance areas or functions within a specific social system, influenced mainly by performance and perceived outcomes. It is proposed that a model may be developed to determine the maturity profile of a social system (profession, society or nation) as a learned society.

It is proposed that associations, institutions, or a society can be measured in respect of its maturity as a learned society by measuring its strengths in respect of the eight suggested dimensions in table 14 relative to the importance levels as well as the standing and presence of

the various maturity dimensions. The importance levels are aspects that form the basis of further research. Importance levels are only important in respect of comparison within the proposed maturity model.

Figure 3 shows the following as a maturity spider web to suggest the form that a model for a profession's maturity may take. Three series are shown in the spider web, these are:

Series 1: The importance as identified by respondents (Response)

Series 2: The quantity surveying profession in South Africa as a mature, learned society: Average given by respondents (QS maturity)

Series 3: The research group's proposed maturity level: The yardstick that may be related to measure a social system's maturity as a learned against society (Research Group)

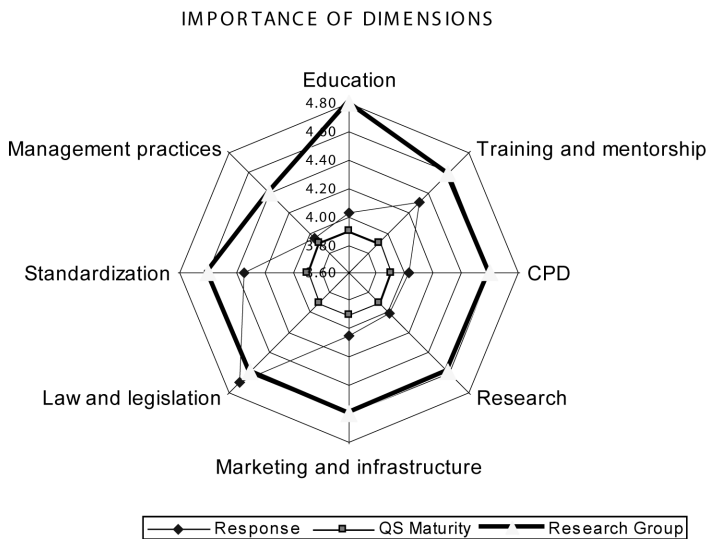


Figure 3: Spider web for a maturity model of a learned society
Source: adjusted from figure 1 and figure 2

The dimensions of a learned society are identified, but to understand the maturity of a specific society, the standard relative levels of each dimension should be measured. The results of these measurements will support strategic development of such a society.

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