A Model of Personal Professionalism

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Following extensive research into the nature of personal professionalism (Beale 2010 and in prep a & b) proposes a model for personal professionalism that is explained in the four diagrams below. (NB each contributor will be provided with Richard Beale’s Draft Chapter which should be available by late January).

Personal professionalism is visualised as a complex set of beliefs, identity, ways of thinking and behaving, capability, qualities and dispositions that are integrated by an individual in a highly personal way, in the act of being in a professional context. These contexts are not limiting to the professions like the practice of law, medicine, engineering and accountancy, rather they are a feature of all work environments in which an individual has the opportunity to adopt a particular approach to their work. Anyone involved in work can behave in a professional or unprofessional way, however the more demanding and complex a role, the more complex is the idea of what being professional means.

The model of personal professionalism is intended to represent in an easy to digest way the most important dimensions of professionalism so that they can be explained to students who are preparing themselves for a lifetime of professional work. The model also provides a useful aid for people involved in the education and training of people whether in formal education or in the workplace.

The model provides a conceptual frame within which the idea of professionalism can be explored and further developed. It allows us to think about the way in which an individual’s knowledge, understanding, skills, capability, beliefs, qualities, behaviours and dispositions are integrated and deployed within specific contexts and situations to achieve not just results but to achieve them in particular ways that are integral to an individual’s presence and professional identity.

Figures 1-4 offer four generalized perspectives on personal professionalism all of which must be integrated into the act of being professional in actual work relevant situations. They incorporate the dimensions of:

Figure 1 Knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to the particular context in which professionalism is being lived and enacted.
Figure 2 Key elements of identity that frame an individual’s unique enactment of professionalism.
Figure 3 The moral consciousness that frames an individual’s thinking and behaviour and shapes their response to the situations they encounter when they are performing their professional role.
Figure 4 The approach an individual takes to the situations they encounter when they are performing their role in the workplace.

These Figures provide the starting point for examining the nature of professionalism from a range of perspectives.

References
Figure 1 Knowledge and skill for professional practice are integrated and applied to the daily interactions and challenges encountered in the role and drawn together in the idea of capability to fulfill the role.

Knowledge and skill for professional practice are integrated and applied to the daily interactions and challenges encountered in the role and drawn together in the idea of capability to fulfill the role.

Doing right things and doing these things the right way

Knowledge(s) (Michael Eraut typology)
- Codified knowledge in the form(s) in which the person uses it
- Know-how in the form of skills and practices
- Personal understandings of people and situations
- Accumulated memories of cases and episodic events
- Other aspects of expertise, practical wisdom and tacit knowledge

Self-knowledge, attitudes, values and emotions.

Domain skills
- Skills, capabilities and competencies to fulfil the role
- Expert, artistic and/or masterful skill level
- Qualified where required/appropriate

Complementary skills
- Organisational, administrative
- Interpersonal and political
- Management, leadership

Doing right things and doing these things the right way

Figure 2 Key elements of identity that frame an individual’s unique perspective on and enactment of professionalism

Role-supporting identity

The person I need to be and want to become at work

Attitude
- Enthusiastic
- Passionate
- Objective
- Committed
- Self-motivated
- Serious
- Purposeful
- Determined
- Resilient
- Respectful
- Willing

Beliefs and values
- The role being performed has personal meaning and contributes value

Presentation
- Dressing and communicating in an appropriate manner

Demeanour & presence
- Conducting self in an appropriate manner
- Working confidently and competently and inspiring trust and confidence in others
Figure 3 The moral consciousness that frames an individual’s thinking and behaviour and shapes their response to the situations they encounter when they are performing their professional role.

Figure 4 Generalised model of the approach an individual takes to engaging with the significant new situations they encounter when they are performing their role in the workplace.

[Diagram showing the moral compass and the right thing]

**Attributes**
- Honesty
- Ethical
- Integrity
- Responsible
- Principled
- Accountable

**Active (proactive)**
- Decisions about doing what is right guided by values, principles, codes and ethics

**Aligned or conflict-managed ethics**
- Personal ethics aligned with ethics of the occupation or profession, organisation and society
- Personal values ideally aligned with those of the employer

**Reacting when things not right**
- Acting by doing the right thing when unethical or illegal activity is recognised
- Developing and following due process in acting upon breaches; eg whistle-blowing

**Approach to role, tasks & development**

**Prepare**
- Rigorous
- Specific
- Focused, structured and purposeful
- Match skill type and level to task ahead
- Learn new skills, practise existing skills
- Evidence-based
- Understand and clarify expectations, e.g.
  - outcomes required
  - authority to execute
  - scope
  - quality

**Plan**
- Draw on knowledge base
- Match intended performance with required outcome
- Consult

**Identity Capability Integrity Willing to be professional and to become a better professional**

**Perform**
- Execute skills to high/masterful standard at required time
- Achieve outcome
- Deliver what was agreed
- Structure and purpose
- Effective
- Efficient
- Due process
- Perform my job, not someone else’s

**Reflect, review**
- Evaluate own performance
- Learn and act on lessons

**Change/develop**
- Continuous professional development

**The way I perform my role and do my job**

*How I deal with significant new situations*