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The Art of Making Do

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The art of making do
What's on the shelf today?

It has become very fashionable to be enterprising with the notion of competency development, and not only so in academia. In fact, it has become one of those notions that you are bound to encounter during most company presentations at business schools, where small and large companies 'dress up' to attract the future pool of promising candidates. To a large extent, dressing up is a matter of using the right vocabulary, and the irresistibility of the notion of competency development seems to be grounded in two distinct, yet interrelated features.

For one, it appeals directly to the *individual*, because it is a notion that, in most popular treatments of the term, is articulated as something the individual *gets*. Hence, we often learn that this or that company *offers* competency development to what has been depicted as the trademark of modern society (Bauman, 2000: 31), namely the *individuals*. It follows from this logic of getting and having, that individuals can get more or less competency development, and it would seem perfectly plausible that employees, just as people of our times generally speaking (Camus in Bauman, 2000: 82), would suffer if they cannot get enough of that sacred means to individual improvement. After all, competency development seems to be an integral aspect of the construction of a modern work-identity in the sense that it provides a self-confident platform for the individual to become less dependent on employers and more able to construct work as a matter of personal *choice*, thereby proudly honouring our modern obligation to be free (Rose, 1989: 231). It becomes plausible, that competenzing as the art of making do is becoming a way employees and practitioners are pragmatically bending and structures and rules to create spaces of competence, innovation and creativity. Competenzing is in this way based on a claim of performance (Christine) rather than a normative claim.

The alluring promise of competence-based human management systems

Competence is an interesting concept no matter how you approach it. It is fundamentally about being good at something. And good in a way where the right things are done in the right way, at the right place and right time, without any need to check if things are done. In this sense competence is already pregnant with the connotation of 'perfect resource'. The competent employee is essentially the employee of your dreams. I a way we all have an intuitive feeling of what competence means (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991; Lave, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Most of the time in our daily work it is totally uncomplicated to evaluate who is good, who is no good, and people in between. One needs no big surveys or competence-mappings to tell this, since it is an integral part of the production of distinctions within any community of practice (Bourdieu, 1997; Wenger, 1998). The general need and obligation of competence-based HRM is however

to be able to identify, measure, structure and develop 'the competent', that is the excellent or high performance on the job on multiple dimensions (Van der Linden & Parker, 1998; Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999; Stern & Kemp, 2004; Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

In this way 'the competent' is existing in between the simple and the complex. Working with competence is challenged by management's need to simplify and reduce competence to become able to control and predict development and hence competitiveness. Management is challenged with an obligation to create overview, consistency, harmony and strategy aligned development. At the same time Management objectives are dominated by a strong strive and need for complexity, creativity, diversity, autonomy and multiplicity of competence in a complex and turbulent marked (Ulrich, 1997; Grønhaug & Nordhaug, 1994).

The raison d'être of 'competency-based human resource management system' consists of a variety of 'promised outcomes', which, generally speaking, are presented as the means to ensure organisational success. Thereby, these promises present themselves as tools to bridge the seemingly simple with the seemingly complex. Success is from the point of view of competence-based management first and foremost the ability to hire the right people train and develop these people to realize their potential, provide appraisal systems, and identify behaviours and skills that are *proven predictors of success* (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The way of doing this is by *"…identifying the traits that contribute to the success of the organizations top performers.'* (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999; 2) Competency models are purported to be able to contribute to efficiency as well as effectiveness in employee job-performance.

"Competency models are highly useful in ensuring that employees are doing the right things; clarifying and articulating what is required for effective performance, such models help organizations align internal behaviours and skills with the strategic direction of the company as a whole.' (Lucia and Lepsinger, 1999; xiii)

Further, success of competence-based management is measured in terms of business needs. Dubois & Rothwell (2004) states, that competence-based management– if used properly - can be of value for organizations trying to: 'Enhance competitive advantage, develop better quality in products and services, increase productivity, position the organization for future growth, facilitate culture change and transformation, assist with large scale organizational change, foster positive outcomes with customers or suppliers, increase financial performance, establish systematic linkages and integration among HR management practices, align HR management practices, with the mission, vision, values or the business strategies or objectives of the organization.' (Dubois & Rothwell, 2004; 35) Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) states, that competency models can help to: Clarify job and work expectations, hire the best available people, maximize productivity, enhance the 360-degree feedback process, adapt to change, align behaviour with organizational strategies and values (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). The lists seem endless and all

encumbering. One might wonder what underlying theory of the individual and the social makes the lists possible? What kind of human being, is it possible to become when the competence discourse frames the relationship between employee and organization in terms of behavioral adaption? What is the nature of these virtually unnoticed frames of understanding that make these promises seem plausible? How come there is obviously no need to explain or ague the plausibility?

The notion of competence development is tightly interconnected to a strong discourse of learning in modern society (Contu et al., 2003). In relation to this discourse, competency development is a notion that is saturated with value, seemingly in no need of a critical reflection, because it is the very growth of human beings that seems to be at stake. In general the promise of a competence-based HRM-system holds that success is within reach through the modelling of the right kind of employee behaviour. This modelling occurs through the manipulation of the underlying traits (skills, knowledge, abilities) and by instigating a discourse of standing up to business needs. The business needs are again undisputable, and the fact that competence-based management should be able to fulfil (if properly managed) any or all of these needs – needs no further argumentation or explanation. But shouldn't one ask why and how the task of 'Clarifying job and work expectations' becomes a business need in the first place? Secondly, would it not be prudent, before throwing an organizational practice into the straining and often very costly work of 'implementing' a competence-based HR-system, to ask why and how this clarification of work expectations should place the organization in a position where it is able to handle turbulence, unpredictability and dynamics. Wouldn't the generally agreed upon statement that the conditions of the modern organization is a world more and more complex, dynamic and turbulent, let one conclude that it would be just as important to complicate work and job expectations? How, in the face of dynamic markets, does the competence-based models put you in a position, where you are able to hire the best available people, when competence-models models '…help organizations *align* internal behaviours and skills with the strategic direction of the company' (Lucia and Lepsinger, 1999; xiii)?

The trend in general Human Resource Management goes towards a more strategic oriented focus. This is implemented through '…aligning HR strategies and practices with business strategy.' (Ulrich, 1997; 25) The alignment of behaviours and skills with the strategy of the organization is handled through a wide assortment of HR-technologies. 360-degree evaluations, competence assesment, developmental appraisal systems to mention a few. There can be noted a striking resemblance in the way Competence Management and Knowledge Management are handled in terms of *"…simple, 'techno-fix' solutions to the creation, dissemination, acquisition, access and application of organizational knowledge'* (Wood, 2002; 152). The 360-degree feedback technology is widely used in assessment of competence and thought especially important in development, appraisal and compensation systems. (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999; xiv) This technology is in short an

evaluative process where the employee to be evaluated is evaluated 360-degrees – i.e. by peers, subordinates, leaders and customers. The evaluated employee is observed from all the imaginable perspectives of the technology, and what is to be evaluated are the skills and knowledge thought most relevant to the job as well as the differences between the evaluated employee and more and less effective leaders and managers. It should wonder no one, if such evaluative processes create narcisistic and fragmented personalities much concerned with their own appearance and needs (Bauman, 2003). Competence management technology is creating individuals concerned with at the same time being constantly on the move and changing – and appearing firm and solic.

An employee not on the move cannot be thought of as competent, since the discourse of competence is tightly connected to the discourse on *change* and *competitiveness* (Andersen, 2004). At the same time, an employee who cannot be evaluated as someone possessing identifiable and demonstrable skills and knowledge cannot *appear* competent. Therefore, the employee has to bridge the seemingly impossible disconnetedness of at the same time appearing and dissapearing as a competent worker, because to *be* competent you have to appear as someone with a firm employee/professional identity, and to conform to the mantra of everlasting change, you have to dissapear as someone solid and stable, and to always become someone else and something else (Andersen, 2004; Mogensen, 2000). The important point is that the technologies used for evaluation produce individuals preoccupied with themselves and their own paths and appearance in work-life, as it is largely the individual that has to align, the individual that is evaluated, and the individual who is rewarded or punished according to the extent of and success in aligning and communicating this alignment. On the one hand, this line of argumentation draws a rather sinister picture of the possible developmental spaces, as the concern with development gets highly individualized and seemingly disconnected from any sense of social practice and moral obligation vis-à-vis a community of work. On the other hand, the social doesn't disappear. It just takes on a new form with new consequences. In what follows, we will elaborate upon the way the individual copes with this tension in a manner that transforms the possible spaces of development.

The competency menu – buying and having competence

> 'In the fluid society though, there is no "big brother" to watch over you – "Everything, so to speak is now down to the individual. It is up to the individual to find out what she or he is capable of doing, to stretch that capacity to the utmost, and to pick the ends to which that capacity could be applied best – that is, to the greatest conceivable satisfaction.' (Bauman, 2003: 62)

We often learn that employees *want* competency development. In fact, they *demand* it (DH&S, 2001), and it would seem that employers are forced to give it to them. Notwithstanding the critique that competency development works from a deficit discourse of the individual work-identity, i.e. from a basic idea that the individual needs

to close the gap between their present capabilities and the ones needed in some imminent future (see also Bramming and Frandsen, 2003), we might also pause a bit and reflect upon what it is they get. Slightly provocatively, we argue that what is at stake is a 'supermarketization' of companies in which it is customary that companies present themselves via a more or less integrated set of 'packaged goods' (opportunities for personal and professional growth, competency development, a strong learning focus, etc.) that present and potential employees should able to buy into rather swiftly. Like others of these 'promises', the goods on the shelf are connected to the possibility of taking specific courses that will add to individual CVs, and, hopefully, to the individuals' ability to do a good job for the company in question. Yet, it goes further than this, because even what we habitually conceive of in collective terms, e.g. the notion of organizational culture (see e.g. Schein, 1994; Martin, 1992), is something that has to *appeal* to and *match* the individual. When this is considered in relation to the general ideal of moving central to the ideology of competency building, of not getting stuck within one specific company in fear of losing your external employability (Nordhaug, 1994), we may clearly begin to understand the way even the collective is conceptualised. Namely, as a pre-packaged commodity wrapped into a fashionable vocabulary that is apt for the swift consumption of the employee who, more than anything else, is enacted in the image of the sovereign consumer making his way in the super*market* enterprise.

However, the notion of competency development is not only a commodity on the shelf of the supermarket enterprise, it also has the potential to make the employee a commodity *to herself*, as it has also been discussed in a more general reflection on work by du Gay (1996). Thus, competency development is, amongst other things, a way in which the modern work subject may slice up their own existence into categories like social competencies, personal competencies, and subject-specific competencies. Once sliced up, once the personal identity is laid before you on the paper in a nice two-by-two matrix, you may begin to consider how to optimize it, how to add a new component to your competence-profile, thereby enhancing the most ecstatic and swift communicational devices of today, namely the CV. It is probably difficult to identify a technique of the self (Rose, 1989: 245) that is more prominent in modern work-life than that of the CV. In a sense, it is a document of freedom, of being able to choose what to add to your profile and CV in order to widen the space of possibility for the next professional move. If anything, the CV and the continual competency development that this CV 'ought' to reveal, is probably the example par excellence of the modern working subject's perceived need of performing a hyper-simulation of themselves in the sense that Baudrillard uses the word (Baudrillard, 1983), namely as a construction with no firm sense of origin, as this origin is already based upon the fragile construction of a sliced and categorized existence that is strategic through and through.

To the extent that it has simply become an integral part of modern work-life to be playing the competency game in which building up and communicating our acquired competencies are inseparable concerns, one of the important, paradoxical challenges is

how we may begin to reflect a little *less* about our work and about what our work tell about ourselves. Thus, not only is there a sense in which people become very aware of how their competency profile adds up in an incessant movement of 'auto-surveillance' (du Gay, 1996: 79). It also appears that the very ideal of competency development and its more or less implicit assumption about ongoing self-assessment in terms of how it affects their own future marketability, works toward a somewhat solipsistic understanding of what it might mean to become part of a community of work. By and large, these are the effects of the individualizing technologies of competence management, and the particular way of 'living' these technologies is the permanent construction of yourself as an object of development. This is not the kind of development reflected in the more romantic search for an inner self that Bauman related to the notion of desire, but rather a full-blown materialization of the force of 'wish', which denoted an extremely fragile and fragmented developmental temporality. As we have already implied, the subject-as-object-to-herself also produces an altogether different possibility for going beyond mere compliance and alignment to externally formulated, managerial demands. This alternative is what we refer to as the 'art of making do', paraphrasing Michel de Certeau in 'The Practice of Everyday Life (Certeau, 1984).

The art of making do

The art of making do is a way of expressing the everyday creative playing with and pushing at the existing frames of existence. It is the way organizational members pragmatically push and bend rules to make things work. And in this the meaning of the competent comes closer to the intuitive feeling of 'good', and the ability to evaluate what is good and what is not acquired in a social practice. As a consequence, we will draw a distinction between competence and competenzing as a performance, where competence refers to the aligned and compliant rule-follower, and competenzing the more unpredictable movement of creative and anarchistic performance.

In a sense, we may think of competenzing as an acceleration or intensification of the discourse of development that has the potential to subvert a system from within. Thus, the unambiguous and positive value attached to competence development creates an irrefutable movement that may ultimately turn against the system itself. The case we analyse at the end of this paper is a course that relates to this intensification in a double sense. On the one hand, it aims to produce students competent at questioning and ultimately subverting given frames. On the other hand, the course is an attempt at subverting the normal frames of a bureaucratic, educational space in itself. We refer to this intensification as 'the art of making do'.

Competence management is as a discourse addressing an interconnectedness of prediction, control and performance of a phenomenon. But the agenda of competence management is for that very same reason subject to a profound uncertainty as it is impossible to know for certain, if a person will perform in specific ways in the future –

and which persons will perform in what way (Holmes, 1995; 36, Bourdieu, 1997). The very gordic knot of competence management is to be found in the tension between the linear construction of time and development on the one hand, and the temporality of lived life on the other. When taken to its extreme, competence management conceptualises the future as a distinct object coming towards the present, and not, as phenomenological studies on temporality teach us (Carr, 1986), as a temporal stretch that always insists upon its own duration. The problem with the linear time frame is not that fact that it tries to envision a certain future. Rather, its technology is linear in itself and makes no spaces for a dialogue along the way. In this way, competence management present itself as a closed and saturated space in which all the important decisions have already been made and a clear-cut path in the sand has been drawn. As opposed to this, the art of making do insist upon opening spaces by exploring the cracks in what appears to be thoroughly systematized. It is the very exploration of these cracks that create small, *empty spaces* with the potential for redefining what it means to be good in the first place.

B94 – A strange bedfellow in the bureaucratic machine? (temporary title)

Some years ago, a researcher and teacher, together with a colleague, decided to offer an optional course entitled 'Human Organization and Postmodernism'. This masters level course was open for foreign student as well as students from various educational backgrounds from within or outside the business school. The course was to be different from what students would *normally* expect from a course at the Copenhagen Business School. In fact, the teacher made a virtue of its difference vis-à-vis the customary way of organizing courses, which, more than anything else, was perceived of as a bureaucratic activity with the aim of '*disciplining human activity, normalizing through correct training*' (Steyaert, 1997: 229). The archetype of such a normal, bureaucratic space, would be that of a course that is *designed* through and through. In this set-up, the process of conducting the actual course is reduced to a matter of mere *implementation*, realizing what is already planned and thought out in advance. No room there for any kind of spontaneous interaction between the people at the course. In radical opposition to this thoroughly instrumental, educational practice, B94 (its 'bureaucratic' name) is launched as an '*open session*' (Steyaert, 1997: 230), a matter of *inventing* the course while at the course. In many traditional educational settings at business schools, this is close to unthinkable. This rather immense hiatus between the traditional and B94, an almost *antagonistic* hiatus that seems important in B94's own construction of a postmodern self, or at least of a sense of purpose, seems to be based upon a very different sense of the *stake* in the educational process. In fact, it is to the different sense of stake that we shall return throughout our discussion of B94.

We might begin our small investigation of B94 by exploring its (construction of a) radical other, namely that of a bureaucratic, educational space. In such a space, the concern of

the teacher is two-fold. *For one*, it appears pivotal to *design* an educational process that is coherent right down to its smallest component. In other words, a pure reflection on the efficiency of the means to the end, the latter of which is beyond the grasp of the bureaucratic machine and thus also beyond the reach of a potentially transversal dialogue. The example par excellence of this educational practice is the teacher who makes no effort whatsoever to legitimize her course, feel no need to defend or develop an argumentation in favor of the choice of curriculum, in favor of the choice of pedagogical methods, or any other aspect of the educational process. Everything that is there is there for a reason, but this reason may be absolutely absent in the educational process, because the educational process makes no effort to contextualize itself. The teacher of any particular course may think that everything about it is self-explanatory, may lack a sufficient analytical surplus to position it properly in some kind of landscape, or may refuse to discuss it with students as a matter of (bureaucratic) principle. *Second*, and following this logic, the teacher will have to test whether students know what they are supposed to know. In its ultimate extreme, this test or examination is the very anti-thesis to an open dialogue, a mere investigation of the student's ability to become the kind of docile body that knows by heart what the teacher already thinks (s)he knows.

From the teacher's text about the course and from the presentation of and discussions along the course (that one of the writers of this paper enthusiastically followed), B94 placed itself in a somewhat radical opposition to this bureaucratic space. In what follows, we speculate a bit upon the effects.

The postmodern class-room

So what did B94 aim to become? In our view, and this is a quality that we consider one of the greatest achievements of the course, it aimed to be and it actually became a *pause* for most people involved. In the simple sense, it might be seen as a pause in an educational game determined to push students through the educational machine as quickly as possible, with the smallest possible administrative effort, and with an overall grade average as close to the normal distribution as possible (notably for reasons of legitimacy). In this traditional game, it should come as no or little surprise that students have become *competent compliers* to course requirements, courses that are typically of a rather short duration ending with an examination, where they typically demonstrate their capability to relate to the curriculum and, oftentimes, to the discussions particular texts have initiated in the class-room. The very *pace* of this game makes it very pragmatic to simply accept the frames constructed by the (knowledgeable) teacher, it often pays off to 'learn' and 'forget', to rapidly acquire knowledge and then throw it away or pile it in the removed part of the addict as any other non-durable good. This is even more so with optional courses, where students typically follow a number of courses that demand different things of them, perhaps even different meanings of what it means to be a student. In B94, the effort was to frame, deframe, and unframe (Steyaert, 1997: 230), an

ambition that was neatly illustrated the first day at class, where the teacher brought a big painting that he asked the students to comment. Common to various comments was that they all related to what was inside the physical frames of the painting. Nobody addressed the frames, and nobody addressed the background in which the painting was inscribed. As such, it served as a powerful illustration of our habit of swift and competent acceptance of whatever frame given.

As compared to this educational game, B94 insisted upon a certain element of *slowness* characteristic of the ambition of living on the plane of simultaneity, a plane where form and content are negotiated in the process. On the plane of B94's presentation of itself, the process of inventing as you go along demands a different kind of patience, not a strained and disciplined *waiting* for the point to reveal itself via the teacher's voice of authority, but a patience that is beyond waiting tout court. The particular quality of this process is the specific temporality it entails, namely one of *intense density* of the present (as Morson, 1994: 201, discusses it), where contingency in a very radical sense becomes the name of the game. Not only is there this sense of the presentness of the present moment produced by and through the simultaneous process of following the course and inventing it, there is also a sense in which the course makes an effort to collapse the boundary between the professional and the personal. As Steyaert mentions it himself: *'The topic of this class comes closer and closer to ourselves, reaches our skin'* (Steyaert, 1997: 233). Or: *'Becoming professional takes a personal stand' (Steyaert, 1997: 233).* Obviously, this combined and mutually reinforcing production of an at once more *open* and more *intimate* educational space is no little thing to demand of the students involved, and the teacher seems conscious as well as open about this. In fact, it seems that the teacher evokes the impression of an existential threshold that the students may *choose* to transgress and, thus, overcome the fact that *'they are afraid of their own inertia'* (Steyaert, 1997: 231). What is at stake in such a space as this one is apparently not the degree to which the student is able to present herself as knowledgeable about the things the teacher is already supposed to know. It is not about becoming acceptors, nor competent imitators. No, what is really at stake is whether they dare to *reveal* themselves in the process, whether they dare to become in a process not altogether different from what the teacher boldly, and with some pathos, compares to walking for the first time. In short, what seems to be at stake is the student in her quality as human being, or becoming, to stay closer to the language of the course. In this line of argumentation, the choice of the student is a somewhat dizzying one, namely one of choosing whether to seize their last chance of stepping into existence as a human being while still a student.

While we appreciate the effort of making room for this pause in a system, where the student may easily come to behave like a running, compliant fragment with little sense of an overall purpose, there is also a certain *totalitarian* element in the way the teacher conceptualises his act of resistance to bureaucratic conventionalism. Thus, even though

we share the pedagogical ambition of inviting in students as active participants in the development of a course, we would also like to stress that there is a certain violent *subtlety* at play in the alternative offered by the teacher in question. First of all, like any other rebel narrative in violent opposition to the established, it performs on the level of its dramatability. As a student meets something that presents itself as radically different and potentially subversive, she comes to focus more upon the negation, upon the *battle*, which makes the course relevant and important in itself. Perhaps it even places the course in a position that is beyond scrutiny, and it is in this particular sense that B94 bears a certain resemblance to what Höpfl and Maddrell's (1996: 201) refer to as redemptionist enterprises. Second, it is extremely *seductive* in its choice of vocabulary. Thus, even though it never says it in so many words, there is a certain jargon of authenticity pervading this course. Thus, as opposed to other courses, this is supposed to be a course that cares about the students as the human beings they are, as the human beings the may dare to become during this class. And who, if you don't mind us asking, can be against such an ambition? Following this logic, everything about the course is about making room for spontaneous interaction, because in such an eventful space, there is room for honesty and for symmetry. The romantic dream of symmetry is obviously closely related to the discourse of the end of control, the beginning of becoming. As Steyaert (1997: 233) mentions it himself: '*Classes are fully attended, as if we were checking lists of absenteeism. But nobody is here in control*'. This is an extremely interesting and also very seductive remark that we need to pause at. At the face of it, this is an invitation. An invitation to enter a dialogical relationship, and we have no doubt that it is conceived with an honest intention (pardon our jargon of authenticity here). Through such an intention, the teacher immediately becomes an ally, someone equal, perhaps even a friend. This impression is further reinforced by the teacher's tendency to teach in unusual settings, and to meet in places where friends are likely to meet (cafés, cinemas, etc.). However, at the same time his is very likely to produce a space that is even more asymmetrical than that of the bureaucratic space's rigid distinction between the knower and the 'incomplete' student, while making it extremely difficult to address it. Thus, it seems unduly optimistic to believe in that impossible dream of symmetry. Whilst students may well join the battle, it is also a battle that is quite foreign to them, a battle in which they are likely to look for an anchor in a new game, where signifiers may appear to flow more freely. There is little doubt that they actually do, such is the case with virtually act of resistance that tries to find its own feet, but the teacher's dream of symmetry and vision of postmodernism is also a language game itself. It has an anatomy, something that is in and out, good and bad, and this is what is, ironically, very like to be forgotten when this little concealed ideal of freedom is used as a platform to wage a war against bureaucracy….

Competenzing the future…

This article is far from being finished – but we lack the time to make a last write-through of the case and a proper concluding paragraph. So we will let it rest here for now, and finish the article with the rough points we set out to make.

First there is the point of *evaluation*. The competence discourse evolves around an outspoken *need* for evaluation and measurement of accomplishment. Through the measuring of the exemplary or superior performers, it is thought that a competence-gap can be identified, and hence closed. This is found to be true whether the perspective is the US best-practice perspective, the critical, vocational perspective of the UK or the learning, relational perspective prominent in Scandinavia. The assumption is, that competence is a phenomenon, which can be observed, analysed, measured and hence developed.

Second there is the point of the intuitive, *unknown characteristic* of competence. Where the first point is pointing towards superior performers, and a theoretical and normative stance towards the competent, the second point is aimed at underlying assumptions of the competent. Competence is in this case that which we recognise intuitively when we see talented work. Regardless of perspective on competence there is a general, implicit understanding that competence is about being good at something. And not just good in the sense of "ok', but good in a way where the competent employee implicitly (and perhaps explicitly) knows *what* to do, *how* to do it, *where* to do it, *when* to do it, *why* to do it, at the *least* cost, and without any need for *control.*

Taken together these two points constitute the driving force of the *problematic* of competence, that which gives life and energy to the field of competence – the issue that cannot be solved. For competence it is the problematic of a need to measure that, which cannot be measured. The problematic of competence exists in the inbetween of unresolved, simultaneous, opposite forces. Competence is an enigma - an unresolved problematic. Why would so many exercise so much energy trying to define, capture and assess the competent, if the whole issue of competence was simple and undisputed? On the contrary the short outline of the comptence discourse shows competence to be disputed and unresolved. Interestingly enough the popular literature on competence is not showing this double, impossible, samtidige existence into account. Competence management can be decided on the plane of technology: there can exist for instance rather precise performance expectations and measures. On the other hand - on the plane of daily operations - it can appear totally arbitrary and based on appearingly subjective criteria what competence is evaluated to be (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999; 9)

"It is no longer the question of trying, under conditions of incomplete knowledge, to measure the means (those already had and those thought to be needed and zealously sought) against the given end. It is, rather the question of considering and deciding, in the face of all the risks known or merely guessed, which of the many floating, seductive ends 'within reach' (that is, such as can be reasonably pursued) offer priority – given the quantity of means in possesion and taking into account the meagre chances of their lasting usefulness.' (Bauman: 2003; 57)

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