



# The ‘Efficiency’ document series

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## Abstract

The *Efficiency* ‘competence lab’ gathers experience from diverse practice to showcase how efficiency has been achieved in each case, geared towards mastering the art of efficiency.

## 1 Efficiency

As a general concept, efficiency is ‘doing things well and fast’ — where ‘fast’ typically extends to time, materials, and/ or other resources. This general concept of efficiency can be put into a formal mathematical expression like Equation 1 (adapted from Perdicóúlis, 2011, p.25).

$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Intended Outcomes} - \text{Unintended Outcomes}}{\text{Required Resources}} \quad (1)$$

The equation form should not lead to deception: more than anything else, efficiency is an art to be mastered — not unlike poetry, presenting distilled knowledge — and, as an art, requires an extensive familiarity with quality (Perdicóúlis, 2013).

It takes hard work to achieve efficiency, but ‘practice makes perfect’ is not enough: appropriate education or instruction must exist beforehand as an ‘orientation framework’ — practicing in the wrong subject or way may even prove dangerous. As an orientation, let us consider three aspects of efficiency: simplicity, elegance, and goodness (Perdicóúlis, 2014).

**SIMPLICITY** — an intrinsic attribute of objects or situations. After gaining an understanding about the structure and function of systems or phenomena, these do appear simple; and after thoughtful design, forms and working systems alike reach perfection when they can be made no simpler.

**ELEGANCE** — our appreciation of grace or style. After acquiring appropriate skills, performing tasks becomes a breeze, gives good results, and it looks good from the outside, too. After thoughtful design regarding structure, function, and form, works become ‘cool’ or classic.

**GOODNESS** — a perceived attribute. Things ‘done well’ should have this ‘goodness’, or good quality. The sense or references of goodness differ greatly among people, so these must be discussed or negotiated explicitly.

## 2 The journal

The *Efficiency* 'competence lab' is geared towards mastering the art of achieving efficiency. The journal showcases noteworthy examples of efficient practice from the experience of *people/ institutions* in a variety of *fields* and through *alternative methodologies*, regarding one or more *objects of interest*.

**PEOPLE/ INSTITUTIONS** (a) *practitioners* (e.g. in-house planners, consultants); (b) *end-users* (e.g. organisations, stakeholders, civil society, industry); (c) *academics* (e.g. researchers, instructors); (d) *students* (e.g. of planning or management).

**FIELDS** (a) *city* (e.g. spatial planning/ public administration); (b) *state* (e.g. public policy/ administration); (c) *enterprise* (e.g. strategic planning/ business administration); (d) *civil society* (e.g. praxis — science, engineering, law, medicine, literature, journalism, education).

**METHODOLOGIES** e.g. *Systems Planning*<sup>SM</sup> (Perdicoulis, 2010, 2011); *Systemic Approach to Planning* (McLoughlin, 1969; Chadwick, 1978); *Procedural Planning Theory* (Faludi, 1973); *Strategic Planning* (Bryson, 1995); *Plan-Process-Results* (Oliveira, 2011); *Balanced Scorecard/ Strategy Maps* (Kaplan and Norton, 1996); *Strategic Choice Approach* (Friend and Hickling, 2005); *SWOT Analysis* (Mintzberg et al., 1998); *PSR/ DPSIR* (OECD, 2003); *System Dynamics* (Forrester, 1969; Sterman, 2000); *Systems Thinking* (Senge, 2006); *Soft Systems Methodology* (Checkland, 1981).

**OBJECTS OF INTEREST** (a) *system* (e.g. organism, building, city, region, institution, situation, circumstances, state of affairs, substance); (b) *process* (e.g. operation, project, agenda); (c) *plan* (e.g. policy, strategy, action plan, measure, to-do).

## 3 The articles

The articles are geared towards mastering the art of efficiency: narratives report noteworthy attempts structured as 'XYZ' problems (Figure 1), and always searching the way to the refinement of efficiency. The expository writing is styled after the *Systems Planning*<sup>SM</sup> journal suite.

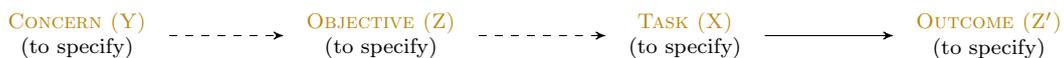


FIGURE 1 The problem expressed in an 'XYZ' form (Perdicoulis, 2010, pp.58–66)

**ABSTRACT** 'A noteworthy example of efficient practice, where the application of [the method/ technique] [enhanced/ improved] the [system/ process/ plan].'

**THE PROBLEM** (a) *Overview* of the successfully solved problem (Figure 1); (b) *the broad concern* (Y); (c) *objective* (Z); (d) *typical responses; the specific task* (X); methods and/ or techniques; (e) *outcome* (Z').

**CONTRIBUTION TO EFFICIENCY** *Assessment*: effectiveness of the operation, fulfilment of purpose, efficacy of the action, efficiency of the operation, etc. (Figure 2).

**CLOSE** (a) *Discussion*: 'thus far'; 'even better'; (b) *Conclusion*: wrap-up.

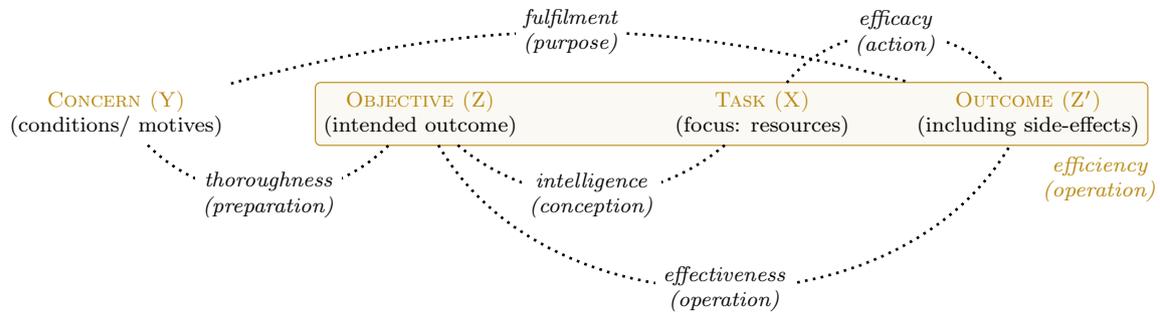


FIGURE 2 Set of assessments (in italics) available to the case studies

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