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# From reflective practitioner to knowledgeable doer - to the ecological professional

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# The whistle-blower – a motif for this session

## Elements of:

- Critical thinking
- Knowledge
- Doing
- Complexity
- Courage/ political nous
- Self-sustainability
- Virtue/ ethics

# The idea of the reflective practitioner

- Knowledge in and through practice (Schon and Argyris)
- ‘Knowledge-in-use’
- Double-loop learning
- (Attack on knowledge-practice assumptions)
- But the reflection was rather limited ...

# The skill-ful practioner

- Skills – it's what you can do that counts
- Idea of 'skill-sets'
- Even 'complexity skills'
- The problems of skills
- Inert
- Redundancy
- Limited transferability
- Rhetoric – is the poet, the ballet dancer, the scientist simply a collection of skills? The term becomes a catch-all.

# And 'knowledge'?

- 'Knowledgeable doers'
- Knowledgeable about what?
- The object of the practice or the practice itself
  - And which knowledge?
- Consider the whistle-blower in the health service
- Where are to be the boundaries of this knowledge?
- Is professional knowledge K for profession x or about profession x?

# And what of 'doing'?

- Lyotard: 'The question now asked ... is no longer "Is it true?" but "What use is it?" (p51, 1984)
- The principle of 'Performativity'
- Without thought
- Shorn of values – except efficiency

# The idea of embodied knowledge

- We are not just minds – or brains – but we have bodies
- Tacit knowledge within the body
- Embodied knowledge (Heidegger; D'all Alba)
- Process knowledge (Eraut)
- One knows more than one can tell

# Critical thinking

- Inadequacy
- Thought has to be thought!
- An object of thought
- But a person who thinks
- And who puts that thought into action (the whistle-blower)
- So – CK/ CA/ CB = Criticality.



# On *being-critical* – or on critical being

- Why am I critical?
- Not because of
- My skills
- My knowledge
- But my disposition to be critical
- To take up an evaluative stance
- To stand off from the world
- And see it and to form judgements of it
- I am disposed in this way; I cannot help myself.

# But what is it to be critical?

- to see that x could be otherwise
- to evaluate it
- to grasp it
- to judge it
- to imagine it as other than it is.

# Complexity – and supercomplexity

## Complexity:

- Of systems
- Open-ended situations
- Unpredictable
- Produces professional stress

## Supercomplexity

- Of ideas/ concepts ('What is it to be a doctor?')
  - Of their proliferation there shall be no end
- This S grows as one engages with it

# Components of professionalism

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Being (being possible)
- Criticality (amid complexity and supercomplexity)
- But NB:
  - Each of these at ascending levels
    - And each of these against ever-widening horizons.

# The boundaries of professionalism

- Porosity
- Work-life balance
- Identities
- Relationships
- Ecozones

# A personal ecology

- Ecologies of practice
- More than mere networks
- Learning ecologies
- Life, learning, profession, communities
- The life-world – of personal meaning
- (Life-work balance)
- Constructing one's personal narrative
- Always unfolding.

# The ecological professional

## **8 Ecozones:**

- Knowledge
- Social institutions
- Economy
- Polity
- Persons
- Learning
- Culture
- Nature

# Why 'ecozones'?

## Conditions of:

- Self-sustainability
- Self-reproduction
- Unity and diversity
- Complexity
- Fragility
- Impairment
- (esp by human action)
- Potential repair/ improvement
- (esp by human action)
- Values and facts intermingled. ('Ought' and 'is')



# The Ecological Professional (1)

## Is:

- Sensitive to the 8 ecozones
- And moving within them
- Boundaries are porous and intermingling
- A situation of complexity
- And supercomplexity
- Brings her/ his critical evaluations to bear
- And seeks improvements
- And acts.

# The Ecological Professional (2)

## **Brings to bear:**

- Knowledge and understanding
  - Immediate but also that reaches across the ecozones
    - Theoretical, practical, embodied.
- Skill
- Sheer being
- Criticality
- Virtues – both generalised and specific – eg political nous
- Life story/ identity
- A lifeworld hinterland

# The whistleblower is an ecological professional

- Knowledgeable
- Virtues – courage, persistence
- Reflective yes, but also Critical
- Can perceive (feasible) alternatives – is imaginative
- A doer – and reflective at that
- Being possible, for oneself and for one's profession.

# Professional experimentation

## **The ecological professional is:**

- An experimenter
- Trial-and-error (tho one may have only one shot)
- Experiments in communication strategies
- In different registers
- With different strategies.
- (Does one use bullet points?)
- Looks for alliances, across boundaries
- Is nomadic; always restless.

## Conclusions

- In a way, no conclusions - Just perpetual effort
- Mobilising all one's resources
- One's world all the time reaching out
- Across the ecozones
- Forging one's learning ecology
- But not at all concerned only with self
- Rather, the self is accompanied
- By a growing sense of the world – impaired
- And so always striving to help in addressing the challenges that the world presents.
- And in this inter-connected world, small victories may just grow into large ones.



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