Chapter 3
Learning to Be – At Work

David Beckett

1 Introduction

One of the great debates in philosophy is the nature of existence: 'to be or not to be: that is the question'. How do we experience our 'being'? Mercifully, this chapter avoids that debate, assuming humans know we exist, but more interestingly for the book, delves in to how we come to know ourselves as workers. Thus, this chapter is about 'becoming' in the sense of (mainly) professional formation through the doing of work, that is, in workplaces.

Consider this case of 'becoming', where future school leaders are identified, according to particular criteria. There are important concepts embedded in the criteria, and I develop the shape of this chapter from them, as below.

> Most head teachers agree that spotting leadership potential is relatively straightforward, even at [an] early stage in a person's career. Among head teachers, the traits most commonly identified as early indicators of leadership potential include:
>
> - *appropriate* professional confidence and *credibility as a practitioner*
> - the *ability to see the big picture* and to *make connections* between key management processes within and across the school
> - *knowing and understanding* his or her role and how it *relates to the roles of others*
> - *seeking opportunities* to develop personally and professionally
> - shouldering responsibilities and *taking brave decisions*

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- initiative and *self-motivation*
- intellectual curiosity and the *capacity to learn*
- resilience and *empathy*. (Jones 2009a, p. 5, italics added)

These eight ‘early indicators of leadership’ are a powerful way into this chapter not because we would contest them much, but rather because they reveal, in the emphases I have added, assumptions about professional formation which are quite telling in education, health, social work and indeed a wide range of work where people are the focus of the activity. ‘Becoming’ a professional is, in this chapter, about the formative, and, indeed, the performative manifestations of a new practitioner identity; these early indications of educational leadership are examples of what at least some people look for, in one context.

Is the list, above, authoritative? I believe so. In a subsequent personal communication, Jeffrey Jones, in the UK, explained to me (J. Jones, personal communication, April 13, 2009) that this list was distilled from a ‘think tank’ organised by the National College for School Leadership in 2008. So it has the authenticity of principals’ rich experiences in how schools should be run, at least in contexts like the UK. But, looking especially at the emphases I have added, notice some implicit desiderata, in the eight ‘indicators’.

Most notably, the first four of the eight ‘early indicators’ cluster around the sociality and the ethos of the workplace: ‘appropriateness’, ‘credibility’, making connections, seeing the big picture, knowing and understanding roles and seeking opportunities in relation ‘to the roles of others’ are, if taken together, clearly prioritising the collective and cultural significance of (in this case) professionalised leadership. By contrast, the latter four ‘early indicators’ cluster around the individual and his/her personal ethic, such as ‘taking brave decisions’, ‘self-motivation’ and exercising a ‘capacity to learn’, with ‘empathy’.

Next, across both the social subset and also the individualistic subset of desiderata, we notice that values and attributes intermingle: what is ‘appropriate’ or ‘credible’ will be cashed out by one’s peers, or, in the case of potential educational leaders, one’s actual leaders. Professional ethics and an ethos will be shown in how ‘roles’ are relationally understood, that is, in connection with others’ roles and processes in a school, and ‘opportunities’ one seeks bridge into the latter half of the list, where enterprising (‘seeking’) individuals show self-awareness of their agency, alongside the regard for altruism.

What is there, then, to ‘becoming’ an educational leader? In deconstructing this list of desiderata and generalising from it to all professionals’ formation, I want to show that the priority it gives to the sociality of practice and to the significance of practical judgements of rightness (or ‘appropriateness’) by both one’s peers and by oneself are underpinned by a legitimate claim that *our professional identities are shaped by what we do, and what we normally do is relational.* It is, simply, in our doing that we find our being. ‘Becoming’ a professional arises from doing

things differently. This chapter sets out what such 'doing' should be like, and why it should be like it.

So, although my methodology is one of conceptual analysis and argument, I do not eschew the normative. Quite deliberately, this 'epistemology of practice' explores what is valued learning for professionalised practitioners, by taking Aristotle seriously when he claimed that all practice should have a purpose beyond itself. What can this mean for 'becoming' a professional?

The shape of the chapter unpacks my answer to this question. I first need to spell out where professional learning has traditionally come from. After that, the new socially relational perspective is outlined, and then epistemic relations themselves are set out. Then, working relationally, the centrality of training and then immersion in providing opportunities for those 'becoming' a professional are both advocated. In the last parts of this chapter, closer attention is given to decisionality or practical judgements as formative experiences within workplaces where new practitioners need to develop the confidence to do well. Links are made to lifelong learning at that point.

2 The Traditional Individualistic Practitioner

Traditionally, professional practitioners hung out their shingle or put up their brass plate, and opened the door and waited for the clients. Not surprisingly, their professional formation was also individualistic. Theories of professional learning tended to assume that learning was primarily an individual attribute, constructed through a cognitive process involving the transmission, acquisition, storage and application of a 'body of data, facts and practical wisdom' (Gherardi and Nicolini 2000, p. 330) which resided in the head, that is, the brain of a solo practitioner. Central to this 'standard paradigm' view of learning is the assumption that 'coming to know and understand something' involves arriving 'at a *state of mind* as evidenced in accounts of what is cognitively the case' (Beckett 2006, p. 4, author's italics; see also Beckett and Hager 2002). When considered from this standpoint, individual practitioners are understood to 'possess' the necessary disciplinary knowledge and professional expertise 'in their heads and bodies' which they then transfer to the situation at hand (Hager and Halliday 2006). Hall and Weaver's (2001) description of healthcare team working illustrates this traditional view well:

> Each member of the team contributes his/her knowledge and skill set to augment and support the others' contributions. Each member's assessment must take into account the others' contributions to allow for holistic management of the patient's complex health problems. Team members preserve specialized functions while maintaining continuous lines of communication with each other, placing themselves somewhere along the continuum of interactions and responsibilities. (p. 868)

This conception of healthcare team working whilst hinting at the potential for collective learning and interdependent action is still largely in keeping with traditional characterisations of learning which, according to Hager and Halliday (2006),

fail to recognise the possibility of collective learning by teams and workplaces 'that may not be reducible to learning by individuals (p. 143). As Lingard et al. (2006) put it, there is a continuing belief and expectation in healthcare practice:

> ... that the work of one profession is fundamentally independent from that of other professions. This belief reflects a sense of professional autonomy, [and] a failure to appreciate fully how one profession's competent performance is dependent on the others. (p. 480)

Traditional professional formation for medical practitioners, for example, has been in silos, within which, not surprisingly, the solo or individualistic nature of specialised practices has been embedded.

3 The New Sociality of Professional Practice

While I certainly recognise the need for sophisticated individualistic disciplinary and technical knowledge in healthcare and other practices, yet, as our UK 'early indicators' list of school leadership desiderata showed, our professional identities are mainly socially shaped.

This sociality is apparent in what we do (our 'practices') and, I claim (cf. Beckett 2009), this is relational: it is in the judgements of what is 'appropriate', which is both an ethos – what our peers enfold our individual practices within – and an ethic, a personal commitment to doing the right thing. Such an approach to an epistemology of practice integrates what developmental psychologists have called the social, the cognitive, the affective and the embodied (or 'psychomotor') domains of learning. As Beckett and Gough (2004) explain, taking this holistic and socially situated view of learning seriously,

> contrasts with traditional classroom learning activities, which ... assume an individualistic learner and knowledge that is often presented atomistically, in abstract propositions, and out of context. In the past this epistemology has marked the professional formation of medical practitioners as much as it has many other professionals. (p. 197)

By contrast, an emphasis on the sociality of practice has come from many places. Lave and Wenger's (1991) social practice perspective, for example, is helpful in reconsidering the relationship between learning and 'the social situation in which it occurs' (p. 35). For Lave and Wenger, learning:

> is not merely situated in practice– as if were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; [i.e. a particular workplace setting or in an individual's head], *learning is an integral part of generative social practice* in the lived-in-world. (p. 35, italics added)

In exploring a relational, social perspective (based, in this section, on Radomski and Beckett 2010, in press), I therefore seek to open a more complex professional learning landscape that recognises the *socially negotiated* character of meaning (Lave and Wenger 1991; Billett 2003) and the role that particular mediating

artefacts (such as other people, technologies, languages, mnemonic techniques and domain-specific tools) have in contributing to the construction of knowledge and the realisation of purposeful and intelligent action (Gherardi and Nicolini 2000; Griffiths and Guile 2004).

This more emergent, particularistic and interdependent view recognises that learning and knowledge generation occur through engaged action (practice) in the world and are 'a function of the activity, context and culture in which it occurs' (Beckett and Gough 2004, p. 197). Knowing and learning can therefore be seen to extend beyond the individual and beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries (Usher et al. 1997). As Gherardi (2003) again helpfully explains,

> [t]he idea is that the relations which constitute the social are continuous. They do not halt at the ontological barriers that separate nature and culture, actor and structure, organisation and environment: the dynamics of interaction prescind from these categories, forming a seamless web. Consequently, knowing is a collective accomplishment which depends on a range of spatially and temporally distributed local practices lying outside the control of any organisation [or individual] and within a network of relationships. Learning thus *becomes an epistemic relation with the world,* and it takes place as much in people's minds as in the social relations among them, in the oral, written and "visual" texts which convey ideas and knowledge from one context to another. Knowledge is in its turn both social and material. It is always unstable and precarious, located in time and space. (p. 352, italics added)

The idea that learning, in all its sociality, forms an inseparable part of practice, which stands as a challenging counterpoint to traditional individualistic conceptions of disciplinarity, professionality, learning and human cognition. I argue that to practise is to learn because the sociality of practising inevitably generates understandings of the world. It is in this sense that learning "becomes an epistemic relation with the world" (as Gherardi puts it).

There is some support for this view, already. Writing from a social work perspective, Bronstein (2003) argues that interprofessional practice is a challenging and potentially problematic way of working, which calls for collaborative action 'in' and 'through' a complex terrain of inter-professional and intra-professional relationships and competing professional accountabilities. Here, we see again that how a practitioner knows what to do is shaped by the performance of his or her work in social contexts.

But if we look more closely, we also see, as I claim here, something more profound. What counts as the 'context' is not as significant for professional formation as what is learned in the *performativity* (the very 'doing') of knowing how to go on, amidst any single social dynamic. I mean by this that a 'context' such as a 'community of practice' or a work 'team', or a hierarchy of roles and responsibilities are all and only structures. They remain, as it were, inert, bounded ways to regard the sociality of practice.

Rather, by decentring such structured approaches to professional practice – whilst not denying their importance in particularising significant learnings and shared expectations – we are able to focus on the relationality itself – the dynamics of a group such as a team – in the very performativity of their daily work together. How do they grapple with the contingencies of a diversity of clients, customers,

patients, learners? How do they learn, amidst their discourse, how to go on, how to proceed? In short, a more profound sociality of practice investigates the 'knowing how and knowing why' thus-and-so is the 'right' ('appropriate') way to proceed. Any conceptualisation of learning a professional identity – how to 'be' – needs to engage knowing how and knowing why, in the daily social practices of working together. Therefore I now turn to how learning becomes, for such practitioners in groups, an 'epistemic relation with the world'.

4 Epistemic Relations

Here the epistemological story is easy to tell. Traditionally, high-status learning, that is, propositional knowledge, as represented in the rich intellectual legacies of libraries, data, formal schooling and examinations, and, especially relevant for this book and vocational university courses, has prevailed. In a modernist world, such learning glitters from afar. It entices families into early labour market decisions (the '11+' fork in the road), articulates into 'High (and Grammar) Schools' and Technical Schools. The former mark out the high status 'professional studies' leading to the spoils of elitist practice; the latter mark out low status 'trades' leading to apprenticeships (see Beckett and Hager 2002, for more discussion of this dualism).

But beneath even that low-status formal learning lies low-status informal learning, typically called 'nouse', 'intuition' or 'common sense' or simply 'know how'; it is receiving long-overdue critical attention. And at one place, it is receiving this in the high status arena of some professions, where, we may say, traditionally propositional ways of knowing meet the experiential, head on. One vivid summary of this epistemological tension is given by Kathryn Montgomery (2006) as part of her detailed account of the clinical judgement of medical doctors:

> Along with "wisdom", "intuition" and "talent", Donald Schon [1987 p. 13] lists "artistry" as one of the terms typically used as a "junk category" to describe what cannot be "assimilate[d] to the dominant model of professional knowledge". (p. 30)

As educators shift their attention to the world of adults' lifelong learning, especially as shown in workplace experiences (Hager and Beckett 1998), it is little wonder that daily life – a 'junk category' of knowledge for the past 2000 years of Western civilization – is found to provide exceptionally rich opportunities for truly educative experiences.

To understand the significance of bringing a junk category of knowledge in from the cold, it is important to establish more firmly what contemporary work actually consists in. Earlier, I claimed that professionals' work is mainly about the daily grappling with the contingencies of unique situations or cases, and that, increasingly, the sociality of such contingencies is the best way to reconceptualise practice. Moreover, I am now taking this beyond the structuralism of 'communities' or cultures' or organisational design, right into the hearts, minds and embodied

human experiences of those who work together: into their relationality at work. How will relationality pan out? Primarily, it is in the energy and purposefulness of the group (its dynamism) that we will find the formation and re-formation of new professionalism, a new way of 'being'. The dynamism should be apparent as a *reflexive way of knowing*, where the groups' memberships and their various individualistic, discipline-based backgrounds and agency are each contributing to, and being changed by, the dynamics of the daily contingent situations they all share. Reflexivity shows up in the negotiation of meanings that these situations present, and the equality of the discourse across the group as it addresses, shapes and reshapes practices and identities simultaneously.

Thus, I argue that such reflexive epistemic relations issue in understandings of how to go on and that these are constructed in the 'hot action' of their daily work. In a chapter in Tara Fenwick's book on workplace learning (Beckett 2001a), attention is drawn to

> . . . a reflexivity between, on the one hand, a worker "knowing how" to do something . . . that is, what they are drawing upon at work . . . , and, on the other hand, the "knowing why" they find themselves drawn to act. Both the "know how" and the "know why" are up for constant renegotiation as, anticipatively, actions unfold – amidst "hot action" in the workplace. (p. 83)

Now, almost a decade later, I want to claim that such reflexivity in epistemic relations is first and foremost a social phenomenon. This sociality of practice is the primary site of such renegotiation of purposeful practice. In linking 'knowing how' and 'knowing why', I am exploring *what it is to come to understand something,* at a fundamental level: at coming to understand the achievement of 'understanding' itself, through work experiences for adults.

Essentially, *coming to understand something* at and through one's work is very context specific. But here, I am not claiming that the 'context' drives the learning. Rather, I claim that the reflexivity of social relations in particular situations is where we should be looking for both a new epistemology of practice, and also, simultaneously, for a new ontology of practice: as I stated at the outset, the question is not Hamlet's 'to be or not to be'. Existence can be assumed. I claim that this 'being' is the efflux of the doing – of work, that is, of working. The question therefore is one of *formation*: how do professionals (at least) learn to 'become', by *doing* – that is, by *acting* – differently, when they are working?

5 Working Relationally

In addressing that question, it is tempting to simply retrieve an 'apprenticeship' model of professional formation. After all, since medieval times, trade and craft expertise have been acquired over time by the novice standing alongside the expert, learning the skills of, say masonry, by observation, replication, modification and repetition. The eyes, the hands and the intelligence were integrated in the sociality

of the trusting relationship between two workers: one, the master, the other, the apprentice. The secrecy of the craft was imparted to those worthy of acquiring it, and mutual trust was apparent in the assumption that the 'real' (that is authentic) skills would be divulged by the master, and that the apprentice would respect the confidence, and the confidentiality placed in him (sic), as part of that process. Thus, in this tradition of workplace learning, we see – and, indeed, we can tell by looking – how the normative and the behavioural are intimately intertwined.

My argument is that relational work is very much at the heart of education. If the normative and the behavioural are intimately intertwined in an apprenticeship, as I have claimed, the larger claim I now make is that this is apparent in any pedagogical situation. Where there is any teaching and learning, I believe that what is worthwhile is shown in the very ways it is being taught, and that these very ways are what is experienced as learning. And these intimately intertwined 'ways' are *tacit.*

The tacit has a long educative tradition, reactivated most famously by Polanyi (1967): 'we know more than we can tell', and then explicitly by Schon (1987), in his articulation of the significance of 'knowing-in-action' and 'reflection-in-action'. But, there is an unhelpful version of the tacit. For example, the practice of chicken sexing (taking day-old chicks in the hand, inspecting their genitals and sorting them into male and female, at a speed of several hundred an hour) has been explained as 'intuition', where a meditative state helps in this rapid and accurate sorting (Martin 1994; R. Martin, personal communication, September 28, 1997); to be interrupted and to have to explain what is going on, degrades accurate performance. Chicken sexers pride themselves on high accuracy, but they cannot explain how they do it. Beginning as a chicken sexer is somewhat like an apprenticeship – you learn by osmosis, but, unlike in masonry, there is no articulation of 'how', much less of 'why'. Of course, chicken sexing is a simple unitary 'way of seeing', whereas masonry is a complex multi-skilled 'way of doing', with seeing just one aspect of the tacit. But my point is that the tacit is unhelpfully mystified by examples of skilled performance like chicken sexing. Not only is the relational almost nonexistent (newcomers pick up a chick, and little else, to help them become skilled), but it is barely social (other than with day-old chicks).

Professionals do rely on the tacit, in this intuitionistic way, quite a bit. For example, a nurse in a burns unit can be drawn to a bedside to investigate a hunch that a seriously ill patient, for whom the technology is indicating clinical stability (the monitoring is beeping along well), is, despite that evidence, actually in trouble. She touches the skin, which is clammy, infers restless and unease, and makes an intervention. Similarly, busy leaders form impressions of their staff, or of potential staff, in the first few moments of an encounter, such as in a selection interview, backing up these hunches as time and the interview unfold. In both these examples, the tacit is central to the judgement. This is not to claim that the judgement is entirely reliant on the tacit, only that it is a point of entry to more sophisticated relational work. It is hard to see any of that in the chicken-sexing example.

So, if the tacit is significant for educationally intertwined relationality, it is for its deliberate attention to *what* to look for, *what* to do, *what* to show (or, equally, *how* to look, *how* to do, *how* to show). Teaching and learning tacitly is driven by marking

out features of the world, and our experiences with it, which are significant for the educative purpose in hand (and by 'in hand', we normally mean immediately in front of us, in our purview). Beginning to learn something with the guidance of another is social, relational, and perspectival. It is first and foremost seeing attentively in a shared way, because the 'teacher' or guide draws attention to it in a particular way – from a perspective of authority, and invites the learner to see it thus and so. This bringing of something into a shared perspective can be shown, rather than voiced. By directing attention to a stone (an object) or a horizon (a view) or a chapter (a reading) or a state of elation or disease (an experience), tacit teaching gets a foothold and so does tacit learning. This relationship begins to legitimate the journey from 'peripheral' to eventual central, skilful participation in a 'community of practice', as Lave and Wenger (1991) have famously set out.

There is a continuum of broadly tacit relationality. Nicholas Burbules (2008) describes these:

> [First] . . . we are observed unknowingly and in this become examples to others whether we realise it or not [although we may be] actively behaving with an eye toward how others may be learning from us.
>
> Second, in trying to explain one's tacit know-how one person may try to indicate at least ostensively and indirectly what they want another to notice: 'see that?' 'try to do it like this' etc . . .
>
> Third, a certain kind of know-how is gained only through repetition: watching and doing the same thing over and over, under the watchful eye of a skilled practitioner. Over time, proper performance becomes habitual in ways that may be almost entirely tacit and inexpressible . . . such repetition is sometimes called 'practice'.
>
> Fourth, one sometimes tries to demonstrate the correct way of doing something by at least being able to point out when it is being done incorrectly . . .
>
> Fifthly, and similarly, sometimes teaching through questions can lead thought towards important inferences and connections, without saying explicitly what they are – this kind of teaching can provide a kind of scaffolding that can guide the learner to formulate their own version of understanding against their background knowledge, experiences, and point of view.
>
> Finally, analogies or similes can be useful, though indirect, ways of guiding understanding: 'look at it like this', or 'imagine if it were . . . '. Needless to say, those are open to interpretation and guesswork too. (pp. 672–673)

Burbules' point with these examples is that 'there is a degree of structure or intention in the process of teaching (it need not be entirely tacit), even when it must necessarily involve processes of indirection, allusion and guesswork' (p. 673), and I agree with him. Becoming a worker, from crane driving on the building site to lawyering in the court room, is centrally about learning from the intertwining of the normative (what is worthwhile) with what is behavioural (what is being done), and the glue is the tacit: we show and we are shown, we see and we are seen, we try and we are 'trying' (very 'trying', sometimes!). In brief, new learners, and new workers, are invited into a perspective on the world, and they may take it up, diversely, in ways of knowing that are more or less skilful, and more or less their own.

Inviting learners, especially beginners, into ways of seeing which are new to them, is not an invitation to a settled or definitive perspective. The teaching of Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as his genius as a writer, illustrates this. Burbules (2008) relates this account from Cambridge in the 1940s:

> Sometimes Wittgenstein, sitting in a plain hardback chair, 'would break off, saying, "Just a minute, let me think!" or he would exclaim "This is difficult as hell"' (Gasking and Jackson 1967, p. 52). Sometimes the point of his many examples became suddenly clear as though the solution was obvious and simple. Sometimes the class stood in lengthy silences. Gasking and Jackson report Wittgenstein as saying that he wanted to show his students that they had confusions that they never thought they could have . . . (p. 667)

I was taught by Jackson at Monash University in the 1970s, and his own teaching was tacit in this emergent and dynamic way: sometimes the class on epistemology was cancelled because he told us that he hadn't done any thinking for it. In the class, Jackson conversed with us, grappling with the topics in a way that invited us to see philosophising as dynamic, as arduous, as, really, 'showing' (that is, 'doing'). Only rarely was there any printed reference – a fragment of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, for example.

A workplace can itself generate ways of seeing hitherto unknown to those who work there. For example, aged care staff – those who care for residents with dementia – can be encouraged to 'see' themselves as knowledgeable and professionally authoritative, even in an industry which regards them as low skilled and peripheral. In Beckett (2001b), I trawled their tacit experiences on a daily basis with residents whose 'challenging behaviours' had to be managed. In one vivid case, one resident threw food at dinner time, and it turned out that she had regressed to the farm where, as a youngster, her responsibility at dinner time was to feed the chooks in the farm yard. In asking the simple Wittgensteinian question: 'What do you find yourself doing [with the residents with dementia]: trying, guessing or showing?', I was unpacking the tacit – the literally messy – in their work.

Such staffs have immense and deep professional knowledge, although they initially denied it. One of them said to me when I first met them: "David, we know nothing!" She meant they had no formal recognition of their learning. They had not 'seen' themselves as knowledgeable workers, because their context had never expected them to show that they had 'become' such workers. Yet, they were steeped in knowledge as I pointed out to them in due course. Their 'knowing how' to deal with, say, residents' food throwing or incontinence was socially located (they discussed during each shift how to manage) and comprised an interweaving of the normative and the behavioural. Each shift, they assisted each other to construct explicatory stories which arose from the residents' unusual realities (dementia does this), thus making sense of challenges hitherto unforeseeable. Like Wittgenstein's and Jackson's philosophy classes, aged care staffs were challenged to see, and to practice, differently, by the dynamics of the kind of workplace in which they found themselves.

6 Climbing the Ladder

Becoming a practitioner normally, and normatively, means improving in some ways. Can working relationally in the ways I have outlined be calibrated? Is there, in short, a 'tacit' ladder from novice, or initiate, or fringe dweller, on the lower

rungs, to expert, accomplished professional right at the top? In posing the question thus, I am leaving aside other ways of conceptualising occupational, vocational or organisational hierarchies, such as by qualifications, by promotions, by salaries and titles. My purpose from the start is to analyse how learning, through experiences, can generate how one becomes a professional so that the focus on educative experiences, not these other types of experiences, is maintained here.

In understanding how novices can best learn, can we learn from those with expertise? Expertise in workplace performance is a tricky notion, as Jarvis (2009), who sets out the history and current state of the debates on it, makes it clear. There is a strong 'decisional' or judicial character in expert performance, which is relevant to my argument here. What can this mean? Gigerenzer (2007), taking a research perspective on 'gut feelings', indicates how the accomplishment of experts is shown in the speed with which they cut to the *decisional moments*, discarding the psychic and experiential scaffolding that has defined their competence in the past. We may say that having climbed the ladder (of competence, of accomplishment), they can kick it away.

Montgomery (2006), in analysing the clinical judgements in medicine, puts the same point this way, in drawing upon the landmark 'novice to expert' work of Patricia Benner, for nursing: "The acquisition of a clinical skill is a process that goes beyond mastery of rules . . . to a stage where the rules are no longer recalled: each case is comprehended wholistically". She acknowledges that Benner drew upon Dreyfus and Dreyfus, who ' . . . maintain that experts reason not by methodical inference but "holographically" . . . ' (p. 35).

Montgomery further states that clinical judgements are marked by 'practical reasoning necessitated by an absence of certainty' (p. 42), and, central to this analysis, what practitioners bring to such reasoning is '[d]escribed as intuition . . . essential to good practice, those "gut feelings"'. This is 'a sort of know-how: as nonscience, this must be art' (p. 30).

Notice, however, that this is the unhelpful usage of the tacit which I discussed earlier using chicken sexing. There is a persistent mystification in relying on 'gut feelings' and 'intuition' which enshrines a Cartesian sense of the individual. Rather, I am keen to advance the socially located practitioner, working relationally in ways that construct learning through perspectival and dynamic experiences, albeit with others as 'teachers' (broadly construed as guides of learning).

So the interest now is on how improvements in practice can be tacitly undertaken, but this is not a new interest. Parents have undertaken this for millennia. It was Aristotle who stated that training is essential for the development of character, since if someone in youth acquires, through repetition, the 'right' habits, he/she will come to internalise them as his/her own valued practices as life unfolds. 'Training up' a child will give you the mature adult. Can beginning professionals be similarly 'trained'?

The problem with training is its limiting but pervasive provenance in behaviourism, without the leavening effect of the normative. By mindless repetition, it instils a change in behaviour – it works well for animals. By contrast, training to some worthwhile, and agreed, purpose, with activities which engage the whole

person, not merely the hands, is an important educative experience at the centre of the formation of a professional. Training is in skill acquisition. It has a specific ambit, so it does contribute to the details of ‘know-how’ within professions, where for most there are correct, safe and efficacious ways to ‘go on’. This ‘knowing how to go on’ is a curious phenomenon. As Wittgenstein has argued, knowing how to go on (in following a sequence, such as a pattern of odd numbers), is an example of being able to follow a rule. But to follow it, you must have an understanding of it (that it is every second number in a pattern beginning on an ‘odd’ number, such as 13 . . . etc). The debates are about how such an understanding is achieved. What learning activities will help? As Luntley (2008) puts it:

> If the activities in question in pointing, using an example, saying things like ‘and so on . . . ’ are intentional activities, they are activities that exhibit understanding . . . that are conceptually structured . . . it is not training that provides the platform of resources to respond to reasons. That platform is supplied by the prior conceptual understanding manifested in the pupil’s [or any age learner’s] capacities to undertake a variety of intentional activities. Training will have an important role to play as we exercise the activities that manifest such understanding. But that is simply to note that when we ‘work out’ intellectually, the moves we make need not be restricted to the silent moves made within an inner language of thought; they can include the moves we make in those bodily activities in which we express our intentionality. (pp. 702–703)

Such a Wittgensteinian view of training thus requires intelligent action in the very performance of skills and implies that skill-acquisition activities will need to engage the mind, especially because our capacity for understanding is a ‘resource’ which is manifest in, say, knowing how to follow a rule. In the rule-following itself, we are making apparent our understanding of the rule, and can give an account of it when asked.

Notice here, then, that training is correctly a ‘tacit’ activity of the kind I advocate. It is socially located, relational and normative in the sense that it fits some understanding of why and how the skill to be acquired is worthwhile. Luntley goes on:

> . . . words often give out when we explain meaning. We do not and often cannot explain the meaning of a word in other words. Words give out and we explain meaning implicitly by resorting to action . . . But this reach beyond the scope of words is not a reach beyond the scope of reason . . . .The activities that figure here are *activities that express an understanding*. (p. 703, italics added)

The crucial point is that it is in the *doing* that the *understanding* is apparent. ‘Understanding’ how to go on is not some psychologically prior state (‘having an intention’) which is then manifest in doing. The intentionality of the action is shown in the doing of the act itself. That is, although the meaningfulness of training is bound up in the commitment made to undertake it, the actual learning – and the development of this learning as calibrated in further rungs up the ladder of skilfulness – is shown in the doing, which is done from intelligent commitment. This ‘doing’ is the explicit aspect of such training. It is this which ‘expresses an understanding’.

Understanding 'understanding' in this way – as tacitly acquired (that is, an implicit, often indirect set of learnings broadly as Burbules listed above) – implies that it is an equal partner in an intertwining of behavioural and normative experiences, which are coextensively authentic, as I have argued from the outset. We know by doing, simultaneously as behaviour and as purpose; we call these 'actions'. And they are, hopefully and typically, intelligently enacted. Moreover, such intertwined experiences are not just coextensive. I make the stronger claim: they also *jointly constitute* 'understanding'. They simply *are* what we mean by 'understanding'. In this way, they are fully integrated in activity, and amount to a Deweyian (1916) holism, grounded in our materiality – our embodied practice (O'Loughlin 2006). What does coming to understand something amount to? It is fully manifested in the intertwining of the behavioural and the normative as jointly apparent in what human, more or less intelligently, *do*. Hence, we 'become' a worker – by working. And we do so, knowingly. Training can be regarded as contributing to this overall ontology.

But, training is not enough. Despite this intentionally integrated, experientially holistic, and, let's say it, broadly humanistic approach (see how far it has come from its simply behaviourist ancestry), training does not exhaust this analysis of how professionals are best formed, although it is central to it. Becoming a worker, by working, needs careful attention to the growth of *intelligent* action, as I now explain.

7 Giving Reasons

In addition to carefully calibrated training of the type I have outlined here, what is also required of those 'becoming' a professional is immersion in practice. This is also an aspect of the tactile. In many organisations and associations, various structures such as shadowing, mentoring and coaching will seek to make sense of the seemingly inarticulable for the new appointee.

Many such structures range across the six varieties of the tacit as Burbules listed above, united by the intentionality I have unpacked in the previous section. Immersion in work targets growth in intelligent action(s). Intelligent activities at work can be reflected upon equally intelligently, in, say, a mentoring programme, from which a new staffer can learn, in Wittgensteinian terms, 'how to go on'. These reflections are typically not of the private, meditative type. They fit the socially located, relational tactility which is central to this analysis: 'Why did you do it that way?' 'What did you find yourself doing next?' 'How will you go about making that change?' are questions a mentor can ask of a mentee which invite the giving of reasons. Yet, this is not reason giving in a narrow cognitivist sense. Often responses to these questions will deal with feelings, values, willpower, colleagues and embodiment. This is what makes them experientially holistic and intentionally integrated (as in the previous section). In non-training contexts – as in the messiness

of immersion in authentic work – such questions and such a structure like mentoring take on new significance.

If beginning professionals are to make sense of their new identities, and their grasp of the bottom rungs of the ladder of skill formation, they need particular encouragement in giving and receiving reasons of the kind I have just specified. After all, a *professional* practitioner joins a peer group, by definition (colleague professionals), and initiation into the codification and an ethic of practice (and, similarly, of 'malpractice'). These are, each of them, both normative and behavioural. How to act or how to 'do' one's profession is calibrated not just hierarchically via skill development, but also laterally through one's quality of immersion in practices and with practitioners.

In this lateral immersion, it is the reason giving that locates one's professional participation. As I have argued at length elsewhere (Beckett 2004), reason giving for the decisions one takes at work, is best regarded as the *making of inferences* from what is experientially significant – what differences or changes were made? What was brought to bear on them? Where do these lead for your practice, or your part of the organisation? A good mentor will bring this out, in inferential questioning like this. Beginning practitioners need to learn how well to respond to this because they are part of a socially located, relationally tacit environment. As Beckett and Mulcahy (2006) put it:

> Briefly, our claim is that how a person goes on to do something (what 'know how' consists in) is not about something other than itself (like a propositional state, or a product, such as is Given), but rather about what that person finds herself or himself undergoing, in what it is to be human. Frequently, what humans find themselves doing is making decisions (judgements) about what to do next. Workplace learning is increasingly shaped by this sort of fluid experience ('knowing how' to go on), but it needs to be made explicit... The 'making explicit' is what the best adult teachers and trainers can do, in facilitating, even revealing, adults' experiences for educational purposes. Mentoring schemes are an example.
>
> Judgements under this latter, inferentialist, model of agency are practical in that they are expected to be efficacious: they deal in what is thought to be good (that is to say, appropriate) in specific contexts in which they are embedded. (p. 248)

Immersion in the relationally tactile giving and receiving of reasons, at work, enables new professionals to become confident in the integrity of their experiences as a source of learning: shadowing, mentoring and coaching, for example, may not give many insights into learning from experience in a narrow, cognitivist sense, but, as I claimed about inferentialism, such wider, more holistic rationality is 'at several points "ostensively tied" to reality (that is, are about *this* world *now*)' (p. 246). Ostensive activities, like showing by pointing, hinting, trying and simply moving about are educationally powerful but hitherto low-status ways of knowing, as the aged care staff case exemplified.

A relationally tactile analysis, based in inferentialism, links ways of seeing and ways of knowing into provocative reflective questioning inviting the making of inferences about what happened, what should have happened, and what yet could happen and the consequences of all the three. In this richly interrogative sense, new

professionals learn better at and from work. In Beckett and Mulcahy (2006), we call this the ‘communal, self-correcting’ nature of professionals’ practice, and I claim it is essential that those becoming professionals learn to do it well and that immersion at work may provide the structures through which it can take place.

8 Making Judgements

But I do want to emphasise that this communal self-corrective reason giving is rational in the broader (almost metacognitivist) sense that Luntley meant, above, in his defence of tacit activities as manifesting rational understanding. In educating beginning professionals, we need to stay away from narrow cognitivism. Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) describes the problem thus:

> Regrettably, the pervasiveness of the rational paradigm to the near exclusion of others is a problem for the vast majority of professional education, and especially in practical fields such as engineering, policy analysis, management, planning and organisation . . .
>
> This has caused people and entire scholarly disciplines to become blind to context, experience and intuition, even though these phenomena and ways of being are at least as important and necessary for good results as are analysis, rationality and rules. (pp. 24–25)

Flyvbjerg directs us to the way forward, which I share:

> The person possessing practical wisdom (phronimos) has knowledge of how to behave in each particular circumstance that can never be equated with or reduced to knowledge of general truths. Phronesis is a sense of the ethically practical, rather than a kind of science. (p. 57)

Aristotle’s *phronesis* is indeed helpful (as Beckett and Hager 2002 claim) in making sense of this reliance upon strange experiences. Flyvbjerg goes on:

> . . . Phronesis goes beyond both analytical, scientific knowledge (episteme) and technical knowledge (techne) and involves judgements and decisions made in the manner of a virtuoso social and political actor. I will argue that phronesis is commonly involved in social practice . . . (p. 2)
>
> . . . and is [the]m most important because it is that activity by which instrumental rationality is balanced by value rationality, and because such balancing is crucial to the sustained happiness of the citizens in any society, according to Aristotle. (p. 4)

And throughout his chapter entitled ‘Rationality, body, and intuition in human learning’, Flyvbjerg (2001) refers for support to the ‘Dreyfus’ model of competences and skill formation, suggesting that traditionally individualistic models of learning skills are unhelpful:

> Practical experience consists precisely in an individual’s ability to readily recognise skill and virtuoso experience. [In relating an experiment with paramedics and experienced teachers of paramedics . . .] ‘The teachers attempted to identify a competent rescuer by looking for individuals who best followed the rules the teachers themselves had taught their students in CPR. The teachers’ concept of “good” resuscitation technique was simply to follow the rules . . . Being novices, the students could do little else’. (p. 23)

Again, Montgomery (2006) articulates a similar way forward; for her, it is based on research into how our contextuality frames our practices:

> Bourdieu's habitus and Geertz's common sense are useful concepts because, like Aristotle's phronesis, they characterise a kind of knowing that is not hypothetico-deductive, not scientific, but nevertheless deserves the label 'rational'. Those who possess this rational capacity or virtue in great measure are often regarded as wise . . .
>
> Because competent clinicians embody a habitual and "automatic" commonsense method of responsive knowing, the idea of a rationality that is both deeply ingrained and largely unaware of itself is essential to understanding their enculturation, the formation of the professional self. (pp. 165–166)

9 A Wise Way Forward into Lifelong Learning

Overall, I have just argued that *immersion* in opportunities for rationality as it is apparent in socially located and relationally tacit practices is how we should be shaping new professionals. Prior to this, I also argued we should be providing *training* which is rich in such opportunities.

In this analysis, I am, overall, arguing for a Wittgensteinian approach to particular programmes of skill formation and particular attention to workplace and professional practices, which have both normative and behavioural characteristics glued together in experiences that are decisional. This Wittgensteinian approach is underpinned by Aristotle's epistemology, where decisionality constructs practical wisdom or prudence, through judgement. That is the sense in which these are rational – not narrowly so, but holistic, in that they take thinking, feelings, sociality, one's embodiment and the conative (willpower) as aspects of a unitary phenomenon: human experience as manifest in moments of decision – 'what to do next?' – in pursuit of some good. This is Aristotle's *phronesis*. Beginning professionals can, indeed, must, learn this capacity, but they need particular guidance through training and immersion of the kind I have specified.

In advocating such particularities, I am disavowing any reliance on 'learning how to learn', or any mystical capacity or ability to acquire this, or be taught it. Christopher Winch (2008) explores what sense can be made of such a generic 'learning' and concludes that apart from literacy and numeracy (both particular skills) not much can be claimed for it ("it can be acquired and maintained", p. 661), although it is often stridently advocated by developmentalists (e.g., Rousseau, Chomsky) and many Western government policy statements. Indeed, the 'lifelong learning' agenda seems to assume such a capacity, almost as a given: 'learning how to learn' is meant to mark out the ultimately self-aware individual. Where has this mystical ideal come from? Is it any more helpful than chicken sexing in illuminating self-awareness?

Lifelong learning was revived around the world in the 1990s as a neo-liberal policy umbrella under which many governments articulated their plans to build the vocational capacities of their various populations. It justified upskilling, deskilling

and reskilling, and the shift from a focus on employment as a national aspiration, to 'employability'. Working 'smarter' meant working within the risk of losing your job, and lifelong learning became the mantra for staying just ahead of the current labour market demands for skilled workers. Lifelong learning under this umbrella was usually about individuals planning their fragmented futures, and managing the prospects of subgroups of vulnerable individuals (early school leavers, mature age redundancies, immigrants and so on). Learning, labouring and social welfare and cohesion were all bundled under the 'lifelong' umbrella (James and Beckett 2000).

Such a bleak analysis masks the potential for lifelong learning in more generative situations such as within fairly stable workplaces, and in most recognised professions. But it needs to be seen as *agentive*, not as *attributional.* By this, I mean lists of skills, capacities and competencies (which is how governments, unions and professions have operated under the policy umbrella) which are attributed as desiderata to individuals or groups of individuals, and which merely preserve the old atomistic way of seeing work and identities. Generic or key competencies in themselves are not undesirable. Who would disagree that the new workplace needs team players, communicators, problem solvers and so on? The issue is that these are bolt-on attributes of more or less successful workers or aspiring workers, who themselves have no acknowledgement of their relational engagement to bring these about in the very intelligent activities of their work. Rather, as this chapter has argued, a relational approach insists on the epistemic value of practical judgements at work and on the justification of such judgements amongst one's peers. This approach will display the usual generic or key capacities or competencies which governments or unions or professionals seek, but not by atomistic attribution (Task: 'Check the box – has or hasn't the practitioner "got" the skill?'). Instead, a relational approach to such desiderata goes about constructing these in the very doing of the work (Task: 'From what practical evidence can we infer the practitioner's judgements were, or were less, effective?'). A relational approach under such a thoroughly vocationalised lifelong learning umbrella locates the agency of the practitioner or the worker at the centre of the learning, but insists on the sociocultural context as the site of the epistemic relations which constitute such learning.

To reiterate claims I made earlier and to apply them under the lifelong learning umbrella: the learning we *do* (sic) is in the linkages, not in the head or the heart, or in various 'bolt-on' attributes, of any individual worker. To come to 'understand' something is to enter into relationships which construct and display understandings, which are, themselves, emergent characteristics of practices. In this relational approach, agency is a shared relationship, for those with peer groups, which is most of us, at work. I have argued and shown, for example with the aged care staff, that typically we see our decisionality – our ability to enact differences in situations – amongst others' abilities to do this as well. It's the linkages here which are the first and most epistemically profound ways of seeing ourselves. We can be guided to see ourselves differently: less as novices, more as experts; less as intuitionistic (like chicken sexers), more as accountable (like school principals). We 'become' workers of various kinds *through the doing of the work with others*, which requires an active (agentive) intelligence. Immersion and training are therefore central to

lifelong learning, but they have a richer epistemic significance than an attributional approach confers. An attributional approach supplies 'bolt-on' skills and capacities, desirable though these may be in themselves, but understates the agentive, the social and therefore the relational character of lifelong learning at and through work.

Stepping out from under the vocationalised lifelong learner umbrella, such an agentive, relational approach is also central to our life, in our familial and most intimate relationships. In our homes and communities, we find fulfilments in the immersion and training we find ourselves undergoing informally as parents, lovers, partners and local leaders of groups which are not vocational. Again, this is Wittgensteinian, and Aristotelian: we literally 'find ourselves' in our local worlds, and the languages game we are immersed within. Our 'selves' are constructions, where each individual's agency is only part of the story – the rest is out there, with us, in the relationship-constituted world we are born in to.

This world – my world and your world together – is what we know best; it is also our way of seeing what we know best. And we make judgements every day as we negotiate our ways of acting and ways of seeing amongst others. Skilfulness at this grows over time – it emerges in the doing, as it were – and we are almost always in situations of having to account for our actions amongst those we love most or hold in high esteem. Whether we are fully aware of it or not, we find ourselves on pathways to maturity as well-integrated adults. Success or otherwise is more up to others to judge – our peers, we can claim.

Scepticism about attributional wish lists of purported 'lifelong learnings' is justified, then, in favour of support for the more holistic and relational analysis of such desiderata, established in this chapter. Properly conceptualised, lifelong learning can be generative, for and around workplaces and elsewhere. If it is powerful, I believe it is so because relationality builds only one generic capacity, *self-confidence.* Winch (2008) puts it this way:

> One key point is that success in an activity tends, other things being equal, to bring confidence that future attempts will lead to success. Confidence in doing something is a motivational factor since, again, other things being equal, someone who is confident that they will succeed in achieving something if they attempt it, is more likely to attempt and succeed than someone who is not. (p. 661)

He advocates literacy and numeracy as 'crucial specific transferable abilities' which are likely to bring about such confidence. In the world of adults' professional formation, we could do well to advocate particular learning designs and opportunities, centred on training and immersion experiences, as I have claimed throughout.

But, in addition, to building self-confidence in beginning professionals, we must be mindful of those UK school leadership indicators with which I began. What do we learn from that list, and how it was established? I suggest that, using the indicators as 'evidence' of a sort, even being named as a potential school leader, is motivational because one is being *paid attention*: this is *perspectival, socially located and relationally tacit*. It tells an up-and-coming practitioner that she has been noticed, and for reasons which are organisationally and professionally defensible. Her peers and her workplace hierarchy have given and received reasons in the form of messages about practices, both real and desirable. These real and

desirable practices are, each of them, both behavioural ('what you are doing is fine') and normative ('why you are doing it is appropriate/good/worthwhile'). Such expressed reasons amount to judgements which are of real and desirable practices. Thus, they instantiate *phronesis*, and they shape a professional and his/her confidence as he/she moves up, and further into, his/her chosen career.

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