Professional Practice in Health, Education and the Creative Arts

Joy Higgs
Angie Titchen
# Contents

**List of Contributors** v 
**Preface** viii 
**Acknowledgements** xi 

## Part One Introduction

1. Framing Professional Practice: Knowing and Doing in Context  
   *Joy Higgs and Angie Titchen*  
   3

2. Doing, Knowing, Being and Becoming: the Nature of Professional Practice  
   *Robyn Ewing and David Smith*  
   16

3. Our Collaborative Inquiry  
   *Joy Higgs*  
   29

## Part Two Dimensions of Professional Practice

4. Practising Without Certainty: Providing Health Care in an Uncertain World  
   *Colleen Mullavey-O’Byrne and Sandra West*  
   49

5. The Meaning(s) of Uncertainty in Treatment Decision-making  
   *Cathy Charles*  
   62

6. Finding the Fifth Player: Artistry in Professional Practice  
   *Lee Andresen and Ian Fredericks*  
   72

7. Embodying Knowledges: Challenging the Theory/Practice Divide  
   *Debbie Horsfall, Hilary Byrne-Armstrong and Rod Rothwell*  
   90

8. Exploring Relationships in Health Care Practice  
   *Dawn Best, Rosemary Cant and Susan Ryan*  
   103

9. Technology and the Depersonalisation of Knowledge and Practice  
   *Charles Higgs*  
   114

10. The Research Sensitive Practitioner  
    *Anne Cusick*  
    125

11. The Practice Sensitive Researcher  
    *Dorothy Scott*  
    136
Part Three  Journeying in Professional Practice

12 Using Autobiographical Narrative and Reflection to Link Personal and Professional Domains 149
   Sally Denshire and Susan Ryan

13 Students and Educators Learning Within Relationships 161
   Joy Goodfellow, Lindy McAllister, Dawn Best, Gillian Webb and Dawn Fredericks

14 Becoming in Professional Practice: an Exemplar 175
   Robyn Ewing and David Smith

15 Transforming Practice 185
   Angie Titchen, Jim Butler and Robert Kay

16 Articulating Practice 199
   Jim Butler, Robert Kay and Angie Titchen

17 Knowledge and Practice in the Education of Health and Human Service Professionals 212
   Fran Everingham and Jude Irwin

18 Parallel Journeys in Professional Practice 227
   Sue Radovich and Joy Higgs

19 Developing Creative Arts Expertise 238
   Joy Higgs, Ian Maxwell, Ian Fredericks and Lyn Spence

20 Weaving the Body, the Creative Unconscious, Imagination and the Arts into Practice Development 251
   Emma Coats

Part Four  Reflections

21 Professional Practice: Walking Alone with Others 267
   Joy Higgs and Angie Titchen

22 Towards Professional Artistry and Creativity in Practice 273
   Angie Titchen and Joy Higgs

Index 291
List of Contributors

Lee W. Andresen  BSc, DipEd, PhD  Retired, previously Senior Lecturer, Professional Development Centre, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Currently freelance consultant in Higher Education and Academic Development and affiliate of the Centre for Professional Education Advancement (CPEA) at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Hilary Byrne-Armstrong  DipPhys, Grad Dip Soc Ec, MSc (Hons) PhD Lecturer, Centre for Critical Psychology, School of Psychology, Faculty of Social Inquiry, University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Dawn Best  Dip Physio, MEd, MAPA  Senior Lecturer, School of Physiotherapy, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia.

Jim Butler  BSc, PhD  Associate Professor, Graduate School of Education, The University of Queensland, Australia.

Dr Rosemary Cant  MEd, PhD  Senior Lecturer, School of Behavioural and Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Dr Cathy Charles  BA, MA MPhil PhD  Associate Professor, Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University, Canada.


Ann Cusick  BAppSc (OT), MA (Psych), MA (Interdisc Stud), PhD  Associate Professor, Faculty of Health, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, Campbelltown, New South Wales, Australia and Hon. Research Associate, School of Physiotherapy, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney.

Sally Denshire  Dip OT (NZ) MAppSc(OT)  Lecturer, School of Community Health, Charles Sturt University, Albury, Australia.

Fran Everingham  BA, MHPEd, Grad Dip Ed (Hlth Stud), DipEd  School of Behavioural and Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney, Australia.
Robyn Ewing  BEd (Hons), PhD  Senior Lecturer, School of Policy and Practice, Education Faculty, The University of Sydney, Australia.


Ian Fredericks  Eng.  Affiliate of CPEA at the University of Sydney, Lidcombe, Australia.

Joy Goodfellow  Dip SKTC, BA, MEd, PhD  Co-ordinator of Early Childhood Professional Experience, School of Learning, Development and Early Education, University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Charles Higgs  BSurv, MSocEcol  Key Performance Consulting, Centre for Professional Education Advancement, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Professor Joy Higgs  BSc, GradDipPhty, MPHEd, PhD  Director, Centre for Professional Education Advancement, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Debbie Horsfall  BEd, MA, PhD  Senior Lecturer, School of Sociology and Justice Studies, University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Jude Irwin  BSW, MA, MASSW  Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Social Policy and Sociology, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Robert Kay  BAppSc (Hons), PhD  Lecturer, School of Construction and Building Sciences, University of Western Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

Ian Maxwell  BA (Hons) PhD DipArts (Dram Arts)  Centre for Performance Studies, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Lindy McAllister  MA (SpPath) (Hons), BSpThy  Head of Program and Senior Lecturer in Speech Pathology, School of Community Health, Charles Sturt University, Australia.

Colleen Mullavey-O’Byrne  MA (Hons)(Macq), DipOT  Director Intercultural Interactions, Honorary Associate Professor, School of Occupational and Leisure Sciences, The University of Sydney, Affiliate, CPEA, Australia.

Sue Radovich  BAppSc (Sp Path)  Consultant, Educational Speech Pathology, Research Officer, CPEA, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Roderick Rothwell  MA (Psych)(Syd), MA (Phil)(Syd), PhD (Syd)  School of Behavioural and Community Health Sciences, The University of Sydney, Australia.
List of Contributors

Susan Ryan MSc, BAppSc (OT)  Reader in Educational Development in the Health Sciences, University of East London, UK.

Dorothy Scott BA (Hons), DipSocStud, MSW, PhD  Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Melbourne, Australia.

David L. Smith BA (Hons), PhD  Senior Lecturer, School of Policy and Practice, Education Faculty, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Lyn Spence BSc (Hons), BA  Centre for Professional Education Advancement, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Angie Titchen DPhil (Oxon), MSc  R&PD Fellow and Lead, Clinical Supervision Developments, RCN Institute, Oxford, England.

Gillian Webb Dip Physio, Grad Dip Ex for Rehab, M Clin Ed  Senior Lecturer, School of Physiotherapy, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, Australia.

Sandra West BSc, PhD (Macq), RN, CM, IntCare Cert  Senior Lecturer, Department of Life Science in Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, University of Sydney, Australia.
Preface

This book invites you to explore a multidimensional and multiprofessional view of professional practice. The authors have explored four key dimensions of professional practice: ‘doing’, ‘knowing’, ‘being’ and ‘becoming’. These concepts have been chosen to represent professional practice as being much more than applying learned knowledge in practice situations. Instead, professionals bring much of themselves to their work. They engage with others who are also being and becoming people, they generate as well as refine their knowledge and understanding of their role and of the broader people-centred context of professional practice, and they incorporate all of these understandings, skills and learnings into their actions. For this reason, we present professional practice as a lived experience, a service for (and with) others and a way of being and behaving. Further, we view professional practice as a team activity involving our clients, their caregivers and other team members. (The term client is used throughout the book to refer to all categories of people who seek the benefit of professional practice, including patients, customers, clients, students, family, caregivers and other relevant members of the community.)

The multidisciplinary focus of the book is reflected in the participating authors and our intended audience. Our audience broadly encompasses professional people engaged or interested in practice, and members of the community interested in the way professionals practise and frame their practice. The authors are professionals currently engaged in practice, the study of practice and/or teaching about professional practice. The authors were drawn from the fields of education, the health sciences and the creative arts. In our writing the rich and diverse mix of these backgrounds is harnessed; and while addressing these groups specifically in our examples and experiences, we consider our deliberations and findings relevant to other professional fields.

This book resulted from a collaborative research inquiry and writing project (see Chapter 3 for details of this writing process and experience). The project involved 29 people who participated directly in a writing retreat and another three who were invited to contribute chapters during the inquiry process. Each chapter has been peer reviewed. We retreated from our immersion in our professional roles to interact with creative arts media and nature and to engage in reflection, discourse, inquiry and debate about the nature of professional practice
and to explore this topic through interaction with creative arts media and our natural surroundings. Our goals during this week-long retreat were to commence the inquiry process, to construct a conceptual and operational framework for a collaborative writing project (with the aim of producing a book on professional practice) and to identify areas of further inquiry needed. With these goals achieved, the process of inquiry and writing continued over the following 18 months. This book is the product of this research and writing collaboration.

The book explores the essential unity of knowledge and practice through discourse, narrative, imagery and critical debate. It is located in the human sciences, with interactions between people at the core and the human services professions as the broad focus. It is a book for all those willing or seeking to learn and to improve practice, including practitioners, students, teachers, researchers, practice developers, consumers, managers and reviewers.

One of the challenges we faced in preparing for this project and engaging in the inquiry and writing activities was to confront the questions: What is a profession? What is professional practice? We chose a broad definition of profession to encompass occupations where practice is underpinned by a body of discipline-specific (as well as generalist) knowledge and where principles of professionalism, including ethical behaviour and a service orientation, provide the foundation for professional practice. In this context we identified a number of similarities as well as differences between the creative arts professions, education and the health professions in relation to their use of different forms of knowledge in practice and ways of being and becoming in these professions. Therefore, we invited people from these three professional areas to participate in this project, as is reflected in the chapters in the book. In addition, we used creative arts during the retreat to break down barriers between word knowledge and wordless knowing, to explore our ideas through creative media and to produce images (in art, poetry and music) to express emerging ideas and visions arising from our exploration of professional practice. The colour plates and chapter title images in the book contain some of this artwork.

By examining issues and themes in this multidimensional topic area, the book seeks to be:

- **Transformative of practice**, encouraging more thoughtful and reflexive practice, and the extension or removal of practice boundaries
- **Transcendental of concepts**, moving decisively beyond the artificial divide often placed between knowledge and practice
- **Liberating of arguments on knowledge**, firmly acknowledging different ways of knowing, particularly the credibility of practice-generated knowledge
- **Stimulating of further insight and exploration into knowledge and practice**, through practice, education and research.

In exploring knowledge and professional practice we recognised the value of
different forms of knowledge, including knowledge gained from research and theory (propositional knowledge), knowledge emerging from professional experience (professional craft knowledge) and knowledge derived from personal experience (personal knowledge). Professionals who engage with people and who use evidence from each of these knowledge sources as a foundation for their practice will find much of relevance within this book. For those who adopt a more traditional approach, immersed in professional mystique and ‘the knowledge of the discipline’, we hope this book will challenge you to extend your horizons.

The book is divided into four sections. In section one we introduce the concepts of doing, knowing, being and becoming, and present the inquiry process involved in producing the book. Section two deals with dimensions of professional practice, examining issues such as uncertainty, artistry, embodiment of knowledge, relationships, technology and practice research. Section three presents a variety of professional practice journeys considering personal-professional links, learning relationships, transformation of self and practice, developing creative expertise and using creativity in practice development. Section four reflects on being and becoming in practice.

We invite you to explore the products of our inquiry and to consider their relevance and application to your experiences and situation. We hope that you will find, as we have, questions as well as relevant insights and ideas in this book and that this will result in further questioning and reflections about professional practice.

Joy Higgs and Angie Titchen
Acknowledgements

The authors in this book participated in a research inquiry funded by the School of Physiotherapy and the Centre for Professional Education Advancement (CPEA) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney. The research project and writers’ retreat was organised by CPEA. CPEA promotes the advancement of research and scholarly activities in the area of professional development and education in the health sciences, in a multidisciplinary and human interaction context.

We wish to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by Joan Rosenthal to the implementation and production of this volume. We express our grateful appreciation to Charles Higgs for his magical contribution to our graphics production.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to one of our group of authors, Ian Fredericks, who epitomised the spirit of the group and the search for humanity, creativity and knowledge that is embedded in us all.
Acknowledgements

The authors in this book participated in a research inquiry funded by the School of Physiotherapy and the Centre for Professional Education Advancement (CPEA) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney. The research project and writers’ retreat was organised by CPEA. CPEA promotes the advancement of research and scholarly activities in the area of professional development and education in the health sciences, in a multidisciplinary and human interaction context.

We wish to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by Joan Rosenthal to the implementation and production of this volume. We express our grateful appreciation to Charles Higgs for his magical contribution to our graphics production.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to one of our group of authors, Ian Fredericks, who epitomised the spirit of the group and the search for humanity, creativity and knowledge that is embedded in us all.
Part One
Introduction
Chapter 1
Framing Professional Practice: Knowing and Doing in Context

Joy Higgs and Angie Titchen

‘Most practitioners today ... would agree that they act under conditions that are almost exactly the reverse of pre-defined, unilaterally controlled (and hence uninterrupted) experimental conditions. Consequently, the conditions under which knowledge is gained when following the canons of rigorous experimental research are simply not generalizable to the conditions practitioners face. Practitioners are generally attempting to act well in situations which they do not fundamentally comprehend, in pursuit of purposes which are not initially fully explicit and to which their commitment is initially ambivalent, and they are being interrupted all the while by other claims on their attention. Of course, it is not altogether pleasant and reassuring to acknowledge the degree of uncertainty and discontinuity to which (this) ... points, ... what practitioners really require is a kind of knowledge that they can apply to their own behaviour in the midst of ongoing events, in order to help them inquire more effectively with others about their common purposes, about how to produce outcomes congruent with such purposes.’

(Torbert 1981, p. 143)

This argument was presented by William Torbert in support of the need for a new paradigm of research in which collaborative inquiry and a search for knowledge address the real-world needs and situations of practice. His argument is reflected in the goals and mode of inquiry we adopted in the research which produced this book. In addition, Torbert’s points illustrate the focus we are selecting to frame this book: ‘doing’, ‘knowing’, ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ in the context of professional practice.

This chapter explores the knowing and doing dimensions of our framework for professional practice. It provides the landscape upon which the subsequent chapters are enacted. As the book progresses, this focus on the more concrete and immediate dimensions of practice is transformed into a greater emphasis on the future and more ephemeral dimensions of being and becoming. The last two chapters explore these two issues respectively, reflecting the image of professional practice as a process of dynamic professional socialisation.
The context of professional practice is of major importance to the shaping and structure of this practice. As Fig. 1.1 illustrates, the knowing and doing of professional practice (or the knowledge-in-action which comprises practice) are influenced by many factors. Some factors, such as the culture, personal frame of reference and life history, are particular and internal to the practitioner. Other factors, including the practice situation, other people and other cultures, occur in the practice environment and influence directly or indirectly the practice design, process and outcomes.

![Fig. 1.1 The contexts of ‘doing, knowing, being and becoming’ in professional practice.](image)

This book challenges traditional notions of what it means to be a professional. We propose a valuing of propositional knowledge (research-based and theoretical knowledge), professional craft knowledge (gained from professional experience) and personal knowledge (derived from personal experience) as
credible evidence for professional practice. At the same time, we set high expectations for professionals, namely, that their knowledge claims are well tested and that knowledge is communicated in substantiation of practice. The authors in various chapters examine the dances and tensions which occur in professional practice between practice and research, between rational, intuitive and creative thinking, and between art, craft and science. In this way we seek to bridge the theory-practice gap. We extend professional practice discourse through consideration of emerging types of partnerships (in place of dominant roles for the professional, and more passive ‘receiver’ roles) and through exploration of the use of the creative arts to generate professional knowledge and expand practice horizons. Professional practice, we contend, is a rare blend of people-centred and interactive processes, accountability and professional standards, practice wisdom, professional artistry, openness to knowledge growth and practice development and engagement in professional journeys towards expertise.

Our conceptual framework

The cooperative inquiry (see Chapter 3) which generated this book resulted in the development of a conceptual framework which represents a vision of people-centred, accountable, context-relevant professional practice suitable for the demanding world of human services which we are facing today and tomorrow. This framework draws on a number of the practice dimensions above and seeks to interpret the elements and wholeness of this proposed approach to professional practice. The framework is structured around the following themes and sub-themes that we overview here and explore in more depth in the subsequent chapters.

Practice which is people-centred

- Aesthetic dimensions of practice – creating a form that is satisfying
- The nature and importance of people-centred practice
- Personal and public discourse and stories, knowledge and voices in practice.

Practice which is context-relevant

- Culture and context as they apply to practice, and the obstacles and opportunities they create
- The need for, and influence of, flexibility, uncertainty, ambiguity and boundaries in professional practice
- Practice in relation to individual and collective considerations.
Practice which is authentic

- Issues of authenticity, credibility, valuing, power, and authority in professional practice
- Ethics, morality and professional practice
- Professional practice and philosophy – how we view truth, reality/realities, perceptions.

Practice which is wise

- Practice as a process of transformation of actions, knowledge and people
- Practice as a process of awareness – attending to the unspoken needs and edges as well as the obvious
- Practice wisdom – considering wise practice, not best practice.

These themes are integrated in Fig. 1.2. We have chosen an Aztec drawing to reflect the integration of elements from everyday and spiritual life, the mundane as well as the aesthetic, the people and things in the context of our lives and well-being, the symbols of learning, wisdom and philosophy, as well as the stories which comprise our lives, cultures and histories. This drawing symbolises the complexity, the humanity, the practical and the mystical which is professional practice. The need for flexibility, boundaries, awareness and authenticity in professional practice is represented by the snake, an image of the healing arts. The choice of an ancient artistic symbol prompts our discussion in this book of the value of investigating ways of knowing, doing, being and becoming through an exploration of our creativity and the wisdom of other cultures, both past and present.

Practice which is people-centred

The participants in our cooperative inquiry strongly supported a model of professional practice which highly valued working with and for people. Whatever the profession, we saw the goal of professional service being primarily concerned with the enhancement, empowerment and development of people, their lives or environments. The three sub-themes illustrate this contention.

Aesthetic dimensions of practice – creating a form that is satisfying

One of the firm points of agreement which arose in our inquiry was the support for the artistic as well as the technical/craft and science dimensions of professional practice. In supporting the aesthetic/artistic side of professional practice we are espousing recognition of and preparation for the human interactions which lie at the centre of the professional’s service role, whether this be in the health, education, law, creative arts or other professions. The quality of this
Fig. 1.2 Dimensions in professional practice.
human interaction is a significant topic today. On the one hand, the pressures of
globalisation, consumerism and economic rationalism are promoting market
economies and ‘service contexts’ where professional services are commodified,
where profit margins rather than professional standards are paramount, and
where consumer satisfaction represents a willingness to re-purchase, rather than a
feeling that the professional service received was personally satisfying. On the
other hand, with an increasingly well-educated society and a greater under-
standing of the ‘purchased’ and ‘purchasable’ product alternatives, the recipient
of professional services is increasingly expecting, and indeed demanding, a form
of service that is both professional and relevant.

Aesthetics in health care is illustrated by Titchen (2000) who speaks of ‘graceful
care’. Graceful care is realised through presence, comportment, use of body,
touch and humour, through valuing, creating a caring climate, balancing
therapeutic closeness and professional distance and through moderated love to
promote personal and professional growth.

The nature and importance of people-centred practice
People-centred practice is an approach to professional practice which is gaining
growing support among professionals and clients alike. This approach reflects a
return to the traditional valuing of the client as the focus and centre of pro-
fessional service (as opposed to organisational goals, outcomes and procedures),
with an emphasis on humanistic values and the empowerment goals of the critical
social sciences. It recognises and seeks to avoid the problems which can arise from
the depersonalisation of professional practice. People-centred practice is also,
increasingly, an expectation of clients who expect the high standards of the best
that science and technology have to offer, but who want to relate to people and be
treated like people. In addition, there is a growing number of professional
practitioners who aspire to base their services not on technical rationality, but on
practice wisdom based on their humanity and life learnings and a desire to
provide quality services for and with the people who are their clients.

We live in an age of change and globalisation. To be competent is no longer
enough, and to work, even with very high levels of competence, in the absence of
effective interaction with others and the environment is to limit the quality of
professional services and contribution to society. In the model of the interactional
professional, the beginning practitioner attains the traditional abilities of com-
petence and professionalism and a new vision of professional accountability and
interaction with consumers and society in both local and global contexts (Higgs
& Hunt 1999).

This new vision of person-centred, interactional practice requires a capacity to
understand the concerns and lived experiences of clients who seek or receive
professional services, not only from the professional’s perspective, but also from
the client’s. The balancing of the two perspectives in designing, implementing and
evaluating the particular service offered, is more likely to result in a personalised
interaction which is mutually satisfying and in a service that benefits the environments of which each is a part.

**Personal and public discourses and stories, knowledge and voices in practice**

People often communicate via stories. The histories and lives of individuals, societies and nations are embedded in personal and public discourses. To understand the roles, needs and realities of participants in professional practice we need to hear their voices, their knowings and their stories. Sometimes these voices are silenced by unequal power differentials, so singing up these voices requires critical approaches in education, practice, research and practice development.

**Practice which is context-relevant**

Professional practice needs to be suited to the context of practice on many levels: the international and national as well as local environments which shape and challenge practice, the context of the specific profession, and the real world of particular clients and their families, friends and so on.

**Culture and context as they apply to practice, and the obstacles and opportunities they create**

Professionals cannot be insensitive to or independent of the culture and context in which they work. Since they provide services to the community they need to understand and work within the obstacles, constraints and opportunities that these community contexts provide.

Current and future graduating professionals will work in a society that is culturally and linguistically diverse, technologically oriented and increasingly international in its outlook and interactions. Some of the most pressing challenges for educators in professional entry programmes that have been created by these developments, are the need to prepare students to work in a global community, the range of ways of viewing the world, the cultural diversity inherent in cultural groups and multicultural multiethnic society, the need to understand and value diversity, and the need to confront one's own cultural orientations (Mullavey-O'Byrne 1999).

**The need for, and influence of, flexibility, uncertainty, ambiguity and boundaries in professional practice**

In today's rapidly evolving, globalising and unpredictable working worlds, the decision we need to make is how to live with change, rather than whether or not to change. In addition, professionals commonly work in social arenas, or at least in consideration of the needs of the social world. Therefore, we are choosing to live and work in contexts where uncertainty and ambiguity are prevalent and where there is a need to set some boundaries to facilitate practice implementation,
as well as to restrict possible chaos and burnout from working in potentially limitless jobs. To say we need effective survival skills, as well as flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity and a strong capacity for perspective transformation, is an understatement.

**Practice in relation to individual and collective considerations**

Professional practice in health, education and the creative arts professions involves service to individuals and groups. This raises a number of issues in professional practice: establishing priorities in relation to services that address the needs of the individual client versus the group; providing services (e.g. classes, performances, creative products) which build on expectations and anticipated characteristics of the group, but which also serve the interests of the individual providing the service; addressing the needs of individuals who are culturally different from the rest of the population (e.g. minorities), whilst balancing the need of the collective.

**Practice which is authentic**

Authentic practice is compatible with the professional role and standards, as well as the individual values of the practitioner. To be authentic, professionals need to understand the role and influence they have and the expectations (quality, ethics, accountability) which clients and society can reasonably expect of them. And this authenticity requires self-knowledge.

**Issues of authenticity, credibility, valuing, power, and authority in professional practice**

Membership of professions brings status, power and authority. The inquiry linked to this book examined issues related to the question of the relevance and place of professional mystique and authority today. Terms like ‘clinical’, ‘academic’, and even ‘professional’ have understandably acquired connotations of distance, reserve and dominance, through such factors as exclusive education, privileged knowledge bases and technical expertise. But these connotations are also attributable to professional socialisation programmes which result in adopted and learned modes of professional conduct, and which commonly encourage maintaining professional distance, and also to professional bodies which promote the respect, status and market share of their professions. This is illustrated by Richardson (2001) who presents the following arguments.

Professions are structures of privilege and market place dominance. They are socially sanctioned and are regarded as a special kind of occupation which embodies a promise of service to the community. Changes in the operation and roles of the professions are reflecting changes in society. Definitions of health care have changed with a move to primary care which is offering significant changes in the role and dominance of health care professions. These changes
reflect a growing influence of women and consumer groups who recognise the more humane issues of nurture, care and support (Sidell 1995). However, the challenge is now to consider the ethics of professional practice and the need to engage in moral and civic purposes (Sullivan 1994) as befits mature professions.

**Ethics, morality and professional practice**

One of the changes facing society is changing patterns of ethics, morality and professional standards. The world of professionalism is facing unsettling times in relation to balancing its ethical responsibilities with the need to deal with issues and practices of market competitiveness. One of the challenges faced by the professions is to re-create and regulate the ethical and professional standards of their members and to seek forms of accountability which consider the growing role of the community as participant stakeholders, not just recipients of prescribed or profession-determined services. One option being proposed is democratic stakeholder regulation in which professions would work with those who have a stake in the service they offer. This would mean that professionals’ voices in the debate would neither be totally controlling or totally controlled (Davies 2000).

**Professional practice and philosophy – how we view truth, reality/realities, perceptions**

Professions have a tradition of ‘learning the rules’ – the ground rules, the rules of thumb and the legal and ethical rules of operation. There is perhaps less attention being paid to understanding the truth, realities and perceptions which underlie these rules. Curricula commonly focus strongly on technical/professional skills and knowledge acquisition. Some level of research skills is included in most professional curricula; minimally, learning to critically appraise and utilise published research. More recently, skills of interpersonal interaction have received increasing attention. However, few curricula explicitly include practice epistemology in their requirements. Students learn to learn, and learn to practice. But they learn less about how knowledge is generated, understood and critiqued in their professional context. To be competent authentic practitioners, we argue, professionals need to understand the philosophy, the knowledge generation paradigms and the truths, realities and perceptions which ground, frame and define their professions.

**Practice which is wise**

The wise practitioner brings to practice a higher level of knowing; a capacity to see bigger pictures and creative, meaningful possibilities, not just solutions. Practice wisdom considers not just the best of what is, but the broader possibilities of what could be.
Practice as a process of transformation of practice, knowledge and people

For everyday practice to be effective, creative and responsive to clients’ needs, it has to be imbued with evaluative processes, otherwise it cannot be called professional. In addition, professionals have a responsibility to contribute to the knowledge bases of their professions. Increasingly, professionals meet these dual responsibilities by using a critical social science approach to transform themselves, their practices and their cultures, at the same time as generating new knowledge. This approach emphasises the enlightenment (perspective transformation), empowerment and emancipation of oppressed people and silenced voices.

Knowledge is generated through using the research process in collaboration with others, but there is a special emphasis on knowledge creation through critique, contestation and debate (Carr & Kemmis 1986; Titchen & Ersser, 2001). It is proposed that all the stakeholders involved in a particular professional practice under consideration should be involved in this knowledge creation. If practitioners thereby create new knowledge about their current practices and the historico-social, cultural and political contexts that shape them, they can use these new theoretical understandings and insights to inform the actions they undertake to change practices and to counter inhibiting contexts and factors. New knowledge can then be generated about the change process itself, the transformed practices and their effectiveness in achieving what they set out to achieve. Thus critical social science offers a way of illuminating and transforming practice simultaneously.

Practice as a process of awareness – attending to the unspoken needs and edges as well as the obvious

Expertise in health, education and the creative arts involves high degrees of self-awareness, attunement and creativity. Earlier, in our consideration of the aesthetic dimensions of practice, we mentioned graceful care. This process is an integral part of Titchen’s (2001) conceptualisation of person-centred health care as skilled companionship. Skilled companions take themselves as people, as well as professionals, into their relationships with others. They must, therefore, be highly aware of all aspects of their humanness, their bodies, comportment, emotions and so on in order to use themselves therapeutically and so transform the experiences of their patients. In bringing their emotions into their care, for example, they have not only to be fully aware of these emotions, they also have to be attuned to the needs of others and the ways in which this can be done therapeutically. At the same time, they have to protect themselves and their patients from over involvement that fosters dependency, neediness or inappropriate interactions. Skilled companions are aware of the uncertainties in their work with others and are prepared to take risks in order to meet their patients’ needs. This often requires creative and unique practices. Skilled companions’ attunement also enables them to anticipate patients’ needs and to help them to empower themselves. Thus they engage in critical practices.
As they develop expertise and expand the edges of their practice, skilled companions aspire to articulating their tacit, as well as explicit, knowledge bases, making them available to public scrutiny and verification. Critical awareness also marks the ways that a facilitator of person-centred practice works with others to transform practice, knowledge, people and organisations. Critical companionship, described by Titchen (2000), parallels the awareness of skilled companionship through the facilitative use of self.

The importance of critical awareness in learning and knowledge generation is emphasised by Torbert (1978, pp. 109–10), who contends that liberation in learning and knowing involves ‘a higher quality of attention than we ordinarily bring to bear on our affairs’ and that this high level of attention is necessary for the search for shared purpose, self-direction and quality work which ‘create the possibility for adult relatedness, integrity, and generativity’. Given the goals of our collaborative inquiry, this framework for operation was clearly a desirable choice.

**Practice wisdom – considering wise practice, not best practice**

Best practice is loudly advocated in many professional practice arenas. But best practice is frequently interpreted as merely the best of what currently exists. It guarantees neither the most ideal practice experience, process or outcomes for the individual client, nor the best practice that can be imagined or created. Rather, we should aspire to wise practice or practice based on a depth of propositional knowledge as well as non-propositional knowledge (based on experience); practice based on wise action informed by sound professional judgment, imagination and caring to provide what is best for the individual.

‘Knowledge is still defined according to the criteria of the research community alone – as codified, published and public … a much broader framework is needed for studying the creation of professional knowledge, and the situation looks very different if we move the academic research from the centre of the universe. First we notice that new knowledge is created also by professionals in practice … (second) knowledge use and knowledge creation cannot be easily separated … Finally we should not underestimate the degree to which unsystematized personal experience affects the knowledge creation process.’

(Eraut 1994, pp. 54–5)

An integrative factor – creativity

In this book we recognise and value the uniqueness and individuality of people as both recipients and providers of professional services, or more desirably, as partners in professional practice. To achieve this outcome requires professional artistry, or creativity and expertise in doing, knowing, being and becoming. This is
the topic and vision of this book. Our *doing* or practice role and intervention need to be individually tailored to the client’s (or group’s) needs, building on credible, defensible knowledge from our professional field and own experience. Knowledge, apart from being creatively used in practice situations, needs to be created through research, theory and experience to meet practice demands. Our *being*, the self we bring to professional practice, is a creative entity, meeting individual needs with individual solutions. Our *becoming* is a creative process and outcome, responding to our needs for growth and to our practice needs for development.

Fig. 1.3  Human creativity. With permission from Denshire (2000).
And, finally, creativity is a medium for facilitating the processes of practice as well as the raised awareness and transformation which enables professional artistry to be realised. Figure 1.3 was designed by one of our authors to represent creativity in professional practice.

References


Chapter 2
Doing, Knowing, Being and Becoming: the Nature of Professional Practice

Robyn Ewing and David Smith

In this chapter we argue that professional practice is about doing, knowing, being and becoming. Our practice is about doing things with and for other people within a purposeful, informed, ethical and aesthetic framework. As practitioners or people who are exploring practice, it is impossible for us to separate out who we are from what we do: we bring our beliefs and our already acquired knowing and understanding to our practice. Being is embedded in our practice of doing and, through the doing, as practitioners we continue to become who we are. Through doing, including the opportunity to deliberately reflect, we have the potential to develop new ideas, understandings and skills, thus learning more about our practice and ourselves.

In attempting to illustrate the intimate connection between doing, knowing, being and becoming, this chapter begins with three cameos of professional practice. These cameos are deliberately drawn from the work of a wide spectrum of practitioners. We assert that all arenas of professional practice have a number of elements in common, to a varying extent. While any example of practice is complex and multilayered, it is argued that there are at least five interrelated distinguishable features of all professional work. Professional practice is:

- People-centred
- Purposeful
- Based on informed action
- Individual
- Located in a specific context which is itself embedded in wider historical, sociopolitical and economic cultures.

A number of ideas, themes and issues introduced in this chapter are further discussed and elaborated in the chapters following.

Cameo 1
The ambulance siren screams to a standstill as the paramedics rush the gurney with the seriously injured motorcyclist into the emergency ward of the large regional hospital.