

ADULT EDUCATION AS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

David G. Beckett

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some elements of some of the chapters in this thesis have appeared, or may appear, in publications as follows:

Chapter Two:

Professional Ethics for Organists and Others. In *Victorian Organ Journal*. April 1994 22-31

Imagining the Image: Ethical Implications of Digital Imagemaking. (1995) In *Proceedings: Still Photography? The International Symposium on the Transition from Analog to Digital Imaging*. Melbourne 4-8 April 1994

Chapter Three:

Doing It for the Right Reasons: Professional Knowledge for Adult Educators. (1994) In *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*. 34:2 104-111

Chapter Four:

Straining Training: The Epistemology of Workplace Learning. (1992) In *Studies in Continuing Education*. 14:2 130-142

Dancing With the Ugly Sisters: What Kind of Democratic Culture Should Adult Education Develop? (1993) In *New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning*. 21:1 77-98

Workplace Learning: Managing Cultural Change. In *The Workplace in Education: Australian Perspectives*. (1994) (eds. Crowther, Frank et al.) Sydney: Edward Arnold Australia / Australian Council for Educational Administration Ch. 27

Philosophical Underpinnings of the Integrated Conception of Competence. (1995) (with Paul Hager) In *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 27:1 1-21

Critical Judgement and Professional Practice. In *Educational Theory*. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) May 1995 [at refereeing]

Chapter Seven

Professional Practice for Educators: The Getting of Wisdom? (1995) In *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 27:2 [in press]

PREFACE

In 1985, I was persuaded to give a couple of classes in the first tiny involvement which the then Melbourne College of Advanced Education had in adult education. Over the rest of the 1980s the teaching and intake grew, then I was asked to co-ordinate the course, now the Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training. As the 1990s unfolded, I developed Master of Education coursework, and commenced MEd theses supervision, all in adult education.

The University of Melbourne absorbed MCAE, on January 1 1989, and it was increasingly clear that adult education would be a priority in the new Faculty of Education. From January 1 1996, its home will be the new *Department of Vocational Education and Training*, with a Foundation Chair and staff initially based on the Hawthorn campus.

So this PhD effort rounds off one decade of accelerating involvement with adult education, and points me towards a stronger focus within the field, both in research terms and in graduate teaching, after 1995.

Three people have especially helped me in this transition. Dr Gerald Elsworth, Associate Professor Gabriele Lakomski, and Professor Brian Caldwell, through their leadership of what is now called the *Department of Education Policy and Management*, encouraged me with advice, some crucial study leave in 1993, and in many other tangible ways, to push ahead with research in this area. In particular, papers I gave at these gatherings helped crystallise the thesis:

- Annual Conferences of the *Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia*: Perth , September 1992 and Sydney, October 1993
- Fourth Biennial Conference of the *International Network of Philosophers of Education*, Leuven, Belgium, August 1994.
- Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation: *Conference on Argumentation and Education*, St Catherine's, Canada, May 1995.

Two other people have helped me outside my workplace.

Associate Professor Paul Hager, my supervisor at UTS , has carried out the supervision as a model of mentoring, and as an energetic and resourceful philosopher.

Denise Beckett, my wife, is wonderfully supportive of this research activity, and has managed her own work commitments, our responsibilities to our two very young children and our household most expeditiously. I am forever grateful to her.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Vera and Ralph Beckett, who taught me to value what Charles Wesley meant when he wrote of being 'lost in wonder, love and praise'.

David Beckett
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ABSTRACT

The thesis will establish, through philosophical argument, particularly in philosophical psychology, that professional practitioners in adult education are those who see themselves (and indeed are also seen) as agents of the integration of

- (a) adults' learning from their experiences (the *authenticity* aspect), with
- (b) the values of 'education' (the *integrity* aspect).

That is, such practitioners employ 'know how' to bring such integration about, and they may ideally exemplify a kind of wisdom in 'knowing why' they act as they do. *We will call this the 'integrationist' model of adult education practice.*

This integrationist thesis, drawing mainly upon Wittgenstein, Kant and Aristotle:

- takes the very phenomenon of the practices of adult educators as its starting point, rather than analyse concepts or language *per se*, and treats ethical and epistemological dimensions of this practice as intertwined and equally central in such phenomena;
- requires extensive treatment of the formation of the 'appropriateness' or efficacy of the ethical and epistemological ingredients of professional practice, and subsumes this 'know how' in the significance of sociocultural location;
- assumes such people are still 'students' in the broad sense that they are integratively learning from their practical experience and that socio-culturally located workplaces provide the most significant context for their practice (intentionality and competence are especially addressed);
- re-examines the emphasis in adult education on the role of experience and the self, and accordingly revitalises a constructivist approach more firmly based in ontological considerations;
- accordingly, moves beyond an atomistic conception of professional competence and the sovereignty of the agency of the individual practitioner;
- develops an emphasis on teleological considerations - adding 'knowing why' to a more holistic 'know how' and, in that sense, signals a retrieval of the notion of 'vocation', with an orientation towards the attainment of the 'rightness' of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) as the purpose of adult education as professional practice.

Integrationism is thus also constructivist: professionals in any field are expected to make a positive difference. There are general features of the analysis pertinent to any practice where adults' circumstances are up for amelioration.