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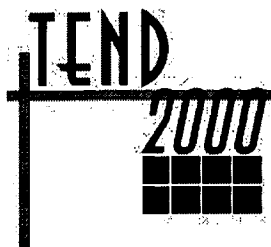
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## ABSTRACT

The resurgence of "lifelong learning" has renewed consideration of the nature of "working knowledge." Lifelong learning has many aspects, including construction and distribution of individuals' very self-hood, educational institutions' role in capturing informal experiences, and the juggling required between family and work-based responsibilities. Prominent themes in the literature on lifelong learning include the following: the whole person at work, the workplace and the "eros of learning"; the new practical learning; and practical judgments and the whole person. According to a review of the literature on lifelong learning and interviews with two practicing lifelong learning professionals, working knowledge in its "whole person" or organic form will be marked by the following aspects: (1) the contingent (the informal, nonroutine, and capricious nature of daily work is overtly decisional); (2) the practical (the need to solve problems efficaciously is paramount); (3) the process (Schonian reflection-on-action has generated expectations of professional growth); (4) the particular (the need to address the here and now with compromise is accepted); and (5) the affective and social domains (judgments are primarily value judgments because which cognitive considerations are entertained depends on whether they can be made sense of cognitively, emotionally, and ethically). (Contains 48 references.) (MN)

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# Crossroads of the New Millennium

## Working Knowledge

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**Workshop 2**

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## Abstract

**Working knowledge** is the kind required almost everywhere: universities, whether corporate, virtual, technological or traditional, are all caught up in, and being re-defined by, new epistemologies, mediated by markets. Beyond universities, organisations as worksites-of-learning are exploring knowledge creation and workers everywhere are trawling their experiences for that creative edge. With 'lifelong learning' as the policy mantra, enterprising nation states are provoking consideration of 'working knowledge' almost everywhere. Thus, the time is right for a vivid re-conceptualisation of general/liberal learning, and current research can show what this would be like. Drawing on some international publications in education, I will outline this new 'working knowledge', building up that re-conceptualisation, and explicitly linking it to policy developments and to constructive workplace practices.

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## Working Knowledge

### LEARNING: AT THE CROSSROADS? OR A 'A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE'?

Whichever metaphor you prefer - the crossroads, or the bridge - it is clear that lifelong learning has re-appeared from its 1970s incarnation as global and globalisable justification for all manner of reforms to educational programmes, so that adults (and potential adults - those still school children) can create fulfilling lives. Lifelong learning as national policy, at least in Western democracies, assumes that it is up to each adult to identify and pursue opportunities for her or his own employability, and that this may include formal studies (the old 'recurrent' or continuing education ethos), and also informal experiences. UNESCO, at its Second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education, in Seoul in April, 1999, had as its theme, *Lifelong Learning and Training: A Bridge to the Future*. Crossing that bridge to the future, according to UNESCO (1999), will mean:

...lifelong learning opportunities. Some proposals to facilitate this approach include designing courses in modular format, introducing competency-based assessment, using self-paced learning to meet individual requirements, and giving recognition to the experience, knowledge and skills already possessed... (para 14)

The future of lifelong learning is thus, at least in policy terms, bound up with what it is to be a whole person, because 'experience, knowledge and skills already possessed' range over all of a person's life, not just that part of it in paid employment.

There are many aspects to 'lifelong learning', such as the construction and distribution of the very selfhood of a person (*Futures* 31:8 passim), the role of educational institutions in capturing informal experiences, especially via the new virtual technology (*Futures* 30: 7 passim), and in the juggling required between family and work-based responsibilities as 'contingent' or just-in-time employment takes hold (*Futurework* 1999 passim). I want in this workshop to raise these sorts of issues, but mainly through presenting some brief research evidence of the workplace as a site of adults' informal experiences, especially on our emotional involvement in practical workplace judgments.

### THE WHOLE PERSON AT WORK

A prominent futurist, James Bellini, is making much of the emotions. By the year 2025, Bellini expects corporations to have fixed assets (plant etc) one-tenth the size they are today,

but a much more prominent role for the 'emotional economy', where abstractions such as company likeability, brand loyalty and relationships are nurtured. (Bellini 1999)

The contextually-sensitive nurturing of relationships, workplace by workplace, is worth exploring, then, because the learning, which is thought to arise, may affect and have been affected by, life experiences in general. If Bellini is right, this may in turn have a market edge. Vocationalised lifelong learning can be investigated for its expectations of the 'whole person' at work. Work experiences are, however, highly contextualised. It is my office, factory and lunchroom which fires me up and cools me down on a daily basis. Each worker relates first and foremost to her or his immediate work setting, and expects the wholeness of her/his personhood to be manifest in the sociality and ephemerality (or 'hot action': Beckett, 1996) of that setting.

Many philosophers, of whom Aristotle is one splendid example, similarly recognise the situation or context of human activities as crucial to the meaningfulness of those activities. Our very selfhoods are, perhaps, constructed first by each other (that is, socially and emotionally), from which our individuality then flows. Workplace learning takes this sequence seriously (see *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 1999: 31: 3). From this new interest in practical judgments, there are inferences towards a new 'paradigm' of knowledge for the next century, which I can only briefly allude to here (Beare and Slaughter, 1993: 70; Hager and Beckett, 1998).

I argue that if we are serious about whole-person workplace learning, we must confront reductive and narrowly cognitive 'paradigms' (as Beare and Slaughter put it). It seems to me that workplace learning will be more apparent in those who understand their own 'context' or situation in daily social life at work - shared feelings, thoughts and actions at work construct us as workers. Those who can recognise this - who are open to their own learning possibilities (as 'whole persons' if you like) - can then advance such learning in others. Managers, for example, who are frequently leaders in some way, working with other humans (say, team-members, learners, patients, and clients), are increasingly expected to show leadership in their own performance of sophisticated 'people' skills. The current interest in 'emotional intelligence' has direct bearing on this (Goleman, 1996). If managers can create amongst their peers and their clients a climate, which nurtures everyone's creativity, they will have demonstrated the fusion of thinking, feeling and doing. They will have shown that integrable workplace learning is at the structural and cultural heart of the organisation in

which they work. In terms of Aristotelian creativity, they will have *made* learning work, by giving practical judgments centre-stage in a new epistemology of workplace-based and workplace-located experiences.

*In this workshop, I want to show how the whole person is manifest in workplace practical judgments, and within those judgments, how the emotions (that is the affective domain) may be apparent amongst the cognitive and the social domains. But first some argument!*

## **BRINGING THE BODY BACK IN**

Workplace learning requires human embodiment, yet it seems to me curious that new educational technologies—culminating in the notion of a ‘virtual’ university—require the denial of that embodiment. New technologies in education, like the world of celebrity, glitter enticingly and their acolytes abound, but they play upon the coloured surfaces: they shimmer, without materiality, and they have a shadowy aspect. The non-material (that is to say, disembodied) learning which I believe flows from these new technologies relies upon a prior conversion of knowledge into information, which thus presents learning as a consumption of marketed ‘education’ packages. Universities are at the forefront of this, which is surely one of the great ironies of our times, given their historic provenance in substantial and material learning. Yet, in the corporate world, newfound interest in individuals’ self-directed (even lifelong) learning, in groups’ teamwork, and what some call broadly post-Fordist ‘knowledge production’, fleshes out humanist adult learning principles that virtual technologies cannot address well. Here are some examples. Coaching, mentoring, appraisals, professional development programmes, job rotation, project management, off-site and on-site training and so on, are all implicitly or explicitly learning opportunities. They assume an embodied worker, and assume humanist (rather than behaviourist) adult learning principles. People are expected to develop an enthusiasm for their own learning in the particular socio-cultural context of their workplace. Of course there are new material technologies which are deployed in these workplace-based activities—computer-assisted learning, e-mail, the web, and on-line courses and training packages with self-paced elements. But basically the contention here is that the corporate usage of new technologies stays closer to a more natural materiality (the ‘embodied’) worker than do the universities’ rampant enthusiasm for new technologies. This enthusiasm, paradoxically and unnaturally, ‘disembodies’ the learner.

Yet in real time and real space, learners appear as embodied beings, in what Berge (1995) has called “synchronous interaction”. However, in ‘asynchronous’ time and space, learners’

embodiments are educationally irrelevant. They need not 'appear' in learning at all. We know they are out there, but their interactions are mediated by technologised time and space. This must affect the quality of learning, as I now suggest (cf Beckett, 1998).

Classroom dynamics and management have been a close focus of education research for at least three decades, perhaps since the realisation in the late 1960s that Western society was becoming more diverse and that, in schooling, one shoe no longer fitted all feet. Class sizes, gender- and ethnicity-related learning styles, teacher behaviours, activity-based and experiential pedagogies, assessment variables, and so on, have all been ingredients in debates about how *just being there* in a classroom as an individual learner-in-a-group improves one's education (or perhaps impedes it). Diversity has emerged locally, classroom by classroom, as a fact of teachers' and learners' lives. Rather late in all this, new information technology has arrived promising individualised (or self-directable) ownership of learning.

Now we can arrange learning environments through new technology which removes the need to 'just be there'—that is, in the room. At once, you may say, we have eradicated the pathology of the classroom: learners will no longer feel their very presence has generated an inscription on their bodies by others. Fat, thin, shy, squeaky-voiced, slow, boisterous, late, sleepy, hairy—the whole Seven Dwarfs roll-call—will be irrelevant in the new virtual learning environment. Learners can log on and off in their time, arranging their learning programme without regard for appearances in real time or real space. And isn't this a great advance?

Undoubtedly so. Yet at the same time as diversity and technology are engaging, our culture is coming to terms with a new emphasis on visual literacy. Perhaps the greatest cultural change we are facing is the shift from the primacy of the printed word to the primacy of the visual image. We live in an image-driven age. The visual and the virtual are intimately connected. But to what extent does the virtual, in educational settings, engage this new visual literacy? On-line courses can look very pretty, but to get anywhere with them, the learner-as-viewer requires fairly high print literacy, not just a visual literacy. Understanding the icons and images is not as helpful as being able to read the print instructions and then following the protocols. Moreover, in the absence of a real-time, real-space classroom, learners require (virtually, that is) all the instructions in great detail lest, in their real time, they lose their way. On-line subject material is, in this sense, ambiguous. With its visual appeal and immediacy (which persuades the learner that they can get along well with visual literacy), it *invites*

learning, but to *achieve* learning, print literacy is essential. This is not merely an informational point, but an epistemological one. Hypertext links, which must be read as print and are presented as information, can leave a wide variety of sequenced, and randomised, pathways open to the learner. In terms of self-direction, this is exceptionally liberating. Smart minds can turn information into self-education, given half a chance. But in terms of *socio-culturally significant learning* (that is to say, information structured into knowledge claims) even the smartest minds need to know, eventually, what their peers think, and even what the teacher thinks, about the information they have cut and pasted into their own 'take' on the world. Furthermore, everyone expecting to learn 'on-line' needs a distillation of the previous attempts to establish, structure and overturn what counts as worthwhile knowledge. The information-presenting function of on-line courses (as an example of flexible delivery) is unquestioned. But as knowledge-presenting functions, such delivery is ambiguous. Like the huge shopping mall, the technology in itself invites the learner to buy, but only to satisfy mindless consumption. We learn because we have a social curiosity. We want to learn because we know our own limitations, our own ignorance. Self-direction, especially in front of the WWW, looks increasingly capricious. In the face of this, virtual learning needs, at the very point of learner experience, to be heavily structured. This is almost paradoxical. The paradox is compounded when we notice that the more divergent from printed text such on-line courses appear (the more they engage the visually-literate, perhaps), the greater they rely on traditional print literacy for navigation. Of course, new technologies permit flexible delivery, and require feedback. All manner of group-based networking, with and without the teacher, is possible, and assessment tasks can key in to these. This is true - and it is essential. But the more essential point remains: *the informationalised (even 'virtual') university offers an excessively individualistic educational ideology*, which, to avoid eccentric and idiosyncratic knowledge-claims emerging, structures masses of teacher input, in printed text format (Beckett, 2000b). It is, in brief, lonely and disembodied learning.

### THE WORKPLACE AND 'THE EROS OF LEARNING'

In contrast, lonely and disembodied learning is *not* what most workplaces provide. Work for most of us occurs in the here and now, in real time, and in real space, with real bodies present. I will now outline what it is about workplaces (including offices, factories, classrooms, training rooms, meeting rooms, conference halls and so on) that tends to generate high-quality learning, by concentrating on a phenomenon ignored by the rush to the new technologies. Some in education call this "the eros of learning".



The eros of learning is not the pursuit of the erotic-as-sexuality (although that may well be present). Instead, the recognition of the wider notion of the erotic-as-pleasure, and it is to be found in the work of the best practitioners (trainers, teachers, managers, mentors—anyone in a leadership role for learning at work). This occurs when they energise learners (including students, protégés, colleagues, subordinates and so on) with a love for the content, and a love for learning in itself. This is a professionally-responsible characterisation of the *enthusiasmos* which inspires learners to learn more. It typically happens in the real time in real work sites of real embodied people. This is the ‘hot action’ of the workplace (Beckett, 1996). It is, if you like, the erotification of learning in the sense that the dynamics of such classrooms play out the intentions presented in planned and accredited documents.

Notwithstanding this richer, humanistic reading of workplace activities, the point remains that ‘informatised’ programmes, delivered (rather than constructed) through new virtualisable technologies reduces the learner to disembodiment. And that, dear reader (not viewer!) reinstates the ‘ghost in the machine’: all mind plus mechanistic body (Ryle, 1949; Schon, 1987). This has been the picture of elite education of all kinds, for centuries, in grammar schools and Oxbridge, and, yes, amongst senior secondary credentials like the International Baccalauréate, and its equivalents around Western schooling (the academic mind reigns supreme). The effect of all this contributes to keeping workplace-based learning in its lowly place—as mechanistic, behaviouristic, and therefore, mindless, as unthinking.

### THE NEW PRACTICAL LEARNING

Let me swing the whole debate around and come at it from the other side. In dramatic contrast to the Cartesianism implicit in universities’ enthusiasm for new technologies, the corporate workplace, wherever it is found in the Western world, is rightly serious about bodies and what they can do, and identifying this with thinking. What sort of learner is being constructed in the resort to and reliance upon these new technologies?

Workers are, it is argued (Beckett, 1999, 2000a, 2000c, Beckett and Hager, 2000) now and for the foreseeable future, best regarded as integrated thinking and doing beings who exercise all manner of judgements during the working day—these are their *practices*. Following from these states of being, there are new, powerful and experientially authentic knowledge claims made of workers and of work which challenge the formality of traditional university-based education (see Hager in Symes and McLaren, 2000). For example, managers’ ‘know how’

connects readily with the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* —practical wisdom (Beckett, 1999).

Practical workplace learning across the corporate world assumes and expects the dissolution of the traditional (that is to say, 'modernist') mind/body Cartesian world, and its privileging of the 'pure' mind. It is the person, not merely the mind, which is significant, and persons are inevitably embodied. In the light of this 'post-modern' conceptual shift, the new material technologies in education, of which 'on-line' delivery is the most prominent, look a little arcane. More ominously, to the extent that these new technologies discount teaching in favour of the 'delivery' of learning, they impart an instrumentalism which enshrines the old Cartesian dualism between mental labour (thinking) and manual labour (doing). Instead, let us investigate workplace practice.

### **PRACTICAL JUDGMENTS AND THE WHOLE PERSON**

Attention to learning from informal experience will come as no surprise for any of us who are parents, or who for some time have been involved in what is typically the work of professionals, such as lawyers, teachers, medicos, and nurses. This is because such activities as these deal in human values and actions with consequences for which one is held responsible, such as child-rearing, technical and clinical diagnoses, litigation, and so on. All these activities require *practical judgment*, that is, decisions about what to do next to bring about the most efficacious result - the 'practical', or appropriate, or tailor-made solution to what ever is the issue or problem. These judgments have not, traditionally, entered much into the theory-driven acquisition of a formal education, but now universities are being forced to re-think that tradition (Hager and Beckett, 1998).

In fact, the 'given' context requires its expression in creative work. A vision *unrealised* is a waste of time: it is *unintegrated* into daily corporate life. It is in being 'worked upon' (Schon would say: in the artistry of performance) that workplace learning emerges. What psychologists call 'situated learning' is the most powerful workplace learning, because humans are immersed in their daily activities, from which they are especially susceptible to learning. Such immersion involves the totality (the 'wholeness') of experience, which, as we noted at the outset, is central to such learning: understanding, feelings, and with whom this occurs - the sociality of the workplace - are each intertwined therein.

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**TWO WORKPLACES: TWO CONTEXTS (- TRANSCRIPTS WERE DISTRIBUTED, NOW INCLUDED HERE)**

For the empirical part of this paper, I draw on interviews with two practising professionals (part of a larger project: see Hager, 2000, Beckett and Hager, 2000; building on Lipman (1991), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) as well as that of Dewey and Aristotle).

In these judgments, individuals 'attend' to their total perceptions of their workplace: the cognitive (reason-based), affective (feelings, wants) and social (group and team allegiances) aspects of these perceptions are only artificially separable.

**Two Interviews -**Respondent One: The Ambulance Officer

*Respondent:* ...And the little baby certainly wasn't breathing. The first decision is - do you start resuscitation or not? And there's a whole set of rules that we have about when you do and when you don't start resuscitation. So I made the decision to start...My partner was more frazzled by the situation than I was. He and I had an interesting relationship at that time because he was in a superior position, theoretically, but in practice and knowledge I was ahead of him. So that made it awkward, and he knew that. He felt very uncomfortable about it, and I did too - because of the way he treated me because of that. So the relationship was on the face of it harmonious, but it had some undercurrents that made things difficult. And this resuscitation brought those out because I'm used to resuscitating children, and so I just went into that role. And he wasn't, and he didn't. So we resuscitated the little baby, and we actually got an output, which means that we got some heart rhythm back - which in these circumstances was very unusual and quite unexpected - well not unexpected but unusual. And so another crew arrived, which was the intensive care crew, and so they helped us to continue to resuscitate. Eventually we had to stop.

So I suppose decisions that I made were things like- which equipment to use and when; how to help my partner through it, because he obviously wasn't coping very well with it. He had little kiddies the same age, so apart from the conflict he and I had, I could see it was hard for him anyway. Then dealing with the family obviously was difficult. It is very difficult in the ambulance world because they actively encourage

the family to stay around for resuscitation, whereas in nursing they are not as progressive in that way. So it is very difficult doing resuscitation with the family watching, than it was in a hospital where you put them out the door and when it's all over you bring them in again. So during the resuscitation, I had to decide when to speak to them - and when you know, when you're pretty sure that you're not going to get the little baby back - you give them a warning before you stop. And so you have to decide when to do that and how to phrase it. And there's a decision that we've made collectively as a group of officers about whether to stop the resuscitation or whether to keep it going or not.

*Interv:* - You do that collectively?

*Resp:* - Yes. Once it's all finished, you talk to the family about it. and give them some time with the baby. And there's a whole set of protocols about where you take the baby's body and call the police.

*Interv:* - So the police arrive while you're there?

*Resp:* - Yes they did, and that's routine.....it's difficult dealing with the death of children obviously. But I've developed some techniques for dealing with that.

*Interv:* - How have you done that?

*Resp:* - Through exposure I suppose and exploring how my feelings play a part, particularly in my decisions, because after I've been in a situation where I make judgments about things, or just my everyday job - this is from quite a few years ago I started doing this. Looking at what role my emotions played in it, I found that the more dissatisfied I was with how I performed, the more my emotions had played a less than constructive part in the job. So I don't believe you can keep your emotions right out of it or have your emotions controlling the situation. And I think you need to have a balance somewhere in between, and so I'm getting to the point - and I'm practising it - I don't say I do it that well - actually I like to think I do it pretty well. I find it easy to do a job now and keep my emotions right out of it, and think about it later on. And I think that's a step up for me from having my emotions play a part and affect my judgments. And that's a step up from not having your emotions in there at all.

So now I'm getting to the point where I like to be able to feel my emotions at the time, and still have them not impact upon the appropriate judgments and the decisions that I make - and that's complex.

Respondent Two: Private School Principal

*Interv:* - ...Where you get resistance to decisions - perhaps with staffing implications - that people wouldn't be comfortable with, or parents not comfortable with, and people land on your doorstep with a gripe, what do you bring to the resolution of these situations?

*Resp:* - I bring to it an instinct - an instinctive feel for how it fits within our culture and how it fits within our future. Now of course I don't think that I'm conceited because I actually argue with myself all the time but obviously I think my instinct is right. ...

*Interv:* - And you'd have a series of these decisions across several days or across the working year, which could be routine for you, because they are utterly consistent with the way in which you read the situation, or read the culture.

*Resp:* - Yes.

*Interv:* - Where the organisation has faced external constraints such as the planning difficulties I read about with your extensions and development - that kind of thing - when you have to make judgments of an overtly political nature involving the media, the local press, and so on, what do you bring to those sorts of judgments?

*Resp:* - Well you already know what your own plans are in terms of seeking advice on what you're prepared to do. What is right to do - what is ethical and appropriate. And you may have noticed if you are local that I made a decision very early on that I wasn't going to talk to the press. So that was the end of it. But it has been in the press with the comment that the principal hasn't returned a call or wasn't available. That's fine.... You have to know what you're doing for your own organisation is right in the first place. You have to be very sure about that....

*Interv:* - .... I wanted to build on the idea of what I take to be reliance on intuition.

*Resp:* - Right. Huge. Huge.

*Interv:* - So when I say, and you say, 'the reading of the culture', a lot of that is intuitionistic?

*Resp:* - And a build up of that experience. If you'd interviewed me say six or seven years ago - different, different totally.

*Interv:* - But can we formalise that more in knowledge-based terms so that you can say - 'Look I'm the principal and I've got this depth of experience: It's different from when I started the job. I'm able to say just by rule of thumb. I can exercise judgments that I know are going to be more or less effective'.

*Resp:* - Oh yes.

*Interv:* - So even against the odds you might pull something off with the council, staff, or people within the community because you backed a hunch that you could really formalise this knowledge.

*Resp:* - Oh. I do that quite a bit and I'm always pleased when it's something that is my idea that a lot of people didn't want at the time. We just sort of say OK well we'll try it and the people find they actually do like it. However we also try and work in a team way on a whole variety of decisions but another thing I'd say, I can't remember in my ten years working with the school council (and their culture has changed too and some of that would be my influence...), I can't remember anything that I've asked for that doesn't happen. ...

*Interv:* - Now, based on that, I'm picking up the feeling that it's important for you that a challenging judgment is something that shouldn't really arise in an ad hoc or unforeseen fashion. It's very important to have it thought through, deliberated upon, well resourced, justified, and so on. So I'm wondering if in the daily course of your work there is very much reliance on the emotions, feelings.

*Resp:* - What sorts of feelings?

*Interv:* - Trusting them.

*Resp:* - When it comes to trusting them?

*Interv:* - Yes, instinct is fine, but this sort of warmer, fuzzier idea of feelings.

*Resp:* - No I don't think so - not if it's got to be cool objective thinking..... I think I'm being utterly objective when I can disassociate myself from feelings, friendships, and other alliances and say look at the big picture, look at this, look at that. So no I don't think so.

*Interv:* - So if somebody walked in to see you and they had a particular problem and they dissolved into a flood of tears - would you be less likely to modify the point of view that you had?

*Resp:* - I don't know. I'd - depending on who it was - I'd put my arm around them and want to solve their personal problem first and then deal with the rest of it... Two other things, unrelated but maybe not, I love it when someone walks through my door and says 'I've done something terrible: I've got the most dreadful problem you can imagine', because I instinctively know it's going to be the most easy thing to solve of the lot.

But secondly, if someone - as will happen today - walks through my door for an

interview - then when I'm choosing people for interview to come and work here, as you know from research, the CV goes out the window the minute they come through the door and instinct takes over but also a little bit of that is feelings. And even though they may not fit your criteria, they're some of the most critical judgments I ever make for the school - picking the right people....It's my principal job - getting the right people into this school.

## CONCLUSION

Summarising the workshop discussion, we may state that working knowledge in its 'whole person' or organic form will be marked by

- (1) the *contingent* - the informal, non-routine and capricious nature of daily work is overtly decisional;
- (2) the *practical* - the need to solve problems efficaciously (the Aristotelian 'good' result) is paramount;
- (3) the *process* - Schonian reflection-on-action has generated expectations of professional growth;
- (4) the *particular* - the need to address the here and now with compromise is accepted by our interviewees;
- (5) the *affective and the social domains* - judgments are basically (but not entirely) value judgements; because which cognitive considerations are entertained depends on how they can be made sense of, cognitively, emotionally and ethically.

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