

**Critical conceptions of “professional”
knowledge for the EF/SL teacher, and their
implications for administrative orientation**

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Introduction

In this paper I take up some related topics that respond to the theme of the conference, with its emphasis on critique as well as reflection and practice. I hope they will be seen as somewhat forward-looking, but of course, we should be aware that there is little if anything new under the sun, and ideas presented as new or at least different and worthy of interest are often also past concepts dressed up in fresh clothing. For that matter, when we use the language of critique, and the concept of the critical, we are often referring to a non-mainstream, non-dominant stream of tradition that has co-existed, often uncomfortably, with dominant ideas, perhaps for as long as those ideas have themselves been in existence. Certainly radical critiques of schools as institutions, and of professionals, have been existence as long as school as a formal institution has existed. The tradition of radical critique in the West clearly goes back at least to the middle 1700s (not to mention egalitarian trends associated with various peasant revolutions and the first Republic of England), and perhaps intensified after the abortive revolutions of the 1830s. For school and teaching, both the 1890s and the 1960s also saw radical critiques. On the other hand, it is also the case that at any given time, ideas may be ‘in the air’, and shared, and then come to be articulated somewhat independently at much the same time –so some of what I say will overlap with and I hope connect with other discussions of terms such as ‘profession’ and ‘professional’ at this conference. Clearly, when different speakers address matters professional from a critical point of view they may home in on the same long-standing critique of the subject,

but one which is important enough to be taken up more than once.

My paper has three parts; that is, it draws on three literatures, or domains of discussion. They are inter-related, though it is not entirely a matter of A implying B implying C. Rather, it is I think that all three derive from the same place: a critical theory of society and the individual within it and constituted by it; and they have the same concern: social improvement, social justice, a democratic and emancipatory vision.

I propose to begin by continuing the discussion that has been going on for many years, intermittently, concerning how we do, and how we should, conceptualize the knowledge and the processes that go with it, that we think of as central to professional practice in our field. This in turn naturally leads to some, or further, critical reflection on the conditions and contexts of professional practice. The 'We' in this case, refers partly to individuals like myself who are primarily academics, researchers, and teacher educators, as well as those of us who are also administrators, as I am at the present time, as well as those of us who are primarily teachers, as I certainly have been and may yet again be.

One (personal) reason for addressing this topic is a sense that what I take to be the basic understandings of the terms I just mentioned, understandings which are probably non-critical ones, are not entirely appropriate for the needs of many teachers. The ones I work with most directly are moderately experienced teachers who are part of the English Language Institute, a service English program I am the Director of; I also work with many TESOL teachers near the beginning of their career and doing their Masters degree with me and my colleagues in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

And a second reason for this topic is that, as I am also a researcher, in some sense one of the supposed creators of knowledge in our field, and as I am a professor, someone who is supposed to profess knowledge, though I sometimes

profess ignorance, I feel a certain responsibility for this matter of 'knowledge', not to mention 'profession'. And particularly since for the last couple of years I have been an administrator, having resisted becoming one for some time, that has naturally affected the way I see the world; that has been part of the reason why I have begun to question these somewhat established views. Third and finally, since the theme of this conference specifies critical reflection (and I completely agree with the need for that), given the importance of these two concepts it seems appropriate to submit them to critical inspection.

I suspect that these dominant conceptions of knowledge and profession are not necessarily good for our teachers or for our educational institutions; and since I hope my comments will be generally relevant, I should say that I suspect the concepts are inadequate for all of us, and for the field. I am concerned, then, with how we represent our practices to ourselves, not necessarily to governments, parents, or the general public. Some of these groups have separate quite different understandings of words like profession and, in particular, "professionalization".

I am going to circumscribe my discussion of conceptions of knowledge by placing it in terms of what has often been called "the profession"; our profession, that is. In fact, this term is important because a key sense of it is why we might be particularly concerned about the other term under question here, knowledge. Professionalism, or the status of being a professional, seems to be closely tied up with the idea that a professional has, constructs, thinks with, or uses knowledge, perhaps knowledge of a particular kind. That does connect with what has been identified as an even messier area - the matter of a profession; it indeed does beg the question concerning whether we are a profession at all, and indeed, whether we want to be, or whether we want to use that term.

In the end, I will certainly agree with other speakers that the conception of profession and professional with which our

field seems most often to work is an uncritical one that does not do justice to the conditions of our work and certainly not to a critical conception of society; in addition, it is inadequate because although it depends for much of its strength on a conception of knowledge as central to the discharge of professional duties, that conception of knowledge again does not do justice to the realities of professional work. The inadequacies of that conception would make us look to professional activity and knowledge as much more embedded in context and systems, and thus for educational professionals, in the school itself and in its various groups of teachers. I will end up by drawing on literature that see the school as an enabling organization for professional work, and therefore has continually developed a critique of associated administrative practice as important for critically reflective and thereby professional practice in our field. Finally, if I leave aside the extended discussion of the profession, in paper my position is critical not directly via a critique of society, but by way of a critical theory of the individual, and by means of a social theory of knowledge and cognition, which stands implicitly as a critique of individualist theories of knowledge and thought. Once one has a social theory of things elsewhere claimed to be individual or not social at all, one also has a way in for political critiques of these matters, of course.

So let me get going seriously here, and as the first substantive part of these remarks explore the matter of knowledge in "professional" contexts.

Professions defined, and their knowledge

Professions defined, or theorized

Our field has clearly used the term professional quite a lot. Since we include among ourselves both teachers and academics, and possibly translators and interpreters upon occasion, it has certainly been convenient to have a term for the membership which is not just 'teachers' - the other general term being 'practitioners'. But more than that - individuals in TESOL have regularly called for the increased professionalization of the field (see e.g., Pennington, 1992,

Staczek, 1987; Wright, 1988); and elsewhere in FL education (e.g., Schrier, 1993). In some cases this has been simply a way of saying 'let's not have so many part-time and casual hires'; it has also been a way of pushing for more graduate degrees, and less backpackers. Professional standards, whatever they are, have been called for. If we had them universally, of course, we probably wouldn't be talking about them.

When one digs into terms that appear to make up the way our world is, elements of social life, it is often surprising at first to discover that they have a history. An important element of the critical tradition calls upon scholars to historicize their work, to recognize, that is, that ideas have a sociocultural location and are the creation of women and men. Seeing a key term as indeed having a history, and having changed, one can see it as more likely to be impregnated with limitations, and also perhaps capable of being improved; one might say as having a moral dimension.

So let me recognize that the term "profession" is, like almost every other term related to education, itself a contested site. And that efforts have been going on to theorize it and "the professions" for a long time - for most of the twentieth century (according to Bennett & Hokenstad, 1975). One of the earliest efforts (Flexner, 1915) states that "a profession (1) is based on intellectual activity, (2) requires from its members the possession of a considerable amount of knowledge and learning, (3) has definite and practical purposes, (4) has certain techniques which can be communicated, (5) has an effective self-organization, [and] (6) is motivated by a desire to work for the welfare of society" (Bennet & Hokenstad, 1975, p. 253). The archetypal professions are medicine and the law. Others involved in this apparently long drawn out program of analysis were Carr-Saunders, 1928; Parsons, 1937; Wilensky, 1964; and Moore, 1970. In more recent, turn-of-the-century discussions, many of those original ideas are preserved. For example, according to Middlehurst and Kennie (1997), some key characteristics are "expectations of individual autonomy, expertise, and intrinsic motivation for self-actualization through worthwhile work". This strand of

work also, at some point in the optimistic, scientific twentieth century, picked up a sense of progress in many fields of work being associated with the term 'professionalization'. Hence Wilensky's article, entitled "the professionalization of everybody". This call, with its implied valuing of a not very well defined set of features, has certainly been heard repeatedly at conferences in our field and within articles on the status of EFL teachers, or their working conditions.

At some point, particularly from the 1960s on, dissent from the positive conceptions of profession implied above has been articulated. Etzioni was a scholar who became well-known for his analyses of what he called "the semi-professions" (Etzioni, 1969). These are generally taken to include school teaching, nursing, and social work. Some propounding this position say that the areas just mentioned are never likely to gain full professional status. One of the main differences between the semi-professions and the professions, and this is an acute problem with TESOL even more than with other subject area domains of education, is control over entry into a field of work. TESOL in particular has even less control over entry; and we do not "police" (as the term is) ourselves for violation of standards of professional conduct. Indeed, the last time I looked, TESOL - unlike for example the American Association of University Professors and the US National Association of Education - didn't even have a set of professional ethics.

Also from this time on, if not earlier, there was the development of more radical critiques of all major professions, in which "professional aspirations are seen as... detrimental to humanistic and/or egalitarian goals" (Bennett & Hokenstad, p. 259). Individuals from that period associated with these more general critiques in education include Goodman (1956, 1962), Newman & Oliver (1967), and broadly also Paulo Freire. More recently, see the work of Mark Ginsburg (e.g., 1988). As Hoffman (1989, p. 3) summarizes the difference between these lines, "Traditional models have tended to treat attributes such as the knowledge

base as structurally given, relatively static, and non-ideological. There were seen as social facts, not claims, viewed as in the mutual interest of client, professional, and society, not as self-serving. Similarly, professions were seen as homogenous and cohesive communities.... Critics, on the other hand, have emphasized political process and outcome rather than intrinsic attributes. They have seen professions as occupations which achieve occupational control by credentialing and licensing. ... From this perspective, knowledge and expertise are not ... neutral scientific elements ... but political resources in the battle for power and status, constructed and advanced by occupations and segments within occupations to forward collective aims.” Some of this critique has surfaced in TESOL-related discussions of professionalism. Johnston’s (1997) study of Polish EFL teachers alludes to the destructive critique of the concept lately articulated by Burbules & Densmore (1991), Popkewitz (1994) and Welker (1992).

Knowledge(s) - a key characteristic of profession

Let us explore this knowledge aspect of professions as an aspect of our work, and move to some acceptance of a critique of it. A prominent analyst of the professions for the last 30 years, Eliot Freidson, refers to “the use of a circumscribed body of knowledge and skills” (p. 18), and regards this as “one of the two most general ideas underlying professionalism” (2001, p. 17; see also Freidson, 1970). Professionals, Freidson observes, make use of “discretionary specialization.... [which] requires the employment of a body of knowledge that is gained by special training” (p. 24). It is precisely for that reason that we claim (and other professions similarly claim) that not anyone should or could do what we do, and that we have therefore professional discretion and abilities for which we should be given some recognition and not subjected to bureaucratic control when we are engaged in our work.

Obviously the field of education has been making such claims for quite some time, indeed, perhaps at least since the first era of reform, which in the US is associated with the 1830s and

the name of Horace Mann. One strategy used to argue for increased discretionary powers, or at least to push back against de-skilling efforts, has been efforts to delineate the knowledge in question. In the last twenty years or so serious efforts have been made to define and delineate the supposed "knowledge base for teaching" (Galluzzo, 1999; e.g., Shulman, 1987). Even though the idea of the possibility of identification of a definitive knowledge based was immediately disputed (Ayers, 1988; Henderson, 1988), starting from this initiative, publishers such as Pergamon increasingly began to turn out encyclopedia-sized tomes which present this knowledge. This they have done as part of a deliberate agenda for professionalization, it appears. Reynolds (1989), in the introduction to one such heavy item, states "this book seeks to demonstrate that teaching does have a distinctive knowledge base, that the knowledge is expressed in articulated understandings, skills, and judgments which are professional in character and which distinguish more productive teachers from less productive ones" (p. ix). As Galluzzo (1999) points out (see also Jenlink, 2001), this project has faltered; but I fear that this is not sufficiently appreciated in TESOL quarters.

Problems with the way "knowledge" in professional contexts is conceptualized

I suspect that most of us in TESOL, who use this term, knowledge, rarely stop to examine it or its associations in detail, except from one main perspective. We have had plenty of discussions of the difficulties of applying the supposed "scientific" knowledge of SL learning and teaching to the actual realities of the classroom, by the actual classroom practitioners. Those difficulties have often been attributed to the form in which such knowledge has been generated and propounded, along with the working conditions of those supposed to make use of it; and at the same time the devaluing of the actual knowledge of practice that practitioners themselves have. There are, however, other problems.

I will follow the analysis of one specialist in this area, Friedson (2001). His perspective on this point calls for us first to separate knowledge and skill in the practice of professionals. "Skill may ... be kept analytically separate from the substantive knowledge connected with the task itself" (p. 25) "Skill is itself a kind of knowledge, namely, of the techniques for using or applying substantive knowledge... It is facilitative in character". "Some of the skills required for applying knowledge to the performance of a task are formal in character, codified in texts, or otherwise described clearly and systematically in the course of training for work. Other skills, however, are tacit - un verbalized, perhaps even unverbalizable, but in any case not part of a formal corpus of codified technique." (p. 25).

Another useful distinction of Friedson's is between "everyday" and "formal" knowledge. The former is that which is acquired through normal socialization and is needed to perform "the everyday tasks of daily life" (p. 28). But distinguishable from that is "formal knowledge", which has also been called "public codified knowledge" (Myers & Simpson, 1998, p. 77). This is "institutionalized into and by what Foucault (1979) called 'disciplines' and Holzner (1968:68-70) 'epistemic communities' (p. 29). Describing this area, Friedson comments. "These are of course inevitably rooted in everyday knowledge but are organized in institutions set apart from everyday life.... The formal knowledge of particular disciplines is taught to those aspiring to enter specialized occupations with professional standing. Much of it is abstract and general in character, however, and cannot be applied directly to the problems of work. For actually performing work, formal knowledge may be needed in some cases, but so also are specialized knowledge and skill of a more concrete nature, and of course, everyday knowledge" (2001, p. 29). Myers & Simpson (1998, p. 78) comment on this, too, remarking that academic disciplines are usually formulated by researchers and scholars... in ways that fit their purpose, rather than by practical users of the ideas... when teachers use a particular set of ideas for professional purposes, they cannot simply select them without

reconfiguring them ... (Eraut, 1994)". These "take on meaning only as they are acquired by teachers and transformed by them into forms that become part of those teachers' individual professional knowledge, competencies, and value systems (ibid)." Others (e.g., Kennedy, 1999) would distinguish a third kind of knowledge, "expertise", in this, again with a highly contextual character. Similarly, Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) refer to knowledge-for-practice (formal knowledge), knowledge-in-practice (the embedded, contextual variety already mentioned under several headings) and knowledge-of-practice, which last has a strong teacher-research character.

The two more concrete, less disciplinary forms of knowledge are valuable, indeed essential for practice; unfortunately they are deprecated and devalued by knowledge creation practices and personnel central to an uncritical concept of a profession.

It is this formal knowledge, not all of which is conscious, and not all of which is disembodied or separate from specific situations, that is inherent in what Friedson calls the "ideal-typical professions". "The ideal-typical position of professionalism is founded on the official belief that the knowledge and skill of a particular specialization requires a foundation in abstract concepts and formal learning and necessitates the exercise of discretion." He goes on, incidentally, to remark that "When so recognized a number of distinctive institutional consequences follow", the most obvious of which, of course is a profession's monopolistic control over its own work.

Formal knowledge is the kind of knowledge that academic specialists in TESOL (like myself) have mainly concerned themselves with. Besides concerns about its applicability, clearly the critical turn also would question this form of knowledge on other grounds. As Friedson says, "All work presupposes knowledge, that it is the practice of knowledge, and that the social and economic organization of practice plays a critical role in determining both what knowledge can be employed in work and how that knowledge can be

exercised" (p. 27). Here we come up against the blunt fact that the working conditions of teachers do not afford them the opportunity or encouragement to create formal knowledge. In addition, it is important in an international organization for TESOLers to recognize, as we increasingly do, that a lot of the creators of formal knowledge for our field come from specific national, class, race, and gender backgrounds, which may show up in the forms this knowledge takes.

Continuing this process of dissecting our professional use of knowledge in doing our work, Friedson goes on to focus on this "specialized knowledge and skill of a more concrete nature" that is nevertheless needed for us to discharge our professional duties adequately. He draws on the work of Scribner on 'practical thinking', which is "thinking that is embedded in the larger purposive activities of daily life and that functions to achieve the goals of those activities... So conceived -embedded and instrumental - practical thinking stands in contrast to the type of thinking involved in the performance of isolated mental tasks undertaken as ends in themselves (Scribner, 1986, p. 15)." Friedson continues that "Much of the knowledge and skill this thinking employs is developed and learned situationally, on the job, as information about the tasks to be performed and as skills to be employed in performing them" (p. 31). The almost inextricable association of skill and thinking with knowledge is important for my argument.

In one approach to categorizing this knowledge (Myers & Simpson, 1998), a tripartite analysis is used. Practice-based professional teacher knowledge is divided into technical knowledge, practical or craft knowledge, and tacit knowledge.

Myers & Simpson exemplify technical knowledge as "knowing that having clear and well-organized classroom routines and firm behavior management strategies contribute to the smooth operation of classes; knowing that student attention during recitation lessons can be maintained better by raising questions for the whole class before calling on a

specific student" (p. 82). Clearly one could find a statement of that kind in a book, but the point here is that it is more likely to be developed through practice, and possibly is quite often developed solely through practice, reflection on practice, or direct transmission from other practitioners. Myers & Simpson remark that "it can also be transmitted in the form of principles of practice and can evolve into codified professional knowledge" (ibid).

Practical or craft knowledge is the 'knowing how' aspect of knowledge: the ability to do, rather than know about, something. "Some people think of it as being learned only by individual teachers from their personal practice... and as being specific to the situations in which it is learned... It is not often thought of as something that can be passed from teacher to teacher. Instead, it is seen as something that individual teachers do but not something they write about or formulate into generally useful statements for other teachers to study" (p. 83). Whether this is correct or not seems disputed.

Tacit knowledge is something that would be even more difficult to transmit, I suppose. This is a long-standing conception of professional knowledge that appears in this mini-taxonomy. It is basically knowledge that we possess without knowing that we know it. As many here undoubtedly recall, it is a concept that was further developed by Schon in his explorations of professional practice. These days it seems that it is central to concepts of reflective practice, much of which involve raising tacit knowledge to consciousness.

The processual, or dynamic, and potentially interpersonal aspects of this approach to knowledge creation, and this approach to conceptions of knowledge for our profession, is important. It is one reason why the idea that young teachers, students in the profession, can over the course of a couple of years graduate, or post-graduate work, somehow acquire through study at a university that which they need to know to discharge their professional duties subsequently, is clearly wrong. This goes along with the greatly increased recognition

of the local and contextualized nature of almost all knowledge of the human world. Rather than having a body of knowledge, teachers need to know how to make knowledge, or get knowledge, or integrate with others in the use and application of knowledge.

A non-individualist conception of professional practice

The foregoing conceptions of knowledge in professional practice have focused on the individual professional. This is probably because professions, although having a corporate, collegial, or "body" aspect—as in the body of professionals who police themselves—have nevertheless been seen as made up of individually-practicing people. Hoffman (1989, p. 193) remarks that "Professional groups are typically locked into individualistic methods and concepts both by training and practice" (a position he particularly attributes to C. Wright Mills, 1943). With regard to teachers, it is clearly the case that an individualist ethos is still widespread. But there have been efforts to break down the individualist model of teaching. Why? Partly for political reasons, which I support - namely, that united we conquer and divided we fall. That is, teachers have often failed to create or take advantage of solidarity to press for better working conditions. Exactly opposite to those who work in factories and have shared workspaces and thus develop solidarity, teachers go into their rooms, shut the door, and spend the greater part of the day not with their peers and equals, but with their juniors, over whom they have a petty power.

But as schools and schooling have grown, the people who work inside the school building have grown more diverse and differentiated. Even though today teaching is still a "flat" profession, with little or no career ladder - by that I mean, you are either a teacher or you are in administration, a vice-principal or head, or head of studies - now there are more than just janitors, cafeteria workers, the secretary and us teachers. There are more specialists of all kinds: Testing and assessment personnel, counselors, special education specialists, just to name a few. Thus the network or organization aspect of school can be seen as more prominent.

The well-educated teacher knows a lot - has to know a lot - must perhaps better also be able to find out a lot. And somehow, this information, whether knowledge per se or knowledge-getting skills, must apparently reside in the back of their individual brain, ready to be called upon when needed. But is this really the case - does it do justice to the realities of day to day practice in the increasingly complex organization that we call school?

Perhaps any claim that it does do justice merely reflects who it is that provides the dominant conceptions of many things in our field. It seems to be the academics who are the image-makers of TESOL; yet academia outside of natural science research teams is a domain of education which has a greater degree of isolation than ordinary schools, which goes along with its cultivation (perhaps creation) of persons of supposedly exceptional individual brilliance - the so-called academic stars. And as academics have considerable influence on the education of TESOL professionals, they may implicitly transmit to TESOL teachers an image of professional knowledge that reflects their own isolated worlds, or at least their individualist conceptions of them. In this they follow along with the dominant expectations of education: what has been called "solo intelligence": "The common assumptions of solo intelligence as a central goal of education guides the investigation of learning, the cultivation of mental abilities... and the design of classroom instruction, with relative disregard for the social, physical, and artifactual surroundings in which such activities take place" (Pea 1993, p. 71).

I am glad to say that developments of an alternative understanding of knowledge and thought provide another way of looking at the knowledge professionals have and how it is deployed in action. This is the conception of "distributed cognition".

"When we look at actual human practices, we see that human cognition aspires to efficiency in distributing intelligence -

across individuals, environment, external symbolic representations, tools, and artifacts - as a means of coping with the complexity of activities often called "mental". Since such aspirations do not inevitably lead to the fulfillment of culturally valued goals of invention and innovation in the face of today's rapid societal and global change, a principal aim of education ought to be that of teaching for the design of distributed intelligence. ... We should reorient the educational emphasis from individual, tool-free cognition to facilitating individuals' responsive and novel uses of resources for creative and intelligent activity alone and in cooperation. ... This goal might be achieved through the examination of living, everyday examples (building from cases where they already do distributed intelligence in the world) and perhaps through case studies of the role of information structures (e.g. matrices, flow charts, templates) and social structures (work teams, apprenticeships) in mediating learning and reasoning as activity systems of distributed intelligence" (Pea 1993, p. 82).

The development of this recent line of work comes from both a critical reflection on previous models of cognition, as well as actual observation of sites of what I am inclined to call professional practice. Though it is not by any means a revolution, not a sudden change, and not a matter of black and white.

Just the same, clearly the dominant conception of thinking, the mind, and knowledge, in western thought in the last century, has been that thinking takes place in a mind that is attributed to and in some sense the property of an individual, and that it is the individual (rather than any other entity) who knows something. All of this grows out of concerns with individual rationality and individual rights (not to mention private property and free markets) in the European Enlightenment. Critiques of the individual concept of mind in psychology go back at least to G. H. Mead, in the early 30s; but a more strongly critical tradition is associated with the sociocultural perspective of Vygotsky and his associates and followers. The emphasis on interpersonal aspects of

cognition, and latterly on the contextual aspects of cognition (here I am thinking of the work of Lave and others), I don't see as necessarily having a strongly critical dimension, but once one brings in context as essential to cognition, rather than viewing cognition as disembodied, impersonal, and decontextual—once one does that, then the realities of everyday life, with their potentially associated sociopolitical aspects, can come in too. Thus one can have a "critical psychology" (Sullivan, 1984). And of course, similarly, when one sees teaching as inherently located in society and as affecting society, then one can have a "critical pedagogy" as well.

But at first blush, then, what I want to say is that a distributed cognition, distributed knowledge, distributed intelligence view of the practice of teachers might seem just to be a better, or at least more productive alternative, to the way we've been inclined to think of the role of knowledge in teachers' professional practice.

Let me try to say a bit more about this line of inquiry as it seems to have shaped up, as rather a small line of work over the last 10 years. Currently, one well-known name in it is Edwin Hutchins (e.g., 1991, 1995). He has mainly worked on contexts where skilled individuals work together to accomplish tasks with a fairly obvious computational aspect, most notably navigation; but these are tasks where nevertheless it is fairly obvious that the computation does not take place just inside one person's head; and indeed, does not even take place inside several people's heads, since all kinds of physical manifestations of the computation, as well as physical embodiments of the interactions between individuals, are clear. One published collection and book-length work to appear prior to Hutchins' book is the Cambridge collection edited by Salomon. Gavriel Salomon, as editor, in turn attributes the initial use of the term 'distributed cognition' as well as important early impetus for the work to David Pea (of Northwestern University, IL). In the 1980s, Pea was using the related term 'distributed intelligence'. More importantly for checking on the critical heritage of this

approach, Pea is quite firm about the sources of this development of sociocultural approaches to cognition. He says,

As a developmental psychologist in the early 1980s with a long-term interest in the social foundations of cognitive growth, I became very intrigued with the increasingly prevalent use of technologies in society, including the widely hyped developments in artificial intelligence systems of the time. What consequences would this have for rethinking human development, learning, and educational goals and practice. I developed a cultural-historical perspective, influenced by the works of Vygotsky, Luria, and Cole and rooted in the theories of Vico, Hegel, Marx, and Engels, for addressing these questions (1993, p. 57).

And just to take the history one step further back, Cole himself (Cole & Engeström, 1993) point to an even earlier concern with non-individual consciousness and thought. We can identify a non-individual perspective in the work of Wundt, around the turn of the nineteenth century. Wundt is often identified as the father of psychology. He distinguished a physiological psychology, which also drew on individual introspection, as a way of getting at elementary aspects of cognition. But he also spoke of the study of higher psychological functions, reasoning and the use of language, which he subsumed under the heading *Völkerpsychologie*, which could not be studied experimentally and for which the sociocultural milieu is essential. At the same time, the sociocultural perspective on mind and cognition of Vygotsky (not to mention Mead) has interesting roots in the work of psychologists Janet and Baldwin and philosopher Royce (Valsiner & van der Veer, 1988).

Now, getting back to recent developments... In this approach, a couple of key concepts should be mentioned before I move to an example. One of these is "mediation". Once we accept that thought is not exclusively inside the individual head, we have to come to grips with the ways in which it is aided (or inhibited) by the environment. The

environment, in this sense, is a cultural product, which may include physical artifacts, as well as symbolic artifacts, such as conceptual frameworks or the accumulated knowledge of prior generations and of course other people. And the other concept is "activity system". Cole & Engeström (1993, p. 9) note "a natural unit of analysis for the study of human behavior is activity systems, historically conditioned systems of relations among individuals and their proximal, culturally organized environments".

What would an application of this sort of understanding look like? Engeström worked over some time with the structure and practices of a health care center (in Finland), which has I think some interesting and provocative similarities, and perhaps also differences, with some aspects of life in our own schools. And he approached the study of this site with a theory of the organization which also should be very comfortable to those of us who, in our growing critique of professional practice, have taken on board ideas from action research as a way of doing critical teacher reflection. Let me provide you with some quotes as a means of summarizing this work:

Work activity in a complex organization is an obvious case of distributed, artifact-mediated cognition.... In what is called 'developmental work research', researchers provide data and conceptual tools for the practitioners, who analyze the contradictions of their own work and design a new model for it in order to master and solve those contradictions (p.30).

Part of Engeström's work reflected the fact that "a workplace is not a homogenous activity system". He cites as pointing out with regard to medicine that "many disparate groups now live under medicine's tent" and that "contemporary medicine is not a unitary profession" (p. 189). This echoes what I have already mentioned with regard to the nature of schools.

Within the activity system concept I mentioned earlier, Engeström looked first at potential "mediating artifacts", in this case the conceptions that the doctors in the health center

had of their own practice. As he says, "Competing schools of thought and practice originate in different historical periods and conditions. Old traditions persist and are modified. ... Competing and contradictory historical layers of expertise can regularly be discovered within one and the same organization, and often within the actions and thoughts of one and the same practitioner" (1998: 31)

From interviews with the doctors, and analyses of videotaped patient-doctor consultations, Engeström arrived at the view that a range of frames of reference existed along with scripts for dealing with patients; a "rich source of resources", as he puts it, distributed among the medical personnel. However, administrative structures interfered with the deployment of these resources. "The physicians were compartmentalized in their work.... Organizationally, any patient could see any doctor, depending on who happened to be on duty. Doctor-patient relationships were dominated by anonymity and discontinuity... [and] strong production pressures" (p. 33). The latter manifested in rules for swift throughput of patients. The same patient, on different occasions would see different doctors and might not only get a different diagnosis but would also be treated by means of different frames of reference with respect to professional practice.

Engeström's interim conclusion was that there were three contradictions in the activity system. "The first contradiction was that between the complexity of the patient's problems and the arbitrary distribution of patients to physicians.... The second contradiction was that between the demand for quality care for complex problems and the rule requiring speedy consultations... The third contradiction was that between complex patient problems and rather traditional tools of biomedical diagnosis."

Since this was developmental work research, Engeström fed back this analysis to the health center workers, and they redesigned their practice. Teams consisting of four physicians and two health care assistants took on responsibility for patients in specified geographical areas. Related changes were

a reworking of the “mediating artifacts” or conceptions of medical care, allowing, among other things, a more comprehensive model of care, a community diagnosis, and an associated improvement of the database on patients that all of the health care members worked with.

Engeström comments:

The new activity structure does not emerge out of the blue. It requires reflective analysis of the existing activity structure - participants must learn to know and understand what they want to transcend”. Looking back on the transition process, he says “Expertise can be understood as a system of cognition, distributed as an activity system. The type of distribution observed in the health center at the beginning of the project was one of compartmentalization. The type of distribution achieved through the [period of change] was one of teamwork. The transition from compartmentalized expertise to team-based expertise was essentially a process of redistribution of cognition based on design from below. It can be assumed that such a design will be incorporated into the new team-based type of expert practice as a novel cognitive resource” (p. 40).

This particular example took place in the late 1980s. Perhaps it simply sounds like a move to a team administrative structure, which is certainly much more common nowadays, and again, “nothing new”. And indeed, many have developed this line since. (For Engeström’s more recent work, see Engeström & Middleton, 1998.) But for me the key point is that the move was made following a commitment to a distributed cognition conception of skilled professional work. And incidentally, it was also facilitated by a heightened concern for reflection in practice, by way of the incorporation of a research team within the work environment.

Let me turn now to the structural and administrative implications that a critical and distributed cognition conception of professional knowledge has for the conditions of professional practice.

What are the implications of seeing professional knowledge as distributed for the administration and organization of “professional” TESOL practice?

So far I have counterposed a somewhat critical, at least anti-individualist model of cognition with the pre-existing, non-critical view of professional knowledge. I am suggesting that it does better justice to teachers' practice as well as being better grounded in a conception of human beings that has emancipatory potential. The practical implications of this opposition are that we need a revised theory of professional work, or specifically of how teachers, at least, apply their professional knowledge. That is to say, we need to examine the conditions and contexts of our, or teachers' work, critically.

As I mentioned at the outset, there have been many calls to improve teachers' working conditions - calls which have often made use of the term 'professional', of course. Most of them imply a covert or explicit recognition that teaching shouldn't be an isolating, isolated experience, even though it often is. Some come out of a sense of entitlement - that we are, or should be, professionals, and therefore are entitled to better (and less isolated) working conditions; what you might call a bourgeois critique of the school as an organization coming from a mainstream theory of professions. Others, perhaps, may come from a more radical critique of the school, coming from critical social or educational theory. And some come from further right, from politicians and ministries of education, who wish to control teachers. (It has been noted [Ozga & Lawn, 1981, p. vi], that professionalism can “both operate as a strategy for control of teachers manipulated by the state, while also being used by teacher to protect themselves against dilution”.) In TESOL, unfortunately, there is simply a very small literature on administration altogether, so we must look elsewhere for advice.

Current discourse about school administration

Let us just glance at the mainstream, liberal critique of school organization. It seems to rest on some discussion of non-individualist conceptions of teaching, and would clearly be sympathetic to the implications of distributed cognition view of teachers work, though does not directly involve a sociocognitive analysis. Myers & Simpson (1998) follow a popular line of advocacy when they refer to schools as potentially "learning communities". They mention the work of Little (e.g., 1987, 1990) on 'collegiality', which is "a combination of commitments, relationships, and caring" (p. 69). When present, according to Little, teachers are more likely to work together, which enables them to "try curricular and instructional innovations, visit each others' classes, observe each other teach, and study classroom-related issues together" (ibid.). "Key elements" for this "include personal closeness, mutual caring, and professional interdependence" (ibid.). Others in this literature (e.g., Sergiovanni, 1992) refer to it as covenantal and spiritual (ibid.).

Now while I would like to see all of the above, they are being called for out of a different perspective on critique. It is not a critique of cognition, nor a critique of society which seems to be there; rather, perhaps, a critique of values and ethics (for example, an attachment to Nel Noddings' 'ethic of care'). And while I think I would like to work in a school or educational institution which had such a high degree of unanimity and positive human values, in current practice it seems they rarely exist. Even the optimistic Myers and Simpson recognize that and note that "collegiality as we are describing it rests on different intellectual norms than those present in most schools today". They also admit (following Grimmett & Crehan, 1992; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) that collegiality is not likely to develop unless it is sustained by a conception of professional work different to the previous individualistic one.

From a critical perspective, schools are political institutions. So, precisely because they are fully infused with the practices of power, and because they act very much to determine who

gets what, when, under what conditions (one of the major definitions of politics, Lasswell, 1936), they are always contested sites. And this is something that the just-mentioned Andy Hargreaves has made much of. That is all the more reason why, in pluralistic societies, we may be less likely to get those warm fuzzy feelings or indeed manifestations of collegiality that Myers and Simpson seem to think are essential for teachers to work together. I suspect that a critical perspective on teacher knowledge and cognition could recognize this but also dispute the absolute necessity for this. This perspective does not require the minds involved have hearts that beat as one.

What we do clearly require, however, are administrative systems that facilitate the distribution of cognition across activity structures. They should also reflect critiques of professional knowledge which emphasize the non-unitary nature of this knowledge, and thus put greater emphasis on teacher knowledge and teacher development of professional knowledge. So perhaps I can direct these two lines of critique, the one more social critique of the concept of a profession, the other more psychological critique of the concept of professional knowledge, one from top and the other from the bottom, on the matter of school itself.

For at least the last 10 years, mainstream educational administration discussions have featured a range of variations on the topic of "schools as learning institutions". The phrase is associated with the organizational theorist Senge. It implies a recognition that of course, schools should be places where everyone learns, but there is a suggestion that particularly because of the isolated nature of much teaching practice, opportunities for teachers (as opposed to students) to learn may be inadequate. Indeed, it may well be the case that the school, as a whole, as a system, does not do well in learning to adapt to changing conditions. The typical school, in this analysis, is like Engeström's health care center - in its organizational structure not doing justice to the distributed nature of professional practice.

So what is needed is an administrative structure that emphasizes openness and communication. In a typical articulation of this position, Wallace, Engel, & Mooney (1997) remark: "Traditionally, schools have been governed on the basis of a hierarchical decision making model not unlike a factory or the military, with prescribed roles for personnel in a command structure with highest authority at the apex" (p. 109). What they and others like them call for is a professional community. For them this involves reflective dialogue among teachers, and certainly interaction and collaboration among them (they adopt the term "de-privatization of practice" from Louis & Kruse, 1995). For these things to be achieved, they claim *shared governance* of a school is needed (p. 108). They comment "In general, shared governance can refer to a broad range of matters from instructional policies and practices to decisions related to budget and personnel. What is important is that the people affected by such policies (i.e. teachers) be involved in the decision-making process, especially in regard to issues associated with instruction and student learning" (ibid).

Shared governance: Not as radical as it used to be

Now actually, calls for this sort of thing, and of course actual implementations of them, have been going on for a very long time. In some of the English-speaking countries, this sort of language is associated with the school-community based management reform wave that began in the 1980s. As Zeichner (1991, p. 363) puts it: "Since 1986, the literature has been flooded with calls for the empowerment of teachers to participate in a more central way in the determination of school goals and policies, and to exercise their professional judgment about the content of the curriculum and the means of instruction. Along with these calls... have come proposals for the restructuring of schools to become more professional and collaborative work environments."

However, in some parts of the world, schools with this sort of approach to internal governance have had a long, albeit non-mainstream existence, going back a century before what Zeichner has just referred to and calls "the second wave of

school reform". In fact, the language I've just mentioned sounds a lot like the libertarian perspective on schools that could be found in the work of A. S. Neill and other radical schools that have survived since at least the 1890s, on and off (see, e.g., Neill, 1993; Smith, 1983); it appeared in the 50s under the heading of "democratic teaching" (Stiles & Dorsey, 1950); and it also could be found in the crop of "free schools" that appeared mushroom-like in the 1960s (Mercogliano, 1998), most of which, like mushrooms I'm afraid, did not have a long shelf life. There seem to be comparatively few actual analyses of schools with such structures, though one substantial example is Goodman (1992). What is interestingly missing from the literature that Wallace et al are an example of and to which Zeicher refers, is the language of radical critique that you would find in the free school literature. What's present, increasingly, is actual accounts of how more mainstream schools have moved in the direction of shared governance. For this, see e.g. the five case studies of change provided by Louis & Kruse (1995). I have said that I think that the anti-individualist critique of professional cognition has administrative/structural implications that are consistent with some of the changes called for by liberal, teacher-centered ethics based analyses. What are the administrative and structural implications of more radical critiques of school, of teaching, of the education profession? Do they also come together?

The missing pieces: radical/critical theories of school administration, and administrative theory in TESOL and in the critical pedagogy literature

Approaching this literature from the viewpoint of critical and radical theories of pedagogy, not just of critical theories of the individual or of professional knowledge, I was initially pessimistic about finding material that would provide a useful administrative response to such positions. Similarly, having reviewed the literature on critical approaches to education from an organization standpoint, Earle & Kruse (1999, p. 170) comment that this work "tend[s] to focus on broader societal patterns.... and tend[s] to have underdeveloped discussions of the detailed particularities that constitute

school organizational processes. ... Although some critical education scholars have focused on school organizations as the primary unit of analysis these efforts have not been built on and expanded nearly to the extent that they might be. New critical work has been done in looking at business organizations but little has been done recently regarding schools."

Kanpol (1997) draws implications from the critical pedagogical literature to end up with some advice for sympathetic principals. However, he notes "there has been sparse literature directed to principals regarding the role they may play in challenging forms of oppression, alienation, and subordination" (p. 79). He does not cite *any* such literature, though one obvious source would be the one work in which Paulo Freire himself talks about his administrative experience as a superintendent of schools for the city of Sao Paulo (Freire, 1993). Kanpol also comments: "when we do have some administrators in my graduate foundations courses, we are often met with disdain and/or a numbing coldness, as if critical pedagogy is cancerous" (p. 79). Marshall (1991, p. 142) remarks "No comprehensive review of research on the culture of school administration exists. However, ... we know that white males with a bureaucratic maintenance orientation have dominated the ranks of school administration" (in support she cites five studies in Boyan, 1988). Kempner (1991) gives a little more helpful detail. Drawing on an earlier survey of 420 Oregon educational administrators (Goldman, Kempner, Powell & Schmuck, 1990), conducted a detailed analysis of interviews with 144 of those respondents. Summarizing, he remarks "as this analysis has indicated, most administrators either lack a level of awareness or do not possess the socialization and language to communicate a democratic vision for their leadership or a philosophy for the schools. Rather than value those administrators who are critically aware of themselves and society, the dominant ideology of administration favors and selects those who subscribe to a rationalistic approach that assumes a science of administration.... The perspective is one of organizational manipulation, not individual empowerment.It is apparent

that women, minorities, and others who do not share the physical, social and cultural attributes of those who currently predominate in educational administration do not find easy access... How individuals are systematically excluded from administration and who is prevented from entering are certainly questions needing further research. From a critical perspective, however, any training programs that simply perpetuate the existing inequalities of who is allowed to lead the schools are unacceptable" (p. 120).

Associated with evidence of the exclusion of those who do not share dominant physical and sociocultural attributes from the ranks of educational administrators is, I believe, the effects of a disdain of administration and administrators on the part of those involved in critiques of the system. Power, particularly that which appears to accrue to individuals in positions of authority in systems of questionable moral integrity, like schools under critical attack, is seen as undesirable; administrators in such systems are seen as inherently corrupt. Indeed, the libertarian tradition on the left goes to great lengths to set up administrative systems that will enable, for example, immediate recall of delegates, immediate firing of union leaders, and so on (e.g. Earth First article). This, coupled with a very low visibility of argument about critical educational administrative structures and practices, discourages pedagogues with a transformative orientation from entering the administrative ranks, I believe. Finally, in academia administrative positions are felt to kill off academic careers; in elementary and secondary education, not to mention proprietary institutions (i.e. private language schools) they are positions of high stress and long hours.

However, the analyses of William Foster (especially his 1986 book, and see also Foster 1980a, 1980b, 1983, 1989, 1991a,b, 1999) provide some help here (and see also the collection of Smyth, 1989). Foster's work is valuable in providing guidelines for critical educational administration practice. (Foster also called for biographies of radical administrators as the kind of research that would particularly aid practitioners

in this area, but there still aren't so many of these, as Lincoln (1991) pointed out.)

As an initial position, he joins with other critics of the products of positivistic research in educational administration. He joins with Alastair McIntyre in denying that management science can identify universal laws of administrative or managerial behavior. "There is no systematic law-like knowledge base for....educational administrators" (also Littrell & Foster, 1995). Then, he does recognize the darker side of administration. "Educational administration has taken as its goal the structuration and control of institutional life, which forms the autonomous individual but which has formed such individuals within wider structures of domination and inequality" (1999, p. 111). He calls on critical educational administrators to see themselves as "an oppositional tendency within structures of control", which he would call "postadministration" (*ibidem*).

Importantly for my purposes, he, like Cole et al., has consistently rejected a conception of "the social life that can be reduced to the cognitions of individual actors" (1991, p. 114). He provides an analysis which directs the critical administrator to support the development of meaningful communities that can support practice; a position which he took long before such calls became popular (before e.g., Sergiovanni, 1992, etc.). And he backs it up to MacIntyre's moral critique of modern society, which is embedded in a concern for the virtues. So Foster would redeem our concern for the profession on the grounds of the moral and ethical aspects of our practice.

Speaking against an individualistic analysis, he remarks that we should "rethink [our] mission in terms of establishing community rather than in terms of individualistic decision-making, for it is really within the community that social problems are addressed" (1991, p. 120). The critical educational administrator should have a "theory of transformative action" (Fay, 1987), which "involves the critique of current structures" and asks "what particular

strategies, viewpoint, and perspectives are important to achieving the kind of social reality which lends itself to more equitable relationships within communities" (p. 122). And if it comes to the matter of key aspects of a community, Wenger's (1998) three definitional terms –joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire-- suggest useful sub goals.

For present purposes, Foster's emphasis on the administrator's responsibility for developing critical communities of practice (1991) is the key point. In this sense, the educational administrator is one who persuades, leads, and above all educates, rather than merely acts as a bureaucrat or time-keeper.¹ Foster's point here is that educational administration must be educative or it becomes only administration and loses its roots, thereby, in school as an educational institution. And leadership here (Foster following Burns, 1978, p. 43), means "raising consciousness on a wide scale". What should be aimed for in educational administrators is individuals who have a reflective consciousness about their work, as well as a critical and emancipatory conception of it. And what they should aim for is a particular kind of community. In his more recent work (1999) he cites Haber (1994, p. 108) on the importance of a community of practice which has a critical orientation (1999, p. 111): "Since the subject is an effect of multiple community formation, alternative subjects can only be formulated within the discourses of alternative communities. This is to claim that there are no individuals, in the traditional sense and that the traditional autonomous subject must be replaced by the concept of subjects-in-community". (Here, incidentally, we see the earlier sociocognitive forms transposed into a discursual mode reminiscent of Foucauldian analyses.) How is this goal to be achieved? Gradually, undoubtedly. Paulo Freire, when he was an administrator, remarked "Everything that can possibly be done... to introduce democratic change

¹ "In reality, we cannot even think about gaining teachers' compliance with, for example, a model of teacher/student relationships that is more open, more scientific, and also riskier by imposing our point of view on them. We need, above all, to convince, almost convert" (Freire, 1993, p.39).

in the school structure must be done. There must be, for example, permanent development of educators, without ideological manipulation, but with political clarity, making clear the progressive orientation of the administration." He also referred to "other changes" which are very much part of the alternative education tradition that has resurfaced under the heading of school-community based management: "curriculum reformulation, community participation in school life, parents' associations, school councils, etc." (1993, p. 49). These things exist and have been worked for, in many places. They are not always developed with a fully critical understanding, perhaps.

To terminate this administrative discussion: From the point of view of those who work for a more just form of educational practice, administrators are not usually positive figures. Yet their work is important if the word 'professional' is going to be used meaningfully. Speaking to the critical teacher, Foster concludes that "pockets of resistance are both available and viable", but that "the project ... is not the final and ultimate victory over forces of coercion and domination... In a postmodern world, power and domination will always exist, and pure emancipation is, perhaps, deceptive, but we do what we can" (p. 110). Or, to use an old slogan from a different domain, "politics is the art of the possible".

Summary remark

I began, then, with a discussion of the concept of a profession, and alluded to critical theories of the professions. One element of professions is that they work for social improvement, or at least to help people; this should be retained. The concept that professions and professionals make use of a specialized body of knowledge is also important but has to be critiqued and developed. This can be done partly by means of a conception of the thinking professional as embedded in society, not isolated. Someone who thinks and acts together with others, and by means of tools, both mental and physical - such a person is involved in an activity system in which we can say that cognition is

distributed. Taking this approach should make us call for a critical theory of the school, considered as a place where teachers operate together. When the individual consciousness is seen as embedded in and deriving from social contexts, it is then crucial to consider the development of those social contexts if the individual is also to develop, to “be all s/he can be”. Thus we must question older administrative models, and join with newer developments that emphasize professional teamwork, but at the same time we must not lose sight of the connection between individual and sociohistorical and cultural context. Teamwork to build an individualist society does not make sense; a critical theory of consciousness has implications that cut across the profession, knowledge, pedagogical theory, and the working conditions and orientations of teachers and their schools.

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