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For: Cevero, LEAC 590A
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Term Project Proposal

THE CHICAGO TRAINING CENTER
OF THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND
FAMILY SERVICES:
IN SEARCH OF CONTEXT

I propose to reflect on and evaluate continuing professional education as a context for understanding the training center which one state agency, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, has recently established. The primary mission of this training center is to provide training for Department staff, in particular the direct service staff made up for the most part of social workers. The center has been staffed initially with a supervisor and three trainers. It has launched a two week training class for new child abuse workers which will be offered six times in the coming year. Thus the training center is new. It is located within a state social service agency. Its primary service is to social work professionals.

What follows is a first draft, a sketch, of an argument which I would like to critique, review, and expand in the course of the term.

To begin with, I wish to call attention to the term "context" as I am using it. In a fast-moving, changing, dynamic society such as ours, the issue of context crops up over and over again. As new specialties, new occupations, new arrangements of occupations emerge, the question of where they belong, what they are, how they are to be defined, emerges with them. Contextlessness, or unclear, ambiguous definitions can produce confusion over standards, goals, duties, assumptions. Uncritically adopted definitions or contexts can produce myopia or isolated specializations which are very narrowly conceived.

As is suggested by that last paragraph, I am using the word "context" in conjunction with the term "definition," in the sense that definitions point to and identify contexts, locate things, ideas, phenomena such as occupations. However, I want to suggest that it may be useful to think in terms of "contexts" rather than "definitions" only. One reason for this suggestion is that there is a tendency, when seeking to define an occupation or institution or whatever to look for a single definition. Thinking in terms of contexts, to my mind at least, makes it easier to conceive of a more complex perspective from which to view a given phenomenon. Instead of a single context, it is easier to conceptualize a field of multiple overlapping circles or concentric circles as contexts for a phenomenon, and to add to this conceptualization that of process, so that the whole can be viewed in terms of a dynamic field of change, of choices, of development.

The Chicago Training Center of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) can be viewed from a variety of perspectives, in a variety of contexts. It is located in a state agency, as one arm of the public administration structure. The implication for professional identity of this context is that the Training Center staff see themselves as professional public administrators and link up with the Association for Public Welfare Administrators. Secondly, it is part of a state wide organization, and as such has responsibility for "organizational development." Training Center staff could conceivably view their role to be that of "OD" practitioners and join the Organization Development Division of the American Society for Training and Development in order to "delve into the art and science of organization development" (1:4). Closely related to both of these first two contexts is that of management, as a third option

This is a useful way to think about the forces impinging on an occupation.

↓ what follows in your options is

fascinating. Particularly, how does the individual think about his own professional identity and how does this affect the professionalizing process?

for self understanding on the part of the Training Center staff, a third professional identity to choose, a third context in which to view the Center, a third choice of definition.

A fourth obvious option would be to take the word "training" more seriously. This choice would lead, as does option number two above, to the American Society for Training and Development, as a professional "home."

A fifth option would be to focus on the fact that the Department is a social service agency, and to stress the connection with the social work profession, see to it that all staff at the Training Center have their M.S.W., be members of the N.A.S.W., and subscribe to the Journal of Education for Social Work, attending, of course, all the national and local chapter meetings of the N.A.S.W.

A sixth option would be stress that the Department is a family and child welfare agency, and link up with the appropriate organizations and associations, the Child Welfare League of America, the Child Care Association, etc., as sub-groups within the social work field.

A seventh option would be to identify even more narrowly with the first training program which has been launched, in the area of child abuse, and stress Child Protective Services as a major new specialty within the field of child welfare, a new profession or professionalizing occupation. Child Protective Services now can point to four national organizations with which to associate.

I don't follow this
 Many of the above options would also imply continuing professional education as a further, or broader context, within which to locate the Training Center. Broader yet would be the field (profession?) of adult education, within the broader context of education or learning as such, generically.

And the Training Center could be placed in a still broader context, that of social history. This would bring to light or bring into focus such broad issues bearing on the Center as the encroachment (?) of the public on the private/voluntary sector in social services, represented by DCFS and the establishment of a training resource within a public agency. One might view the Training Center within the context of the breaking up of an academic monopolization of education, a trend towards diversification in educational delivery. Or within the context suggested by Peter Drucker's notion of "the knowledge society." Peter Drucker points out that the "knowledge industries" or the "knowledge sector" of the economy ~~will~~ accounts for one-half of the total national produce by now (2:263). Drucker means by "knowledge industries," those industries which produce and distribute ideas and information rather than goods and services. He has ~~taken~~ taken the term "knowledge industries" from Fritz Machlup, a Princeton economist who coined the term in his book, Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). In his discussion of the "knowledge society," Drucker (in 1968), was pointing out implications for professional schools. "Our divinity schools, our schools of social work, of education, of nursing, and of medicine," he pointed out "expect the applicant, regardless of his age, to start out 'learning to sew.' Yet, he went on to argue,

There is no reason . . . why we should not teach experienced, responsible, serious men and women, who have shown their capacity to contribute, how to be effective teachers, ministers, social workers, nurses, or doctors and train them in a fraction of the time needed to prepare youngsters without experience (2:293,4).

Within the broad social historical context represented, for example, by Drucker, it is evident that more occupations are taking on some of the features of the professions, and, in the process, there are changes taking place, alterations and diversification, in the "professional" model.

The point of the discussion, the insight (or thesis) towards which I am moving is the necessity of reconceptualizing the notion of "profession," not only in terms of a dynamic rather than a static model, but also so as to do justice to the diversification of models of what a profession is. [Rather than assuming a single ideal type,] what is needed is a development of a typology that does justice to the new formations. For example, organization-based professions or "segments" in contrast to the individual, private-practise model. Multi-disciplinary, comparative-type professions in contrast to single-focus, "pure" types. Pure research models versus applied research types. Charles Wegener in Liberal Education and the Modern University has a provocative discussion of diversities of types of scholars, intellectuals, teachers within the university which might be useful in this regard (3:71-74). I think also of the differences between performing artists and, for example, scholars, or performing artists: and, say, painters, in terms of the kind of continuing professional education that is involved in each case. Still another "type" would be those circles in which there is a pattern of "indoctrination" or dogmatism, political, religious, commercial.

Houle calls for a comparative continuing professional education model and hence he is interested in identifying similarities, commonalities among the professions. I am suggesting that attention needs to be paid to distinctions, differentiations, but also across the boundaries of particular professions, a kind of middle level comparison or typology, which would be less general than Houle, but more general than the particular professions. (Bucher and Strauss's analysis of segments would be another source for identifying significant commonalities between segments in various professions, segments which are more like each other, though in different professions, than they are

a type
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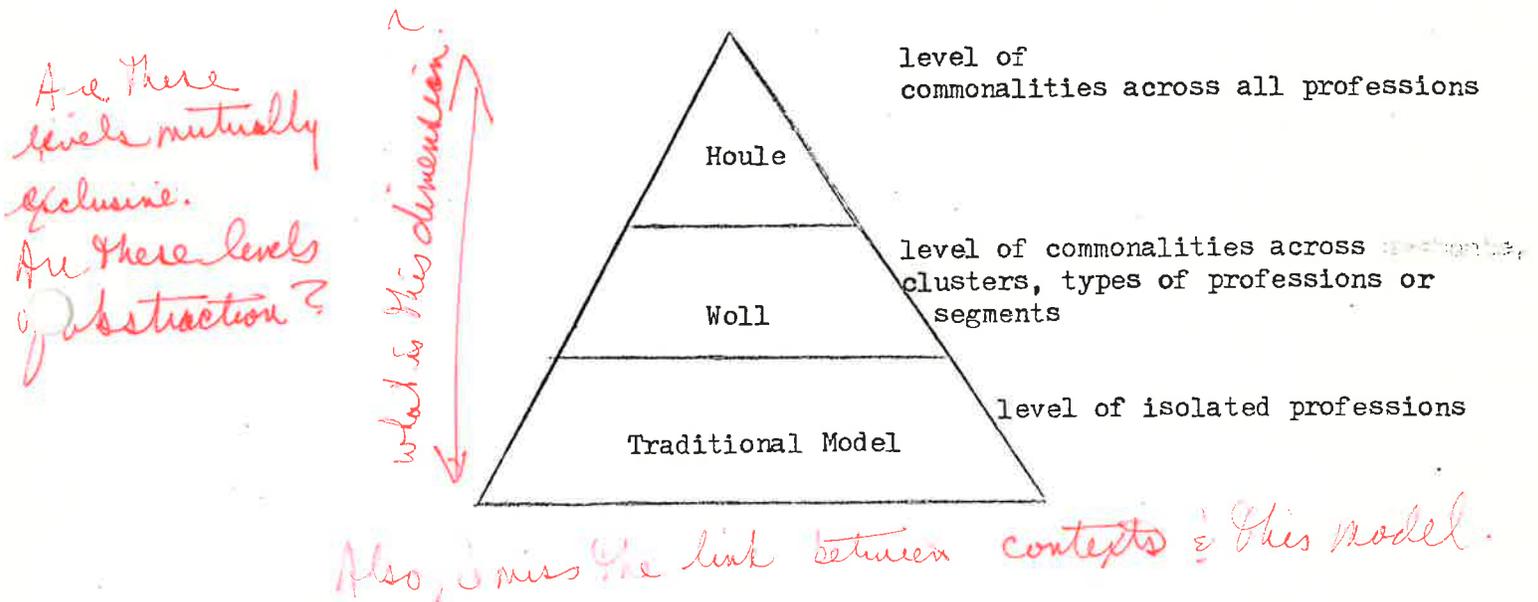
Does Houle present a type or a process?

Does the way CPE is conceptualized

vary by the "types" of professions?

like the "mother" profession, in significant respects).

The relationship between the three approaches, Houle's, mine, and the traditional isolated model, can be illustrated by a diagram, a triangle. The top of the triangle would be the level of commonalities across all professions. The base would be the level of no recognized commonalities. The middle level would be clusters of occupational types, professional segments and specialties, which have many of the significant characteristics of a "profession" in common:



This model should not be viewed as a static one, but in dynamic terms, reflecting forces that are constantly at work, both pressing for unification and coordination and commonality, as well as striving for differentiation, specialization, and particularity.

Viewing the Chicago Training Center in this context, it is not a matter of which one context is proper, but of which context or contexts might be most useful at a particular stage of its development. The context may change in the course of the development of the Center. Perhaps the stages of its development can be charted, drawing on organizational development theory.

Finally, I suggest that by means of paying attention to contexts

*Miss
This
point.*

the "humanities", by which I am referring rather specifically and technically to those approaches to knowledge and understanding which have to do with the interiority of consciousness, can be reintroduced to professional learning and education in a way that will enrich and enlarge the context and perspective of the professions, and at the same time enrich and enlarge the humanities by lifting them out of their drift towards solipsism. Interiority, as expressed in fiction, music, drama, art, for example, becomes one of the critical contexts within which professional continuing learning is located.

Postscript

As you can see, I have thrown in everything but the kitchen sink. I have not had time to edit out from the above what is worth focusing on and elaborating. I think it is the argument with Houle explicitly.

I think one of the interesting questions arising from these thoughts is whether your suggested conceptualization of professions ala Woll presents different ways of thinking about

CPE

NOTES

1. Thomas H. Patten, Jr., ed., OD - Emerging Dimensions and Concepts: A Collection of Papers. np: American Society for Training and Development, 1973.
2. Peter Drucker, The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to our Changing Society. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., Harper Colophon edition, 1978.
3. Charles Wegener, Liberal Education and the Modern University. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.