



Knowledge, Expertise and the Professions

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It has long been recognised that specialised knowledge is at the core of what distinguishes professions from other occupations. The privileged status of professions in most countries, however, together with their claims to autonomy and access to specialised knowledge, is being increasingly challenged both by market pressures and by new instruments of accountability and regulation. Established and emerging professions are increasingly seen as either the solution, or as sources of conservatism and resistance to change in western economies, and recent developments in professional education draw on a competence model which emphasises what newly qualified members of a profession 'can do' rather than what 'they know'.

This book applies the disciplines of the sociology of knowledge and epistemology to the question of professional knowledge. What is this knowledge? It goes beyond traditional debates between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that', and 'theory' and 'practice'. The chapters cover a wide range of issues, from discussions of the threats to the knowledge base of established professions including engineers and architects, to the fraught situations faced by occupations whose fragile knowledge base and professional status is increasingly challenged by new forms of control. While recognising that graduates seeking employment as members of a profession need to show their capabilities, the book argues for reversing the trend that blurs or collapses the skill/knowledge distinction. If professions are to have a future then specialised knowledge is going to be more important than ever before.

Knowledge, Expertise and the Professions will be key reading for students, researchers and academics in the fields of professional expertise, further education, higher education, the sociology of education, and the sociology of the professions.

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