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How do academics come to know? : the structure and contestation of discipline-specific knowledge in a Design school / Alan F. Cliff ; Rob Woodward

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**Abstract**

This paper reports the results of a small-scale (n = 9) interview study of the 'ways of knowing' of academics in a Design School at a South African polytechnic. The focus of the study was on exploring the perceptions of these academics about discipline-specific knowledge in their fields. The paper presents an analysis of the responses, derived from semi-structured interviews, to questions concerning the origin, development, structure, and contestation of knowledge. Responses were classified and tabulated in terms of their relation to theories of epistemology and the findings analysed in relation to how they might be said to be descriptive of qualitatively different views of the construction and contestation of discipline-specific knowledge. The analysis suggests that there are some areas of commonality, such as the agreement that their knowledge has an eclectic base and that its structure is influenced by personal, historical, professional and technological imperatives in the discipline. On the other hand, there are some tensions in beliefs about the structure and contestation of knowledge. The analysis draws out tensions between the established canon and popular culture;

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between individual intuition and professional benchmarks; and between Eurocentric and Afrocentric knowledge-bases. Concluding comments suggest that these tensions have important implications for both the content and methodology of teaching. (HRK / Abstract übernommen), Cliff, Alan F., E-Mail: [acliff@ched.uct.ac.za](mailto:acliff@ched.uct.ac.za)