

# Chapter 10

## Knowing Pedagogical Praxis in Twenty-First Century Education



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**Abstract** There are always perennial and critical questions to be asked about the nature, conduct and study of education. Who is it for? What is its purpose? Is it just? How does it happen? How does one educate? What is education? Such questions lead us into the complex territory of interrelated educational practices involving student learning, teaching, leading, professional learning and development and researching. This chapter seeks to answer a more fundamental question for educators about pedagogical practice posed by Stephen Kemmis: *in whose interests are we acting?* To do this, we take the lead from decades of influential work by Kemmis and his commitment to a praxis-oriented view of pedagogy, research and education. For him, praxis in education, although differently understood in different historical and educational traditions, concerns a more deliberative, moral, ethical and virtuous conceptualisation of pedagogical practice. It sets aside a more simplistic view of praxis as action by tying it intimately to the notion of *phronēsis*, a concept that accounts for practical wisdom and the recognition that practical action in the here-and-now (in everyday life, in educational settings) has consequences and so is part of history-making. Thus, the chapter re(in)states the promises of education by considering what is pedagogical praxis, what is required for pedagogical praxis and why should educators be concerned with pedagogical praxis in contemporary times.

Educational practices are always propelled by something more than propositional knowledge. Today, we want practitioners of the professions to have qualities that extend beyond professional practice knowledge toward wisdom in the form of the dispositions of wisdom and prudence, that Aristotle called *phronēsis*. (Kemmis, 2012, p. 148)

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As we move forward and more deeply into education in the twenty-first century, it is necessary to consider the practices, interests and dispositions that propel it onward. This means it is time to return to enduring questions concerning education itself and, as suggested by Kemmis, the prevailing need for praxis. Such questions lead us into the complex territory of the interrelatedness of educational practices involving student learning, teaching, leading, professional learning and development and researching. To be educational in these pursuits, according to Kemmis, means looking ‘to live well in a world worth living in’ (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018, p. 14).<sup>1</sup> This view of education suggests that it is not solely an individual endeavour, but that its purpose is aspirationally a societal good. However, since the turn of the century, understanding these practices and answering questions related to their educational virtue have shifted towards results, measurement and accountability. With this global shift, the pathway towards education has narrowed, leading *education* to be more simply equated with *schooling*. Perhaps education has even been diverted into territories that might be described as *uneducational*. Education in schools has struggled to find itself within the midst of New Public Management and the rise of neoliberal regimes of technicism and performativity, which have gathered momentum across the globe as teaching standards, high stakes national and international student testing, and national systemic accountabilities and comparative league tables have pervaded the daily work of educators (in preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, technical and vocational schools and universities). Left in its wake seem to be more perfunctory technical schooling practices and dispositions devoid of a sensitivity to the broader societal purposes of education that are realistically and genuinely responsive to the site, and of the needs and circumstances of those practising there—for societal good.

Against this movement, this chapter searches for praxis in modern education by taking up the double view of education premised on the idea(l) of praxis. It sets aside a more simplistic view of praxis as action by tying it intimately to the notion of *phronēsis*, a concept that accounts for practical wisdom and the recognition that practical action in the here-and-now (in everyday life, in educational settings) has consequences and so is history-making. Thus, in this chapter we re(in)state the

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<sup>1</sup>After intellectual encounters with Aristotle, Plato and Dewey (among others), Stephen has long considered that education has a double purpose: to live well in a world worth living in. He first wrote about this doubleness in *Curriculum, Contestation and Change: Essays on Education* (unpublished manuscript, Deakin University 1990). This conceptualisation is now published in Kemmis and Edwards-Groves (2018) *Understanding Education: History, politics and practice*, based on Kemmis’ (2006a, b) *The Nature and Study of Education*, written for first-year education students at Charles Sturt University. Although Stephen also wrote about this idea in varying ways across his career, particularly notable is with Wilfred Carr in 1986 *Becoming Critical* and more recently in a volume reporting findings from an Australian Research Council Discovery Program research project reported in *Changing Practices, Changing Education* (Kemmis et al. 2014).

Making this distinction between education and schooling in his Occasional Address ‘Education for Sustainability’ to participants in the Faculty of Education graduation ceremony, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, 5 April 2006, Kemmis described ‘schooling’ as ‘the functional apparatus of schools, textbooks, lesson plans, units of work, assessment’. Education, on the other hand, he says ‘is what changes lives’. Published in: Kemmis and Edwards-Groves (2018).

promises of education by considering what pedagogical praxis is, what is required for pedagogical praxis, and why educators should be concerned with pedagogical praxis. To explore this further, we draw on Kemmis' work to explore the concept of praxis as it is intricately tied to the conduct of practice. Our intention here is not to re-package Kemmis' work on praxis and practice but to attempt to discover its relevance in empirical examples. We orient the chapter by examining a definition of education proposed by Kemmis and colleagues in 2014.

## Rediscovering Praxis in the Task of Education

Education and schooling will not be equal to the new historical challenges of the twenty-first century, that is, if we cannot discover, develop and sustain changed and new practice of education. (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 3)

To the challenge proposed here by Kemmis et al. (2014), we add to *rediscover* the purpose of education in and for contemporary times. Kemmis et al. (2014) state:

Education, properly speaking, is the process by which children, young people and adults are initiated into forms of understanding, modes of action, and ways of relating to one another and the world, that foster (respectively) individual and collective self-expression, individual and collective self-development and individual and collective self-determination, and that are, in these senses, oriented towards the good for each person and the good for humankind. (p. 26)

This definition points us to the doubleness of education proposed by Kemmis in the 1990: *to prepare people to live well in a world worth living in*. This, as Kemmis et al. (2014) claim, 'must always be determined anew for changing times and circumstances' (p. 27). So our task as educators, as suggested by Kemmis et al. (2014), is to rediscover what counts as the good life for humankind (we note that this notion is also contested), individually and collectively in, and for, education. This double view establishes education as having an individualistic aim to educate sovereign persons that, at the same time, works futuristically towards a broader societal good. Kemmis et al. (2014, p. 2) state that:

On the one hand, it aims to form and develop individuals with the knowledge, capabilities and character to live good lives—that is, lives committed to the good for humankind. On the other hand, education aims to form and develop good societies, in which the good for humankind is the principal value.

Education, thus, is formational and transformational of individuals and societies. This view of education turns us towards praxis.

Taking the lead from decades of influential work by Kemmis and his commitment to a praxis-oriented view of education, in this section we consider these central questions: What is pedagogical praxis? What is required for pedagogical praxis? What is educational about pedagogical praxis? Why should educators be concerned with pedagogical praxis? To ponder these critical questions for education and the more fundamental question for educators posed by Kemmis, *in whose interests are*

*we acting?* means taking seriously the double purpose of education. This means to critique and question the ways educational endeavours serve the interests of individuals in practice and the interests of the societies in which individuals are responsible. Added to this is a line of questioning in regard to how education forms society and how society forms education (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018, p. 21) through the recursive interconnections between the individual and the collective. This line of thinking generates provocative questions that challenge us to turn a mirror back onto ourselves as educational practitioners. As Kemmis (2012, p. 148) states:

Our task in *understanding* professional practice, in *researching* it, and especially in *developing* or *changing* it, is greater than the task of understanding the professional practice knowledge that resides ‘in practitioners’ heads. Our task requires understanding, researching and working to develop professional practices both in the heads of practitioners and in the settings in which they work, in which their practices are formed and daily re-formed *in practice* – or, one might say, from the perspective of the one who acts, *in praxis*.

From this view, praxis as practical action prioritises the *happeningness*, the socialness and humanness of practices and practising. This is a site ontological view (after Schatzki, 2002) that centralises the primacy of the site and the conduct of practice as it happens there. It considers how practices are always made and remade in the doing of them in real time, each and every time; that is, the realities of what happens in the place or situation at the time are revealed as if they ‘unfold’ through passages of time. Fundamentally, this requires practitioners to know doing (Kemmis, 2010).

Inspired by critical theories, in particular the critical theory of Marx, Kemmis draws our attention to the insight that ‘while histories make practices, at the same time, practices make histories’ (in Kemmis & Mahon, 2017, p. 223)<sup>2</sup> when considering the consequences of practices—or more precisely praxis. So, for instance, a Grade 3 teacher stepping into a mathematics lesson about scale and measurement with his class of 25 students on one day will, in reality, make practices anew in subsequent lessons about scale and measurement because the day, the content, the student prior knowledge, the student attitudes and emotions on that day might be new/different/changed for them at that new/different/changed moment. Therefore, the task for educators is recognising that the doing of practice—at any given moment—is thus at every point an historical action with particular consequences for those in the practice at the time. For the Grade 3 teacher and his students, practices encountered in the lesson make history with consequences that might be evidenced by some students learning more about scale and/or measurement, some students having difficulty with an aspect of the new concept, the teacher learning more about individual students’ prior knowledge of the topic, and so on. These cannot be known a priori to the moment, but are revealed in actions in moments as they happen.

For Kemmis, to be praxis-oriented acting in these moments is guided by dispositions that reflect a more deliberative, moralistic, ethical and virtuous conception of pedagogical practice since it considers ‘the ends’ of Education. Exploration of

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<sup>2</sup>In an interview with Kathleen Mahon, Kemmis outlined some of the earlier influences on his thinking that have led to current theorisations of praxis, practice and practice architecture, presented as a genealogy in Kemmis and Mahon (2017, pp. 219–238).

educational praxis and the ends of Education requires an exploration of *phronēsis*; a disposition described by Aristotle as informing and guiding practice (represented in Fig. 10.1).

Accordingly, if as practitioners—as educators in practices—we understand that practices are ‘formed and daily reformed in practice’ as suggested by Kemmis et al. (2014), then praxis cannot simply be the doing or the action nor is it the intentions for the doing or action. For practitioners, there is a continual interplay between praxis, *phronēsis* and practices (as represented in Fig. 10.1).

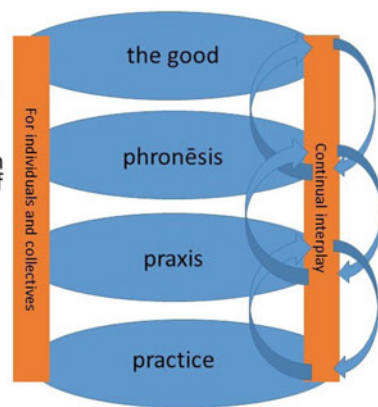
Praxis is a particular kind of action whereby practitioners’ actions in practices are anchored in an overt awareness of the historical consequences of those actions. This is because, as suggested earlier, how things turn out at the time cannot be predetermined. This raises the notion that praxis should also be understood as socially responsible history-making action (after Marx & Engels, 1854; published in 1970). Knowing praxis for oneself means to understand that praxis also accounts for the particular practitioner dispositions to do the right thing at the time amidst the changing circumstances and conditions brought to bear on the conduct of practices at the time, regardless of the intentions residing in the practitioner’s mind. These two related views on ‘praxis’ were explained initially by Kemmis and Smith (2008, p. 4), and later by Kemmis et al. (2014, p. 26) in this way:

‘Educational praxis,’ may be understood in two ways: first, as *educational* action that is morally committed and informed by traditions in a field (‘right conduct’), and second, as ‘history-making *educational* action’ that is, as action with moral, social and political consequences – good or bad – for those involved in and affected by it.

This view is one that makes knowing pedagogical praxis for ourselves a central condition of the educational work we do:

To make such an argument ... means being able to see beyond the intention of the practitioner to see into the practice at the time of practising in the site of practising. Kemmis (2012, p. 148)

- Teachers begin with knowledge of their students and a curriculum or program which they consider in relation to what they think makes for student learning and development in lessons, units of work, stages of learning.
- They are guided by a moral disposition and professional wisdom to act truly and rightly in the best interests of individuals and groups of students.
- This enables them to engage, as committed thinkers and actors, in actions and interactions in the best interests of those in the situation as enacted in moments in lessons.
- The outcome - the end - is a process of intersubjective meaning making where educational practice is possible.



**Fig. 10.1** Educational practice, *phronēsis* and pedagogical praxis (adapted from Grundy, 1987, p. 64)

Entering into this argument means our task as educators is one that not only seeks to understand the nature, conduct, study and improvement of education, which have been central to Kemmis' life's work, but to understand it as it arises from *phronēsis* in *praxis* in moments of *practice*. This springs from, and connects back to, our role as teachers, teacher educators and educational researchers, that challenges us to see beyond the intentionality of our work and look deeply into practices to see the here-and-now—the happeningness, of practices and to consider the justness of our practices. For educators, this view of education is not only a philosophical undertaking, but importantly for those acting within it and for it, redirects our educational thought, reasoning and reflection about our everyday work towards pedagogical praxis in teaching practice.

## Pedagogical Praxis in Teaching Practice

A teaching life is an educational life. (Kemmis, 2006a, b<sup>3</sup>).

When we think of education, or more specifically an educational life, our thoughts often turn to the teaching and learning practices that happen in classrooms in schools, that is to consider pedagogical praxis. This is the focus of this section. In classrooms, among other places where educational practices occur, teachers and learners enter into teaching and learning practices of one kind or another. As teachers and learners enter into these practices (generally temporally bound in 'lessons'), there is always an uncertainty about how things will actually 'play out'; that is, that practices as practical real-time actions unfold in the here-and-now of lessons in indeterminate, in unpredictable and sometimes in unintended ways. The reality is that practices always have consequences, and hence the need for praxis:

It turns out that we confront uncertain practical questions more or less constantly, in the form "what should I do now/next?" The kind of action we take in these circumstances is not a kind of rule-following, or producing an outcome of a kind that is known in advance (both characteristic of technical action) but rather action whose consequences are more or less indeterminate, but that can only be evaluated in the light of their consequences – in terms of how things actually turn out. This kind of action is 'praxis'. (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 26)

In making determinations about what to do now or next, practitioners in practices are confronted with choices and consequences. Guided by *phronēsis*, praxis-oriented practitioners bring an awareness of making choices in the moment to act in one way or another. Thus, educational action is dynamically composed of decision-making:

Making choices is always a practice matter since it concerns what ought to be done for the good of individuals and the collective, and so is not simply a technical question about how to do things – although practice choices ordinarily also involve knowing how to use the appropriate means to get to a desired end. (Kemmis, 2012, pp. 223–4)

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<sup>3</sup>Cited in Kemmis and Edwards-Groves (2018, pp. 153–157).

Choices in practices too have consequences.

It is how one acts at the time where practical wisdom is revealed in practical actions. Considering the consequences of practices forms part of our educational life—a praxis-oriented socially just life, one where dispositions of prudence, ethics and morality enter our day-to-day work. So, as educators, when we reflect on, or even confront past practices, or contemplate future practices, we might ask ourselves specific questions concerning the finer details about how things transpired in moments (of lessons) like, *Did I do enough to support Selma's struggle with division? What else does she need to know? How can I help tomorrow? What book would have better for helping Omar with his comprehension? Was I clear enough in my explanation about biodiversity and deforestation? Why were the class not engaged in this lesson? What should I try tomorrow that can help prepare them in their writing persuasive texts for NAPLAN test on Wednesday?* These specific yet almost banal routine questions about moments of practising are ones inseparable from questions concerning an educational life like, *are our practices educational? How do we understand our educational life? How can we live an educational life in the midst of the pressures of performativity?* What elevates these questions towards praxis is a desire to be more than a technician of practices. Furthermore, although meanings generated by these kinds of deeper level questions often hover above our consciousness as educators, they significantly show the relationship between praxis, *phronēsis* and practice, demonstrating that educational praxis is cognisant of moral, social and political consequences. It is a relationship whereby each of these dimensions of practising does not sit loosely alongside the other, but rather reflects a disposition for acting justly—for doing 'good' for individuals and the collective under the circumstances at the time.

To ask questions of this kind about their teaching practices, teachers recognise and orient towards the theoretical, technical and practical dimensions of their work. They are acting within an educational paradigm formed and differentiated by knowledge and dispositions which give rise to different kinds of actions and ethics. These knowledge and dispositions reflect a neo-Aristotelian perspective within the theoretical, technical and practical perspectives (outlined in Table 10.1) which shape language, activity and interrelationships encountered in practices.

Acting with the realisation of the consequences of how actions enacted in the moment of doing is praxis. Here, it is practical wisdom and prudent action that aims—at that moment in time, for the good of those involved (the individual) and for the good of humankind (the collective). This is a view consistent with post-Hegelian/post-Marxian understandings of praxis as 'history-making action'; that is, as action with moral, social and political consequences for those involved in and affected by it.

Here, we open up the question of what pedagogical praxis might be by taking up the question, *What is a good teacher?* To begin this task, we return to the proposition made by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008, p. 39) who suggested an educator, a good teacher, is a person who

- is well-informed about education traditions (with the disposition *epistēmē* put into practice through the contemplative action called *theoria*),
- has the technical skill to achieve educational aims using appropriate means (with the disposition of *technē* put into practice through the technical action called *poiēsis*),
- aims to act rightly (with the disposition of *phronēsis* put into practice through the practical action called *praxis*), and
- has a critical disposition to overcome irrationality, injustice and suffering through *critical* reflection and *emancipatory* action in concert with others who arrive at critical insights about how irrationality, injustice and suffering might be overcome.

In many ways, the descriptions here draw our attention to the distinctive qualities and dispositions of praxis-oriented educators. It also directs us to the interplay, reciprocity and delineation between these classes of actions (contemplative, technical, practical and critical) and dialectics such as theory and practice, thought and action, skill and action, practical wisdom and practical action, and activism and action. Yet, as asserted by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008), such an educator does not develop ‘naturally’, nor solely through having these good intentions and acting on them, but that it is through praxis that *phronēsis* develops and through *phronēsis* that praxis

**Table 10.1** Four disposition-action couplings (adapted from Kemmis, 2012)

	Theoretical perspective	Technical perspective	Practical perspective	Critical perspective
Telos (Aim)	The attainment of knowledge or truth	The production of something	Wise and prudent judgement in activity	To overcome irrationality, injustice and suffering
Disposition	Epistēmē: to seek the truth for its own sake	Technē: to act in a reasoned way according to the rules of a craft	Phronēsis: to act wisely, critically, morally and justly	Critical reflection: to arrive at critical insights about practices
Action	Theoria: ‘Contemplation’, theoretical reasoning about the nature of things	Poiētike: ‘Making’ action, involving means-ends or instrumental reasoning to achieve a known objective or outcome	Praxis: ‘Doing’ action, morally informed action, involving practical reasoning about what it is wise, right and proper to do in a given situation	Emancipation: sayings, doing and relating to others in practices in ways that are socially rational, just and for the betterment of individuals and humankind



develops (this interflow was depicted also in Fig. 10.1). These actions are not hierarchical but recursive and generative. Each action alone is not sufficient for education.

As Kemmis and long-time colleague Carr suggest (1986), considering the ‘here-and-nowness’ of doing practice establishes a more fulsome account of educational praxis; as they state:

We can now see the full quality of *praxis*. It is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities. These include a commitment to human well-being and the search for truth, and respect for others. It is the action of people who are free, who are able to act for themselves. Moreover, *praxis* is always risky. It requires that a person ‘makes a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in *this* situation’. (p.190)

The idea that praxis is risky is experienced by teachers in the doing of teaching practices every day, since the uncertainty and unpredictability of how things will actually turn out at the time weighs greatly on their shoulders as they move through the semantic spaces, physical space–time and social spaces of their lessons. As we wrote in 2015 (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015), making wise and prudent practical judgements at the time relies on teacher dexterity and a meta-awareness that praxis and so practical action is characterised by three interrelated principles:

1. Praxis-oriented teaching decisions [being] about education, and more than schooling
2. Praxis-oriented teaching [being] ontologically responsive to local circumstances and needs
3. Praxis-oriented teaching [reflecting] individual and collective dimensions, where individual actions taken together influence the broader society for the good. (p. 159)

In our study that reported on an empirical examination of praxis we found:

when actors in practices – even students – describe their actions in relation to ‘what we do here in this place for this purpose and consider the best way forward under these circumstances’, they reflect particular knowledges and dispositions which give rise to different kinds of individual practical action and responses that may influence the broader society for the better. This kind of action points to a kind of disposition of educational praxis that is about more than schooling; one that is responsive to the circumstances and needs of students in the particular school in the face of regimes of performativity and accountability. (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015, p. 159)

This means that *a teaching life is an educational life* (after Kemmis, 2006a, b) when teachers’ praxis explicitly accounts for, and demonstrates in their practicing responsiveness to, the particularity and nuances of the site, site-based concerns, needs and circumstances.

## **Recognising Pedagogical Praxis and Phronēsis in Practice: Why This Matters?**

Recognising pedagogical praxis and phronēsis in practice matters, since it is through recognising it that we can begin to understand it, develop it and find it for ourselves in

our own practices. Recognising the ways that our pedagogical praxis is intricately formative and transformative of individuals and societies, provides an essential platform for the development of praxis in contemporary education. And as Kemmis (2006a, b) asserts, we need to find it in the empirical. To begin the task of understanding pedagogical praxis in contemporary education, we turn to a classroom lesson, since this is one site where educational praxis happens. In a practical sense, lessons are sites where pedagogical practices, with enduring consequences, happen daily and routinely, and often without critical examination. We begin here also because transcripts of lessons (like the one presented here) are representations of practices that can reveal how practices unfold sequentially and temporally in actions, activities and interactions in physical space–time and semantic and social spaces.

With the benefit of the transcript, we can study the lesson practices for praxis and *phronēsis*, making it possible to infer the particular dispositions that guide the teacher’s pedagogical decision-making. By closely reading the transcript, we can see that it is in the moment of practising that pedagogical praxis is enacted and made evident; that is, what the teacher (Mr. Moro<sup>4</sup>) does, what he says and how he relates to the student (Theo), in certain ways at particular moments, reveals his ‘teacherly’ disposition. The episode is taken from a whole-class writing lesson recorded in a Grade 1 classroom. Students in this class are 6 years of age, and the teacher, Mr. Moro, has set the children the task of writing their own ending to a story they have read in a prior lesson. Here, Mr. Moro approaches a desk where a student, Theo, is sitting looking at his page. Theo is a recently arrived student to this class who has English as a second language. He lacks self-confidence in his abilities in English and often struggles to begin assigned tasks.

Extract 1: The Escaped Cow—Mr. Moro and Theo discussing Theo’s writing.

1. Tch: You look stuck Theo, can I help? ((Theo nods as he twirls his pencil)) Do you remember your sentence buddy? ((Theo shrugs)) Was it about the escaped cow? ((Theo nods gently)) Okay so think back, say it aloud again Theo, then when you hear it, that will um help you remember it and help with writing your sentence, and ah spelling those tricky words, that’s our focus, remember. Let’s go
2. Theo: Umm ((pause 0.2, as Mr. Moro lowers himself to be at the same level as Theo who is sitting at his table)) they, they shout out at the c:cow that um escaped through the gate STOP WO:OAH STOP ((says ‘stop’ and ‘woah’ loudly))
3. Tch: Excellent, love that expression, what an improved sentence from your first go. Okay, well let’s write those words one by one to make the sentence, your ideas sound right, make sense. So, first word they, see if you can write THEY ((0.2)) We did that one the other day. Th the:ey, they. What can you hear at the beginning?
4. Theo: th::th ((says slowly as he writes the letters *T, H*))

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<sup>4</sup>All names are pseudonyms.

5. Tch: Good lad, then? stretch it out slowly. What's next? But don't get tricked, it rhymes with day like you know but we need to spell it using other letters that make the ay:y sound. You can do it, come on.
6. Theo: I can't ((long pause 0.9. Theo cries, 0.3, Mr. Moro puts his hand on his shoulder)) [ay::y ((makes the sounds with Mr. Moro))
7. Tch: [ay::y. Okay, good Theo, you can write that for me. They. ((Theo writes the letter A)). Think carefully, it's one of those tricky ones.
8. Theo: I know, I know it, its ee:e ((Theo writes the letters E, then Y))
9. Tch: So so clever, you can do it. Okay, great, now, can you write the next bit for me? SH:SH[OUT OU:T ((said loudly and slowly))
10. Theo: [they shout out = ((Theo joining in))
11. Tch: =Remembering if you can write sh:shout you can write out too. K? writing sh:shout, do you remember spelling your word Theo?
12. Theo: Sh:sh sh:sh
13. Tch: you have the sound, now what two letters make that sh:[sh sound?
14. Theo: [sh:sh H ((names the sounds and H)) sh::sh out
15. Tch: Clever speller, now can you write it for me? OU:T ((said loudly and slowly))
16. Theo: ((Theo begins to write, first forms the letter O, then W))
17. Tch: No, O W will work for cow though, it's ah one of those tricky ones, can I hear again? What else makes ow sound, OUT? stretch it.
18. Theo: ow::w ow ((spells letters O, W)), no, no it's U, it's O-U-T ((names the letters aloud)) that's right isn't it Mr. Moro?
19. Tch: Right, you are right. Good work Theo, and, since you are so smart, if you can write shout, you can write out, out, use what you know about shout to write out. Off you go.
20. Theo: I've got it ((writes O, U))
21. Tch: Yes you have, you're, ah working hard, good writing Theo ((patting him on the back as he rises))
22. Theo: I know it, can do it myself ((writes the word out))

Reading across this extract shows the ways in which lessons are formed by practices that are constituted *socially* (among people like teachers and students, e.g. Mr. Moro and Theo), *temporally* (through time, like in this small segment of the Grade 1 writing lesson), *spatially* (in places, like sitting at a desk in a classroom and using resources and materials such as pencils and books) and *discursively* (through the talk, interactions and relationship between Mr. Moro and Theo) in moment-by-moment exchanges and happenings. Understanding how these interconnected aspects of pedagogical practice relate to praxis requires closely examining how the lesson progresses and how the precise substance of each turn connects to one another as they unfold chronologically through time, represented here in the sequential lines of the transcript. If at any one point in a first reading of the transcript we stop reading, we can never know what actually happens next; although we might guess at the intentions of Mr. Moro in this exchange, it is in what actually happens in real time that the consequences of practice, and so praxis, is revealed.

Several instances of practical wisdom seem to guide the choices Mr. Moro makes in this short segment of the lesson. To explain, as Mr. Moro moves around the room, he notices Theo twirling his pencil looking at his blank page in a somewhat ‘glazed’ fashion. At this point, his noticing action (in turn 1) to assist Theo individually seems to be one prompted by his prior knowledge of Theo’s identity as a literacy learner and of his more restricted experiences as an English language user. This instructional move to help Theo at this particular moment sets in motion particular actions and interactions between them, but as this begins, Mr. Moro does not, or cannot, know how things with Theo will actually progress or turn out. For instance, Theo’s shrugging (turn 1) shifts Mr. Moro’s action towards reminding, prompting and revising; these pedagogical moves appeared, at this time, to be the right things to do to assist Theo begin his sentence writing.

Following this, Mr. Moro’s shift of position to crouch down alongside the desk to be beside Theo at eye level (turn 2) appeared to be an action touched off by Mr. Moro’s knowledge of Theo’s reluctance to begin a task along with his knowledge of Theo’s lack of self-confidence with English literacy. This physical move seemed to encourage Theo’s enthusiastic telling of his sentence (in turn 2)—a pronouncement that prompted a positive feedback response by Mr. Moro (in turn 3); ‘excellent, love that expression, what an improved sentence from your first go’. Mr. Moro then incorporated some important teaching moments customised for Theo who required additional support in English language and literacy learning. For example, the provision of specific literacy cues, like ‘writing words one by one to make the sentence, your ideas sound right, make sense’, reminding Theo that they ‘wrote the word *they* the other day’, and to ‘focus on hearing the beginning sounds to help with the spelling’, make apparent both Mr. Moro’s knowledge of the technical skills of writing that at the same time are significant for Theo as he continues in the practice. Each pedagogical move required practical wisdom for a timely, sensitive response to a student with additional literacy learning needs. Yet as it turned out, Mr. Moro would not have anticipated that Theo might cry (turn 6). This is unknowable *a priori* to the moment, but it is what actually happens next that demonstrates praxis. Here, it was his response to put his hand on his shoulder at that moment that indicates that Mr. Moro at that time seemed concerned for Theo’s well-being and literacy identity. It is our view that this move could be described as praxis guided by the disposition of *phronēsis*.

This transcript provides empirical displays of pedagogical praxis. Since these kinds of responding moves to interact with individual learners, like Theo, at particular moments demonstrate a kind of professional knowledge and practical wisdom that teachers, like Mr. Moro, make apparent *in the doing*. The transcript is one that illustrates the ways particular practical actions are influenced in moments by a disposition for *doing the right thing here and now*. In many ways, we can see how guided by the disposition of *phronēsis*, praxis reveals itself in the unfolding turn-by-turn moments in lesson practices. As the lesson progresses, Mr. Moro demonstrates praxis in practice as he offers timely praise (turns 5, 7, 9, 15, 19 and 21), provides focused explicit writing instruction at teachable moments (turns 3, 5, 13, 11 and 17) and offers cueing and prompting next turn actions (turns 3, 5, 9, 11 and 17) to assist

Theo's accomplishment of writing his sentence about the escaped cow. It is critically important that Theo's own responses 'that's right isn't it Mr. Moro' (turn 18), 'I've got it' (turn 20), and 'I know it, can do it myself' (turn 22) provide evidence that indeed Mr. Moro in this lesson was acting in the best interests of Theo.

In this short transcript, attention is drawn to the collective, social and corporeal aspects of human activity. Here, we examined the notion of praxis and how pedagogical praxis moves teachers and learners into, as Kemmis contests, educational practices that are undertaken by morally committed professional. It is in examining lessons like this that the ways educational practices are influenced by more than technical skills and performativity are highlighted. We see that practical action (the praxis, the doing) is clearly guided and influenced by an educator's practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) in the moment of acting in highly nuanced site-responsive ways. As Lindeman (1944, p. 103) acknowledged, although many teachers are involved with *pedagogical praxis*—teaching acts which shape and change the world for individuals and the collective—the notion of praxis often is not part of their vocabulary. To this we add—nor is praxis as a concept that is overtly part of many teachers' meta-awareness as they act in actual moments of teaching; they do what is right in the moment and this evidenced in the pedagogical moves they make to support student learning, well-being and positive identity development. We argue that explicitly knowing praxis in practice for oneself provides educators with a meta-cognitive awareness of the kind of pedagogical actions that can be described as educational with certain individual and, ultimately, societal goods. Herein lies an important imperative for teacher education.

## **In Whose Interests Are We Acting?**

This chapter takes up Kemmis' long challenge to educators that there is a need to restore the broader sense of purpose of education. Taking Kemmis' lead, we argue this is an urgent task, not simply in order to move understandings beyond technical descriptions of schooling where performativity and accountability pressure the daily lives of educators, but to recover a sense of its significance for educators, like Mr. Moro, as they practise in 'educational' moments. Understanding education through the philosophical ideas of praxis provides educators with a resource for reconsidering primacy of praxis, and more critically, to consider whether their 'educational' practices are really educational, or, on the contrary, only practices of schooling. This is necessary because in constantly changing social, political, material and environmental circumstances for both educators and those being educated we need to be sure that *living well in a world worth living in* means we know with absolute certainty in whose interests we are acting.

## Postscript

It is by virtue of Stephen's disposition for living a praxis-oriented life that we came together to write this chapter to mark his role in influencing our three distinctly different educational lives in significant ways. From the early–mid-2000, the three of us—among others of course—work/ed with Stephen at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, Australia. Led by Stephen, part of our work then involved participating in critical conversations about pedagogy, education and praxis (along with colleagues Ian Hardy, Jane Wilkinson, Will Adlong, Helen Russell and his wife Ros Brennan-Kemmis *now deceased*). These conversations contributed to the foundations for the now longstanding international research network 'Pedagogy Education and Praxis' (PEP) (meeting yearly since 2006). From these early moments, a number of themes recurred in our discussions with Stephen and our colleagues about the nature of praxis, and to this day continue to reverberate through the work of the PEP network. Through Stephen's leadership in PEP International's research programme, of which we have been part from the beginning, the PEP network continues to reflect on and examine the influences of neoliberalism on educational practices, researching questions concerned with pedagogy, education and praxis, in particular ideas characterising:

1. agency, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, being, becoming, identity (and difference and otherness) and reflexivity;
2. site ontology and the particularity of sites and materiality;
3. connectedness, relatedness, conditions, practice arrangements;
4. history and biography;
5. morality, ethics and justice;
6. the purposes, connections and differences between education and schooling;
7. critical participatory educational action research and emancipatory practice
8. the differences and connections between praxis, practice and practice architecture;
9. praxis as revealed in Sayings (not just thinking or intending), doing and relatings
10. Practice traditions and practice landscapes;
11. the nature of and ecological connections between the Education Complex of Practices (that is, teaching, student learning, professional learning and development, leading and researching); and
12. the enablements and constraints in enactment.

The list here is not exhaustive, but both individually and collectively our own educational and intellectual histories were influenced by Stephen in ways that challenged us to consider, but moreover confront, the profound consequences of the happeningness of educational practices like teaching, learning, professional development, leading and researching. In turn, this challenge drew us all to an existential and ontological view of educational work that at the same time required us to understand our own actions—especially our praxis *as happening* in the living processes of history and *as contributing* to a history we share with others as researchers and educators.

With this, Stephen's sincere commitment to education and deep wisdom—realised and expressed in praxis—played a pivotal role in drawing us into discovering praxis for ourselves and in ourselves, changing the directions of our professional lives: Tracey as co-editor with Stephen of the first PEP book '*Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education*' which initiated a series of Sense publications (from the international PEP network) that set in train a solid foundation for the establishment, ongoing development and growth of PEP's research programme since 2006; Peter, as co-author with Stephen, of the seminal publication '*Situating praxis in practice: Practice architecture and the cultural, social and material conditions for practice*' (appearing as Chap. 2 in '*Enabling Praxis*') that launched a comprehensive introduction to the theory of practice architectures that has been subsequently utilised by researchers across the globe as an analytic, linguistic and theoretical tool for understanding and changing practices; and Christine as co-chief investigator—with Stephen, Jane Wilkinson, Ian Hardy, Peter Grootenboer and Laurette Bristol—of an Australian government funded philosophical-empirical inquiry examining the ecological connections between *leading and learning* practices in education (published in *Changing Practices, Changing Education* 2014) that established critical empirical evidence of the utility of the theory of practice architectures for understanding the complexity of educational practices, and more recently as co-author with Stephen of the text *Understanding Education: History, Politics and Practice* (2018). Bringing us into these professional activities in strategic ways was an expression of Stephen's commitment to educational praxis; these history-making actions had real consequences for our future educational work, practices for which we are forever grateful.

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