

3. RESEARCH THAT FACILITATES PRAXIS AND PRAXIS DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This chapter draws on an integrative literature review of the corpus of Pedagogy, Education and Praxis (PEP) publications between 2008 and 2018, examining research conducted *in* and *for* praxis, that is, research that helps us to understand and facilitate praxis. The chapter maps some of the central foundations that cut across educational research facilitating praxis and praxis development, including the theory of practice architectures and educational action research. It also touches upon approaches that, despite their connections with praxis, appear to be less common. The chapter also deliberates on the conditions under which research in and for praxis might be conducted, and by whom, in different educational settings and national contexts. The findings show that research in and for praxis is possible via multiple approaches and various positionalities, as long as the aim is to go beyond understanding praxis into realising its possibilities in actual educational sites. These multiple approaches include ‘insider’, ‘outsider’, and ‘in-between’ researcher locations. Overall, our review reveals that the rich and varied works on, with, and for praxis discussed in the chapter can provide a powerful armoury with which to speak back to increasingly homogenised and homogenising research approaches in education. It also suggests that the emergence of new ideas and less dominant theories has the potential to further facilitate the (re)imagining of new possibilities for research/praxis development.

Introduction

In this chapter, we draw together key findings from a review exploring research conducted *in* and *for* praxis, that is, research that helps us not only to understand but also facilitate praxis. We do it by exploring studies that focus on praxis and praxis development, rather than practice *per se*¹, responding to one of the five research questions explored by researchers in the network Pedagogy, Education and Praxis (PEP), that is, What research approaches facilitate praxis and praxis development in different (inter)national contexts?²

In examining this question, a corpus of publications of the PEP research network, from 2008 to 2018, was canvassed, including works published in English, Finnish, and Swedish. Furthermore, to explore the question in more detail, we broke it down into the following sub-questions:

1. What are the key methodological/theoretical ideas informing research approaches facilitating praxis and praxis development?
2. How do different arrangements prefigure research facilitating praxis?

¹ See Russell and Grootenboer (2008), and Chapter 2 in this volume, for the difference between praxis and practice.

² See Chapter 1 for more details of PEP, and a full list of the PEP international research program questions.

3. Whose praxis is being facilitated (or attempted to be facilitated)? From what position is it being claimed that this praxis is being facilitated? How is it being facilitated?

These questions form the organisational structure of this chapter.

In order to address these questions, it is important to define some of the central concepts that guided our reading and writing. We have taken the phrase ‘research approaches’ to refer to both the theoretical and methodological lenses that have been employed in terms of facilitating educational praxis and praxis development. In relation to the term, ‘praxis’, we note that, as explained in preceding chapters, the PEP literature has typically adopted a view of educational praxis from a stereoscopic lens that combines neo-Aristotelian notions of praxis as ‘right conduct’, with a post-Marxian view of praxis as morally and socially responsible, ‘history-making action’ (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 4). In terms of ‘right conduct’, such praxis has been clearly linked to the Aristotelian concept of *phronēsis*, that is, the practical reasoning, practical philosophy, or disposition that guides educators’ wise and prudent action (praxis) (Kemmis & Smith, 2008; Kemmis, 2012a). However, rather than being a method for reasoning, it is noted that *phronēsis* is “a moral and intellectual virtue that is inseparable from practice”, constituting the moral consciousness of those who aim to “do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 141, as cited in Carr, 2006, p. 426).

Thus, so the argument goes, as a virtue, *phronēsis* cannot be transmitted as a form of *technē*, for example, through an initial teacher education program focusing only on practical skills development, or through ongoing professional development on particular techniques prescribing how to cater for different learners’ needs. However, *phronēsis* and praxis can be developed by particular forms of research and reflection that support educators to engage with, and make judgements about, what the most appropriate and morally right course of action might be in the light of their professional views in their specific site and time. This course of action requires that educators consider their understanding of the possibilities in their local sites, as well as their interpretation of the locally -and globally- accepted views of the purpose of education (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis, 2012a). Such research can foster the conditions by which educators begin to develop their own praxis, and, through observing and reflecting on the consequences of their praxis, their *phronēsis* or wisdom. Our chapter focuses on this kind of research.

We now turn to discussing our first set of findings in response to Sub-Question One, that is, *What are the key methodological/theoretical ideas informing research approaches facilitating praxis and praxis development in the PEP literature?*

Key methodological/theoretical ideas informing research facilitating praxis

In terms of the question of which research approaches facilitate praxis and its development, we note that such research approaches of necessity go beyond understanding praxis (see examples of this research in Chapter 2); or the conditions that render possible praxis and praxis development (see Chapter 4). We also note that the question of how research approaches facilitate praxis and its development presumes that particular key ideas inform such research approaches. The ideas informing the PEP literature in regard to these research approaches are multiple and diverse and need to be explicated. The following section thus examines some of the key theoretical concepts informing research facilitating praxis.

Theories of social justice and change

In research literature more generally, a diverse range of theoretical ideas underpins research approaches that claim to facilitate praxis and praxis development (Carr, 2006, p. 422). Many approaches have their roots in ideals of social justice (Rawls, 1999; Fraser, 2009; Young, 1990; Freire, 1969/2000), which is understandable given the transformative and often critical-emancipatory aims of praxis. Some of these approaches are implied in the PEP corpus of literature whereas others are foregrounded. For example, Iris Marion Young's concepts about self-expression, self-development, and self-determination as aims for social justice (1990) are not explicitly used to frame research reviewed for this chapter, but they have been used implicitly to understand the aims of education (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Mahon, 2014, p. 232). Likewise, Freire's ideas of justice, 'conscientization', and conceptualisation of praxis are implicit in much of the research we reviewed (see, for example, Santos, 2016).

However, not all research framed within theories of social justice facilitates change. This was noted in Marx's famous Theses on Feuerbach (1888/2002), according to which (Thesis 11) "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." Freire (1969/2000, p. 48) referred to the same problem, using the term "armchair revolution" to describe research which poses critical questions about society, but keeps a distance from the field and stays at a theoretical level. More recently, Gert Biesta and colleagues (2019) have argued that educational research should not only explain problems or even limit itself to solving them; rather educational research should in fact cause problems. Biesta and colleagues' logic is that because problems are never just 'there', they cannot be understood or solved without first defining why they are important, why they require solving, and from whose perspective. They argue that research into seemingly unproblematic settings should not accept and maintain the status quo but instead, scrutinise and problematise the situation (Biesta et al., 2019).

Much of the research we examined for this chapter starts from the premise that transformations in society, for example, through changes in schools or preschools, come through changes in the praxis of those involved. Thus, research approaches facilitating praxis tend to be, understandably, participatory and responsive to the historical time and social, political, and cultural circumstances of their site. The theory of practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer, & Bristol, 2014), developed in the PEP network over the last ten years has been useful in addressing this need.

The theory of practice architectures

The theory of practice architectures sits under the broad umbrella of approaches influenced by the 'practice turn' (Savigny, Knorr-Cetina, & Schatzki, 2001) and the notion of site ontologies, informed by the work of the practice philosopher Theodore Schatzki (2003, 2005, 2010). A site ontological approach to studying practice draws attention to the specificity of sites and to the connections (or lack thereof) between practices in a site, rather than between participants in a site (Kemmis et al., 2014). By rendering visible the often taken-for-granted arrangements that enable and constrain specific practices, such as researching to develop one's praxis, in particular sites, the theory can foreground questions about how to change arrangements to make such researching possible (Kemmis et al., 2014). In particular, the theory helps us understand how attention to the specificities of the site is required in order to conduct research that facilitates praxis with all its "happening-

ness” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 29, following Schatzki, 2010), and in ways that are relevant and effective for those involved. The theory of practice architectures is by far the most common theoretical resource drawn from in the PEP literature reviewed for this chapter.

Less commonly, but nonetheless present, are ideas drawn from the theoretical armoury of Arendt (Santos, 2016; Langelotz, 2017b), Bourdieu (Wilkinson, 2008), Garfinkle (Edwards-Groves, 2017), Foucault (Langelotz, 2014; 2017a, b; Variyan, 2018), Habermas and Honneth (Heikkinen & Huttunen, 2017; Huttunen, 2009; Huttunen & Murphy, 2012), Ricoeur (Olin, 2009), MacIntyre (Mahon, 2014), feminism and postcolonial research (Exley, Whatman, & Singh, 2018; Wilkinson, 2008), and Scandinavian New Organisational Theory (Wilkinson, Olin, Lund, & Stjernström, 2013), to name a few. The emergence of new ideas and less dominant theories facilitates the collective praxis development of researchers and helps to move thinking forward. We will return to this point in the chapter’s conclusion.

Research practices facilitating praxis and praxis development

In this chapter, we do not make a rigid delineation between theories, methodologies, and methods. Instead, we view research methods as useful to the extent that they contribute to the development of more or less explicit theories about or interpretations of the world. Theoretical terms, such as those employed in relation to social justice or equity, become visible in the empirical world through the use of research methods. Moreover, we note that methods are not neutral tools; they are theory-laden in the sense that they imply a language for describing, interpreting, or explaining phenomena. Hence, we now move from identifying key ideas underlying much of the PEP research facilitating praxis, to the interlinked question of how, in practice, research approaches facilitating praxis and praxis development are employed. As such, we turn first to action research, and then present other, complementary approaches we found to be common in research aiming for praxis or praxis development.

Educational action research

Educational action research would appear to be one of the most relevant approaches for praxis development across different educational sites and national contexts, which is not surprising, given the clear connection between action research and praxis development. Kurt Lewin, whose name is often associated with the origins of action research (see, for example, Bradbury-Huang, 2010), contended that “if you want truly to understand something, try to change it” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 18). However, early versions of action research were mostly focused in changing the practices of others, rather than facilitating praxis in a participatory manner.

Rather than providing a comprehensive history of educational action research in the countries of PEP research³, our purpose in this section is to show, on the one hand, how differing traditions of action research have shaped the current work of PEP, and on the other hand, how PEP scholars have contributed to the field of action research. Educational action research in today’s PEP research has influences from John Dewey’s work dedicated to education, teachers’ work, democracy, and pragmatism; Robert N. Rapoport’s (1970)

³ For comprehensive histories of action research, see, for example, Hendricks (2019).

early ideas of action research and organisational development, which spread gradually to education; as well as the work of Lawrence Stenhouse, John Elliott, and Clem Adelman (Kemmis, 1993). The epistemological and ontological ideals of these early action researchers are prominent especially in the PEP research conducted in Anglophone countries, and in approaches highlighting the importance of ‘teachers-as-researchers’. Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis (1986), both of whom, especially Kemmis, have influenced the development of intellectual resources of the PEP network have highlighted that action research is not only a research method but also a way to facilitate educator’s learning. Action research can help education return to its roots in philosophy, history, and theory, and, as such, research and practice should be combined to develop educational practice and praxis in a critical way (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). This insight, brought to wide audiences in their classic book *Becoming Critical – Education, knowledge and action research*, has strengthened the stance of action research in education.

The development of action research in the Nordic Countries with North Germanic languages (mostly Swedish and Norwegian) has developed through slightly different routes, providing Nordic Action Research with arguably its own strand of action research⁴ (see Chapter 7). As in Anglophone countries, the history of action research in the northern PEP-countries of Sweden, Norway, and Finland formed in relation to local societal needs, in particular, the need to educate the ‘common’ people and use their knowledge to develop industry as well as democratic society. Nordic traditions of folk enlightenment and workers’ education at the end of the nineteenth century culminated in major social change programs of the 1960s and ’70s. These included the Norwegian Industrial Democracy Project of the 1960s (Thorsrud, 1970), and the Swedish shipbuilding projects employing ‘research circles’ in the 1970s (e.g., Holmstrand & Härnsten, 2003). These, and other like projects, have marked important moments in the history of action research in the Nordic nations (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Wiebe, 2015), sharing a revolutionary idea that practitioners (such as ship builders or factory workers) were not “expendable spare parts” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 23). Rather, they were a valuable resource who, as participants in work processes and practices, could play a key role in improving work conditions and productivity. This aspiration clearly aligns with ideals of praxis and especially *phronēsis*. Early action research projects like these created and continue to foster connections between work research, the union movement, and adult education throughout Scandinavia.

Drawing on their own languages and Nordic traditions of action research such as study circles, Anglophone approaches such as Carr and Kemmis’s critical traditions, and to a lesser extent, Central and South American traditions such as those pioneered by Fals Borda (cf., Santos, 2016), PEP researchers have utilised action research to a significant degree to explore educational practices and praxis of their national contexts. In Finland, the most cited Finnish action research source was written by PEP-researcher Hannu Heikkinen with Rovio and Syrjälä (2007). In Sweden, Karin Rönnerman’s action research studies, conducted over more than 20 years, are widely known and used as reference points (see, for example, Rönnerman, 1998). Doris Santos’ research on critical participatory action

⁴ The dominant languages of Sweden and Norway belong to the Nordic Germanic group, whereas Finnish does not. Thus, action research in Finland differs from the ‘Nordic tradition’ by drawing more heavily on English sources (Heikkinen et al., 2007).

research (2016) has been influential in building action research communities in Central and South America. Much of this literature, especially that which has been written in English, has reached wide audiences internationally (for example, the revised Action Research Planner, updated by Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014, from the 1986 Kemmis & McTaggart edition), thus impacting the global action research field.

Collaborative research practices

The ongoing commitment to consistent and systematic collaborative research across different national contexts has been crucial for the PEP network (Edwards-Groves & Kemmis, 2016). In the Nordic context, democracy and research as a democratic practice are recurring themes and highlighted in relation to action research within and between varying national contexts. For example, Olin, Karlberg-Granlund, and Moksnes Furu (2016) explore academic action researchers' double role when facilitating school teachers' professional learning projects in Sweden, Finland, and Norway. They reveal multi-faceted ways of working democratically in partnership with teachers and the importance of the act of recognition when forming and reforming teaching practices. Furthermore, the researcher's ability to spend time in order to gain trust within a site is emphasised in several cross-national publications, such as a special issue around partnership and recognition in education edited by Australian, Swedish, and Finnish researchers (Edwards-Groves, Olin, & Karlberg-Granlund, 2016). A similar point is explored when working with vulnerable populations across educational contexts such as Canada, Australia, Sweden, and Finland (see, for example, Reimer et al., 2019). Further examples are Pennanen, Bristol, Wilkinson, and Heikkinen (2017), who examined the practice architectures of collaborative research between Finnish, Australian, and Caribbean educational research contexts, and Sjølie, Francisco, and Langelotz (2018/2019), who explored 'communicative learning spaces' in Norway, Australia, and Sweden. These parallel or comparative projects create opportunities not only to understand or facilitate praxis in researchers' own national contexts, but also to broaden thinking into the diversity of ways in which praxis can be understood in varying educational contexts across nations.

Specific methods and tools within and outside action research have also found their way into research facilitating praxis. These changes can be seen in the changing field of educational research in general and more specifically in the corpus of work reviewed for this chapter. Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2017) have enriched the analytical armoury of research facilitating praxis. Technological tools such as video (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2017; Mahon, 2016) or mobile phones to record interviews or to take pictures (Wilkinson & Lloyd, 2017) have changed the way we generate data in praxis research. They have the potential to contribute to making research more collaborative and participatory as educators and students can document and explore their own work. Methods like student poetry writing (Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008), teacher-made videos, and transcripts (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2017), drawings, photo elicitation and photo-voice (e.g., Kaukko & Wilkinson, 2018; Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008), and participant-data sharing through for example blogging (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2017) are also used for this purpose.

Dialogue cafés and dialogue circles where professionals engage in research and experience-based discussions are methods used especially in the Nordic countries (see, for example, Lund & Moksnes Furu, 2014; Rönnerman & Salo, 2014). Similar methods have developed in Australia, where university teachers engage in research conversation that

facilitates their praxis (for example ‘Teacher Talk Groups’, see Hardy, 2010; Edwards-Groves, 2013; Mahon, 2014). These are examples of research which aim to facilitate praxis and praxis development. These methods have the potential to make research by professionals more accessible and more relevant for their praxis. Thus, they may contribute simultaneously to deepening of the knowledge base and changing praxis of those involved, as well as widening participation of practitioners in research.

Arrangements enabling research facilitating praxis

Our second sub question relates to different arrangements that prefigure (enable or constrain) research facilitating praxis. We have already noted that histories and traditions make an impact. There are, of course, other arrangements that enable such research. Language (cultural-discursive arrangement), time, technological resources and money (material-economic arrangements), and relations (social-political arrangements), to name but a few, are also crucial. In this section we discuss how these arrangements emerge in the reviewed literature.

Among the most obvious arrangements that enable or constrain research facilitating praxis are the several languages spoken in a site, and the kinds of topics discussed. For example, the literature review we conducted for this chapter was predicated on selection criteria based on key words or titles employing language such as ‘praxis’. However, our multilingual review revealed that research can facilitate praxis without necessarily using the word praxis. This applies to research written in Finnish and Swedish, but also to research conducted in other non-English contexts, written in English. For instance, in the anthology *Lost in Practice: Transforming Educational Action Research* (edited by Rönnerman & Salo, 2014), the development of action research in Nordic countries is outlined and the authors note that action research is a practical science. The chapters in the book elaborate on Nordic traditions and theories without using the concept of praxis. The book discusses dialogue and conversations as a means of enhancing practitioners’ reflexivity and self-knowledge, in order to enable practitioners “to identify and eliminate the inadequacies and limitations of the practical knowledge sustaining their practice” (Carr 2006, p. 427). Rather than calling this ‘praxis’ or ‘praxis development’, the text refers to this as practice development. In the chapters of the book, the authors from Finland, Norway, and Sweden seldom use the concept of ‘praxis’ although it is clear that the action research studies described elaborate on how to facilitate praxis and praxis development (e.g., Aspfors, Pörn, Forsman, Salo, & Karlberg-Granlund, 2014; Wennergren, 2014).

Hence, in some texts, the praxis dimension is not explicit but interwoven in the concept of practice. In other texts, writers have maintained a balance between explicit and consistent use of terms. For example, in Finnish, ‘practice’ can be translated as *käytäntö*, which means not only practice but also a custom or way that things are done (Itkonen, 1992). The word ‘praxis’ (or *praksis*) is rarely used. In the small body of PEP literature in Finnish found for this chapter, only three (Heikkinen, Kiilakoski, Huttunen, Kaukko, & Kemmis, 2018; Heikkinen & Huttunen, 2017; Kaukko, 2017⁵) used the word ‘praxis’ or ‘praksis’. In some texts (such as the above-mentioned Heikkinen et al., 2018), the authors attempt to overcome the conceptual confusion by making a distinction between *käytänne* (common practice) and *käytäntö* (multiple common practices together), but the distinction

⁵ Later published as Kaukko, Kielinen, and Alasuutari (2019).

between these words has not become common in spoken or written Finnish. In Swedish, the word *praxis* has more or less the same two meanings as Finnish *käytäntö*. To muddy the space further, Swedish and Norwegian-speaking Nordic countries have introduced the concept of ‘praxis-near research’ (Mattson & Kemmis, 2007), which has later evolved into ‘practice-based research’ (*praktiknära forskning*). It might also be noted that, in English and in Swedish, the noun ‘practice’ can also refer to customary ways of doing things, or an organisation (as in a ‘legal practice’, or a ‘medical practice’), as well as a social practice more generally. Moreover, in English, the verb ‘to practise’ can also mean a kind of exercise (as in ‘practising scales on the piano’) as well as enacting or conducting a kind of social or professional practice (like teaching or caring).

These examples show that concepts such as *praxis* or *practice* can be used interchangeably, sometimes confusingly, across different language groups and national contexts. Research needs to be communicated in a shared language in order to make it understood, or to make an impact. The way concepts are used in research reflects not only the language but also the philosophies, histories, and intellectual and practice traditions of the (inter)national contexts of research examined in this chapter. The PEP research reviewed for this chapter does not simply repeat the traditions of their contexts. Instead some studies aim to recreate them in critical and dynamic ways. For instance, in the Nordic PEP literature, we find an emphasis on the culture and traditions of the Germanic concept of ‘*bildung*’ (in Swedish: *bildning*) and ‘folk *bildung*’ (in Swedish: *folkbildning*), the latter of which has roots in work science and adult education (Hardy, Salo, & Rönnerman, 2015; Langelotz, 2014; Rönnerman & Salo, 2012). However, such ideas are also problematised, for a range of reasons such as their possibly elitist and individualist connotations. One example is Langelotz’s research on Swedish teachers’ peer group mentoring (Langelotz, 2014, 2017a, b), with clear traces from adult education such as study circles (i.e., ‘*folkbildning*’). Combining the theory of practice architectures with Foucault’s concepts of the power/knowledge nexus and discourse, Langelotz found tensions amongst the peer group mentoring participants and a risk that individuals might be stigmatised (Langelotz, 2014, 2017a, b). Another example of the power of research to problematise taken-for-granted concepts is Doris Santos’s (2016) action research in Colombian higher education, drawing on her immersion in the Latin American action research approaches of Freire and Fals Borda, as well as Hannah Arendt’s concept of *natality* (Champlin, 2013). Santos examines the problematic assumptions of participation that sit beneath notions of participatory action research (i.e., the ‘P’ in PAR). She suggests that PAR be re-signified on the basis of six imbricated ‘P’ notions: people, plurality, publicity, participation, power, and politics (Santos, 2016, p. 635), rather than limiting its meaning to only participation. She argues that CPAR understood as participation only, carries simplistic and often unproblematised assumptions of people’s universal and equal possibilities to participate in ways that are meaningful for them (Santos, 2016).

What we have discussed above are examples of how, on the one hand, research facilitating *praxis* has been prefigured by the different arrangements (such as languages and ideas or traditions) found in or brought to different national sites, and, on the other, when this research has also shaped those arrangements, for example, by problematising the use of certain concepts. At least as significant is the climate in which research is conducted. The way research approaches are used reflects the individual histories, interests, and viewpoints of researchers in this chapter, as well as their historically and socially constructed ways of understanding education and educational research.

Furthermore, the social-political climate of the parts of the world in which PEP research is conducted influences what kind of research is possible and viewed as valued or worthwhile. This variation also reflects the changing world, and the key differences between the social-political arrangements of our contexts. For example, addressing issues of discrimination and inequity, in educational efforts to create ‘world[s] worth living in’ (Kemmis et al., 2014) may look different in the Nordic social-democratic nations compared to Colombia or the Caribbean. Research from Latin America, for example, addresses issues of civil war and attempts to build reconciliation between stakeholders as part of critical participatory action research projects in Colombian tertiary education (Santos, 2016). What enables research that facilitates praxis in these different locations is that “[t]he knowledge that guides praxis always arises from and must always relate back to practice” (Carr, 2006, p. 427), and the achieved change is beneficial for that context.

Whose praxis is being researched, and from where?

In the preceding sections, we have discussed how research facilitating praxis has been shaped by – and has shaped – the historical and geographical contexts in which it has been conducted. We now move to discuss the third and last sub-question of this chapter, ‘Whose praxis is being facilitated (or is attempting to be facilitated), and from which position?’. It allows us to explore not only who the research is about, but also where praxis is located within the education complex (see Figure 3.1 below), whose praxis matters, and from which positionalities it is explored.

Our review of the PEP literature reveals that in most cases, research aiming to facilitate praxis starts from an assumption that praxis and praxis development are desirable and should be promoted. Typically, the findings suggest that the chosen research approach has worked to facilitate praxis, and that the participants, more often than not, have benefited from this development. There is a danger, however, that the question used to guide the literature review reported in this chapter (What research approaches facilitate praxis and praxis development?) might steer us to find ‘success stories’ of praxis development and hide some contesting voices of those whose praxis may not have been facilitated, or whose praxis was not in focus. Not everybody views their praxis development the same way and not all research approaches can capture this diversity.

There are some studies in the literature that look reflexively at the challenges of conducting particular kinds of research, focussing on, for example, power dynamics in research teams or the complexities of conducting research with colleagues as co-participants (see, for example, Mahon, 2014; Mahon, 2016; Zhang et al., 2014). The question of whose praxis is being facilitated and by whom may reveal assumptions about whose praxis is worth facilitating, and whose knowledge is viewed as valid, but more than that, it reveals where the research focus of the network has traditionally been located.

As discussed elsewhere in this book, educational practices are sometimes (but not always) ecologically interdependent (see Figure 3.1., below). Thus, exploring how research facilitates the praxis of teachers, for example, cannot ignore the development of praxis of others at the same site, such as students or educational leaders. As shown below, all dimensions of the educational complex are acknowledged in the PEP literature collectively, but with a particular emphasis placed on the praxis of teachers.

[INSERT FIGURE 3.1 HERE]

Figure 3.1. Ecologies of Practices (modified with permission from Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 52).

Educators' praxis at the centre

The insistence on including the practitioners' praxis and their site-specific knowledge in research is clear in our review of literature (e.g., Groundwater-Smith, Mockler, Mitchell, Ponte, & Rönnerman, 2013; Forsman & Hummelstedt-Djedou, 2014; Sjølie et al., 2018/2019). This speaks back to the deprofessionalisation of educators' practices, particularly apparent in nations such as Australia (see Chapter 5 for greater elaboration on the site-based conditions for educators' practices). It also speaks back to research which, often unintentionally, can disempower and downgrade educators' knowledge with research or interventions done from the outside, in the hope of a 'quick fix'. Ideally, research for praxis avoids asking simply 'what works?', but instead asks how do things work, and for whom? Attempts for 'quick fixes' may look like good ideas from a distance and in theory, but they do not trust that professional, involved educators can indeed contribute to the development of practice in their own settings.

A push to include teachers' professional knowledge in school development projects has justified the use of action research and impacted, for example, local educational development work in Sweden (in Swedish *lokalt utvecklingsarbete*; Rönnerman 1998); earlier moves towards school-based curriculum development in Australia in the 1970s; and the process of educational delegation and deregulation in Finland (Johnson 2006). This is illustrated in PEP research which originates from these countries. For example, Edwards-Groves, Bull, and Anstey (2014) employed action research with clusters of Australian primary teachers to facilitate the use of oral language and dialogue as a means of enhancing pedagogical practices. Some studies have focused the examination of praxis in the disciplines, for example in the mathematics curriculum (see Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2014) and in the English teaching (see Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015). Other examples of teachers facilitating their own praxis through research include Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Australia (e.g., Hardy, Rönnerman, & Edwards-Groves 2018; Heikkinen, de Jong, & Vanderlinde, 2016; Rönnerman & Salo, 2014). Societal support for 'teachers as researchers' can be seen as creating enabling conditions for researching praxis in our national contexts, although in some cases, there is a risk that teachers can be 'hijacked' and misused in an instrumental rather than an emancipatory way (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

A considerable emphasis in PEP literature has been placed upon educators' praxis, with educators encompassing adult learners such as teachers, trainers, preschool teachers, tertiary educators, principals, professional developers, and researchers, which is understandable, as the role of the teachers is strongly emphasised in the five research questions framing the work of PEP (see Chapter 1). Consequently, it is most often the educators' voices that are heard. Less commonly is there a focus upon the praxis of students be they in the compulsory or post-compulsory sectors community members or families. This is a limitation not of the body of research, which has been successful in capturing the educators' voices, but a limitation of what can be said about this question based on the reviewed literature. Given the original aims of the PEP network, it makes sense that its research has focused on studies with teachers as researchers (often with external researcher partners) investigating and transforming their own practices, understandings, and sites of their practice.

However, the emphasis on teachers' praxis (and teaching) should not overrule a parallel focus on the other practices in the education complex: students' learning, researching, professional learning, and leading as they also contribute important knowledge to the

project of developing education. As Edwards-Groves and Grootenboer (2015) argue in their examination of teachers', principals', and students' voices and perspectives on teaching practices, "understanding English teaching practices must also be re-envisioned to account for an ontological practical perspective that gives pre-eminence to praxis" (p. 160). Indeed, as noted in Chapter 5, learning does not always need a teacher, but teaching always needs a learner. The need to more carefully address the students' voices has been responded to with a small but growing focus on students' learning practices (see, for example, Edwards-Groves et al., 2013; Forsman & Hummelstedt-Djedou, 2014; Kaukko & Wilkinson, 2018; Smit, 2013).

Our review shows that the use of the research approaches differs depending on whose praxis was in focus. Hence, the third key finding in our literature review was that particular research approaches were seen as facilitating praxis in three ways: from an 'outside', 'inside', and 'in-between' research position. We do not make judgements as to whether some locations facilitate praxis more effectively than others, but we argue that the location does matter. "Where you sit determines what you see", noted Westoby (2009, p. 13) and this seems to be the case also in the PEP literature. We also note that the analytic method impacts what the researcher considers to count as praxis (see, for example, Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2017). The 'real' impact relies on the participants/researchers whose praxis is the focus, and in how they use research to facilitate it.

In some of the literature reviewed, a researcher viewpoint was deliberately chosen and discussed. For example, Zhang et al. (2014) explore their own research praxis in a retrospective analysis of their own PhD work and compare the different national settings and possibilities to relate as a researcher to participants in the research. They use the concept of 'communicative space' and emphasise the importance of inviting the 'practitioners' or the 'researched', such as school teachers, physiotherapists and so on, to participate (p. 14). They argue that

being grounded in the intimacy of the lived experience of the researcher and the researched has offered us hopes to make stronger emotional connections with action research and the 'researched' in a stance of empathy and receptivity (Zhang et al., 2014, p. 16).

Thus, the research from the 'inside' reported in this study may foster a development of the authors' own ethical and respectful research praxis in the future, which can be used from other subject positions.

The role and practice of the researcher are explicitly problematised in some literature (e.g., Aspfors, Pörn, Forsman, Salo, & Karlberg-Granlund, 2015; Kemmis, 2010; Langelotz, 2014; Mahon, 2016). Langelotz (2014) discusses the delicacy of her role as a 'storyteller' in her research into peer group mentoring practice in Swedish schools. In these sites, she was invited to be part of teachers' 'confession' practices, which positioned the teachers as particularly vulnerable. Langelotz refers to this practice as peer group mentoring through a 'Foucauldian lens' (2014). Similarly, as a doctoral student conducting research into a Teacher Talk collaborative research group of which her supervisors were members, Mahon (2014) examines both her and her supervisors' challenging roles in collaborative research inquiry. In other publications drawing on Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish contexts (Rönnerman, Furu, & Salo, 2008) or Australia (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2013), the viewpoints of researchers are implied. Whether the research viewpoint was discussed or not was a matter of whose praxis was in focus, as well as the chosen research method.

In the remainder of this section, we explore these different researcher locations in the reviewed literature through a tripartite lens – considering whether the point of view of the researcher is ‘outside’ or ‘inside’ the point of view of the practitioner, or ‘in between’ the perspectives of the researcher and the practitioner/s.

Research facilitating praxis from the ‘outside’

Perhaps surprisingly given the emphasis upon action research, many of the PEP publications reviewed were *about* or *on* educational praxis, drawing on research exploring the praxis of others’ (teachers, leaders) practices. For example, this was the case in *Changing Practices, Changing Education*, in which Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer, and Bristol (2014) used ethnographic methods of observation, focus groups, and interviews, and a hermeneutical approach to explore the *education complex* – the practices of teaching, learning, leading, professional learning, and researching that hang together in several distinctive sites across two Australian states. In the beginning of their study, the methods positioned the researcher ‘outside’ the practices they studied, that is, observing these practices rather than working as action researchers with the practitioners. However, this outside position changed over time in some educational sites. To find praxis within the practice, the researchers aimed to understand what the actions meant for the people performing the practices. Furthermore, the researchers explored how people involved in these practices, that is students, teachers, leaders, and professional leaders, understood these practices. By doing this, the researchers gained access to educators’ self-understandings through a range of methods: interviews, focus groups, pre-lesson interviews, classroom and staff meeting observations, and post-lesson debriefing interviews. Moreover, the researchers wrote their emerging findings and returned to the schools to share these drafts and invite discussions about them. In so doing, they explored praxis within educators’ practices through a process they described as ‘philosophical-empirical inquiry’, which combines “observations and eliciting descriptions of practices (particularly about the talk, actions, and relationships which characterise these practices)” with “contemporary practice theory and philosophy to explore how practice theory [can be used] to interpret the empirical circumstances [they] encountered, and how [their] interpretations could also prompt development in practice theory” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 13).

This approach was based, on the one hand, on practice theory and philosophy, and, on the other, on observations of the empirical realities of practice as revealed in the classroom and other settings studied, utilising observation, interviews, document analysis, interaction analysis, and discourse analysis. In other words, the researchers made observations and elicited descriptions of practices while engaging with literature on contemporary practice theory and philosophy. This helped them to employ practice theory to “interpret the empirical circumstances they encountered, and to understand how their interpretations could prompt new developments in practice theory” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 13). Hence, rather than testing or validating existing theories in the field, or creating new knowledge inductively, based purely on observations of practices, this study combined theory and practice in a dialogic manner. In other words, it utilised a form of abductive (sometimes called *retroductive*) analysis, that is, “reasoning through the phenomenon in focus, considering its parallels to other observations and existing theories, resulting in an inferential creative process of producing new knowledge” (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, 171). As such, this approach aims to facilitate a form of praxis for both the educators and

the researchers involved in the dialogue. This dialogic approach is common across PEP research (e.g., Edwards-Groves & Hoare, 2012; Kaukko & Wilkinson, 2018).

The outside-perspective, be it more or less dialogic, allows a choice of a variety of methods. For example, Heikkinen and Huttunen (2017), Kemmis (2012a) and Carr (2007) write about the rationale of education on a theoretical level, but still aim to facilitate praxis. Rönnerman and Langelotz (2015), Boyle, Grieshaber, and Petriwskij (2018) and the book you are now holding review educational research literature. Although the subject position of such desk-based research (reviewing literature or writing theoretical texts) appears to be very much outside the practice the research discusses, this kind of research arises from practices, and can build the body of knowledge which educators can use to develop their praxis. Moreover, it can help to build conditions for praxis.

Researchers 'in between'

A second research location identified in our review of the literature lay somewhere between insider and outsider approaches. We have termed this an 'in-between' research location. Many studies use the theory of practice architectures to explore the site-based and national conditions that shape the ways practices unfold and participants' understandings of their practices. Researchers in these studies do not claim to facilitate praxis by exploring primarily their own practices, but the researchers are also not fully spectators, exploring somebody's praxis completely from the outside. Hence, the researchers may have started as "invited guests from the outside" (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 269), but, with time, have progressed closer towards an insider perspective.

For instance, Langelotz's (2014; 2017a, b) study with a teacher team employing peer group mentoring describes this move as sliding from the subject location of a guest to that of a recognised 'storyteller' – the one who co-creates and carries the story of the teachers' professional learning. The teachers had the professional knowledge, which they shared to inform research, which in turn facilitated their praxis development. The changing power relations in play enhanced the teachers' mentoring and the researcher's practice, producing a "collaborative practice" where more democratic discussions and decisions were made possible (Langelotz, 2014; 2017). Another example is a study conducted by Aspfors, Pörn, Forsman, Salo, and Karlberg-Granlund (2015), in which the authors engaged in collaborative professional development projects for teachers in Swedish-medium schools in Finland. Although the research was situated within projects for teachers' professional development, the researchers were (outsider) negotiators "concerning the cultural-discursive arrangements, the material-economic arrangements, and the social-political arrangements" (2015, p. 407) of the professional development projects. The aim was quite deliberate: to facilitate teachers' praxis (from the outside), while learning about their own researching practice and praxis (from the inside). The authors note that "an outsider such as a researcher with an authentic and professional interest in teachers' tasks always seemed to be welcomed and highly needed. Here, the researcher might serve as a catalyst" (Aspfors et al., 2015, p. 408). More examples of researchers as facilitators in teachers' professional learning projects include an action research initiative by Swedish teachers and leisure-teachers (Tyrén, 2013), and Gyllander Torkildsen's (2016) study of collaborations with Swedish junior high school teachers and students to explore and enhance assessment praxis.

The studies of Gyllander Torkildsen et al. (2016) are examples of the researcher's position shifting alongside the changing cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-

political arrangements of the research sites. For example, despite Gyllander Torkildsen et al.'s shared ambition to enhance collaboration and interaction between Swedish comprehensive school (in Swedish, *grundskola*) teachers and the researchers, they note how the material-economic arrangements of time available for teachers changed, constraining the teachers' possibilities for collaboration with the researchers and thus, positioning the researchers further to the outside. Forssten Seiser (2017) conducted a critical participatory action research initiative on Swedish comprehensive school principals' professional learning, leading, and school development. Her study reveals how the action research process developed in three phases: the establishment stage, the testing stage, and the critical stage. These stages, she contended, gradually enhanced trusting relationships among the participants, which proved necessary in order to unpack and understand these principals' pedagogical leadership. Forssten Seiser (2017) argues that her previous experiences as an 'insider', that is, a former Swedish comprehensive school principal, having inside information about the complexity of the role of the principal, gave her insights into the research process, which she otherwise would have not achieved.

In Aspfors et al. (2015), Gyllander Torkildsen et al. (2016) and Forssten Seiser (2017) studies, the researchers' positions were 'sliding' because of the arrangements in their sites. Gyllander Torkildsen and colleagues were pushed outwards, but the movement can be also in the opposite direction. In the preceding study by Kemmis et al. (2014), the extended periods of time the authors spent in schools brought the 'guests' (researchers) closer to their participants (teachers and various kinds of school leaders), developing their understanding of the happeningness of practices into which they were invited (Kemmis, 2012a). Likewise, Kaukko and Wilkinson (2018) started their research as outsiders in a multicultural primary school located in the outskirts of a major Australian city, interviewing children, teachers, and the leadership team. Over time, the children and staff became more familiar and at the same time, keen to participate in deciding how the research should progress, thus changing the relatings of the research practices. Consequently, the researchers were invited to continue with a follow-up study, collecting video data from 'inside' the everyday teaching and learning practices of the school. In such cases, the researchers gradually lose their 'outsider' status and become accepted as co-participant researchers, or 'co-researchers', with the school participants – in this case, the teachers and leadership team. These examples show changes in the intersubjective spaces between the researchers and participants, and illuminate the happeningness of practices, as well as the praxis within them.

Facilitating praxis from the 'inside'

Both outsider and in-between subject locations afford the opportunity for researchers to gain insights into educators' praxis. They can also help, at least indirectly, to facilitate the praxis of both researchers and educators. However, we acknowledge that exploring praxis (rather than solely practice) and its development is most easily accessible from the inside, through a first-person perspective (Kemmis, 2012a). Examples of this approach are apparent in the reviewed research, although perhaps surprisingly, they are not as common as one would have assumed.

There are a few studies exploring and facilitating praxis in higher education, framed by the concept of 'Teacher Talk' (e.g., Edwards-Groves, 2013; Hardy, 2010; Mahon, 2014). Edwards-Groves, Hardy, and Mahon examined, in three different studies at their respective Australian universities, communicative arenas of reflective practices of higher education

scholars, groups in which the researchers were participants, observers, and on occasion, facilitators. In Mahon's study (2014), seven scholars created a communicative arena of reflective conversation practice, simultaneously conducting a collaborative inquiry with elements of critical participatory action research, institutional ethnography, and self-study. This study provides an insider-view of higher education praxis, and how praxis can be enabled and constrained by the conditions within their setting, and how the academics negotiate tensions between the conditions and their praxis-oriented goals. Hardy (2010) argues that the findings from his study validate the use of collaborative inquiry as a form of praxis in university settings. The Edwards-Groves (2013) study showed how creating communicative space for critical and transformative dialogues enables teacher educators to research for praxis, and ultimately redefine their roles, sense of agency and professional identities. In addition to these research outcomes, The Teacher Talk group became a platform for researchers to explore and facilitate their own praxis.

Further examples of insider-research include that by Pennanen, Bristol, Wilkinson, and Heikkinen (2017), who conducted a reflexive examination of their transnational research practice as research collaborators in Finland and Australia. Their study provides a further example of an insider view into praxis and praxis development. Kaukko (2018) wrote an auto-ethnographic account of action research with a vulnerable group of children, that is, unaccompanied asylum-seeking girls. Kaukko's text was written as a practical guide for doctoral students, but the process of writing provided opportunities to explore how such research practices had influenced her as a researcher, educator, and mother. Wilkinson, Rönnerman, Bristol, and Salo (2018) examine the different ontological conditions for researching leadership in their varied national sites of Sweden, Australia, and Finland, and Kaukko and Kiilakoski (2018) focus on ethical and methodological conditions for action research with vulnerable groups of young people.

Overall, the notions of 'outsider', 'in-between', and 'insider' research locations in the study of educators' praxis are not fixed but dynamic and continually shifting. PEP research has demonstrated that researchers can research practices from the outside and find praxis within them. Researchers also can develop their own *phronēsis* or wisdom by "praxising" (Kemmis, 2012a; Russell & Grootenboer, 2008; Smith, Salo, & Grootenboer, 2010). Moreover, the possibilities of facilitating praxis are not limited to learning about one's individual actions, for praxis can also be developed by studying the rationale and consequences of other people's actions. The ways in which researchers initially enter the research site and navigate their way through it illustrates researchers' subject locations as part of a praxis continuum.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have reviewed not only the PEP literature written in English by researchers from a particular range of cultural backgrounds, but also a smaller but equally important corpus of literature written in Swedish and Finnish. Given our authorial team is composed of Finnish, Swedish, and Australian authors, this has allowed us to understand more deeply the varying traditions that underpin approaches to research across our different cultural contexts, particularly in terms of action research. A key omission has been the presence of a South American author in the team, as well as authors writing in other European languages (such as Dutch or Norwegian). We have attempted to at least partially make up for this lacuna by including all English research written about and for

research approaches conducted in contexts in PEP, which are not present in our authorial team.

In examining what research approaches facilitate praxis and praxis development in different (inter)national contexts, our review reveals that praxis can be conducted from a variety of research locations (inside, outside, in-between), but typically many of the studies reviewed explore praxis from the ‘outside’. If research was conducted from an ‘inside’ perspective (for example, when educators reflected on or researched their own praxis or research process through action research), it may have helped educators to develop a sensitivity to the local, immediate consequences of their teaching practice. Such sensitivity assists educators to become more aware or attuned to the wider consequences of their work for the learner and society over the long term (Kemmis, 2012a; Mahon, 2014). If research was conducted from the ‘outside’ or what Kemmis has termed a ‘spectator’ perspective (Kemmis, 2012a) for example, when a university researcher conducts research on an educators’ teaching practices, and reports the findings to the educator research may facilitate praxis by changing the conditions for teaching, or enabling educators to look at their own praxis differently. Furthermore, between the ‘insider’, and the ‘outsider’ positions, there is a spectrum of positions in between.

Exploring researcher locations is fruitful for it assists us in understanding whose praxis is seen as worth facilitating, and whose knowledge about praxis may be viewed as valid. However, this division into ‘insider’, ‘outsider’, and ‘in-between’ raised questions about what the researcher is an outsider or insider to the whole education complex, i.e., student learning, teaching, professional learning, leading, researching – or the various interrelated educational practices in that complex? Our main focus when considering the research location of researchers was the practice at hand, the actual focus of research, but a more holistic analysis could have interpreted this from the broader point of view of the whole education complex. This later interpretation would be justified, as most PEP researchers come from a professional background as educators, that is, teachers, principals, adult educators, and are quite well acquainted with the practices they are researching. Nonetheless, foregrounding this question is an important part of rendering explicit researchers’ praxis in the future.

Addressing the question, ‘what research approaches facilitate praxis and praxis development in different (inter)national contexts?’ affords opportunities to understand how praxis may best be facilitated in a range of different national and sector-specific contexts. It also opens the door for dialogue and cross-fertilisation of differing research traditions and understandings to be fostered and shared. However, writing this chapter also pointed out that perhaps unintended normative underpinning to the way in which the question is worded, suggesting that certain research approaches do facilitate praxis and praxis development while others do not. Yet we also acknowledge that all research, knowingly or unknowingly, expresses normative commitments, and there is no pure ‘non-normative’ perspective or location from which any research in any field can be conducted. The way the question is asked points our attention to certain things when aiming to answer the question. The normativity is therefore not a problem of the question per se, but of what can be done with the question. As discussed earlier, Biesta et al. (2019) challenge research to cause problems rather than fix them. Hence, a question to ask in the future may be: What research approaches challenge and/or facilitate praxis and praxis development? This form of the question would lead to different answers, and open up possibilities for new research-generated knowledge.

The examples of research facilitating praxis used a range of methods from ‘traditional’ methods of interviews, observations, focus groups, and case studies, to emerging methods such as ‘blogging’, video research, or poetry-writing. Many of the examples were action research, which arguably links well with the ideas of praxis and praxis development. The reviewed literature was almost purely qualitative; mixed methods or quantitative approaches were missing. There may be a useful place in future research for mixed methods and/or quantitative approaches that have the potential to raise educators’ awareness and begin a process of ‘conscientization’ (Freire, 1969/2000).

In conclusion, the rich and varied works on, with and for praxis provides a powerful armoury to speak back to increasingly homogenised and homogenising approaches to education. The findings presented in this chapter suggest possibilities for research approaches that can further contribute to the rich corpus of work emerging from the literature reviewed in this chapter.

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FIGURE 3.1

