Philosophy of Radical Inquiry: A historical case study of constructing teachers' knowledge from practice

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> Whereas the problematic of rationalisation /reification lies along a 'German' line of social-theoretical thought running from Marx through Weber to Lukacs and Critical Theory, the paradigm shift from purposive activity to communicative action was prepared by George Herbert Mead and Emile Durkheim (Habermas, 1987a, p. 1).

Abstract

There must be a powerful reason as to why most education systems around the world are essentially conservative, indeed anti-educational. That is, they are not primarily concerned with creative knowledge formation for the majority of the population, but with the passive transmission and acceptance of what is already known. This may be due to the dominant influence of economic purpose and procedure, particularly under the extensive market force imperatives of capitalist neoliberalism. In contrast, this paper advocates a radical departure from the grasping tentacles of neoliberal education and outlines an approach to the active construction of personal knowledge for staff and students alike and arising from social practice. Based on collaborative teaching and research in teacher education programs and within a framework of pragmatist philosophy, a 'praxis inquiry' model of learning and knowledge is introduced for critique and application. For our purposes, the notion of praxis is associated with Aristotle (2014) and Greek philosophy regarding action taken in living well and with Freire, where theory and practice come together for the common good of communities. A 'practice-theorising' approach has been developed called the 'Praxis Inquiry Protocol,' involving continuing and flexible cycles of practice described, explained, theorised and changed. In terms of guiding teaching as a holistic process, a set of 'Signature Pedagogies for Praxis Teacher Education' was compiled as a means of guiding, evaluating and researching classroom experience. Case writing by participants has been used as a means of gathering teaching and learning data and this process has been extended to include commentary writing and case conferencing to articulate teachers' knowledge. In terms of pragmatist philosophy that frames 'praxis inquiry,' the theorising of human experience has been explored, to connect with understandings of language, memory and consciousness. Praxis Inquiry as a radical philosophical construct, engages what it means to be human and the nature of reality and truth.

*Passed away November 2021. See biographical detail Part II.

Part 1 Authentic teachers' knowledge

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Educational organisation and evaluation takes place within a complicated and interwoven fabric of economic and socio-cultural factors. They are not independent entities floating in a sea of tranquillity. From a Marxist point of view, educational endeavour therefore will be dominated by the economic and ideological requirements of society whether capitalist or socialist, although as with all contradictions, there are principal (major) aspects and particular (minor) aspects, with constant movement between them. However it should be possible within this socio-economic context of contradiction and social division, to adopt a social justice position for the educational benefit of all families and students, regardless of background. While it follows that socially divided education will exist within a socially divided society, it also follows that schools and teachers should at the same time strive mightily to create the counter-conditions of progressive, authentic pedagogy such that students can pursue meaningful and satisfying knowledge and learning. That is, schools and teachers can adopt the position of social justice as the major aspect of the contradictions they face. In its broadest sense, justice itself according to Plato for example, is an ideal form for humans to imitate, while Aristotle spoke of justice as the maintenance of balance throughout life. In his virtue ethics, Aristotle took justice to mean acting justly with the intent of doing what is considered just within society. Justice also refers to official principles, procedures and legalities to ensure that all citizens are treated impartially, are supported when in distress and receive consequences when agreed conduct is violated. Social justice occurs within this framework and involves fair and equitable distribution of the rights, opportunities and procedures that exist for all citizens. It applies to all the institutions of society, the elimination of barriers to fair conduct and the provision of resources to ensure appropriate actions can be implemented. With this understanding and in positioning social justice as the major aspect of the educational contradiction in capitalist society, the focus of educational improvement and change is transferred from the generalised nature of policy formation and critique to the localised struggles and debates regarding knowledge and learning that confront committed teachers in their classrooms. That is, the emphasis is on what staff and students do, the social acts of daily interconnection.

In developing his theory of structuration, the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1938 -), proposed a duality of structure and agency (Giddens, 1984), whereby human actors and actions create social structures and social structures in turn impact the actions of humans. Such interaction between structure and agency means that action is not separated from structure enabling scope for intervention and initiative to occur. While policy frameworks have also arisen from structure-agency encounters at the political level and establish boundaries for institutions, educational organisations can also be subject to this arrangement in their own work and identify points of flexibility that can be altered. Giddens noted that human actors are knowledgeable in their conduct and act on three levels of consciousness, the unconscious, the practical and discursive. At the unconscious level, actors are responding automatically to the prevailing situation and are unaware of the reasons for their response. Practical consciousness involves what every actor knows and needs to know to function socially, but cannot always express. Discursive consciousness or knowledge is described as what actors are able to say, or give verbal expression to, about the social conditions they are engaging, including the conditions of their own action. What emerges from this notion of structuration by Giddens when applied to education (Burridge et al, 2010), is the portrayal of an educator constantly acting within the institutionalised rules and regulations of the location,

engaging with staff and students in acts of knowing that not only move across and between boundaries, but adapt, change and delete boundaries as required.

Similar in some respects to these features of Giddens' work, the German social theorist, Jurgen Habermas (1929 -), set about investigating and theorising what he called the 'project of modernity,' particularly following the chaos and destruction of World War II. There had to be a better way than fascism and constant conflict. He focused on the relationship between history and reason and drew upon the thinking of Aristotle and of critical social theory as developed by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s. These ideas included that of 'instrumental reason,' whereby the world is understood purely in terms of objects and people to be manipulated ultimately for individual gain and benefit. Societies that are governed by capitalist instrumental reason, generate a nihilist individualism such that the social good and common values are replaced by inward-looking need, want and greed. These features are characteristic of neoliberal and market-driven economies today. In theorising society as involving 'system and lifeworld,' Habermas is arguing that humans inhabit a lifeworld of participation, communication, agreement and consensus, while economic and political systems require the rules and legalities of instrumental rationality to maintain control and authority. At certain times in history, appropriate balance is distorted and systemic rationality exerts a strong colonising influence over the lifeworlds of citizens. Within this context, Habermas proposed that human knowledge arises from three cognitive interests, the technical, practical and emancipatory. A technical cognitive interest is found in the empirical-analytic sciences; a practical cognitive interest is incorporated in the historical-hermeneutic sciences and the approach of critically oriented sciences incorporates the emancipatory cognitive interest. Briefly, technical knowledge includes all the knowledge that is required to implement technical rationality, practical knowledge enables understanding of the issues at hand regarding purpose and outcome, while emancipatory knowledge looks to a critical understanding and critique of society, its procedures and distortions. In bringing the ideas of critical social science, system and lifeworld and forms of knowledge together, Habermas is not only describing society as it is for critique, but is moving towards what might be for a more satisfying and just modernity. His 'theory of communicative action' (to be discussed in more detail later) was one result.

From this brief introductory discussion of the work of Giddens and Habermas, it can be proposed that not only are they grappling with similar questions of human interest, society and knowledge, but that there is some connection with the theories of Aristotle and his experience of Athenian life. Techne is taken to be doing or craft knowledge, episteme is understanding of doing in the sense of scientific knowledge and phronesis is ethical knowledge where explicit values and virtues underpin the process of living well. While phronesis can be thought of as practical wisdom about a life well-lived, praxis is prudent action that arises in order to bring an ethical life into effect. In reality, it is difficult to envisage humans not integrating all of the features shown in Table 1 as they go about considering and resolving issues at home and community. Teachers similarly, as they attempt a social justice perspective in their classrooms. That is, there is a blending of activity and thinking to engage with and understand the social and physical worlds and to conceptualise what is beneficial, realistic and ethical.

	Knowledge formation	Action formation
Aristotle	Techne, episteme, phronesis	Praxis
Giddens	Unconscious, practical, discursive	Structure-agency
Habermas	Technical, practical, emancipatory	Communicative

Table 1 Relationships of knowledge-action formation

Neoliberalism and education

It is difficult today to nominate education systems around the world that have a strong social theoretical or philosophical base. National economic systems that support neoliberal ideology of course have little reason to be concerned with guidelines that might impose restrictions on market forces. This makes it difficult to identify the arrangement of neoliberal education as, according to the market, some students will succeed and others not as the natural order of things. The contradiction here is that there are very few 'purist' neoliberal ideologues either economically or educationally, given that they expect that the nation state will establish the conditions most propitious for profit, that is the economic conditions that involve taxation, trade and tariffs, interest rates, salary levels, investment opportunities and support for various financial initiatives. In his enthusiastic advocacy of market-based economics, or what is called monetarism, the American Nobel Prize laureate, Milton Friedman (1912-2006) outlined two main principles for the role of associated government: 'First, the scope of government must be limited. Its major function must be to protect our freedom both from the enemies outside our gates and from our fellow citizens; to preserve law and order; to enforce private contracts; to foster competitive markets' He went on to accentuate that 'The second broad principle is that government power must be dispersed. If government is to exercise power, better in the country than in the state, better in the state than in Washington' (Friedman, 2002, pp.2-3). He considered that capitalism was the road to human freedom and that, while government under capitalism could assist the process, yet if concentrated and especially in the wrong hands, can be a threat a freedom as well. Hence the notion that government power must be limited and dispersed. In arguing that 'the market provides economic freedom,' Friedman then went on to declare that 'Political freedom means the absence of coercion of a man by his fellow men. The fundamental threat to freedom, is the power to coerce, be it in the hands of a monarch, a dictator, an oligarchy, or a momentary majority' (ibid, p. 15). Friedman had powerful allies in United States President Ronald Reagan and United Kingdom Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who advanced neoliberal policies on a national scale. They also agreed with him that 'human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade' (Harvey, 2005, p.2). Clearly, institutionalised neoliberal education and schooling needed to meet these ideological requirements as well.

It will come as no surprise that Friedman saw a very restricted role for government in education. However he did accept that 'a stable and democratic society is impossible without a minimum degree of literacy and knowledge and without wide-spread acceptance of some common set of values' (ibid, p. 86). Except for literacy, there is no detail regarding the range of knowledges and values to be included and the definition of 'minimum.' He noted two principles by which the intervention of government in education could be rationalised. First, he wrote of what he called 'neighbourhood effects,' or 'circumstances under which the action

of one individual imposes significant costs on other individuals' and where 'voluntary exchange' to compensate individuals for costs or gains is not possible. The second principle is what he called 'paternalistic concern for children and other irresponsible individuals' (ibid, pp. 85-86). On the question of the provision of funding required for schools, Friedman famously advocated a 'voucher' system that would essentially transform education into a neoliberal market, where education is bought and sold as a commodity (ibid, p. 89):

> Governments could require a minimum level of schooling financed by giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on 'approved' educational services. Parents could then be free to spend this sum and any additional sum they themselves provided on purchasing educational services from an 'approved' institution of their choice. The educational services could be rendered by private enterprise operated for profit, or by non-profit institutions. The role of the government would be limited to ensuring that the schools met certain minimum standards, such as the inclusion of a minimum common content in their programs, much as it now inspects restaurants to ensure that they maintain minimum sanitary standards.

There is clearly no evidence of social justice thinking here, where all children regardless of background and location are provided with the highest quality education as a right ensured by society. Taken to the extreme, the market would decide whether schools remained open or closed, in the same way that a car factory may open or close, as parents decided where to invest and schools became more privatised. This is the polar opposite of what it means to support the public good, where public institutions are established and improved so that they provide excellent services for everyone. Friedman's view of a market-driven, voucher funded approach to education was strongly criticised by the profession and other commentators, especially in relation to the proposal that those parents who could afford to pay additional funds to the voucher would establish a dual system of schools, those that require what amounts to substantial fees and those where parents cannot. The neoliberal insistence on markets, privatisation and individualism therefore creates a number of contradictions when it comes to education and in particular, questions of epistemology and pedagogy. On the one hand, a more liberal approach to teaching and learning could involve an 'anything goes' approach, with a recognition that all students are different and that some will come first and others last. Alternatively, a liberal view of teaching and learning could involve the incorporation of various avenues to knowledge and many different teaching methods to cater for individual differences. Under these conditions, learning is essentially an individual and private matter and a lack of achievement and progress for many is completely acceptable. The neoliberal approach therefore will not be overly concerned with failure and with the problem for example of connecting concrete and abstract understandings of the world from a philosophical perspective, of attempting to reconcile meaning that emerges from a working class or bourgeois background. Because of their emphasis on economic and systemic questions, neoliberal epistemology has probably received little detailed attention from neoliberals themselves. A summary comparison of epistemologies and their relationship with social justice is shown in Table 2 below (Hooley, 2018, p. 13):

	Progressive Epistemology	Conservative Epistemology	Neoliberal Epistemology
Concrete, everyday knowledge	World-centred, activity emphasised, small-group discussions, uncertain outcomes.	Information-centred, passive reception, class discussions, known outcomes.	Individual-centred, diverse active/passive activities, individual considerations, varied outcomes.
Abstract, systematic knowledge	Project-based, emergent ideas, student activity, small group discussions, problematic outcomes.	Teacher-based, predetermined ideas, passive reception, class discussion, known outcomes.	Student-based, disparate active/passive activities, individual considerations, varied outcomes.
Social justice impact	Establishes personal and social environments as areas of action, progress, change, sharing and betterment for all.	Maintains personal and social hierarchies and relationships of influence and power for some.	Rearranges personal and social hierarchies and relationships due to non-regulated individual capabilities.

Table 2 summary comparison of epistemologies and social justice

While it is very difficult to identify the key features of a neoliberal approach to education and schooling, Table 2 is intended to open up this question for debate and critical analysis. A specific issue of course involves that of measuring outcomes and whether the system in place is effective. Current national and international testing regimes can be seen as being or not being contradictory with neoliberal purpose, given that content is specified and measured somewhat loosely. As per the comparison above, test results are entirely unsatisfactory for progressive educators in that they say little about learning and meaning, whereas for neoliberals, they may be satisfactory in providing rank ordering in response to information provided. Accordingly, various theorist such as Giddens and Habermas can advise on how to analyse and think about the characteristics of neoliberal society and education and how they contribute to our understanding of learning and of our humanity, or not. To this end, we now turn to the theories of George Herbert Mead.

Mead and the 'generalised other'

As a friend and colleague of John Dewey during their time at the University of Michigan and University of Chicago and along with Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and Jane Addams, George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) was one of the founders of American pragmatism (Da Silva, 2007). Unlike Dewey, Mead did not develop an explicit theory of education, but his research and writing in philosophy and sociology provided extensive guidance. He proposed for example that the key feature of learning for children was that of communication and that communication results from interaction beginning with the social group, or whole, rather than with the part, or individual, so that the part is explained in terms of the whole, rather than the other way around. Mead went on to conclude that the 'social acts' of life cannot be understood and explained as individual components by themselves, but as 'complex organic processes' of the whole. Mead (1934, p. 7) elaborated this concept when he wrote:

> A social act may be defined as one in which the occasion or stimulus which sets free an impulse is found in the character or conduct of a living form that belongs to the proper environment of the living form, whose impulse it is. I wish however to restrict the social act to the class of acts which involve the co-operation of more than one individual and whose object as defined by the act, in the sense of Bergson, is a social object.

From an epistemological point of view, this definition can be taken to mean knowledge of society that already exists in the brain, gives rise to acts that may appear to be individual, but in fact, are social and organic. Objects are taken to be problems, events, artefacts, thoughts and ideas that are available for observation, discussion and rearrangement. Based on these types of ideas and according to Miller (1990, p. 3), Mead, who was deeply interested in the nature of the self and of consciousness, assumed 'a social-behaviourist account of the genesis of the self,' such that 'The unit of existence is the act, not the moment.' Miller (ibid, p. 4) suggested that:

> If Mead can show that the emergence of the self can be explained in terms of what is experienced alike by the various participants in the social act and that the perspective of the individual emerges from a common, or shared, perspective, then he will have succeeded in showing how the individual perspective can become objective and also how it is possible for the individual to formulate new hypotheses which, in turn, may become shared by the members of society and tested through social behaviour for their objectivity.

Here is a view of self and consciousness emphasising process or emergence that does not require anything more than matter and energy interacting in human ways as social acts grapple with the physical and social environments. They remain two concepts that have resisted close definition until today, but which are used to describe how humans become. The notion of objectivity mentioned above, in one sense, means that when agreement or consensus is reached amongst participants on issues and problems, then that understanding is taken to be true, at least until such time as evidence may indicate otherwise. It is difficult to nominate events that can be agreed as universal and absolute from a scientific or cultural perspective. There is another understanding of 'objective' to be mentioned here. Mead (Miller, 1982, p. 20) spoke of 'self-consciousness,' such that 'Minds arise when, in the experience of the organism, they break out of a present and this is done when the organism becomes an object to itself.' At this point, the human organism 'becomes an object to itself and therefore a subject.' The human subject becomes aware of itself, is able to reflect and think back on itself and recognises the role and acts of others. While this notion is difficult to grasp, Mead as perhaps Giddens, is attempting to describe the key aspects of what we know as consciousness and how it might appear and be shared. Self and consciousness, to which we can add learning and knowledge, have long-been conundrums for philosophy to wrestle with and remain crucial questions for educators at all levels. Rather than being in some way pre-ordained and static for each person and perhaps beyond their control, the philosophy that all humans are active, participatory beings who are constantly transforming their relationship with the world and with each other, envisages a radical humanity with liberatory intent.

Extending the concept of self-consciousness to a more generalised understanding, Mead (1934, p. 154) developed the idea of the 'generalised other,' referred to as 'The organised community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self.' Mead argues that to develop self to the fullest, requires that each participant takes the attitude of others towards the participant and takes their attitudes towards the social activity in which participants are engaged; the individual accepts and takes the attitude of the 'generalised other.' When discussing social justice in education above, it was mentioned that different perspectives such as working class and bourgeois need to be taken into account, if all students are to bring their understandings together to generate meaning, tentative or otherwise. Mead gives the example of a baseball team, where all players need a shared understanding of the game that enter into

the shared experience of the group, each player needs to take the attitude of the others so that they can proceed together. In this way, Biesta and Trohler (2008, p.5) contend that:

> The central concept in Mead's conception of education is *meaning*. The question that guides Mead's education thinking, therefore, is how meaning can be communicated – both from one person to another and from one generation to the next. The answer he develops to this question is based on a view that conceives of human action and interaction in terms of meaning. For Mead, human action and interaction are not only *guided* by meaning; Mead also argues that through our actions and interactions, we are constantly engaged in the *creation* of meaning (emphasis in text).

On this basis, Mead's philosophy connects nicely and generally with the philosophy above of Aristotle, Giddens and Habermas. Contrary to the instrumental reason of neoliberalism, there is a strong view of all humans as creative beings, acting and interacting with the world to resolve problems and to move forward. Biesta and Trohler make an additional point to this concept, that the objects of thought and action described by Mead, do not have objective meaning in themselves, 'Their meaning lies in what they mean *to us* and this is to found in how we respond to them' (ibid, p.5, emphasis in text). A progressive philosophy is therefore available to educators for all subject content at all levels, to encourage authentic learning and knowledge to be fashioned from personal and collective creative experience.

Construction of teacher/student knowledge

If formal systems of education and schooling around the world were primarily concerned with student learning in its most profound sense, they would focus on what can be called 'the knowledge question.' Indeed, according to Bernstein (1999, p. 203), 'In the history of philosophy, especially in modern philosophy since Descartes, the primary question has been: What kind of knowledge if any, does experience yield? Or, what is the role of experience in our knowledge of the world?' Unfortunately the dominance of neoliberal ideology has ensured that philosophical issues of this type do not feature regularly in educational discourse, which is then substantially diminished. However it is possible to connect major currents of thinking throughout the centuries, from Greek and European philosophy that asked 'How should we live' and European Enlightenment thought such as Descartes that considered 'What and how can we know?' to raise our own historical question today of 'What does it mean to experience mind, to act, think, know and create ethically?' (Hooley, 2019, p. 179). It may be impossible to understand the term 'mean,' but it can be investigated through the insight of Biesta and Trohler that meaning is made by us, through our social acts, rather than being thought of as being resident in objects themselves. Whether or not there is meaning of some sort in any human endeavour is of course, open for debate. In relation to the term experience in our historical question and following on from his discussion just noted above, Bernstein suggested that both empiricism and rationalism have seen experience as a 'knowledge-affair,' but with empiricists arguing that all knowledge comes from experience and rationalists countering with the view that experience by itself is never enough. That is, knowledge requires experience and reason. Then, 'to experience mind' connects with the notions of self and consciousness discussed by Mead, where the human is able to think back upon itself, take the attitude of others and enter into collaborative communication of meaning. Whether or not human consciousness can think about itself is extremely problematic, perhaps explaining why consciousness remains the great imponderable of philosophy. Finally, the terms 'act, think, know and create ethically' are all open to similar analysis and with a range of definition, specially if an epistemological stance is taken. That is,

how do we understand the subjective nature of knowing when we 'feel' that something is now known this moment, when it was not during the previous? What is significant about this new, contemporary question is that it is clearly one of action, of human knowledge arising from the experience of acting, thinking and the like, as humans live with the world and each other. Expressed as 'the knowledge question,' this appears to be the key issue for education and schooling, historically and in terms of social justice.

In a practitioner research project regarding school restructuring that impacts on authentic teacher and student learning practices, Cherednichenko and colleagues (2001), worked for three years with schools across the Australian states of Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. Understanding social practice from the perspective of the social agents (teacher and learner) was a central feature of the methodology, sustained by teacher professional conversations and validation seminars. As will be discussed more fully in Part II of this paper, case writing formed the basis for the gathering of primary data. Case writing and professional conversations about teacher-written cases have supported the exposure of teachers' descriptions and understandings of practice, thus providing a significant insider view of the teaching and learning, rather than the traditional outsider perspective on the practice of others. Such methodological tools fostered research practices supportive of communicative action with the potential to lead to shifts in practice. Within this framework, the role of the university research team has therefore been more that of collaborative researcher and not constructed as one of professional development facilitator or critical friend to local action research. The main findings of the research emphasised the significance of student and teacher discourses, communication and dialogue, or what the research team called 'the discursive environment,' described as 'time and space geographies which enable the collective agency of teachers and students; but agency which is constrained by institutional, cultural, community and personal expectations and rules.' The overall outcomes of the project were summarised as follows:

> These five features - discourses of learning, curriculum in practice, social division, social justice and localised struggle – constitute the connection between practice constructed as personal agency in an organised setting and broader social structures and movements. Institutional reflexive practices set up the conditions for practitioners such as teachers to recognise that they possess their own reflexively informed agency with which to challenge systems' one-dimensional prescriptions for schooling

The theories of Giddens and Habermas have clearly informed these discussions and findings, drawing on understandings of structuration, discursive consciousness and communicative action. Issues of social justice arise through learning occurring from practice and the realisation that all students and teachers have their personal agency when interacting with system requirements and constraints. The approach adopted by the researchers is intrinsically philosophical and epistemological, with an emphasis on improving the learning of school students. However identifying and describing in detail the learning of school students was beyond the scope of this project, although the general direction and purpose of such research was continued somewhat extensively in Australia within the framework of teacher education and school-university partnerships (Cherednichenko et al, 1999; Kruger and Cherednichenko, 2005; Cherednichenko and Kruger, 2009).

In tracing the background of philosophy that connects with social life and the social acts of participants, politically and educationally, Karl Marx was an important theorist writing at the time of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. For example, Marx (2022) stated:

The question whether human thinking can reach objective truth – is not a question of theory, but a *practical* question. In practice, man must prove the truth, that is, actuality and power, this-sidedness of his thinking. The dispute about the actuality or non-actuality of thinking – thinking isolated from practice – is a purely *scholastic* question (emphasis in text).

In this passage, Marx is getting at the essence of praxis, when he insists that human thinking and by extension, reason, values and morality, cannot be isolated from practice, production and labour. His derisive remark regarding scholastic issues, comes from the method of scholasticism as initially followed by religious thinkers in Europe of the 1100-1700 period in trying to reconcile problems within their own traditions, but from an argumentative, idealist standpoint, without practical investigations. No doubt his position was strengthened by observation of the conditions of industrialisation across Europe at the time and the impact that machinery and factory processes had on how each person views the world. Today, it seems that computer-based technology has similar influence. In bringing theory and practice into an integrated whole, Marx was also asking what it means to know, together with the attendant epistemological and metaphysical implications. He drew upon Hegel's notion of dialectic, although he had serious disagreement with Hegel regarding materialism rather than idealism where the particular has priority over the universal, facts having priority over ideas, normative and ethical statements being not independent of production and labour and class conflict as the driver of history rather than ideas in the head. As Marx and Engels (1969, p. 79) succinctly expressed, 'The history of all hitherto existing society, is the history of class struggles.' From these types of consideration, the notion of 'dialectical materialism' central to Marx's thought, can have the following features (Hooley, 2019, pp. 4-6):

- Nature as a connected and integrated whole, in a state of constant movement and change that occurs, not as a simple repetition of what has passed, but as an upwards and onwards movement, from a new state to another, from the simple to the complex.
- Contradictions as inherent in all phenomena with a positive and negative side such that different aspects of the contradiction are becoming and dying away, enabling quantitative features being transformed into qualitative features and the reverse.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the project to be outlined in detail in Part II of this paper, supports a practice-based approach to learning and knowledge as reinforcing socially-just education. It is recognised of course, that it is a matter of independent professional judgement regarding which philosophical approach towards learning and knowledge is accepted. It may reflect a childhood of unrestrained daily exploration of the local beach and surrounds, or a rigid family situation demanding obedience to rules and procedures. The former social environment may give rise at a later stage in life to support for something like the ideal speech situation advised by Habermas, where participants seek consensus through respect for different points of view, discussion proceeds with reason and there is no coercive intent. The latter conditions may provoke a positivist approach to learning, where ideas and points of view to be accepted must be verified by definition and logic, such that other forms of knowledge based on for example cultural, intuitive and theological understandings are meaningless. Both approaches and many others to the 'knowledge question' can be used in the pursuit of truth, or of reality. In addition to the theorists discussed above, Freire (2000, p. 92) expands on the notion of praxis, dialogue and communication when he describes critical thinking in the following terms:

Finally, true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking - thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them – thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity – thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved.

This concise statement by Freire, summarises the above discussion of Part I, where critical thinking emerges from social practice and with the intention of transforming reality. It can be compared with what may be called naïve thinking, that is more concerned with some direct correlations with current activity. The discussion provides a progressive framework and starting point from which to consider the following case study, where the principles introduced here have been applied to teacher education at the early childhood, primary and secondary levels. Application of philosophical, socially-just, praxis education to its fullest extent, will dispatch neoliberal education to distant history.

Part II Practice, Partnership, Praxis

Tony Kruger

This section was written by Associate Professor Tony Kruger (deceased 2021) and has not been published until now. Tony was an academic staff member of the School of Education, Victoria University Melbourne, 1988-2020 and was Head of School, 2006-2011. During this time, he had lead responsibility for designing and implementing the new 4-year Bachelor of Education in accord with the then movement towards 4-year initial teacher education qualification in Australia and supporting the University's general commitment to access and equity. Tony developed and strongly supported the principles of social justice through practice, partnership and praxis for teacher education, including the practices of case writing and participatory action research as outlined in the narrative writing below. The section (with minor editing) brings a historical perspective to bear on the evolution of educational practice within a particular economic and political context and shows Tony's mature understandings of vision and possibility. It is most relevant concerning the conservative ideology dominating education and teacher education today with a narrow instrumental reason pervading specified content and behaviourist testing . Tony Kruger was an extraordinary person and educator, who made a significant contribution to progressive and socially-just education for all students everywhere.

Education as socially-just practice

For established universities and many faculties in universities, 30 years is a short period, but it encompasses the entire life of the Education organisational unit at Victoria University in Melbourne. Commencing with a single course with an initial enrolment of about 60 in 1985, it has grown to be a large college with about 3 000 undergraduate, postgraduate and research students. Throughout its history, despite dramatic changes in state and national political and economic environments in the university and in the college itself, it has managed to assert a set of principles to inform research priorities, course development and pedagogical choices. Commitment to education and teacher education as a social practice, was the foundational idea of courses and teaching from the outset. Grounded in relationships between teacher and students and between institutions and their communities, courses in the college have sought to exemplify education for social justice in action. In changing times and especially when the

political and institutional odds have been anything but propitious, the college has maintained commitment to education and teacher education as socially-just and practice-based, expressed within partnerships with schools and other educational institutions in the community.

What follows in this section is a historically informed explanation of the main questions and challenges which have confronted college staff as they have sought to mould principle and preferred practice in changing structural opportunities and constraints. These changes have presented challenges and questions which, on the surface, may have appeared as disabling impediments. But as Honneth (1996) has argued, '… it is precisely in the situations in which actions are problematised during their performance, that humans make cognitive gains.' These gains are conceptual, theoretical and practical, integrating elements of western social theory and the pragmatist insights of Dewey and Mead. No-one should conclude however that teacher education at Victoria University has been a kind of grand and planned project. Rather, referencing Giddens (1984), it has been a set of projects which have been expressions of personal agency and as a result of action to change institutionalised habits and relationships; that is, hopefully, as 'praxis' as Freire (1972) defined. At stake has been practice-based teacher education itself. As perceived threats appeared, the challenge was to regard the altered circumstances as no more than new conditions of action and not prescriptions to be followed. Public justifications of practices and theorising of those practices became important work for program teams, in parallel with teaching and course administration. What follows is a partial and, in truth, a personal account of the pathway to the proposition of 'praxis inquiry' as the pedagogy of teacher education at Victoria University. Transforming praxis inquiry from ideological declaration to a theorised practice has been a three decade-long struggle. It has culminated in the proposition, trialling and strengthening of a 'praxis inquiry protocol' whose goal has been to invest teacher education with a research-loke quality, akin to Stenhouses's definition that research is 'systematic inquiry made public' (Ruddick and Hopkins, 1985, p. 120).

Following a brief account of the history of teacher education at Victoria University, this section presents a discussion of the major questions and tasks that have confronted teacher educators at the university in their efforts to express commitment to socially-just education and teacher education through an explicit privileging of practice in course curriculum and pedagogy. The tasks have included:

- A clear articulation that socially-just education and teacher education are essentially matters of practice
- Finding ways for teacher education courses to adapt constructively and non-defensively to the acceleration neoliberal conditions in Australian education
- A refusal to accede to the neoliberal hollowing-out of the 'social' in teacher education
- Constructing school-university partnerships enabling local and personalised socially-just teaching practices
- Beyond 'doing stuff' to praxis, the possibility of an inquiry protocol in teacher education
- Progress towards a praxis inquiry protocol in teacher education.

While an extended discussion of the 'praxis inquiry protocol' is discussed later, within a consideration of the nature of reflexivity in teacher education, the goal here is to note that such a protocol is essential if education practitioners are to connect their daily practices with the social conditions in which they and their students work and with the social and personal consequences of their experiences.

A brief chronology of teacher education at Victoria University

Teacher education at Victoria University commenced at one of its predecessor colleges in 1985. For most of Melbourne's history, its western suburbs as the location of Victoria University, have been the heart of the city's secondary and transport industries and home to expanding working class communities. Since settlement, 180 years ago, Melbourne's west has lacked the benefits a university can bring to a community. The location of the University in 1992 was a hard-won achievement made possible by the successive re-elections of social-democratic governments at state and national levels. Policy led to the establishment of Victoria University and the history of teacher education at the University has been one of responding to policy changes and the multiple institutional lurches which have accompanied shifts in national and state government priorities and administration strategies.

The achievement of teacher education's relative strength at Victoria University cannot be listed in a neat, sequential chronology of development. What were challenging conditions or problems in the early years continue as uncertainties now, even if in different forms. In an exemplar of educational agency meeting structural shifts, at least in the early years, teacher educators at Victoria University theorised partnership-based teacher education and were able to trial options at a time of reduced enrolments in teaching courses across the state of Victoria. When confronted by demands to radically increase teacher education enrolments, the School of Education was in a position to communicate practice-based accounts of successful partnerships and suggest how they might benefit potential educational partners, such as schools and early childhood settings. In the succeeding two decades, despite continuing changes in policy, funding arrangements and institutional structures, partnership-based teacher education has been the acknowledged achievement of Victori University's School of Education. Phases of change have impelled the articulation of more developed theorising about the constitution of socially-just teacher education. Broadly, attempts now to apply a useable praxis inquiry protocol to teacher education and to generate forms of research which actively included all participants in partnership are the current contents of the ongoing struggle set by the changing structural conditions in Australian universities and teacher education over the previous quarter century.

Early years: the articulation of commitment to social justice and practice (1984-1990)

At a time when governments funded programs for students in disadvantaged schools, for students from non-English-speaking families and for multicultural education, the assertion of the primacy of practice in teacher education was largely unchallenged. Entry of students to Victoria University's teacher education courses occurred through the application of a range of criteria and eschewed the conventional ranking resulting from the formal examination system at the end of schooling. Proximity to local schools provided preservice teachers with a range of experiences in schools, including the conventional supervised teaching practice. The first preservice diploma level teacher education courses were complemented by a post-registration; degree organised around action research by participants in their schools.

'Mixed blessings' of initial neoliberal government policies and programs (1991-1998)

Federal funding changes brought reductions in general grants to higher education, with the money saved diverted into the formation of new universities through amalgamations of Colleges of Advanced Education and the introduction of the first 'quality' programs designed to produce improved outcomes. Two of these programs involved the School of Education

innovative relationships with schools, providing scope for strengthening incipient partnerships and giving added impetus to explorations in the documentation of practice by teachers and preservice teachers and the first awareness of the need for a semi-structured protocol to encourage practitioners' inquiry into practice. Declines in general university budgets however led to reductions in face-to-face teaching hours in university courses and, disturbingly, pressure to cut the number of days of practice for preservice teachers in schools. Allied with these changes internal to the university sector, the state government imposed staff and funding cuts on schools. Thousands of teachers were retrenched and many schools closed or amalgamated, with the result that interest in teaching among school leavers and those seeking a change in career dramatically decreased. Teacher education enrolment at the university declined, following years of growth, giving teacher educators time to work through the complexities in the form of partnership-based teacher education which were emerging at the university.

Creeping neoliberal juggernaut, sustained and rapid growth at Victoria University, the confirmation of partnerships, but threats to socially-committed practice (1999-2008)

Further and deeper cuts to university funding led universities to 'rationalise,' in the weasel word of the time, courses and, in universities like Victoria University, to close down campuses established to democratise the geographical distribution of higher education. Fortuitously, applicant numbers to higher education were increasing as schools were reporting teacher shortages, about which final year students in schools were becoming aware. Teaching as a career in Victoria, transformed from unpopular to popular in a handful of years. At Victoria University, the effect of these developments was eventful. Over more than a decade, university decisions resulted in the shift of funded enrolment from science, business, engineering and humanities courses to preservice teacher courses. Contributing to the steep growth was the perceived success of the School of Education's partnerships with schools, now badged as 'Project Partnerships,' signifying the elevated status accorded to the expectation that preservice teachers would make a direct and negotiated contribution to the learning of school students through their partnership experiences. Two government reports gave prominence to university partnerships, one from the Parliament of the State of Victoria (2005); the other from the Federal House of Representatives (2007). The shadow in the growth was that Victoria University's finances were reduced as government funding for education was lower than for courses with dwindling enrolments. Intensifying funding constraints threatened the practice basis of teacher education through pressure to reduce the overall costs of Project Partnerships in the School of Education.

Neoliberalism triumphant ….. or so it seems (2008 -)

The establishment of teacher registration and teacher education accreditation authorities throughout Australia has cemented neoliberal strategic thinking into preservice teacher education. Courses must now demonstrate tight connections between content, practice and assessment, leading to truncation in the scope for inquiry by preservice teachers into their experiences in partnership settings. The discourse of preservice teaching has become one of standards and the demonstration of their attainment by preservice teachers. While partnerships between universities and external educational settings have prominence in the official demands made by the accrediting authority of courses; the significance of the term 'partnership' in official documents has reduced to definitions of control over aspects of the preservice teacher experience. Despite such limitations and their effects, commitment to partnerships, practice and practice inquiry is being reworked. Research activities, some

funded by the Victorian Government, have opened up new possibilities as school authorities seek to improve what they see as weaknesses in the quality of graduating teachers resulting, in part, from poor and insufficient practice in schools (Kruger et al, 1999).

Partnerships, practice and social justice in education

The ultimate justification for a praxis inquiry protocol rests on the possibility that practice and inquiry into practice are essential for teachers to become agents for social justice in education. As neoliberal discourses, policies and educational administration became universal, the claim for the practice-justice linkage has become swamped under an acceptance that the social division of education is a question of effectiveness in teaching and management. In Australia, the work of Hattie (2013) has been particularly influential in driving the effectiveness doctrine. Why then, can the assertion be sustained that action to achieve socially-just education must be constructed around the classroom practices of teachers? The question is important in teacher education because the juggernaut of modernity, which is effectiveness, is seeking to take over university teacher education. Increased time in practice in schools is an emptiness, as the argument goes, because the 'theory' taught by 'leftist' academics in university courses is not related to the 'real' work of teaching. But there is a curious confluence in the agreement by urgers of effectiveness techniques as the sole content of teacher 'training' and those of us who advocate inquiry into practice as the only approach capable of yielding understandings and skill acquisition with any purchase on justice in the education question. Both groups argue for the privileging of – and increasing the quality and quantity of – practice.

The possibility that teachers knowledgeably aware of their students and their circumstances, including their family and community experiences, might be the primary agents in action for social justice in education, has a strong philosophical and social theoretical basis. Gerwitz (2006, p. 69), extending earlier ideas (Gerwitz, 1998) which asserted the need for both relational and distributive justice, has argued that socially-just education, expressed as education 'redistribution,' can only result from:

> first, a recognition of the multidimensional nature of justice and the potential for conflict between different facets of justice; second, Attention to the ways in which concerns of justice are mediated by the other norms and constraints that motivate actors; and third, a consideration of the way in which contradictions between different facets of justice and these other norms and between justice concerns and the constraints that compete with justice are differentially shaped by the levels and settings in which the actors are operating.

Teachers – and, arguably, only teachers as a daily occurrence – are in a position to mediate students' experiences of the norms, opportunities and constraints they confront in schooling. All three 'dimensions' require acts of recognition, not only of students with family, community, cultural and economic experiences, but also of the social and system conditions which structure these experiences. However much a system might have funded programs which 'target' the least advantaged, socially-just education will be merely an ideological illusion unless teachers are given the power, authority and resources to recognise the common and diverse features of the students in their classrooms and to act with discursive understanding of those acts of recognition. That social justice processes of recognitional and redistributive elements is an expressed quality of recent critical social thinking. While Habermas (1987b) has identified the struggle for recognition as an essential element in the

attainment of a morally-formed democratic state, Alex Honneth has been most prominent in articulating the recognitional content in the character of a just society. He theorises recognition (Honneth, 1996) in a synthesis of his critique of Hegel and Mead, as a process through which each person comes to realise self and others as persons. Recognition has three elements:

- Self-respect formed through relations of love and friendship from childhood onwards
- Universal respect as the basis for human rights underpinning legal institutions, but by implication, all other institutions and systems which have the rights of people to equal access – if not equal outcomes – as expressed principles
- Esteem which people have for the specific characteristics and capabilities of others.

Despite differences, Nancy Fraser and Honneth (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) both argue that recognition and redistribution are essential to social justice and that engagement with the practices of people is the starting point for any action with social justice possibilities. Without recognition, even the most constructive systems and programs are likely to fall into the trap reifying (Honneth, 2008) the very people whose interests the programs are seeking to advance. Those multiple Deweyan conceptions of 'interest' (Dewey, 1944) can only be expressed in places like schools if teachers and others recognise student characteristics within a system framework which accords them the right to learn as they want to learn. These educational acts, in turn, will depend on the self-respecting recognition that each student has of her/himself. In other words, it is not sufficient that a teacher might be sympathetic to the needs of the least advantaged. It is incumbent on the teacher to be aware of the respect that each student has of self and the extent to which that respect is formed around awareness of the social relations with which the student identifies. If it matters that the student's self-respect forms around self-awareness as a person who is poor, or a refugee from Africa, or gay, then it is of educational significance and needs the teacher to recognise that self-respect in the classroom. Connell (1993) has used the expression, 'taking the standpoint of the least advantaged,' as the curriculum philosophy which will underpin social justice in education.

Teachers adopting the standpoint of the least advantaged do not take for granted the effectiveness of mandated curriculum and pedagogical strategies. In its distance from the lived experiences of students, effectiveness practices reify (Honneth, 2008) what it means to be working class, Islamic, or differently gendered as a demand for compensation. Taking the standpoint of the least advantaged is achievable only in practice. Policy might provide structuring conditions, but only the teacher can recognise what it takes to open up for students the possibilities in the official curriculum. If the work of the teacher who seeks social justice commences with recognition, then the responsibility of the preservice teacher education course which commits to justice must similarly concern the recognition of students. That is, through providing explicit experiences for preservice teachers to learn how to recognise each student's sense of self, specific characteristics and capabilities. Only teacher education which is practice-based can locate preservice teachers in settings where they can commence the complex task of recognition. Connected to and in parallel with that induction into the practices of recognition will be a coming to understanding of teaching practices – curriculum and pedagogy – which take the standpoint of the student. The latter learning has already been well-documented (Dewey, 1944) provides and early philosophical articulation. But, in the Australian context, highly developed in the 'Productive Pedagogies' research (Hayes, 2005) and the localised example given by Brennan (2000), show how just recognition and redistributive practices can come together in useful curriculum and pedagogical propositions.

From social democracy to neoliberal/neoconservative times

With the benefit of socially-informed hindsight, the establishment of the education program at Victoria University in 1985, appears to have occurred at a favourable moment. But far-reaching changes were underway in Australian education policy and funding. Those developments sought to restructure the nation's educational institutions around explicit managerial principles. The reforms commencing in the mid-1980s are continuing 30 years later and show little sign of losing momentum. In that time, taken-for-granted assumptions about the desirable nature of teacher education at the university have come to be questioned with new policy and funding promising a great advance for Australia in its efforts to become the 'clever country.' Do commitments to social justice in education have leverage in the new times and how sustainable are university close partnerships with educational organisations?

Full-blown social democratic policy came late to Australia, but the election of the Labor Government and Prime Minister Whitlam in 1972, was followed by more than a decade of investment in education and the loosening of centralised control over the activities of schools. The discontinuation of the inspection of teachers in the state of Victoria and the removal of a prescriptive syllabus were prominent changes. School-based curriculum change which received substantial impetus rom federal funding programs, expressed explicit social justice intentions. Less than a year after teacher education's first intake at Victoria University, the policy ground had shifted. Within a political discourse built on the dangers of the nation becoming a 'banana republic,' a new Federal Labor Government prepared the electorate for a swing to market-driven economics and management at all levels of government. Education and social policy in general, were not immune from these developments. The first coherent signs of neoliberal thinking in education were contained within the Report of the Quality in Education Review Committee (QERC) published in 1985. Its first pages defined the new terrain of educational administration and practice effectiveness, efficiency and outcomes. Hitherto, outcomes in Australia had a meaning associated with the broad results of schooling. The fraction of students completing Year 12 and the participation rates of specific student groupings in post-secondary education were typical of the outcome domains which had political purchase in Australia in the period after 1972.

The QERC report washed away the received wisdom of the 1972 reforms. Outcome came to be redefined as 'learning outcome,' a sequenced prescription of learning in each curriculum field, but especially in literacy/English and numeracy/Mathematics. Over subsequent years, large-scale curriculum projects attempted to transform the school curriculum from broad definitions of desirable learning, to tightly descriptive statements of the knowledge, understanding and skills presented in detailed developmental sequences. Similarly, teacher education was brought into the 'learning outcomes' domain as teacher registration and employment authorities constructed lists of outcomes or 'standards' by which teachers' practices could be assessed for professional competence.

Over the subsequent 30 years, neoliberal tendencies in Australian education have intensified. As in many countries, national testing results and international comparisons, for example through the PISA reports, have become the benchmarks of success for politicians who have transmitted their anxieties to school principals and teachers through employment and career advancement practices. The effectiveness and efficiency ideology first expressed in the QERC report has become dominant in teacher education as well. Courses have changed to reflect and advance curriculum and pedagogical practices which are congruent with those adopted in schools and other settings of formal teaching, such as early childhood education

and vocational education and training. Ever-reducing staffing, financial resources and time for staff to work closely with preservice teachers have combined to reduce scope for a continuing practice base in teacher education.

Curiously and in one of those internally contradictory manifestations which complex policy creates, it was in the shift to school-based management, one of the favoured reforms of neoliberal governments, that provided an opportunity for the School of Education to experiment with and then generate a comprehensive strategy for the formation of partnerships with schools, early childhood programs and community education. 'Schools of the Future' as the school self-management approach was entitled in Victoria introduced the now typical redistribution of authority in government enterprises: policy and finances tightly determined in the centre with the 'branch office' at the periphery – the local school for instance – being responsible for the implementation of policy. While one element of the policy's practices appeared as tight control with supremacy accorded to learning outcome measures, another of the Schools of the Future features liberated schools, school principals really, to find ways to create distinctions from other schools. The distinctions came to be seen as important, because Schools of the Future established local educational markets with neighbouring schools in competition for students. A claim for distinctive excellence became an ingredient in each school's public face. Parents' school choice in the new education market led to some schools growing in student enrolment and others losing student numbers.as a result, the government was able to close many schools and make substantial budget savings.

Into this exemplar of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000, the setting up of distinctive relationships by the School of Education with local schools and early childhood settings became a practical and practicable possibility. Partnerships became practically possible because schools were open to the proposal that preservice teachers could make helpful contributions to the specific activities that schools were setting as their distinctive characters; and practicable because teacher education staff had become confident in their partnership negotiations with schools. Some principals embraced the opportunity with understanding, others less so, s continuing condition of school-university partnerships.

Partnerships in practice

Consider what has been regarded as an exemplary, if not ideal partnership between the School of Education and a local school. The principal of a newly established Year 10-12 secondary school in a rapidly growing outer suburb of Melbourne, has discerned that his students had little conception of post-school career and educational possibilities. He approached a colleague in the School of Education and they set about negotiating how a large group of preservice teachers – about 20, or the size of a university tutorial group – might have a two-days per week and year-long engagement working with school students and teachers. Initially, undergraduate preservice teachers participated in the partnership, but hose first experience led the principal and university staff to recognise that preservice teachers in the graduate teacher education program would offer deeper and broader possibilities for school students. For the School of Education, an appropriate partnership with an educational setting had three principle learning practices:

- The required classroom-based supervised teaching practice allowing relationships between preservice teachers, school students and mentor teachers to develop over a year.

- An 'Applied Curriculum Project' (ACP), negotiated with the school, in which a team of preservice teachers work with a mentor teacher on a specific task related to a school learning priority. Over a year, the expectation is that preservice teachers will be able to experience the professional obligations of the teacher as they take on greater responsibility for the project's work.
- Detailed professional discussions, best held at the school with a mentor teacher and a university teacher education colleague. These discussions are intended to prompt preservice teacher reflection in and on practice, but they are also reflexive in that the discussions relate to the preservice teachers' deepening understanding of the students with whom they are working, the growing responsibility they have for the students' learning, but also education's social and political structures and system.

Substantial experimentation and research in working out how to plan partnerships in schools, in ways which schools welcomed and understood, preceded the mature arrangement at the senior secondary school described above. Two large-scale national government funded research projects enabled the School of Education to explore the desirable characteristics and to build project findings into relationship-building action. Both studies sought to explore how the participants in school-university partnerships related to each other and how a partnership could be organised around practices valued by each partner. Not surprising, both reports (include references, p9 transcript) resulted in similar findings, although they were separated by more than a decade and conducted in different sites across Australia. Using a discourse defined by Cox (1995), the more recent report (Kruger, 2009, p.14) defined the characteristics of a school- university partnerships as follows:

> *Partnerships are a social practice achieved through and characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity among preservice teachers, teachers and other school colleagues and teacher educators:*
>
> *Trust: The commitment and expertise that each of the main stakeholders – preservice teachers, teachers, teacher educators – brings to the partnership in the expectation that it will provide them with the benefits each seeks.*
> *Mutuality: The extent to which the stakeholders recognise that working together does lead to the benefits each esteem.*
> *Reciprocity: That each stakeholder recognises and values what the others bring to the partnership.*

The fundamental quality of a school-university partnership characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity, is its commitment to the learning of school students who are necessarily agents in the partnership. These revealing features, present in the teacher education settings investigated in each project and evident in the literature, were possible only in settings which were:

- **Personalised,** emerging from and connecting with the specific demands of each teacher's practice and each teacher's commitment to students.
- **Localised** in the ways teachers interpret their own shared interests and those of their students.
- Instances of professional learning where innovation and development depend on how well schools provide environments supportive of professional conversations and professional collaboration, for example, as in mentoring practices.

- An accomplishment dependent on groups or teams of teachers and preservice teachers with professional relationships whose characteristic is one of professional trust that participating teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators, can be open about their own practices and understanding and be ready to receive feedback from colleagues.
- **Structured** by the decisions taken by universities and schools on the curriculum and pedagogy which are regarded as appropriate for students, teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators. Teachers and preservice teachers are active in constructing those decisions and the ways in which they are enacted in schools.
- Implicated in institutional structures and system power which provide enabling conditions and resources for teachers learning system guidance and support including in teacher education, standards for teacher registration and processes for teacher education course accreditation.

Partnerships defined as experiences in support of school student learning as well as intellectual inquiry move beyond forms of teacher education concerned only with the acquisition of a narrow range of instructional skills and competencies. In their personalised, localised and structured characteristics, partnerships as practiced at Victoria University reconstruct the relationships between preservice teachers, their mentors and teacher educators. In partnership, the trajectory of practice, inquiry and learning commences with the preservice teachers' recognitional insights into the students with whom they work. Conventional placements in teacher education, usually a block of some weeks, separate the experience of the preservice teacher from inquiry in the university classroom. A partnership relationship, as achieved in the secondary school described above, locates preservice teachers in situations where they can relate their reflection-in-action with the longer and less urgent reflection-on-action (Schon, 1995).from which complex questioning, thinking, reading and understanding emerge.

Because each preservice teacher has a long-term relationship with students and teachers in a school, the possibility exists for pans for change and improvement to be applied promptly and with the potential for immediate feedback from students and mentor teachers. In such settings, the university teacher educator enters into professional conversations about the effects of pedagogy and curriculum organised around evidence and explanation which have accreted over successive cycles of practice. The teacher educator shifts from being the lecturer or tutor, to being a guide to further practical inquiry and definer of links to the pre-existing knowledge contained in the literature. That is, the partnership alters the relationships in teacher education: the distinctive focus on school student learning requires renewed structural arrangements enabling the participants to come together around the pressing questions preservice teachers meet in their classroom practice with students. Getting the practice right in the partnership even approximately however hassled to another challenging uncertainty, that of the form of university context into which preservice teachers should be reporting and reflecting on their experience. Figure 1 presents a concept map used by the School of Education to guide early workings-out of the partnership 'problem.'
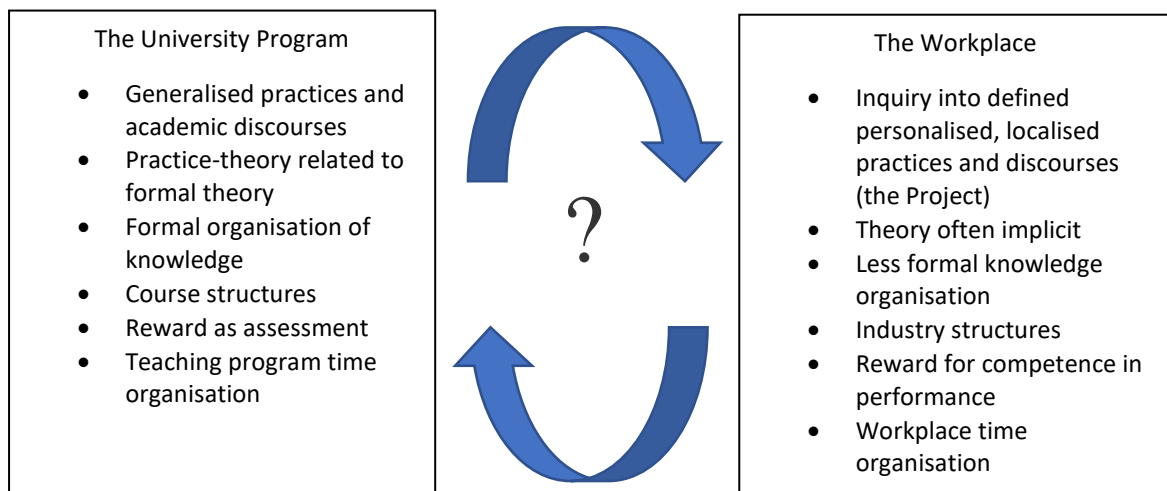
The University Program	The Workplace
• Generalised practices and academic discourses • Practice-theory related to formal theory • Formal organisation of knowledge • Course structures • Reward as assessment • Teaching program time organisation	• Inquiry into defined personalised, localised practices and discourses (the Project) • Theory often implicit • Less formal knowledge organisation • Industry structures • Reward for competence in performance • Workplace time organisation

Figure 1.The Partnership Problem

If partnerships for schools, teachers and preservice teachers acquire significance and coherence in their emphasis on preservice teachers' support for school student learning, what is less clear is how partnership practice connects with the intellectual requirements of the university program. The form of assessment in the university program appeared to be, at the one time, the solution and also the impediment to practice-based teacher education. Stenhouse's assertion about research as public and systematic inquiry was a starting point for curriculum theorising. Translating what might be a slogan into an inquiry framework informing assessment structures required preservice teachers to document their experiences in teaching as a basis for rick assessment tasks in the university course. Preservice teachers' planning and teaching records and their journal keeping in which they collected reflections on practice, impressions of themselves and school students and recollections of conversations with mentor teachers and students became the raw materials for praxis inquiry.

'Beyond just doing stuff' to praxis: the task of an inquiry protocol in teacher education

Commonly, preservice teachers announce their work in schools as 'the place where the real learning occurs.' What is most trying for teacher educators is preservice teachers' reluctance to grapple with the range of theoretical and research-based insights contained in the educational literature. Such a response is often complemented by an awareness that the professional conversations preservice teaches have with their mentors are more likely to focus on immediate concerns with 'what works?' or 'what do we need to do next?' rather than on deepening understanding about students, their learning and associated curriculum and pedagogical insights/ Partnership activity without explicit demands for preservice teachers, at the very least, to have a go at thoughtfully explaining the rationale and purpose of expectations for students reduces the activity to work to keep students busy. Little wonder that corridor conversations for teacher educators question how partnerships might be able to move 'beyond just doing stuff' to make students and their teachers happy!

Teacher educator dissatisfaction obscures however what is a question of significance: that of the different commitments of schools and universities and the purposes teachers and teacher educators impart to their considerations of practice. Recognition of those differences and finding ways to respect them shifts attention from what occurs in the partnership setting to

asking how the preservice teachers' practical experiences might lead them to generate the kind of evidence-based theorising characteristic of a university program. As shown in Figure 1 above, what preservice teacher education offers a partnership setting is the developing intellectual and practical expertise of the preservice teacher. The partnership setting's quid pro quo is that the preservice teacher returns to the university program with experiences of working with young people, recollections of professional conversations and resulting understandings and questions. Finding a way for the preservice teacher to unpack these questions and propositions is the task of the university program. That is, the starting point for practice-based teacher education is the questioning the preservice teacher takes back to university course work. The representation of the practices from which the questions emerge and how the preservice teacher might find answers to questions in the forms which satisfy both school and university interests is the conceptual challenge in the proposition of a protocol with both theorising and practice-enhancing significance.

Less serendipity and more like taking advantage of useful external circumstances, even at the risk of being co-opted into the national pursuit of effectiveness and 'quality in education,' participation in two Australia-wide reform projects complemented initiatives within the School of Education. Established under an Accord between the Federal Labor Government, employers and trade unions, the National Schools Network (NSN) and the Innovative Links Project (ILP) (see Sachs, 2003 for discussion of NSN and ILP) provided long-term co-operative settings for teacher educators with institutional change and teacher professional development initiatives with colleagues in other Australian universities and most importantly with teachers in schools which had become active in School of Education partnerships. Both projects emphasised the significance of practitioner research in teacher professional development and school change and both projects gave impetus to the case writing and analysis methodology in the School's practitioner research activities and teacher education course assessment tasks.

Coming to grips with case writing

Case writing, an approach to the recording of practice prominent within the teacher self-study movement, came to the attention of the Victoria University teacher educators as a result of a visit to Melbourne by Judyth and Lee Shulman in 1995. The possibility of case writing, as Shulman (1992) and others (Wassermann, 1993) presented the approach, was the way in which it enabled practitioners to make public a professional experience which then required explanation beyond that which might have been available through the usual routine of teacher reflection. How to support practitioners in drafting a case and how to conduct respectful and inquiry-focused professional conversations about cases became urgent tasks as the NSN and ILP schedules proceeded. A small internal collaborative research grant provided timely opportunities for staff to experiment with the case writing form and to trial it with a small number of teachers from local schools. The ILP resulted in the publication of a selection of case writing from what was known as the Western Melbourne Roundtable, Victoria University's component of the initiative. The sixteen cases collected in a volume entitled *Teachers Write* (WMR, 1997) were chosen to enable a small group of teachers or preservice teachers to conduct an ethically aware conversation about their interpretations of a case as a prelude to their own writing. A loosely organised format for conversations, agreed by the teachers, teacher educators and critical friends in the Roundtable, Initiated discussion which delayed the diagnostic evaluation and proposition of changed action until the various significances in the case had been explored. The main prompts in the semi-structured format were:

- What is the case about?: individual analysis of each case
- Similarities and differences: in comparison to other cases and to personal experiences
- Broad principles: the main educational questions and ideas in the case
- Implications: how consideration of the main educational questions and ideas might lead to improved practice in the setting described in the case, but also in each teacher's classroom
- Making knowledge public: the case and the notes of case conversations are available for distribution to interested colleagues.

In the years succeeding conclusion of the ILP, teacher educators in the School of Education reached the conclusion that even this structuring of case conversations did not meet Stenhouse's research criterion. While the structure enabled respectful, even democratic, information-seeking and practically explaining discussions among colleagues. It did not lead to the kind of systematic analysis which might make connections with the work of other teacher teams and, importantly, in a university setting, with the educational literature. In addition, the publication of the proceedings from case conversations was limited to the local school and was in forms not easily communicated to wider audiences. What a small group of teacher educators then set out to achieve was the proposition of a semi-structured strategy for the coherent analysis of practitioner descriptions of practice with validated substantiation expected in qualitative educational research (Anderson and Herr, 1999).

A promising response to this question was located in the 'protocols' being publicised by the NSN. The inquiry protocol format was an outcome of the work of the coalition of Essential Schools in the Unites States and its goal (McDonald et al, 2007) was that:

> … educators might gain new sources of insight and energy for their work by sharing honest accounts of it with each other, by giving and receiving honest feedback and by coming to appreciate a different perspective on their joint concerns.

While the various protocols were more methodical than the semi-structured inquiry format used by the Western Melbourne Roundtable, they also had similar restricted explanatory and localised qualities. Six desired qualities framed the development of an inquiry protocol suitable for practice-based teacher education at Victoria University. It should:

- Be based on the questions and challenges preservice teachers encounter in the practical experiences in partnership settings
- Enable preservice teachers, in their reflection and in their professional conversations, to generate educational understandings attentive to their practical settings in classrooms with emphatic commitment to the enhancement of their learning of the students with whom they were working
- Be translatable into the formal discourses used in their university studies and the educational literature, leading to explanatory possibilities inclusive of personal, cognitive, interpersonal and social structural dimensions
- Form the framework of preservice teacher participation at university and the coursework assessment tasks
- Prompt preservice teachers' theorising of he challenges in their educational practice inclusive of personal, cognitive, interpersonal and social structural dimensions

- Lead preservice teachers to consider how they can invest proposals for changed practice with an explicit social understanding and commitment to socially just action.

The final point has an effable character. No prescription for inquiry can make – or force – practitioners to recognise education's social divided nature and socially dividing effects in their experiences with the students they teach. But a protocol which encourages teachers or preservice teachers to discuss possible explanations for experiences – to become 'discursive' in the meaning used by Giddens (1984) – might delay a rush to action with pressured effectiveness. Becoming discursive through the offering of explanations for experience is an instance of the 'thoughtful study of problems' which is the starting point recommended by Stenhouse (Ruddick and Hopkins, 1985, p. 120) for practitioner research. But it also opens up the possibility that the protocol is inquiry into 'praxis' in the definition applied by Freire (1972, p. 28), that is, 'reflection and action on the world in order to transform.'

Times have changed substantially since Freire first wrote about education as conscientisation. The idea that 'praxis' has world changing potential may be an encouraging ideology for those working with and for the least advantaged. Change possibilities in education reflect the neoliberal administrative and funding constraints on schools. Bur 'praxis' has leverage when the teacher enters into a 'community of inquiry' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2001) with colleagues and members of local educational communities. Yes, change may be achievable only in the local community, but as Anyon (2005) has argued, local action takes on the character of a 'new social movement' when it is the result the generation of 'critical consciousness' achieved through inquiry, reflection and reading. Maybe it is a step too far to imagine teachers, in these difficult times for school-based democratic action, taking part in the 'transgressive politics' urged on us by Anyon, but participation in the spirit of praxis in school communities is a possibility for teachers and for preservice teachers as well.

Arguably, such praxis if it is to concern social justice, must ultimately become informed action about the terrain of teachers' work, about knowledge matters, that is, about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and their implication in social division. Becoming aware of the connections between educational practice, curriculum and pedagogy and education's socially divided and socially dividing effects is the principle of the reflexivity a teacher acquires through discursive inquiry, through praxis. It will be a reflexivity which will draw out teachers' moral concern about their students and it will also have an emotional component because morally-based action demands personal commitment. Further sections will now outline in detail an explanation of the 'praxis inquiry protocol' being applied by the School of Education. They will seek to explain how a praxis inquiry protocol might switch on the reflexivity of teachers by giving them access to the ontological, epistemological and technical complexity of their practice and it will also prompt them to acknowledge their axiological, or moral, interest and cathexical, or emotional, power.

Dimensions of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol

The quality sought by the Praxis Inquiry Protocol (PIP) is informed practitioner reflexivity. It may be that reflexivity is one of those terms which seems to acquire a range of definitions. But a useable one for education is that it is the way people are able to understand how they are affected by the world around them and, in turn, how what they do affects the world. Parallel concepts to reflexivity are agency and structure. Agency is the quality all people have of understanding the world and acting on it. Structure typically refers to what might be termed 'patterns' in the world, divisions and organised systems in which we observe. In our

reflexivity, we respond, as agents, to the structural opportunities and constraints we experience and importantly, which we perceive. In practice, educators such as teachers are caught up in the busyness of working with relatively many people at the one time. Any practitioner under time pressure is likely to resort to routine and habit and to not become reflexively conscious of the structural and agential conditions of learning and teaching. In those conditions, understandings on which practitioners make decisions may be incorrect, or at least, based on expediency.

The intention of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol is the initiation of a 'systematic and public inquiry' by practitioners, in the words of Stenhouse. But even if the PIP is used, false understandings can result if practice is not clearly described or analysed. For this reason, the protocol is best located as a learning and as a research tool, in what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001) have called as noted above a 'community of inquiry,' whose express characteristic is the inquiring conversation among practitioners. The giving and testing of reasons in relation to practical experience, informed by published accounts in the literature, will enable teachers to come to an agreement about explanations in a spirit of practitioner validation.

In its simplest form, the Praxis Inquiry Protocol consists of four elements:

Practice Described

The practitioner presents an account of practice so that it leads a reader to understand the situation the practitioner is wanting to communicate. A written case of practice is one useful form of practice. But photographs and videos, accompanied by written or audio recorded notes, are also powerful means of describing practice. In all forms, the emphasis is on providing as natural account as possible of practice.

Practice Explained

Here, the practitioner considers what might be the possible ways of explaining the practice as described. Usually this consists of two steps:
Practitioner analysis. While some formal means of analysing practice are available, an informal examination of described practice prompts the writer/reader to list the main issues or components of the practice and how they relate to each other. The result of this analysis is a vocabulary of practice whose meanings take the reader to the second step in the explanation process.

Analysis related to published research and educational literature. In this step, the practitioner related his/her personal understandings to educational explanations presented in the literature, available primarily in journals and research publications. A range of explanations may be possible. At the conclusion of this step, the practitioner will decide what explanatory framework seems to fit the description. In effect, this literature-related step provides the ideas and language with which the practitioner will express in personal theorising.

Practice Theorised

At this point, the protocol encourages the practitioner to assert a new understanding of the described practice through an interrogation of the two analysis steps. Theorising clearly accounts for the key elements of the described practice, but is also the place where the practitioner should discuss how s/he judges if the theorising appears to present the

participants fairly and justly (axiological or moral theorising). Theorising should also connect with the practitioner's emotional and intuitive interests with with the interests, hopes and desires of the participants described in the practice (cathexical theorising).

Practice Changed

The final element of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol is the statement of an action proposal, or at least an orientation to action. An important quality of the action proposal is that is should be consistent with and be justified by the preceding steps.

Written down, the four elements of practice described, explained, theorised and changed, might appear to be some kind of lock-step recipe. But the practice of the PIP is that it is internally responsive. Completion of one element will suggest possible ways of clarifying or improving other steps. For example, the personal analysis and associated references to the educational literature in the *practice explained* step, are likely to alert the writer to the need for further or more detailed description, with the result that the final outcome is a rich example of educational theorising. In summary then, any inquiry into practice commences with a well-framed question arising from an uncertainty or challenge which requires the practitioner to apply a thoughtful and professional response. Asking the right question or expressing the complexity of a practical problem can avert simplistic action and can lead the practitioner to deeper understanding and confirmed professional learning. Accordingly, the following explanations are not meant to indicate separate ideas, but should be helpful prompts to assist in the framing of the question or questions being followed in the Praxis Inquiry Protocol. Importantly, each term should be regarded as one side of the complex sociocultural whole that is education.

Ontological

Each of us has an ontology – a way of talking about the world in which we live. Being ontological is being aware of the way we talk and write about our experience. In education for example, some teachers talk about teaching and learning as something that occurs between the teacher and an individual learner in which teaching is a following of effective methods. Other teachers see complex socio-cultural relationships in education. Such teachers regard the relationships between students in a classroom as important as methods of teaching and they recognise that students bring to school well-developed understandings and an accompanying language which enables them to proceed successfully in the world. Difference is an important consideration. Thus, it might matter that students could be children from rich or poor families, or if they are members of newly arrived non-English speaking communities. An ontological standpoint will also pay attention to the organisational and institutional content of education. Matters related to how schools are organised and managed and how systems of education benefit one social grouping rather than another become evident when an educator undertakes an ontologically aware inquiry.

Epistemological

Our respective ontologies lead directly to the way we understand the world. Epistemology concerns how we know and understand. Being epistemological in praxis inquiry is to work out how to understand what occurs in classrooms. For example, an epistemological stance which is concerned with learning as an individual achievement might emphasise testing and careful measurement of student learning, whereas as socio-culturally aware epistemology

would lead to the adoption of range of ways of understanding. Having an epistemological awareness also relates to the recognition of how students learn and how they approach the questions teachers pose.

Technical

Technique relates to method – in education, how to teach most effectively. A focus on learning as an individual achievement is often associated with teaching methods which follow a strict set of steps. On the other hand, teachers who are aware of the background and interests of students might employ a range of methods depending on their interpretations of the students and on what is being taught.

Axiological

An axiological awareness relates to education's ethical or moral quality. It is associated with the nature of relationships between those in education, for example in the student's experience of being treated fairly. In the local setting, such as in an early childhood group or school classroom, having an axiological perspective draws attention to the ways in which particular educational methods, such as strategies for grouping students, advantage particular students rather than others. It will also have an institutional dimension, in that an axiologically aware educator will want to inquire into the approaches by which the form of education systems might lead to outcomes which benefit one social or cultural group rather than another.

Cathexical

All human activity has an emotional or cathexical quality. Education's cathexical nature is seen in the ways in which students become interested in some topics or knowledge areas rather than others. The relationships students have with teachers and with fellow students are also infused with emotional content. Another important consideration is how students see their own lives developing and the associate commitment that their life plans intersect with the possibilities they experience in education settings.

Implementing the Praxis Inquiry Protocol requires a more critical inquiry than the 'natural' account provided by the case. A case written in the immediate and often emotional aftermath of a challenging professional event may present a 'common sense' reaction to the circumstances described. The responsibility of the teacher is to move beyond common sense to an informed 'good sense' understanding. That is the possibility of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol. Following the writing of the case, the next main step is 'practitioner explanation.' It comprises two sub-sections, *practitioner analysis* and *relating the analysis to the literature.* A useful strategy for practitioner analysis of case writing can be considered as Collaborative Practitioner Analysis (for a more detailed discussion of this approach, see 'case conferencing' in Part III). The approach is collaborative because it is best carried within a professional conversation, in which colleagues discuss and validate their interpretations and propositions. Collaborative Practitioner Analysis has four components:

Sketching the case: identifying the parts of the case which appear to present the significant elements, by highlighting either on the computer screen or highlighting pen in printed cases.

Threading the case: extracting from the case sketch, the key words or expressions which impress the reader as important in understanding the meaning intended by the writer.

Propositions arising: readers advance a judgement or interpretation about the educational or other meaning from the case threading.

Explanatory threads: readers propose a statement or statements which encapsulate the meanings they have gained from the case.

At this point, the inquiry turns to the concepts that the analysis has presented. What the Praxis Inquiry Protocol advocates is that attention should be focused on an understanding which includes the key elements of the case. A rush to finding out what technical responses would solve a problem, is not advised. For this reason, search of the literature should commence with a consideration of the nature of the concepts present in the practitioner analysis, those of ontological, epistemological and others noted above. Elaborating these will assist in finding literature discussion which strengthen insights into the case and its educational questions. Giving a personally theorised understanding of an educational event, challenge or problem is difficult, but of critical importance. An understanding supported both by a careful review of data available and informed by the literature, will be the basis of changed practice for improvement. In re-presenting the case to colleagues under the general headings of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol of practitioner explanation, theorising and change, enables the finished account to be comprehensive and coherent. Readers will be able to see how the practitioner has interpreted the case and will be able to make final comments and judgements about the reasonableness and quality of the conclusions reached. In theorising, the practitioner asks questions of the type:

Educational theorising	What educational understandings have I gained through the analysis about the reasons in and causes of the event or problem? At this point, pedagogical, curriculum and assessment concepts derived from the ontological and epistemological content of the analysis will be important. But social, psychological and philosophical ideas will need to be considered.
Axiological theorising	How do the theorising and propositions for change affect the participants? Is there any sense that students, for example, might be treated in ways which reduce their educational opportunities? The practitioner will want to consider if moral and ethical commitments are consistent with or not offended by the understanding the analysis has provided. Axiological theorising asks about the ways in which epistemological understanding and techniques affects people.
Cathexical theorising	How do theorising and propositions for change answer the emotional responsibility felt by the teacher for students, the sense of desire that students have for learning and the feelings of self-worth teachers and students have? In many ways, cathexical theorising is best thought of as a taking of the standpoint of 'others' in the event as described in the case.

The practical end of the application of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol is an informed change or action proposal. Use of the Protocol should result in a range of practical options which take account of the complexity of the event described in the case and the understandings emerging from the analysis and theorising. An important criterion for the change proposed is that it deals with the core issues in the event presented in the case. A second criterion is that the change is achievable within the constraints of the setting and the resources available to the responsible practitioners. In the spirit of Action Research (see Part III), what happens next is that the practitioners 'have a go' at the change outlined. At some point, the practitioner is likely to encounter another event which indicates success of the process, or one which suggests another challenge, even a disturbing problem. What then? Yes! Another application of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol.

Welcome to the intelligent world of the caring, emotionally engaged, informed world of the inquiring practitioner!

Part III Pragmatist experience and consciousness

Neil Hooley

As noted earlier in this paper, the ultimate justification for collaborative practitioner education and a praxis inquiry protocol rests on the possibility that practice and inquiry into practice are essential for teachers to become agents for social justice in education. As neoliberal discourses, policies and educational administration became universal and market forces have become increasingly dominant, the claim for the practice-justice linkage has become swamped under an acceptance that the social division of education is a question of bureaucratic effectiveness in teaching and management. Social division and questions of disadvantage and deficit are taken as the norm, rather than distortion. Appreciation of the practice-justice linkage in education demands understanding of the sociological context in which schooling and learning occurs and the epistemological factors that must be applied if improvement for all becomes realistic. This general approach to 'practice-theorising' as constituted by practice, partnership and praxis described in Part II, falls within the category of pragmatist philosophy. Rather than being a narrow approach to merely 'getting things done,' or of a selfish mercantilism arising from development of the American republic, Menand (2001, p. xi) suggested the original group of pragmatists although differing in some ways, were united by their respect for knowledge and ideas:

> Their ideas changed the way Americans thought – and continue to think – about education, liberty, justice and tolerance. And as a consequence, they changed the way Americans live, the way they learn, the way they express themselves and the way in which they treat people who are different from them. We are still living, to a great extent, in a country these thinkers helped to make.

This view of pragmatism as a comprehensive philosophy that ultimately, over time, opens up various pathways to human values and morality, was supported by Dewey (1981, p.56, cited by Bernstein, 2010, p. 9) when he wrote: 'in opposition to many contrary tendencies in the American environment, that action should be intelligent and reflective and that thought should occupy a central position in life.' He also argued for participation of the many in aspects of human concern and interest where each person thereby needs to consider and respect the points of view of others, a collective process 'equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full

import of their activity' (Dewey 1916, p. 87). Despite these directions, pragmatism had difficulty in establishing itself during much of the 20th Century, due in part to the influence of British philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, Ryle and Moore and, after World War II, the emphasis on analytical philosophy. It was not until the late 1970s and the writing of Rorty in particular, that pragmatism received greater attention. In a series of lectures published after his death, Rorty (2021) argued that the key feature of philosophical pragmatism is its 'anti-authoritarianism,' where humans seek to take full control of their own independent thoughts, ethical conduct and what is good. For educators, this view of what it means to be human saturates every social act undertaken and encountered in classrooms with historical and moral intent.

In their seminal work regarding educational philosophy and the influence of positivism, Carr and Kemmis (1986) in many respects, introduced the ideas of critical theory and those of Habermas to the education profession. Habermas was concerned about the dominance of scientific thinking and the view that science offers an 'objective' view of knowledge that other forms cannot. To the contrary, Habermas argued that all knowledge is based in social and cultural frameworks depending on the interests of the participants. For their part, Carr and Kemmis (ibid, p. 162) advanced action research as an approach that educators can use to guide their educational work in an educational rather than positivist way:

> Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

This definition outlines the key features of action research that make it action research and distinctive from other methodologies. That is, the intention is to improve the practices of the participants concerned, participants become the researchers rather than becoming passive observers and that outcomes can range from improvements in procedures to improvements in social analysis and critique. There is a connection here of course with the comments of Habermas regarding technical, practical and emancipatory purpose. Carr and Kemmis went on to propose that 'In terms of method, a self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflection is central to the action research approach.' The action research spiral as it became known of 'plan, act, observe, reflect,' was somewhat of a breakthrough in educational research, as it showed that scientific 'measurement' could proceed in a variety of ways apart from testing, statistics, readings from equipment and the like and shift to a more qualitative approach involving description, context and critical reflection that have validation processes of their own. The recommendation should also be noted that action research occurs in cycles, such that issues arising from qualitative data can be discussed, refined and re-investigated over longer periods of time. For this reason, it can be argued that action research that is interested in deeper questions of knowledge production, human meaning and the changing of social circumstances, cannot occur over shorter time intervals such as might be available in university courses and research programs. Following Habermas, the notion of participatory action research as a means of conducting educational research in education, of education asking critical questions of itself, will contribute to the formation of education itself as a critical social science. In this regard, Kruger, Cherednichenko and Moore (2003) noted that Giddens (1984) has suggested that social science might be regarded as a process that involves the uncovering of the unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of human action. They comment that such opaque qualities are rarely evident in the course of action even if conducted within the enabling environment of action research. Kemmis (2012)

also has provided more detail within a critical and action research philosophy, by advancing the principles of 'practice architectures,' whereby participants research the 'sayings, doings and relatings' of social practice. Kemmis asks of himself that, from the point of view of investigating practice, 'If I am *within* this practice tradition, what form of research will allow me to form and transform *both* myself as a practitioner *and* the collectivity of people whose work constitutes the contemporary manifestation of this tradition?' This is a question of praxis that can be taken up through teacher education.

Signature Pedagogies for Praxis Teacher Education

Associated with the Praxis Inquiry Protocol discussed in Part II above, a set of eight 'Signature Pedagogies for Praxis Teacher Education' (Table 3) has been identified to guide teachers, pre-service teachers and university educators in their investigations of teaching and learning practice (Hooley, 2019. p. 48). Given that the protocol and signature pedagogies have emerged from the design and implementation of teacher education programs over a period of years and then provide avenues of reflecting on, returning to and changing practice for the social good, they constitute a framework for professional ethical conduct. In an Aristotelian sense, participating in prudent action over time, involving personal and community judgements about what is reasonable in meeting mutual interest, enables not only what is appropriate for everyone, but an understanding of what it means to live well. That is, a personal and continuing investigation of human meaning and ethical action from the standpoint of social practice. The signature pedagogies for praxis teacher education have deliberately not been arranged in any order of priority, either vertically or horizontally, so that readers need to allocate significance of each cell for themselves, in relation to the work being undertaken. However it could be noted that the second column of cells from the left does refer to actions that raise questions and judgements about ethical comportment as participants engage in specific activity. This column is designed to deal with the competing issues in capitalist society of power and equity, so that 'signature pedagogies must be able to establish a learning environment that is equitable for all participants and is not dominated by discrimination, prejudice, bias and coercion' (ibid, p.51). This is not an idealist formulation, but recognition that a 'practice-theorising' approach to at least mitigating the influence of pernicious market forces in education, can be implemented. Again, educators can be guided by the notion of 'virtue ethics' as developed by Aristotle and how our concept of courage, patience, friendliness, humility and the like emerges from our participation with others and are incorporated in what we do and think. Mead (1908) was developing this aspect of pragmatism when he wrote:

> Now, to a certain extent, the conception of an evolution of environment as well as of the form has domesticated itself within our biological science. It has become evident that the environment can exist for a form only in so far as the environment answers to the susceptibilities of the organism; that the organism determines thus its own environment, that the effect of every adaptation is a new environment which must change with that which responds to it. The full recognition, however, that forms an environment must be phases that answer to each other, character to character, appears in ethical theory.

In referring to biology, Mead (and Dewey) is indicating his connections with Darwin and is attempting to bring the changing face of science to assist humans and their learning. He shows the relationship between organism and environment and how each influences the other, that humans change as the conditions change. Mead then states that this process is in

Signature Pedagogies	Characteristics of signature pedagogies			
Professional Practice	Recognises personal learning from immersion in practice	Positions participant interest as central concern without bias	Supports communities of practice to support inquiry for improved learning environments and student learning	Continuing critique of practice for change of conditions to formulate ideas of new practice
Repertoires of practice	Identifies and articulates features of pedagogical, curriculum, assessment practices	Adopts mix of innovative practices to meet specific needs	Links key features of pedagogy, curriculum, assessment for change and improvement	Critiques repertoires of educational practice as social activity that supports satisfaction and progress
Teacher as Researcher	Systematically investigates own practice for improvement	Recognises research as situated in participant experience	Participates as member of school-based research team/s	Relates local, national and global research, policy and practice
Case Conferencing	Generates case and commentary writing for understanding of practice	Authorises narration and commentary of lifeworld case and story	Participates in case conferencing and concept analysis for production of teachers' knowledge	Encourages articulation and analysis of teachers' knowledge in relation to theories of curriculum and teaching
Community Partnership	Connects with local communities	Ensures partner relationships are 'without prejudice'	Integrates community culture and knowledge into curriculum	Investigates community to understand local aspiration, history, knowledge, language
Praxis Learning	Investigates / provides description, explanation, theorising and change of practice in response to reflection on practice	Supports autonomous, non-coercive practices	Demonstrates a curriculum developed from praxis and in response to reflection	Constructs learning environments of ethically-informed action for the public good
Participatory Action Research	Identifies and advocates key issues of policy and participates in collecting data for analysis	Encourages participation of all cultural backgrounds	Contributes to project discourses with internal and external team members	Theorises and critiques research findings in the public domain
Portfolio Dialogue	Compiles and discusses artefacts of personal learning over time	Assists new praxis through problematising experience, themes and actions	Participates with artefact and knowledge discourses that show understandings of meanings of practice	Demonstrates a coherent philosophy consistent with personalised practice and community change for public good

Table 2. Signature pedagogies of praxis teacher education

fact, ethical, as participants work out what to do to resolve what they confront and what they should do that will be socially beneficial. Ethics and meaning are not waiting to be found in the objects of experience, but are constructed by us as we engage the objects of experience.

Praxis-based, socially-just education

> By nature, all men long to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer seeing (one might say) to everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things (Aristotle, 2004, p, 4).

As Aristotle's opening philosophical statement in his 'Metaphysics' and written over 2300 years ago, it provides substantial guidance for educators today. What else is required to frame our practice, it brings thought and action together not only for the delight that process brings, but for their usefulness as well; we come to know and think, we become human. There is some way to go of course, before a philosophy of radical inquiry for education today can be established within, if not counter to, prevailing economic imperatives, but the broad direction has been set. Constructing student and teachers' knowledge from social practice is therefore supported by recognised and substantial philosophical debate over the centuries and there is a very strong basis for replacing neoliberal ideology, provided there is will. This is the view of a socially-just approach to education as has been discussed by this paper, where human satisfaction and fulfilment comes about from living with the social and physical worlds and being creative and ethical in our relationships with others.

There is one final detail to consider regarding how thought and ideas occur in the midst of practice, a detail that impacts directly on classroom arrangements. In reference to Marx above, it was noted that he drew on the idea of dialectic from Hegel, although in a materialist rather than idealist manner. While arguing that ideas depend on practice rather than existing in the brain alone, Marx accepted that ideas were formed through two ideas interacting to form something new, thus submitting that humans themselves, like matter, energy and the universe are in a state of constant flux and transformation of consciousness formation; or as Marx stated more expressively: 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness**.**' Materialist dialectics has three important features that should be of interest to educators (Hooley, 2019, pp. 6-7). First, the notion of 'unity of opposites,' involving the internal aspects of a phenomenon, object or idea, that are interrelated and in constant motion and change. Second, the transformational relationship between qualitative and quantitative properties, involving internal characteristics such as structure, connectedness and external characteristics such as size, volume, scale. Third, 'negation of the negation' involving development of the new form from the old through current aspects of the unity of opposites being transformed or negated into new aspects. Respective examples of these dialectical features include positive and negative charges within an atom or molecule, continuous germination of seeds into flowers and plants and class antagonisms creating new social and economic arrangements not existing before. Specifically and realistically, application of these dialectical principles could include the integration of the history of ideas or the philosophy of mathematics into all year levels of schooling. For instance, this would enable or at least assist children to experience and grapple with the concept that mathematical knowledge occurs in the same way as all other forms of knowledge, that is from social practice and reflection on practice and that they can investigate

and create mathematical understanding for themselves. It would show, over time, that their ideas are in motion and that they themselves as well as the objects they are considering, are transformed as well.

While this paper has attempted to recognise progressive connections and tensions between sociological and philosophical knowledges that have been investigated and debated over centuries of scholarship and research, the discussion has been of necessity, brief and condensed. It has been written to outline the development of practice/praxis-based education and learning and to signpost a number of key theorists for further reading and study. In this regard, it has proposed two strategies of 'Praxis Inquiry Protocol' and 'Signature Pedagogies for Praxis Teacher Education' – both of which have arisen from educational practice over a number of years - as means of working towards socially-just education for all students, at all levels and topics, regardless of background. Teachers and educators will also be involved in creating their own knowledge of teaching and learning as they investigate genuine issues of student interest, walking side-by-side with learners. As mentioned above, the praxis approach is in direct opposition to the current market forces of capitalist neoliberalism as they impact education through privatisation, individualism and insistence on the instrumental reason of specified content, with attendant national and international testing. If, as Aristotle suggested, everyone by their very nature of being human desires to know, then nothing short of revolutionary, pragmatist change in public education, is acceptable.

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