

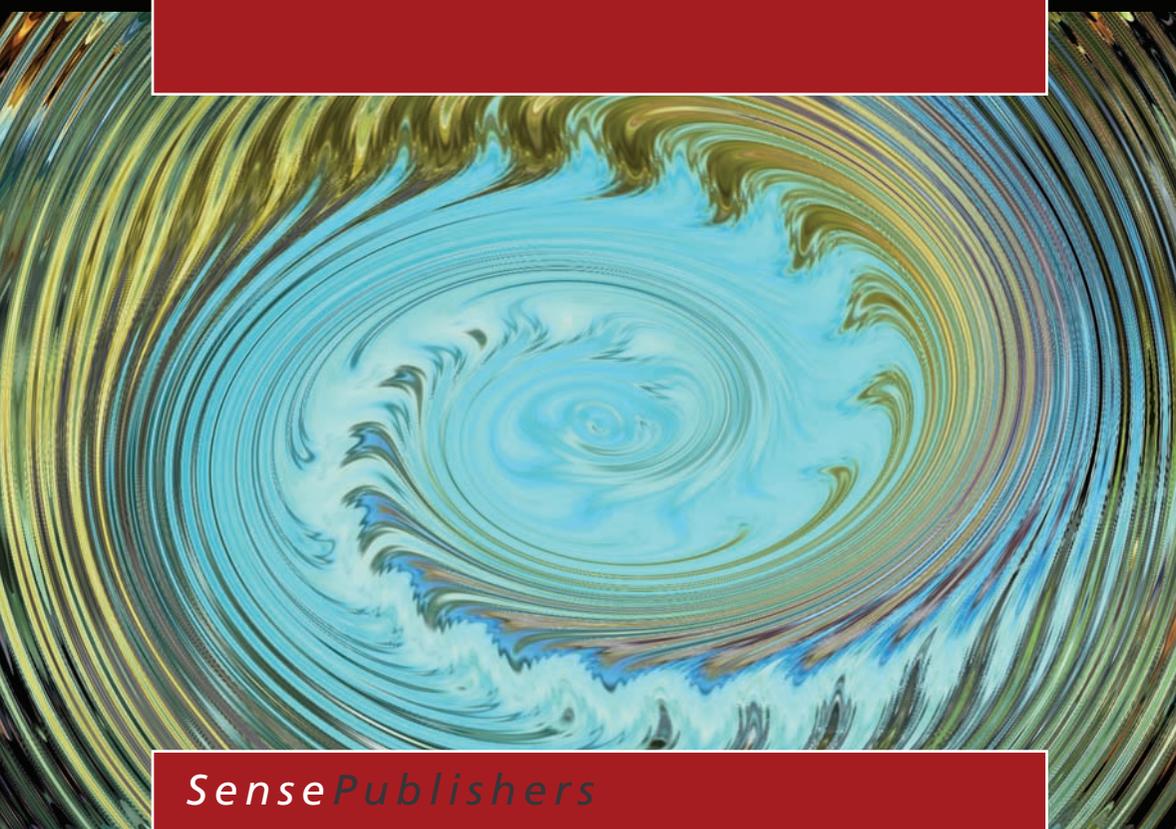
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PRACTICE, EDUCATION, WORK AND SOCIETY

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# Education For Future Practice

Joy Higgs, Della Fish, Ian Goulter,  
Stephen Loftus, Jo-Anne Reid  
and Franziska Trede (Eds.)



*SensePublishers*

# Education for Future Practice

# **PRACTICE, EDUCATION WORK AND SOCIETY**

Volume 3

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# Education for Future Practice

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JOY HIGGS

## **SERIES INTRODUCTION**

*Practice, Education, Work and Society*

This series examines research, theory and practice in the context of university education, professional practice, work and society. Rather than focussing on a single topic the series examines areas where two or more of these arenas come together. Themes that will be explored in the series include: university education of professions, society expectations of professional practice, professional practice workplaces and strategies for investigating each of these areas. There are many challenges facing researchers, educators, practitioners and students in today's practice worlds. The authors in this series bring a wealth of practice wisdom and experience to examine these issues, share their practice knowledge, report research into strategies that address these challenges, share approaches to working and learning and raise yet more questions.

The conversations conducted in the series will contribute to expanding the discourse around the way people encounter and experience practice, education, work and society.

*Joy Higgs, Charles Sturt University, Australia*



## FOREWORD

This book brings together ideas at the cutting edge of our understanding of practice and the thinking that informs the ways in which higher education prepares people to participate in the world of skilled occupations and professions. It considers relevant issues confronting universities as they adjust to the demands and expectations of practice and education in the twenty first century. The authors explore theoretical and practical issues surrounding practice-based education including: the nature of practice, ontology of practice, communities of practice, situated learning, practice and theory, work-based learning, the discursive construction of practice – the role of discourse in forming and transforming practice and practitioners.

Of particular interest is how practice is learned and how students are prepared for the workplace through engagement in professional socialisation, collaborative learning, interprofessional learning, learning organisations, evaluation of practice-based education and transcending the links between practice and research. Individual chapters discuss issues as varied as the evolving role of universities, teaching ethical practice and learning how to practise interpretively.

The book contains 26 peer reviewed chapters in five sections:

- Education for practice
- Contextualising practice
- Contextualising education for practice
- Doing education for practice

This book will be of interest to educators, scholars, practitioners and those concerned with how we are preparing people to work in the rapidly changing world of the twenty first century.

*Joy Higgs*



## **SECTION 1: EDUCATION FOR PRACTICE**



## 1. EDUCATION FOR FUTURE PRACTICE

Education for practice – also referred to as practice-based education (PBE) – refers to *grounding education in strategies, content and goals that direct students' learning towards preparation for practice roles post-graduation*. PBE includes curriculum, subject, stream and activity-level strategies such as goal setting and curriculum design as well as work-based-learning induction and education programs. It can occur in all components of curricula including on-campus, workplace, distance and e-learning elements.

In this chapter we argue that education for future practice is not about reproduction of today's professions and occupations, nor is it about educating graduates just for current times and contexts. Instead, the challenge for educators is to envisage the future of practice and education and ask how we should educate practitioners for this future. Looking at current practices and emerging trends in higher education allows educators to identify and respect aspects of practice and education that are likely to endure as well as fads and trends that will not be sustained or embraced in future higher education. Moreover, understanding the influences on higher education is a critical aspect of planning relevant strategic directions, curricula, infrastructure systems and learning communities to address local and global needs.

### HOW IS PRACTICE CURRENTLY BEING CONCEPTUALISED, CONTEXTUALISED, SHAPED AND ENVISIONED?

In the new millennium we are faced with rapidly changing workplace contexts and global challenges which require an education for future practice that engages with uncertain, diverse, complex and rapidly changing conditions. In this book education for future practice is discussed from social, cultural and transformative perspectives. Professional practice is theorised as a social practice to serve, contribute to and improve the world we live in.

This book proposes concepts of practice that are much broader than simply preparing students for routinised practice based on theoretical, procedural and technical knowledge alone. Professional (and occupational practice)<sup>1</sup> is a socio-cultural process that is negotiated among multiple stakeholders. These stakeholders include higher education, workplace organisations, professional and discipline bodies, accreditation agencies, governments, global and local economies and communities. Academics, professionals, practitioners who supervise and educate learners in the workplace, students and consumers of practice services, all contribute to shaping professional

practice by negotiating personal, professional, and global interests. Practice lies at the intersection where knowledge, reflection and action come together. Practice is understood as continuously coming to know and to be.

The authors in this book offer a perspective on practice as being much more than simply “doing and knowing”, which would restrict practice to the theoretical and technical domain. The nature of practice also needs to include action and reflection within social contexts. Professional practice is conceptualised here as reflective, reciprocal and transformative, and it builds on particularised ways of being and becoming as well as doing and knowing. Knowledge for practice comprises many different forms of knowing, which can be clustered into conceptual-propositional, procedural-practical and dispositional-critical. In this book practice knowledge is also conceptualised as involving local and system-wide forms of knowledge, discipline-specific and interprofessional types of knowledge. These dynamic, sophisticated ways of knowing and doing are closely connected to ways of relating and becoming. This book pays attention to the context, the extra-personal conditions, workplaces and learning environments shaping future practice.

The first two sections of the book deal with concepts and contexts of education for practice and professional practice. Practice is conceptualised as cultural and social, as well as potentially wise and transformative. Professional practice is contextualised through various lenses, including practice as a future phenomenon, a co-production, a community of practice, a narrative, a critically transformative environment, and work that is informed by standards and regulations. This variety of lenses and interpretations demonstrates and honours the complexity and diversity of professional practice and offers frameworks and principles for future education. It also highlights the many competing interests that stakeholders bring to the framing of professional practice encounters and the shaping of the collective future of professional practice.

The nature (interpretation and practices) of work and professional practice are constantly changing due to multiple catalytic and often conflicting factors such as changing human needs, changing demographics, generational attributes and influences, restructuring of organisational systems, advancing technologies, and evolving communication technology. The increasing demands of practice to be economical, efficient and safe have repercussions on curriculum, pedagogy and outcome measures. The rise of external scrutiny, standardisation and globalisation tends to squeeze courses into more universal, less negotiable and prescribed curricula. This clashes with demands by consumers for greater flexibility and negotiation. How institutions and academics respond to these forces greatly influences academic programs and communities.

Education for future practice has become an interdependent undertaking between higher education, workplaces, industry partners, regulatory agencies, professional bodies, students and society. The competing interests and wide ranges of practice conceptualisations can be summarised as lying – in critical uncertainty or successful strategy – between diversity and routine, theory and practice, technical skill and reflection, formal and informal knowledge, certainty and uncertainty, standards and values, performance and thoughtfulness, and practice and praxis. Authors of the early

chapters in this book endeavour to explore, problematise and reconcile these tensions and dichotomies of practice.

In Chapter 2 Ron Barnett sets the scene of higher education for future practice by tracing its history. The traditional role of higher education was to generate new knowledge and to conduct research. This role is increasingly under scrutiny, and higher education today is under pressure from its stakeholders to educate, teach, facilitate learning, and prepare students for the world of work. This is compounded with the trend of professionalisation of more and more emerging disciplines, such as paramedic practice. Formal knowledge and research compete with the demands of the world of practice. Practice is no longer equated with knowing theoretical declarative facts but instead knowledge, action and practice are seen as being closely interrelated. Higher education, as a place to equip future generations of practitioners, will be a place to reflect, retreat and learn in order that future practitioners can understand, critique and act. Universities can be seen as a vehicle to help create future practices.

Chapter 3 devotes attention to the reciprocal phenomena of history shaping practice and practice shaping history. Stephen Kemmis and Franziska Trede examine key ingredients for future practices that depend on practitioners taking control of their practice through participation, public debate, continuous reflection and action intertwined with reflection.

In Chapter 4 Stephen Loftus discusses recent developments in conceptualising communities of practice (CoP). He argues that a community of practitioners with a shared interest can break down silos, develop a corporate wisdom, and flourish through shared narratives. A key component of CoP is the facility for boundary crossing. Many practitioners are members of several CoPs, and this reality creates the potential for cross-fertilisation and practice development, with implications for defining and shaping the professional identities of individual practitioners and professions.

The contributions of critical practice to education for future practice are examined by Franziska Trede and Joy Higgs in Chapter 5. Critical practice is reflective, relational, reciprocal and dialogical, and advocates for involved participation with a disposition to appreciate yet challenge current ways of practising. It highlights and problematises issues of professional power and authority as well as dialogues which can be distorted and oppressive or emancipatory and transformative.

In Chapter 6 Alison Lee and Roger Dunston re-present practice as co-production, where service providers and service receivers both contribute to its production. Such a concept has radical implications for the notions of expertise, responsibility, professional power, and the role of the professional and the client. Co-production is built upon citizenship entitlement and the need for sustainable practices, including accessibility and availability. Co-production advocates client-centred approaches and professional learning for and in practice.

In Chapter 7 Steve Hutchinson and Pam Shakespeare tackle the roles and implications of standards, external regulations and professional autonomy for university education. Standards and protocols can be seen as one way of representing (and enacting) professional practice. Protocols can range along trajectories from

negotiated to non-negotiable and from context-specific to non-context specific. The challenge for higher education is to prepare students to meet professional standards and at the same time renegotiate them. The authors conclude that “good standards and regulation work to inform practice”.

Stephen Loftus and Trish Greenhalgh draw attention to the role of narrative in professional practice in Chapter 8. A narrative mode of practice involves a form of storytelling that can lead to deeper understanding and reinterpretations of practice. It is a conversational way of knowing. Stories are told within a context and from a storyteller perspective, revealing the human and meaning-making side of practice.

#### EDUCATION FOR PRACTICE – FROM PRACTICE

It is clear that thinking about education for practice has changed and is continuing to change. Perhaps the biggest change is the growing awareness of what has been called by many as the primacy of practice. For far too long there seems to have been an assumption in higher education that theory is all important, and that if theory is produced and advanced then the practice will somehow follow. This preoccupation with theory and its generation is seen in the ways that university funding and staff promotion continue to favour research, with education being the poor cousin. However, a growing number of people are now beginning to appreciate the importance of practice as the driver of what professionals should be researching and teaching. It is worth recalling the words of the Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, who wrote:

Practice sets the tasks and serves as the supreme judge of theory, as its truth criterion. It dictates how to construct the concepts. (Vygotsky, 1927/1987, p. 1)

Where practice is used to set the tasks and where it is used as the judge of theory we are beginning to see real innovation in higher education, as demonstrated by some of the examples in this volume. Where the primacy of practice is embraced there is a genuine concern to develop forms of education that encourage new practitioners to live and work with uncertainty and complexity, to be critical, to be reflective, and to engage in interdisciplinary work while maintaining a robust sense of identity within their own professions. There is also an acceptance that theory and knowledge come in many forms and can be generated from practice, so that practice itself is often a form of inquiry and the practice setting is a worthy site for important and relevant research. One of the greatest benefits of adopting a practice-based approach to higher education is that it fosters a strong ethical stance where professional practice and educational practice are founded upon clearly articulated values that are regularly questioned and explored.

#### WHAT ARE THE MAJOR INFLUENCES ON EDUCATION FOR PRACTICE?

The major stakeholders influencing PBE include society, consumers and interest groups, practitioners, professional, disciplinary and occupational groups and associations, and funding and regulatory authorities including governments and employers.

These parties all require university graduates entering the workforce to be skilled, moral and ethical practitioners who are highly educated and capable entrants to their chosen professions. The process of preparing these graduates can be described in many ways. In this book we frame this education in practice-based education. Such education is purposeful and grounded or contextualised in communities of practice (see Higgs, Ajjawi, & Smith, 2009a, and Chapter 4) and the practice worlds that the graduates will enter; it involves socialisation of the learners into these worlds (see Higgs, Hummell, & Roe-Shaw, 2009b).

An important consideration in higher education in preparation for graduate practice is the multiple responsibilities faced by educators (curriculum developers, academics and workplace educators) and learners. The learners – in the spirit of lifelong learning and the requirement of practitioners to maintain their ongoing competence – have the paramount responsibility to meet the expectations of the stakeholders described above. Further, practitioners each have their own unique practice approach to develop – comprising their practice epistemologies, ontologies and models – the blending of their dispositions (e.g. values, ethical stances), goals, personal standards, self-appraisal and intentions towards their clients, with the imperatives they face from workplaces, professional associations and society. Universities have the responsibility to educate individual professionals to critically appraise received models and practices. Practitioners need to take this critical stance into their living practice so that they can own and take responsibility for their actual practice and their practice models (see Trede & Higgs, 2009).

The nature and world of work provides a major influence on PBE. In Chapter 9 Stephen Billett interprets the implications for university education and PBE of emerging perspectives and practices of work. He argues that meeting work requirements requires practitioners to have a robust knowledge base comprising canonical occupational knowledge (i.e. the concepts, procedures and dispositions expected of those practising the occupation), procedural knowledge and dispositional knowledge, comprising interests and beliefs, emerging from their social experiences and life histories. These three forms of knowledge are richly interconnected and interdependent. As well as pursuing knowledge development and use in practice, practitioners need to effectively manage change in their work, roles and environment, being what Billett describes as agentic learners. It is the responsibility, he argues, of higher education to support the development of occupational knowledge and agency. Domain-specificity is paramount in both work practices and PBE.

In Chapter 10 Della Fish and Stephen Brigley explore education as practice. They portray enhanced teaching based upon in-depth educational understanding that arises from teachers' exploration of their practice and education values. Such advanced understanding attends to and seeks to develop learners' own understanding and values. From this chapter we see the inevitable and intense influence on teaching of individual teachers' interpretations, learning and values, and we gain an appreciation of the impact of the education of higher education academic and workplace teachers on the way they understand and pursue "the practice of education".

Will Letts in Chapter 11 examines the pedagogical landscapes that frame higher education. He argues that pedagogies of higher education have an important place

in education for future practice and reminds us that these pedagogies can both enable and constrain future practice. He challenges us to recognise that we are not beholden to the ideologies that are shaping and constraining higher education, and we are not obliged to enact the pedagogies suggested by confining and repressive regimes.

In Chapter 12 Ian Goulter and Maurits van Rooijen argue that, notwithstanding the ongoing relatively high autonomy of universities, contemporary higher education remains subject and responsive to a range of complex, dynamic and often compounding social, political and industrial drivers. The authors argue that since universities are social institutions in time and place, these drivers are always complexly realised in their mission and actions.

Chapter 13 explores the emergence of work integrated learning (WIL) and related educational practices including work-based learning. In this chapter Ian Goulter and Carol Joy Patrick examine the origins and evolution of WIL in terms of integrating learning and work experience. A key dimension of this evolution (indeed revolution) in higher education has been the growing expectations of governments, society and students that university graduates will be work ready, will have high employability capacity and will make positive contributions to their nation's growth and success. The future of WIL is likely to be one of sustained priority, alongside challenges to deal with the high costs in time, funding and organisation that WIL implementation entails. Facing these challenges is a major task for universities.

Pam Shakespeare presents the argument in Chapter 14 that effective practice-based curricula respond to different stakeholder requirements and that multiple practice understandings and different perspectives of what students should be able to perform in practice need to be woven into the curriculum.

In Chapter 15 Marilyn Childs and Marian Tulloch reflect upon broad social, economic, technological and labour market changes that have driven changes in higher education over the last two decades. They identify that these global trends have focused attention on the quality of university teaching, arguing that university teaching dominated by didactic teaching methods is simply unacceptable in the contemporary world. Instead, with many knowledge producers active in the global Internet world, students have access to a wide variety of learning opportunities and learning technologies. Many universities are responding with a shift towards student-centred learning and teaching.

#### WHAT ARE THE CURRENT TRENDS IN EDUCATION FOR PRACTICE?

It is clear that a number of emerging trends are engaging the attention of more and more people who are concerned with the manner in which higher education prepares people for the world of work. The emerging trends include a concern for adequately equipping graduates to cope with the uncertainties, not only of today's practice but also of tomorrow's. What we *can* be sure of today is that we are uncertain about what tomorrow's uncertainties might be! The knowledge required for practice is complex, comes in different forms and is not easily learned, as much of it must emerge from engagement with practice itself. Closely related to this is the growing realisation that theory and practice need to be closely integrated, and

that good practice-based education must integrate the two in sophisticated ways that allow students and new graduates to engage with and appreciate the true complexity and uncertainty of professional practice.

In Chapter 16 Brent Allpress and Robyn Barnacle look at PBE through the lens of project work in architecture. They are critical of many trends in higher education that they see as counter-productive, such as the preoccupation with competencies, the visible and easily measurable behaviours that can be confused with the breadth, depth and complexity of professional conduct. They present a project-based approach that allows participants to engage with the full richness of practice. This approach provides opportunities to integrate theory and practice, often because relevant theory emerges from practice.

In Chapter 17, Della Fish develops some of these ideas and argues for a greater awareness of Aristotle's *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. She points out that although difficult to do, we need to nurture *phronesis* and articulate practice so that we can consciously engage with our professional practice at a deep level. In other words, we need to practise interpretively and we need to teach interpretive practice to newcomers to the profession. Fish argues that a consciously interpretive approach to PBE can also bring about a more moral and ethical approach to practice. Such an approach encourages practitioners to be aware of how their professional values are driving their interpretations of practice.

The concern for ethical practice is taken up in Chapter 18. Ben Bradley reflects on the history of the university and its concerns to produce good citizens as well as good practitioners. He warns that the utilitarian approach to higher education, adopted by many Western governments in recent decades, has had a deleterious effect on this responsibility. The new managerialism assumes, for example, that there can be "content-free" metrics of excellence. Bradley critiques this view. Fortunately, a growing number of voices are now calling for a re-integration of education for citizenship into university curricula.

In Chapter 19, Mike Keppell discusses the importance of cultivating academics who have a deep understanding of the implications of new technology for higher education, as a practice in itself and as a preparation for the world of practice. He describes an institutional scheme for developing this understanding in academics that encourages them to be interdisciplinary and willing to become champions for innovation, not for the sake of innovation, but because they know how and why the new technology can enhance education. There is much talk now of flexible and blended learning as well as simulations and e-portfolios. These are exciting innovations that are playing an increasing role in supporting higher education. Those in PBE need to be aware of the ways the new technology can enhance the educational experience for students, as well as the limitations.

In Chapter 20, Linda de Cossart and Della Fish discuss the important area of new graduates' learning in the workplace after they leave the sheltered environment of the university. As junior practitioners new graduates must accept much more responsibility than students, and the pressures and demands on new graduates are quite different from those faced by students. These early experiences are important educationally, but there are many myths and misunderstandings about what and

how such learning occurs in these settings. The authors examine these issues and suggest principles to set up a learning/work environment that fosters the creation of reflective practitioners with insight, self-knowledge and wise judgment.

In Chapter 21, Maree Simpson and Stephen Loftus discuss the importance of preparing practitioners in the field (fieldwork educators) to take on the roles of mentor, teacher and supervisor for the growing number of students who are undertaking workplace learning. Such learning is now recognised as an important opportunity for students to engage in PBE, and the proportion of time that students spend on workplace learning is steadily increasing worldwide. With this expansion, however, comes the realisation that to maximise learning in these settings we need educators who can be both good role models of practice *and* good teachers with a sound understanding of PBE pedagogy. For example, these educators should have the knowledge and sensitivity to judge when students need simple feedback or some deeper, more reflective intervention. Universities have a responsibility to “educate these educators”.

In Chapter 22, David Boud discusses the issue of student assessment. It is well-known that assessment drives the learning of many students who will tailor what they learn to assessment tasks. It is important, therefore, to carefully design assessment so that students learn what we want them to learn. As Boud points out, carefully designed assessments need to accomplish a number of goals. Good assessment will develop the practice of students within their university courses, but it will also encourage them to continue developing their practice into the future. There needs to be a future orientation to assessment, and graduates should leave the university with a well-developed sense that they are responsible for their own learning throughout their professional careers.

In Chapter 23, Nick Klomp discusses the issue of creating a practice-based learning environment, especially one that fosters citizenship, as mentioned earlier. Citizenship can include environmental awareness and sustainability. In particular, Klomp discusses the implications of documents such as the Talloires declaration. This encourages sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching and research. He argues that universities need to be seen to “walk the walk” as well as “talk the talk”. He examines the physical environment of learning in universities that can be provided, for example, in buildings that explicitly incorporate advanced thinking in environmental awareness and sustainability. Such buildings provide actual and inspiring examples of environmental sustainability.

In Chapter 24, Tracey Green and Rosemary Woolston pick up the theme of integration. In their case it is integration of the university with industry, where the partners collaborate closely to provide a rich PBE environment in which theory and practice are integrated on a daily basis. Using the example of policing education, they discuss the need for university and industry partners to recognise each other’s importance in university education and to be committed to the joint educational venture.

In Chapter 25, Jo-Anne Reid takes a poststructural look at efforts to prepare students for workplace learning. She argues that careful use of reflective portfolios allows students to develop awareness of the many power relations, voices and

discourses in and around professional practice. Portfolio construction can also allow students to try out and rehearse new identities as professionals. This also enables them to identify, articulate and justify their values and practices as emerging professionals. In other words, students are encouraged to learn in, through, and about professional practice in ways that go far beyond anything that can be assessed by more simplistic competency-based approaches.

In the final chapter, Megan Smith, Rola Ajjawi and Joy Higgs provide a reflective overview of PBE practices and trends in a range of health professions. This chapter summarises many of the changes and challenges occurring in education across these professions. Those in charge of curricula need to keep in balance a large number of voices seeking to influence (at times in opposing ways) the education of health professions. These voices include the competency-based movement, the drives towards evidence-based practice, reflective practice, critical practice and interprofessional learning. In recent times, higher education in the health professions has had to learn to cope with the sharp rise in numbers of students and new graduates that will be needed as the demand for healthcare for an aging population increases. To deal with all these pressures those who design and run PBE need a deep understanding of the issues raised in this book and the ability to engage in the ongoing debates that continue to shape higher education.

#### A CONCLUDING VIEW

To conclude this chapter and draw the various ideas together in this book we present an argument that *education for future practice involves the pursuit of clarity of shared purpose in the midst of turbulence* (see Figure 1.1). This view of practice-based education involves a dialogue among teachers, learners and other mentors in consideration of the goals and situation of the learning endeavour. We place this dialogue in the centre of a swirling, turbulent, multi-layered environment. The turbulence is created through participation in multiple learning communities, unpredictable workplaces, dynamic education and practice market places, the demands of many stakeholders, the many imperatives influencing higher education, and unparalleled opportunities and challenges from advancing technologies.

Change is seen as a whirlpool, a vortex with rapids, strong currents, breaking waves and multiple forces buffeting the key educational players. These players, in pursuit of clarity and shared purpose of vision, strategies and programs gain success in this turbulent context through the realisation of organic curricula. Such curricula are broad-living, evolving, self-modifying phenomena.

Curriculum refers to the sum of the experiences students engage in and acquire as a result of learning at university, and the factors that create these experiences. This includes explicit, implicit and hidden aspects of the learning program, and experiences that occur incidentally (alongside) the formal curriculum. The curriculum is intentional teaching, content, assessment and inevitable as well as unintentional messages to learners created through role modelling by teachers and fieldwork educators, through assessment schedules,

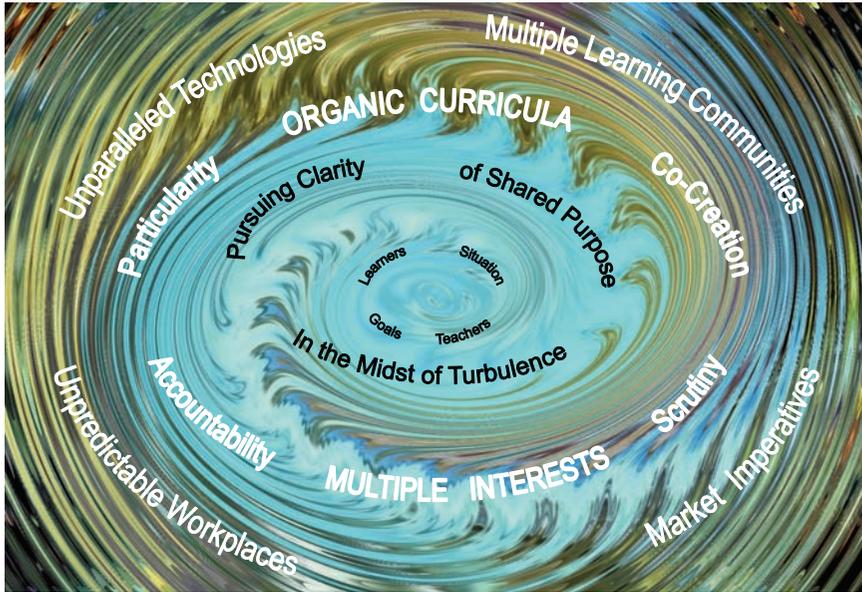


Figure 1.1. Creating shared organic curricula in the midst of turbulence.

learning climate, infrastructure (resourcing, facilities, staffing, administrative and support systems), university communities and additional experiences (e.g. sporting, social) that are part of university life. (Higgs, 2009, p. 3)

Organic curricula are particular to the circumstance (e.g. setting, discipline, people, profession), robust in the face of internal and external scrutiny, committed to quality pursuit and accountability; AND they are a co-creation of key stakeholders, honouring the multiple interests of these players. We see these features as the vision for this book, as well as the vision arising through the multiple interpretations and arguments presented by the authors.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The term professional practice is used broadly in this chapter and frequently throughout this book to encompass graduate practice and refers to practice in designated professions as well as practice in occupations other than those recognised as professions by society.

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## 2. FRAMING EDUCATION FOR PRACTICE

### INTRODUCTION

What might it mean to frame education for practice? We can only come at this matter seriously by embarking on an analysis of 'practice'. And for that, we would have to look at 'practice' as it has been understood in the writings of both philosophers and sociologists; Aristotle, MacIntyre, de Certeau, Bourdieu, and Schön and Argyris would be among those disparate many who offered their thoughts directly on the nature of practice who would come into the reckoning. Yet others whose work has touched on cognate matters include Heidegger, Levitas, Wittgenstein, Habermas, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Charles Taylor. Somewhat fortunately, the space of a single chapter does not permit such an examination. Instead, I shall essay a more personal offering; but the murmurings of some of those just named – and others – may well be heard in what follows.

### THE PROBLEM STATED

For now, let us take a practice to be a socially institutionalised and socially acceptable form of inter-action requiring cognitive understanding and reflection. There are several ingredients in this stipulative definition: action in a social setting; cognition; reflection; social legitimacy. Lurking just in the wings of this definition are concepts of openness, personal freedom, social critique, and knowledge. Less obviously, perhaps, is a concept on which I wish to dwell a little in this essay, namely that of 'consideration'.

The purpose of this chapter, though, is not to embark on an examination of the idea of practice as such but to develop a sense of a higher education that is fit for practice. There is a challenge here, for higher education developed for itself a sense that part of its mission was founded on knowledge. Another part of its mission was that of personal development. In both its German and English variants, it was felt that an authentic encounter with knowledge had person-forming properties. An enquiry of a serious kind had personally edifying qualities. For Newman (1853/1976), such a voyage furnished a 'philosophical outlook'. In the Germanic concept of *Bildung* (notoriously without anything approaching a direct translation into English) lay a somewhat equivalent idea: the free search for knowledge brought forth 'Spirit', the individual coming into an encounter with a greater good beyond the individual (c.f. Lovlie, Mortenson, & Nordenbo, 2003).

This association of higher education with knowledge which has been successively compounded as a state-backed interest in systematic inquiry – or 'research' – grew apace through the twentieth century. Higher education came thereby to be an educative

process that was conducted in the context of research; and so arose debates as to the proper relationship between ‘teaching’ and research. Even ‘teaching’ itself was a fuzzy concept in this milieu: was it an activity in its own right or was it an adjunct of research? Such a debate only had point in a situation in which the association between higher education and knowledge was not just tight but was indissoluble. And this was not just knowledge in any facile sense but, as implied, knowledge won as a result of systematic research and scholarship.

It is against a background of something of this kind that the matter of the relationship between higher education and practice becomes problematic. If it is felt desirable that higher education should have some relationship to practice, what might that relationship be? Might higher education be still construed as an authentic encounter with knowledge and also as some kind of preparation for practice? This is the problem before us.

#### POSSIBLE GAMBITS

A number of gambits are open to us in tackling this problem. One gambit would be to suggest that, in higher education, our concept of knowledge needs at least to widen if not fundamentally to change. A way forward here has been opened by the so-called Mode 2 thesis of Michael Gibbons and his associates (1994). Here, ‘Mode 2’ knowledge is explicitly identified as different from conventional ‘Mode 1’ academic propositional knowledge, being knowledge that is produced in situ, often by teams working on projects such that the knowledge won is not just practical and interdisciplinary but is local and ephemeral.

Such a gambit could be pressed in a more radical way by suggesting that the Mode 2 thesis, despite its possibly radical character, is hopelessly inadequate for the modern age. It might be observed that the contemporary world brings forth competing and incommensurable frames for understanding the world and yet demands more or less instantaneous action. Consequently, an appropriate stance in relation to knowledge would be that of epistemological Catholicism. That is to say, there should be no arbitrary limits on what is to count as knowledge. Recent and contemporary ideas such as ‘process knowledge’, ‘tacit knowledge’, ‘action learning’, ‘experiential learning’ and ‘the reflective practitioner’ would here be understood to be mere hints towards new forms of knowing.

A larger view still would be that of acknowledging that we live in a ‘multimodal’ age and that, accordingly, our legitimate ways of appropriating the world (that is, ‘knowledge’) need to be openly multimodal in character. (We may note that this is no arcane point: universities around the world are having to reflect seriously on their regulations for the presentation of doctorate theses, as students – who are often much more *avant garde* than their tutors – seek to offer theses that are themselves multimodal in character.)

That, then, would be one gambit, in securing a proper relationship between higher education and practice: that of pushing and pulling the boundaries as to what is to count as ‘knowledge’. A second gambit would be to deny the premises of the question. The question – ‘Might higher education still be construed as an authentic encounter

with knowledge and also as some kind of preparation for practice’ – posits some kind of relationship between higher education and practice (even if the answer might be that it is not possible so to construe higher education). But the gambit here, our second possible gambit, could be simply to deny that higher education and practice should be understood as being in a relationship with each other. This is a gambit not to be dismissed lightly.

As stated, higher education came, over a long period, to be seen as an encounter with formal knowledge, knowledge gained by various epistemic communities at work in different intellectual fields. Here, knowing was as important as knowledge: in Bourdieu’s terminology, ‘habitus’ was a confluence of knowing structures and ways of being in the world (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.11–15). Higher education was a process that took individuals out of their immediate world of practice: the university was a space severed from the world. It offered, in Oakeshott’s phrase, ‘the gift of the interval’ (Fuller, 1989, p. 101). On this view, accordingly, to posit a relationship between higher education and the immediate world of practice is to misconstrue one of the purposes of higher education. So this gambit denies the legitimacy of the question set above.

A yet third, and for now, final gambit would be to press the second gambit further and to observe that the challenges of coming to know, in anything approaching a systematic way of understanding the world, is itself to enter a practice. Such a view has been captured in the recent upsurge of interest in the idea of ‘communities of practice’. Knowing only makes sense if and when one is coming to understand the world within a community. There can be no private appropriations of the world that amount to knowledge. In Richard Peters’ (1966) terminology, education is here understood as an ‘initiation’ into a way of life that imparts cognitive understanding and that is worthwhile. This gambit, it will be noticed, also dissolves the original problem to some extent. For it denies that there is the distance between knowing and practice that the originating question implies. Education is not to be understood as separate from practice for it itself ushers in an entry into a form of practice (see Dunne & Hogan, 2004).

Of these three gambits, I would say that each has some merit. The contemporary world requires us to be epistemologically adventurous (gambit 1) and many of the new epistemologies have action and practice written into them. A virtue of higher education lies in its offering a space separate from the pressing nature of the world, to enter into forms of thought and understanding – and their associated standards – that can serve as resources by which not only to comprehend the world but also to critique it and to act afresh in it (gambit 2). Finally, the forms of life sustained in higher education are themselves complexes of practices (gambit 3). This argument serves as one of the bases on which the notion of ‘transferable skills’ gains its grip, for the transferability has sense only if there is some common basis between higher education and the external world of practice. The idea of transferability, however, is itself suspect for even if there was some degree of correspondence between the practices of the academic world and the practices of the external world, it remains open as to whether there is any correspondence between the practices of today and the practices of tomorrow.

But this is surely odd, for the three gambits are at odds with each other. Gambit 1 relishes practice and asks that our epistemologies embrace it. Gambit 2 seems to shun practice. Gambit 3 occupies a more nuanced position in declaring affinities between the practices of higher education and those of the wider world but does so only at the price of posing key questions: will future practices be like contemporary practices? Could higher education ever be adequate to unknown and unforeseeable practices? But to pose such questions is to return us to our starting point.

#### UNCERTAIN KNOWING, UNCERTAIN PRACTICES

Still the matter of the divergence between gambit 1 and gambit 2 haunts us. Should the epistemologies of higher education enthusiastically embrace practice or should they endeavour to protect a space separate from practice? Here, of course, lies the challenge both set by, and set to, liberal education: its separateness from the world afforded a retreat, where new resources could be gathered, the more effectively to critique the world. But how can such a contemplative position offer the wherewithal with which to engage with and in the world?

A realist may break into this line of thought with the reflection that, as a matter of fact, higher education has seldom suffered from such angst. From its mediaeval inception, universities have been oriented towards the external world. Practices – plural – were often originating points for the establishment of universities, whether those of medicine, law, administration or – in the nineteenth century – the practices of industry and commerce. Today, many institutions and courses are oriented in the direction of work, whether directly through related work-based elements as part of the program (both on campus and possibly through simulations, both virtual and ‘real’) and through wider work experiences as part of ‘study service’.

This realist caveat has point on its side but only some point. For this ‘realist’ overlooks the emergence through the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth century, of an anti-utilitarian ideology in higher education; an ideology that itself had merit since the distance that it sought to widen between higher education and the wider society was seen as a key plank in the open society. ‘Knowledge for its own sake’ was a slogan that, *sotto voce*, heralded a radicalism far from the benign separateness that it seemed. Through that idea came the possibility that universities could offer one institutional means of commenting on and critiquing the dominant ideologies of the age.

Our fundamental question remains, therefore, though now slightly refined: how might higher education be framed so that it might do justice both to the challenges of practice in the contemporary world but yet also do some justice to its liberal if not emancipatory promise? Can the circle be squared?

Here, we may return to gambit 3. That gambit, it will be recalled, took the move of combining gambits 1 and 2. It was suggested that higher education itself is a complex of practices and so there are overlaps between higher education and the outside world precisely through the idea of practice. But ‘practice’ remains problematic. I offered a stipulative definition earlier. That definition included the suggestion that practice be understood as ‘a socially institutionalised and socially

acceptable form of inter-action'. But what is socially acceptable today may not be socially acceptable tomorrow. The brevity of this time-frame is deliberate: social acceptability may change remarkably quickly nowadays. (Here, we may observe the recent change, virtually overnight, in social attitudes towards banking and the financial independence of banks.)

Two points follow: firstly, rather than *the practice of everyday life* (de Certeau, 1988), we should instead note the richness and complexity of the practices of everyday life, each of which may attract competing evaluations. (The practices of hedge funds and 'shorts trading' may be anathema to some but a crucial part of the operation of financial markets for others.) Secondly, those practices of everyday life change, both intentionally and unwittingly. Practices, accordingly, are situated amid flux and contestation; they are not stable institutions.

It follows, in turn, that the idea of higher education needing in some way to correspond to practices in the wider world, is problematic. There is no stable world of practices to which higher education could 'correspond' even if it so wished. And, more tellingly still, there is little, if any, consensus even as to the descriptions of those practices in the contemporary world, for those descriptions are themselves contested. (What is it to be a banker? What is it to be a doctor? What is it to be a politician?)

And yet, the supposition that higher education should be more linked to practice of some kind presses insistently and evermore so. It is surely amid the recognition of the inherently unstable and contested nature of practices that calls arose for the development of the 'reflective practitioner'. To the acquisition of technical skills – probably in a 'practicum' where simulations of practices could be set up with minimal risk – was to be coupled reflection. The major proponents of this way of thinking – Donald Schön (by himself in 1983) and with his collaborator, Chris Argyris (1974) – developed complex ideas of the relationships between knowledge, practices and reflection. Reflection could take place both with varying degrees of penetration (single or double-loop) and could take place in real time (during a practice) or subsequently, in systematic evaluation after an event.

A value of the role that Schön and Argyris (and others following in their wake) accorded reflection was that the forms of reflection in this schema themselves provided for the possibility of moving on, of understanding the world anew. Individuals were not merely to acquire skills but were to do so in knowing ways. Treated to forms of reflection, the practice of the skills offered paths to new knowing. The knowing might be different from that caught in formal propositional epistemologies; but knowing it was. And it was sophisticated knowing at that. For this was a critical knowing, always monitoring itself, moving itself forward, even as the action was in progress (through 'reflection-in-action').

What has happened to that line of thought, which became so influential that we may fairly call on that overused term 'paradigm'? Talk of 'the reflective practitioner' has been replaced by talk of 'communities of practice' (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1999). There has been a widespread shift such that the more social aspects of learning and knowing (and speaking and communicating) have become dominant. Out has gone any sense of individuals becoming themselves as individuals and as gaining their

identity through their lone struggles. Neitzschians and existentialists need not apply for membership of this newly emerging community of practice (itself built on the idea of 'community of practice').

Doubtless the 'communities of practice' movement has helpfully reminded us of the value of collaboration and dialogue in education. Its rapid take-up, though, and its becoming a mantra readily to be espoused in debates on teaching and learning, have potentially serious implications, implications that are germane to our purposes here. The matter before us is that of the radical unpredictability and contestability of practices and the framing of an appropriate higher education in those circumstances. 'Communities of practice' may empirically be quite inadequate as a means of addressing this situation. They are certainly not sufficient; and, in a sense, it is not even clear that they are necessary. They may even be an obstacle in addressing the situation – of radical doubt, uncertainty and contestability – that we have identified.

Let me press the point. I acknowledged earlier – in my stipulative definition of 'practice' – that practice takes place amid communities. But that by no means implies that the resources for dealing with the contemporary situation – which we are entitled to term 'supercomplexity' – can be found within such communities. I suggest that the necessary resources can be found in three domains working together in some combination. Those domains are those of (i) the individual, with his or her own cognitive capacities, and personal and social dispositions and qualities (and these – dispositions and qualities – are to be distinguished); (ii) the totality of society's institutions, those institutions – at least in their totality – being characterised by openness and a level of responsible critique; (iii) the culture of society being receptive to ideas (and giving space to 'public intellectuals' in society). These three domains together form an ideal empirical framework by which resources - conceptual and practical - might emerge that are adequate to the instability and insufficiency of contemporary practices.

To be more specific, if these three domains were to flourish together, we would be likely to see two things.

- Firstly, ideas would be continually being created and circulated in and across society. New knowledge would more readily be created in different domains. New theories, new representations of the world, new media for conveying those representations: these would be readily apparent. Institutional space would be even more readily available for the formation of what Charles Taylor (2007) has termed 'imaginaries', new ideas that may come to be so taken up that they become part of the weave of society. And the formation of such imaginaries would be itself semi-institutionalised (through universities and other means of knowledge production.) What it is to know would be continually challenged.
- Secondly, individuals would both feel able to critique the dominant ideologies of the age (MacIntyre, 1971) and be enabled to come forward with their own perhaps iconoclastic ideas – even against the positions of their own 'communities of practice'.

Under such conditions, the uncertain knowing and uncertain practices that characterise contemporary life would be compounded. Why is this necessary?

It is necessary in the first place as a means of sustaining an open society (a form of society now threatened not merely from without but also from within with the onward march of ‘the surveillance society’) (cf. Popper, 1971; Habermas, 1972). But it is also necessary in the second place as a means of addressing the near-intractability of the major problems facing us on this planet. Those problems – including those of energy shortages, climate change, AIDS, wars, unjustifiable inequalities of power and resources (both across and within societies), demographic instabilities, and loss of community – require new complexes of interdisciplinary thought and research. (cf. Maxwell, 1987) On both fronts – sustaining an open society and seriously addressing the problems of our age – we require the compounding of the complexity and interactions of knowledges and practices. Uncertain knowing and uncertain practices have to be conditions of our sustaining meaningful life on this planet.

## FRAMING EDUCATION FOR PRACTICE

We have now, I think, the beginnings of the necessary resources by which to enable us to frame education for practice. At least, we must start on that task. To start us off, we may crudely list the components of an education for practice as they have emerged – or been surely implied - in our reflections so far:

- An understanding of key strands of contemporary knowledge germane to a practice;
- A sense of the capacities of other disciplines and fields not merely to shed additional light on the field in question but to challenge it and widen it, and so strengthen and to modify it;
- Capacities to live in a practice, to become part of its community (‘of practice’);
- Capacities to live out authentically one’s practices in a self-monitoring and self-critical mode, even at the cost of occasional estrangement from the community of practice;
- Capacities to communicate with multiple audiences (‘clients’) in different genres and modes; to live a life of ‘multimodality’ (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001);
- Capacities to theorise one’s practices so as to take up critical stances towards them (so as in turn to be well-placed to help to take them forward in an uncertain world);
- Capacities to open oneself to other fields and practices, both to work productively with them and to be able to collaborate on joint knowledge and creative projects together.
- Capacities to live with and even love languages, ‘languages’ here understood in their broadest way, for each field and community has its own language, which is not only a dynamic form itself but which may take on a sense of the tower of Babel, as languages abut against each other, in their different modes and genres.

Does such a framing of education for practice seem obvious and non-contentious; or, rather, does it seem radical, over-ambitious and most certainly contentious? I believe that the latter set of descriptions is warranted here. Let us note some dimensions of such a framing:

- An insistence on the dimension of criticality, a dimension that may be waning in an era of so-called performativity and commodification of higher education;

- The implicit demand for the formation of strong ego and super-ego structures, if the implied forms of being and becoming are to take place;
- A distinction between labour and work (Arendt, 1958): practices are not routinised but are all the time subject to interpretation and re-evaluation, to re-design and even, in the end, to jettisoning;
- Personal dispositions such as those of ‘a will to learn’ and ‘a will to go on amid uncertainty’, ‘a willingness to take risks’ and ‘a will to listen acutely’ and personal qualities such as those of vigilance, openness, care, carefulness, courage, respect for others and even forthrightness (Barnett, 2007);
- A sense of the other, but yet a refusal to be swept up in the other.
- An interpenetration of the theoretical and the practical domains, often leading to further uncertainty and even anxiety (not least because of chasms between the potentiality opened by theory and the limitations of institutionalised practices).

Together, these eight components and six dimensions surely present a formidable agenda in the framing of an education for practice. However, the challenges that such a framing presents are by no means exhausted.

What, precisely, is the relationship between the (eight) components and the (six) dimensions? The components are the pedagogical and curricula aims; the desiderata of a successful higher education. They supply the wherewithal – as it happens – for individuals to go on purposely and productively. By ‘productively’ we have to mean here not merely with an eye to the realm of the economy but to the fullness of life itself; the furthering of life in its best possible form. The *dimensions* are the conditions of the achievement of the components; the necessary means by which the components might be realised.

Not every component will be an educational aim in every program of study or will be present in equal measure. Different programs will legitimately have different emphases. Correspondingly, not all the dimensions will come into play. For example, not every unit of a course can all the time be characterised by criticality. Some routine is necessary on all courses to some extent. (The realisation of the components requires, to some extent, the formation of habits, which require a measure of routine.) Nevertheless, a full and valid framing for practice, it seems to me, requires the fulfilment of the eight components and the abiding of the six dimensions.

We, therefore, have here a genuine framing of education for practice. The eight components and the six dimensions can be placed against each to form a complex grid. Every program of study and every unit within a program of study could be placed on the grid. In this way, the pedagogical and curricula potential of programs of study can be mapped. Both units and whole programs could be mapped onto this grid, so revealing their pedagogical and curricula potential for an education for practice.

#### CONSIDERATION

I said at the start of this exploration that I wanted to bring into view the concept of ‘consideration’. Its ambiguities are apparent. In it, are hints if not explicit connotations of being considerate, of considering (an immediate present reason or

a situation), of ‘for a consideration’ (that is, for some pecuniary favour) and of ‘considering’ (that is, reflecting widely on a some set of prevailing circumstances and coming perhaps to a critical view of it). Bound up in the concept are dimensions of the personal and the impersonal; and of the displacement of self and very much the presence of self.

With such sets of ambiguities within the one term, it is surely marked out as apposite for our reflections here. An education for practice – of the kind just drawn out - will enable individuals:

- to come to *consider* – albeit ultimately more or less instantaneously as experienced practitioners – a range of immediate dimensions of their practices (such as the kind that a surgeon may voice when giving a running commentary on her actions in the operating theatre);
- to be *considerate* of others in the practising of those practices;
- to distance themselves from a situation, in a post hoc reflective mode, so as to take up evaluative and critical stances as a wide range of *considerations* are brought to bear on a matter;
- to invite their clients to *consider* matters, giving their clients the wherewithal to come to well-founded decisions;
- to estimate an appropriate *consideration* for their own services, taking into account the needs of clients and third parties and the capacity of clients to pay the necessary fees or meet the costs of services or products.

The idea of consideration, therefore, has ethical properties and itself is a cameo of the challenges of framing an education for practice. It at once speaks to the personal but it also speaks to the other; it includes subjective reason but insists on universal reason at least trying to gain a hearing; it allows for economic reason but it reminds the educator of the value of a more public or civic reason. So, in the one term, we see a complex of ideas that not merely jostle together but actually compete against each other. We might even venture, in a deconstructionist mode, that there is prospect here of the consideration undermining itself. The consideration pretends to be adopting a mode of universal reason but, all too easily, in professional or practical life, it can come to be a vehicle for personal advancement and economic reason. So the idea of the consideration mirrors the complexity, indeed the ‘supercomplexity’ (Barnett, 2000), of the life of practice and of practical reason.

And, to press the idea of consideration even further, we may observe that if this complexity is characteristic of the life of practice, it must be correspondingly present in pedagogy and curricula aimed at an education for practice. All of the dimensions of ‘consideration’ have to come into play in the design of curricula and in the choice of pedagogies. Just what considerations are to come into view on the part of the educator? What processes of consideration might students be encouraged to accomplish? What features of practice might students be invited to ‘consider’ (as in ‘consider this’)? What is to be the economic relationship between the educator and the student – in other words, what ‘consideration’ might come the way of the educator? We may see here, then, in the idea of consideration, a cameo of the manifold and contradictory aspects of an education for practice.

## CONCLUSIONS

The framing of an education for practice is fraught with difficulty and complexity. But the idea of a framing of an education is still worthwhile. A frame appropriate to and for this complexity can be worked out that can, in turn, serve as a basis for action – both educational action and practical action (that is, in the world of practice). However, if it is to do justice to the complexities – the components and the dimensions – that we have uncovered here, the frame itself needs to be open and generative of energy.

In this framing, knowing and acting will be brought into a complex but productive relationship through the student's being and emergent becoming. 'Practice' will be held in view but not assumed to be given in any sense. Practice will be held to account and will be subject to the critical gaze of knowledge; and may even be jettisoned when found to be inadequate to the challenges bearing in on it. But knowledge – especially when made active in forms of 'knowing' – may also be found to be inadequate to the demands of practice. However multimodal knowledge may become, still further modes of knowing will be found necessary; and new spaces will mysteriously arise for those new forms of knowing.

The framing of an education for practice is a task, accordingly, that is and never can be – finished. It is always work and thinking – and potentially revolutionary work and revolutionary thinking at that – in action.

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