

P E D A G O G Y , E D U C A T I O N A N D P R A X I S

# Lost in Practice: Transforming Nordic Educational Action Research

Karin Rönnerman and Petri Salo (Eds.)



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# **Lost in Practice: Transforming Nordic Educational Action Research**

## PEDAGOGY, EDUCATION AND PRAXIS

### Volume 7

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# **Lost in Practice: Transforming Nordic Educational Action Research**

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STEPHEN KEMMIS, MATTS MATTSON, PETRA PONTE &  
KARIN RÖNNERMAN

## **SERIES INTRODUCTION: PEDAGOGY, EDUCATION AND PRAXIS**

The ‘Pedagogy, Education and Praxis’ series arose from shared concerns among educational researchers from Australia, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom about the relationships between different traditions of education and educational research that inform our work. The meanings of terms like ‘pedagogy’ and ‘praxis’ are contested *within* European research traditions and Anglo-American traditions and even more confusingly contested *across* or *between* traditions. These words, shared across languages and intellectual traditions, inhabit different spaces in different languages, with different characteristic ways of behaving in each.

What ‘pedagogy’, ‘education’ and ‘praxis’ mean in Dutch or English or Swedish – where variants of these words occur – cannot be translated precisely and without remainder into another language. The volumes in this Series aim to help readers reach better understandings of ideas like ‘pedagogy’ and ‘praxis’ as they are used in different languages and traditions, *not* by finding some foundational or essential cores of these terms about which people in different languages and traditions might agree. Rather, the Series aims to encourage a ‘conversation of traditions’ in which the voices of different traditions can be heard, and different perspectives can come into view. In this way, readers may glimpse beyond the English in which the conversation is conducted to the rich intellectual traditions presented by contributors to the Series from traditions constructed over centuries in languages other than English. We hope to use these key ideas – pedagogy, education and *praxis* – as windows through which we may see, even if darkly, into the rooms of other languages and traditions, and to learn what we can about those other traditions by engaging them, as best we can, in a conversation.

The international collaborative project ‘Pedagogy, Education and Praxis’, of which this Series is an expression, has three kinds of aims:

1. theoretical aims concerning the exploration and critical development of key concepts and associated understandings, from different educational and research traditions, of pedagogy, educational science and educational studies, and social and educational *praxis* and practice;
2. practical aims concerning the quality and transformation of educational *praxis* in settings including education, teacher education and the continuing professional development of teachers, in relation to a variety of contemporary educational problems and issues, as they emerge in a variety of educational contexts at

different levels of education and in different national contexts; and

3. strategic aims of

- a. encouraging the dialogue between different traditions of theory, research and practice in education;
- b. enhancing awareness about the origins and formation of our own (and others') presuppositions and understandings as participants in such dialogues; and
- c. fostering collaboration and the development of networks between scholars interested in these problems and issues across traditions.

The volumes in the series are intended as contributions to this dialogue. Some aim to foster this dialogue by opening and exploring contemporary educational contexts, problems and issues within one country or tradition to readers from other countries and traditions. Other volumes aim to foster dialogue by bringing together, to address a common topic, authors and contributions from different countries and traditions. These 'conversations of traditions' will be in the foreground of at least one volume in the Series that will directly compare and contrast ideas about pedagogy, education and *praxis* as these ideas are understood in different traditions, especially between different Anglo-American and continental European traditions of educational theory, research and social and educational practice.

We believe that this endeavour will renew and revitalise some old conceptual resources, and make some, old or transformed, accessible as new resources for educational theory and practice in the international conversations, conferences and collaborations which constitute the globalised educational research communities of today.

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## 1. TRACES OF NORDIC EDUCATIONAL TRADITIONS

In 2008 the international network Pedagogy, Education, Praxis (PEP) published a number of books in this series by Sense. Since then the network has been actively involved in a number of collaborative research projects, which has resulted in other joint publications elsewhere. Researchers in the Nordic Network for Action Research have continued their work in investigating action research and the ways in which it is embedded in the Nordic traditions of *bildning* (*bildung*) and *folkbildning* (folk *bildung* or enlightenment). This reflective work on our own tradition, as well as an on-going conversation with other traditions in education, is highly regarded in the network and is recognised in this book. In *Nurturing Praxis* (2008), we closed the book by presenting a definition of how we would like to capture teachers' professional development in the light of the Nordic traditions and concepts of *bildung*, *folkbildung* and pedagogy:

A reciprocal challenging of professional knowledge and experiences, rooted in the everyday practices within schools, in collaborative arenas populated by researchers and practitioners, and in the interchange of knowledge of different kinds. (Rönnerman, Salo & Furu, 2008, p. 277).

In *Nurturing Praxis*, we presented eleven case studies on action research for furthering professional development. Researchers' involvement and engagement in these studies put the emphasis on *collaboration* and *partnership*. These, alongside *sharing values*, were three recognised features which can all be related to *bildung*. In collaborative groups both practical and emancipatory issues are in focus. Based on the educational traditions where ways of learning such as study circles and dialogue conferences are used, the democratic dialogue is at the centre. To create such dialogues, openness to different perspectives (or knowledge) in the different parties in the partnership is necessary. Drawing on experiences from work life, as well as theory, are highly regarded and are a given content in the dialogue aiming at deeper understanding and the social construction of new knowledge for further development of practice. In such meetings, sharing of values becomes a natural but challenging part of the dialogue.

The Nordic Network for Action Research is still involved in several research projects where the definition of action research has been at the fore in collaborative projects with teachers and schools. We can, after ten years of involvement in the Nordic Network for Action Research, be aware of how these collaborative projects have evolved together with a more confident and deeper knowledge of our own

traditions. Digging deeper into the history of educational traditions in the Nordic countries has helped us to understand educational action research but also to use and renew ideas and ideals from the last two centuries in our everyday practices. These include the use of the concept of research circle and dialogue conferences, and the analysis of our own way of working through the ideals set up half a century ago. But it is not just our own history that has helped us develop new understandings. Just as important are the conversations with scholars and colleagues within the international PEP network.

In a network such as PEP, collaboration and partnerships are present as well as shared values. As our annual meetings are constructed in such a way as to promote dialogue, we can also relate our own work to the traditions of research circle or dialogue conferences, explained by Gustavsen (2001, p. 24) as relationship building to create a plurality of vision to “maximize the number and quality of ideas that can be created and made real”. Our work can be similar to expanding networks, and in so doing, providing a structure for allowing one another to sit as equals and develop an understanding of different perspectives on similar issues. In such dialogues, when issues and traditions are shared, one becomes more aware of one’s own traditions when viewed from other perspectives. This gives a lot of input into a conversation, and leads to a deeper understanding of how traditions work and are transformed in modern times.

Relating our work to the concept and tradition of *bildung* helps us to make sense of and nurture education as praxis in a neo-liberal world, where education is reduced to rankings by means based on global testing of national learning outcomes. Using the metaphor of *bildung* as a travel (Gustavsson, 1996) fits well into our understanding of education and action research. You start reflecting on your own understandings of your practice and plan for development in a way that is congruent with your wisdom. Following the processes in a critical dialogue with other scholars, you become aware of the knowledge you need to be able to attain a deeper understanding of the issues at the fore. In collaboration with others you share and construct new understandings for developing your practice. In other words, you start from what you know, go into the unknown, and when you come back you are not the same. New knowledge is added to your understandings and experiences, which will be part of your new actions. Thereby *bildung* can be understood as a dynamic relationship between the known and the unknown. A confrontation with the unknown brings us closer to reflecting on our own practice, and gives us an opportunity to examine the taken-for-granted everyday understandings of the practice at hand. In a dialogue with others, this can be discussed and further developed. Gustavsen’s (2001) notion of how to set up such dialogues has been used and is of help in creating communicative spaces. These spaces can be understood as necessary conditions for possible actions for improvement (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The dialogue set up both within the Nordic Network for Action Research and in the international network of PEP can easily be said to be promoting a communicative space in which a conversation of traditions has been created. This conversation on the educational traditions, concepts and practices will continue, and we

hope to open it up for you as a reader, and for this new volume to become a part of the conversation. However, one might get lost in conversations about complex educational traditions and the practices informed by the traditions. And we all do get lost. This can be seen as part of the necessity of maintaining a conversation both on our historical traditions and on the ways in which the traditions are understood and developed in our times. The title of this book, *Lost in Practice*, is to be read as dynamic and open to interpretations, understandings and negotiations – not as a judgement. It builds on the notion that professional practices on various educational sites, which action research intends to affect, are extremely complex and contradictory – easy to be lost in. This risk of becoming lost is a professional challenge, especially when the highly technical and instrumentalist views characteristic of neo-liberalism challenge education and teaching as praxis. But no matter what the educational policy or the historical-cultural context, practitioners still seem to view theory and practice in education as independent, disconnected and even as opposed to each other. Teachers and principals are often driven by an immediate need to act professionally in and on educational practices. They prefer practical guidelines ahead of pedagogical theories, and reject the latter with reference to inoperability. Further, they reject theory by referring to its historical dead weight (theorising for its own sake) and its institutional context (university and research as detached from the everyday practices in schools and classrooms). In teachers' and principals' views, theory is something to “be put into practice” rather than to “be used for” making sense of or understanding the professional challenges at hand (Lopez-Pastor, Monjas & Manrique, 2011; Wenger, 1998, p. 47-49). As action researchers we still have a lot to do, particularly in engaging ourselves in conversations with practitioners on the abstract concepts to be used to interpret and make meaningful their educational practice, or in acting as critical friends for furthering a complementary view on different forms and domains of knowledge, and asserting their usefulness in developing professional practices in various educational settings

The practice-anchored standpoint becomes quite understandable and sympathetic when relating it to Berliner's (2002) view on educational research as “the hardest science of all”. The number, the power and the complexity of the contexts in which educational practices are embedded affect the conditions under which both practitioners and researchers do their work. The power of the contexts is intertwined with the ubiquity of interactions. Educational practices consist of myriads of loosely coupled interactions, some of them reciprocal, others occasionally one-sided. As Carr & Kemmis (1986, p. 180) noted some time ago, the problems of education are not about achieving known ends, rather:

.. problems of acting *educationally* in social situations which typically involve competing values and complex interactions between different people who are acting on different understandings of their common situation and on the basis of different values about how these interactions should be conducted.

As action researchers engaged in practices at various sites, we are continuously confronted with practitioners' desire for practical guidelines and pedagogical recipe

books – an understandable professional need to be able to handle the complexities of educational practices. As Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire (2003, p. 21-22) note, action researchers are to learn how to handle the “beauty of the chaos” of educational practices and to recognise the “messiness” of the professional practices at hand. In our times, when educational development and improvement of both educational systems and individual schools is of primary interest, the need for theories-for-understanding rather than theories-for-action is obvious. Translation theory (e.g. Røvik, 2007), focusing on the processes of how ideas and practices travel from one context or institution to another, is a good example of a theory-for-understanding. Furthermore, it embraces the complexity of contexts and the ubiquity of interactions characteristic of educational practices. Both the contents and forms of professional practices might be lost in the complex processes of translations, due to the manners in which these travelling practices are extracted, transported and re-embedded.

Our definition of action research, as presented above, supports the notion that the gap between theory and practice and the messiness of educational practices can be handled by focusing on the construction of local knowledge (Berliner, 2003, p. 20) or by collaborating for a co-creation of local theories (Elden & Levin, 1991). Action research stands as a practical science. It uses dialogue and conversations as means of enhancing practitioners’ reflectivity and self-knowledge, to enable them “to identify and eliminate the inadequacies and limitations of the practical knowledge sustaining their practice” as well as to recognise that “the knowledge that guides praxis always arises from and must always relate back to practice.” (Carr, 2006, p. 427). Hardy (2012, p. 522-524) constructs an approach in which a consciousness of the context-specific nature of educational practices is combined with an ambition to make generalisations (theorising) from particular instances of practice. This is to be enhanced by working simultaneously across multiple perspectives, and allowing researchers and practitioners to play their different frameworks and conceptualisations (e.g. on theory and practice) against each other. The aim of this interplay is to create a new common framework – a local theory (Elden & Levin, 1992, p. 132). Hardy (ibid.) draws upon sociologist Raewyn Connell’s concept of “dirty theory” in handling the messiness, specificity and complexity of educational practices. Theories become dirty by paying regard to:

both locally generated data (“actual” practice) and theoretical constructs (“understandings” of practice) in context, and for doing so in a way that acknowledges past practices and multiple ways of “knowing”.

The growing interest in practice theories, labelled as a practice turn, reflects an ambition to dissolve the dualisms between mind and body, social and material as well as the one between theory and action (Nicolini, 2013, p. 1-3). For Schatzki (2005) the aim is to combine the efforts and actions of the individual practitioners with the workings of society and the way in which the society is constructed and conceptualised within organisations and institutions. However, for teachers,

struggling with surviving at the chalkboard, or for principals struggling with teachers' disinterest in professional development, practice theory might represent just another grand, abstract and remote "theory" produced under the circumstances (practices) characteristic of the institutions of research and university. From the point of view of the Nordic educational tradition, when relating to the dynamics of *bildung* (both process and aim) and the practice of study circle (both as an arena and a method, bringing together individuals and collectives), the adoption of a practice approach does not result in a radical transformation of the view of knowledge or meaning (Nicolini, 2013, p. 5). At least in the ideal sense, study circles can be seen as sites in which the participants share, negotiate and develop their personal understandings and "theories" of reality and of the world they live in. Further, the ambition has been to relate this "educational" aspect to the political context that is structuring it, and to deepen its meaning in relation to historical and social circumstances. And thereby, study circles coincide with a community of practices (Wenger, 1998, p. 47-49).

It is not unusual for teachers or principals engaged in professional development to ask for guidance in "how to do" their practice rather than being prepared to confront the theories that would enable them to understand the ways in which their practices are affected and formed by the complexity of contexts and the ubiquity of interactions (Berliner, 2003; Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 59). Collaborative and participatory action research in and close to everyday educational practices enables action researchers to challenge the complexity of theories and the simplicity of practices, and to establish mediating discourses between theory and practice. Maybe as a result of the practice turn, practices and arenas for reciprocal and collaborative orientation, constructed to prevent the practitioners getting lost, are nowadays well represented in educational literature. These practices and arenas include communicative spaces, research circles, democratic dialogues, transformational partnerships and professional learning communities (e.g. Groundwater-Smith et al., 2013; Gustavsen, 2006; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Stoll et al., 2006).

#### ARRANGEMENT AND CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

This book is divided into three parts. The first part consists of three chapters, all emphasising theoretical perspectives relating to Nordic educational traditions. In the second part, six different empirical cases are presented, connected and discussed in terms of the theories addressed in the first part of the book. The last part will follow the outline of the previous books in the series: it consists of reflections from researchers seen as experts on the specific theories presented in the first part. The concluding reflections are written by Blair Stevenson, a researcher with a Canadian background living in Finland, with experience of and insights into both Nordic and Anglo-Saxon educational traditions.

In the first part, Chapter 2, *The practical knowledge regime, teachers' professionalism and professional development*, written by the Norwegian researchers Tor-Vidar Eilertsen and Rachel Jakhelln, the practice-theory regime (PTR) is

presented as a Norwegian and Scandinavian conceptualisation of pedagogy that both directly and indirectly promotes the notion of teachers' autonomy and professional development as an integral part of educational practices. In the chapter, the roots, main advocates and conceptions of this regime in Scandinavia are outlined. The role of the PTR is discussed in relation to contemporary policies of teacher education, as well as in relation to contemporary global educational trends and pressures of testing, standardisation and bureaucratic control. As a conclusion the authors argue that the Nordic conceptualisation of a practice-theory regime still has a vital position in the educational landscape.

In the third chapter, *Action research and translation studies – understanding the change of practice*, Norwegian action researchers Torbjørn Lund and Eli Moksnes Furu discuss and elaborate connections and possibilities of cross-fertilisation between organisation theory and action research. After contextualising the Norwegian tradition of action research within working life studies, they present and discuss translation theory, as developed by the Norwegian researcher Kjell Arne Røvik, as a possibility for both bridging and handling the short-comings of relating to change and development within organisation theory and action research. They present both the processes of de-contextualisation and contextualisation, and the problems of configurations during the translation processes. They also focus on translation competence, and discuss translations taking place within arenas set up for furthering translations (dialogue conferences), and in terms of networks of organisational actors (e.g. schools) developing coalitions for furthering change and development.

The Finnish researcher Petri Salo and the Swedish researcher Karin Rönnerman are co-authors of the fourth chapter, titled *The Nordic tradition of educational action research – in the light of practice architectures*. They follow the line argued in the second chapter and aim at challenging the global regime of competition and standardisation within education by dwelling on the Nordic traditions of education. They aim at formulating a kind of educational counter-movement based on, firstly, the complex idea(l) of *bildung* and the social practices of study circles, and secondly the collaborative practices characteristic of the Nordic tradition of educational action research. The exploration of traditions is furthered by discussing and analysing the Nordic tradition and practices of study circles and action research in terms of the theory of practice architectures, which is a theory outlined by Australian researchers within the international PEP network (see Kemmis et al., 2014).

The case studies presented in the second part of the book connect all the theories and overall practices presented in the first part. The Swedish researchers Lill Langelotz and Karin Rönnerman connect *The practice of Peer Group Mentoring: Traces of global changes and regional traditions* both to the Nordic traditions of collaborative forms of professional development and to the theory of practice architectures. Their chapter examines how the practice of peer group mentoring can be understood as being prefigured by the historical influences of a Nordic tradition of folk enlightenment, as presented and discussed in Chapter 2. With a focus on

particular kinds of cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements, they show how traces of these arrangements shape practice and come into play in group mentoring practice.

The sixth chapter, *Research circles – Constructing a space for elaborating on being a teacher leader in preschools*, is co-authored by the Swedish researchers Karin Rönnerman and Anette Olin. They use the theory of practice architectures for analysing and understanding the Swedish tradition and practice of meeting in research circles with the purpose of gaining, developing and sharing knowledge in a democratic way. The theory of practice architectures is used to examine the social nature of the language, the activities and the relationships of leading practitioners in pre-schools, as well as the particular conditions or practice architectures which enable practitioners or constrain them from taking part in a research circle.

The following chapter, too, titled *From transmission to site-based professional development – on the art of combining research with facilitation*, uses the theory of practice architectures for framing the analysis of four cases of enhancing professional development, close educational practices and collaboration between researchers and practitioners. Chapter 7 is written by a group of Finnish researchers: Liselott Forsman, Gunilla Karlberg-Granlund, Michaela Pörn, Petri Salo and Jessica Aspfors. They study the complex and challenging practices of initiating and promoting professional development in close collaboration with teachers and principals. They look into and discuss the aims, approaches and challenges of professional development from the viewpoint of researcher-facilitators, in cases where the established traditions of predetermined content-delivery are replaced with development practices based on research and collaboration on educational sites.

The Swedish researcher Ann-Christine Wennergren uses the Scandinavian practice theory presented in the Chapter 2 to analyse and discuss a professional learning project applied on a whole school level as a response to poor results in student achievement. In Chapter 8, *The power of risk-taking in professional learning*, she explores the impact of a case of a long-term critical friendship formed between teachers in relation to practices of shadowing. She highlights the importance of (professional) courage, trust and risk-taking in handling the complexities and ambivalences as well as the educational values and beliefs that become exposed when teachers engage in shadowing and documenting each other's classroom practices.

The translation theory presented in Chapter 3 is put into practice in the two remaining chapters in the second part of the book. Norwegian researchers Eli Moksnes Furu and Torbjørn Lund use translation theory in Chapter Nine, *Development teams as translators of school reform ideas*, to study and discuss how educational ideas and practices, in this particular case Assessment For Learning, are formulated on national level, and how they travel via regional reform programmes into individual schools. They focus firstly on the use of dialogue conferences as arenas for translations taking place outside schools, and secondly on the translation processes within schools, furthered by development groups and taking place in arenas such as staff meetings. As a result of the study they conclude that development groups and

the translation competence the members of these groups carry are of importance for fruitful translation processes to take place and the kind of school development these processes further.

The last chapter in the second part of the book, *Research partnerships in local teaching programme work*, is written by a Norwegian doctoral candidate, Svein-Erik Andreassen. He uses translation theory to analyse the procedures by which teachers in his case study school translate the competence aims in the Norwegian curriculum (LK06) into local teaching programmes. Both the translation of the behavioural and content dimensions of the competence aims are studied. The conclusion is that the strong framing of the behavioural dimension (focusing on the pupil) in the national curriculum is translated at the school into a strong framing of the content dimension, with a range of variations with regard to the behavioural dimension. This might be due to inadequate supervision, lack of time to work with the aims, or a content-oriented tradition and culture within the school.

In the third part we are proud to be able to present reflections on the studies and themes of the book from a range of eminent professors and from around the world. We have simply asked them to reflect on the contents of certain chapters in part one and two. In Chapter 11 the Norwegian professor emeritus Gunnar Handal, one of the founders of practice theory, contributes his reflections on the contents of Chapters 2 and 8. Professor emeritus Stephen Kemmis, from Australia, is an internationally acknowledged representative of action research, and the main figure behind the theory of practice architectures. He is also involved in the PEP network and he formulates comments on the uses and understanding of the theory of practice architectures as brought forward by the members of the Nordic Network for Action Research in this book. Professor emeritus Bernt Gustavsson from Sweden has conducted extensive research on the historical ideas, the Nordic tradition of *bildung* and the practices within folk enlightenment that have evolved from the ideal of *bildung* throughout the years. He concludes his reflections by referring to the rich Nordic educational tradition, and advocates the mobilisation of this tradition for practice-based research. The concluding reflections are written by Blair Stevenson, a researcher with roots in Canada but working currently within the Nordic tradition of education in Finland. His expertise includes the use of participatory action research as a means and arena for the development and use of Inuit culture in education, specifically by Inuit teachers in the classroom. The concluding chapter, *Reflections on the politics of practice*, reflects on the political context and the underlying political artefacts which influence the Nordic traditions and educational practices as presented in the book, and have an impact on the aims and methods used in the case studies. Finally, Stevenson widens our understanding of participatory action research as presented in the book, by identifying similarities between the localised and social Indigenous knowledge and the practitioner-participant knowledge characteristic of the Nordic tradition of educational action research.

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**PART 1**  
**BACKGROUND**



TOR VIDAR EILERTSEN & RACHEL JAKHELLN

## 2. THE PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE REGIME, TEACHERS' PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The “practical knowledge regime” (PKR) is a conceptualization of pedagogy that directly and indirectly promotes the notion of teachers’ autonomy and development as an integral part of professional practice. The purpose of this chapter is firstly to outline the roots, main advocates and conceptions of this regime in Scandinavia, and secondly how it resonates with related, international strands of educational thought. Thirdly we trace and discuss the position and role of the PKR in relation to contemporary policies of teacher education and education more generally. In spite of recent pressures of testing, standardization and bureaucratic control it is our contention that this regime still has a vital position, and in particular as a counterweight to these tendencies.

The authors have for a number of years been engaged in teachers’ professional development, both in initial and in-service teacher education, and as an integral part of practice from the newly qualified stages and beyond.

### INTRODUCTION

“Pedagogy is not theory about or for practice, but theory in practice”  
(Løvlie, 1973).

This citation from one of the most influential advocates of the Norwegian and Scandinavian version of the international strand of educational theory and philosophy, labeled “The Practical Knowledge Regime” (Dale, 2005), describes one of its essential assumptions. Launched in the early 1970s in opposition to the predominance of mainly Anglo-American positivistic and psychometric approaches, PKR insisted that pedagogy, the Scandinavian equivalent to the broader English term “education”, is first and foremost a practical discipline. According to Dale (2005), Løvlie’s most original contribution was the assumption behind this definition, namely that “Practice is an independent epistemological category” (1973), referring to the Aristotelian distinction between *episteme* (science) and *techne* and *phronesis* (pedagogy). Based on this, he introduced an integrative practice-theory model that has been widely disseminated, especially in initial and further teacher education. Two of the most prominent representatives and “translators” of the PKR, Handal and Lauvås, coined the term “practical professional theory” to capture the essence of this

model (2000). The crucial message is that teachers' professional knowledge base, their practical professional theory, should be developed in and through educational practice, integrating performance and epistemic, practical and ethical considerations. Collaborative learning, especially via pre- and in-service tutoring, is a major vehicle in this process.

The aim of this chapter is to give an account of the Nordic version of the PKR as an important contribution to the theoretical and methodological underpinning of teachers' individual and collective professional learning, particularly in the formats of action learning and research. The collective, participatory views of teachers as learners can be traced to the larger framework of Nordic educational traditions and the democratic values they are built on (see Chapter 4, in Salo & Rönnerman, 2014). Within the context of educational research in Scandinavia, there is a strong affinity between the PKR and contributions related to understanding and handling schools as organizations and cultures, and we will briefly include some of these.

The PKR is a Nordic version of a larger, and more specifically Anglo-Saxon strand of thought, represented particularly by Joseph Schwab, Laurence Stenhouse, Wilfred Carr and Steven Kemmis. In line with the more general aim of the "Pedagogy, Education & Praxis" collaboration, to promote dialogue between different traditions and understandings, our purpose is also to illuminate the relationship between the Scandinavian PRK and its Anglo-Saxon counterpart. This dialogue will be pursued and broadened in the third section of the book. The concluding part of this chapter will discuss its present status, particularly in the light of the evidence-based "turn" in contemporary educational policy, research and practice.<sup>1</sup>

#### BACKGROUND - SOURCES OF LEGITIMATION

According to Dale, opposing definitions are essential elements in marking one discourse or knowledge regime as different from another in the hegemonic struggle that often takes place within scientific disciplines. He uses the term "demarcation works" of texts that have signature status in defining and distinguishing one tradition as distinct from another. Løvlie is defined by Dale (2005) as being the most distinguished Scandinavian representative of the PKR, and uses some of his most seminal texts as data when defining and analyzing the core elements of this regime, as opposed to its most influential opposition, the theoretical-scientific regime. The Swedish philosopher and educationalist Bernt Gustavsson maintains that the latter "for a long time has been conceived as the only form of knowledge that matters" (2000, our translation). He goes on to state that a major philosophical strand during the last decade has been a contestation of this division and the formulating of alternatives to it. The theoretical-scientific regime was largely equated with the positivistic conception of science in which the natural sciences were given universal status. The international student radicalization and the positivism dispute in the 1960s and 70s fuelled the breakthrough of the PKR. In Norway this was manifested institutionally by the "Social-Pedagogical Alternative" at Oslo University. Initiated

by radical teachers and students, among them Løvlie, this alternative study programme emphasized pedagogy as a practical as well as a cultural and critical discipline, in opposition to the predominantly historical, psychological and Christian-humanistic establishment. Together with the rehabilitation of practical philosophy, the reintroduction of the continental traditions of phenomenology and hermeneutics in the 1970s has been another important contribution to the PKR as an alternative to the Anglo-Saxon, theoretical-scientific tradition. And last but not least, the Anglo-Saxon opponents to this regime, Schwab, Stenhouse, and also Carr and Kemmis, have been important frames of references in the development of the Nordic version of the PKR. Most influential among these has been Lawrence Stenhouse, whose seminal book “An introduction to Curriculum Research and Development” (1975) and its conception of “the teacher as researcher” has been widely included in the study literature at Scandinavian universities.

#### PKR – THE ARISTOTELIAN HERITAGE

The modern assumption of theoretical, scientific knowledge as being superior to other forms can be traced back to Aristotle, the originator of the tripartite model of human knowledge and reasoning introduced above: “Aristotle regarded this as the highest form of reasoning, associated with finding the truth about the nature of things...” (Kemmis & Smith 2008, p. 15). In the Ancient Greek version of scientific inquiry, *theoria*, guided by the disposition called *episteme*, was essentially seen as an activity that aimed at pursuing knowledge and eternal truths for their own sake, and with little or no relevance to everyday life. When considering human, everyday action, the other two forms of activities, *poiesis* and *praxis*, and their corresponding dispositions *techne* and *phronesis*, are more important. *Poiesis* refers to instrumental actions, to the making of material and immaterial products, and to various forms of instrumental actions based on considerations of means and ends, and on the mastery of skills and technical expertise. *Praxis*, on the other hand, refers to activities that, instead of material production, aim “progressively to realize the idea of the ‘good’ constitutive of a morally worthwhile form of human life” (Carr 2006, p. 426). Whereas practical knowledge, in the form of general know-how, is essential to the former, practical wisdom is an integral part of the latter, not as a universal, epistemic asset, but as realized in particular situations. Aristotle formulates the nature of *phronesis*, as opposed to *techne*, in the following way:

For production aims at an end other than itself; but this is impossible in the case of action, because the end is merely doing well. What remains, then, is that it is a true state, reasoned, and capable of action with regard to those things that are good or bad for man... (1976, p. 209).

This implies that *phronesis* is concerned with values and the moral aspects of human conduct, focusing on situational actions and choices. These cannot be subject to universal rules and laws, and presupposing deliberations, judgments and decisions.

According to Nicolini (2013), the vast impact of Aristotle's tripartite model on Western tradition can be divided into two aspects. First, and in line with Løvlie, by granting "praxis the status of an independent, legitimate, and worthy form of knowledge" (p. 27), and secondly by establishing "the partial incommensurability between practice and theory, and the irreducibility of practical wisdom to theory" (p. 27). In his analysis of the historical and ideological context of the PKR, Dale (2005) concludes that these propositions are at the core of the practical knowledge regime, combining *phronesis* and *techne* as the basis that pedagogy should be built on, rather than on traditional scientific theory, *episteme*, associated with positivism.

#### THEORY IN PRACTICE – THE SCANDINAVIAN VERSION

The rejection of scientific theory as the point of departure and guide for educational practice implied a rejection of the predominant definitions of educational theory based on support sciences such as psychology, sociology, history and philosophy, rather than an independent and self-sufficient discipline. This predominant conception particularly in Norway and Scandinavia in the 1960s was heavily influenced by the writings of the English educational philosopher Paul Hirst (1966). One of the leading American spokesmen of the PKR, Joseph Schwab (1969), accepted this definition but insisted that the only way to save the "dying" curriculum studies area was by interdisciplinary "deliberations" based on "real" educational matters. Løvlie, however, rejected Hirst's position. Referring to the notion of pedagogy as a way of knowing in its own right, *phronēsis* and *techne*, rather than *episteme*, Løvlie raised a number of issues concerning power and control in school development. Who should be the initiators, teachers or "experts", and on what premises should cooperation between the two rest?

Løvlie's contention was that if mediation between theory and practice was left entirely to the discretion of theorists and experts, teachers might be reduced to being "educational assistants to expertise without necessary local and contextual insights" (Dale 2005, p. 114, our translation). Consequently, his integrated practice-theory model was based on the following assumptions: firstly that experience is primarily built on everyday educational practice, not scientific knowledge; and secondly, as a consequence of the first, that pedagogy must be defined as an autonomous discipline, building a separate knowledge base independent of support sciences. Thirdly, the dialectical relationship between theory and practice renders mediation between theory and practice unnecessary (Dale 2005). In one of his demarcation contributions, "educational philosophy for practicing teachers" (1974), Løvlie establishes a distinction between theoretical and practical justifications of educational propositions and actions: "Whereas theoretical justifications (science) refer to the distinction between true and false, the practical ones refer to the distinction between what is useful or not" (p. 23).

According to Løvlie there is, however, a crucial distinction between practical justifications based on criteria of usefulness and those who are related to criteria

of worthwhile-ness. The latter justifications ...”clarify the ethical implications that underpin a practical proposition and help us to make the morally correct decision” (p. 24).

Løvlie highlights two major problems that have to be taken into account when using scientific, theoretical justifications as guidelines for practical propositions and actions. Firstly, all scientific results should be considered preliminary and subject to modification and/or refutation. They also tend to be contradictory, e.g. in the case of teachers’ appraisal of students’ achievements. On the one hand this can stimulate efforts, and on the other, it may lead to extrinsic and instrumental motivation rather than a genuine interest in a subject or activity (Kvernbekk, 2001). Secondly, and more fundamentally, based on examples from a much-used textbook in teacher education, Løvlie illuminates the risk of “categorical mistakes” by substituting practical justifications for theoretical ones. The risk, as Løvlie sees it, is that theoretical propositions are transformed into technical procedures and teachers into “educational assistants” or technicians. This notion is well in line with psychometric, positivistic conceptualizations, corrupting the moral aspects of assessment and schooling more generally.

Løvlie’s main proposition is that educational, or in Carr’s term, “practical philosophy” (2006), should be problem-based, addressing crucial issues that practising teachers are faced with in their daily actions and transactions. The most important task is to prescribe educational actions rather than describing and defining educational concepts. The strategy should therefore be to engage in the analysis of propositions about educational action, bearing in mind the difference between analysis and action: “Teachers’ interactions with their students will always be risky and part of an existential enterprise” (p. 32). Theory, he states, can never be more than a preliminary to action, and is not capable of eliminating the complexities and the unforeseen that are integral to educational practice. This signals the existential-philosophical references of the Nordic version of the PKR, in addition to its Aristotelian underpinning. Løvlie construed a model of his practice-theory model that in modified versions has been, and still is, a vital representation of the PKR in Norway and Sweden. This model has been used widely as a tool for reflection, especially in formal and informal programmes for students and in-service teachers’ professional development via supervision, peer consultation and cooperation. Originally, the model was shaped as an inverted pyramid with three layers of practice: the bottom, most pointed one, represented actual practice (P1); the second layer represented the theoretical and practical considerations (P2) based on previous experiences and criteria of usability; and the third, top layer (P3) represented the ethical and meta-theoretical justifications of actual performances and the theoretical and experience-based propositions that instructional and other educational choices rest on (Løvlie, 1972). Meta-theoretical considerations include issues raised above about the nature and status of scientific and theoretical statements, but also the overall goals and purpose of education, which is ultimately a normative and moral enterprise, or *phronesis*.

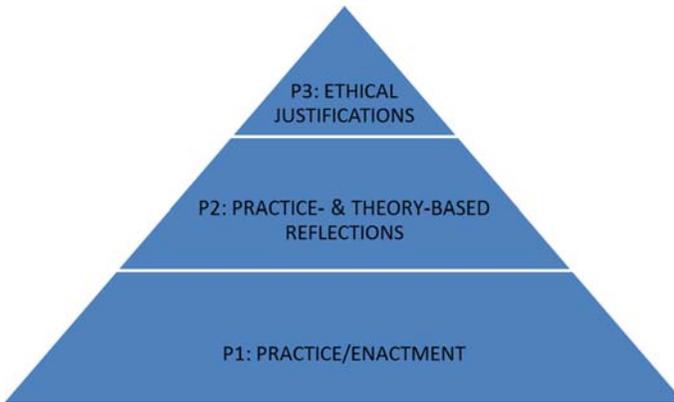
In the next section we will present one of the most common, modified and elaborated versions of the practice-theory-model, that of Handal and Lauvås (1983). Before we do so, it should be mentioned that Løvlie's model bears a resemblance to that of O'Connor (1957), one of the most prominent representatives of the opposing, theoretical knowledge regime.<sup>2</sup> More important, however, is the influence from continental, especially German *Bildung* traditions, and the contribution from Erich Weniger, who also launched a pyramidal, three-layered model that has much in common with that of Løvlie and his followers: Practice (T1), teachers' theories (T2) and meta-theoretical reflection (T3) (from Imsen, 2006).

In our context the salient message of the PKR, explicitly and implicitly, is the optimistic notion of the autonomous, committed and morally informed professional, able and willing to develop his/her professional competencies as an integral part of everyday practice.

#### ELABORATION AND TRANSLATION

The most influential approaches for translating and consolidating the PKR from the 1980s onwards were developed by the Norwegian educationalists Gunnar Handal and Per Lauvås. Their main area of contextualization was peer and students' consultation, supervision and guidance, especially within teacher initial and in-service education and school development. Later they expanded to areas such as nursing, medicine, administration and leadership, and disseminated their translations extensively. Their main impact was, however, in teacher education and in various forms of in-service programmes and school development, not only in Norway, but also in the other Scandinavian countries (See chapter 5, Langelotz & Rønnerman, 2014 and chapter 8, Wennergren, 2014). Their most seminal book, which, according to Dale (2005), gained a regime-defining status within the field of consultation and supervision in Scandinavia was (in direct translation) "On Own Terms" (1983). It was translated into Swedish and English ("Promoting Reflective Teaching", 1987). In addition to Løvlie, Handal and Lauvås' prime international sources of reference were Stenhouse (1975) and Schön (1983). Their consultation model, consisting of a written lesson plan, pre-guidance, observation and post-guidance, has for many years been the dominant and institutionalized approach, especially in the practicum part of initial teacher education.

In their elaboration of the original practice-theory model, Handal and Lauvås "inadvertently" turn Løvlie's model upside down, but they make the point that this is not important: "The main message is that practical activities are more than the actual enactments, and that such an expanded concept of practice consists of different levels and aspects" (Lauvås & Handal 2000, p. 176). In addition, they mark level P2 and P3 as practice-theory and subsume them under the comprehensive concept "educational practice", including all three levels:



*Figure 1. The practice- theory model (Løvlie, 1975).*

Whereas Handal and Lauvås used the concept “practice-theory” in their first book (1983), in their more recent volume, “Guidance and Practical Professional Theory” (Lauvås & Handal 2000, our translation) they changed this to “professional practice theory” (PPT) to underscore the professional context and setting of this particular version of practice theory.<sup>3</sup>

In their summary of the theory, Lauvås and Handal highlight the following six key elements. Firstly, the main ingredient of the theory is what Argyris and Schön (1978) define as “theory-in-use”, that is, knowledge and values that are put in place in daily practices, not “espoused” professional knowledge. PPT consists of more or less tacit cognitive schemata, interpretations and action rules. Secondly, and related to the first, although PPT contains tacit and implicit elements, one should nevertheless strive to make it conscious and propositional. “This does not imply that it is unwarranted to actively investigate all that we know, but that we do not know that we know” (Lauvås & Handal, 2000, p. 184). Thirdly, the pervasive sub- or unconscious levels of PPT can be related to the fact that for many professions, notably the educational, its development starts prior to institutional and formalized education and training. Fourthly, the distinction between values, experiences and knowledge is an analytical one that are clustered together in an amalgam of all the impulses that have been internalized from early childhood onwards. The most accessible ones are the most recent and novel, while the least accessible are those that stem from deeply rooted, emotionally laden primary socialization. The fifth distinguishing feature concerns the fact that although PPT might be shared among professionals both locally and more universally, it is first and foremost an individual construct. Nevertheless, and this is the sixth feature, although it is an individual phenomenon, it develops and changes in constant interaction with the surrounding environment. PPT is part of our biography, rooted in our gender, social and cultural background and shaped in social interaction

with significant others. We are not just individuals but also representatives of the local and institutional culture that we are part of.

In terms of guidance in its manifold forms, its most fundamental purpose is to assist those who seek guidance in the process of “knowing more of that he or she do not know that they know” (Lauvås & Handal 2000, p. 184). This is, however, a two-sided venture that also includes making the known unknown, identifying, conceptualizing and thereby creating distance from the taken-for-granted elements of the PPT. These might include ways of knowing and doing that represent the most valuable cultural heritage of the profession, but on the other hand also taken-for-granted (mis)conceptions and practices that are inadequate, out-of-date and sometimes even “perverted”. According to Lauvås and Handal, there are limitations as to how far individual or collective professional introspection alone is able to expose and change professionally inappropriate sayings, doings and relations – the way practices are conceptualized, enacted and organized (Kemmis, 2008; Salo & Rönnerman, 2014, chapter 4). Based on theories of knowledge and epistemology, especially that of Polanyi (1958) and Schön (1983), and contributions from Scandinavian philosophers like Johannessen (2005) and Rolf (2006), they propose two main approaches when dealing with the tacit, or in Johannessen’s term “implicit” elements of the PPT: one is apprenticeship learning, the other is “reflective guidance”. Although the latter is Lauvås and Handal’s main focus, they accept both as important and consider reflective guidance to be a vital, complementary strategy to apprenticeship learning, which traditionally puts more emphasis on practising rather than articulating the PPT.

In addition to the strategy of planning, pre-teaching guidance, observation and post-activity guidance that are widely used in initial teacher education and to some extent also extended and translated to in-service tutoring and collaboration, Lauvås and Handal have also developed various models for professional, reciprocal consultation that have been extensively promoted and practised. These include problem-based consultation in groups of teachers in which one teacher at a time presents an authentic problem case. This is clarified and contextualized via systematic questioning by group members and is followed up by “the problem owner’s” proposals for a solution, group advice and the owner’s assessment of the advice. Another module targets participants’ professional practice theory more specifically; this is done by presenting fictive collegial discussions on educational topics for group-based analysis, sorting and discriminating between statements about actions and their practical, experience-based, theoretical and value-laden justifications (Lauvås, Lycke & Handal, 2004).

The wide-spread influence of PPT and the practice theory regime more generally, not only in Norway, but in all Scandinavia, is not only manifested by the translations (linguistic and semantic) and extensive use of Handal and Lauvås’ contributions (see chapter 5, Langelotz & Rönnerman 2014 and chapter 8 Wennergren 2014). In fact, the very concept of “practice theory” was not developed by them or Løvlie, but by the Danish educationalist Thomsen (1975). In the foreword of Handal and Lauvås’

regime-defining book “Promoting Reflective Teaching” (1987), they give credit to Thomsen who, by taking the candidates’ own theories and criteria as the point of departure for guidance and consultation, significantly influenced their own thinking and practice.

Although the use of the concepts of practice theory/professional practice theory and its corresponding visual representation had their peak in the 1980s and 90s, they are still included and widely used in core educational literature and textbooks in teacher pre- and in-service education (e.g. Imsen, 2006; Lyngsnes & Rismark, 2007). This dissemination contributes to the theory’s influence on new generations of teachers.

### THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE

Although the PPT is fundamentally seen as an individual construct, it puts strong emphasis on the interplay between the individual and the collective levels in the development of practice theory as “the private, intertwined, but constantly changing system of knowledge, experience, and values that at each point in time significantly influences the individual’s teaching practice” (Handal & Lauvås, 1983, p.14). The collegial or organizational frame of reference is therefore an important part both of their theoretical and their more practical, strategy-oriented contributions. Schön (1983) is not only referred to in terms of the individual, reflective practitioner, but also the theories of organizational learning that he developed together with Agyris (1978). Their distinction between espoused and enacted theories (in use) resonates strongly with the distinction between propositional and tacit, or implicit, knowledge that is a crucial part of PPT. Another Anglo-Saxon reference is Schein (1992), whose multilayered model of organizational culture distinguishes between its “propositional”, visual elements, “the culture’s products and artifacts”, and the more hidden but formative structures in the forms of core values and basic assumptions, e.g. about the nature of teaching and learning. The Swedish researcher Arfwedsson (1985) has more consistently focused on school organization and culture, using school codes as a key concept. This refers to the basic, often hidden and tacit rules underlying interpretations and patterns of actions that develop over time at each school site, more or less influenced by the local, surrounding context as well as the broader, institutional one. Their formative effect on the individual and collective PPT is pervasive, and an important target both in individual and collective guidance and consultation, and in school development more generally.

The cultural-discursive backdrop represented by the practice theory regime thus promotes a conceptualization of teachers as operatives rather than as victims of circumstance. Within this framework they are seen as being capable and able to develop their own professional practice theory via individual and organizational consultation, collaboration and learning. This offensive role definition is supported by an influential concept stemming from the work of another Scandinavian educational researcher, Berg (2007), whose main focus has also been the organizational and

institutional framework of schooling and education. One of his key analytical concepts is that of *free room*, represented by a visual model consisting of an inner circle that marks the cultural-cognitive definition of the possibilities and limitations of professional conduct, and an outer circle representing the factual limitations of professional autonomy. The inner circle concerns issues of cultural and informal legitimacy, the outer one those of formal and juridical legality. The gap between the two represents the free room, the scope for action that teachers should control, individually and preferably collectively, in order to develop their practice, and more generally, their professionalism.

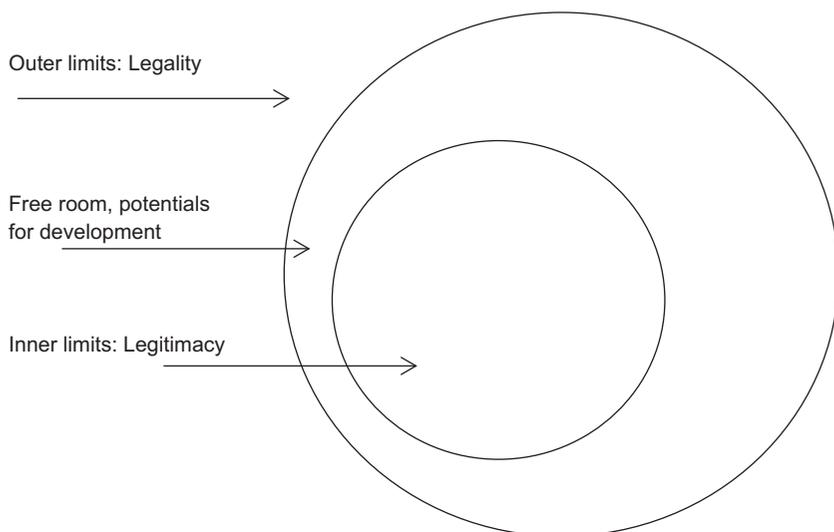


Figure 2. *The free room model, adapted from Berg (1999, p.28).*

Berg relates the two circles to the distinction between restricted and extended professionalism. The first refers to those whose practice is confined to the given cognitive and cultural definitions that are dominant in their local settings, whereas those who subscribe to the extended version seek to expand their practice via cultural and curricular analyses as points of departure for school development.

The pervasiveness of this model can be illustrated by the following small anecdote. At the final celebration of an in-service course for teachers, “Guidance and school development” at the University of Tromsø, Norway in the mid-80s, the gift from the students was a ceramic cake dish with the following text (in direct translation): “Thank you for our expanded scope for action!” The reference was to Berg, whose theories and research on schools as organizations had a prominent place in the list of set reading and in students’ course work. Although these theories had their heyday in

the 80s and 90s, the free room model and the theories behind it are still vital frames of reference in contemporary discourses and practices, especially as far as teacher professionalism, school organization, culture and development are concerned.

#### THE SCANDINAVIAN PRACTICE REGIME AND BEYOND

Løvlie and those who have developed, elaborated and translated the conceptualization of pedagogy as primarily a practical discipline in Scandinavia have much in common with the most influential Anglo-Saxon spokesmen of the practical knowledge regime. Among these are Joseph Schwab and Lawrence Stenhouse, two of the most prominent international representatives of the regime, who joined forces in dismissing scientific, disciplinary knowledge as worthless for teachers' daily work, in Løvlie's terms confined to "the ivory tower of the profession of anonymous men and women, more concerned with constructing cathedrals of eternal truths than functional school buildings" (Løvlie, 1973, in Dale, 2005, p. 113). In Schwab's rhetoric, this is expressed in the following way: "The stuff of theory is abstract or idealized representations of real things. But curriculum in action treats real things: real acts, real teachers, real children, and things richer than and different from their theoretical representations" (Schwab 1969, p. 310). And finally, in Stenhouse's version: "When it is regarded as a matter of applying the findings of these disciplines, the result is generally disastrous" (Stenhouse 1975). Stenhouse's position was, however, more radical than that of Løvlie. Whereas the latter accepted the epistemic, objectivistic concept of science as a provider of concepts or models, which should, however, be subject to the test of practice rather than defining it, Stenhouse stated that "The problem of objectivity seems to me a false one" (1975, p. 157). The argument was that any form of classroom research should aim at improving teaching and learning and therefore be made operational by teachers. This fact makes it impossible to escape the subjectivities that will always be present in the realities of classroom decisions and actions.

Consequently, Stenhouse's concept of "an educational science" defined every classroom as a laboratory, and every teacher a member of the community of researchers (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 142). He is in line with Handal & Lauvås (2000) when he suggests that teachers should alternate between the positions of teaching and observing in order to establish distance from and be able to identify, investigate, criticize and change the explicit and implicit assumptions that underlie classroom conduct. This called for the development of a joint professional language, "a general theoretical language" (p. 157), as an integral part of developing professional practice. This was a necessary prerequisite for collegial communication and for reporting on teachers' work. The establishment of "a general theoretical language" could also be supported by cooperation between "professional researchers" and teacher researchers. In this process, however, the researcher "needs to see himself as notionally employed by the teacher and accountable to him" (p.192). The case study approach was seen as a vital tool in collegial and teacher "educationalist"

based research, and in the joint construction of concepts and professional language. In this process, educational and curriculum research and theory should be serving, not defining, the needs of schools and teachers.

According to Lauvås and Handal (2000) there is a strong affinity between Stenhouse's concept of "the teacher as researcher" and Løvlie's practice-theory model. Both serve as a basis for "theory-based planning, observation of and reflection on own practice and using own and others' experiences in constant efforts to develop and refine a consistent practice-theory as a basis for further plans and practice" (cited in Dale 2005, p. 146). Although the advocates of the Practical Knowledge Regime had a shared scepticism towards scientific knowledge in the positivistic version, which had a strong position in the post-Sputnic era of the 1960s, some of its vital elements were imported and adapted to the PKR by prominent Scandinavian translators, among them the Swedish educationalist Erik Wallin (1970). These translators extracted and imported elements of models and systems, starting from an educational technology predominantly based on behaviouristic principles and means-end reasoning. These adaptations were also influenced by classroom studies, especially in Sweden, that revealed the contextual nature of teaching and learning, particularly when implementing pre-designed and programmed educational packages. The "frame factor analyses" of Lundgren and others (1972) documented how structural-temporal, cultural and social factors were always at play in classroom settings, influencing the course of events in various and often unpredictable ways. One recurring observation was that frame factors such as curricular overload and scarce time resources often resulted in teachers "piloting" students to "correct" answers rather than guiding their quest for understanding. Within the framework of the practice regime, Handal adapted a systems model in which frame factors was one element, together with educational objectives content, methods of teaching and learning, assessment strategies and students' learning dispositions (prior knowledge, metacognition, motivations, cultural and social background, etc.). These six elements and their interplay are widely referred to as "the didactical relations model" defined, in teacher education, as the prime professional tool for planning, executing and evaluating teaching practice. The didactical relations model constitutes one of the main "carriers" of the PPT into the teaching profession, due to the fact that it is the dominant structural basis for lesson planning, pre- and post-teaching supervision and guidance. This has particularly been the case in initial teacher education, but also in in-service and collegial consultation settings in Scandinavia. It is also the structuring tool for students' case studies and other written assignments, which are often included in coursework and examination papers both in initial and further teacher education.

#### PKR IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGING POLICIES

As indicated above, there is a close connection between the educational philosophical underpinning of the practical knowledge regime in Scandinavia, and its Anglo-

Saxon counterpart, practical philosophy, especially as advocated by Wilfred Carr (2006), Steven Kemmis (1988) and John Elliott (1987, 1991). In the case of action research these authors have criticized the methodological “fallacy”: in the quest for scientific legitimacy, action research has substituted *phronesis* with *techne* and *episteme*. In the same vein, the Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim (1972) used the term “instrumentalist mistake” to capture the tendency to subsume all forms of educational practice more generally within technical, narrow means-end rationalities. “Instrumentalist mistake” was formulated in the early 70s within the framework of the anti-positivist movement, and was a vital contribution to the cultural-discursive backdrop that inspired and nurtured the inception of the PKR.

Our main proposition is that the practice regime has been, and still is, a major element in the professional knowledge base conveyed and practised within teacher education and beyond. Today, 40 years after its inception, we have, however, good reason to discuss the development and present status of the PKR, especially in view of contemporary educational discourses and practices. According to Salo and Rönnerman, Chapter 4 these are characterized by globalization, testing, competition and standardization. These concepts and the policies they represent can be related to changing trends within the macro-level practice architectures of education in the Nordic countries. According to Telhaug, Mediaas and Aasen (2006), the post war development of the Nordic school model can be understood as three phases. The first one is often referred to as the “golden era of social democracy”, a public comprehensive school system promoting equality of opportunity, cooperation and solidarity. The next phase, the radical left era, coincided with and inspired the inception of the PKR. The latter continued and augmented the student-centred, pragmatic and progressive ethos of social-democratic education, emphasizing the critical, subversive mission of schooling in an authoritarian, capitalist society. The third, contemporary phase, the era of globalization and neo-liberalism, and the frame of reference of Salo and Rönnerman (2014, chapter 4), implies a reduced confidence in the social-democratic, strong and egalitarian state. The remedy was instead liberalization, deregulation, decentralization, privatization and competition, based on principles of management by objectives and incentives, combined with testing and quality control, also labeled New Public Management (NPM).

Within the educational sector, this is manifested in centrally defined and specified objectives with an emphasis on core competencies, leaving decisions about methods and approaches to the discretion of local schools and teachers, and followed up via an increasing quantity of national and international test regimes. The mismatch between overarching curricular objectives and “what really counts” can be illustrated by the lack of public and professional interest in the ICCS (the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study), investigating the ways in which countries prepare their young people for citizenship and democratic participation (Kerr et al., 2010), compared to the massive media coverage of PISA and TIMMS.<sup>4</sup>

Despite differences between countries, neo-liberalism and NPM have been less influential in Scandinavia, mainly due to the progressive, social-democratic heritage

emphasizing equality and equity in education (Telhaug et al., 2006). As already mentioned, we also consider the practical knowledge regime as a cultural-discursive force that has countered or at least mitigated the neo-liberal impact. From our vantage points as teacher educators, curriculum designers and programme evaluators we have nevertheless witnessed a growing tendency towards more instrumental practice-theory versions. Although principal educational objectives emphasizing citizenship, democracy and international solidarity are vital elements of the “espoused” national school and teacher education curricula, student and practising teachers seem more focused on the P1 and P2 elements of the triangle than on P3. This is clearly a result of the neo-liberal impact on schooling and school policies, which has implied a displacement of objectives from social to cognitive-instrumental ones.

There are thus contradictions and ambiguities in current school policies and practices that again can be related to the “counter-cultural” potentials of Nordic educational practice architectures. There has been a revitalization of education defined in terms of *Bildung*, not only in teacher education but also in higher education more generally. As the last of the Scandinavian teacher unions, the Norwegian Union of Education has recently (2012) discussed and formulated its professional code of ethics. The mission statement emphasizes the profession’s contribution to developing a democratic society characterized by tolerance and respect for difference and diversity. The notion of the autonomous, morally informed and learning professional is also reflected in contemporary role definitions in policy statements and documents. A case in point is the White Paper from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research on future research policies, launching the concept of “student-active research”. Student involvement in research and development activities is encouraged as an integral part of all study programmes from undergraduate level onwards (Meld. St. 18, 2012–2013). In initial and further teacher education this is strongly articulated in Finland, but also in the latest teacher education reforms in Sweden and Norway. Following Finland’s example, Norway has launched a five-year pilot master programme for primary school teachers at the University of Tromsø emphasizing the notion of student-active and participatory research.

These and other manifestations can be seen as plots of different and contrasting stories, both the social-democratic and PKR ones and the neo-liberal and neo-positivist, the latter accentuating a narrow, instrumental understanding of evidence-based research and practice. Our main source for this chapter, Erling Lars Dale, has formulated a critique of what he sees as tendencies towards an unwarranted skepticism within the PKR towards research methodologies. Whereas Løvlie’s position was that science disempowers and alienates the practising teacher, Dale, referring to Dewey and Habermas, sees science as a tool that enables practitioners to obtain critical distance and liberate themselves from the inadequacies of traditions. In our understanding of the dispute, the problem is not the application of scientific methodologies as such, but the “categorical” or “instrumental mistake” (Skjervheim, 1972) we have discussed above, degrading “practical reason to technical control”

(Gadamer, 1975). The rehabilitation of practical philosophy by Wilfred Carr (2006) and other representatives of the Anglo-Saxon version of the PKR do not imply a dismissal of methodology and research technique as such:

This is not to argue that participatory action researchers should not be capable of conducting sound research, rather, it is to emphasize that sound research must respect much more than the canons of methods (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 284).

Since the inception of the PKR in the early 1970s there has been substantial development within “the canons of methods”, necessitating more nuanced definitions of what counts as evidence in evidence-based practice and research, rather than randomized controlled trials and other positivist strategies that are often associated with the concept (Kvernbekk, 2011). Advances in theories of individual and organizational learning, implicated in the concept “participatory” in the quote above, have also resonated well with the Practical Knowledge Regime: the sociocultural notion of professional development in communities of practice.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Practical Knowledge Regime was developed in opposition to the prevailing positivistic conceptualization of educational science and theory, as a discipline without a unified, theoretical foundation and therefore dependant on theories, concepts and research tools from more established academic disciplines. The alternative PKR provided was a shift from pedagogy as a scientific, epistemic and fragmented endeavour, to practice, and praxis, as the point of departure for pedagogical and educational knowledge building. This also implied a shift from a definition of teachers as obedient consumers of academically generated knowledge, to autonomous learning professionals integrating science-based results, experience-based knowledge and normative considerations into their everyday practice.

Although the PKR had its heyday in the 80s and 90s in Scandinavia, it is still a vital part of educational curricula for teacher education and of cultural-discursive definitions of their professional role in Scandinavia more generally. On the “arenas of formulation” (Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2000), we have seen that the notion of teachers’ experience-based knowledge development is included and valued together with more traditional academic research in various policy documents. However, an analysis of the concept of profession in significant Norwegian White Papers and in the Union of Teachers’ policy documents shows that whereas the latter focus is on responsibility, the former focus is on accountability (Granlund, Mausesthaugen & Munthe, 2011). Needless to say responsibility version is more in line with the PKR than the other.

The situation is also ambiguous with regard to the “arenas of realization”. The visions of the national pilot MA programme in teacher education at the University of Tromsø, Norway, reflect core elements of the PKR. This, is done by facilitating students’ motivation and capacity for more systematic ways of professional learning

and development, not only via action learning and research, but also other research strategies. On the other hand, Carlgren (2013) notes that resources allocated to teacher-based research in Sweden are scarce compared to the extensive investments in in-service programs in which university-based research is condensed, distributed to schools and consumed by teachers. The mismatch between rhetoric and resources, between the cultural-discursive and the material-economic underpinnings of teacher-based development and research can also be traced in Norway. Training, inspiring and socializing future teachers to become producers of their own and collective knowledge base is thus a necessary, but not sufficient, prerequisite for realizing the ambitions and visions of the PKR. Educators at different levels and in different positions should therefore join forces to reveal this mismatch – and in doing so the argument of the Practical Knowledge Regime will still be relevant and convincing.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned that our account of the PKR and its broader international setting draws heavily on the extensive analysis of different knowledge regimes by Erling Lars Dale (2005), a comprehensive contribution to the discourse on the identity and framework of what he defined as an “educational science”. From the early 1970s until his death in 2012 he has been one of the most versatile, articulate and influential educational voices in Norway and Scandinavia. Unfortunately his extensive publications are mainly restricted to the Scandinavian languages.
- <sup>2</sup> O’Connor defined education as consisting of three levels: a repertoire of methods to transfer knowledge, skills and attitudes, a set of theories justifying these methods, and thirdly, values and ideals that constitute the overall aims (1957). However, in his definition of educational theories they could only be developed through the methods of “the positive sciences and in particular the science of psychology” (p. 5).
- <sup>3</sup> As in English there is a plethora of concepts that are used in this area in Scandinavia. Unlike in English, we have a “master concept”, *veiledning* in Norwegian (In Swedish: *Handledning*), “to lead the way”, that subsumes many of the others that emphasize different aspects of the relationship between those who guide and those who “seek the way”. That is why we, in line with Handal and Lauvås, use “guidance” as the overall concept, and not mentoring.
- <sup>4</sup> In the case of Norway, students’ scores are above average in the ICCS tests, whereas they score average or slightly below average on TIMMS and PISA.

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