Editorial and dedication to Roslin Brennan Kemmis

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The articles in this *Educational Action Research* special issue on ‘Partnership and Recognition’, whose authors are collaborators in the international Pedagogy Education and Praxis (PEP) research network, investigate questions concerning two key concepts: 1) different kinds of partnerships in site-based education development, and 2) the critical role of recognition – as a basic condition of humanity – as these are played out in the day-to-day experiences and practices of people participating and collaborating in educational change. These concepts of partnership and recognition are well reported in the literature to be central ideas that hold together the practices of action research as site-based education development. They are taken up variously by the authors of each article in their exploration of the ways in which practitioner learning and development (in schools, school districts, universities and workplaces) is held in place by practices and the practice architectures that enable and constrain their enactment. From this, therefore, practice theory is given a prime place in each article by illuminating how change, learning and development practices are experienced by people in a range of partnerships.

The concepts of partnership and recognition are discussed theoretically, methodologically and empirically. They are taken up both in terms of the agency and actions of individuals and collectives as they encounter one another in change, learning and development, and in terms of the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political preconditions that make these practices possible. These preconditions are considered as both enabling and/or constraining the practices that they prefigure but do not necessarily pre-determine in different situations and circumstances. This is a view of the kinds of practices that each author considers to be intricately influential on partnerships and recognition.

Before going further, however, the publication of this collection of articles pays tribute to the work of Roslin Brennan Kemmis. Ros Brennan Kemmis, affectionately known as Rozzie to her friends and colleagues, sadly passed away during the preparation of the articles for this edition. We pay tribute to Ros because, as an original guest editor of this special issue, without her wisdom, forethought and mentorship the articles presented herewith would not have materialised. Ros was a key member of the PEP international research network, and co-leader of the PEP Partnership and Recognition research group. Not only was Ros a champion for education, she was an inspirational woman whose humility, humour and genuine care and respect for everyone around her was admirable. She was a mentor and advocate. She truly embodied the vision for education declared by Charles Sturt University (where she worked for many decades):

*Yindyamarra Winhanganha*

These words from the Wiradjuri peoples, an Australian Aboriginal nation, mean ‘the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in’.

In memory and recognition of Ros’s tireless work in our PEP partnership, we offer the following thoughts from the authors of the papers in this special issue:

For many, Rozzie was first and foremost a warm, welcoming and embracing person. To have her as one of the main characters in our network has meant that everyone has felt included, valued and important. She knew what recognition stood for in the real sense.

As a mentor for the past 20 years, Rozzie introduced us to numerous enriching opportunities for professional growth, both nationally and internationally. Her invitation to join the PEP network has primarily advanced our individual and collective knowledge and understanding of practice theory and critical participatory
action research, as well as enlisting us to a new community of highly professional international researchers. Her personal philosophy of nurturing the development of emerging researchers leaves behind a legacy that we will continue to model and sustain.

Rozzie was a person who lived her life; she was herself and expressed herself freely in any situation. She had time for you, and you could share professional as well as personal experiences and she would listen, give advice and give comfort. She also had an extraordinary gift to summarise things from discussions in a way that it all became clearer – this is so important for an international network. Sometimes she was as a healer in moments of tension. She was an inspirational person never to be forgotten.

Rozzie illuminated what it meant to start and sustain critical, collective inquiries into improving at-risk students’ life chances in K–12 schools. Her work supporting these students in alternative education routes in Australia illuminated how all students can learn, and that adults can be empowered to work against sometimes very traditional structures and policies that disenfranchise students. Rozzie always endeavoured to find ways to help practitioners to find ways to work together and to research new approaches to teaching, leading and engaging in professional.

Rozzie was always a relentlessly hopeful and cheerful influence on every person she met. She gave us hope when we entered new roles. She made people laugh as we shared in formal professional development settings and in informal coffee breaks, lunches, and suppers. She brought light into very challenging school and district issues that would otherwise have felt insurmountable.

Through our sadness we endeavour to focus on the colour of her life, her scholarship and her joy; and on behalf of the authors – and all members of the PEP international research network – we conclude with these words from John Donne:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or of thine own were: any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.

Vale Rozzie BK.

Change, learning and professional development are a complex and unique social interplay of physical, political, cultural and interpersonal influences. These are not static but dynamic processes whereby the partners in any action research context bring with them their own distinctive sayings, doings and relatings formed and reformed at local sites; consequently, these are mediated and negotiated for particular and distinct local conditions, circumstances and purposes. As the articles will show, change, learning and developing one’s professional practice depend not only on what one does (the doings), but also on the depth and quality of the interactions and relationships (the relatings) and the understandings, theories and discourses (the sayings) by which these are guided.

The articles in this special issue, outlined in the following paragraphs, include contributions that will provide different viewpoints and perspectives on the concepts of partnership and recognition in action research based on research carried out in Australia, Canada, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The studies reported are drawn from different philosophical and educational contexts and traditions found in different countries; they include research carried out in schools, in school districts, in vocational education and training sites, and in the workplace. These studies conceptualise different kinds of partnership and recognition required for site-based educational development, an overarching concept of the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008, Kemmis et al. 2014). The contributions of their theoretical bases are drawn on to conceptualise site-based educational development under an overarching framework of the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008, Kemmis et al. 2014).

The first article, ‘Partnership and Recognition in Action Research: Understanding the Practices and Practice Architectures for Participation and Change’ by Christine Edwards-Groves, Anette Olin and Gunilla Karlberg-Granlund, lays down the theoretical, contextual and practical understandings taken up in other articles in the issue. The article utilises the resources of a contemporary
form of practice theory, the theory of practice architectures and ecologies of practices to lay down the foundation for conceptualising partnerships and recognition.

The second article, ‘Theorising Partnerships for Site-based Education Development in Vocational Education and Workplace Learning’ by Sarojni Choy, Roslin Brennan Kemmis and Annette Green, examines partnerships as they are experienced in site-based education and development in the context of particular workplaces and occupations that focus on gaining employment whilst simultaneously working towards achieving broader social, economic and personal outcomes. The authors suggest new forms of partnerships, other than traditional vendor–client relations, where the contributions are integrated and recognised to effectively engage partners with the view to enabling them to contribute to the goals of site-based education and development.

Developing partnerships for workplace learning is emerging as a common model for organising vocational development. The third article analyses the challenges that emerge when partnerships between adult education teachers, production workers and managers try to accomplish change on the production floor. In her article ‘Adult Education in a Workplace Context: Recognising Production Workers’ Responses and Partnership Challenges’, Gun-Britt Wärvik argues that recognition must embrace an understanding of the particularities of the work process on the production floor to be able to develop and support workplace education. The author lays claim to the importance of recognising the voice of the employee.

In an educational milieu where teachers are taking on the role of facilitating pedagogical development among colleagues in their schools, ‘Facilitating a Culture of Relational Trust in School-based Action Research: Recognising the Role of Middle Leaders’ examines relational trust as an enabling condition in action research partnerships. Authors Christine Edwards-Groves, Peter Grootenboer and Karin Ronnerman present data from a larger research study focused on middle leading practices in Australian primary schools and Swedish preschools. The article extends current understandings of trust that accounts for five newly identified dimensions: interpersonal trust, interactional trust, intersubjective trust, intellectual trust and pragmatic trust.

During the early 1990s, Sweden went from having one of the most centralised to one of the most decentralised education systems in the western world. Ingrid Henning Loeb, author of the fifth article ‘Zooming in on the Partnership of a Successful Teaching Team: Examining Cooperation, Action and Recognition’, focuses on examining the organising and re-organising of educational settings in upper secondary education, during a period of intense reformation. The author shows how the stability of praxis of a specific teacher team is based on collaboration, partnership and recognition making a strong argument for site-based education development that preserves the identity of those in educational partnerships within sites.

Rhonda Nixon, author of the sixth article ‘Principals and Teachers as Partners in Critical, Participatory Action Research’, turns attention to the changing nature of partnerships that participants experience in their programme of professional learning. The article presents a two-year study of principals’ professional learning practices in ‘Transform’, a professional learning programme in Edmonton Catholic Schools, Alberta, Canada which was designed to be a bottom-up, morally-oriented professional learning approach in which principals and teachers worked as partners on critical participatory action research projects in 89 schools.

In the final article, a Nordic perspective on partnerships is explored in ‘Facilitating Democratic Professional Development: Exploring the Double Role of Being an Academic Action Researcher’. Here, Anette Olin, Gunilla Karlberg-Granlund and Eli Moksnes Furu focus on action research partnerships between universities and schools overlaid with a traditional Nordic perspective. The article explores how university researchers facilitate democratic professional development projects in school and preschool settings. The inquiry opens up new understandings about the double role of academic action researchers considering ways of managing (sometimes) complex and contradictory objectives and roles.
Taken together, the articles in this issue provide a theoretical–empirical exploration of partnership and recognition, noting that there is no evenness in the attention given to each of these principles or to the particular theories presented in the introductory article. Some articles do not explicitly use practice theory to elaborate on the phenomena at all, but rather focus more on finding empirical evidence in the practices encountered in a range of partnerships; others represent issues of recognition described from a practice perspective. Some authors use different theories to bring these phenomena to the fore. However, the theory of practice architectures has provided most authors with a powerful analytical tool for understanding action research as site-based education development. It enabled authors to interrogate the differences between traditions and the practicalities of action research as it relates to culture, identity and collaboration, and how partnerships and recognition are played out in educational change and site-based development. From this vantage point, the articles return us to the questions about partnership and recognition that prompted the publication of this special issue: how are people recognised within action research partnerships? How do people recognise one another? How do participants recognise the partnership itself? What are the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements that are influenced by and influence recognition in these partnerships for action?

In the spirit of partnership we would like to finish by recognising and thanking the reviewers and critical friends who supported the authors in preparing and refining their manuscripts for publication. Your assistance has been amazing.

References


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