



PEDAGOGY, EDUCATION, AND PRAXIS IN CRITICAL TIMES

Kathleen Mahon, Christine Edwards-Groves, Susanne Francisco, Mervi Kaukko, Stephen Kemmis and Kirsten Petrie (Eds.). (2020). *Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis in Critical Times*. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd., 23.4 cm, 193 p.

Issues related to pedagogy, education, as well their forms applied in practice cannot be described as novel – on the contrary, they date back to the onset of teaching-learning practices and appear to be growing on a daily basis.

It is also a fact that the world we belong to, including all the available spheres of human endeavour (education being one of them) has significantly changed over previous decades. As a result, contemporary educators, just like all the other participants in the education-related processes, are facing some new needs and requirements posed by their students, their own environment and the labour market. For those reasons, constant and additional effort made by teachers, students, policy-makers, as well as other stakeholders is expected, in order to enable all of us to accommodate ourselves to the modern world demands in a smooth, yet efficient way.

The turbulence of the 21st century, characterised by new professions, a number of different information channels enabling extremely fast exchange, etc. has been additionally triggered by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has introduced us, on a global scale, to a range of unprecedented demands that we are struggling to meet day by day.

The book *Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis in Critical Times* is a result of continuous efforts made by international researchers gathered around the Pedagogy, Education, Praxis (PEP) network to provide answers to a number of questions arising from the PEP area. Over the previous decade and a half, the network not only tried to shed some additional light on the phenomena pertinent to pedagogy and education, but also to provide additional help and support, from both theoretical and practical aspect, for all those engaged in teaching-learning, i.e. pedagogical and educational practices. Despite the fact the book did not initially address the Covid-19 imposed era – it can undoubtedly become immensely helpful in these times.

The first chapter, titled *Education for a World Worth Living In*, is the one via which the authors, Kaukko, Francisco and Mahon first emphasise the importance of education for humankind per se, with specific focus on the fact that the role of education should always do good to each and every individual. The chapter also discusses questions regarding the influences and trends that contemporary education faces nowadays and whether, under such conditions, it can persevere, i.e. keep its inherent goals. Finally, it is the first part of the book which introduces all the central questions to be further analysed in more detail, including, but not limited to – pedagogy, education, bildung, practice and praxis (differentiating these two), stating, at the same time, that all the components yielded from the work of 23 international researchers, who, on the sample of more than 200 publications, tried to answer the questions mentioned above.

Through the second section of the book, *What is Educational Praxis*, Mahon et al. first highlight the difference between the phenomena of praxis and practice, which are usually interchangeably used, but also the influence of political, social and other domains on the domain of education. In this way, they enlighten the notion of education praxis from a number of angles and discuss its development, potential, participants, as well as moral and justice in this context. Taking into consideration the conditions surrounding educational praxis on a general level, the chapter specifically emphasises its transformative nature, crucial in the era we live in.

In the third chapter, *Research that Facilitates Praxis and Praxis Development*, Kaukko, Wilkinson and Langelotz illustrate the pillars of a spectrum of research, i.e. approaches and methods which have led or could lead to facilitated interpretation and implementation of the wanted actions in educational praxis. In this regard, the authors point to the fact that research related to educational praxis, which could be rooted in different approaches, should focus on both adequate interpretation and real possibilities in given educational contexts. They conclude that some novel ideas, and approaches which could result from them, could support the development of educational praxis and related research.

What follows is *Critiquing and Cultivating the Conditions for Educational Praxis*, the chapter in which Hardy et al. first list and describe the conditions, on different levels, including the global one, which strongly influence educational praxis and its progress. They also aim to define in what ways educational praxis is interpreted and then applied in different national, international and global contexts, all of which are susceptible to inevitable influences (among them – migration, global warming, social, political, economic situation, etc.). Despite the circumstances being crafted by factors visible on both micro and macro level, it is being concluded that examples of good practice, available on a number of territories, lead to positive overall impression regarding educational praxis implementation and could help its further development.

In the chapter entitled *Teaching as Pedagogical Praxis*, Kemmis and associates, by illustrating a number of experiential examples, aim to shed some additional light on the issues pertinent to the field. Irrespective of the form and level of education being observed, what cannot be denied is the fact that student-teachers, i.e. teaching-learning relationship is the only factor enabling success and, at the same time, the one being at the heart of educational praxis.

In the sixth chapter, *Leading as Shared Transformative Educational Practice*, Edwards-Groves, Wilkinson and Mahon illuminate the phenomenon of leadership in and for the sphere of education – again from different perspectives, i.e. local, national, and international angles. Reminding us of the fact that leadership per se is an inherent component of education-related activities conducted by all the stakeholders, the authors also provide answers to questions concerning leadership in different scenarios and for different purposes, with the goal of understanding leadership, sharing our knowledge and then successfully applying it in our daily practices.

The relevance of collaboration in professional context, in addition to the issues raised in the section addressing leadership, is discussed by Olin and associates, in the chapter entitled *Collaborative Professional Learning for Changing Educational Practices*. The authors primarily focus on learning and development of educators and leaders, as well as others engaged in educational activities, trying to identify not only their views of the issue but also the forms and steps taken with the goal of learning and development. Their experiences along this path, as the authors conclude, can facilitate understanding of contemporary trends and initiate some progress with regard to lifelong learning practices.

Last but not least, the final chapter, under a symbolic title – *Critical Praxis for Critical Times*, is the spot from which Petrie, Kummis and Edwards-Groves look back at what has previously been presented, with specific emphasis on the nature of the world we live in, including all the accompanying challenges influenced by politics, society, economy, and a number of other factors. Reflecting the character of the PEP network, whose work has led to the creation of all the components of the book, final remarks are also micro- and macro-oriented and strongly advocate directing the educational cycle in such a way so it could use its full potential and become a great supporter of all those experiencing it.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned, it can be concluded that the book *Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis in Critical Times* not only represents a valuable review of the results yielded by the research conducted by the PEP network, but could also be a great starting point for future transformation of education.

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