Seeking Expertise from Others

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Sections and Subsections

• Literature review

• Theory
  • Theory and Inquiry Study
  • Folk Theories
  • Craft Knowledge

• Philosophical Orientations
  • Philosophical Conflicts

• Teacher as Research Instrument
Why do we seek expertise from others?

Understanding the topic from the vantage point of others can widen one's intellectual knowledge base. This understanding can also stretch the teacher's thinking to areas outside of education that may not have been studied before, such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Kenway & Fahey, 2009).
Literature Review

- A review that provides a broader understanding of the work that has already been done by others on the topic (p. 91)

- Presumes you have a topic and research question/statement of intent
- Bridges practical knowledge with academic research
- Often conducted using library sites as well as Google scholar
"Meier and Henderson (2007, p. 148) suggested addressing the following as part of a lit review

• What does the educational research say about the proposed focus?
• What do researchers and previous studies agree or disagree on?
• What are the central ideas and patterns about this focus area?
• Are there gaps in the literature on this topic?
• How will this study add to the existing knowledge on this topic?"

(Babione, 2015, p. 91)
Theory

- a set of assertions about what occurs in some aspect of reality (p. 92)

“Traditional educational researchers use theories and philosophies to support their research agenda and to describe their visions about teaching and learning.” (p. 92, my emphasis)
A theory is not always essential to the development of an inquiry project (Bell, 2010). However, teachers who identify others' relevant theories often use these ideas as roadmaps and frameworks to clarify their thinking about their own studies (Anyon, 2009). Even though teachers sometimes think of theories as remote ideas, far removed from their day-to-day teaching, much of what we do in classrooms relates to theories.

It should be further noted that teachers do not always use theory the way it was initially designed to be used. Teachers pick and choose particular aspects of theories to implement (Kersten & Pardo, 2007). For example, John Dewey's (1959) theory...
Folk theories are the everyday taken-for-granted ways of defining reality, not always valued by traditional theorists, that originate from experiences and worldviews that teachers draw on to organize and carry out their work.

Theories from experts in the field are no more exclusive than those from one's own personal and professional experiences. What a person believes about teaching and learning will also come into play when searching for theories to support an inquiry project (Dadds, 1995).
Craft Knowledge

Teacher inquiry studies are rooted both directly and indirectly in what we believe, and our personal theories and beliefs will be woven into any supporting theory we might choose to use for our projects. Some teacher inquiry even goes so far as to totally reject the theories and work of outside sources, preferring to use craft knowledge from teaching experiences.

This **craft knowledge** is so highly valued that teachers often seek additional sources of information to strengthen their understandings of a topic from those with first-hand experiences in schools: students in the class, other educators, advisors, librarians, school counselors, cafeteria workers and custodians, parents, and community members.

**craft knowledge**

a personal-practical knowledge that has a foundation in beliefs about past experiences, present mindset, and future plans
Philosophical Orientations and Conflicts

When making decisions about practitioner teacher inquiry, it is useful to be aware of historically dominant or normative philosophical positions.

Such awareness can help ground one’s inquiry or simply give the teacher inquirer insight into an aspect of their practice they may not have had before.
Philosophical Orientations

• Essentialism
• Behaviourism
• Progressivism
• Reconstructionism
• Existentialism
• Perennialism

(pp. 97-98)
Teacher as Research Instrument

It is important that teachers unpack their philosophical beliefs about teaching and learning and make these beliefs transparent to themselves and to others in order to more fully utilize tools of inquiry to comprehend how they approach their professional work. As businesses take on greater roles in curriculum development, it is even more crucial for classroom teachers to understand their theories and philosophies about teaching and learning and use this information to study the effectiveness of their curriculum and instruction.

Once the focus and problem statements are established, and teachers are at ease with their understanding of relevant literature, theories, and philosophies, they are ready to move forward. Moving forward frequently involves creating a workable plan.

(p. 98)