

---

Volume 4

Issue 1 *Practitioner Research in a Changing Educator  
Preparation Landscape: Exploring Tensions and  
Reimagining Possibilities*

Article 2

---

2019

# From Rigor to Vigor: The Past, Present, and Potential of Inquiry as Stance

Elizabeth Currin

University of Florida, [ecurrin@ufl.edu](mailto:ecurrin@ufl.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jpr>

 Part of the [Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Currin, Elizabeth (2019) "From Rigor to Vigor: The Past, Present, and Potential of Inquiry as Stance," *Journal of Practitioner Research*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5038/2379-9951.4.1.1091>

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jpr/vol4/iss1/2>

## **From Rigor to Vigor: The Past, Present, and Potential of Inquiry as Stance**

### **Abstract**

*Over the years, practitioner research has been both marginalized and trivialized within the larger educational research landscape. This article challenges that exclusion by tracing the emergence and development of the inquiry stance construct. Understanding the origins of teacher inquiry can contribute to its cultivation and ultimately lend a necessary rigor—or better yet, vigor—to practitioner research. Indeed, inquiry as stance endures because it is far more than a best practice or ready-made technique. Deeply ontological and epistemological, an inquiry stance enables educators to transform their teaching for the sake of all learners in the face of an ever-changing educational landscape.*

On January 20, 2017, Donald Trump delivered his inaugural address as his audience watched with the rapt attention of rabid followers, the morbid curiosity of staunch opponents, or the passive indifference of citizens awash in the incessant, ubiquitous news cycle. The reality show host's campaign was unprecedented and historic, yet his first speech as president preserved the status quo in at least one way—paying scant attention to education. To observant ears, however, even the passing mention conveyed a significant message. When Trump briefly described “an education system flush with cash but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge” (Will, 2017), he implicitly articulated his view of knowledge as static, objective, and transmittable.

If knowledge is objectified, it can also be commodified. The education system thus becomes a network of transactions: elite academics produce or discover knowledge; pre-service teachers attend college to obtain it; and as certified graduates, mistaken for “finished products” (Rubin & Land, 2017, p. 190), they go forth to dispense their goods to K-12 pupils, whether unwitting recipients or willing customers. This insensate assembly line creates “consuming citizens” marked by “an overwhelming degree of homogeneity and conformity” (Darder, 2015, pp. 31, 59). The factory-like system works, Eisner (2002) argues, because of society's devotion to economy and efficiency. Education is unmistakably institutionalized and intractably hierarchical, pitting professor over practitioner (Grant & Murray, 1999), and theory over practice.

Practitioner inquiry offers an alternative path: as Wolk (2008) suggests, “inquiry is the opposite of transmission” (p. 118). Not limited to the field of education, practitioner research and its forerunner action research help nurses, counselors, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, and other such

practitioners glean constructive understandings of their work and how to make that work better (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007; Ravitch, 2014). Within the education realm, inquiry enjoys a likewise vast array of applications, all of which promote “systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, pp. 23-24). Inquiry, as a “technology for producing understanding,” operates from the core premise that practitioners are in the best position to do so (Allwright, 2005, p. 354). At once a distinct methodological approach (Stevenson, 1995), an indication of the relationship between researcher and researched (Schaenen, Kohnen, Flinn, Saul, & Zeni, 2012), and a theoretical orientation (Benade, 2015; Pine, 2009), practitioner inquiry defies the notion of knowledge as fixed and transmissible.

Grounded in constructionist epistemology (Copeland, Birmingham, de la Cruz, & Lewin, 1993; Klehr, 2012; So, 2013), inquiry conveys teachers’ attempts—whether pre- or in-service—to make sense of their teaching (Amond, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Snow-Gerono, 2003). The process can be time- and labor-intensive (Baumann, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992), but the researcher’s insider status is celebrated and valued (Schaenen et al., 2012). Although practitioner research, teacher research, practitioner inquiry, and teacher inquiry operate quite successfully as interchangeable terms despite their distinct histories (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014), *inquiry* honors the epistemological and ontological perspectives at work by conjuring both a worldview and a way of knowing and being (Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2010; Fitts Fulmer, 2012; Ritchie, 2014). Inquirers see the world as “something to study, to explore, [and] to wonder about,” and “when teachers breathe inquiry as a part of their lives,” they contagiously invite students to do likewise (Wolk, 2008, pp. 116, 118). Far from depriving children of all knowledge, they affirm students’ capacity to produce it.

School- and district-wide cultures of inquiry do not magically appear; they derive from the same systematic, intentional, and iterative effort at the root of inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Both teachers and students benefit from having a cyclical framework to guide their investigations and keep them focused on an ever-evolving goal (Clayton, Kilbane, & McCarthy, 2017; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Ermeling, 2010; Wolk, 2008), but guidelines are often “open by design” (Klehr, 2012, p. 127). Teacher researchers acknowledge that “findings are a beginning,” leading both to new questions and “reflection on past practice in order to inform and change future practice” (Nelson, Slavitt, & Deuel, 2012, p. 19). Practitioners with an inquiry stance thoughtfully look back and intentionally look forward.

Formally labeled by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), inquiry stance as a construct has deep and enduring roots, supporting “a radically different view” of knowledge and practice (Fiorentini & Crecci, 2015, p. 10) by honoring the transformational agency of teachers (Irvin, 2005; Rowe, 2015; Schaenen et al., 2012). Nevertheless—or perhaps precisely because of its powerful potential, teacher inquiry has been both marginalized and trivialized within the larger educational research landscape (Foshay, 1998; Snow-Gerono, 2003). In response, advocates have argued teacher research is “rigorous” in spite of its unconventional intermingling of theory and practice and predilection for qualitative methods (Hamilton, 2017; Hymes, 1977; Klehr, 2009). The inquiry stance construct enriches these efforts and lends a necessary rigor to teacher research, although it is more appropriate to think of it as vigor.

While *rigor* connotes objectivity, certainty, and stasis, *vigor* embraces a more fluid and dynamic view, mirroring how the “stance” of teacher researchers is “contrary” to traditional—and dominant—modes of investigation (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011, p. 54). Garte (2017), for instance, envisions an educator gathering “data from the classroom with the rigor of a scientist” (p. 15), whereas others maintain that teacher inquiry, like teaching, is more akin to art (Burnaford & Hobson, 2001; Klehr, 2009). This article affirms practitioner research as inherently creative, tracing its evolution and celebrating its survival in the Age of Accountability. By focusing expressly on the emergence and development of the inquiry stance construct, this article aims to inspire teachers and teacher educators to cultivate and maintain an inquiry stance, reflecting rearward for the sake of change (Ravitch, 2014) while conscious of “the immediate and continuous present” (Benade, 2015, p. 110). As the Romantic poet Percy Shelley (1985/1816) eloquently expressed, “Nought may endure but Mutability” (p. 41). Teachers with an inquiry stance—and the teacher educators who prepare them—relish this paradox that change is the only constant and use it to propel their visions of more vibrant and equitable teaching and learning.

### **Inquiring into Inquiry’s Origins**

Examining the origins of the inquiry stance construct echoes Huberman’s (1996) belief in the value of historicizing teacher research writ large. Though McFarland and Stansell (1993) trace practitioner inquiry all the way to Aristotle, the concept has more familiar roots in the work of John Dewey, who first encouraged teachers to act as both “consumers and producers of knowledge about teaching” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 9). Knowledge, in this case, is “itself inquiry—as a goal *within* inquiry, not as a terminus outside or beyond inquiry” (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p. 97, emphasis theirs). In other words, students cannot

possibly be deprived of all knowledge, so long as they are curious, which is more likely to be the case when they have curious and reflective teachers.

Because White (2013) urges attention to the difference between Dewey's actual beliefs and the criticisms sometimes lodged against him, it is instructive to turn to his words directly. Here, Dewey (1910) arguably lays the groundwork for the yet-to-be-named inquiry stance:

Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful. [...] To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry—these are the essentials of thinking. (p. 13)

This disposition, rife with chaotic disturbance and systematic order, paradoxically unites motion and stasis. Although the exercise is systematic, it is vigorous and active, not rigid and inert. Dewey's acknowledgment of the seeming pain in this process highlights the perplexity he believed to be a prerequisite for learning (Ermeling, 2010). Growth, in other words, can arise from confusion. As a pragmatist, Dewey grounded this Socratic abstraction in the activity of everyday life, advocating collective, scientific deliberation as democracy's guide (Hammersley, 2004). Moreover, Dewey idealized educators as "society's most potentially powerful agents of change" (White, 2013, p. 40), but only when they trouble the alleged gap between theory and practice to find the overlap of "common sense knowing" and "scientific doing" (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, pp. 188-189). Dewey firmly maintained a need for both.

### **Critical Contributions**

Ostensibly taking a cue from Dewey, and likewise inspired by the work of John Collier, psychologist Kurt Lewin also pondered and promoted the intermingling of theoretical and practical knowledge in the 1940s (Winter, 1987). As Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Collier had sought, through collaborative action research, "to reverse deeply discriminatory, racist, and destructive practices [...] and to implement more democratic policies" in U.S. dealings with Native Americans (Pine, 2009, p. 38). He thus brought a critical edge to the nascent and still nameless philosophy of practitioner inquiry, echoing Dewey's belief in the "inherently reflexive" and incomplete nature of knowledge (Winter, 1987, p. 50). Action research, for Collier, united epistemic humility and collective action for social change.

As a Jewish émigré who had fled Europe in the 1930s, Kurt Lewin was drawn to Collier's emphasis on the social justice potential of action research, particularly in the milieu of World War II (Benade, 2015; Kemmis, 1980). Challenging the hegemonic force of both basic science and the burgeoning social science fields, Lewin's tolerance for ambiguity and willingness to employ qualitative methodology brought attention to the concept of action research as he further defined it (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; McFarland & Stansell, 1993; Pine, 2009; Winter, 1987). Although he was working in psychology rather than in K-12 education, Lewin shared Dewey's vision of a more harmonious relationship between theory and practice, achievable through an iterative spiral of hypotheses and actions (Hammersley, 2004; Noffke, 1995). Beyond striving for practical efficiency, these efforts truly sought participatory, democratic social change (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), a discernible continuation of Collier's work.

### **Action Research Goes to School**

Inheriting these philosophical threads from Dewey, Collier, and Lewin, Stephen Corey (1953) wove them together in a classroom context, recommending practitioners' "continuous and thoughtful" evaluation of their pedagogy (p. viii). Privileging scientific approaches over common-sense problem-solving techniques, Corey held a decidedly positivist orientation (Hammersley, 2004), but his emphasis on cooperative practitioner research continued the legacy of his forebears (McFarland & Stansell, 1993). Indeed, Hodgkinson (1957) sees Corey's version of action research as the "direct and logical outcome" of Progressive education (p. 139), and his efforts to simplify the process made it more accessible (Dodman, Groth, Ra, Baker, & Ramezan, 2017). Thus, Corey undoubtedly contributed to the explosion of interest in action research in the 1950s.

However, heightened awareness also brought increased scrutiny, including demands for a clearer definition of the practice as well as fierce methodological and epistemological concerns related to a perceived lack of rigor (Hodgkinson, 1957; Kemmis, 1980; Wiles, 1953). Corey's (1949) determination to upend the pernicious hierarchy of educational research, whereby experts dictate to educators who feel "qualified to consume research, but not to engage in it" (Corey, 1952, p. 478) nevertheless anticipated the high philosophical standard of the inquiry stance even as his era constituted another chapter in the historic marginalization of practitioner research (Irvin, 2005), a woeful trend that continued for some time.

## **Growing Pains and New Beginnings**

Despite Corey's ambitions, educational action research declined in the late 1950s in favor of top-down and therefore allegedly top-notch practices (Efron, 2005). The Cold War context fostered concerns about education as an issue of national security, effectively promoting a back-to-basics approach (Rudolph, 2002; Wong, 2005). Practitioner inquiry survived, in part, by dividing into two strains. Some scholars celebrated the grassroots aspect of action research as markedly different from sterile, formal research (Hammersley, 2004; Odell, 1976; Shumsky & Mukerji, 1962), while others held fast to the language of scientific—even clinical—inquiry, encouraging teachers to begin with “a diagnosis of the priority needs for change” (Jung & Lippitt, 1966, p. 25). What united these factions was an endorsement of the transformational potential of teacher research, necessarily at odds with schools' remarkable stability and conservatism. That itself was “a phenomenon to be explained and understood” (Hinely & Ponder, 1979, p. 136), particularly with the help of postmodern and feminist lenses (Pine, 2009). Though teacher researchers employ a diverse range of methodologies (Klehr, 2009), the gradual acceptance of qualitative approaches and multiple perspectives revived action research, endowing its adherents with new resolve.

Lawrence Stenhouse carried practitioner research out of the shadows and into the 1980s, readily embracing more interpretive, dialectical modes (Huberman, 1996; McFarland & Stansell, 1993). Confronting generalizability concerns head-on, Stenhouse demonstrated how teacher research might transcend classroom walls through constructive dialogue (Stevenson, 1995). Kemmis (1980) endorsed such attention to the “lived experience” of schooling (p. 3), and together, Carr and Kemmis (1986) advocated for richer discussion of the epistemology of practitioner research, to “arm it against criticism and promote its future progress” (p. 1). The best defense—the inquiry stance—was yet to come.

## **Coalescing and Critique**

By the 1990s, teacher research had proliferated enough to be considered mainstream (Huberman, 1996; Noffke, 1995; Snow-Gerono, 2003), yet widespread and watered-down went hand-in-hand. Throughout the decade, critics consistently attacked along epistemological, methodological, and political fronts (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The first two battle lines echoed earlier concerns about credibility and rigor (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Huberman, 1996; van Manen, 1990), and the “eclectic” approaches of teacher researchers continue to be “a point of tension within the community and a point of criticism outside of its borders” (Klehr, 2009, p. 37). In the 1990s, proponents with a disdain for overly technical

approaches to teaching and learning resisted imposing a requisite formula on teacher research, not wanting product to supersede process (Allwright, 2005; Pine, 2009; Stevenson, 1995). Consequently, the potential for teacher inquiry as an organic form of professional development came more fully into view (Sardo-Brown, Welsh, & Bolton, 1995), subverting “remedial” forms by honoring teachers “as generators, not merely consumers, of significant knowledge” (Lytle, 1996, pp. 85-86). When the goal is a more fully developed professional—an improved practitioner, the nuance and narrative of qualitative inquiry are especially suited to those aims (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007; Fiorentini & Crecci, 2015; Hymes, 1980; Nelson et al., 2012; Richardson, 1994). Still, epistemological and methodological concerns definitely gained an audience during the 1990s. Patterson and Shannon (1993) forcefully called for a “redefined rigor [that] requires teachers to take responsibility for their work and to be changed by their research” (p. 10). The imminent inquiry stance, with its vim and vigor, would answer that call.

Epistemological and methodological criticisms also incorporated ethical dilemmas endemic to teacher research. Challenging Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1993) bold unwillingness to privilege research over teaching, Wong (1995) disapprovingly cited tensions associated with simultaneously attempting two roles, reinforcing the historically low status of teacher research (Hammer & Schifter, 2001; Sardo-Brown, et al. 1995). Conversely, inquiry advocates embraced tension as a source of “more salient and honest questions, more responsive methods, and more compelling findings” (Baumann, 1996, p. 33), ultimately more capable of inciting real and lasting change (Richardson, 1994).

Various qualms about teacher inquiry, including suspicions about the validity of qualitative research, were amplified in the Age of Accountability (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Massey, 2002; McFarland & Stansell, 1993). As demands for higher-quality education catalyzed preferences for narrowly defined best practices and standardized curricula, school culture often inhibited teacher research and its attendant professionalization (Baumann, 1996; Hursh, 1995; Sugimoto & Carter, 2016), pitting practitioners against “established conceptions of how teachers and students, or students and students, ought to behave in a classroom setting” (Wong, 1995, p. 27). This, then, was the third battle line: an inherently political critique of teachers as researchers.

Acknowledging the paradox that teachers require supportive administrators in order to engage in work that seeks to critique the very institutions they inhabit, Stevenson (1995) nevertheless cautioned against “depoliticized” iterations of action research (p. 205). Others likewise celebrated inquiry’s power to contest the status quo, viewing the political nature of teacher research as inextricably bound to its



epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations (Anderson & Herr, 1999). As a means by which “practitioners make full use of what they know” (Foshay, 1998, p. 109), teacher research required a distinct “set of political commitments [...] and a moral and ethical stance that recognizes the improvement of human life as a goal” (Noffke, 1995, p. 4). At the dawn of the twenty-first century, as the practitioner research movement began to coalesce around a central critique of the sociopolitical climate in schools, the construct of inquiry as stance supplied powerful lifeblood.

### **Reinvigoration through Inquiry as Stance**

As the matriarchs of the current moment in inquiry’s life history, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) insist teachers are “deliberative intellectuals,” capable of navigating the “productive and generative tensions” that result when boundaries blur (pp. 2, 94). Their vision for inquiry honors the deep roots of teacher research, in that a practitioner’s wondering “stimulates, intensifies, and illuminates changes” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 51), yet the inquiry stance for a new millennium requires an “underlying cultural change” (Rinke & Stebick, 2013, p. 72). Rather than connoting a rigid, inflexible, position, the inquiry stance is a disposition, at once active and meditative, ontological and epistemological, microscopic and macroscopic, and personal and political (Benade, 2015; Fitts Fulmer, 2012). Inquirers must continually challenge the status quo, especially when surrounded by deskilling directives and short-lived, technique-obsessed reform movements (Anderson & Herr, 1999; Bennett, 2013; Efron, 2005; Ermeling, 2010; Fecho, Price, & Read, 2004). By definition, the inquiry stance resists hegemonic grand narratives of teaching (Hulburt and Knotts, 2012), telling a very different story of practice.

For the teacher researcher with an inquiry stance, the word *problem* is no longer pejorative (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). Paradoxically, then, the inquiry stance makes teaching more challenging (Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2010), but in a way that fosters deep, professional learning and honor Dewey’s vision. Dana (2015) explains:

teacher inquiry is a continual cycle that all educators spiral through throughout their professional lifetimes—a professional positioning or stance, owned by the teacher, where questioning, systematically studying, and subsequently improving one’s own practice becomes a necessary and natural part of a teacher’s work. (pp. 163-164)

Necessary and natural, intentional and flexible, grounded yet “animated [and] evolving” (Klehr, 2009, p. 5), the inquiry stance enables teachers to harness happy “praxidents” in their day-to-day work (Schiera, 2014, p. 108). By collecting

authentic data, teachers with an inquiry stance persevere in the Age of Accountability with “a reinvigorated sense” of evidence-based practice (Ravitch, 2014, p. 6) in living, breathing classrooms.

What happens as a result of that evidence is a vital part of the vigorous inquiry stance. Whereas traditional action research has noticeably neglected its potential for “advancing social justice and emancipatory change” (Kinsler, 2010, p. 172), the inquiry stance provides a way to take action research “to the next level,” beyond “an event or task” and towards a fully embedded mindset that views professional development and social justice as inextricably bound and mutually reinforcing (Irvin, 2005, p. 9). Extending far beyond the boundaries of a teacher preparation program, the inquiry stance actively promotes sustainable, authentic professional learning for a lifetime (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Dana, 2015; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010). It bears repeating that the very words *inquiry stance* capture the inside-outside, push-pull, grounded and dynamic qualities of the teacher researcher, whose short-term goal is local change in the sense of improved practice, but who ultimately exercises a sort of “epistemological power” (Anderson & Herr, 1999, p. 17), ready and willing “to expand possibilities for practice” writ large (Burns Thomas, 2004, p. 18).

Though scholars have noted the invisible nature of the inquiry stance (Copeland et al., 1993; Dana, 2015; Rowe, 2015), studies have also documented the inquiry cycle at work (Amond, 2008; Hulburt & Knotts, 2012; Snow-Gerono, 2003), evincing claims that inquiry is far more than mere reflection (Fiorentini & Crecci, 2015; Lawton-Sticklor & Bodamer, 2016). Rather, exemplary inquirers exhibit critical self-awareness, courage, confidence and a keen sense of the connections between their reflections and the larger sociopolitical world (Benade, 2015; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Pine, 2009; Schaenen et al., 2012). True to its roots in Dewey, the inquiry stance amounts to an “attitude toward understanding classroom life,” marked by “a teacher’s continuing responsiveness” towards problems of practice (Copeland et al., 1993, p. 349), which are celebrated, named, and systematically studied (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

Dewey, however, has a tendency to describe the teaching profession “as a solitary, disassociated activity” (White, 2013, p. 39), whereas the inquiry stance is fundamentally dialogical, such that “even a teacher doing solo research in the classroom can engage others: students, parents, outside observers, in a dialogue about research in progress” (Schaenen et al., 2012, p. 80). Ideally, collaboration occurs in communities of practice, marked by a high degree of sustained and even transformational negotiation (Grant & Murray, 1999; So, 2013). These groups share “habits of mind or ways of being” (Nelson et al., 2012, p. 5) that further reveal

the inquiry stance as epistemological and ontological at its very core. When inquiry communities acknowledge and own this philosophical foundation, they “regard educational problems and issues not solely as individual matters but also as social, cultural, and political concerns that may require collective action” (Lytle, 1996, p. 93). Through a literal co-laboring, practitioner researchers are positioned—and *dispositioned*—to transform schools and society.

### **Inquiry Endures**

As schools and society have shaped the construct of inquiry as stance, practitioner research also stands to influence the contexts in which it occurs, a process Snow-Gerono (2003) describes as “reculturing” (p. 4). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) have long believed, “the ultimate purpose of inquiry as stance—always and in every context—is enhancing students’ learning and life chances for participation in and contribution to a diverse and democratic society” (p. 146). Accomplishing this moral imperative requires practitioners to take Theodor Adorno’s advice of “allowing oneself to be a stranger in one’s own home” (Richert, 2005, p. 298). As fish more fully aware of the water in which they exist, teacher researchers may feel that they are swimming upstream (Fecho et al., 2004; Lippitt, 1981), for the inquiry stance is not always well received.

Lone inquirers in hostile school environments are particularly prone to backlash if they appear “too confident, ambitious, and knowledgeable” (White, 2011, p. 322). Institutional resistance can also arise if others fail to realize that practitioner researchers produce knowledge in addition to rather than in lieu of staying abreast of traditional education research (Odell, 1976; Schiera, 2014; So, 2013). In the face of this antagonism, the inquirer’s persistent stance is crucial, supporting a belief that the ambitious project of problematizing “current arrangements of schooling; the ways knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and used and teachers’ individual and collective roles in bringing about change” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 18) is well worth the risk.

Far too often, “adverse consequences” result when teachers engage in a “critique of prevailing educational ideologies and policies” (Hines, Conner, Campano, Damico, Enoch, & Nam, 2007, p. 79), and yet, that is the only way they can transform the status quo. Scholars have advocated for inquiry-oriented action research as a way to empower teachers to join critical policy conversations (Meyers & Rust, 2003; Rust & Meyers, 2007; Sinnema, Meyer, & Aitken, 2017), recognizing the authentic contributions practitioners can make. Ravitch (2014), for instance, highlights the potential for practitioner inquiry to be “a tool of social, communal, and educational transformation” amidst a backdrop garishly bedecked

with “top-down policy, mandates and standardization” (p. 5), and White (2013) underscores the power of teacher research to “make teaching more visible, more public, and more resistant” to such pernicious sociopolitical forces (p. 45).

To date, the Trump administration has done little to inhibit or reverse the perilous tide of neoliberal education reform (Green, 2018). As the Accountability Era rages on, educator preparation programs have also faced market-driven calls for standardization and measurement (Rubin & Land, 2017). Given the history of practitioner inquiry, teacher educators must vigorously resist these forces and empower their teacher candidates to do the same. To do so, Kim (2013) turns to action research, expressly at odds with “a narrowly defined [...] measurable objectivity that might result in quick fixes” (p. 380). Other teacher educators have experienced similar outcomes in a range of applications across diverse contexts (Baker & Milner, 2016; van der Heijden, Geldens, Beijaard, & Popeijus, 2015; Wamba, 2011), suggesting that “learning to teach and learning to research can happen simultaneously” (Bower-Phipps, Cruz, Albaladejo, Johnson, & Homa, 2016, p. 3) to foster lasting and laudable change.

Because the inquiry stance—as a worldview and a way of knowing and being—resists rigid prescriptions, it “cannot be transferred in a banking mode” (Darder, 2015, p. 110). On the contrary, Schulte and Klipfel (2016) remind us that the development of teacher researchers happens “from the inside out” (p. 457), a process that flourishes with intentional support from educator preparation programs (Fulmer & Bodner, 2017). Inquiry as stance endures because it is far more than a best practice or ready-made technique. Deeply philosophical, inquiry as stance enables teachers to “see themselves as leaders [...] and as makers of knowledge” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 135). Indeed, the inspiring accounts of inquiry-oriented teacher leaders ably testify to that end (MacDonald & Weller, 2017; Storm, 2016). Practitioner researchers with an inquiry stance—and the teacher educators who guide them—embrace a lifelong process that reclaims teaching and learning, evolving from transmission to transformation, and from rigor to vigor.

## References

- Allwright, D. (2005). Developing principles for practitioner research: The case of exploratory practice. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(3), 353-366.
- Amond, M. (2008). *Enacting an inquiry stance: Examining the long-term impact of learning to teach in a professional development school that fosters teacher inquiry* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3325880)
- Anderson, G. L., & Herr, K. (1999). The new paradigm wars: Is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities? *Educational Researcher*, 28(5), 12-40.
- Baker, S. & Milner, J. O. (2016). Building discretionary authority in a teacher education program. *Action in Teacher Education*, 38(2), 91-103.
- Baumann, J. F. (1996). Conflict or compatibility in classroom inquiry?: One teacher's struggle to balance teaching and research. *Educational Researcher*, 25(7), 29-36.
- Benade, L. (2015). Teaching as inquiry: Well intentioned, but fundamentally flawed. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 50(1), 107-120.
- Bennett, L. H. (2013). *From preservice to inservice: The development of inquiry stance* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3602003)
- Bower-Phipps, L., Cruz, M. C., Albaladejo, C., Johnson, A. M., & Homa, T. (2016). Emerging as teachers, as researchers, and as the 'other': A cooperative inquiry. *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research*, 18(1), 1-13.
- Burnafor, G. E., & Hobson, D. (2001). Responding to reform: Images for teaching in the new millennium. In P. B. Joseph & G. E. Burnafor (Eds.), *Images of schoolteachers in America* (pp. 229-243). Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Burns Thomas, A. (2004). *Inquiry within and against: The experiences of four new teachers in an urban professional development network* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3138081)

- Campbell, A. & Groundwater-Smith, S. (2007). *An ethical approach to practitioner research: Dealing with issues and dilemmas in action research*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge, and action research*. London, UK: The Falmer Press.
- Clayton, C., Kilbane, J., & McCarthy, M. R. (2017). Growing into inquiry: Stories of high school teachers using inquiry for themselves and their students. *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education*, 8(2), 1-20.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Demers, K. (2010). Research and teacher learning: Taking an inquiry stance. In O. Kwo (Ed.), *Teachers as learners: Critical discourse on challenges and opportunities* (pp. 13-43). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1992). Communities for teacher research: Fringe or forefront? *American Journal of Education*, 100(3), 298-324.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1993). *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. *Educational Researcher*, 28(7), 15-25.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2001). Beyond certainty: Taking an inquiry stance on practice. In A. Lieberman & L. Miller (Eds.), *Teachers caught in the action: Professional development that matters* (pp. 45-58). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Copeland, W. D., Birmingham, C., de la Cruz, E., & Lewin, B. (1993). The reflective practitioner in teaching: Toward a research agenda. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 9(4), 347-359.
- Corey, S. M. (1949). Curriculum development through action research. *Educational Leadership*, 7, 147-153.

- Corey, S. M. (1952). Educational research and the solution of practical problems. *Educational Leadership*, 9, 478-484.
- Corey, S. M. (1953). *Action research to improve school practices*. New York, NY: Bureau Publications.
- Dana, N. F. (2015). Understanding inquiry as stance: Illustration and analysis of one teacher researcher's work. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 8(2), 161-171.
- Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2008). *The reflective educator's guide to professional development: Coaching inquiry-oriented learning communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Dana, N. F., & Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2014). *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Darder, A. (2015). *Freire and education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think*. Boston, MA: D. C. Heath & Co.
- Dewey, J., & Bentley, A. F. (1949). *Knowing and the known*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Dodman, S., Groth, L., Ra, S., Baker, A., & Ramezan, S. (2017) Developing an inquiry stance through PDS action research: Does it maintain after graduation? *School-University Partnerships*, 10(4), 30-46.
- Efron, S. (2005). Janusz Korczak: Legacy of a practitioner-researcher. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56(2), 145-156.
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Ermeling, B. A. (2010). Tracing the effects of teacher inquiry on classroom practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 377-388.
- Fecho, B., Price, K., & Read, C. (2004). From Tununak to Beaufort: Taking a critical inquiry stance as a first year teacher. *English Education*, 36(4), 263-288.

- Fiorentini, D., & Crecci, V. M. (2015). Dialogues with Marilyn Cochran-Smith. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 88(1), 9-14.
- Fitts Fulmer, D. E. (2012). *Autobiographical meaning making, practitioner inquiry, and white teachers in multicultural education* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3535033)
- Foshay, A. W. (1998). Action research in the nineties. *The Educational Forum*, 62(2), 108-112.
- Fulmer, E., & Bodner, J. (2017). Detached and unsustainable: Central tensions in teacher research capstones and the possibilities for reimagined inquiry. *I.E.: Inquiry in Education*, 9(2), 1-15.
- Garte, R. (2017). American progressive education and the schooling of poor children: A brief history of a philosophy in practice. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 13(2), 7-17.
- Grant, G., & Murray, C. E. (1999). *Teaching in America: The slow revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Green, E. L. (2018, March 9). After demanding local control, DeVos finds that it limits her influence. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/politics/betsy-devos-education-reform-states.html>
- Hamilton, M. (2017). On being a teacher-ethnographer: Nestling the ethical and logistical dilemmas among the joys of insiderness. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(9), 2457-2477.
- Hammer, D., & Schifter, D. (2001). Practices of inquiry in teaching and research. *Cognition and Instruction*, 19(4), 441-478.
- Hammersley, M. (2004). Action research: A contradiction in terms? *Oxford Review of Education*, 30(2), 165-181.
- Hinely, R., & Ponder, G. (1979). Theory, practice, and classroom research. *Theory into Practice*, 18(3), 135-137.



- Hines, M., Conner, J., Campano, G., Damico, J., Enoch, M., & Nam, D. (2007). National mandates and statewide enactments: Inquiry in/to large-scale reform. *English Teaching-Practice and Critique*, 6(3), 76-91.
- Hodgkinson, H. L. (1957). Action research: A critique. *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, 31(4), 137-153.
- Huberman, M. (1996). Moving mainstream: Taking a closer look at teacher research. *Language Arts*, 73(2), 124.
- Hulburt, K., & Knotts, M. (2012). Making the turn: Fostering an inquiry stance in teacher education. *English Teaching-Practice and Critique*, 11(2), 94-112.
- Hursh, D. (1995). Developing discourses and structures to support action research for educational reform: Working both ends. In S. E. Noffke, & R. B. Stevenson (Eds.), *Educational action research: Becoming practically critical* (pp. 141-153). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hymes, D. H. (1977). Qualitative/quantitative research methodologies in education: A linguistic perspective. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 8(3), 165-176.
- Hymes, D. (1980). 1979 Presidential address: Educational ethnology. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 11(1), 3-8.
- Irvin, M. D. (2005). *Confidence and doubt: Balancing teacher efficacy and an inquiry stance towards teaching in a professional development school context* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3187516)
- Jung, C., & Lippitt, R. (1966). The study of change as a concept in research utilization. *Theory into Practice*, 5(1), 25-29.
- Kemmis, S. (1980). *Action research in retrospect and prospect*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Sydney.
- Kim, J. (2013). Teacher action research as Bildung: An application of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to teacher professional development. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(3), 379-393.

- Kinsler, K. (2010). The utility of educational action research for emancipatory change. *Action Research*, 8(2), 171-189.
- Klehr, M. R. (2009). *Artful inquiry: Aesthetic practices in teacher research*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3399992)
- Klehr, M. (2012). Qualitative teacher research and the complexity of classroom contexts. *Theory into Practice*, 51(2), 122-128.
- Lawton-Sticklor, N., & Bodamer, S. F. (2016). Learning to take an inquiry stance in teacher research: An exploration of unstructured thought-partner spaces. *The Educational Forum*, 80(4), 394-406.
- Lieberman, A., & Pointer Mace, D. (2010). Making practice public: Teacher learning in the 21st century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 77-88.
- Lippitt, R. (1981). A supportive organizational climate for action research. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 59(8), 515-517.
- Lytle, S. L. (1996). 'A wonderfully terrible place to be': Learning in practitioner inquiry communities. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 70, 85-96.
- MacDonald, M. & Weller, K. (2017). Redefining our roles as teachers, learners, and leaders through continuous cycles of practitioner inquiry. *The New Educator*, 13(2), 137-147.
- Massey, D. D. (2002). *Teachers conducting research: An examination of the short-term and sustained influences of teacher research on classroom teachers* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3060359)
- McFarland, K. P., & Stansell, J. C. (1993). Historical perspectives. In L. Patterson, C. M. Santa, K. G. Short, & K. Smith (Eds.), *Teachers are researchers: Reflection and action* (pp. 12-18). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Meyers, E., & Rust, F. O. (2003). *Taking action with teacher research*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Nelson, T., Slavit, D., & Deuel, A. (2012). Two dimensions of an inquiry stance toward student-learning data. *Teachers College Record*, 114(8), 1-42.
- Noffke, S. E. (1995). Action research and democratic schooling: Problematics and potentials. In S. E. Noffke, & R. B. Stevenson (Eds.), *Educational action research: Becoming practically critical* (pp. 1-10). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Odell, L. (1976). Research roundup: The classroom teacher as researcher. *The English Journal*, 65(1), 106-111.
- Patterson, L., & Shannon, P. (1993). Reflection, inquiry, action. In L. Patterson, C. M. Santa, K. G. Short, & K. Smith (Eds.), *Teachers are researchers: Reflection and action* (pp. 7-11). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Pine, G. J. (2009). *Teacher action research: Building knowledge democracies*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Ravitch, S. M. (2014). The transformative power of taking an inquiry stance on practice: Practitioner research as narrative and counter-narrative. *Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education*, 11(1), 5-10.
- Richardson, V. (1994). Conducting research on practice. *Educational Researcher*, 23(5), 5-10.
- Richert, A. E. (2005). Inquiring about practice: Using web-based materials to develop teacher inquiry. *Teaching Education*, 16(4), 297-310.
- Rinke, C. R., & Stebick, D. M. (2013). 'Not just learning about it but actually doing it': The evolution of a teacher inquiry culture. *Action in Teacher Education*, 35(1), 72-84.
- Ritchie, G. (2014, October). My journey as a teacher researcher. *Virginia Journal of Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.veanea.org/home/2428.htm>
- Rowe, K. E. (2015). *Potential influences of action research on the developing identities and practices of teacher leaders* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3724070)

- Rubin, J. C., & Land, C. L. (2017). 'This is English class': Evolving identities and a literacy teacher's shifts in practice across figured worlds. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 68, 190-199.
- Rudolph, J. L. (2002). *Scientists in the classroom: The Cold War reconstruction of American science education*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Rust, F., & Meyers, E. (2007). The bright side: Teacher research in the context of educational reform and policy-making. *Teachers and Teaching*, 12(1), 69-86.
- Sardo-Brown, D., Welsh, L., & Bolton, D. L. (1995). *Practical strategies for facilitating classroom teachers' involvement in action research*. Mobile, AL: Project Innovation, Inc.
- Schaenen, I., Kohnen, A., Flinn, P., Saul, W., & Zeni, J. (2012). 'I' is for 'insider': Practitioner research in schools. *International Journal of Action Research*, 8(1), 68.
- Schiera, A. J. (2014). Practitioner research as 'praxidents' waiting to happen. *Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education*, 11(2), 107-116.
- Schulte, A. & Klipfel, L. H. (2016). External influences on an internal process: Supporting preservice teacher research. *The Educational Forum*, 80(4), 457-465.
- Shelley, P. B. (1985/1816). Mutability. *Selected Poetry*. London, UK: Penguin.
- Shumsky, A., & Mukerji, R. (1962). From research idea to classroom practice. *The Elementary School Journal*, 63(2), 83-86.
- Sinnema, C., Meyer, F., & Aitken, G. (2017). Capturing the complex, situated, and active nature of teaching through inquiry-oriented standards for teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 68(1), 9-27.
- Snow-Gerono, J. L. (2003). *Living an inquiry stance toward teaching: Teachers' perceptions of teacher inquiry in a professional development school context* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3097046)

- So, K. (2013). Knowledge construction among teachers within a community based on inquiry as stance. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 29, 188-196.
- Stevenson, R. B. (1995). Action research and supportive school contexts: Exploring the possibilities for transformation. In S. E. Noffke, & R. B. Stevenson (Eds.), *Educational action research: Becoming practically critical* (pp. 197-209). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Storm, S. (2016). Teacher-researcher-leaders: Intellectuals for social justice. *Schools: Studies in Education*, 13(1), 57-75.
- Sugimoto, A. T., & Carter, K. (2016). Divergent narratives: The story of schools, schooling, and students from the 1960s to the present. In K. Bosworth (Ed.), *Prevention science in school settings: Complex relationships and processes* (pp. 19-32). New York, NY: Springer.
- van der Heijden, H. R. M. A., Geldens, J. J. M., Beijaard, D., & Popeijus, H. L. (2015). Characteristics of teachers as change agents. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 21(6), 681-699.
- van Manen, M. (1990). Beyond assumptions: Shifting the limits of action research. *Theory into Practice*, 29(3), 152-157.
- Wamba, N. (2011). Developing an alternative epistemology of practice: Teachers' action research as critical pedagogy. *Action Research*, 9(2), 162-178.
- Watts, R. J., Diemer, M. A., & Voight, A. M. (2011). Critical consciousness: Current status and future directions. In C. A. Flanagan & B. D. Christens (Eds.), *Youth civic development: Work at the cutting edge. New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 134, 43-57.
- White, B. (2011). The vulnerable population of teacher-researchers: Or, 'why I can't name my coauthors.' *English Education*, 43(4), 321-340.
- White, B. (2013). A mode of associated teaching: John Dewey and the structural isolation of teachers. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 15(1-2), 37-47.
- Wiles, K. (1953). Can we sharpen the concept of action research? *Educational Leadership*, 10, 408-410, 432.
- Will, G. F. (2017, January 20). A most dreadful inaugural address. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post->

partisan/wp/2017/01/20/a-most-dreadful-inaugural-address/?postshare=6701485023087925&tid=ss\_fb-bottom&utm\_term=.afee189876e5

Winter, R. (1987). *Action-research and the nature of social inquiry: Professional innovation and educational work*. Aldershot, UK: Avebury.

Wolk, S. (2008). School as inquiry. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(2), 115-122.

Wong, A. (2015, July 16). Children's TV—left behind. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/07/the-1960s-experiment-childrens-tv/398681/>

Wong, E. D. (1995). Challenges confronting the Researcher/Teacher: Conflicts of purpose and conduct. *Educational Researcher*, 24(3), 22-28.