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RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

PHILOSOPHY, RESEARCH, AND EDUCATION

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Research always conveys a commitment to philosophical beliefs even if this is unintended and even though it remains implicit and unacknowledged... [Researchers] cannot evade the responsibility for critically examining and justifying the philosophical ideas that their enquiries incorporate. It follows that philosophical reflection and argumentation are central features of the methods and procedures of educational research.

—W. Carr, 1995 (as quoted in Bridges, 1997, p. 179)

Indeed... adapting from Plato on a different but not unrelated matter, one might say that there may be no good educational practice until all professional teachers become—rather than school effectiveness, action researchers or other empirical researchers—educational philosophers.

—D. Carr, (2001, p. 475)

The problems we face are not really technical—they are moral, they are ethical. A reliance on technical solutions leaves us still gasping, still empty.

—M. Greene (as quoted in Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 6)

37.1 INTRODUCTION: PHILOSOPHY AND PERSONAL STRUGGLE

The purpose of this chapter in the First Edition of this handbook was to engage the reader in a discussion of concepts/issues in philosophy and to suggest how philosophical inquiry is a form of critical inquiry, philosophy as a way of doing research. The concepts/issues were (are) presented (re-presented) as follows.

1. Education is a moral undertaking and therefore our practice within education must be open to inquiry.
2. To engage in philosophical inquiry is to theorize, to analyze,

to critique, to raise questions about, and/or to pose as problematic that which we are investigating.

3. Theory can be derived from other systems of thought; derived from social, political, and/or economic situations; and constructed from practice.
4. Philosophical inquiry is concerned with (i.e., “inquires into”) the nature of reality, knowledge, and value.
5. Philosophical inquiry can be descriptive, normative, and/or analytic. It can be interpretive and/or critical.
6. Modes of philosophical inquiry have interests: Interpretive inquiry has an interest in understanding, critical inquiry has an interest in emancipation.
7. Critical inquiry is a mode of philosophical inquiry that questions reality, looking for contradictions. Critical inquiry is change/action-oriented.

8. The major task of philosophy is the posing of questions. It is the foundation of research. Without good questions there is no inquiry.
9. Philosophical inquiry is doing philosophy.
10. Philosophical inquiry is philosophical research.

The struggle for the first author in writing the first-edition chapter was twofold: to establish that philosophy is more than an “academic distraction” and to present to the reader a philosophical discussion of the relationship/connectedness of philosophy and research. Eisner (1991) provided insight into understanding my struggle, stating that some researchers within the social sciences viewed philosophy as an “academic distraction” because

Philosophy is nagging. It conjoles students into asking questions about basic assumptions, it generates doubts and uncertainties, and, it is said, it keeps people from getting their work done. Many appear to believe that it is better to leave the unanswerable questions and unsolvable problems alone and get down to brass tacks. I regard such attitudes as short-sighted. Core concepts in the social sciences are philosophical in nature: Objectivity, Validity, Truth, Fact, Theory, Structure. Why neglect to examine them, even if their examination will never yield a single unassailable meaning? (pp. 4–5)

Trying to deal with the “big picture” in education gets complicated. There is a greater sense of urgency felt today to come up with answers to educational “problems.” Philosophy takes too much time. There is the sense of “Let’s get down to brass tacks.” Like Eisner, I experience philosophy as a study that does nag at my thinking because, at its best, it has me question and doubt. Because I question and doubt, sometimes it keeps me from getting my work done. Also, I agree with Eisner that core concepts in the social sciences are philosophical in nature. And this is my struggle, also taken up by my coauthor.

Our perspective in this chapter is that of teacher-student. We find value in the study of philosophy, which has helped us to understand issues in education better. Our purpose in this chapter is to convey to the reader the importance of philosophy for research into education. We discuss and analyze, in a philosophical way, philosophy, education, and research. We do this by situating our discussion of philosophy, inquiry, and education within a general discussion of educational research. We then examine education as a moral undertaking, and that inquiry is foundational (theoretical), diverse, and critical. We argue that the study of philosophy/philosophy of education will provide a framework needed for inquiry into schooling that is foundational (theoretical), diverse, and critical. We briefly look at the notion of theory and the importance of having or taking a theoretical (foundational) perspective. Modes of philosophical inquiry are discussed throughout the chapter.

Greene (1978) provides insight into what is implicit in the writing of this chapter and suggests the philosophical issues imbedded in the work of teachers, hence the importance of and need for philosophical inquiry:

The concern of teacher educators must remain normative, critical, and even political. Neither the teachers’ colleges nor the schools can change the social order. Neither colleges nor schools can legislate democracy.

But something can be done to empower teachers to reflect upon their own life situations, to speak out in their own ways about the lacks that must be repaired, the possibilities to be acted upon in the name of what they deem decent, humane, and just. (p. 71)

The study of philosophy/philosophy of education can provide the possibility for the empowering possibilities and practices that Greene identifies: reflection on one’s own life situation, one’s own voice with which to speak, and the possibility for action based on decency, humaneness, and justice.

37.2 EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

We begin with a brief definition and discussion of what we consider a mainstream position on what constitutes educational research (Anderson, 1990). We do this to situate our discussion of philosophy, research, and education:

Research in education is a disciplined attempt to address questions or solve problems through the collection and analysis of primary data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalization and prediction. (Anderson, 1990, p. 4)

Anderson’s discussion in his first chapter, entitled “The Nature of Educational Research,” expands this definition. He views educational research as primarily problem solving as opposed to testing of hypotheses. This research is based on “systematic and objective observation, recording and analysis”; it seeks to find “general principles and theories which can lead to the prediction of behaviors and events in the future”; its goals are “understanding, prediction and ultimately control”; controlled, accurate observation and recording information allow for prediction to be “accurately measured and assessed”; the researcher should be “unbiased” and strive for “objectivity” (p. 5). Furthermore, “research is a scientific process which assumes that events in the world are lawful and orderly” and that the laws are “discoverable.” This lawfulness provides the meaning of determinism and the

... researcher acts in the belief that the laws of nature can be understood and ultimately controlled to at least some degree. In a nutshell, educational research is the systematic process of discovering how and why people in educational settings behave as they do. (pp. 4–5)

As stated above, we believe that this is a mainstream position on educational research.

Anderson (1990) also identifies “four different levels at which educational research takes place: descriptive, explanatory, generalization and basic or theoretical” (p. 7). It is within the basic/theoretical level that Anderson places philosophy as an associated discipline:

While philosophy does not typically incorporate primary source data, empirical evidence, or observation, it is included as an associated discipline since it relies on similar approaches to other forms of theoretical research. (p. 7)

At the same time, in a previous passage, philosophy is not considered research within the definition quoted earlier:

There is another domain of investigation which some scholars consider research. It includes philosophical analysis, especially conceptual analysis, the situation of educational issues within a philosophical tradition, the examination of epistemological and axiological assumptions, criticism and so forth. I view such activities as scholarship, but not as research in the sense in which it is used in this text. The principal difference is the lack of primary data in those approaches which rely entirely on critical thinking and analysis of existing literature and theory. (p. 5)

The above discussion places philosophy outside legitimate educational research and identifies it as “scholarship.” In this framework, scholarship does not qualify as research because it is not “empirical.”

Whereas the impression is that in the sciences there is a detached empiricism, researchers in the sciences also have a commitment to philosophical beliefs, although at times the philosophical beliefs might not be explicit. They, too (researchers in the sciences), have a responsibility to society, and that responsibility is usually justified in philosophical terms. Thus, there is no neutral research even in the natural/hard sciences. For example, researchers in medicine and in civil engineering (e.g., building highways, large buildings, bridges) have to consider ethical implications of their work. They are concerned with finding cures for human maladies, safer transportation and buildings, etc. There is no veiled claim to neutrality. Hence, philosophy is implicit in research. Bridges (1997) observes that scientific research usually operates in such a way that the researcher is “artificially invisible” (p. 179). With philosophical research, however, although there are particular methodologies in use (e.g., “Socratic questioning, Cartesian doubting, or linguistic analysis”), oftentimes the research process itself is less visible, whereas the researcher is highly visible. “One curious consequence is that of course we have relatively little public evidence of the way in which philosophers go about their business: we have rather the fruits of that business” (p. 179). We do not believe that this makes an associated discipline of one and genuine research of the other.¹

37.3 EDUCATION UNDERSTOOD AS A MORAL UNDERTAKING

The study of philosophy/philosophy of education can provide greater insight and understanding into the complexities of schooling. By complexities of schooling we mean that educational practice does not “just happen,” does not take place as an isolated activity. Wingo (1974) identifies the complexities of the school setting:

Behind every approach to teaching method, behind every plan for administrative organization of the schools, behind the structure of every

school curriculum stands a body of accepted doctrine—assumptions, concepts, generalizations, and values. In short, every practical approach to the art of teaching is shored up by some constellation of accepted ideas. Very often, however, the very presence of this body of ideas goes unnoticed. Its acceptance is largely unconscious and based on tradition. (p. 6)

To be more explicit about this, as educators, we are concerned with philosophical issues and perspectives in our daily work within classrooms. As we debate curricular issues, as we decide educational policy, as we work with students and their “behavior,” as we “test” students’ “knowledge,” etc., we are concerned with philosophy. However, as Wingo stated, the underlying ideas behind our practice may go unnoticed, may be unconscious, may be unquestioned. The importance of philosophical inquiry in education is exactly at this point: It can illuminate, inform, call into question, etc., the taken-for-granted notions that we have. Philosophical inquiry and analysis can help conceptual clarification, as well as inform our praxis, and vice versa.

37.3.1 Traditional Philosophical Questions

The Western tradition in philosophy has wrestled with the following questions: What is real? (metaphysics/ontology), How do we know? (epistemology), and What is of value? (axiology). Understanding and identifying the nature of reality, what counts for knowledge, and what is of value, are all philosophical positions. We use the term *philosophical inquiry* to mean a form of questioning (inquiring into) the nature of reality, knowledge, and value. This notion of inquiry is the beginning of doing philosophy, of inquiring into the nature of things (Greene, 1974).

The three questions/positions regarding the nature of reality, knowledge, and value also identify the nature of the concerns of schooling as well as forming the basis for philosophical inquiry. If this is so, the lives of educators/researchers are rooted in philosophical and moral struggles and questions, and consequently they cannot view their work as a neutral enterprise. Their lives are rooted in philosophical, moral, and nonneutral (political) realities because educators, schools, communities, interest groups, legislators, religious organizations, private and corporate enterprise, etc., presuppose some conception of reality that they wish to transmit, or pass on to the young. As Childs (1950) stated,

... Deliberate education is never morally neutral. A definite expression of preference for certain human ends, or values, is inherent in all efforts to guide the experience of the young. No human group would ever bother to found and maintain a system of schools were it not concerned to make of its children something other than they would become if left to themselves and their surroundings. (p. 19)

School practice reflects the interests of divergent groups. The metaphysical/ontological, epistemological, and axiological

¹As we stated in the Introduction, modes of philosophical inquiry are discussed throughout the chapter. Also, see Kincheloe (1991), especially Chapter 3, on “Exploring Assumptions Behind Educational Research: The Nature of Positivism,” pp. 48–66.

questions of philosophy are educational questions as well. Research in education reflects this. The differing groups mentioned have interests, and those interests identify the political nature of education.

School curricula reflect multiple worldviews. Curricula reflect the possibilities of humankind. Curricula can raise critical questions about the nature of the social world and how we know that world, or it can dogmatically repress such exploration. To choose a specific curriculum is to choose from among many possibilities. Curricular decision making is hence a political decision. To say that "... education is a moral undertaking involves choices that make a difference in the individual and social lives of human beings" (Morris & Pai, 1976, p. 18).

The concept of moral as used here is from Child's work (1950), *Education and Morals*. He uses the term quite specifically regarding educators' intervention in the lives of their students. Moral refers to

... the more elemental fact that choices among genuine life-alternatives are inescapably involved in the construction and the actual conduct of each and every educational program. These choices necessarily have consequences in the lives of the young, and through them in the life of the society. Viewed from this perspective, education undoubtedly ranks as one of the outstanding moral undertakings of the human race. (p. 20)

Furthermore, education is rooted in philosophical and political realities. The philosophical and political roots come in when we are required to make choices from among many possible worldviews.²

Boyd (1997) echoes this notion of education as a moral undertaking. He states that to be involved in education "is to be engaged, ultimately, with the question of what it means to be fully human" (p. 4). He goes on to state,

... Education is one of the main ways we have as humans to define our humanity, to practice our humanity, to maintain our humanity, and to change our humanity. It is how we seek to connect ourselves today with ourselves of the past and it is how we project ourselves into the future. Although it is tempting to view much of what goes on in contemporary schools in much less grandiose terms, to do so risks losing sight of what schools are there for in the end. (p. 5)

If education is a moral undertaking as Child's rightly suggests, and a way for us to define our humanity, as Boyd suggests, it is incumbent on educators to "inquire into their work," to question their theory and practice. Philosophical inquiry provides various ways of doing that.

37.4 PHILOSOPHY AND INQUIRY

Although we were critical of Anderson's (1990) discussion of philosophy and research, we do think he accurately represented

the processes of philosophical inquiry: conceptual analysis, situating educational issues within a philosophical tradition, and examination of epistemological and axiological assumptions, criticism, etc. He also emphasized critical thinking and analysis of existing literature and theory as part of philosophical inquiry. These processes are modes of philosophical inquiry, ways of doing philosophy.

Our criticism of Anderson's position centered on his viewing philosophy as an "associated discipline" for research, whereas we believe it to be a foundation (theory) for educational research. Philosophical conclusions are the fruit of research, not simple speculation. To begin to address philosophy as foundation, we return to the three questions that have concerned philosophers within the Western traditions from the beginning.

What is the nature of reality? What is the nature of knowledge? and What is of value? (metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology, respectively). These questions provide a *conceptual framework* that gives coherence to the study of philosophy. These questions also identify the major concerns of education and provide the possibility for coherence in educational practice. By coherence we mean that they provide educators with a possible framework for posing questions from multiple perspectives that allow us to reflect on our work. For example, they allow us to pose multiple questions regarding the nature of curricula. They allow us to examine whose knowledge we are promoting and, even prior to that, what knowledge is of most worth. Questions of value ask us why we choose this particular knowledge and leave all of the rest out, etc. (see Apple, 1979, 1996). Engaging in this questioning is philosophical inquiry, is doing philosophy.

Another framework we can use in looking at the relationship among philosophy, research, and education, is an examination of the differing approaches to the study of philosophy. Wingo (1974) states that we can approach the study of philosophy in three ways (these ways may also be looked at as the main functions of philosophy): the descriptive, the normative, and the analytic (pp. 15-16).

To engage in descriptive philosophical inquiry, a student would be involved in the study of the history of philosophy. He or she would be studying "... what is (and has been) the field of philosophy. Working comprehensively, he is trying to picture the general development of philosophical thought" (Wingo, 1974, p. 15). This is more than studying "intellectual history." As Wingo points out, it is possible to study about what philosophers have said and, at the same time, be doing philosophy in that students are "analyzing and clarifying concepts and the language in which ideas are expressed" (p. 15). This is the area that Anderson (1990) identified as situating educational issues within a philosophical tradition. For example, educational issues looked at from the viewpoint of different philosophies, and what writers within those philosophical traditions said about the issues, how they would go about making sense of those issues, establish a worldview (metaphysics/ontology), a way of knowing (epistemology), and a way to make decisions regarding

²Recent educational critics suggest that we have lost this sense of education as a moral undertaking. Representative essays of a philosophical nature are those by Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), Beyer (1998), Giroux (1988), and Purpel (1993).

action (axiology). Philosophy of education textbooks are good examples of the descriptive perspective.³

To engage in normative philosophical inquiry a student would be involved with values (axiology). Interests could focus on

ethics or aesthetics. He will be involved with advocating some ends or objectives (values) that he believes to be desirable and with explaining the reasons for their desirability. He may also be involved in suggesting means for advocating these values. His main concern is not what is, but what ought to be. (Wingo, 1974, p. 15)

Normative philosophical inquiry explores and critiques philosophical positions, as well as making decisions as to the “rightness and wrongness” of those positions (see Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 1992). The normative perspective reflects Anderson’s (1990) earlier position regarding examination of epistemological and axiological assumptions, as well as critical thinking and analysis of existing literature and theory as part of inquiry.⁴

To engage in analytic philosophical inquiry is to engage in the “analysis of language, concepts, theories, and so on” (Wingo, 1974, p. 15). This is the practice that analytic philosophers consider “doing philosophy.” According to Webb et al. (1992), analytic philosophy has as its goal

... to improve our understanding of education by clarifying our educational concepts, beliefs, arguments, assumptions. For example, an analytic philosophy of education would attempt to understand such questions as: What is experience? What is understanding? What is readiness? (pp.174–175)

Anderson (1990) referred to the analytic perspective as conceptual analysis.⁵

The framework of the “functions” of philosophy suggests the foundations position mentioned earlier. Each of these three functions can provide multiple possibilities for educational research and, more specifically, philosophical inquiry. The descriptive, normative, and analytic forms of philosophical inquiry suggest in-depth study of the philosophy of education. Looking at different philosophical traditions with regard to metaphysics/ontology, epistemology, and axiology requires study in philosophy. Movements in education, e.g., reconstructionism, perennialism, Marxism and education, and more recent movements rooted in critical theory, postmodern analyses, and renewed emphasis on democratic schooling and forms of emancipatory practice, represent major areas of study for researchers. These areas of study have their own world-views and concerns. Writers within these positions offer differing conceptual frameworks, differing questions posed, and hence challenges to status quo practice. And they all engage the student in philosophical inquiry.

The study of the philosophy of education from the normative, descriptive, and analytic perspectives offers critical means of inquiry into educational realities for researchers. Writing

within these frameworks is doing philosophy. Doing philosophy is doing research. The descriptive perspective works out of systems of philosophical thought, schools of thought, offering foundational positions from which to work; the normative perspective offers a “process of inquiry into ideas and basic beliefs that will enable us to form reasoned attitudes about the important issues of our time” (Wingo, 1974, p. 22). The analytic perspective allows us to inquire into the use of language, the meaning, and clarification of language used to talk about education. This is philosophical inquiry/philosophical research.

Education is a complex social undertaking, having myriad important dimensions that can be examined from psychological, sociological, and political perspectives, yet there is one question that is uniquely philosophical: “the question of determining the ends of education” (Wingo, 1974, p. 22). The means and ends of education are inseparably united. Wingo quotes Max Black:

All serious discussion of educational problems, no matter how specific, soon leads to consideration of educational aims, and becomes a conversation about the good life, the nature of man, the varieties of experience. But these are the perennial themes of philosophical investigation. It might be a hard thing to expect educators to be philosophical, but can they be anything else? (p. 22)

Conceptualizations about “the good life,” the nature of humankind, etc., are problematic in the sense that there are no final, all-inclusive, agreed-on positions on these concepts. Inquiry into these issues can take place through the descriptive, normative, and analytic perspectives. Each of these perspectives, again, will demand different questions be posed. This process is doing philosophy, doing philosophical inquiry.

To understand how the three perspectives can be used in the study of education, Wingo (1974) suggests that there are three assumptions that underlie the nature of philosophical inquiry in education. These three assumptions are critical to an understanding of the importance, scope, and possibility the study of philosophy has for the study of education. As obvious as it may seem, the first assumption is, “The primary subject matter of philosophy of education is education itself” (p. 24). Thus the phenomena of education, in all its myriad forms, are the “subject matter” for study. From a research point of view this can mean looking at curricula, the outcomes of learning, testing, organizational matters, place of schools within the social setting, the means-ends of education, etc.

The second, and perhaps the most insightful and critical assumption, states that “education always takes place within a certain constellation of cultural conditions and therefore it cannot be studied as a set of universal and independent phenomena” (Wingo, 1974, p. 24). This assumption means that there is no “one best system” to model schools after and no single answer to complex educational situations. This assumption suggests that we need to view education relationally, in context (cf. Apple, 1979; Beyer, 1986; Purpel, 1993), and clearly identifies the

³Examples of descriptive philosophical inquiry can be found in the following philosophy of education texts: Gutek (1997), Ozmon and Craver (1995), and Wingo (1974).

⁴See Dewey, 1904/1964 and Kaufman (1966) for examples of normative philosophical inquiry.

⁵Examples of analytic inquiry are Tom (1984) and Wilson (1963).

complex nature of understanding education. At the same time this assumption suggests the myriad possibilities for inquiry into the process of schooling. By this we mean that the nature of the inquiry is dependent on the researcher. It is not standardized, it is not given (cf. Eisner, 1991).

The third assumption states that the “basic purpose of philosophy of education applies to the ends and means of education and their interrelationships” (Wingo, 1974, p. 24). The assumption suggests the complexity of educational experience and the many variables/factors that influence the process. These assumptions clearly call for the descriptive, normative, and analytic perspectives of viewing educational realities but also point toward the need for expanding our decision to accommodate other perspectives such as interpretive and critical forms of inquiry, as well as the empirical.

A way to expand our discussion to accommodate other perspectives that can be used in looking at the relationship among philosophy, inquiry, and education can be found in examining research paradigms. This framework (research paradigms) extends the more traditional descriptive, normative, and analytic perspectives by looking at methodological/epistemological viewpoints. This framework allows the researcher to identify human interests within modes of inquiry.⁶

Bredo and Feinberg (1982) discuss differing paradigms according to the research methodologies utilized. These methodologies have inherent interests in the kind of research findings sought and generated. The paradigms identified are the positivistic, the interpretive, and the critical approaches to social and educational research. These paradigms have fundamental differences that separate the positivistic from the interpretive and critical approaches. These differences are of a philosophical nature concerning metaphysics, subject-object dualism, generalization, causality, and axiology (Koetting, 1985).

If we pose the question “Why do we do research?” our response will allow us to explore the framework (research paradigms) as follows. We do research to gain a clear/clearer perception of reality and our relationship to that reality. This clearer perception can be of benefit to us and others depending on our interests: What are we searching for? (Truth? Knowledge? Information? Understanding? Explanation? Emancipation?). This notion of interest also bears on why we ask certain research questions, as well as what the nature of the research question/problem/situation under investigation might be. Positivist science has an interest in technical control, interpretive science has an interest in understanding, and critical science has an interest in emancipation. For example, I may try to control reality better to make predictions, develop lawlike theories or explanations, establish causal relationships, etc. This would correspond to the positivist, empirical approach to research. I may want to understand reality better and, hence, understand myself and others within a particular context. I may want to understand the meanings attached to social customs, the diversity of meaning in multiple interpretations of singular events, etc. This would

correspond to the interpretive approach to research. I may want to understand reality better and, hence, understand myself and others within a particular context in order to act within that context, to effect change. This corresponds to the critical approach to social and educational research.

There are fundamental differences that separate forms of inquiry, and the differences are of a philosophical nature. The differences are concerned with the three questions of philosophy stated earlier: metaphysics/ontology, epistemology, and axiology (also, cf. Koetting, 1985, 1993). These concerns keep us rooted in doing philosophy.

Although we have used the term “foundations” frequently in this section, we are not talking about the establishment of a “metanarrative” (Hlynka and Yeaman, 1992; Lyotard, 1984). We are not talking about “doing philosophy in the grand manner” of building systems of thought (Wingo, 1974). We do not believe that there is only one complete explanation or understanding of our social world and that, given the time and effort, we will be able to “figure things out.” What we are saying about foundations is the way in which philosophy is carried out, within philosophical inquiry, the problem posing, the questioning, the search for clarification, the quest for seeing things relationally, provides multiple ways of inquiring into the world of social and educational realities.

Martusewicz and Reynolds (1994) state a similar position regarding foundations. They see the “job” of foundations as being

... to raise questions and offer points of view that ask us to see what we do as teachers or as students in new or at least unfamiliar ways, from another side, perhaps from the inside, or perhaps from both inside and outside. It is an invitation to look at education both socially and historically as well as practically, that is, from the inside (the complex processes, methods, and relations that affect individuals in schools, for example) within the context of the outside (the larger social, economic, and political forces that have affected those processes over time). (p. 2)

This notion of inside/outside (school/world) suggests the “flux of boundaries” and allows the researcher/participant to see the relationships of seemingly separate realities, as well as questioning the idea of foundations as a “stable set of knowledges, concepts, or principles to be discovered, defined, and then presented in a unilinear way” (p. 3; also see Greene, 1974). Again, there is no one best way to explain what happens in the world or in education. Possibilities for understanding, however, can take place when we pay “particular attention to perspectives that maintain a critical stance, a willingness to put existing assumptions and interpretations into question” (Martusewicz and Reynolds, 1994, p. 3).

As we become engaged in this form of critical inquiry, we become involved in theory (foundations). There are multiple theoretical perspectives on the world, knowledge, value.⁷ However, there is no metanarrative. There is no grand philosophy (Greene, 1974, 1994; Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994). Returning to an assumption made earlier in this chapter from Wingo (1974),

⁶The foundational (theoretical) text that influenced my (first author) study was that by Jurgen Habermas (1971): also, as secondary texts, those by Bernstein (1978), who offers an historical perspective and overview of mainstream social science and moves through theoretical positions of language, analysis, phenomenology, and critical theory, and Schroyer (1973).

⁷Note the chapters in this volume on postmodernism and poststructural theory and on critical theory.

education always takes place within a certain constellation of cultural conditions and therefore it cannot be studied as a set of universal and independent phenomena. Some set of relations among education, politics, and social institutions is inevitable and cannot be ignored in any useful analysis. (p. 24)

There are multiple explanations/understandings of schooling, and of the “world,” and multiple ways of knowing. In the next section we turn to a discussion of theory. Understanding the notion of theory can provide insight into the multiple interpretations of the world and experience. Theorizing is a mode of philosophical inquiry that suggests the complexities and possibilities for creating/constructing knowledge.

37.4.1 Theory and Philosophical Inquiry

Theorizing is a mode of philosophical inquiry. It is an important mode of inquiry in that, as educators/researchers, we take a theoretical stance with regard to our work (Koetting, 1993). Stated another way, as educators/researchers, we work out of a theoretical framework that is very closely related to our orientation to the world. This happens whether we are conscious of it or not. Furthermore, it is important that we reflect on that stance, we try to understand how that stance affects our practice and, vice versa, how the practice influences our theoretical stance. This is directly related to the earlier discussion of the moral nature of our work (we intervene in the lives of people).

How do we define/talk about theory that helps shape our practice, and practice that helps to shape theory? Stated simply, theory is a “worldview, a way of looking at and explaining a set of phenomena” (Martusewicz and Reynolds, 1994, p. 5). In relation to philosophy and education, Gutek (1997) refers to theory as a “grouping or clustering of general ideas or propositions that explain the operations of an institution, such as school, or a situation, such as teaching or learning” and says that these ideas are “sufficiently abstract or general that they can be transferred and applied to situations other than those in which they are directly developed” (p. 259). Theory can also refer to an “opinion that originates from trying to establish generalizable patterns from facts, information, or practices” (p. 259).

Where do educational theories come from? How do educators arrive at theoretical positions? Gutek (1997) discusses three sources of educational theory. Educational theory can be derived from philosophies or ideologies; educational theory can be constructed from reactions to certain “social, political, and economic situations”; and theories can be constructed from educational practice. We discuss each of these sources.

First, theories are derived from philosophies and ideologies. This is the study of philosophy of education. Education is examined within the broader context of individual philosophical systems. Although these systems may not have dealt specifically with education, educators, writers, and scholars derive educational positions from these philosophies and apply principles from their study to schooling. For example, progressivism, as a theory of education, is derived from elements of pragmatism and naturalism. Similarly, we can derive a theory of education from ideological positions. For example, a view of the Ameri-

can democratic ideology can be found in public-school settings. Theories of education can be derived from a Marxist ideology. And, finally, educational theories can be derived from blending philosophy and ideology, as in social reconstructionism, a blending of philosophical elements found in Pragmatism and ideological elements found in Utopianism (cf. Gutek, 1997, pp. 259–262). This theorizing is philosophical inquiry.

Second, educational theory can be developed from reactions to certain “social, political, and economic situations.” Gutek (1997) suggests studying the history of American education to understand the reactive nature of educational theories. For example, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, educational critics said that

... schools had become too formal, devitalized, and geared to rote learning. In some of the big cities school systems were mired in political patronage and corruption. Progressivism as an educational movement and the various experimental schools that it simulated, including John Dewey’s at the University of Chicago, were reactions designed to bring about the reform of American society and education. (p. 252)

This examination and critique of existing literature (cf. Anderson, 1990) are philosophical inquiry, are doing philosophy.

Finally, educational theories can be constructed from educational practice. The effective schools movement provides an example of theory derived from practice (Gutek, 1997). Schools, teachers, administrators are singled out for their effectiveness in bringing about higher levels of student achievement. Research is conducted, findings are analyzed, generalizations and principles are offered. A research report is published by the Department of Education entitled *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning* (1986, quoted in Gutek). The report

... is based on a research investigation and analysis of school practices. Information about these practices is organized as findings. These findings have sufficient generality about them that they can be applied in various school settings. In other words, they represent an emerging theory of education. (pp. 261–262)

Examples of theoretical generalizations and principles from the report are

Parents are their children’s first and most influential teachers. What parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than how well-off the family is.

and

Children learn science best when they are able to do experiments, so they can witness “science in action.”

and, finally,

Belief in the value of hard work, the importance of personal responsibility, and the importance of education itself contribute to greater success in school. (pp. 261–262)

These three sources allow us to engage in philosophical inquiry, theorizing possible understandings of realities/schooling. This

theorizing is a mode of doing research, a way of doing philosophy. As stated at the beginning of this section, theorizing, inquiry happens whether we are aware of it or not and suggests the importance of “thinking about what we are doing” (Arendt, cited in Greene, 1974, p. 6). This theorizing, this doing philosophy, is what Greene refers to as “wide-awakeness,” thinking about commitment and action wherever we “work and make” our lives. “In other words, we shall attempt to do philosophy with respect to teaching, learning, the aims and policies of education, the choices to be made in classrooms, the goods to be pursued” (p. 6).

Another way of talking about theory, to identify the nature of differing theoretical positions, is to view theory in relation to method and interest (Koetting and Januszewski, 1991). From this viewpoint, knowledge of the world is constructed through a dialectical relationship with that world, i.e., we are shaped by our world, and we help to shape that world. Thus

... theorizing about that world is part of a social process, and therefore, theory itself can be considered a social construction. Theorizing, as a social construction/social process, arises out of humankind's desire to explain and/or understand and/or to change the world. (Koetting and Januszewski, 1991, p. 97)

This analysis is based on the work of Habermas (1971) and thus has a philosophical position within critical theory. Habermas' theory of knowledge and interests has three forms/processes of inquiry: empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic, and critical. Drawing on a previous work (Koetting and Januszewski, 1991), we briefly present these processes.⁸

Theory can serve to explain both the conscious and the unconscious. Theory can be seen as a “hypothetical position which can be proven/disproven through empirical testing.” It suggests causal relationships.

This notion of explaining things is the basis for rational thought. Nomological knowledge is the result of such endeavours. Nomological suggests law-like propositions based on the results of the testing of hypotheses. This form of theory (empirical/analytic theory) has an interest in prediction and control. (Koetting and Januszewski, 1991, p. 97)

Theory can serve to help us better understand/make sense of the world as well as ourselves and others within that world. When we are engaged in this form of investigation, our interest is not explanation, but understanding. Thus we are involved in an

... interpretive mode of understanding/theorizing and this theoretical stance to the world sees reality as a social construction. This form of theory (historical/hermeneutic theory) has an interest in better understanding that social construction through consensual agreement. (Koetting and Januszewski, 1991, pp. 97–98)

The third use of theory can help us gain insight into seemingly “given” realities. Through a process of reflective critique we can

... examine the social construction of reality and seek ways to analyze the contradictions found in reality (the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’). Through a shared vision we can begin to set about the enormous difficulty of changing (our) individual and group context. (Koetting and Januszewski, 1991, p. 98)

To effect change within that context a different understanding of reality is needed. This form of theorizing (critical theory) has an interest in emancipation. In this context emancipation means

... the possibility of individuals freeing themselves from “law-like rules and patterns of action in ‘nature’ and history so that they can reflect and act on the dialectical process of creating and recreating themselves and their institutions” (Apple, 1975, p.126). In this sense, emancipation is a continual process of “critique of everyday life.” (Koetting and Januszewski, 1991, p. 98)

This discussion of theory/theorizing returns us to the main focus of this chapter: philosophy, research, and education. There are fundamental differences within the empirical, hermeneutical, and critical modes of knowing and theorizing, and these differences are of a philosophical nature. Each form of inquiry has its own understanding of the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge, and the nature of value (metaphysics, epistemology, axiology). Hence theory and theorizing raise questions of a philosophical nature. To become engaged in raising these questions is philosophical inquiry, is doing philosophy. This is the sense in which Eisner (1991) referred to philosophy as being nagging, “conjoling us” into asking more questions about the nature of things, generating “doubt and uncertainties,” and perhaps, hindering us in getting our work done.

Theory and theorizing do lead us to ask philosophical questions. Giarelli and Chambliss (1984) state that it is the philosopher's “task to ask the unasked questions” (p. 36). They state that “without a formulated question, there can be no inquiry” (p. 36). They identify the special task of philosophy as

... the formulation of questions for reflective thought. The philosopher, as a qualitative thinker, tries to cultivate a sensitivity to the situation as a whole and to the qualities that regulate it. . . . For the philosopher, the issue always is, “What is the problem?” which in turn depends on a prior question, “What is this all about?” (p. 37)

The philosopher as “qualitative thinker” does not seek certain knowledge or truth but, rather, is concerned with meaning. In this sense,

philosophy does not aim at making the world, for its concern is not action, but qualities. Rather, philosophy serves an educational role. It mediates between immediate experience and experiment and promotes the intelligent development of value. (p. 38)

The educational role of philosophy can be seen within public philosophy of education. Public philosophers of education “see the context of educational problems to be social and cultural

⁸This discussion of theorizing relates to our earlier discussion of research paradigms and interest.

life” (p. 40). The social and historical processes of education include the interactions of differing institutions and participants whose intent is to conserve, create, and criticize culture. Public philosophy focuses on creating a context for understanding the process of education as a whole.

Their methods are synthetic rather than analytic and aim to integrate and give synoptic meaning to knowledge from all perspectives (e.g., history, sociology, economics, anthropology, psychology, etc.), about all educational institutions (e.g., family, school, work-place, church, community, media, etc.), in order to construct a context or a vision of education in its widest cultural sense. Without such a context, efforts to resolve educational problems will be short-sighted and short-lived. (p. 40)

This position of the public philosophers of education relates to Wingo’s (1974) second assumption that underlies the nature of inquiry in the study of philosophy and education, namely, that “education always takes place within a certain constellation of cultural conditions and therefore it cannot be studied as a set of universal and independent phenomena” (p. 24). Giarelli and Chambliss (1984) build on Wingo’s assumption and show the broader context of the discussion.⁹ They discuss the nature of questioning:

All questions arise from within a perceptual field, a whole, a context, or a situation. Inquiry is the exploration of questions (or queries) that arise and take particular shape in a situation. The same may be said for “research,” which word comes from the Latin *re-circere*, “to go around again.” Research is going around, exploring, looking within a situation, context, or field. Inquiry, then, is not simply questioning or searching. It is questioning and searching with an intent, with some limits, or with an object in mind. (p. 36)

This questioning is a mode of philosophical inquiry and will help to identify the fundamental problems in education, which depend on an aesthetic judgment (axiology) of “where the difficulty is and on qualitative thinking to bring these difficulties into the form of questions and problems that can be researched” (p. 45). In other words, these “questions and problems that can be researched” are not arbitrary, they do not just “appear.” They are contextual, purposive, and limited in scope, necessitating further questioning, and have a particular “object” in mind that changes as we question, search, re-question, re-search.

Our discussion in this section has gone from theory and theorizing as philosophical inquiry to the nature of questioning within the context of a public philosophy of education. The nature of questioning, our engagement in the process of questioning, is philosophical inquiry, is doing philosophy.

The present status of “doing philosophy,” particularly philosophy of education, has broadened into multiple discourses. Ozmon and Craver (1999) suggest that the “current mood” in philosophy of education is moving away from “overriding systems of thought” and is concerned with problems and issues in particular contexts, becoming the new arena for philosophy of education. At the same time, the philosophical task remains one of “constant probing and inquiry” (p. xxv). This suggests to us the

notion of public philosophy of education mentioned previously in the work by Giarelli and Chambliss (1984). This “new arena of philosophy” is what was meant by the construction of a “context or vision of education in its widest cultural sense” (p. 40).

Quantitative research also relies on philosophical inquiry. Sherman, Webb, and Andrews (1984) argue that even a study (e.g., a dissertation) that has a “quantitative formulation” has a

... qualitative context out of which it grows and to which its conclusions must be put. The “statement of the problem” in such a study, to be made clearly, calls on philosophy, and the chapter in which conclusions are suggested to be important (for further research or for practice) is philosophical in its axiological import. And one may see a “review of the literature” in any study as an historical account of what has been tried in reference to the problem at hand. (p. 33)

Sherman and co-workers’ position captures the sense in which we believe philosophy and its modes of inquiry are the foundation for educational research.

37.5 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION: DOING PHILOSOPHY

We want to revisit some concepts/terms used during the course of this chapter, similar to how we began:

- To engage in philosophical inquiry is to theorize, to analyze, to critique, to raise questions about, and/or to pose as problematic that which we are investigating.
- Philosophical inquiry is concerned with the nature of reality, knowledge, and value.
- Philosophical inquiry can be descriptive, normative, and/or analytic. It can be interpretive and/or critical.
- Modes of philosophical inquiry have interests: Interpretive inquiry has an interest in understanding; critical inquiry has an interest in emancipation.
- Critical inquiry is a mode of philosophical inquiry that questions reality, looking for contradictions. Critical inquiry is change/action-oriented.
- The major task of philosophy is the posing of questions. It is the foundation of research. Without good questions there is no inquiry.
- Philosophical inquiry is philosophical research.

As we have stressed throughout this chapter, philosophical inquiry is doing philosophy. Maxine Greene (1974) has captured in a very insightful and existential way what it means to do philosophy. We have used her work in the course of this chapter and would like to present more of her insights on what it means to do philosophy (also see Ayers & Miller, 1998).

Greene (1974) regards philosophy as a way to approach (a way to look at, or to take a stance with respect to) knowledge gained through study of the sciences and the arts, as well as the

⁹Giarelli and Chambliss (1984) identify Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* (1944) as a “classic example” of public philosophy of education. Also, cf. Aronowitz and Giroux (1985).

personal understandings and insights that each of us acquires through daily life. Philosophy allows us a way to ask questions that have to do with

... what is presupposed, perceived, intuited, believed, and known. It is a way of contemplating, examining, or thinking about what is taken to be significant, valuable, beautiful, worthy of commitment. It is a way of becoming self-aware, of constituting meanings in one's life-world. Critical thinking is demanded, as are deliberate attempts to make things clear. (p. 7)

There is the exploration of "background consciousness" and boundaries; there is the creation of "unifying perspectives"; there is normative thinking; there is the "probing of what might be, what should be" and the "forging of ideals." Doing philosophy is becoming conscious of the world as it presents itself to our consciousness. "To do philosophy, as Jean-Paul Sartre says, is to develop a fundamental project, to go beyond the situations one confronts and refuse reality as given in the name of a reality to be produced" (p. 7).

To do educational philosophy we must become critically aware of the complexities of the teaching and learning context. We must clarify the meanings of education and the language of schooling. We must become clear about preferences for the "good" and the "right" that motivate pressure groups as they place demands on schools (Greene, 1974, p.7). This calls for critical, analytic, and normative philosophical inquiry.

We do philosophy (theorize) when, for whatever reason, we are

... aroused to wonder about how events and experiences are interpreted and should be interpreted. We philosophize when we can no longer tolerate the splits and fragmentations in our pictures of the world, when we desire some kind of wholeness and integration, some coherence which is our own. (Greene, 1974, pp. 10-11)

This requires that we be "wide awake" within our world, with others, within our communities. To be closed off because of

... snobbery, ignorance, or fear is to be deprived of the content that makes concepts meaningful. It is, as well, to be deprived of the very ground of questioning. For this reason, the teacher who dares to do philosophy must be open to such a multiplicity of realities. He cannot do so if he cannot perceive himself, in both his freedom and his limitations, as someone who must constitute his own meanings with the aid of what his culture provides. Nor can he do so if he is incapable of 'bracketing,' or setting aside, on occasion the presuppositions that fix his vision of the world. (p. 11)

We sense this feeling of a fractured, fragmented world is part of the human condition, our sense of not being at home in the world. To remain open to multiple perspectives of the world, to create our own meanings and yet have to bracket them to understand another, etc., leaves one with a sense of uneasiness

(cf. Koetting, 1994). And yet not to be able to do this leaves us (teachers), like our students, to live in a world that is primarily prefabricated by others for what they consider to be "the public." Thus,

on occasion, he must be critically attentive; he must consciously choose what to appropriate and what to discard. Reliance on the natural attitude—a commonsense taking for granted of the everyday—will not suffice. In some fashion, the everyday must be rendered problematic so that questions may be posed. (Greene, 1974, p. 11)

Greene is speaking of the difficult task of maintaining a philosophical attitude, a person/teacher who sees philosophically and can communicate that attitude to students, that sense of empowerment to transform their situations. Thus students

... need to be enabled- through habituation and stimulation- to initiate inquiries. To be equipped for inquiry is to be equipped to engage in a process through which objects and events can be seen in connection with other objects and events in the experienced world. (p. 158)

This is working with students to do philosophy, to develop the philosophical attitude/orientation; this is seeing realities relationally and not in isolation. We need to show, as well as believe, that students are capable of doing philosophy.

Maxine Greene identifies what it means to do philosophy, to engage in philosophical inquiry. We have presented in this chapter many of the theoretical positions that she demonstrates. We have referred to this as the philosophical attitude/orientation. There are many texts that will convey this attitude that would be helpful for initiating or continuing study in educational research.

There are texts on inquiry that are of a philosophical nature, that present in great depth the theoretical positions, the modes of inquiry, and examples of critical research.¹⁰ There are texts within the field of educational technology that convey the theoretical positions for engaging in multiple forms of research.¹¹ We believe that it is important for those in technology/educational technology to engage in educational philosophy/research. Educational technology is founded on philosophical assumptions, and the designers of educational technology (and of technology in general) work under certain interpretive and normative processes that are essentially philosophical. The dichotomy between technology and philosophy is somewhat superficial, as both impact each other. Although our focus in this chapter has been on education, the connection among educational technology, philosophy of education, and educational research suggests the opportunity for a mutually critical and enriching dialogue. And there are texts of critical essays that are examples of the forms of philosophical inquiry discussed in this chapter.¹² They are examples of doing philosophy.

¹⁰For example, Bredo and Feinberg (1982), Carr and Kemmis (1986), Cherryholmes (1988), Eisner (1991, 1994), Kincheloe (1991) and Popkewitz (1984).

¹¹For example, Hlynka and Belland (1991), Muffoletto and Knupfer (1993), and Yeaman, Ketting, and Nichols (1994).

¹²For example, Apple (1999), Beyer and Apple (1998), Greene (1978), Martusewicz and Reynolds (1994), McLaren and Leonard (1993), Pinar (1988), and Short (1991).

37.5.1 A Final Word

Six years have passed since the First Edition of *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology* was published. In a review of the *Handbook in Educational Technology, Research, and Development* (Braden, 1997), specific reference was made to this chapter on “Philosophy, Research, and Education.” The chapter was identified as a “surprise.” The reviewer stated that the chapter was a “philosophical statement that warrants intellectual consideration. But it is no more than that” (p. 100). As the author of the chapter for the First Edition, I (Koetting) was pleased that the chapter was received as a “philosophical statement that warrants intellectual consideration” because I did struggle with how to discuss and analyze,

in a “philosophical way,” philosophy, research, and education. The reviewer went on to say,

... This controversial chapter is one about which each reader will have to make her or his own judgment. Certainly, when we talk about research we should enter into both the discussion and the process with open minds. (Braden, 1997)

We re-present this chapter in the hope that readers will find a viable understanding of educational research that goes beyond the common notions of what it means to do research. It is our belief that philosophy, and philosophy of education, opens the discussion for examining educational issues within a framework of philosophical inquiry (philosophical research).

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