

Position Paper 5: Inquiry in Literacy Research

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A close look onto the notion of inquiry as a stance in education is the theme of this part of the course. The dictionary defines “stance” as a way of standing or being place, or a position—as a side note. So, first off, what does it really mean, in more descriptive languages, for education to “take an inquiry stance”, compared to an inquiry, or inquiry-based pedagogy? I think the answer is the following: inquiry as a stance, rather than the specific techniques of inquiry-based pedagogy, emphasizes the commitment of inquiry into the practicum, and that inquiry “has a democratic spirit that knowledge can ‘bubble up’ from the ground” (Campano, G., 2020).

We believe that inquiry is a medium/catalyst to classroom democracy, critical literacy, and the healthy change in educator-learner communities. In the article on communities of inquiry, scholar Simon elaborates how inquiry can support preservice and inservice teachers (Simon, R., 2015); specifically, inquiry advocates the critical literacy and learning in initial teacher training and across their professional lifespans. The communities of inquiry can adopt unique approaches to support teacher’s classroom research, providing room to upgrade their teaching outcomes and methodologies. To start from questions and open-ended exploratory discussions, the classroom environment not only becomes an objective terrain for brainstorming, but also a place where multiple heads are put together for potentially a better answer/solution. The democratic spirit, mentioned as one of the distinguishing features for inquiry as a stance, is that inquiry may be considered a *constancy* as a methodology here, to guide the teaching and communication process.

Because of such a stance, the roles teachers play in designing and doing their initiatives for their own learning would be problematized (Cochran-Smith, M. and Lytle, S. L., 1999), and teachers (i.e. the leadership component) will be challenged upon the purposes and underlying assumptions of their efforts to make a positive difference. This is the critical side of inquiry, that instead of seeking the easiest or predetermined results, it is important to leverage the inquiry spirit to polish/refine the pedagogical decisions as well as materials. For example, we not only expect educators, curriculum designers, school administrators to make critiques and constructive, open-ended remarks to each other—which would make possibilities for improvements—but also students and other communities of inquiry that are constantly interacting with the educational environment to be “critical” with an inquiry mindset and a stance. As for literacy is concerned, reading comprehension cannot thrive without inquiry spirit: it is all about reiteration and understanding and asking great questions, before landing on any fix conclusion. Inquiry will altogether bring healthy change in our communities and make us thrive as learners and as educators.

References

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