

## Review

### **ON TEACHER INQUIRY: APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE AND LITERACY RESEARCH**

**by Dixie Goswami, Ceci Lewis, Marty Rutherford, and Diane Waff  
New York: Teachers College Press, 2009**

This book is one of the volumes in the National Conference on Research in Language and Literacy (NCRL) collection published by Teachers College Press of Columbia University, with a focus on the relationship between teacher research, teacher practice, and student learning in the field of language and literacy education. By using Janet Emig's "inquiry paradigm" as a guideline, which includes 1) governing gaze, 2) assumptions, 3) coherent theory, 4) intellectual tradition, 5) methodology, and 6) indigenous logic, the authors use this book as a venue to share with the readers their experiences of doing teacher research, which involves tasks such as observing, analyzing, raising questions, designing research methodologies, and building relationships with colleagues. The aim of doing teacher research is to create the conditions and the contexts that can facilitate and advance student learning.

The book contains five chapters. In chapter one, the authors first discuss the rationale and importance of teacher research. After that they introduce Emig's inquiry paradigm and then give an overview of the book. In chapters two, three and four, the authors do not only share their experience of doing teacher research in different settings, but also make reflections on what they did as teacher researchers. The author of chapter two, "Fostering Communities of Language Learners", reports what motivated her to conduct teacher research and how her points of view changed from perceiving teachers only as knowledge consumers to those as knowledge builders in the process of improving their practice. She describes how she created a learning environment that fosters interactive English language learning for speakers of other languages and reports how she conducted teacher research with her students. This chapter closes with the author's reflections on how research informed her practice.

In chapter three, "Using Narrative as Teacher Research", the author reports that her research was inspired by her own need to "understand and clarify the phenomenon in my classroom" (p. 47). Through the experiences of conducting teacher research, the author of this chapter says that she learned that classroom teachers are in the best position to do teacher research as they are "right in the middle of the education process" (p. 48). She used her research participant's narrative stories as a lens through which to have an in-depth understanding of him. She also describes how she utilized a web space to facilitate communication among interested parties from different parts of the world to enhance her students' learning. The author of this chapter also closes her writing with her reflections on "lessons learned". Chapter four, "Coresearching and Coreflecting" presents the author's narrative of how her teacher research endeavour was influenced by her participation in three different teacher inquiry communities. The author was involved in a community focusing on multicultural education, a community focusing on teacher leadership, and a community focusing on teacher research. She gives a quite detailed description of the research projects conducted in the three communities, coupled with her reflections. Like chapters two and three, this chapter also closes with the author's reflections, emphasizing the importance of teacher research. Each of these three chapters begins with an introduction by the first author, Dixie Goswami, with the intention to "help create the 'web of meaning'" the authors claim they seek to offer in the book.

In chapter five, the authors provide some resources for teacher researchers, including an annotated bibliography of publications related to teacher inquiry and an introduction to some institutions that support teacher research. The authors put the bibliography under sub categories, which may be

helpful for readers to find what specific topics they are looking for. The context of this book is in the United States so those institutions introduced may be more useful for the audience located in USA than those in other places.

Some of the chapters of this book are coauthored while others are solo-authored, but the whole book demonstrates collaborative work among the authors as they cross reference the contents of different chapters besides introductions from the first author. With the complexity of classrooms, teachers who do inquiry on their teaching so as to improve their practice are required to read relevant literature to get themselves well informed, and the authors of this book utilized various theories to support their arguments, especially when it comes to the point when they conduct their analysis of the research data.

Due to a variety of reasons, such as busy teaching schedule, lack of support and need for training, teachers may be enthusiastic to find ways to improve their teaching and their students' learning, but more often than not, they may find it hard to do research, because many teachers apt to think that conducting research is the job for academics but not for practitioners, just like what the author of chapter two had thought before she started doing teacher research. The cases reported in this book can be used as good examples that may encourage teachers to do research in their classroom. It is assumed that this book is written for teachers who may be interested in doing research in their classroom, so it is quite easy to understand. However, as there are a lot of theorization involved in the process of the presentation, classroom teachers may find some parts of the book a little bit "too theoretical" that they may want to use this book more as a reference for carrying out teacher inquiry rather than a how-to book for beginners of teacher research. *On teacher inquiry* is 128 pages and retails for \$31.95 Canadian.

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