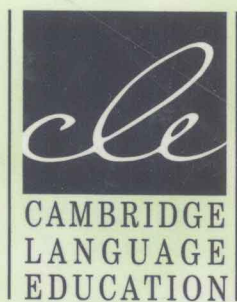


KAREN E. JOHNSON
PAULA R. GOLOMBEK
EDITORS

**TEACHERS'
NARRATIVE
INQUIRY**

AS

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**



SERIES EDITOR

JACK C. RICHARDS

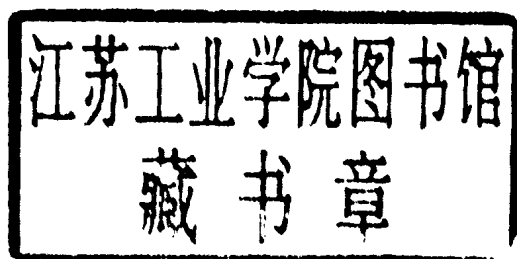
Teachers' Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development

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To Glenn and Elizabeth
To Michael, Alex, and Anya

Series editor's preface

Engaging teachers and teachers-in-training in classroom research is now a well-recognized component of teacher development programs, as evidenced by a growing literature on journal writing, case studies, reflective teaching, action research, and other initiatives in which teachers develop “insider” accounts of teaching. Such activities focus on the thinking that teachers employ as the basis for their teaching and decision making, how they frame and problematize issues, and the ways in which they draw on experience, beliefs, and theory in teaching. This book expands what we know about teacher inquiry by describing the philosophy, procedures, and potentials of a less familiar form of teacher inquiry – the use of teachers’ narratives – in which teachers write about significant teaching episodes and experiences and, through the process of writing, gain a deeper understanding of the issues they describe as well as of themselves as teachers. Rather than depending on outside sources, narrative inquiry makes use of teacher stories as a source of knowing and as a way of bringing about changes both in themselves and in their teaching practices.

Teacher narratives are similar to case reports. Like case reports, they are a particularly useful form of teacher research because they are relatively easy to obtain and yet can provide a rich source of teacher-generated information that is of great interest both to the teacher-narrator and to others interested in how teachers conduct their practice, the thinking and problem solving they employ, and the sources they draw on in their daily practice. The teacher narratives in this book thus show the following:

- The nature of teacher narratives
- How different forms of teacher research take place
- How teachers theorize their classroom inquiries
- How the professional and theoretical knowledge teachers obtain from academic courses is used in their professional lives
- How teachers struggle to create lessons and courses that reflect their ideals, philosophies, and understandings
- How narrative inquiry can empower teachers

- How narrative inquiry can become a powerful tool in language teacher education
- How collaboration with other teachers enables teachers to develop a better understanding of teaching and of teachers

Many books on teacher education assume that the most interesting parts of a teacher's professional development are what happens during their teacher training. The narratives in this book remind us that teacher development really starts once teachers enter their classrooms and begin teaching. The contributors describe how they addressed very basic issues in teaching, such as using literature in the ESL classroom, giving feedback on writing, the sequencing of classroom activities, conducting classroom discussions, teaching a basic writing class, negotiating student-teacher roles, understanding students' perceptions of learning, and lesson planning. The stories have in common their description of a teaching dilemma, the reasoning the teacher brought to the problem, how the teacher explored the problem and sought to resolve it, and what he or she learned during the process.

The 1986 report by the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers in the 21st Century* (New York: Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, Carnegie Corporation), proposed the use of teacher-generated case reports as a core resource in teacher education and recommended that "teaching cases illustrating a variety of teaching problems should be developed as a major focus of instruction" (p. 76). *Teachers' Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development* can be regarded as an implementation of this recommendation, expanding the notion of case reporting and providing a rich and powerful set of teacher narratives that will prove to be a valuable resource for language teachers and teacher educators.

Jack C. Richards

Preface

Teachers' Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development is a collection of highly personal, highly contextualized stories of teachers inquiring into their own experiences as learners of language teaching. As such, their stories of inquiry represent the journey of *how* they know as well as *what* they know. In Part I, "Inquiry into Instructional Practices," teachers' stories of inquiry are driven by a sense of dissatisfaction with some aspect of their classroom practice. Yet, as they examine their practice, they are compelled to confront how their understandings of teaching came to be; their own and their students' needs, interests, and objectives; and the institutional constraints within which they work. In Part II, "Inquiry into Language Learners," teachers' stories of inquiry highlight different methods of inquiry, for example, self-reflection, focus groups, journaling, interviews, and discourse analysis, that they have used to come to truly know their students, while at the same time gaining insights into themselves as teachers and their instructional practices. In Part III, "Inquiry into Language Teachers," teachers' stories of inquiry focus on their evolving beliefs and practices as they journey through various contexts, crossing boundaries of different countries, cultures, and roles. And finally, in Part IV, "Inquiry through Professional Collaborations," teachers' stories of inquiry stem from participation in collaborative professional communities, which enables them to learn about themselves as teachers, their students, and the value of being part of a community of teachers.

The purpose of this collection is to bring teachers' ways of knowing into our professional conversations so as to transform our understandings of language teachers and language teaching. By making teachers' ways of knowing public, open to review by others, and accessible to others in this profession, we hope to validate language teachers' ways of knowing and the activity of language teaching in ways afforded to other forms of scholarly work. We expect that readers of this collection will recall, rethink, and reconstruct their own ways of knowing about language teachers and language teaching. We encourage readers to look for multiple interpretations and multiple layers of meaning in these stories. We hope that doing this will

change our collective perceptions of what counts as knowledge, who is considered a knower, and what counts as professional development.

As language teachers, teacher educators, and researchers, we are honored to have edited this collection. To the teachers who contributed to this book, we owe our deepest gratitude for their willingness to open up their minds, lives, and classrooms to us and to the entire language teaching profession. We also thank them for their open-mindedness in responding to our seemingly endless queries throughout the revising process, for their patience during the time-consuming review and publishing process, and most of all, for their commitment to the lifelong professional development of language teachers. We would also like to thank Jack C. Richards for his recognition of the value of this collection for the future of the language teaching profession and to Debbie Goldblatt, Mary Sandre, and Olive Collen for their help in the publishing process. As always, our deepest gratitude goes to our families, for their unwavering encouragement and support.

Karen E. Johnson
Paula R. Golombek

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1 Inquiry into experience

Teachers' personal and professional growth

Karen E. Johnson

Paula R. Golombek

Shifting views of teachers' knowledge

What is knowledge, and who holds it? The answers to these deceptively simple questions reside at the heart of debates in teaching and learning, and in teacher education in particular. Unfortunately, the traditional answer has been unsatisfying for many teachers. For more than a hundred years, teacher education has been based on the notion that knowledge about teaching and learning can be "transmitted" to teachers by others. In the knowledge transmission model, educational researchers, positioned as outsiders to classroom life, seek to quantify generalizable knowledge about what good teaching is and what good teachers do. Teachers have been viewed as objects of study rather than as knowing professionals or agents of change. Researchers have been privileged in that they create the knowledge, hold it, and bestow it upon teachers. Teachers have been marginalized in that they are told what they should know and how they should use that knowledge. Even though many teachers personally reject this model, most of them continue to work and learn under its powerful hold in teacher education programs and the schools where they teach.

Critics of the knowledge transmission model, although not new (Counts, 1935, reprint 1965), have argued that such a view of knowledge and knower is paternalistic (Goodson & Dowbiggin, 1991; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1988; Schön, 1983), decontextualized (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Elbaz, 1983), and, hence, ineffectual (Woods, 1987). Since the early 1980s, ethnographic and second-order investigations of teachers practicing their work in actual classrooms have revealed teachers as constructing their own explanations of teaching and highlighted the messiness that is inherent in the ways in which teachers think about and carry out their work (Elbaz, 1983; Lampert, 1985). The bulk of this research argues that what teachers know about teaching is largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which teachers have come. Furthermore, it argues that how teachers actually use their knowledge in classrooms is highly

interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work (Bullough, 1989; Clandinin, 1986; Grossman, 1990). Such conceptualizations of teacher learning have parallels with sociocultural theories (Leont'ev, 1978; Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978) that highlight the fundamentally social nature of cognition and learning. Others argue for parallels with theories of situated cognition, which maintain that knowledge entails lived practices, not just accumulated information (Chaiklin & Lave, 1996; Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Such socially situated views of knowledge and knowing argue that the processes of learning are socially negotiated, constructed through experiences in and with the social practices associated with particular activities, in particular social contexts (Cobb & Bowers, 1999; Wenger, 1998).

When viewed from a socially situated perspective, teachers not only possess knowledge, they can also be creators of that knowledge. What teachers know and how they use their knowledge in classrooms are highly interpretative and contingent on knowledge of self, students, curricula, and setting. Teacher learning is understood as normative and lifelong, built of and through experiences in social contexts: as learners in classrooms and schools, as participants in professional teacher education programs, and as members of communities of practice in the schools where they teach. Professional development emerges from a process of reshaping teachers' existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices rather than simply imposing new theories, methods, or materials on teachers.

It follows, then, that in order to recognize and document the activity of teacher learning and language teaching through the perspective of teachers, it is necessary to gather descriptive accounts of how teachers come to know their knowledge, how they use that knowledge within the contexts where they teach, and how they make sense of and reconfigure their classroom practices in and over time. Since the early 1990s, the reflective teaching movement (Lockhart & Richards, 1994; Schön, 1983, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), the predominance of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; McNiff, 1993; Somekh, 1993), and the teacher research movement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Edge & Richards, 1998; Freeman, 1998) have helped to establish the legitimacy of teachers' experiences and the importance of reflection on and inquiry into those experiences as a mechanism for change in teachers' classroom practices as well as a forum for professional development over time.

Already well established in general educational research, "teachers' ways of knowing" have recently been referred to as the *new scholarship* (Schön, 1995; Zeichner, 1999) or *practitioner research* (Anderson & Herr, 1999).

This new scholarship includes an ongoing struggle to articulate an epistemology of practice that characterizes teachers as legitimate knowers, as producers of legitimate knowledge, and as capable of constructing and sustaining their own professional development over time. The inclusion of a broader epistemological frame reflects a broad-based movement among school professionals to legitimize knowledge produced out of their own lived realities as professionals. Such work has the potential to fundamentally alter “outsider” or “objective researcher” knowledge, upon which the traditional knowledge base of teacher education is founded, by infusing it with “insider” knowledge: the complex and multilayered understandings of learners, culture, class, gender, literacy, social issues, institutions, communities, and curricula that teachers possess as natives to the settings in which they work (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998).

Much of this new scholarship has been aligned with inquiry-based methods, such as critical, feminist, and reconstructionist approaches to pedagogy and curriculum (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Fundamental to these approaches is posing questions, questions that emerge from and are studied in teachers’ classrooms. Public recognition of the new scholarship has the emancipatory potential of transforming schools and changing equations of power and control in order to create more equitable social relations between university-generated research and teacher research, and to permit the growth of teachers’ personal and professional knowledge and thereby enhance their lifelong professional development.

A compelling example of this new scholarship is the line of research carried out by Clandinin and Connelly (1991, 1995, 2000), in which they view re-storying experiences as essential to teachers’ personal and social growth. Their research relies on data that are generated by researcher observation, participant observation, and observations by other participants; the resulting stories are jointly constructed as teachers re-story their experience and researchers offer narrative interpretations based on teachers’ stories. In their most recent work, they argue that the value of narrative inquiry lies in its capacity to capture and describe experiences as they occur “in the midst” (2000, p. 63) of other lived experiences, to look *inward*, *outward*, *backward*, and *forward* at teachers’ experiences in order to capture their temporal nature and their personal and social dimensions, and to see them as situated within the places or sequences of places in which they occur and from which they emerge. Narrative inquiry, then, has the potential to create a “new sense of meaning and significance” (p. 42) for teachers’ experiences and thus brings new meaning and significance to the work of teachers within their own professional landscapes.

Although the new scholarship centers on teachers' experiences, in the bulk of this published work, teachers' voices are validated through the collaborations and interpretation of researchers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Golombek, 1998). Although such work is informative for the field as it struggles to articulate an epistemology of practice, Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) suggest that systematic inquiry *of* teachers *by* teachers can generate both individual and public knowledge about teaching. Furthermore, having teachers articulate their knowledge and practice in their own voices is one way to respond to calls for the validation of local forms of knowledge (Edge & Richards, 1998; Pennycook, 1989). The end goal of such an endeavor is, of course, the documentation, articulation, and public recognition of teachers' ways of knowing as legitimate knowledge, knowledge that can rightfully stand alongside the disciplinary knowledge that has dominated the traditional knowledge base of language teacher education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Narrative inquiry

We ground our conceptualization of narrative inquiry in Dewey's (1916, 1920, 1933) educational philosophy, which, at its core, argues that we are all knowers who reflect on experience, confront the unknown, make sense of it, and take action. However, not all experiences are informative in that some develop from what Dewey called *habit*, or to make use of an experience to take similar action repeatedly. Rather, inquiry into experience that is educative propels us to not only question the immediate context but to draw connections among experiences – what Dewey calls *continuity of experience* (1938), or how experiences change the conditions under which new experiences are understood so that a person's abilities, desires, and attitudes are changed. Inquiry into experience, in this sense, can be educative if it enables us to reflect on our actions and then act with foresight.

Yet, how we reflect on experience and how we make sense of our experience are often achieved through the stories we tell. Narrative has been constructed as a mode of thinking (Bruner, 1996) and as particularly valuable for representing the richness of human experiences. Through narratives, human beings play an active role in constructing their own lives (Mead, 1977), seeking to make sense of their experiences by imposing order on those experiences (Sarbin, 1986) and by seeing the self as constituted as a story (Bakhtin, 1981). Not surprisingly, narrative has been placed center stage in teacher education as both a method in and an object of inquiry

(Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Elbaz, 1983; Witherall & Noddings, 1991).

Yet narratives are not simply stories of individuals moving through and reflecting on experiences in isolation. Narratives, by their very nature, are social and relational and gain their meaning from our collective social histories. Therefore, narratives cannot be separated from the sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts from which they emerged. Instead, they are deeply embedded in sociohistorical discourses (Gee, 1999) and thus represent a socially mediated view of experience. For example, when teachers describe a learner as “disadvantaged” or a classroom activity as “successful,” such depictions are not neutral but are embedded within sociocultural and sociohistorical notions of what it means to be disadvantaged in a particular society or what constitutes success in a particular educational system. Thus, narrative inquiry allows individuals to look at themselves and their activities as socially and historically situated.

Besides recognizing the social and relational dimensions of narrative inquiry, Dewey’s (1933) notion of inquiry into experience as intelligence is not simply cognitive but also moral. Witherall and Noddings (1991) note that “stories represent a journey into the realm of practical ethics” (p. 4). Thus, because classroom dilemmas often serve as catalysts for inquiry, teachers’ narratives embody emotions such as frustration, fear, anger, and joy, and they center on the caring emotions and actions of trust, dialogue, feelings, and responding (Noddings, 1984) that permeate the activity of teaching. Likewise, when teachers reflect on, describe, and analyze the factors contributing to a classroom dilemma, they confront their emotions, their moral beliefs, and the consequences of their teaching practices on the students they teach.

In order to make an experience educative, teachers need to approach narrative inquiry not as a set of prescriptive skills or tasks to be carried out but rather as a mind-set – a set of attitudes, what Dewey (1933) called *open-mindedness* (seeking alternatives), *responsibility* (recognizing consequences), and *wholeheartedness* (continual self-examination). When teachers inquire into their experience from this mind-set, they individually and collectively question their own assumptions as they uncover who they are, where they have come from, what they know and believe, and why they teach as they do. Through such inquiry, teachers recognize the consequences of their beliefs, knowledge, and experiences on what and how they teach. They recognize who their students are, where their students have come from, what their students know, and what their students need to know. Through inquiry, teachers question the taken-for-granted definitions of what is and is not possible within the contexts in which they teach. They ask the broader questions of not just whether their practices work but for whom, in what

ways, and why. Through inquiry, teachers frame and reframe the issues and problems they face in their professional worlds. As teachers engage in narrative inquiry, they become theorizers in their own right, and as theorizers, they look less for certain answers and more to rethink what they thought they already knew. Thus, we believe that teachers' stories of inquiry are not only *about* professional development; they *are* professional development. Narrative inquiry becomes a means through which teachers actualize their ways of knowing and growing that nourish and sustain their professional development throughout their careers.

Narrative inquiry as professional development

We advance a conceptualization of narrative inquiry as systematic exploration that is conducted *by* teachers and *for* teachers through their own stories and language. We believe that narrative inquiry, conducted by teachers individually or collaboratively, tells the stories of teachers' professional development within their own professional worlds. Such inquiry is driven by teachers' inner desire to understand that experience, to reconcile what is known with that which is hidden, to confirm and affirm, and to construct and reconstruct understandings of themselves as teachers and of their own teaching. What teachers choose to inquire about emerges from their personalities, their emotions, their ethics, their contexts, and their overwhelming concern for their students.

Our view of narrative inquiry as professional development reflects Dewey's (1920) claim that inquiry takes into account:

observation of the detailed makeup of the situation; analysis into its diverse factors; clarification of what is obscure; discounting of the more insistent and vivid traits; tracing the consequences of the various modes of action that suggest themselves; regarding the decision reached as hypothetical and tentative until the anticipated or supposed consequences which led to its adoption have been squared with actual consequences. This inquiry is intelligence. (p. 164)

Thus, inquiry into experience enables teachers to describe the complexities of their practice while stepping back from the hermeneutical processes in which they normally engage. This process of stepping back, description, reflection, and analysis becomes a kind of articulation (Freeman, 1991) or a process through which teachers link and clarify tensions that seem, at first glance, to have no relationship to one another. However, when teachers inquire into their own experiences, such inquiry propels them to question and reinterpret their ways of knowing. Inquiry into experience enables teachers