

BOOK REVIEWS

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THE ART OF CLASSROOM INQUIRY

RUTH SHAGOURY HUBBARD & BRENDA MILLER POWER, HEINEMANN PUBLISHERS, 2003.

Reviewed by Anne-Marie Cashmere

After a decade, authors Hubbard and Power have revised their first handbook but maintain the original intent to help new teacher-researchers get started. While it can be perceived as a “how-to” book, the emphasis is on the community that is created through teacher research as teachers recognize that they have questions to ask, stories to tell, and wisdom to share. If you want a simple, straightforward guide for the research journey, this book would make a good companion. Hubbard and Power want teachers’ voices to resonate with readers so that beginning teacher-researchers understand that teachers are researchers who not only observe things happening in the classroom but also make them happen.

The Art of Classroom Inquiry begins with an introduction proclaiming the importance of teachers conducting their own research in the classroom rather than relying on outside researchers to do so. “Because of our presence over time at our research sites, we teachers bring a depth of awareness to our data that outside researchers cannot begin to match” (p. xiv). Teacher research allows teachers to learn more about their practices and make necessary changes, defining what it means to be a professional. Following the introduction are seven chapters detailing the research process complemented by teacher narratives, helpful strategies, and practical tips. For example, two practical tips include “Research Permissions and Confidentiality” and “Starting – and Sustaining – Teacher Journals” that novice teacher-researchers will find useful. All but the last chapter end with “Extensions” that help readers think about – and act on – the ideas presented. Finally, the book concludes with relevant appendices. Appendix A, in particular, gives examples of research designs that could be used as templates for teacher-researchers looking for a place to start the process.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the research question and design. Research questions emerge as teachers become reflective practitioners who note concerns, tensions, or “wonderings” in the classroom which can lead to deeper understandings of students and teaching. A real-world example from an English classroom asks, “What procedures or activities promote or encourage students to revise their writing?” (p. 2). Hubbard and Power stress that sometimes it is the question that is most important because it leads to discovery and change, so teacher-researchers must be prepared to engage in inquiry and own the responsibility inherent in what they find.

Once the teacher-researcher determines the question to explore, there must be a plan to guide the research. Hubbard and Power suggest designing subquestions to support the central research question, and then the next step in the research design is to decide which data are relevant to the question and will provide possible answers. The question often dictates the process by which the teacher-researcher is to take. Some teacher-researchers will look closely at student conversations while others may look at student artifacts or teacher documentation of practices and/or patterns. While Hubbard and Power reiterate that the steps in the research process are not necessarily linear, it does help to be intentional about the process by developing the question and design as the basis for the research and to maintain manageability.

Likening teacher-researchers to painters, Hubbard and Power present an artist's viewpoint about artistic expression to show the similarities to teacher-research. Artists have a vision for their work much like the research design of teacher-researchers, and both must use tools to "paint" their visions. Chapter 3 describes the artist's toolbox for teacher-researchers as they collect data. Notetaking, anecdotal records, and interviews are some tools discussed with examples to support. While readers will find many tools presented in this chapter, Hubbard and Power caution readers that more tools do not always yield more answers and that beginning teacher-researchers should find the tools that work best for them without becoming overwhelmed by many. An ongoing theme throughout the book is that research is a process of discovery, and it should be fun and exciting, not tedious and boring. Remembering that "your eye and your view of classroom life" (p. 38) is the best tool to help teacher-researchers capture slices of reality will keep the journey personal and stimulating.

Chapter 4, "Strategies for Data Analysis," helps teacher-researchers learn to make sense of that which is amorphous, their data. In essence, data analysis means "seeing" and theorizing about the data collected. "Patience, a willingness to make mistakes, and playfulness can lead us to a deep seeing of the underlying patterns beneath surface appearances" (p. 90). The teacher-researcher might code the data and then categorize concepts in order to integrate them into a larger scheme from which emergent theories or claims can be made. By seeing again and again, the data begin to take shape and align with the artistic vision.

Writing is the focus of chapters 5 and 6 as the research must be situated within a theoretical framework, the review of relevant literature, to give credence to the teacher-researcher's findings, and then written up to contribute to the field of scholarly research. Hubbard and Power acknowledge that finding an audience for a teacher-researcher's writing is difficult, but it is rewarding when the work is accepted for publication. Getting one's work published validates the teacher-researcher's work and underscores the idea that teachers have something important to say. Furthermore, teachers join a community of other teacher-researchers. The support that comes from a community of teacher-researchers helps to fuel more research. Collegial support and financial support are both crucial. Finding funding for research is the focus of chapter 7.

The Art of Classroom Inquiry conveys the wisdom of two teacher-researchers who take the fear out of research and make it approachable for novices. Rather than perceive teacher research as a chore or a mandate, Hubbard and Power reveal that research can be a pleasure. This is not a book for advanced

teacher-researchers nor is it laden with esoteric terms. It is, however, a user-friendly handbook for aspiring teacher-researchers wishing to turn their classrooms into laboratories where teachers and students are at the heart of the research. Research has the power to transform classrooms, and it begins with inquiry. Hubbard and Power say that “inquiry has been oxygen for us” (p. 185), and they hope that such inquiry breathes life into the work of teacher-researchers giving them the chance to reinvent themselves and their work.

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THE NEW FAITHFUL: WHY YOUNG ADULTS ARE EMBRACING CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

COLLEEN CARROLL, LOYOLA PRESS, 2002.

Reviewed by Kevin P. Kiefer

In the book *The New Faithful*, Carroll uses an anecdotal approach to explain why many young people today choose Christian orthodoxy. The underlying premise throughout the book is that the group of young Americans at the end of Generation X (ended in 1983) is searching for a truth and meaning in life that is not provided by the current societal norms and values. In seeking this truth, young people are rejecting ethical relativism and embracing notions that are religious in nature, with God as the source of all truth. Because of this revelation, they are drawn to the religious identities and devotions that their parents rejected.

One of the first surprising comments in the book is that young adults are more likely today to hold traditional views on sexuality, such as the immorality of premarital and extramarital sex, homosexual relations, and birth control. Citing Illinois high school teacher Sue Davids, Carroll writes, “Whereas students thirty years ago fought for sexual liberation, students today have seen the dark side of free love, and they want stability” (p. 123). Carroll goes on to describe the increasing popularity of chastity and abstinence programs across the country. Virginitiy pledges and the True Love Waits campaign are reaching more teens than ever before. It seems that more young adults are waiting until marriage to explore their sexuality.

Young adults are finding strength from secular and postmodern persecution on college campuses by ardently defending their faith both affectively and philosophically through campus fellowships. In a post-modern society where ethical relativism is a prevailing paradigm, many college students are embracing the notion of absolute truth and engaging in apologetics with their professors and peers. To draw strength to combat relativistic instruction and dialogue, these