

What Kinds of the Researchers of Teacher?

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Abstract

In order to remove the perplexed of teachers as researchers, realize the identity of teacher research, based on the germination, development and go deep into the investigation on teachers' dominate position in different stages, discovered that teachers as researchers have three different identity: "action researchers", "reflection practitioners", "critical practitioners". This paper focus on the development, the epistemology bias as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the three kinds of identity of teacher researchers.

Key words: Teacher research; Action research; Identity

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INTRODUCTION

Scientific research has been questioned and criticized, because they lack of education of the increasingly complex problem solving. Followed by that, people attention to the "real situation", "phenomenon in the world", and "real" of education, and launch of theory and practice of the reconsideration of binary relation. Under this background, the action research as the main methods of teachers, in the West as a kind of education could be carried out in vigorous motion, Lewin, Stenhouse, Schwab, Schon and others have made positive efforts for it. In China, the teacher study also welcomed by the

majority of educators. From "science and technology university" in the 1990s to this more than 10 years of the 21st century "action research" movement, actively promote the development of teachers' research. More teacher through many years practice, the current research of subjectivity, the research content is extensive, gradually matures research methods. With the improvement of teachers' research level, the identity of teachers as researchers increasingly important. However, "teacher as what researchers?" In different stages of development of the teachers' research have different identities, at the same stage, teachers have different opinions on its own identity. Therefore, the teacher as the researchers needs identity. Identity is often included "who am I?", "where to?", "where to go?" Three basic questions. According to this logic, the author attempts to in the form of the historical evolution of teacher research, clarify teachers as researchers who is? From where? Where to go? Extremely concerns such as primary and secondary school teachers.

1. TEACHERS AS "ACTION RESEARCHERS"

Action research is the embodiment of teachers in research, at the start of operations research, teacher is to be a "researcher", and to make "teachers as researchers" has a deep "action".

In 1920s or 1930s, the action research proposed firstly by the german-born American psychologist Lewin (Lewin, K), and then developed and spread gradually in the United States. Action research is the enlightenment method of teachers' research, "the Movement for teachers research" in the United States is also under the impetus of the action research. To understand the action research should grasp four keyword participation, improvement, system, public. Participation is mainly emphasis on The dominant position of teachers' research, improvement is mainly emphasis on the purpose of teachers to do research, system emphasizes the action research as a scientific research approach,

“Public” aims to emphasize the Cooperation requires and the results reflect form of action research.

Can be seen from the above definition of action research, in the early part of the teachers to carry out the study, because of the influence of positivism, teachers tend to quantitative research methods. And due to the emphasis on systematic and scientific in research, and then the method to research on teachers made a strict and even harsh requirements. In a word, initial teachers as researchers with action research as the basic research methods, the pursuit of teacher is a professional research, teacher as a “special” action researchers. The author said this stage is the embryonic stage of teacher research, teachers as “action researchers” at this stage. Action researchers refer to teachers physically perform as the main content of the education exploration activity.

In fact, in the initial stage of teachers’ research, most teachers researchers affected by leading epistemology. Leading thought of epistemology to all disciplines to provide instructions regarding the consistency of the relationship between theory and practice, should be “know before action”, is a kind of “top-down” process. And because, at the beginning of the teachers’ research carried out, the teacher is regarded as a teacher, teacher’s research is a kind of mechanical “action research”, researchers are passive. Therefore, teachers as researchers “action” as the study of the “action” instead of “reflection”, is the study of the “default” instead of “generation”, is the study of the “centrifugal” rather than a physical research, is the study of the “general” rather than “special” research. These factors lead to teachers’ research is simply the physical “action researchers”.

Once the scholar thinks

whether teacher research, participatory research, the reflective teaching, and practice research, field research, had not enough to open and expand the action research, carried out action research is not only a way of teachers’ research and practice research, it also with their own unique way of participation, improvement, openly and execution commitment. (Liu, 2001)

For now, however, in order to achieve this commitment is a bit difficult. So some scholars put forward “why action research on hold?” The inquiry think “internal loss of momentum is the root cause of the loss of teachers’ research interests”. (Snow, 2006) So I think, in terms of the role of teachers as action researchers this internal development power source is the subject of epistemology under the influence of “reflection” of nothingness. Thus, there are many reasons for the lack of teachers’ reflective practice.

Firstly of all, early on, teachers as researchers are “empowerment” process. We should face the fact that action research in China is introduced by the researchers from the United States, then to the teacher. Teachers to carry out the action research are a process of “empowerment”. The process of empowerment must accompany the existence of “authorized”. Obviously,

teachers as action researchers that are passive to accept, rather than from the teacher’s heart.

Secondly, teachers as researchers that are action researchers, rather than a thinking researchers. The action is relative to the “thinking”, action is external manifestation of thinking. Teachers to carry out the action research starts from the “action”, and not from his own ideas. Teachers as action researchers only have their own “body”, not only real practitioners.

Finally, the teacher as “action researchers” is the inevitable result of the development initial period teacher research. Teachers by the external action into the heart of “reflection” need a process. From the development course of teacher research, is a process of from immaturity to maturity; teachers’ understanding of action research is the outside-in, from “stranger” to the “familiar”, by the body’s action to the thought of the development of the inevitable. Therefore, when teachers gradually master the basic skills, is no longer willing to only as “actors”.

2. TEACHER AS “REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER”

In face of the fact that teacher as action-researcher act rigidly and lack “reflective” thinking in teacher research, we need to make effective research on the real state of teacher research. In this case, how teachers continue to explore and make a real and effective research.

In the 1960s, the curriculum reform in America faced the problem of theory of breaking away from practice, which is also the problem we face in new round curriculum reform. Although the time of curriculum reform in two country was different, in terms of the development of teacher research, the two all doubt the theory and impede the “top-to-down” research instruction. Under this situation, teachers began to reflect the limitations of quantitative and professional scientific research, and also consider the factor of human culture. Then in seventies and eighties of 20th century, the “process-model” teacher research gradually formed, and teacher got the identity of “reflective-practitioner”. So action research “revive” again and go deeply, finally turning “action” to “reflection”. The author calls in development stage of teacher research, and teachers in this stage as “reflective practitioner”.

In the development stage of teacher research, the representative scholars are Schwab and Schon. In Practice- the Language of Curriculum, Schwab put forward three models about curriculum reform: “‘Practice model’, ‘practice model’, ‘compromise model’”, he hopes that make reflective practice research based on curriculum implementation. However, Schwab didn’t put his ideas into practice, but Schon made great effort in this respect and show his ideas in his book Reflective Practice. Schon think reflective practitioner should obtain knowledge from

action, not theory gradually descending to practice in the past. "Turning to reflective-oriented" in teacher research promotes the development of reflective teaching, from quantitative research teacher research turn to qualitative research and pay much attention to the process of action research. And reflective practice emphasizes cooperation and coordination, makes teachers fulfill their own subjectivity to the most and let teachers make research physically and mentally.

The reason why teacher research can continue to develop is that in fact it's related to "direction turning to practice" in teaching research. Educational theory researcher and practitioner gradually realize that "obtaining knowledge in the action" is a kind of cognitive process which obtains knowledge "from practice to theory". Teachers, as reflective practitioner, to some extent, pay attention to teacher's features of "formation", "specialty", and "embodiment". The teacher is not rigid action-er in the research plan which research expert design in advance, while turn to a researcher who has subject status and reflective ability. And teacher does not make research only with their bodies in the research process, but does it physically and mentally. Besides, teacher research not only focus on general field, but also special field, it means teacher research turn to "cognitive through practice".

However, both teacher research based on practical epistemology and dominated epistemology stuck in the cycle of "dualism". Action practitioners holding view of dominated epistemology are placed in the position of "rationalism", primary and secondary school teachers (action researcher) do the same scientific and rigorous research as researcher. Reflective practitioners holding the view of "practical epistemology" "are in the place of "empiricism". They intend to break through the confines of theory from practice and overstep the framework of teaching theory. Indeed, both "action researcher" and "reflective practitioner" are trying to keep the balance on the seesaw of theory and practice.

Besides, it's not complete for teachers as reflective practitioners to make research about the problem of teacher democracy and identity of teachers. Because, under the guidance of practical epistemology, reflective practice doesn't pay much attention to teacher self as a profession and a person, but emphasize teacher reflective object and reflective effect. Although reflective practice also emphasize the generation of process, it don't point to subject rather than object. Teacher as researcher still pays much attention to the researcher results, not meaningfulness of teacher research. Teacher as reflective practitioner takes up more time, increases their burden and has a certain effect on teaching. Therefore, teacher as "reflective practitioner" does not solve the problem of "dualism" between theory and practice and the relationship between teaching and research still trouble teacher's identity.

3. TEACHER AS "CRITICAL PRACTITIONER"

Whether "top-to-down" passive research or "down-to-top" reflective practice, both don't make a complete research about the problems of relationship between theory and practice. When it's difficult for "action researcher" and reflective practitioner to confirm their identities and standard of epistemology, teacher research needs further development to confirm researcher's identity and metaphysical status. And then, critical theory and postmodernism advocates put forward the idea of "critical practice".

Critical practice is a new genre of teacher's research which is different from one-sided dominated epistemology and individual practical philosophy. The genre came from Australia and then flourished in United States. Influenced by critical theory and postmodernism, the genre criticize American's democracy belief and actual domination and oppression, and resist actively against the contradictory fact. Influenced by this kind of thoughts in education field, gradually the critical thinking is applied in teacher research, which promotes diversification of thoughts of teacher research. The author thinks that the phase is the further stage of teacher research, and teacher as "critical practitioner" exists.

Teacher as critical practitioner intends to jump out of the pendulum strange circle of relationship between theory and practice. From the standpoint of criticism, teacher pay more attention to the possibility how a systematic education and a professional teacher to change the internal cause, and emphasize more the initiative of teacher to try to cause "from-inside-to-outside" teacher research. Obviously, the research direction turns to teacher self from problem research, which is an awakening of ability of teacher self. School of critical practice thinks that "critical education science not only means engaging in education, but also make a research about education and change its structure, the same as the role of teacher." (Fang, 2009) From the view of object of study, teacher research focus on inherent problem of role of teacher as individual profession, not teacher's teaching problem. All in all, teacher, as critical practitioner, do not start from theory and end of practice, or start from practice and end from theory. They aims to reconcile the theory bias of action researcher and practical hobby of reflective practitioner, and intends to "bring common development between theory and practice in critical education practice". (Fang, 2009) Obviously, critical practice is full of strong postmodernism. In fact, critical practice is influenced by feminism. In the education field, feminists think that the teacher has the ability to make research and construct knowledge, and there are some problems about teacher's external" knowledge, so teachers themselves need to create more practical knowledge through their own critical ability. American radical educator Hollins Voss and Miller etc. think that "being repressed and controlled, teacher

groups need to follow the example of feminist movement to liberate teacher like liberate women.” (Rearick, 1990) They put forward that teacher can use teacher research as weapon of liberating teacher, and through research teacher can set free from invalid knowledge, which means teacher ensure that they have the ability to construct knowledge and improve practice. Therefore, as critical practitioner, teacher’s aiming to liberate themselves and seek for “democracy” and “fairness” is very clear.

Through further thinking, we can find that teacher as critical practitioner seems to be a compromise “nice guy” who wishes theory and practice can exist peacefully. And they hope the teacher as the “main body” can play a more important role in the whole research. However, the fact is not like this. Teachers as critical practitioner, further expanding teacher’s status and ability, think that “teacher has the ability to challenge and change the limits of their own and student’s existing educational state.” (Sworth & Sockets, 1994) However, they just ignore the most fundamental task as teacher, that is the teaching pressure, pressure from student’s interest and pressure from parents demand for student’s score.

Therefore, as critical practitioners, teachers don’t achieve the research goal that feminists expect to “liberate individuality”. critical practice raising too much teacher’s role and ignoring the participation of experts, which inevitably make teacher research is inclined to become practice-oriented action research which reflective practice prefers.

Of course, referring to this question, the school of critical practice is indulged in construction of teacher’s own knowledge and intends to achieve the goal of paying attention to theory. Obviously, this kind of construction process of knowledge can’t compare with systematic education theory. This situation further lead to the incompleteness of teacher’s status, and imbalance between theory and practice in teacher research. All this shows that the teacher as critical practitioner can only be a transition process of role evolution, and teacher research needs further development.

Finally, it’s necessary to point out that three kinds of teacher roles are both diachronic and spatial. Overall, three

kinds of teacher roles are diachronic, but the boundary is not obvious, and the roles are also spatial. We can’t think arbitrarily that “action practitioner” doesn’t exist, and we can’t say all the teachers are “critical practitioner”, because each kind of teacher may exist. Because teacher, as an individual full of the meaning of life, has subjective initiative, so teacher’s role should be a dynamic development process, on specific identity existence. The author thinks that researcher should consciously recognize their own identity and establish their research standpoint and goal. They ought to treat research as a task which can realize meaning of life and value, as basic behavior of teaching practice, and as fundamental task of teacher’s. All in all, no matter what kind of researcher teacher becomes, they all aims to become “conscious researcher” full of theory consciousness, practice consciousness, teaching consciousness and research consciousness.

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