

## Chapter 38 – Philosophy, Research, and Education

- I. Philosophy and personal struggle: Is philosophy a distraction to educational inquiry?
  - a. What's the problem with philosophy?
    - i. Philosophy is nagging.
    - ii. It generates doubts and uncertainties about our basic assumptions. It takes such concepts as objectivity, validity, truth and fact, & theory, very seriously. Would it be possible, for example, to find objectivity in the heart of subjectivity? Philosophy tries to answer this question.
  - b. Why might philosophy be “nagging”, at least for educators?
    - i. “There is a greater sense of urgency felt today to come up with answers to educational problems” (p.1137).
    - ii. Because philosophy asks us to “questions and doubt, sometimes it keeps [us] from getting [our] work done.”
  - c. Despite this “nagging”, concepts in philosophy are also at the core of education.
- II. The mainstream position in educational research: While the mainstream position may be philosophical in nature (its origin), its not philosophical in practice.
  - a. The mainstream position is an attempt to solve educational problems through:
    - i. Disciplined scientific methods
    - ii. Collection and analysis of primary data
    - iii. Description, explanation, generalization, and prediction
  - b. Philosophy is not main stream, because it doesn't “typically incorporate primary source data, empirical evidence, or observation”.
  - c. According to Koetting (p.1138), philosophy is usually placed “outside legitimate educational research”.
- III. What is philosophy in the first place?
  - a. The core of Western philosophical inquiry, at least, includes:
    - i. Questions of Metaphysics/ontology - What is real? Does existence precede essence? What's the ontological status of knowledge?
    - ii. Questions of epistemology – How do we come to know things?
    - iii. Questions of value – What's important and why?
  - b. Are these questions also at the core of education?
    - i. Koetting believes that if this is the case, the “the lives of educators/researchers are rooted in philosophical and moral struggles and questions, and consequently they cannot view their work as a neutral enterprise” (p.1138).
- IV. Philosophy is, according to our author, foundational for educational research. He provides three philosophical perspectives to base our research:
  - a. A research framework based on the core concepts – Perspective 1
    - i. The core concepts provide a conceptual framework “that gives coherence”
    - ii. These core concepts are also at the heart of education.

- iii. This conceptual framework allows “us to pose multiple questions” about:
      - iv. Simply, “engaging in this questioning is philosophical inquiry, it ‘doing’ philosophy” (p.1139).
    - b. A research framework based on the modes of philosophy – Perspective 2
      - i. Descriptive, analytical, normative, and analytical philosophical traditions
        - 1. Descriptive—grounding educational research within a philosophical tradition.
        - 2. Normative—critical thinking and analysis about education.
        - 3. Analytical—clarifies educational concepts, beliefs, arguments, and assumptions.
      - ii. How do the different philosophical traditions (i.e. descriptive, normative, or analytical perspective) view traditional ontological, epistemological, and axiological problems?
      - iii. In short, to do this is to do “philosophical inquiry”. “Doing philosophy is doing research!” (p.1139)
    - c. A research framework based on research paradigms – Perspective 3
      - i. Different research paradigms: Positivistic, interpretive, and critical.
      - ii. They carry with them very different assumptions.
        - 1. “There are fundamental differences that separate forms of inquiry, and the differences are of a philosophical nature.” (p.1141).
        - 2. What is the ontological status of knowledge? Can we actually experience causal relationships between learning and learner? If not, should we generalize theories of education? What are the consequences/implications of doing so? (p.1141).
- V. All types of “thinking” have their place.
- a. Psychological, sociological, and political perspectives.
  - b. One question “that is uniquely philosophical”
    - i. What are the ends of education?
    - ii. Means and ends are “inseparable”
      - 1. What does it mean to be an educated person?
      - 2. What does it mean to be educated with technology?
- VI. Koetting concludes that there are three assumptions that underlie the nature of philosophical inquiry in education.
- a. All the phenomena of education are the appropriate subject matter.
  - b. Education is always locally situated.
  - c. Means and ends, and their interrelationship, are important.