

Editorial: The Research Literacy of Teachers

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How should teachers engage with research in their professional practice? Although this stubborn and controversial question can be approached from many angles, there is reason to resist tendencies in the field to splinter into separate and opposing camps. An ongoing conversation between different approaches is crucial for research to provide a balanced picture of the role of research in teaching practice and to attain a reflective interpretation of professional standards. Part of the aim of this special issue is to facilitate such a conversation. As we invited authors from different traditions to give their account of current issues and predicaments, we thought “research literacy” could operate as a bridge-building concept. It could provide a common lens through which to view the issues at the heart of the debate concerning research and teaching, which in turn could help bring about some concord. Although we are not sure our framing has softened the disagreement, it has enabled us to see important dimensions and challenges in the debate more clearly.

The core meaning of research literacy is having an adequate grasp of research and the ability to connect research-based knowledge to practical concerns. A research literate person understands certain scientific concepts and methods, and their relevance for justifying practical decisions. Beyond this generic description, however, research literacy is arguably a domain-specific concept. Being research literate regarding climate change is probably quite different from

being research literate regarding migration and social inclusion. And as the contributions to this special issue pick up in different ways, being research literate *qua* teacher is not merely about being literate regarding a specific domain of knowledge. It is also about being literate in a way that respects the demands of a complex professional role that is embedded in certain institutional and epistemic structures. Teachers' research literacy is thus a bridging concept in a second sense: it helps us to understand the bridge which crosses the gap between research and teaching practice.

The issue of teachers' research literacy is receiving increased attention, and this special issue contributes to the literature by putting conceptual and normative discussions in direct contact with fresh empirical material. It links perspectives from pedagogy, philosophy, psychology and sociology, and thereby shows how the topic can be approached conceptually, normatively, and descriptively. The papers in this issue exemplify how key concerns can blend in different ways regarding professional agency, epistemic warrant, and institutionalisation. In this introduction, we provide a brief overview of the papers and highlight some of our key takeaways with respect to the overarching theme of research literacy.

In his contribution "Research Literacy and Teaching: The Peculiar Case of Research about Teaching about Research", Martyn Hammersley explores how different ways of conceptualizing teaching and research give rise to variations in how research literacy is understood. The account one gives of research literacy depends on broad assumptions about what research is or should be, what teaching is or should be, and what education more broadly is or should be. Any discussion of research literacy brings such assumptions into play. Hammersley provides a mapping of various models for understanding the relationship between research and teaching. First, *the engineering model*, which roughly construes research as providing facts about the effectiveness of pedagogical techniques, and teaching as the adoption of such techniques. Second, *the strong enlightenment model*, which roughly construes research as providing theoretical frameworks for understanding and transforming educational situations and practices, and teaching as emancipation from error. Third, *the moderate enlightenment model*, which allows for various roles for research—e.g. providing theoretical perspectives or facts about the effectiveness of techniques—and for various ways of un-

derstanding what teaching and its improvement involves, depending on particular situations. Against this background, he then turns to the peculiar case of research about teaching research methods, in order to highlight the complexities and contentiousness of the ways of understanding research literacy which the models give rise to. This leads him to suggest that a critical stance should be taken towards the notion of research literacy and its potential contribution to teaching. He suggests that the moderate enlightenment model allows for this. On this view, teachers are understood as drawing “selectively on research findings, but also on prior experience and other sources, in order to clarify what is to be done, why, and how it can best be achieved” (Hammersley, 2023, p. 13).

In his paper “The Philosophical Dimensions of Teachers’ Research Literacy” Ben Kotzee highlights further complexities concerning the notion of research literacy. He suggests that research literacy does not merely involve a grasp of empirical educational research, but must also involve a grasp of normative, conceptual and methodological issues which arise in such research. Such a grasp would involve what he calls *philosophical literacy*, and so research literacy should involve philosophical literacy. This sheds light on another sense in which one’s conception of research literacy depends on broad assumptions: as he notes, “what ‘research literacy’ is taken to be depends on your whole philosophy of research” (Kotzee, 2023, p. 17). He also highlights the domain-specificity of research literacy by considering the possibility that while philosophical literacy is part of *researchers’* research literacy, it need not be part of *teachers’* research literacy: perhaps requiring that teachers acquire philosophical knowledge is demanding too much. Rather, teachers can simply defer to researchers with respect to the philosophical issues. However, there is wide disagreement between researchers on such issues: issues about what good research is, about the quality of the research that is actually produced, and about what the appropriate aims of research are. And without some philosophical literacy, it is not clear how teachers would be able to navigate such debates and place their deference well. This suggests that questions about research literacy must be considered in tandem with broader philosophical questions.

Terje Ogden’s article “Research Literacy in Education and the Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices in Schools” contrasts the “research literacy approach” to the “school-wide implementation approach.” The article explains how these

are distinct ways of realising evidence-based practice. In particular, the school-wide models require guidelines and *collective* competencies in the staff; it is not prone to promote the kind of individual critical examination of research that is associated with research literacy: “The process of identifying interventions and critically examining their research base may be too time-consuming or too complex to carry out for teachers at ordinary schools” (Ogden, 2023, p. 5). However, Ogden does not argue for a choice between either approach but argues instead that they serve complementary functions. A school with teachers who individually possess research literacy—and its associated epistemic virtues of open-mindedness and critical examination—may be better prepared as a collective for the kind of attention to local needs that is required for flexible yet sufficiently faithful implementation of evidence-based interventions.

Cecilie Haugen’s contribution “Evidence-Based Practice and Power Struggles over Pedagogic Practices in ‘High-’ and ‘Low-Stakes Accountability’ Contexts” is also concerned with organizational factors, but with a more pronounced concern regarding the power relations involved. She critically examines how certain modes of operationalising evidence-based practice involve hierarchical and managerial modes of accountability. In particular, she argues that school-wide behavioural programs can end up enforcing rules of compliance that undermine professional autonomy and thereby restrict the potential for a reflective mode of research literacy. The article highlights that the conditions for research literacy are political, in the sense that they depend on the distribution of institutional authority with regard to epistemic claims: “I would argue that what is at stake in the struggle between research positions in the educational field is the potential for a democratic anchoring of education and the potential for professionals to take complexity into account in the forming of pedagogic practice” (Haugen, 2023, p. 17). In effect, the article is an argument for upholding a conception of research literacy that respects professionalism and its attendant ideas of autonomy and judgment.

The final article “Educational Research Literacy: Philosophical Foundations and Empirical Applications” is our own attempt to explain how research literacy is both empirically feasible and epistemically attractive. The article argues that we should not expect teachers’ engagement with research to be just a light version

of the way researchers themselves engage with research. Instead, their engagement is bound up with the distinctive needs of the teacher role. This conceptual argument is empirically supported by Sølvi Mausethagen's analysis of teacher engagement with a concrete research-based competence development programme. In the end, a concept of research literacy that may appear overly demanding on paper is shown to be intelligently embedded in actual practice.

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