

Is a Rose Really a Rose?
**A Taxonomy of Education Practitioner Inquiry: Implications for Inter-framework
Collaborations**

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Abstract

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is an emergent movement that aims to encourage future faculty and staff in higher education to systematically analyze the relationship between teaching and learning, publicly share their findings, and improve their practice based on such findings. Although seldom identified as such, SoTL is one of many types of education practitioner inquiry, which collectively have a substantive history and accompanying body of research literature that is generally not acknowledged by the SoTL crowd. Education practitioner inquiry has assumed various names and forms, both at the K-12 and postsecondary levels. The SoTL movement has been shaped by, explicitly or implicitly, the heavy theoretical lifting accomplished by many of these other forms of education practitioner inquiry. Unless it is recognized that SoTL and other forms of education practitioner inquiry are terms used to describe closely related forms, subscribers to these various education practitioner inquiry terms may disregard numerous important findings that may otherwise inform the implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of their practitioner research. One way to address this shortcoming is through a consideration of the literature on practitioner research and an evaluation of the most salient connections between the types. *Via* a review of scholarly literature, I have attempted to 1.discern conceptual and practical similarities and differences, 2.discover which associations are most warranted and applicable to education practitioner inquiry in higher education, 3.create an analytic framework for mapping and understanding, and 4.enrich ongoing and future postsecondary education practitioner inquiry endeavors by providing brief analysis of the emerging analytic framework and its implications for both research and practice.

Introduction

Within the United States alone, *education practitioner inquiry* (EPI henceforth) has roots that extend back to the 1950s with most potential documented at the K-12 level (Hammersley, 2004; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Although EPI at the K-12 level has been an international conversation for quite some time, the use and study of EPI in higher education is a relatively new discussion. The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and The Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning's (CIRTL) Teaching-as-Research (TAR) are emergent conceptions of EPI that aim to encourage educators in the academy to systematically research and reflect upon teaching and learning, and to share their findings in available forums. (For CIRTL's website, please visit <http://cirtl.wceruw.org>)

Although the EPI inquiry field, overall, can point towards extensive anecdotal and empirical data suggesting that the conduct of education practitioner inquiry has merit, relatively few studies examine the purposes, practices, and possibilities in the academy. For sure, the advent of SoTL and TAR prompts several empirical questions that will benefit from future research conducted at the postsecondary level.

Yet a plethora of issues concerning EPI have already been explored at the K-12 level by educational researchers and practitioners alike. Without consideration that TAR and SoTL may be just two of many terms used to describe various related forms of EPI, subscribers to the higher education inquiry forms may disregard numerous important findings that may otherwise inform the implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of their EPI. Additionally, those operating under the different terms/forms of EPI may be missing out on the valuable lessons learned from

the greater EPI literature. Thus, it is to the benefit of the post secondary EPI movements to take into account the relevant lessons learned from the K-12 level. This paper begins to situate SoTL and TAR within the burgeoning genus of EPI. Specifically, through this review of the literature on EPI at the secondary and postsecondary level, I attempt to:

1. discern conceptual and practical similarities and differences between EPI types,
2. discover which associations between the different types of EPI types are most warranted and applicable to EPI in higher education, and
3. create an analytic framework for mapping and understanding variations in education practitioner inquiry, and
4. enrich ongoing and future post secondary EPI endeavors by providing brief analysis of the analytic framework and its implications for both research and practice.

Methods

I performed a review of EPI terminology and practice using Internet and library databases to scan for scholarly articles pertaining to K-16 education practitioner inquiry. English language, peer-reviewed research articles, books and doctoral theses pertaining to the various types of EPI were evaluated. In order draw current relationships between the types, most of the fifty plus sources deemed most relevant were from the 1980s or later. Drawing on descriptions and groupings of EPI from other scholars, I then created a basic typology of most similar EPI types. Once like EPI types were identified, I launched a more thorough literature review to uncover the more nuanced conceptual and practical similarities and differences between these form,

specifically *the scholarship of teaching and learning* (SOTL), *Teaching-as-Research* (TAR), and *action research* (AR).

While this review is still useful, the methods used to compile and analyze this literature were not without problems. TAR is a relatively new construct, being introduced in its modern form by CIRTLL (an NSF-funded consortium, created in 2003, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Michigan State University, and the Pennsylvania State University and more recently being joined by the University of Colorado at Boulder, Howard University, and Vanderbilt University.)

While TAR and SOTL are aimed at the post-secondary level, the vast majority of sources on EPI focus on models at the K-12 level. Specifically, AR has a long history of implementation, and study of its implementation, at the K-12 level. Thus, this literature review is based on types of EPI that are not equally represented in the research literature. Admittedly, a comparison of EPI types that take place at different educational levels may also be problematic. Yet, such problems should not negate the promise that this work offers. This work, to my knowledge, serves as one of the first analyses of EPI across K-16 education. Such a synthesis of EPI issues may be helpful to those interested in bringing EPI to the university level.

Findings

A Quick History of SoTL and TAR

Although there appears to be no forthcoming agreed upon definition of the *scholarship of teaching and learning* (Kreber, 2002a), various researchers have offered insight regarding the general unifying characteristics of the different flavors of SoTL (Kreber, 2002a; Trigwell et al,

2000; Kreber and Cranton, 2000; and Hutchings and Shulman, 1999). The roots of the movement can be traced at least as far back as Shulman's discussion of the importance of *pedagogical content knowledge* to the university educator (1987). Boyer (1990) later argued for the equal valuing of teaching by those evaluating scholarship at universities. Since his introduction of the notion of the *scholarship of teaching*, EPI has been a growing movement aimed at fostering postsecondary faculties' development as teachers. The movement has progressed down multiple, yet interwoven, paths. As it has done so, researchers operating under other post secondary EPI terms, such as Cross and Steadman's 1996 *classroom research* (also Angelo & Cross, 1993; Cross, 1990), added to the movement. In 1998, The Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) was established to support the growth of the SoTL endeavor and its practitioners in the United States. Multiple national and international conferences serve as forums for practitioners and researchers alike to share their experiences with SoTL.

In its grant proposal to the National Science Foundation, the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL) proposed that *Teaching-as-Research* (TAR) could assist science, technology, engineering, and mathematics graduate students-through-faculty in realizing their academic potential. Paralleling ideas in its NSF proposal, CIRTL's website offers that

Teaching-as-Research involves the deliberate, systematic, and reflective use of research methods to develop and implement teaching practices that advance the learning experiences and learning outcomes of students and teachers.

CIRTL website, 2003

CIRTL claims that its original conception of TAR was informed by the wealth of literature on EPI produced during the last fifty especially at the K-12 level (as summarized by Zeichner & Noffke, 200; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). According to the CIRTL proposal, consideration was also given to models of EPI that cross over to higher education (as described by Angelo & Cross, 1993; Cross, 1990). Specifically, CIRTL's NSF proposal states that TAR is most similar to *action research*, *teacher research*, and *classroom research* (CIRTL proposal, p. 2).

Identification of other closely related types of education practitioner inquiry

Yet a brief literature review on other types of EPI thought to be akin to TAR revealed that these other cited forms of EPI may be associated with significantly different practices than CIRTL had originally conceived. Likewise, early on in the review of literature, it also became apparent that CIRTL may have neglected a form of EPI that held many important similarities to its conception of TAR. As should soon become apparent to the reader, literature regarding SoTL begs consideration when constructing an operational definition of TAR. Although amongst the SoTL literature concentrated analysis of other types of EPI is lacking, CIRTL's claim that TAR is similar to *action research*, *teacher research*, and *classroom research* made obvious the need to evaluate literature pertaining to these types of education practitioner inquiry.

Indeed there exist many general similarities between the forms of *education practitioner inquiry*, or the "umbrella" term under which all systematic inquiries regarding one's own practice fall. At the core, EPI attempts to firmly link inquiry regarding pedagogical practice with action to

improve that practice. These similarities are important as they link most forms of EPI in important ways. Yet, it is the identification of the more nuanced similarities and differences between EPI types that will allow us to discern the applicability of one program's findings to our own endeavors.

However, after the brief survey of literature it was apparent that TAR and SoTL are not as akin to some of these other forms of education practitioner inquiry. For example Marion, for her UW-Madison doctoral thesis on EPI conducted an extensive review of terminology and implementation associated with both *teacher research* and *classroom research*. She concluded that teacher research has at its core some crucial aspects that separate it from other forms of education practitioner inquiry. Proponents of teacher research, claims Marion, do not dictate that 1) action must be the result of this type of EPI or that 2) findings should be shared with others. Additionally, according to Marion *classroom research* denotes a type of practitioner inquiry that, while akin to the core ideas of related EPI types, seems a term predominantly used to denote action research specifically done in classrooms (and mostly in K-12 classrooms.) Seeing that *classroom research* is really *action research* in a particular setting, and that action research and TAR and SoTL may often not be confined to this setting, it became most appropriate to focus effort on identifying similarities and differences between TAR, SoTL, and the more encompassing EPI form of *action research*. Indeed, it soon became apparent through the initial review of literature that AR, TAR, and SoTL share the most practical and conceptual similarities. Thus, I shifted my review of EPI to more thoroughly focus on these three types. The rest of this work reports on the specifics and implications of those findings.

Pertaining to differences and similarities among EPI programs' notions of inquiry: Towards a typology of education practitioner inquiry?

Literature has been thoroughly reviewed and evaluated in relation to the following EPI constructs:

- Scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL)
- Teaching-as-research (TAR)
- Action research (AR)

Constructing operational definitions from the finer nuances of TAR, SoTL, and AR is challenging, however. For instance, a recent Carnegie report highlighting the promise of the scholarship of teaching (SOTL) may hold for post-secondary education was not able to provide us with an operational definition of the term (Cross and Steadman, 1996). Instead, the writers implied that teachers can improve their craft by actively reflecting on their practice and that such action could have positive impacts on students and teaching. Likewise, there is evidence that TAR is underspecified (Clifford and Connolly, 2004). And Zeichner, in 1983, noted that the proponents of AR had various conceptions of *inquiry*. According to Tom in 1985, even Zeichner, “a proponent of inquiry-oriented teacher education, has some difficulty providing a clear-cut definition of his favored orientation” (p. 36). Conclusions that SoTL, TAR, and AR are underspecified mean that these types of EPI may be interpreted in many ways. Such ambiguity could present problems of clarity for those interacting with the movements; from practitioners wishing to engage in education practitioner inquiry, to program evaluators seeking to ascertain their overall success in enhancing teaching quality and student learning, to those hoping to

transfer the knowledge gained from at one institution to others. So, how can one compare these seemingly similar, yet under-defined EPI types in a way that allows for the construction of an analytic framework for mapping and understanding variations in EPI and the implications for both research and practice?

To address such a problem, I looked towards the few literature reviews that have examined varieties of action research (which enjoys greater prominence in educational research literature). These researchers have provided delineating parameters along which to compare other practitioner-researchers' conceptions of AR. Through my review of literature, I found that certain aspects of their frameworks were relevant in comparing AR, SOTL, and TAR. The result is a tool that allows readers to differentiate among these closely related EPI forms along a series of distinguishing dimensions. According to Tom (1985), a multifaceted tool is superior to the earlier attempts of researchers who have analyzed the *teacher images* associated with EPI forms as practitioner-researchers that evoke similar images do not necessarily agree on the conceptions underlying the associated EPI types. Additionally, different teacher images may be correlated with one EPI type. Rearick and Feldman (1999) also champion a multi-dimensional classification of the various types of education practitioner inquiry, stating that past attempts to categorize the different types have often resulted in too narrow of classification schemes. In fact, as Tom, Rearick and Feldman, and Newman (2000) argue, practitioner-researchers are inventing methodology to suit their needs then set definitions pertaining to the various EPI types are not practical or necessary (Tom, 1985). Perhaps one definition of each type of EPI simply does not fit all. Instead

Since inquiry-oriented teacher education does seem to be a multifaceted concept, there is a real need for developing a set of dimensions that clarifies the range of options open to educators interested in inquiry-oriented teacher education. If these dimensions are wisely chosen, they should reveal not only significant differences among the varying approaches to inquiry-oriented teacher education but also help the consumer evaluate the pros and cons of these options.

Tom, 1985, p. 37

These researchers and others have developed their own set of dimensions to allow for the classification and comparison of EPI forms.

Construction of an analytic lens under which to compare TAR, SOTL, and AR

Melding and combining dimensions offered by others attempting to make some sense of the vast array of EPI orientations and practice discussed in recent literature (since 1980), I have attempted to locate the various types of EPI on *dimensions of distinction* continua. Four dimensions of distinction have been identified that allow for the evaluation and similarities of the three forms of education practitioner inquiry. These dimensions are: a) *the purpose of inquiry* (Noffke, 1997; Rearick and Feldman, 1999), b) *the model of inquiry* (Tom, 1985), c) *the theoretical orientation* (Grundy, 1987; Rearick and Feldman, 1999-synonymous with Kemmis and McTaggart's (2000) *knowledge-constitutive interests* and Tom's (1985) *ontological status of educational phenomena*), and d) *the types of reflection* (Rearick and Feldman, 1998).

Each dimension of distinction has associated classes that together form an overall continuum-like dimension onto which various researchers have been placed based on their discussions of

education practitioner inquiry. Table 1 below provides explanations and examples of the dimensions of distinctions and underlying classes that differentiate the various types of EPI.

Table 1-Dimensions of Distinction of Educational Practitioner Inquiry

<u>PURPOSE OF EDUCATION PRACTITIONER INQUIRY^{1,2}</u> <u>This dimension is concerned with/is related to the motivations of practitioner-researchers and the possible outcomes of their inquiry.</u>	
<u>personal growth</u>	<u>I reflect on my own knowledge and aim to discover knowledge beyond my current limitations²</u>
<u>professional understanding</u>	<u>I aim to add to the knowledge base of teaching.</u> <u>I assume new knowledge will improve teaching and learning and I share the knowledge I gain.²</u>
<u>political empowerment</u>	<u>My research may discover and challenge knowledge-power connections.</u> <u>My research may inspire collaborations towards change.²</u>
<u>MODEL OF INQUIRY³</u> <u>This dimension is concerned with/is related to the inquiry's (a) rigor and (b) scope.</u>	
<u>Rigor--pertains to methodology</u>	
<u>common-sense inquiry</u>	<u>I do my research using any methods I see fit to inform my own situation³</u>
<u>disciplined inquiry</u>	<u>I do my research utilizing systematic methods and strategies from empirical social science studies that have asked similar questions³</u>
<u>Scope--pertains to what one does with the resultant knowledge</u>	
<u>knowledge scope</u>	<u>The knowledge I gain will inform my teaching practice.³</u>
<u>knowledge-action link</u>	<u>The knowledge I gain will drive changes in/improvements to my teaching practice.³</u>
<u>THEORETICAL ORIENTATION^{2,4} or KNOWLEDGE-CONSTITUTIVE INTERESTS⁵</u> <u>This dimension concerns the form of EPI undertaken based on interests of the proponents. It provides insight into the questions posed and evaluated by practitioner-researchers</u>	
<u>technical</u>	<u>I see teaching as primarily a technical, craft-like activity⁶. Thus, I research my problems through experimentation. Theories may result from my research.^{2,4}</u> <u>The aim of my research is to determine the best means of achieving given ends⁶.</u>

Dimensions of distinctions of SOTL, TAR, and AR

A schematic has been created to show the relative placements of the EPI types within the various dimensions and as a function of which classes researchers dealing with each type of EPI most associate. Based on both the number of researchers associated with each class and the relative importance these researchers place on the class, each class (represented as a cell) is shaded to reflect relative importance of the class for that particular dimension of distinction for each EPI type. This schematic is represented in Figure 1 below.

TYPE PR	TAR	SOTL	AR
DIMENSIONS OF DISTINCTION			
PURPOSE			
personal growth	1, 2	3, 11	12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22
professional understanding	1,	3, 11	14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22
political empowerment	1,		13, 18, 19, 20
MODELS OF INQUIRY			
Rigor			
common-sense inquiry			19, 24, 25
disciplined inquiry	1, 2	3, 10, 11	19,
Scope			
knowledge scope	1, 2		19,
knowledge-action link	1, 2	3, 10, 11	24, 25
THEORETICAL ORIENTATION			
technical	1, 2	3, 6, 11	13, 16, 20, 21, 22
practical	1, 2	3, 6, 11	12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22
critical-emancipatory			17, 21, 22
TYPE OF REFLECTION			
autobiographical	1, 2	3, 7, 11	12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23
collaborative	1, 2	3, 4, 5, 9, 11	14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22
communal	1, 2	3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11	18, 21, 22
Key to researchers/documents	1=pilot study interview 2=CIRTL NSF proposal	3=Boyer, 1990 4=Cottrell & Jones, 2003 5=Hutchings & Shulman, 1999 6=Kreber, 2002a 7=Kreber, 2002b 8=Kreber & Cranton, 2000 9=Shulman, 1998 10=Shulman, 1987 11=Trigwell <i>et al.</i> , 2000	12=Brunner, 1995 13=Carr & Kemmis, 1986 14=Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993 15=Dybah 16=Foy, 1992 17=Hollingsworth, 1994 18=Kanevsky, 1993 19=Kember, 2000 20=McNiff, 1992 21=Noffke & Stevenson, 1995 22=Rearick & Feldman, 1999 23=Schon, 1983 24=Tom, 1985 25=Zeichner, 1983
Key to color codes		strongest match strong match match no match between PR type and dimension of distinction	

Paper length for this volume of work is too limited to allow for a thorough evaluation of the analytic framework in this paper. Such evaluation is provided by the author in other sources (Bouwma-Gearhart, forthcoming). For now, a very brief review of findings regarding the EPI dimensions and implications for practice follows.

Purpose

According to CIRTL's official definition, the main purpose of TAR is the professional understanding, and to a lesser extent the personal growth, of those who are engaged with it. Yet, from CIRTL's pilot studies, it seems that some TAR practitioners identify their personal growth as the most important purpose. Thus, I have chosen to weight TAR evenly between the two classes. Additionally, at least one respondent indicated a sort of political empowerment resulting from TAR. Personal growth also seems the main purpose of SoTL. SoTL results are often shared knowledge and integrated with the previous findings and research of others. Thus, the class of professional understanding is also valued. The patterns regarding purpose, thus, are similar for SOTL and TAR. Of the eight research groups reviewed by Rearick and Feldman, four found the purpose of AR to be predominantly personal while two groups cited personal motivation as being very important. Yet, three groups found professional reasons to be the driving force of AR with another two groups citing its importance. Thus, the classes of personal growth and professional understanding are shaded equally for AR. Political reasons were also mentioned by one group of researchers with two others labeling it *very important*. Researchers concerned with AR definitely emphasize the political empowerment class of purpose more than those concerned with TAR and even more so when compared with those concerned with SOTL. Yet the personal and professional purposes are shared by all three EPI types.

Model of inquiry

The conception of TAR offered in the NSF proposal and in the pilot study rubrics is one that highlights a highly disciplined type of inquiry. The TAR inquiry cycle consists of important steps that are, more or less, thought of as sequential. And, although the NSF proposal and pilot study report both call for a melding of knowledge and action by TAR practitioners, both documents also highlight TAR practices that have a more limited discovery of knowledge purpose. Thus while TAR is envisioned, in its most perfect form, to be of an inquiry type that is disciplined and crosses the knowledge-action divide (the reason for my heavier shading of that class for TAR), TAR may be seen as a practice that allows knowledge of teaching and learning, void of a firmly related action, as a goal. Most proponents of SOTL call for disciplined inquiry by practitioners, which is one of the most salient similarities of this EPI type with TAR. As evidence, Boyer (1990), Shulman (1987) and Trigwell *et al.* (2000) all bridge teacher knowledge and action with pedagogic reasoning and a disciplined inquiry recognize practitioners' inquiry into their pedagogical content knowledge and classroom meaning making and allow for the placement of SOTL into the disciplined inquiry/ knowledge-action class. When one considers the reference by many to the common-sense inquiry that may comprise AR, it appears to differ from both TAR and SOTL in respect to the underlying models of inquiry. Although many AR proponents claim that both commonsense and directed inquiry is practiced and legitimate in AR, it has been difficult to establish a rough proportion of proponents who support each.

Additionally, while most proponents of AR claim that the melding of gained knowledge regarding one's practice and action on that practice is the cornerstone of AR (Zeichner, 1983; Rearick and Feldman, 1999; Kember, 2000), there are those that caution that the claims of

theoreticians are not always practiced by practitioners (Rearick and Feldman, 1999) and that too often the knowledge-action bridge is not crossed by those engaged in the multiple forms of EPI (Tom, 1985). It seems that AR, more than TAR and SOTL, allows for greater variety regarding this dimension.

Theoretical orientation

TAR, as envisioned and portrayed above, is built upon a theoretical orientation that is between the technical (experimentation on and control of the environment) and the practical (realization that human acts are deliberate and trying to understand the reasoning behind them). From CIRTTL pilot studies, it seems that TAR weighs more heavily on the technical side as there may be indication that UW-Madison practitioners are most often engaged in researching and documenting what Tom (1985) refers to as the “teaching and learning process” and “subject matter knowledge” and less with the “political/ethical principles underlying teaching” or a problematic arena of “society, including educational institutions” (p. 37). Boyer (1990), in turn, recognizes SOTL’s social construction of knowledge and is less concerned with the discovery of brand-new knowledge by the individual. Although Boyer feels that the discovery of knowledge comes in the form of empirical data, the interpretation and understanding of such is consensual. Although Boyer proposes a technical theoretical orientation for SOTL, he is more concerned with the practical. Trigwell *et al.* (2000) are also proponents of SOTL having technical and practical orientations when they call for the “substantial and continuing project of understanding, categorizing, defining and describing what it is that teachers and teaching are” (p. 524). Kreber (2002a) notes that SOTL practitioners are concerned with gaining knowledge regarding all facets of pedagogy and labels SOTL as having technical and practical theoretical orientation. In

respect to theoretical orientation, then, SOTL and TAR are very similar. There is not strong consensus around the theoretical orientation of AR. Although the technical and practical classes appear stronger in allegiance, they are so by just one more researcher/researcher group than the critical-emancipatory class. To confound this distinction further, one group that labeled the theoretical orientation to be technical also found it to be quite practical, while one group that labeled AR emancipatory also found it to be quite practical and technical. While it may seem by a comparison of the numbers falling under each class that the theoretical orientations *most* associated with AR are of the technical and practical classes, there again appears to be great variety in respect to this distinction amongst AR researchers. As with the models of inquiry dimension, it appears that there is a greater variety of classes of the theoretical orientation under which AR falls than does either TAR or SOTL.

Types of reflection

TAR seems to require autobiographical reflection (to connect one's inner states with actions) regarding individuals' recognition and questioning of their beliefs and actions regarding teaching, learning, and research. Likewise it seems that for many researchers concerned with SOTL, autobiographical reflection precedes the more social types of reflection. Yet someone who is highly engaged in TAR or SoTL is also envisioned to also be involved in collaborative reflection (seeking meaning of the context of their research). SoTL demonstrates a strongest match with the collaborative reflection dimension with emphasis on the evaluation of shared knowledge. By involving a diversity of others (practitioners and students) in its related dialogue, SoTL's tie to the communal class is strengthened. Additionally, given enough time and social interaction, CIRTL claims that those most highly engaged in TAR should be engaged in

communal reflection (discussions and thoughts regarding the ideologies and actions associated with the larger institutions at work.) By involving a diversity of others (practitioners and students) in a dialogue regarding one's participation of TAR, one is able to develop heightened insight regarding pedagogical practices and research and an awareness of issues of diversity that underlie the cited TAR reform efforts. According to Rearick and Feldman (1999), many researchers agree on the collaborative type of reflection in which action researchers are engaged. Although reflection can be somewhat communal to some, it is autobiographical reflection and collaborative reflection that seems most pertinent to the eight researchers. Out of eight researchers (or teams of researchers) four found autobiographical reflection or collaborative reflection to be most associated with AR. Only one research group found the other communal reflection to be very important in the process of AR. This pattern regarding classes of the types of reflection may set AR apart from TAR and SOTL. The greater weight of TAR and SOTL in the communal category is the result of the emphasis placed on the sharing of knowledge with and critique of findings by others.

Discussion

Conceptual And Practical Similarities And Differences Between EPI Types

The three main EPI forms surveyed here share the critical components of EPI offered by Kember (2000): 1) a concern for social practice, 2) a purpose of pedagogical improvement, 3) a cyclical process of inquiry, 4) reflection of the researcher, and 5) dealing with questions posed by the practitioners themselves. Yet what about the finer nuances associated with the various types of education practitioner inquiry?

Overall, it seems that SOTL and TAR share more similarities with each other than either does with AR. The greater differences between TAR or SoTL and AR may be attributable to AR's seemingly more "fluid" nature. As an EPI type, AR falls under all classes of the dimensions of distinctions that have been discussed here. While this conclusion could be a result of the plethora of AR research reviewed (compared to that of TAR and SOTL) it is also likely that AR, as an EPI type does, in fact, span a greater range of purposes, models of inquiry, and theoretical orientations. This may be a result of the desire of those working with AR to empower practitioners (mostly at the K-12 level) to engage in their own conceptions of inquiry.

TAR and SOTL seem aligned in respect to purpose, models of inquiry, and theoretical orientation. In addition, TAR and SOTL share a stronger orientation towards the communal type of reflection, as the presentation in and consultation of scholarly journals are very important to these types of education practitioner inquiry. As the SoTL and TAR communities struggle to create an operational definition of TAR, the vast similarities (from the most broad to the finest nuances) between TAR and SOTL should be noted. This document begins to make the argument that TAR and SOTL as EPI types may be indistinguishable.

This work highlights issues that may inform the SoTL and TAR communities in their endeavors that rely on a more informed definition of their type of education practitioner inquiry. To begin with, proponents of both SOTL and TAR may soon need to discuss their EPI type in relation to one another, especially with those that are more likely to have experience with the other, to avoid unnecessary confusion. Additionally, as both movements work to accomplish their purposes and

vision, it makes sense to learn from the success and failures of another model at other institutions of higher education. Also, as operational definitions and behavioral descriptions are not well established regarding both SOTL and TAR, researchers may wish to combine future efforts in the identification and study of individuals engaged in these models of EPI at the post-secondary level.

Other Considerations and Recommendations for Future Research

The difficulty in adequately addressing the purposes of this literature review has been addressed in other areas of this document. Historically, research regarding EPI has been focused at the K-12 level. Conclusions of this literature review regarding the similarities and differences of the different types, then, can only be considered with this issue in mind. However, this issue also points to the importance of research such as this that begins to attempt an evaluation of EPI types across the K-12/higher education divide, especially in terms of how findings can inform EPI at all levels.

More importantly, perhaps, the analytical lens provided here allows educational research proponents of all traditions means to evaluate their preferred type of EPI. For instance, based on this analytical framework, and as visually represented in Figure 1, it seems that SoTL and TAR do not have as one of their main purposes the notion of political empowerment. Additionally, both SoTL and TAR lack as a model a dedication to common-sense inquiry. Does this imply that these two higher education movements do not view such dimensions as important components or results of education practitioner inquiry? Does this finding simply imply the overlooking of important dimensions within the communities' publications regarding their

movements or does it points to important lessons to be learned from the AR community? Does AR, with its accompanying dimensions, act as a tried and true model of education practitioner inquiry? Seeing that AR may dictate less disciplined inquiry with a more limited knowledge scope than either SoTL and TAR, should the higher education community be accepting of more fluid models of EPI in the academy? And what may weaker allegiances of AR to certain dimensions of distinction mean for that EPI movement? Such questions may be ripe for future research regarding SoTL, similar higher education initiatives, and EPI overall.

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