



Toward an Epistemology of the Teacher-Researcher Stance

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Abstract: Teacher-led inquiry has gained increasing prominence in educational research and professional development, yet the epistemological status of the knowledge it produces remains insufficiently clarified. This conceptual analysis article proposes a situated and practice-oriented epistemology of the teacher-researcher stance, distinct from both the epistemology of teaching and that of academic research. Building on the notion of epistemic stance, we conceptualise teaching, research, and teacher-led inquiry as governed by irreducible epistemological regimes, each oriented toward different epistemic goods. We argue that teacher-researcher knowledge is characterised by its empirical grounding, contextualisation, and direct professional usefulness, rather than by generalisability. Clarifying this epistemology helps normalise structural tensions, support teacher engagement in inquiry, and align evaluative expectations with professional realities, while opening avenues for broader reflection on epistemologies in educational research.

Keywords: Teacher research; Teacher-led action-research; Professional epistemological perspective; Teacher Training; Professionalisation.

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, numerous educational initiatives have sought to involve teachers more directly in the production of knowledge about teaching and learning. These initiatives take diverse forms—action research, teacher-led action research, practitioner inquiry, some professional learning communities (PLCs), research–practice partnerships (RPPs), and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)—but they share a common orientation: in-service teachers are invited to formulate questions about their own practice, collect and analyse data, and draw conclusions intended to inform future action (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Goodnough, 2010; Mertler & Hartley, 2017). Across these contexts, inquiry is no longer conceived merely as something done to or for teachers, but increasingly as something done by them. So, this empirical commitment goes beyond reflective practice (Schön, 1983) or critical pedagogy (Wamba, 2011).

In many teacher-led inquiry contexts, participants report uncertainty about what counts as adequate rigour, how much methodological sophistication is required, and to whom their results must ultimately be or appear convincing (Atkinson, 1994; Megowan-Romanowicz, 2010). Teachers may feel caught between two unsatisfactory options: either measuring their work against academic standards that appear disproportionate to their purposes and means, or treating inquiry as a loosely reflective activity whose epistemic legitimacy remains fragile. At the same time, external observers—researchers, administrators, or policymakers—often struggle to situate teacher-produced knowledge within familiar epistemic categories, sometimes dismissing it as overly local, anecdotal, or insufficiently generalizable. These recurring tensions suggest that the core issue is not only axiological, but also and perhaps

foremost, epistemological. Such concerns about the epistemological status of practitioner-generated knowledge have been raised in earlier work on teacher research and practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Noffke, 2009).

Despite this convergence, a persistent issue remains largely under-theorised: the epistemological status of the knowledge produced when teachers engage in inquiry. Should such knowledge be evaluated according to the standards of academic research? Should it be judged primarily by its usefulness for improving local practice? Or does it obey a distinct set of epistemic norms, grounded in teachers' professional responsibilities, constraints, and aims? These questions are not abstract. They shape how involved teachers interpret and value their own work, how their efforts are recognised or dismissed by colleagues and stakeholders, and thus how sustainable inquiry-based professional development can be over time.

Proposing an epistemology in this context, however, requires philosophical caution. Developing an epistemology for a professional function such as teaching—or for a hybrid function such as teacher-led inquiry—is not equivalent to formulating a general epistemology in the philosophical sense (e.g. Chalmers (1987)). Indeed, the aim is not to redefine truth, justification, or scientific knowledge as such. Rather, it is to clarify and situate the norms, values, and responsibilities that orient what counts as relevant, warranted, usable and fruitful knowledge within a specific professional practice. From this perspective, an epistemology of teaching or of teacher inquiry may be understood as a role-dependent and practice-oriented epistemic framework (Schön, 1983), consistent with developments in social epistemology and virtue epistemology (Zagzebski, 1996). Such a framework does not compete with scientific epistemology; it operates autonomously and downstream from it, organising the selection, interpretation, and mobilisation of knowledge in accordance with educational aims and professional accountability.

This perspective becomes especially salient when professional activities are approached through the notion of stance (posture [in French]). A stance may be understood as a coherent way of positioning oneself epistemically and practically in relation to a task, a set of values, and a context. It is not a specific activity (like inquiry), but can involve a certain number of activities, processes and choices. Crucially, stances are functionally exclusive: while professionals may adopt different stances over time, they cannot enact more than one at any given moment. Teaching, academic research, and teacher-led inquiry are not merely different intensities of the same activity; they are oriented toward different epistemic goods and governed by different criteria of relevance, adequacy, and success. Confusion arises when these orientations are implicitly conflated or when the epistemic expectations associated with one stance are uncritically transferred to another.

Existing work on teacher inquiry has often foregrounded questions of professional identity, examining how teachers come to see themselves as researchers or reflective practitioners (Goodnough, 2010; Yuan & Burns, 2017). While such analyses have provided valuable insights, they tend to leave the epistemological structure of the activity itself under-specified. In contrast, the present article adopts a deliberately different focus. Rather than examining how

teachers become teacher-researchers, and rather than focusing on their activity, we propose to clarify what it epistemically means for a teacher to adopt a teacher-researcher stance, even episodically, within the constraints of ordinary professional life.

The central proposition advanced here is that the difficulties commonly observed in teacher-led inquiry are best understood as the result of navigating between epistemically distinct professional stances, each governed by its own epistemology. Clarifying these epistemologies—rather than appealing to identity change or methodological prescriptions—offers a more precise and more actionable way of understanding what is at stake in teacher-led research.

We therefore first propose a comparative framework that distinguishes three adjacent but irreducible epistemic configurations: the epistemology of the teacher stance, oriented toward the selection, adaptation and/or mobilisation of knowledge in the service of students' learning within specific educational contexts; the epistemology of the researcher stance, oriented toward the production of propositional knowledge evaluated by a scholarly community; and the epistemology of the teacher-researcher stance, oriented toward the elaboration of empirically grounded knowledge that is directly useful for teaching and judged primarily by its convincingness and utility within comparable professional contexts.

Importantly, the teacher-researcher stance is necessarily rooted in teaching practice. It is not merely practice-focused inquiry, as such inquiry can occur in any field of human activity. A teacher-researcher is always also a teacher, temporarily adopting a distinct epistemic positioning for specific purposes. This stance borrows extensively from both teaching and research yet remains exclusive and irreducible to either. By clarifying this configuration and its epistemic commitments, we suggest that it becomes possible to legitimise teachers' inquiry work without subjecting it to inappropriate standards. It also helps normalise the tensions teachers experience as structural rather than personal and supports the design of more realistic forms of teacher-led research support, whether within action-research projects, PLCs, RPPs, or in relative individual isolation.

The aim of this article is therefore not to prescribe a model of "good" teacher research, nor to elevate teacher-produced knowledge to the status of academic science. Rather, it is to offer a philosophically cautious, practice-informed proposal for understanding the epistemology of the teacher-researcher stance, and to argue that such clarification constitutes a necessary step toward making teacher-led inquiry and research both more intelligible and sustainable in the professional reality (in all its dimensions) of those who teach. With our proposition, we aim to enable teachers and action-researchers (the intended audience here) who adopt or promote the teacher-researcher stance to more clearly situate and legitimize their practice, thereby sharpening its focus and strengthening its motivational grounding.

Methodologically, the present article should be understood as a form of conceptual and theoretical inquiry rather than as an empirical study. More specifically, it adopts a conceptual analysis approach aimed at clarifying epistemological distinctions and assumptions that remain insufficiently explicit in the literature on teacher inquiry and teacher-led research. The article therefore does not seek to test hypotheses empirically, but to improve the intelligibility and coherence of a conceptual configuration recurrently encountered in both research and professional practice.

The analysis comparatively examines three professional stances—teacher, researcher, and teacher-researcher—treated here as heuristic epistemic ideal-types organised around different aims, constraints, and criteria of adequacy. While grounded in existing literature on teacher inquiry, action research, and professional epistemology, the proposal remains primarily philosophical and interpretive in nature. Its value thus rests less on empirical verification than on its capacity to offer a coherent and professionally meaningful framework for understanding tensions repeatedly documented in teacher-led inquiry contexts.

Three Epistemic Stances and Their Respective Epistemologies

To clarify what it epistemically means for teachers to engage in inquiry, we propose to distinguish three adjacent but irreducible professional stances: the researcher stance, the teacher stance, and the teacher-researcher stance. Each is associated with a specific epistemological orientation—understood very broadly here as a coherent configuration of aims, values, norms of justification, and criteria of adequacy that orient what counts as relevant and warranted knowledge within a given professional function. These stances are not hierarchical (even if they may be interdependent), nor do they correspond to successive stages of professional development. Rather, they constitute distinct epistemic regimes that cannot be enacted simultaneously, even though the same individual may move back and forth or between them over time.

The Researcher Stance and Its Epistemology

The researcher stance is governed by an epistemology oriented toward the production of propositional knowledge about natural or human phenomena. Within this epistemic regime, knowledge is developed through recognised methods and evaluated according to explicit criteria of validity, robustness, and generality, with the aim of convincing a community of scholarly peers of its objective, explanatory, or predictive value. What ultimately confers epistemic legitimacy is the capacity of a knowledge claim to withstand critical scrutiny within a disciplinary community that shares standards of evidence, methodological expectations, and theoretical references.

This orientation privileges abstraction, formalisation, and/or transferability. It reflects a classical view of research epistemology, long debated in educational research (Kincheloe, 2011). Indeed, this characterisation should, however, be understood as a broad and simplifying account of a dominant epistemic configuration, rather than as an exhaustive description of the diversity of research practices in education. Indeed, significant traditions—including critical,

feminist, arts-based, and other qualitative approaches—may articulate different epistemic priorities, audiences, and criteria of value.

The present description does not seek to subsume this diversity, but to identify a sufficiently stable configuration against which the specificity of other stances can be clarified. Although research questions may originate in practical or societal concerns, the epistemic horizon of the researcher stance remains oriented toward producing knowledge that has the potential to extend beyond the local context in which it was generated. Contextual features are typically treated as variables to be controlled, described, or analytically bracketed, rather than as constitutive elements of the knowledge itself. The primary addressees of research outputs are not practitioners as such, but peers capable of evaluating the work according to shared scholarly norms. Practitioners may also be targeted, but most of the time will be seen as consumers/users.

The epistemology of the researcher stance is therefore demanding in terms of time, resources, and training. It presupposes access to methodological tools, sustained engagement with literature, and participation in highly specialised epistemic communities. These conditions are rarely met within the ordinary exercise of most professions, including teaching. Importantly, this observation does not undermine the legitimacy or value of the researcher epistemology (research in education, for example); it merely situates it within a specific professional function with its own epistemic aims and constraints.

The Teacher Stance and Its Epistemology

In contrast, the teacher stance is governed by an epistemology oriented toward action under responsibility and professionalism. More precisely, the epistemology of the teacher is oriented toward the selection, adaptation, and implementation of knowledge derived from practice, tradition, or research. It also involves mobilising teaching methods deemed relevant for supporting curricular learning in light of singular educational contexts and the needs of the learners for whom the teacher is responsible. The very idea of a practitioner's epistemology may resonate uneasily with more traditional or strict philosophical perspectives, which tend to construe epistemology as concerned primarily with criteria of truth for explicit propositions rather than with considerations of utility. Nevertheless, we propose, within a broader understanding of epistemology, that practical knowledge can also be assessed in terms of its production, nature, and validity, and that it can be subjected to discussion, critique, and improvement, even if it may mostly remain implicit as well as essentially actionnable. It is in this sense that we treat it as a legitimate object of epistemological analysis.

Within this epistemic regime, knowledge, whether derived or not from research, is valued less for its generality or explanatory scope than for its professional relevance, adaptability, and timeliness. Teachers operate in environments characterised by immediacy, heterogeneity, and moral responsibilities toward learners. As a result, epistemic judgement in the teacher stance involves continuous arbitration between competing considerations: curricular expectations, institutional constraints and contexts, students' profiles and individual needs, available resources, and

professional norms. Knowledge is mobilised in a pragmatic yet reasoned manner, often drawing simultaneously on research findings, professional (or personal preferences) traditions, experiential insights, and situational cues.

Contextuality is not a limitation to be overcome in this stance; it is a defining feature. Educational situations are irreducibly singular, and professional competence lies partly in the ability to interpret and respond adequately and optimally to this singularity. While research-based knowledge may inform teaching decisions, it is always mediated by professional judgement and subordinated to educational aims. Transferability is thus for teachers always an issue (Potvin, 2026) and the utility of research-derived knowledge is invariably indirect. From an epistemological perspective, the teacher stance therefore foregrounds practical discernment, sensitivity to context, and accountability toward learners, rather than the production of new propositional knowledge. While desirable, generalisability is not central, and yields when faced with a student's needs.

The Teacher-Researcher Stance and Its Epistemology

The teacher-researcher stance occupies a distinct epistemic position that cannot be reduced to either teaching or academic research, nor to any imagined intermediary position. We argue that his/her epistemology should be oriented toward the development, by teachers themselves, of new propositional knowledge that is empirically grounded and directly useful and usable for the practical exercise of the teaching profession. The value of this knowledge rests less on its generality than on its capacity to be judged convincing as well as genuinely useful—first by the developers themselves in their own reflective practice, and subsequently (or possibly) by fellow teachers working in comparable professional contexts.

This epistemological configuration borrows important elements from the researcher stance, including a commitment to empirical inquiry, explicit reasoning, and the articulation of claims that can be examined, discussed, and, where relevant, challenged. Like academic research, teacher-led inquiry requires formulating questions, systematically confronting intuitions with data, and accepting the possibility of being wrong. At the same time, it remains firmly anchored in the teacher's stance, insofar as its ultimate purpose is not the production of generalizable knowledge for its own sake, but the improvement of teaching and learning within specific professional contexts. The knowledge produced is therefore intrinsically contextualised and oriented toward professional use, even when it takes propositional form and mobilises recognised research tools.

A defining feature of this stance lies in the origin of the research questions themselves. Within a teacher-researcher epistemology, questions cannot be externally imposed without undermining the very conditions of engagement that sustain inquiry. They must emerge from the teacher's own practice—from recurring difficulties, unresolved dilemmas, persistent frustrations, surprising observations, or moments of professional unease. This emphasis on questions emerging from practice echoes earlier accounts of teacher research as a situated way of knowing (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Gholami & Mehrmohammadi, 2014; Wamba, 2011). These questions are often rooted in what troubles teachers most deeply in their daily work: are unable to directly access what is in their

students' minds, students who do not learn as expected, interventions that seem ineffective despite experience, tensions between curricular demands and classroom realities, or pedagogical choices whose consequences often remain objectively opaque. Far from constituting a bias to be corrected, this subjective and situated origin of inquiry is a central epistemic resource. It is precisely because these questions matter personally and professionally that teachers find the motivation to pursue them rigorously, to invest time and energy in data collection and analysis, and to persevere until they reach answers they judge sufficiently convincing and useful.

From the teacher-researcher's perspective, scientific literature does not constitute the primary origin of the problems under investigation, nor is it necessarily the ultimate destination of the knowledge produced. Research questions typically emerge first from within practice—from recurring pedagogical difficulties, puzzling classroom observations, or persistent uncertainties about students' learning. In this sense, research literature may, but rarely functions as the initial driver of inquiry. Rather, it becomes a resource that may subsequently help teachers refine their questions, situate their observations within broader conceptual frameworks, or identify methodological tools capable of illuminating the phenomena they seek to understand.

Consequently, the role of literature within a teacher-researcher epistemology differs markedly from the role it plays in academic research. Instead of serving as the object of an exhaustive and systematic review aimed at mapping the current state of knowledge, it is mobilised more selectively and instrumentally. Teachers may consult research findings to clarify concepts, explore plausible explanations, or draw inspiration from existing investigative approaches. In this sense, literature can provide conceptual lenses and methodological suggestions that help structure inquiry without determining its direction.

Within this epistemic regime, however, inquiry does not depend on exhaustive mastery of the scholarly literature. Its legitimacy rests elsewhere: in the production of empirically grounded and professionally meaningful knowledge. The teacher-researcher's work is not primarily oriented toward filling gaps in the scientific literature or contributing to cumulative disciplinary knowledge. Rather, it seeks to illuminate concrete aspects of practice in ways that are empirically grounded and professionally meaningful. For this reason, research publications are typically approached in a pragmatic manner: they are consulted when they help clarify a problem or suggest useful ways of investigating it, and disregarded when they do not. Their relevance is therefore subordinated to the practical imperative that ultimately governs teacher-led inquiry—the production of knowledge that can inform and improve professional action.

At the same time, navigating research literature may represent a challenge for many teachers. Identifying relevant studies, interpreting methodological choices, or situating findings within broader theoretical conversations often requires familiarity with academic conventions that are not central to ordinary teaching practice. For this reason, collaboration with professional researchers may play a supportive role, helping teachers access and interpret relevant work without displacing their ownership of the inquiry.

But crucially, the teacher-researcher stance is necessarily rooted in teaching practice. A teacher-researcher is always also a teacher, and the adoption of this stance is episodic rather than permanent. It presupposes a temporary suspension of the immediacy of pedagogical action in order to treat aspects of practice as objects of inquiry rather than as problems requiring immediate resolution. This suspension does not imply a withdrawal from professional responsibility, nor a distancing from students' needs. On the contrary, it reflects a deliberate reorientation of epistemic priorities for specific purposes: slowing down action to better understand it, postponing intervention in order to document it, and accepting short-term uncertainty in the service of longer-term improvement. The teacher-researcher stance is to the teacher what rest is to the athlete: apart from the primary activity, yet essential to sustaining it.

Within this stance, teachers accept uncertainty, expose their intuitions to empirical testing, and render their reasoning explicit—not despite their professional commitments, but because of them. They remain mindful of the constraints, ethical responsibilities, and aims of their profession, and continuously arbitrate between the demands of inquiry and the primacy of teaching. The teacher-researcher epistemology thus describes a demanding but coherent way of knowing from within practice: one that recognises inquiry as a temporary, effortful, and intentional deviation from ordinary teaching activity, undertaken precisely because teachers seek to act more lucidly, more responsibly, and more effectively once they return to it.

Borrowings, Overlaps, and Irreducible Differences

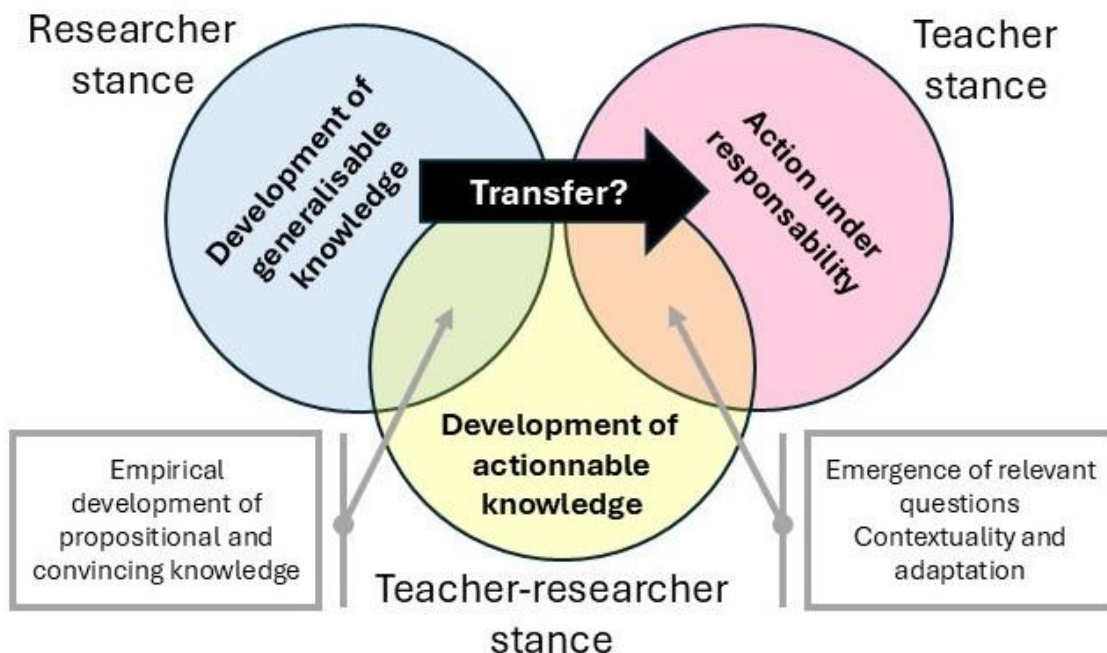
Although the teacher-researcher stance borrows extensively from both teaching and research, it constitutes a distinct epistemic regime with its own internal coherence. From the researcher's stance, it inherits a concern for empirical grounding and explicit justification. From the teacher stance, it inherits contextual sensitivity and an orientation toward actionable knowledge. However, these borrowings are reconfigured in light of a different epistemic economy, in which neither generalisability nor immediate pedagogical action functions as the supreme criterion of value.

In this respect, the present framework differs from approaches that primarily conceptualise practitioner inquiry through identity transformation (Goodnough, 2010), reflective practice alone (Kolajo, 2025), or participation in communities of practice (Hudson, 2024). While these perspectives illuminate important dimensions of teacher inquiry, we argue that they often leave under-specified the epistemological structure of the stance itself and the specific criteria by which its knowledge claims may be judged. Indeed, such studies often identify or articulate the problem (Barkhuizen, 2021) of a lack of guidelines to motivate the work of faculty researchers and alleviate their concerns about the value of their work, but they do not go any further to provide them with the tools to address this or to reassure them.

Unlike the researcher stance, the teacher-researcher stance does not treat abstraction and transferability as primary epistemic goods. Unlike the teacher stance, however, it deliberately suspends the immediacy of action to examine practice through systematic and reasoned inquiry. Conflating these distinct orientations into a single, unified epistemology would risk generating misplaced expectations and inappropriate evaluative criteria, thereby obscuring what is epistemically at stake in each stance. Several authors have noted that misunderstandings about the epistemological nature of practitioner research often led to inappropriate evaluative criteria (Kahn, 2024; Noffke, 2009). The teacher-researcher stance is therefore best understood not as a hybrid compromise between teaching and research, but as an exclusive epistemic positioning (Potvin, submitted) that must be explicitly and intentionally adopted, adequately supported, and eventually relinquished when teaching priorities or emergencies prevail. Although exclusive in its epistemic logic, the teacher-researcher stance usually yields to the teaching function it serves: when instructional urgencies or ethical responsibilities toward students arise, inquiry necessarily yields, and teaching rightfully takes precedence.

Defining and distinguishing these three epistemologies makes it possible to situate teacher-led inquiry within a coherent epistemic landscape. Figure 1 provides a metarialization of some of the main aspects, relations and inclusions that characterize the stances considered. Establishing their relative positioning in such a way may help clarify that tensions are structural rather than accidental, and why neither academic nor purely utilitarian standards could be sufficient to evaluate teachers' inquiry work. By articulating the specific epistemic commitments associated with each stance, this framework provides conceptual resources for navigating legitimately between different ways of knowing, judging, and acting within teaching-related professions.

Figure 1
The Three Stances



Why Clarifying the Teacher-Researcher Epistemology Matters

Clarifying the epistemology of the teacher-researcher stance is not an end in itself, nor does it aim to settle long-standing debates about the nature of productive educational knowledge. Rather, it responds to a practical and recurrent difficulty documented across the literature on action research and practitioner inquiry: teachers who engage in research-like activities often struggle to situate their work epistemically and to judge its value with confidence (Atkinson, 1994; Goodnough, 2010; Megowan-Romanowicz, 2010; Yuan & Burns, 2017). We suggest that many of these difficulties stem less from insufficient motivation, ordinary confusion or methodological shortcomings than from a lack of explicit epistemological reference points adapted to teachers' professional realities.

One immediate benefit of clarifying the teacher-researcher epistemology lies in the normalisation of tensions experienced by teachers engaged in inquiry. When teacher-produced knowledge is implicitly assessed against academic standards of generality and robustness, teachers may perceive their work as epistemically fragile or illegitimate, even when it is coherent, empirically grounded, and professionally meaningful. Several authors have shown how such misalignments contribute to frustration, self-doubt, or disengagement (Atkinson, 1994; Megowan-Romanowicz, 2010). By articulating an epistemology in which contextualised, practice-oriented knowledge is legitimate in its own right, these tensions can be reframed as structural features of the stance rather than as personal or professional failures.

Clarification also supports more appropriate ways of evaluating teacher-led inquiry. Rather than applying uniform research-quality benchmarks across heterogeneous contexts, an explicit epistemological framework invites more nuanced evaluative questions: Are the knowledge claims transparent and empirically grounded? Are they (and how are they-) convincing to teachers working in comparable contexts? Do they inform reflective practice in meaningful ways? Such questions resonate with calls in the literature to develop criteria that respect the specific aims and constraints of practitioner research (Capobianco & Feldman, 2006; Groothuisen et al., 2023). Importantly, this shift does not lower epistemic standards; it reorients them.

At the level of professional learning environments, clarifying the teacher-researcher epistemology helps illuminate why collective structures such as professional learning communities or research–practice partnerships play a central role. These settings function not only as social support, but as epistemic communities in which norms of justification, critique, and credibility are negotiated and sustained (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Hudson, 2024). Making these norms explicit may strengthen the capacity of such communities to support inquiry over time, while also benefiting teachers who engage in inquiry more episodically or in relative isolation (Banegas & Consoli, 2025).

Although the present proposal remains primarily conceptual, it may nevertheless offer practical heuristic value for teacher education, professional development, and research–practice partnerships. For example, making epistemic

expectations more explicit may help teachers, facilitators, and institutions better negotiate the aims, limits, and evaluative criteria associated with teacher-led inquiry. Exploring such applications empirically, however, would require further research beyond the scope of the present article.

In this perspective, the value of teacher-researcher knowledge is not primarily indexed to scholarly novelty, statistical generalisation, etc. but to its capacity to generate warranted, actionable intelligibility about practice. A “good” teacher-researcher claim is one that is empirically anchored, transparently argued, and consequential for professional judgement—helping teachers see classroom phenomena more lucidly and decide more responsibly, even under ordinary constraints. Crucially, such knowledge need not remain private or purely local. Its credibility and reach are strengthened when it is documented in communicable forms (e.g., cases, routines, instruments, or decision rules) and subjected to collegial critique within professional epistemic communities (PLCs, RPPs, networks). Through comparison across sufficiently similar contexts—partial replications, converging observations, and shared scrutiny—teacher-researcher knowledge can become professionally transferable without having to meet the full epistemic horizon of academic research.

Finally, we believe that clearly and unambiguously affirming what the teacher-researcher stance is, what it entails, and what it legitimately prioritises helps give this posture a more explicit and recognisable status within the teaching profession. By naming and defining it, we contribute to making it a legitimate and intelligible professional stance and function rather than an ambiguous expectation placed upon teachers. In doing so, this clarification may help relieve practising teachers from the uncomfortable feeling of “sitting on two chairs” at once—being implicitly asked to behave simultaneously as teachers and as academic researchers without clear epistemic guidance. By articulating the teacher-researcher stance as a distinct and legitimate epistemic position, we provide a third chair: one that acknowledges the specific aims, constraints, and values of teacher-led inquiry. Such recognition may in turn foster a stronger sense of professional coherence and legitimacy and, ultimately, a renewed form of professional pride in the knowledge teachers are able to generate from within their own practice.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the limits of the present proposal. The epistemology of the teacher-researcher outlined here is not offered as a definitive or exhaustive account. It is grounded in specific contexts, disciplinary traditions, and accumulated experience, and it remains open to refinement, extension, and critique. We therefore see this characterisation not as a definitive epistemological account, but as an open and situated conceptual proposal inviting further critique, refinement, and alternative formulations—one that invites other researchers, teacher-educators, and practitioners to contribute alternative perspectives, test its relevance in different settings, and enrich it through dialogue.

Beyond its immediate relevance for teacher-led inquiry, the present proposal may also invite a broader reflection on the epistemological status of research work in education itself. If the teacher-researcher stance calls for an epistemology adapted to the production of contextualised, practice-oriented knowledge, one may ask whether the

ordinary work of university-based educational researchers can always be adequately described through the epistemology of the researcher stance as defined here. Is educational research primarily oriented toward the production of generalisable propositions, or does it more often aim to generate situated understandings whose value lies in their interpretability and relevance across contexts? Alternatively, might educational research warrant its own epistemological characterisation—distinct from both the scientific researcher and the teacher-researcher stances, and governed by its own aims, methods, and criteria of value? (Kincheloe, 2011) While these questions lie beyond the scope of the present proposal, they represent a natural extension of the framework proposed here and an invitation to further dialogue.

Finally, looking ahead, we remain cautiously optimistic about the potential of the teacher-researcher stance, even if it remains challenging (Banegas & Consoli, 2025). When adequately conceptualised, supported, and recognised, it offers a promising pathway for bridging inquiry and practice without collapsing their differences. By enabling teachers to engage with evidence in ways that are both rigorous and professionally meaningful, we believe that the teacher-researcher stance best (more than unidirectional evidence-based training) holds a clear potential to contribute—incrementally but durably—to the improvement of teaching practices of in-service teachers and to a more reflective, empowered, and knowledge-informed teaching profession (Potvin et al., 2024).

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