Educational Research and Practice: Problems, Prospects and Ways of Bridging the Gap

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Abstract

Educational research and practice are often assumed to be interconnected; however, in reality, they frequently exist in isolation from a range of knowledge. This divergence may stem from the theoretical nature of research, which often lacks practical solutions, as well as from perceptions of exclusivity and bias among practitioners. Such attitudes have widened the gap between researchers and practitioners. The objective of this review is to address key underlying issues and explore the possibilities for integrating educational research and practice. The methodology adheres to established guidelines for systematic reviews. A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple electronic databases relevant to education, social sciences, and psychology. The findings showed that the literature highlights various initiatives, including a growing emphasis on action research, collaboration between researchers and educational stakeholders, and mutual understanding through orientation programs and research opportunities for educators. By incorporating reflective practices and models for bridging the gap, educational research can be brought closer to practical application. This review underscores the importance of integrating research and practice to foster welfare and development within the broader field of education.

Keywords: *Educational Research, Research and Practice, Action Research, Theory and Practice, Collaborative Action Research*

1. Introduction

The gap between research and practice has been a topic of heated debate worldwide, but its roots go back more than a hundred years to Dewey (1904), who not only recognized the divergence between theory and practice but also proposed methods to bridge it (Shulman, 1998). Dewey's creation of the Department of Pedagogy and the Laboratory School in Chicago in 1894 aimed to

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establish a research environment where ideas were not only formulated but also tested, generating practical insights and inspiring relevant research.

The existence of this gap is widely acknowledged and extensively discussed by various stakeholders (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Biesta, 2007, 2016). Numerous efforts have been made across different platforms to examine the discrepancies between these two sources of knowledge (Iqbal et al., 2010). As Hussain (2004) argues, theory serves as the foundation of effective practice; without it, practice remains ineffective. Consequently, many countries have invested significant efforts in exploring and addressing this gap (Shaharabani & Yarden, 2019; Wolmarans, 2001). Bauer and Fisher (2007) outlined that educational research's primary aim is to further develop procedures and products, expanding both knowledge and practice. Moreover, according to Hallinan (1996) both researchers and practitioners have lamented the mismatch between empirical research and instructional practice. Researchers often find themselves disregarded and misunderstood by practitioners, while practitioners feel that much research does not address their practical problems (Valle, 2025). This mutual concern drives the need for better solutions to make educational research more advantageous and meaningful for practitioners (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Levin, 2004; Krell et al., 2019).

McIntyre (2005) describes the fundamental gap between theory and practice as a discrepancy between two distinct forms of knowledge: epistemic knowledge from researchers and procedural knowledge or practical wisdom, from teaching and learning practice (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996). These two forms of knowledge exist at opposite ends of a spectrum: research-based knowledge is rooted in academic journals, while procedural knowledge is applied in daily classroom settings (Kinyaduka, 2017). This tug-of-war continues as researchers seek to construct new knowledge, while practitioners demand innovative solutions to real teaching and learning challenges in the classroom (Bates, 2002). However, McIntyre (2005) and Hatasa (2013) observed that, despite ongoing efforts, both researchers and practitioners have struggled to effectively utilize research findings to improve classroom practice. Moreover, only a minority of teachers can confidently claim that their teaching has improved as a result of research in the field (Masood et al., 2022). Hargreaves (1996) argued that teaching could not yet be considered a research-based profession and emphasized the need for practitioners, not just researchers, to help set the agenda for educational research.

Literature presents varying views on the role of educational research in addressing actual educational issues and concerns. Kaestle (1993), for example, heavily criticizes educational research, while others, such as Levin (2004),

appreciate its efforts to enhance policy and practice. Similarly, Badley (2003) considers research a disaster, and Berliner (2002) describes it as a very difficult science. Certain critics (Englert & Tarrant, 1993; Stevens, 2004) accused researchers of being obsessed with gaining a reputation and only caring about publishing their research in prestigious journals, neglecting its practical application and usefulness for teachers and students. Moreover, there is a perceived inefficiency in disseminating research results (Chafouleas & Riley-Tillman, 2005; Hostetler, 2005). On the other hand, some researchers (Landry et al., 2001; Bates, 2002) reject these accusations, arguing that research findings are more widely used than is commonly assumed. However, their impact may not always be immediately visible, due to the complexity of educational contexts and the differing approaches of novice and experienced teachers (Allen, 2009).

1.1 Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the review were to:

1. find out the major problems and challenges encountered in translating educational research findings into the practical educational setting
2. understand the current and emerging prospects for fostering a stronger connection between educational research and practice.
3. examine effective strategies, initiatives, and models that have been identified or implemented to bridge the gap between educational research and practice

1.2 Research Questions

The review was guided by the following key research questions:

1. What are the major problems and challenges encountered in translating educational research findings into practical educational settings?
2. What are the current and emerging prospects for fostering a stronger connection between educational research and practice?
3. What effective strategies, initiatives, and models have been identified or implemented to bridge the gap between educational research and practice?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study has implications for researchers and practitioners. It addresses a persistent and critical challenge in education: the often-cited disconnect between what is learned through rigorous research and what is implemented in classrooms and educational policy. The review will highlight the "prospects" and emerging opportunities for fostering a stronger connection between research and practice.

2. Literature Review

In the preceding discussion, the existence of a gap between research and practice is established. Broekkamp and Van-Hout-Wolters (2007) identified four major problems: two pertaining to the production of research and the other two related to the utilization of research.

One significant issue in educational research is the lack of well-defined and relatively few practical outcomes. Levin and O'Donnell (1999) argue that the inefficiency in conducting research contributes to its inconclusive nature. Gore and Gitlin (2004) further emphasize that inadequate understanding and command over research settings add to the dissatisfaction. The lack of conclusiveness prevents the emergence of practical recommendations ("what works") based on research findings (Kinyaduka, 2017). Moreover, the inconclusiveness of educational research is not solely due to its complexity and lower quality compared to hard science disciplines. It also stems from an overemphasis on the intellectual aspects of teaching and learning, neglecting the emotional and technical aspects of the learning environment and context (Berliner, 2002; Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Biesta, 2016). One of the reasons for its limited application is that research is often conducted on issues that are already well-established or irrelevant to the specific problem (Hammersley, 2002; Levin, 2004). Despite efforts to move research settings from laboratories to classrooms and encourage cooperation between researchers and practitioners, producing conclusive results in such settings remains a significant challenge (Berliner, 2002).

The third and fourth issues are related to practitioners' attitudes towards educational research. Many practitioners do not view educational research as decisive or having a useful impact on their practice, leading to a pessimistic attitude about its utility (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Hatasa, 2013). This attitude is primarily attributed, as described by Gore and Gitlin (2004), to the perception that educational research is irrelevant, inaccessible and untrustworthy because it does not address the real needs of practitioners. Researchers are often seen as unfamiliar with the actual situation of the classroom (Shoval, 2025).

To address these issues, including the application of educational research results in the classroom, the literature suggests several recommendations (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Gore & Gitlin, 2004). However, in reality, teachers, policymakers, and other educational practitioners often hesitate to incorporate these results in their practice, leading to biases. They may lack the necessary research skills and knowledge to understand how to effectively utilize these findings in real settings and contribute to solving problems that emerge (Masood et al., 2022). Therefore, practitioners should be offered targeted training

to develop the essential skills needed to access relevant research, critically assess its content, and evaluate its practical implications. Moreover, fostering academic and professional collaboration can contribute to bridging the gap of mistrust and bias that often separates researchers and practitioners (Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2021).

Many efforts have been made to bridge the gap between education research and its application. Numerous authors have emphasized the need for collaboration between researchers and practitioners, working together on an equal footing to enhance the former's interest in the practical utility of their results (Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2004; Edwards, Sebba & Rickinson, 2007). Some scholars propose that both actors in educational change should come together, not only to discuss research concepts but also to jointly plan and implement these ideas (Kaestle, 1993).

De Vries (1990) discussed two significant aspects of knowledge that enable educational research to inform practice. The first aspect is the "technical role" of knowledge, which leads to actionable steps for achieving desired goals. Ideally, practitioners should be informed about various techniques, strategies, and methodologies for effective teaching and learning, while understanding their relation to educational research. This practical dimension of educational research directly answers the question of "what works?" posed by Biesta (2007, 2012a). It provides immediate solutions to problems by guiding practitioners on which research tools to employ in specific situations to achieve desired results in the field of practice (Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2021).

While the technical role is valuable, De Vries (1990) also stressed the importance of the "cultural role" of educational research. Through this approach, educational research informs practice by offering different explanations and interpretations of educational processes in various situations.

Biesta (2007, 2011, 2016) also emphasizes the equal importance of this cultural role alongside the technical function of educational research. Addressing both roles equally allows practitioners to improve their practice by gaining new perspectives. According to Biesta, focusing solely on either the technical or cultural role can lead to a disconnect between educational research and practice, but a balanced approach can provide cohesion.

Vanderlinde and Braak (2010) conducted an important study interviewing different stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, researchers, and intermediaries, to explore the gap between educational research and practice according to their perspectives. These stakeholders identified inefficiency in dealing with practical classroom problems as a significant obstacle to implementing educational research. Pring (2000) also pointed out that

the research questions may not be relevant to educational practice. Additionally, teachers often lack the necessary skills to use research results effectively due to the academic language used in the research publications. Researchers argue that reputable journals often require the use of technical terms. They feel more at ease with technical language and suggest that intermediaries should be responsible for conveying findings in a manner understandable to practitioners. According to Jochems (2005), time constraints often prevent researchers from explaining complex concepts in simpler ways. Additionally, the worlds of research and practice operate on different logics, and there are cultural differences between professionals in these fields, each with distinct goals and values (Randall, 2002).

Teachers, when considering the most valuable resources for professional development, tend to turn to conferences and seek materials and tools for classroom activities rather than drawing on educational research findings (Fleer, 2001). Furthermore, teachers and school administrators express concern about the descriptive nature of research, which they view as lacking relevance to the practical issues they encounter. They advocate for research that directly benefits them in real classroom situations. In contrast, researchers argue that this type of research is not only traditional but also doesn't require significant financial resources, which are essential for conducting practice-based research (Shaharabani & Yarden, 2019).

Teachers have provided suggestions to reduce the gap between research and practice. They recommend enhancing the practicability of research findings and providing them with enough time and support to comprehend and implement research results (Hatasa, 2013). Deputing intermediaries in schools to help with comprehension and dissemination of research findings is also proposed (Nutley et al., 2007). Encouraging teachers to use specific research to improve their expertise in the teaching-learning process would also be beneficial (Shoval, 2025).

While both researchers and practitioners acknowledge the existence of the gap, disagreements arise concerning the reasons and ways to bridge it. Some advocate extensive research conducted primarily by researchers, while others propose limited research with equal contributions from both sides. Corno (1999) suggests considering multiple viewpoints on causes and solutions from informed individuals rather than relying on a single cause and solution. However, some argue that the debate is mostly controlled by researchers; with practitioners' perspectives being seldom heard (Gore & Gitlin, 2004).

In the realm of research and practice, numerous strategies have been recommended to address the gap that often exists between the two. Broekkamp and Hout-Wolters (2007) have identified several solutions to the issues at hand,

some of which appear to be two sides of the same coin, providing answers to specific problems when reversed. This discussion centers around four models that can effectively bridge the gap: (a) The Research Development Diffusion Model (RDD); (b) The Evidence-Based Practical Model (EBP); (c) The Model of Boundary Crossing Practices (BCP); and (d) The Model of Knowledge Communities (KC).

The first model, known as RDD, places a mediator as a pivotal figure, given the assumption that practitioners may not be inherently interested in applying research-generated knowledge. The mediator's role is to investigate the practical applicability of research findings in real-world settings. Not only do they observe the effects of this knowledge, but they also disseminate the outcomes after implementing it, often through publications. In this model, practice-oriented research extends to basic research, exploring how knowledge originating from earlier stages can be applied to the actual educational context.

The EBP model, as its name suggests, revolves around the application of findings from experimental research. Unlike the RDD model, which is based on descriptive theories, the EBP model solely focuses on empirical and scientific results. Its primary emphasis is on answering the question "What works?" by concentrating on methods supported by practical evidence. This model can be implemented in two ways: practitioners themselves can undertake "action research" (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 1993; Biesta, 2012a;), or they can utilize the results of action research conducted by others under similar conditions. Slavin (2002) views the application of methods randomly in the teaching and learning process as the most effective way to obtain empirical evidence of their effectiveness, offering clear implications for practice. Additionally, Goossens (2004) has highlighted its prominence as one of the most commonly used models in health studies.

The BCP model operates in two modes, aiming for collaboration in integrating responsibilities from other areas of knowledge and professions (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003). In one approach, a single person may work on diverse research and practice issues (Altrichter et al., 1993). On the other hand, individuals from different areas can come together to work on a single problem. This approach allows for different stakeholders to exchange roles, fostering increased trust and mutual understanding of each other's tasks, ultimately aiding in implementing research findings in real-life scenarios (Shoval, 2025).

Lastly, the KC model seeks to create a strong bond between researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and mediators. By sharing common concerns and leveraging each other's expertise, they can generate new knowledge

(Hammersley, 2002; Krell et al, 2019; Wenger, 1998). Such a community of professionals and researchers can work in various capacities and at different levels with the core purpose of bridging the gap between research and practice.

Moreover, Vanderlinde and Braak (2010) highlighted another important aspect of propagating research results. Researchers usually adopt the basic dissemination route of getting their research results published in journals or sharing these results at conferences. However, they often overlook the productive mode of spreading their research findings through collaborative means, such as training or coaching teachers. To overcome this problem, researchers and practitioners proposed a new model of dissemination known as the "collaborative model". In this model, both communities of researchers and practitioners benefit by sharing each other's skills and expertise. Here, teachers are considered experts who need to be motivated to meditate, rather than just being guided by the researchers (Bates, 2002; Nisbet, 2005). Furthermore, Pieters and Jochems (2003) advocate for a 'circular model' rather than a 'linear model,' a perspective also supported by Nutley et al. (2007). In this circular model, researchers and practitioners are able to share research findings and practical knowledge on an equal footing.

For effective use of the collaborative model to disseminating research results and findings, Vanderlinde and Braak (2010) further discovered that the model works best by following these five points: (a) practitioners and researchers should work on the plans over a period of at least five years to create a rigorous alliance; (b) programs for the professional development of teachers and intermediaries should be conducted to gain a better understanding of the latest research trends; (c) researchers should improve their expertise in communication skills; (d) they should enhance their ability to share their research results with practitioners briefly and realistically; and (e) researchers should provide complete freedom to share the research results, even if they do not align with the expectations of funding organisations.

The preceding paragraphs described how the gap between educational research and practice has been discussed in the literature and provided suggestions to close this gap. The related literature has not only debated the problems and issues but has also proposed solutions to reduce the gap. Here are some additional recommendations to gain a better view of how to improve the situation (Masood et al., 2022).

Teachers should be given opportunities for their professional development, which, according to Godin et al. (2014), plays a decisive role in refining the teaching and learning process. It becomes more influential when both parties get a chance to discover better plans for improving the learning process

(Lave & Wegner, 1991). Furthermore, Lumpe (2007) added that such collaborations prove very constructive when they have one shared target. Additionally, Cullen, Akerson, and Hanson (2010) observed that collaboration between teachers and researchers improved students' learning at the university level. In this regard, design-based approaches can be beneficial for both sides (Thein et al., 2012). On the one hand, it compels teachers to think more about their practice and related issues, and on the other hand, it forces the researchers to think deeply about how to overcome these issues and improve classroom conditions (Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2021).

More than collaboration in professional development is required. "Collaborative action research" is equally important. It was argued that action research is a very convenient way of improving teaching practices, resulting in mutual success. Through action research, both educational researchers and practitioners are encouraged to put their efforts and skills into minimising the gap between theoretical concepts and their practical implications (Godin et al., 2014; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Another significant recommendation, which further elaborates on the argument discussed above, is provided by Rubin (2014). Rubin was of the view that descriptive research, when adjusted with "empirically supported treatments" in actual situations, proves to be supportive in bridging the gap between the two.

One further suggestion, by Ginexi and Hilton (2006), is to improve the existing situation through better financial support and political cooperation. Unless the research is politically supported, researchers will not be able to disseminate their findings to the public. Regardless of whether the findings are positive or negative, they should be made public, because if the results go against the expectations of researchers or policymakers, this can lead to further investigation — which may ultimately have positive outcomes. Additionally, the community should also take part in this process so that an advantage can be derived not only from scientific knowledge but also from the knowledge shared by other stakeholders. Moreover, editors should change their publishing policy by giving more importance to focusing on application rather than just extending the explanations of previous studies (Shoval, 2025). Similarly, universities should take responsibility for making their students genuine researchers or practitioners by involving them in practical and real-world setting, while the present practitioners should be trained to fully utilize research knowledge through proper implementation in the community (Kinyaduka, 2017; Mallonee et al., 2006).

Action research can serve as a powerful bridge between the vast body of educational research and practical application. In recent years, it has helped

strengthen the relationship between these two dimensions of knowledge and has also narrowed the gap in perspectives between educational researchers and practitioners. Koshy (2010) argued that "action research supports practitioners to seek ways in which they can provide good quality education by transforming the quality of teaching-related activities, thereby enhancing students' learning" (p.1). In support of this argument, it was shown that there is no question that action research is of value, not only for research, but also for practice. It helps teachers improve classroom practices (Hine, 2013; Shaharabani & Yarden, 2019). Keeping these considerations in mind, Koshy (2010) presents action research by emphasizing its practical nature and purposes, outlining the following key characteristics:

- Action research is a method aimed at improving practice; it involves action, evaluation, and critical reflection. Based on the evidence collected, changes in practice are then implemented;
- It is inherently participative and collaborative, carried out by individuals who share a common goal;
- It is grounded in specific situations and contexts;
- It fosters reflection through participants' interpretations of their experiences;
- Knowledge is generated through action and within the context of its application;
- It may involve problem-solving, provided that the solution contributes to improved practice;
- Findings emerge as the action unfolds, but they are not definitive or universally applicable (pp. 1–2).

Each of the points given above relates action research to practice in educational settings, particularly in a teacher learning situation, as the focus of educational activities in all tiers of education is on teaching-learning activities. Therefore, Hine concludes that "universities must include action research as a core unit in teacher preparation degree programs — either at the undergraduate or postgraduate level, as the action research sequence holds significant value to improving practice within classrooms, schools, and communities" (2013, p. 161). This type of applied research also involves students in the research process, and their belief in this source of knowledge is further enhanced when they practically realize the fruits of educational research by improvements in their learning and related problems (Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2021). Thus, teachers and students should be given training to solve their problems by conducting educational research themselves and applying it to the real-world situations of the classroom and school. Another way to integrate educational research into practice is to

incorporate the latest research findings into the curriculum, motivating students when they study the application of research in current situations (Masood et al., 2022).

A crucial aspect concerning the difficulty in bridging the gap between the worlds of research and practitioners is the role they attribute to theory in relation to educational practices. To develop educational research effectively, it becomes essential to engage with practitioners in order to systematically and rigorously understand their perceptions of research. Joram (2007) proposed research with the specific aim of understanding teachers' and university researchers' views on educational research. Building a genuine comparison between practitioners and researchers, comparing theories, models, and proposing specific contributions to pedagogical knowledge, means addressing not only what teachers think about the results of academic research and their utilization but also the meanings and conceptions they attribute to theories and theoretical frameworks (Shoval, 2025).

Dewey himself pointed out the risks associated with the distance between theory and practice. He stated that theory is practical because it widens the range of attention beyond immediate purposes and desires, resulting in the creation of wider and farther-reaching purposes (Dewey, 1929). According to Dewey, the primary source of science is experience because it sets the problems, tests, modifies, confirms, or refutes the conclusions of intellectual investigation.

From a philosophical perspective, with reference to Kant, it can be argued that solving the problem of practical application of a theory requires establishing a fundamental link between theory and practice. Many practitioners make practical decisions in a situational and contextualized manner, without explicitly relying on theory due to the urgency, complexity and ever-changing nature of pedagogical problems in our hyper-connected and globalized world. However, often new challenges have yet to be matched by research data and, above all, a theoretical framework of reference (Lee, 2012).

Moreover, one should not forget the uniqueness that defines pedagogical situations. While teachers may give instructions and offer inputs suggested by theories, what happens between the moment of instruction and the obtained results is never taken for granted (Biesta, 2015). Pedagogical action has to reckon with the possibility of planning from a theoretical perspective, but it also faces the risk of uncertainty about the outcomes, making it an action always open to contingency. The structure and function of the educational system actually prevent the direct application of knowledge to practice because at the heart of professional practice is indeterminacy, something that cannot be fully defined in advance (Valle, 2025). Furthermore, Biesta highlights the idea of transforming our conception of teaching, moving away from viewing learning as the

development of competencies related to the ability to handle knowledge and transfer it as a cognitive capacity applied to yet unknown areas. Instead, educating means setting in motion processes of developing and responding to questions in the world and managing challenges and questions emerging from practice (Shoval, 2025). Thus, the starting point of education cannot only be situated practice but must be life in the world in which we live our lives (Biesta, 2021). Considering the relevance of locally constructed and distributed practical knowledge in close relationship with the world of life, the idea of the teacher-researcher (Johnson, 2002) or practitioner-researcher (Campbell et al., 2004) must be revisited, placing the concept of practice at a different level to rethink the relationship between theory and action as a circular and reflexive process that continually questions the knowledge and understanding of those involved.

3. Research Methodology

This systematic review aimed to comprehensively synthesize existing literature on the problems, prospects, and strategies for bridging the gap between educational research and practice. The methodology adheres to established guidelines for systematic reviews. A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple electronic databases relevant to education, social sciences, and psychology. Peer-reviewed empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods), systematic reviews, and theoretical papers were reviewed, focusing explicitly on the relationship between educational research and practice, including problems, prospects, or solutions for bridging the gap. A narrative synthesis approach was employed to present the findings due to the anticipated heterogeneity of study designs and outcomes.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The concept of reflexivity is proposed for initial and in-service teacher education, where the perception of coherence between study subjects, references, theoretical frameworks, and practical teaching tasks in context is strengthened (Eraut, 2004). Developing the reflective capacities of student teachers and in-service teachers contributes to their perception of coherence between the theoretical and practical components of training programs and curricula. Reflection, critical thinking, and reflective practices have been proposed as methods to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and to develop and articulate tacit knowledge. The findings of these studies imply that the development of students' reflective skills could be essential to help them experience coherence between the theoretical and practical components of their training, which, in turn, is fundamental to developing professional competence (Körkkö, 2016). The acquisition of reflective skills by students during their training has a considerable impact on their perception of coherence between the

theoretical and practical parts of their training, helping them retrieve theory and thus improving their ability to become educationally wise (Biesta, 2012b).

The idea of reflection was, in fact, conceived by Dewey as an evaluation of the foundations of one's beliefs, as a process of examining the theories on which we have justified our beliefs (Dewey, 1933). Schön (1983, 1987) emphasized the importance of recognizing that professional knowledge implies both 'technical rationality' (theories) and professional artistry (reflection in action). Hensen (1996) included the development of knowledge directly related to classroom contexts through the reflective perspective among the objectives of action research. With the initiation of 'reflection in action' (Schön, 1983), teachers develop professional awareness to connect and redefine the various educational processes within a theory-practice dialogue.

Reflective practices involve being aware of the theories or assumptions underlying professional practice, with the aim of bridging the gap between what is stated and what is actually implemented, in an effort to improve both. Reflection can clearly be adapted in many different ways to suit the specific purposes and contexts of teaching and learning (Mezirow, 1991; Brookfield, 1995). When reflection becomes critical reflection and is integrated into university teaching programmes, organised continuing education, or peer supervision for practitioners, it can lead to a fundamental shift in perspective (Cranton, 1996). The creation of knowledge through continuous reflection on experience is an ongoing process for any committed practitioner; a critically reflective attitude means always being ready to question—and, if necessary, revise—deeply held assumptions (Valle, 2025).

Reflective practices strongly support the vision of the teacher as a researcher. Reflexive engagement enables teachers to act purposefully and draw on theoretical insights from their practical experience, resulting in a circular and dynamic process (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The dialogue between theory and practice emerges through the integration of multiple elements—such as professional development, critical reflection, the search for epistemological foundations, and the transformative and formative aims of pedagogical action (Moon, 2007).

Even when the process of theorising among practitioners is tied to personal and professional self-reorientation, the gap between theory and practice narrows, and theory itself becomes, as Hook (1999, p. 2) suggests, "a healing place." Reorienting experiences can be understood as processes of recovery, in which theory rehabilitates practice and, in turn, is renewed by it. As Hook further observes, "Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfils

this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorising towards this end" (1999, p. 2).

In this sense, theory becomes a dialectical unity with practice: knowledge arises from action and returns to it, transforming it (Freire, 2000). Theory becomes a healing and generative dimension, a social practice with liberatory potential. Referring to theory must always meet a specific need—situated in the lived experience of the practitioner—who must remain an intentional subject, able not only to understand but also to take a position.

The opposition between practice and theory should not be assumed as inevitable, as if the world must either be interpreted or transformed. Rather, theory can be seen as a form of action—because it involves self-transformation and enables transformation in the surrounding environment. Situatedness (or simply 'context') is embedded in every theoretical act: each theory is grounded in contextual and autobiographical experience, forming the basis of a genuine learning community. Theory is never detached from concrete actions; it always takes shape in the space between people and between lived experiences.

In conclusion, much of the research literature remains confined within academic circles, often in the form of papers and dissertations that rarely reach practitioners. This disconnects between research and practice continues to hinder meaningful progress and innovation in the field of education. However, strategies do exist to bridge this gap and foster closer integration between educational research and everyday practice.

Bridging the divide between educational research and practice depends largely on how this gap is perceived and the objectives set for narrowing it. While research and practice may initially seem to occupy opposite ends of the knowledge spectrum, recent initiatives have sought to close this gap in ways that benefit the real-world educational landscape. Four distinct models—RDD, EBP, BCP, and KC—have contributed to strengthening the connection between these two domains, complemented by the development of reflexive skills that help translate research findings into practical insights.

Within this framework, the figure of the teacher-researcher, equipped with reflective tools, is key to identifying and addressing challenges in practice. This approach contributes to a growing body of knowledge that helps to overcome the limitations often associated with educational theory (Ebbutt & Elliott, 1984). Teachers' active engagement as action researchers, in collaboration with scholars, proves essential for the direct application of research in classroom settings. Likewise, encouraging students to investigate complex, real-life situations nurtures a culture of inquiry and critical thinking.

Ultimately, involving all stakeholders in education—including teachers, administrators, and policymakers—not only in research activities but also in assessing their practical relevance, fosters a more balanced and integrated approach. This holistic perspective holds promise for advancing the field of education in meaningful and sustainable ways.

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