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Qualitative Inquiry in an Age of Educationalese

Gustavo E. Fischman
&
Adai A. Tefera
Arizona State University
United States of America

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Abstract: In this introduction we reflect on two key questions that initiated this special issue on qualitative inquiry: What can qualitative researchers do to regain their post-paradigm-wars cache? How do we avoid distracting "science wars" in the future? We suggest that the strong tendency to narrow the research methods accepted as "scientific" – because they adopt quantitative perspectives and are presumed a priori to be more rigorous – has created an *educationalese,* a narrative of rigid categories that has not necessarily contributed to more effective or persuasive educational research. The article ends by suggesting that the use of "knowledge mobilization" strategies would help to strengthen qualitative research and educational research in general.
Keywords: educational research; qualitative methods; knowledge mobilization; Science Wars.

Investigación cualitativa en la era del educacionalismo
Resumen: En esta introducción reflexionamos sobre las dos preguntas que dieron origen a este número especial sobre la investigación cualitativa,: ¿Qué pueden hacer los/as investigadores/as

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cualitativos para recuperar el reconocimiento que tenían luego del periodo de la guerra de los paradigma? ¿Cómo podemos evitar las distracciones de las "guerras de la ciencia" en el futuro? Sugerimos que la fuerte tendencia a restringir lo métodos de investigación aceptados como siendo científica porque a adoptan estándares cuantitativos que a-priori son reconocidos como más rigurosos, han creado una narrativa que denominamos como educationalismo, que no ha contribuido demasiado para que la investigación educativa sea más eficaz o persuasivo. En nuestra conclusiones sugerimos que el uso de estrategias de "movilización de conocimiento" deberían ser incorporadas para fortalecer la investigación cualitativa y la investigación educativa en general.
Palabras clave: investigación educativa; métodos cualitativos; movilización de conocimientos; Guerras de la Ciencia.

A pesquisa qualitativa na era da educacionalismo
Resumo: Nesta introdução refletimos sobre as duas questões que deram origem a este dossiê sobre a pesquisa qualitativa: o que podem fazer os/as investigadores/as qualitativa para recuperar o reconhecimento obtido após o período do paradigma de guerra? Como podemos evitar as distrações das " guerras da ciência " no futuro? Sugerimos que a forte tendência de restringir os métodos de investigação aceitos como científicos porque adotam normas pressupostas como mais rigorosas criaram uma narrativa que chamamos de educacionalismo. Os modelos aplicados maioritariamente nos últimos 20 anos não ajudaram para que a pesquisa educacional seja mais eficaz ou persuasiva. Em nossos conclusões sugerimos que o uso de estratégias de " mobilização do conhecimento" deveriam ser incorporados para fortalecer a pesquisa qualitativa e pesquisa educacional em geral.
Palavras-chave: pesquisa educacional; métodos qualitativos; mobilização do conhecimento; guerra das ciências.

Understanding Educationalese[1]

> Where could animals that are "frenzied," "innumerable," and "drawn with a very fine camelhair brush" ever meet, except in "the immaterial sound of the voice pronouncing their enumeration, or on the page transcribing it? Where else could they be juxtaposed except in the non-place of language?" (Foucault, 1970, pp. xvi-xvii).

This well-known excerpt by Michel Foucault appears in the preface of *The Order of Things* (1970). The opening lines of the book describes Foucault's reaction to Jorge Luis Borges' mythical Chinese encyclopedia and its unusual system for classifying animals where:

> Animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor; (b) embalmed; (c) tame; (d) sucking pigs; (e) sirens; (f) fabulous; (g) stray dogs; (h) included in the present classification; (i) frenzied; (j) innumerable; (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush; (l) *etcetera*; (m) having just broken the water pitcher; (n) that from a long way off look like flies (Foucault, 1966, p. xv).

Reading Borges' encyclopedia was the cause of something akin to an epiphany for Foucault who wrote that this passage "shattered... all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography" (1970, p. xv, emphasis in original). Borges' encyclopedia offered Foucault a glimpse of what it might be like to consider the world through unfamiliar frameworks. Foucault's reflections on this classificatory system brought into

[1] We want to thank the critical comments of our colleagues Jeanne Powers, Kate Anderson, and Rosa M. Jiménez. This introduction has greatly benefitted from their insights.

sharp relief the fact that everyday perception and understanding are always shaped by a pre-existing encyclopedia of cultural organization and classification. Foucault (1970) wrote: "In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*" (p. xv, emphasis in original).[2]

Foucault's considerations on our modern taxonomies raise several questions that will guide us throughout this brief introduction to the special issue on qualitative inquiry: What are the grounds for validating our contemporary "educational research encyclopedia"? How effectively can qualitative researchers play a role in the exploration of ideas akin to Borges's educational Chinese encyclopedia? And, perhaps more importantly, can such explorations improve the role of qualitative research in addressing educational problems?

We ask you – the reader/researcher/educator – to keep Foucault's insight in mind and stop reading for a couple of minutes. Consider the question, what are the most likely entries in contemporary encyclopedias about students today?

Based on our experiences as researchers and educators we believe that it is very likely that in the contemporary encyclopedia of "educationalese," students are divided into neatly-organized categories: (a) good; (b) bad; (c) performing; (d) not-performing; (e) gifted; (f) special needs; (g) boys; (h) girls; (i) minority; (j) majority; (k) *etcetera.*

Do these categories mirror the structure of teaching and learning happening at your university program or K12-school? Do they have a basis in your courses of educational research? Is the reality of schools, or at least what we perceive to be the dominant "educational reality," made possible *only* by the educational structures – in their organizational, legal, curricular, architectural, and cultural formations – developed with modernistic tenacity since at least the mid 18th century? This common sense encyclopedia allows us to rank, establish hierarchies, look for indicators that can legitimize the validity of our classificatory systems, sort the students from best to worst and give us the certainty of a lesson well ordered, a school that fails, and a school that perform well. If the answers are positive, that is if those categories are good descriptors of our modern contemporary encyclopedia of "educationalese," if they are the common sense educational classificatory schema, then it is also very likely that there is no need for researchers to reflect and inquire about their own personal competence concerning pedagogical challenges outside this set of well-ordered categories, easily organized in pairs that help to establish the order of things, bodies, thinking, and feelings.

And yet, we all know that there are cracks in this order, that in any classificatory system there is also a "hidden network" Foucault, 1970, p. xx) of conflicting discourses and alternative understandings. The entries in our Modernistic contemporary educational encyclopedia make possible the manufacturing of our regulated pedagogical systems, which in turn get reinforced by our orderly research categories that reflect the now predictable realities about teaching and learning. Thus, we might argue that the structure of our educationalese, our contemporary research encyclopedias, makes possible our knowledge of the order of educational things and yet, there is a potentially viable network of alternative categories in the grids created by our language, our narratives, and our silences.

It is our perspective that we are currently confronting the limits of modernism in educational research, and more specifically the limitations of the "what works" research narrative as we know it. More than a decade has passed since notions of "evidence-based," "scaled-up," and "scientifically-based" research in education were hailed as the gold standard by the *No Child Left Behind* Act

[2] We are aware of the "orientalizing" tendency presented in Borges' narrative, but that tendency does not diminish the literary quality nor the disruptive power of its alternative classificatory schema.

(NCLB)[3] and the publication of the *Scientific Research in Education (SRE)* report in 2002. Needless to say the changes promoted by NCLB and the report in *SRE* prompted a swift and polarized response from researchers in the field, which deepened divisions in the so-called "science-wars" (see Berliner, 2002; Bloch, 2004; Erickson & Gutierrez, 2002; Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002; Popkewitz, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Moss et al., 2009; Pelligrino & Goldman, 2002; Philips, 2006, 2009; St. Pierre, 2002; Walters, Lareau, & Ranis, 2009). While the shouting matches of the "science wars" appear to have dissipated with most contenders seemingly retreating to their respective corners, for many qualitative researchers a nagging question remains – are the "science wars" really over? The articles in this special issue[4] examine two related questions: What can qualitative researchers do to regain their post-paradigm-wars cache? How do we avoid distracting paradigm/science wars in the future?

In this introductory essay we situate the four papers, present our perspectives on the paradigm wars, and provide suggestions for strengthening qualitative research and educational research in general. A caveat is important. Our intention here is not to explain the terms of the multiple debates, a task already well accomplished by a large and distinguished number of scholars in the field (e.g., Denzin, 2010; Delamont, 2012; Philips, 2006, 2009), but we think that it is important to briefly revisit some key issues to contextualize the contributions in this special issue and to recognize processes of continuity and discontinuity internal to the field.

Beginning with the continuities, we have very little doubt that one of the most persisting traits of educational research is its perceived low status. Research conducted by scholars in the field, is often characterized as ineffective, especially due to its seemingly low influence on improving educational policies and changing educational practices. Even Basil Bernstein, perhaps one of the most respected educational researchers outside the field, noted that in universities education is 'a pariah discourse,' and educational researchers 'are not kosher and live in profane places' (Bernstein, 2000 as quoted in Delamont, 2012, p. 3). Grover Whitehurst, the director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) between 2002-2008, voiced a critical opinion sharing Bernstein's unfavorable assessment: The "world of education, unlike defense, heath care, or industrial production, does not rest on a strong research base. In no other field are personal experience and ideology so frequently relied on to make policy choices, and in no other field is the research base so inadequate and little used" (Whitehurst, 2007, quoted in Hess, 2008, p. 9).[5]

Bernstein's and Whitehurst's unenthusiastic visions regarding research in education are not isolated perspectives, and we could add many more examples and studies reporting similar concerns although reaching very different conclusions (see for example Berliner, 2002; Cole, 2010; Levin 2004, 2011; Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2003, 2004; Nutley et al, 2007; Philips, 2007; Tseng, 2012).

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[3] The words "scientifically based research," and similar expressions were used more than a 100 times in the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education* Act, often called the *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB).

[4] This special issue originated after a panel presented at the 2013 American Educational Research Association conference on "What Do Qualitative Researchers Do Now That The 'Science Wars' Have Ended? Refocusing On Policy-Informing Inquiry." The panel was chaired by Dr. Robert Donmoyer and Dr. Gustavo E. Fischman was the discussant.

[5] Among the many examples of critical perspectives about the influence (or lack of) education research on education policies, Maris Vinovskis points out that when compared to some of the other social and behavioral disciplines "educational research appears to be relatively backward and underdeveloped … second-rate and rather unsophisticated" (Henig, 2008, p. 41, footnotes omitted). In addition to the many fierce judgments coming from insiders in the field, it is important to recognize the traditional complaints voiced in the media and by practitioners about the lack of communication skills of academics or the irrelevance of overtly "theoretical" and ideological publications (Haas & Fischman, 2010).

The publication of *SRE* was one answer to the avalanche of criticisms, proposing to establish very strong boundaries, determining with precision what belongs under the category of "educational sciences" as a necessary first step toward and strengthening the methodological rigor of educational research, making it more accepted and influential (Shavelson & Towne, 2002).[6]

The call for increased rigor, and the very strong association of rigor almost exclusively with quantitative models institutionalized in policy with the creation of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), received quite a bit of momentum after the passage of NCLB – a point we will return to shortly. However, it is important to highlight that even within the subordinate field of educational research, hierarchies exist and some approaches and methodologies are given higher status according to contextual dynamics. The changing nature of scientific relevance, prestige and influence, as well as whose voices appear at the top or bottom of the scholarly hierarchy is a key tension of the quantitative/qualitative debate. During the so-called paradigm wars of the 1970s and 1980s a great variety of practitioners and promoters of qualitative methods were perceived as the "winners" in the sense that they acquired more visibility and legitimacy in explaining educational issues. While qualitative research methods were broadly used in most graduate schools of education in the 1980s, 20 years later the disputes about the scientific rigor and relevance of research in education have contributed to the reversal of that trend, generating an environment that relegated qualitative inquiries to, at best, the secondary role of supporting more the "scientifically rigorous" methodological approaches of randomized-trial-quantitative designs.

In the context surrounding the implementation of NCLB, the defenders of the legislation offered a simple explanation for the dismissal of qualitative approaches: a serious and definitive educational reform demanded to know "what works" based on the most rigorous and scientifically based research studies. NCLB determined that the gold standard of educational research should be randomized controlled trials, based on the claim that researchers rarely employed such research designs. Commenting on the effects of this scientific policy shift, Arthur Levine, former president of Columbia University's Teachers College, and a well-known critic of schools of education pointed out that:

> Because of the NCLB provisions, the subject of educational research is electric. There is a hunger for research to guide policy and practice. The differences of opinion about how that research should be conducted and about its current state are profound. The politics of what would ordinarily be an obscure and apolitical subject outside the academy are polarized. Education researchers and policymakers are cynical about each other's abilities and motivations. (2007, p. 15)

The initial reaction among educational researchers to the new scenario created by the federal research policy was polarized. Many scholars raised the specter of ideological and epistemological censorship and that the tone of the debates the law generated in the field did very little to challenge the notion that a scientific war was in fact occurring (Denzin, 2010; Phillips, 2009). We believe that the dominant logic framed by the metaphor of "war" for resolving epistemological and methodological debates fertilized a soil that was well prepared by previous debates (e.g., positivism/postpositivism, understanding epistemological, religious or political differences in terms

[6] A related but different alternative is to assess the extent to which educational research influences (or fails to influence) policy. Increased attention to education research has primarily focused upon the relative merits of various research methodologies, how to identify "best practices" or "scientifically based" methods, and how to encourage classroom educators to utilize research findings. Far less notice has been devoted to the frustratingly vague but vital challenge of understanding how research does or does not shape policy (Hess, 2008).

of a zero-sum game). Norman K. Denzin one of the most respected voices within and outside the qualitative epistemological community points out that:

> Since the 1980s there have been at least three paradigm wars: the postpositivist war against positivism (1970-1990); the wars between competing postpositivist, constructivist, and critical theory paradigms (1990-2005); and the current war between evidence-based methodologists and the mixed methods, interpretive, and critical theory schools (2005 to present). (2010, p. 421)

One of the byproducts of the "science wars" was the narrowing of the epistemological perspectives institutionally supported for conducting research in education, especially in the areas of educational policies and politics.[7] After the passage of *NCLB* and the publication of *SRE* a great deal of emphasis has been given to evaluative approaches to conducting education policy research, typically concentrating on answering questions related to policy implementation (Ball, 1997; 2001; St. Pierre, 2006). Increasingly, researchers analyzing studies funded by IES are showing that the strategy to privilege funding for technical, randomized controlled trials has not produced the expected results (Gersten, 2009; Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013; Viadero, 2009).[8]

We contend that the lack of expected results from the "scientific educational research" approach is another indication of the limits of the Modernistic contemporary encyclopedia of "educationalese" because it is based on a naturalized and unchallenged notion of "evidence."[9] In this encyclopedia, "evidence" is assumed to be a solid element that can be distributed to people that make decisions through factual bean counting—seen as a mostly conscious process of receiving data about an issue, weighing it, and letting the largest amount of rigorous research data win (Glass, 2008; Fischman, & Haas, 2012). This is the "truth wins" approach, where the emphasis is on dissemination and rigor because data from rigorous research or well-documented successful implementation will be universally recognized and highly valued by all who are exposed to it (Ashwanden, 2010). Yet we know from both research and practical experience that this model rarely, if ever, works (Ariely, 2008, 2010; Kahneman, 2010; Walters & Lareau, 2009).

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[7] It is important to highlight that we do not believe that the authors of SRE (Shavelson & Towne, 2002) advocated for a methodological narrowing of the field.

[8] For example, of the eight studies released by IES in 2009, which included exploring different certification routes for teachers, interventions for literacy improvement, professional development for improving reading, commercial software programs for teaching math, six produced mixed results showing few or no significant positive effects on student achievement. The epistemological limitations encouraged by the science wars in combination with the consolidation of educationalese have also been criticized by a large number of qualitative researchers (Gonzalez, Tefera, & Artiles, forthcoming; Hakuta, 2011; Sloan, 2007; Tefera, 2011; Valenzuela, Prieto, & Hamilton, 2007). Studies such as these help illuminate the need for rigorous approaches that use both qualitative and quantitative methods and offer openings to reveal the complexities involved with educational phenomena, particularly when trying to understand the impact of policy (Stake, 2010).

[9] A key underlying assumption of most studies in the area of "evidence use" in education is that good research data that is collected under the most rigorous scientific methods or well-documented evidence of successful program or policy implementation should lead to the adoption of good policies and practices. In the field of educational policy, several researchers have shown that when "good" data is available, it is often discarded with the justification that the research was inadequate or that there is, still, a shortage of good empirical evidence, whether based on research or implementation (Ashwanden, 2010; Hess, 2008; MacCoun & Reuter, 2008). Paradoxically, this justification is supported by a wealth of empirical evidence; research on policy development shows that robust findings, information, and statistical facts generally play a *smaller* role than is often assumed in educational policy development (see,Kelman, 1988; Kingdon, 2002; Lareau & Walters, 2010; McDonnell, 2007; Stone, 2001).

The "truth wins" dissemination model does not enable effective data use because it ignores key cultural and cognitive aspects of its target audience and, as a result, this model is often ignored or dismissed. Increasing the quantity of data analyzed or narrowing the methods used to a set presumed more scientifically rigorous because of the use of statistical analyses will not make educational research more effective and persuasive. The last 30 years of education policy should have us questioning whether we are really as consciously rational as the methods under the "golden standard" umbrella suppose.

Recent studies using interdisciplinary approaches (Ariely, 2008, 2010; Kaheman, 2010; Lakoff, 2012) and calling for an embodied policy analysis (Erevelles, 2010; Fischman & Haas, 2012; Gonzalez, Tefera, & Artiles, forthcoming; Pillow, 2003) show that understanding embodied cognition[10] prototypes and metaphorical ways of thinking[11] should be fundamental aspects of how we approach policy analysis. We understand facts and policy proposals based in large part on how they compare to the prototypes and metaphors we have constructed, mostly unconsciously, of the world we live in. As the noted cognitive linguist George Lakoff (2008) points out, rationality, reasoning, and understanding can no longer be approached in research or practice as a purely conscious activity as it is in the educationalese of modernist reductionist search, nor should it be idealized as such:

> We will need to embrace a deep rationality that can take account of, and advantage of, a mind that is largely unconscious, embodied, emotional, empathetic, metaphorical, and only partly universal. A New Enlightenment would not abandon reason, but rather understand that we are using real reason, shaped by our bodies and brains and interactions in the real world, reason incorporating emotion, structured by frames and metaphors and images and symbols, with conscious thought shaped by the vast and invisible realm of neural circuitry not accessible to consciousness. (pp. 13 – 14)

An Overview of the Special Issue on Qualitative Inquiry

The four articles composing this special issue provide humble yet well-reasoned and warranted alternatives that build on Lakoff's argument. The contributors believe that educational policy research must address the contextual complexities and situated nature of schooling. In other words, policy analyses and recommendations cannot simply focus on some universal target or aim to fix one educational relationship or dynamic, deemed key (e.g., class, race, language, etc.) while ignoring the complexities and multidimensionality of teaching and learning. Embracing such complexities have, for the most part, defied educationalese approaches to policy analysis, always more comfortable using technically sophisticated frameworks, under the umbrella of scientific and ideologically neutral methodologies (Erevelles, 2010; Marshall, 1997; Pillow, 2003). Educationalese research perspectives often prefer to focus on outcomes and standards, rather than having to deal with unruly, messy, and unpredictable bodies – bodies that are shaped by, and, in turn, shape the social, political, and economic contexts they inhabit. In the name of being the most "realistic"

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[10] We agree with Erevelles (2010) that it is often the case that research questions defined in political arenas result is decontextualized policy analyses where the historical, economic, and cultural dimensions affecting policy are ignored or overlooked.

[11] Metaphors and prototypes are part of the unconscious, automatic ways of reacting and comprehending to our experiences and, together with our conscious reflective processes, we create our understanding of the world around us, including the concepts like "research in education" (Fischman & Haas, 2012; Haas & Fischman, 2010; Lakoff, 1987, 2002, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Rosch, 1977, 1978, 1999).

scientific perspective, educationalese researchers propose a romantic version of educational research applying idealized methods that cannot deliver good policy solutions because they are analyzing educational problems "with a view from nowhere" approach (Erevelles, 2010).

In the first article, Robert Donmoyer reflects on the battles over what constitutes "scientific research in education" and the so called "paradigm wars" regarding qualitative methods. He argues that these battles have in many ways been a distraction from engaging in inquiry that addresses some of our most pressing problems in education. Second, Donmoyer reconceptualizes what inquiry in education should look like by refocusing "the theoretic to the practical." To do this he introduces Schwab's alternative (1969) and argues that deliberation about specific policy decisions should be at the center of the inquiry process. Donmoyer concludes with a proposal that recasts the traditional roles assigned to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research.

In the second contribution to this special issue, Frederick Erickson argues that the science wars are in fact not over--not because quantitative researchers have won and qualitative researchers have lost, as such a dichotomous approach oversimplifies a more complex problem. Rather, he argues an ideology persists that relies on objectivity, empiricism, efficiency, and effectiveness. At best, Erickson believes that while we can learn about "what works" in some settings, we cannot know "what works" in all settings. By using his small hometown as a metaphor for lessons to be learned in education research, he argues for the need to "scale down" and set more realistic expectations for what research can do. We believe that Ericson offers in simple language a very clear and compelling point of departure for the challenging task of developing a more usable as well as rigorous educational research: "teachers do not teach children in general, but particular children in particular circumstances of learning and teaching in classrooms and in community life" (p. 3). This approach provides an opening for how we might engage in what Ericson describes as "practice-based policy research."

In the third article Patricia Lather explores the notion of what engaging in a "post-qualitative" paradigm might mean. To explore the question of what can be imagined in a "post-qualitative" paradigm, Lather discusses an empirical project focused on sports in U.S. secondary schools and asks: do we hire teachers or coaches in our high schools? Using Walter Benjamin's (1982/1999) *The Arcades Project*, an unfinished assemblage that explores the intersections of art, culture, history, and politics through the figure of the Paris arcades, Lather combines field work, an archive of what research does and does not do in conceptualizing excellence in teaching, and her father's and brother's stories, both coaches. By doing this she explores what type of research designs might bring in these seemingly disparate parts in a "post-qualitative" research paradigm.

In the final paper, Michael Dumas and Gary Anderson discuss the "relevance" of qualitative scholarship and its influence in framing policy problems and informing policy debates. In their paper they propose a more expansive kind of relevance where qualitative research exerts more influence in framing problems, particularly those related to policy. In addition to discussing relevance, the authors encourage us to think not merely about "what works" in education but about what we know based on the research and introduce the concept of *policy knowledge*. The authors end by discussing what researchers can do to better reach a variety of education stakeholders, including policymakers, journalists, activists and advocates, as well as community organizers.

A Humble Proposal to Disrupt Educationalese

Criticizing any reductive rationalistic methodological approach that disregards that the reality of educational institutions is complex and is a well-founded criticism, but the recognition of complexity by most qualitative researchers is not enough.. As in any other discipline, if qualitative

researchers want to conduct educational policy-related studies that produce knowledge that is "warranted," we must explore some aspect of the complex realities of educational settings using the most appropriate and effective techniques for the specific research questions and doing so in a competent manner.

> In *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi's final book on his experiences at Auschwitz, he makes a wise remark about the difficulty of rendering judgment on history. The historian is pulled in two directions. He is obliged to gather and take into account all relevant material and perspectives; but he is also obliged to render the mass of material into a coherent object of thought and judgment: "Without a profound simplification the world around us would be an infinite, undefined tangle that would defy our ability to orient ourselves and decide upon our actions….We are compelled to reduce the knowable to a schema." Satisfying both imperatives is difficult under any circumstances, and with certain events may seem impossible. (Lilla, 2013, p. 35)

In the discussion of the merits of qualitative versus quantitative methods for increasing the rigor and impact in the educational policy arena we side with Primo Levi.[12] Serious educational researchers should be as torn as Levi's historians. The quest to find the "best" educational research method will not have definitive answers because we do not believe they exist.. Instead, we have only educational challenges that appear in the form of complex embodied tensions, dilemmas and riddles.

Unfortunately, very frequently, when the debate gets complicated, the tendency is to settle into a state of impasse. Rather than figuring out how to solve the challenge, we engage in disputes about the credentials of those involved. Often stylistic issues and personal characteristics appear to be paramount and occupy the central focus of these debates, casting shadows on the central challenge of how to produce the best, most rigorous and effective research-based knowledge that helps us address both practical and conceptual educational related issues. These distractions fail to move us forward in developing better solutions. We firmly believe that the articles by Donmoyer, Erickson, Lather, and Dumas and Anderson, all of whom are well-established scholars with ample experience in conducting rigorous research studies, offer a very good starting point for understanding, disorganizing, and overcoming educationalese by providing humble, simple, provocative, rigorous, and impactful realizations, conjectures, and options for embodied qualitative research practices.

Finally, like the authors in this special issue, we believe it is important to consider how the knowledge produced by qualitative researchers could contribute in more effective ways to the educational policy debate. Again, we do not think that there are universal or magic formulas, but we believe that one of the first steps is to intentionally and deliberately reclaim and become part of the education policy debate. To do this, we believe that explicit strategies aimed at increasing knowledge mobilization (KM) are an important avenue for education researchers to improve the use and impact of research in education policy and practice.[13]

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[12] Needless to say, we are not equating the holocaust with an epistemological debate in the field of educational research.

[13] While few education researchers have used the term *knowledge mobilization* (KM), a number of scholars are engaging in KM approaches in their research in an effort to be more impactful. The recently released top 200 Edu-Scholar Influence Rankings by university-based researchers, for example, determines impact using a variety of measures, including Google Scholar statistics, Amazon rankings, education press mentions, blog mentions, newspaper mentions and Congressional Record mentions, to name a few. While limitations exist regarding how impact is measured, the emphasis on expanding notions of impact beyond traditional measures is important. Additional examples of KM include the growing number of journals that are turning to Open

One of the explicit aims of KM is improving research use, its relevance, and accessibility. The utilization of this innovative approach has been building momentum nationally and internationally, particularly given the focus on employing a multidirectional social process design that stands in stark contrast to understanding research use to be "a matter of moving information from those that know to those that do not" (Cooper, Levin, & Campbell, 2009, p. 167). Essentially, KM aims to build a collaborative problem-solving environment between researchers and practitioners facilitating reciprocal learning by reflecting and using existing or new research in decision-making. (CIHR, 2013) This process aims to bring together two seemingly different cultures and perspectives in research and teaching to produce the most effective interventions possible.[14]

In response to these challenges, alternatives such as KM have emerged in many fields, including education. KM aims to improve and increase the impact and usability of research by means of multi-dimensional, interactive strategies that target a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, students, and community members, to name a few. KM strategies utilize network-based approaches to integrate research-based knowledge into urgent and pressing scientific, professional and social problems (Sá, Li, & Faubert, 2010). This is an area of potential promise for researchers in education, especially for those employing qualitative methods, to develop both conceptually and at the same time provide useful information about how to bridge research, policy, and practice in the field.

Incorporating explicit strategies for KM could be one of the most significant steps for providing more rigorous conceptual, and also practical, answers to educational challenges. We believe that KM is, as Frederic Erickson compels us to consider, a scaled-down approach, a Lake Wobegon-like perspective on access and usability of educational research. KM does not solve all the issues related to the scientific rigor of educational research, nor the connection and/or disconnections among research, policy, and practice, but it helps us to move away from what Patti Lather describes as a narrowed science that constrains the future and instead moves us forward to a new pedagogical imagination.

Paraphrasing Benjamin Bratton's (2013) criticisms about the risks of simplifying complex problems to make them "more appealing" we conclude by proposing that instead of analyzing educational organizations with perspectives and tools that by their own epistemological imperatives demand complex contextual and institutional dynamics to be simplified, dumbing down the reality of the educational organizations and consequently their futures, we need to work towards finding effective ways of communicating the complexity of the educational systems we are operating in and which are embedded in us. The bottom line is if, as a society we invest in educationalese research approaches that make us feel good because they provide the certainty of orderly classifications but do not produce better pedagogical theories and practices, and we do not invest in more complex and

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Access, including *Education Policy Analysis Archives,* where not only is the journal openly accessible to the public, but the use of video commentaries and social media strategies are also used in an effort to translate research literature in a variety of mediums in order to make it more valuable and accessible to a variety of education policymakers, practitioners and researchers.

[14] Since the publication of the classic study by Weiss (1977) on *The enlightenment function of social research,* a growing body of both empirical and theoretical research is exploring the complex and multidimensional relationships among research, policy and practice (Amara et al., 2004; Belkhodja et al., 2007; Hemsley Brown, 2004; Lavis et al., 2002; Lavis, 2006; Lemieux & Champagne, 2004; Levin 2004, 2006; Mitton et al., 2007; Nutley et al., 2007). A major problem, however, is that while a number of researchers, policymakers and practitioners recognize the need to improve and strengthen their mutual relations, not enough is known about how different potential stakeholders find, share and use educational research (Cooper, Levin & Campbell, 2009).

less predictable approaches that may solve pedagogical problems, then our destiny will be one where we will eventually find it very difficult to feel good about not solving problems in the name of educationalese.

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About the Authors

Gustavo E. Fischman
Professor of Educational Policy
Arizona State University
fischman@asu.edu
Dr. Fischman is Professor in educational policy and director of edXchange the knowledge mobilization initiative at the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. His areas of specialization are comparative education and critical policy and gender studies in education. Dr. Fischman has published extensively and presented in numerous national and international conferences, and has been a visiting scholar in numerous graduate programs in Europe and Latin America. In 2013 has been elected fellow of the International Academy of Education. He serves in numerous editorial boards, and is also the lead editor of *Education Policy Analysis Archives* and co-editor of *Education Review/Reseñas Educativas*.

Adai A. Tefera
Post-doctoral Researcher
Arizona State University
Adai.tefera@asu.edu
Adai Tefera is a post-doctoral researcher with edXchange at Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. Her research focuses on issues of education equity, particularly the consequences of education policies on culturally and linguistically diverse students. She also focuses on how to bridge education research, policy and practice through knowledge mobilization**.**

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