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Disputed yet Invaluable: Philosophical Inquiry as Theory in Educational Research

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ABSTRACT Research shows that one of the aims of theory is to understand and the process of theorising is a distinctly human and humanising social process through which we understand ourselves and our environment. Philosophical inquiry can be said to be theory that explains practice and is in turn grounded in practice that can help to explore and clarify the underlying assumptions of competing value frameworks by critically reflecting on conventional views and assessing their worth in educational research. As theory, philosophical inquiry can provide tools for examining the things that researchers in education so often take for granted in their daily practices. But the question that we ask in this paper is: What makes researchers in education look down upon philosophical inquiry? Are they aware of the complementary role philosophical inquiry plays in scientific matters that concern education? It is on the basis of the foregoing that this paper seeks to argue a case for philosophical inquiry as theory in educational research. We argue that all successful educational research involves philosophical inquiry as implicit theory that informs the practice.