This is a concept version.
Please do not cite withouth permission from the author.
The final version of this chapter appears in:

Carr, D. (ed.) (2017). *Cultivating Moral Character and Virtue in Professional Practice.* London: Routledge..

Practitioner research, practical wisdom and teaching

Wouter Sanderse | Fontys Hogescholen | w.sanderse@fontys.nl | augustus 2017

Introducing practitioner research

'An unworked mine' was the metaphor that Dewey (1929: 45) used to describe teachers' contribution to educational research. From Dewey onwards, several authors have argued for treating teachers as the main source for the creation of professional knowledge, instead of as subjects or consumers of educational research (Stenhouse, 1975; Elliott, 1991). Practitioner research and enquiry, they believed, could play an important role in the generation of educational knowledge. Very generally, practitioner research can be described as practitioners systematically inquiring into their own practice, in order to improve it (Zeichner, 1993: 200).

Various schools of thought have interpreted the purpose, nature and methods of practitioner research rather differently. One controversial issue concerns the question of what kind of knowledge practitioner research yields for practitioners. Originally, the positivistic tradition (Lewin, 1951) argued that researchers should aim to develop a body of objective knowledge consisting in general laws about 'what works' in education. However, according to the interpretative perspective (Elliott, 1991), practitioner research would aim to make teachers more aware of their own subjective educational beliefs and values. Yet again, the critical-emancipatory viewpoint (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) aimed to go beyond reflection on teachers' own educational aims and values by encouraging them to consider the social and political context of schooling as well.

Besides these three perspectives, a fourth, Aristotelian, approach to practitioner research may be delineated (Eikeland, 2008; Sanderse, 2016), which is the subject of this chapter. This regards practitioner research mainly as a matter of the cultivation of practical wisdom – or what Aristotle called *phronesis*. While proponents of the critical-emancipatory tradition also recognised the professional significance of practical wisdom, they were also inclined to dismiss this as an uncritical kind of school-based craft-expertise that rather lacked the wider critical vision or capacity to address the wider social problems of schooling and its injustices (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). In turn, however, theorists of an Aristotelian bent have complained that such theorists have changed the original meaning of *phronesis* "beyond recognition" (Kristjánsson, 2007: 159) and argued that practical wisdom precisely does have a critical potential (Sanderse, 2016).

An Aristotelian approach has received some attention in educational theory, and practitioner research is even hailed as a promising way to judge the development of students' virtues (Kristjánsson, 2015: 77-78). However, it is not well-established in schools or colleges for professional teacher preparation. Moreover, besides an account of the kind of professional knowledge that Aristotelian practitioner research may yield, we also need useful examples of what this looks like in practice. The main aim of this chapter will be to describe and evaluate two practitioner research projects that were carried out by teacher educators working at a college for teacher training in the Netherlands. These projects illustrate how teachers and other practitioners may go about conducting practitioner research, but also raise the question of the extent to which they can be called 'Aristotelian' at all.

This paper has four further sections. In the next section, practitioner research will be introduced by way of brief comparison between three perspectives on the nature and justification of such research in education. In the section that follows this, the Aristotelian approach to practitioner research is described as a kind of moral enquiry mainly directed to the improvement of teachers' practical wisdom. The next section describes two research projects which both set out to help either pre-service or in-service teachers to pay attention to virtues in their subject lessons. The last section, by way of conclusion, reflects on the question whether it is justified to call these research projects 'Aristotelian' after all. Throughout the chapter, I will use 'practitioner' rather than 'professional', as this better fits the notion of 'practitioner research' and also reflects my sympathies with the MacIntyrean notion of a 'practice', to which we shall return in due course.

Three approaches to practitioner research

Before we focus on the Aristotelian approach, we shall first acknowledge three other ways of understanding practitioner research. 'Practitioner research' does not have a single definition, and is often used interchangeably with 'school-based', 'practice-based' or 'action' research. We will not here focus on all the differences between these, but describe practitioner research generally as systematic inquiry by practitioners into their own practice in order to improve it (Zeichner, 1993: 200). Such research often starts with a question that practitioners have formulated in the light of a problem they have encountered. The next step is to specify a plan of action, to implement the proposed action and then to evaluate its effectiveness. The value of such research lies in its concrete utility for practitioners and for the improvement of the practices in which they are involved. Whilst practitioner research is employed by people working in such professional practices as health care, nursing, social studies and education, the examples of this chapter are drawn from education, as the field with which I am most familiar from working in a Dutch college of teacher education.

Educational practices can be improved as the expertise of researchers grows, enabling them to make better decisions in their own practice. The knowledge that such research yields is worthwhile if it enables practitioners to act more intelligently and skilfully (Elliott, 1991: 69). Thus understood, practitioner research occupies a middle ground between (informal and formal) learning in the workplace and fundamental scientific research. On the one hand, practitioner research is more systematic than everyday practical, experiential and informal learning or engagement. On the other hand, it does not have to lead to the generalizable knowledge of scientific theory (Bolhuis, 2012). Admittedly, scientific research itself can be practice-based, in the sense that some concern with practice lies at its heart. However, the knowledge of practitioner research is less generally applicable than scientific theory and more attuned to the contextual particularities of practice.

Throughout the twentieth century, the idea that teachers might conduct research in their own classrooms and schools has not been uncommon, but seems to have attracted the largest following in England, parts of Europe and Australia. Encouraging this perspective, John Dewey (1978) already argued that teachers should play a major role as researchers. Now, more than a century later, practitioner research plays an important role in the education of (pre-service and in-service) teachers, both in undergraduate and graduate professional programmes (Kitchen & Stevens 2008; Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Price, 2001). Still, practitioner research is far from uncontroversial. For example, there are numerous methodological problems, which may well be more general difficulties with social scientific research as such (Baskerville & Wood-Harper, 1996). First, practitioners are not exactly impartial, insofar as they investigate their own practices – which often includes, in the case of teachers, their own students. Second, traditional scientific criteria do not readily apply to practitioner research, which gives rise to problems of assessing its scientific rigour (see, however, Anderson & Herr, 1999). But third, as already noted, practitioner research is highly context-specific, which makes it difficult to determine whether a given problem is caused by teacher researchers themselves, their educational approaches or the conditions or constraints under which they may have to work.

The purpose, nature and methods of practitioner research have been interpreted differently from the various earlier noted positivistic, interpretative and critical-emancipatory perspectives. While these three approaches to practitioner research are briefly described here, they have also been covered by the present author elsewhere (Sanderse, 2016). At all events, in the mid-1940s, psychologist Kurt Lewin sought a general theory of how social change might be facilitated. He argued that in order to change social practices, scientists would have to involve practitioners from real life social contexts. The aim of such researchers would be to test the effectiveness of a particular intervention based on a pre-specified hypothesis: they would identify a problem and a possible intervention, and the practitioner was then moved to facilitate the implementation of the intervention. On this view, practitioner research might enable social scientists to apply their theories in practice and to test their practical effectiveness (Carr, 2006). During this period, the desire to be ‘scientific’ inspired practitioner researchers to develop their own scientifically ‘objective’ methods. However, as an alternative to the ‘empirical cycle’ of science, practitioner researchers developed a ‘problem-solving cycle’, which consisted of a number of steps, including: (1) analysis, (2) fact-finding, (3) conceptualisation, (4) planning, (5) implementation, and (6) evaluation (Lewin, 1951).

After a post-war interval, interest in practitioner research re-surged as a ‘teacher as researcher’ movement in the early 1970s. At a time when behavioural objectives were emphasised in the British curriculum, practitioner research was widely supposed to enhance teacher professionalism (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Such leading British educational theorists as Stenhouse (1975) and Elliott (1991) held that practitioner research could improve teachers’ understanding and judgment, enabling them to improve their practice in a self-directed way. At the same time, more interpretative methods were used to define the problems of the field in ways that might further improve practitioner understanding. While Lewin had endorsed a more positivistic approach to social scientific research, the curriculum theories of Stenhouse and Elliott focused on the more qualitative methods of case study and ethnographic research. Seen from this ‘interpretative’ perspective, the social world is a human construction that requires considerable interpretation. Practitioner research improves education insofar as it helps teachers and other educational workers become more aware of their own and alternative educational beliefs and values.

As large state-funded collaborative practitioner research projects came to be promoted in the 1970s, Kemmis and Carr set out to defend the critical potential of practitioner research. (Herr & Anderson, 2005). They wanted to enable teachers to “reflect upon and examine critically the inadequacies of different conceptions of educational practice” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 123-124). While practitioner research seemed to have contributed something to the critical reflection of teachers on their own educational aims, values and methods, it seemed to them to have neglected the wider social and political context in with schooling takes place. In their view, the ‘teacher as researcher’ movement had been too ‘pragmatic’, ‘uncoordinated’ and ‘opportunistic’, and was in need of a new rationale (Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 1-2). Inspired by Habermas (1987), this ‘critical-emancipatory’ perspective criticised the interpretative approach for not sufficiently recognising the way in which society and culture influence practitioners’ construction of reality. In order to prevent teachers from developing a ‘false consciousness’, practitioner research would need to be not only technical or practical but also critical. In that way, practitioner research might have a more emancipatory and empowering effect by helping researchers to identify social policies that kept unequal power relations in place.

Aristotelian practitioner research

In the 1980s, however, a more Aristotelian approach emerged in the practitioner research literature. The key idea of this approach was that of the significance for good practice of ‘practical wisdom’, or what Aristotle called *phronesis* in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1985). In fact, Aristotle there offers a complex account of human reason and knowledge in terms of the five ‘intellectual virtues’ of *techne* (craft knowledge), *phronesis* (practical wisdom), *episteme* (scientific knowledge), *sophia* (contemplative wisdom) and *nous* (intuitive reason). Of these, practical wisdom is the kind reasoning or deliberation by means of which human agents order their emotional, moral and political lives and affairs. Practical wisdom matters for Aristotelian ethics, insofar as it regards virtues not simply as mindless dispositions to this or that behaviour, but as *intelligent* responses involving rational choices to feel or act in ways that observe well judged ‘means’ between vicious extremes (Annas, 2011). When practically wise agents deliberate about what is (say) the courageous thing to do, they seek to determine this by reference to particularities of the situation so as to avoid cowardice on the one hand and recklessness on the other. In this way, by latching itself on each virtue, practical wisdom has the function to guide action (Kristjánsson, 2015).

The rediscovery of this ancient notion of practical wisdom was not accidental. From the early 1980s onwards, many social scientists and philosophers had pointed out that in numerous professional domains, reflection on values and the normative dimensions of human agency had increasingly given way to instrumentalist rationality (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012: 1). With regard to education, a prime source of unease was the sort of instrumentalism that treated teachers as classroom technicians concerned to meet behaviourally measurable targets (Kristjánsson, 2007: 158). Educational philosophers such as Schön (1983), Sockett (1993) and Dunne (1997) argued that the notion of practical wisdom might help to reconceptualise understanding of professional knowledge and expertise. They promoted the idea that practitioners’ knowledge was more a kind of virtue-infused wisdom to do and feel what is good than either the abstract scientific knowledge or value-free skills of craft. Such resurgence of interest in practical wisdom also coincided with the rediscovery of other aspects of Aristotelian thought. For example, MacIntyre (1984) argued that significant forms of human agency and endeavour, such as arts, sciences, games and politics, should be understood as social practices wherein practitioners are committed to developing certain internal goods, and require virtues to sustain these commitments. For example, psychotherapists ideally aim at improving clients' capacities for dealing with emotional conflict, doctors at restoring health and teachers at helping students become well-educated (Dunne, 2011: 14). To this end, they may require such virtues as patience, honesty, integrity and fairness.

Professional services were increasingly seen as social practices with inherent moral goods, and professional agents as practitioners who required moral excellence and practical wisdom to realise these goods in complex and changing situations. This idea was accordingly influential on the practitioner research literature. In the early 1990s, John Elliott argued that education is a worthwhile end in itself, that moral values are constitutive of this end, and that practitioner research is a kind of inquiry by which teachers may realise the moral aims of education in concrete actions. Explicitly drawing on Aristotle, he called the capacity that guides this transformation 'practical wisdom' (Elliott, 2015: 18). Practically wise teachers determine the means for realising the aims of education in their own particular circumstances and further clarify their educational understanding in the course of so doing.

Still, the educational use of such Aristotelian concepts as *phronesis* and *praxis* is not unproblematic. As Kinsella & Pitman (2012: 3) note, "We do not live in Aristotle's world" and "we cannot see the world as Aristotle saw it". This suggests a need to be cautious about projects that try to apply Aristotle's ideas to modern circumstances. This is why contemporary philosophers of Aristotelian persuasion have criticised some recent educational applications of such concepts as *phronesis* and *praxis* as little more than unhelpful distortions of them. (see, for example, Kristjánsson (2007).

One of the few authors who have studied the relevance of Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* for practitioner research, while keenly aware of the difficulties involved in any such endeavour, is the Norwegian philosopher and action researcher[1] Olav Eikeland (2008). Before we examine our two practitioner research projects in more detail, we may here refer to his work to get an idea about what Aristotelian practitioner research might look like. In Eikeland's view, what practitioner research has in common with Aristotle is an emphasis on thinking from the 'inside' of human practices: that is, from the normative perspective that practitioners already employ, rather than one that treats them as objects to be observed from an external or impartial research viewpoint. In what way, however, does this differ from the standard social scientific approach? Well, when teachers say that they are too busy to do research, Elliott (2015) argues that they seem to regard research as a kind knowledge production that is external to their practice. However, practitioner research is *not* 'insider research' in the sense that teaching and enquiry about it are two separate processes. Practitioner research is more the name for "a self-reflexive mode of teaching" that "enables teachers to handle wisely on a day-to-day basis those contingencies that arise in formal learning contexts" (Elliott, 2015: 18). So, we may say that Aristotelian practitioner research aims to extend and refine practical teachers' wisdom through self-reflective agency.

According to Eikeland (2008: 459), Aristotelian practitioner research consists of two main activities. The first activity is practically oriented and deliberative. In this regard, practitioners know more or less what moral principles are at stake in a given situation, but do not know yet how to act. They analyse and interpret a particular situation they are in, deliberating individually or collegially about what should be done. This produces practical knowledge for action. But the second activity is more theoretically oriented or reflective. It aims at arriving at a better understanding of a given moral response or virtue by reflecting on past actions. Practitioners try to derive more general moral concepts from more particular past experiences. Still, both activities are mutually dependent, since 'knowledge *from* action is necessary in order to make it adequate *for* action' (Eikeland, 2008: 460).

---

[1] Eikeland (2008) talks about 'action research', but we will continue using 'practitioner research'.

Two practitioner research projects

In a previous work, I built on Eikeland's work to examine the value of an Aristotelian approach to practitioner research for moral and character education, but did not present any case studies (Sanderse, 2016). Even when an Aristotelian approach to practitioner research has been established at the theoretical level, there is still a battle to be won at the practical level. What matters is not merely an explication or justification of the kind of knowledge that Aristotelian practitioner research may be expected to yield, but also convincing or inspiring examples of such prospects. The next section therefore outlines two practitioner research projects that I have recently supervised. These are of interest not only insofar as they may be taken to exemplify an Aristotelian approach, but also because they raise further questions about what makes practitioner research Aristotelian.

Before taking a closer look at the projects, we should describe the contexts in which they were carried out. Both projects were promoted by the practitioner research chair on teachers' professional ethics at Fontys College for Teacher Training (FLOT), located in the south of the Netherlands. Offering twenty (full-time or part-time) BA programmes and fifteen MA programmes, FLOT is one of the largest teacher training institutes in the Netherlands. While a further one-year MA-degree enables students to work throughout the secondary education system, the four-year BA-degree precludes them from teaching in the higher classes of HAVO and VWO, the general education grades that enable procedure to higher education. About 4,200 students are enrolled at the college, which has about 300 employees – of which 80 % are involved in teaching. Of those teaching BA programmes, 89 % have a MA-degree and about 12 % have PhDs.

FLOT has seven practitioner research chairs and the researchers (with PhDs) who hold these chairs conduct and supervise teacher educators' research on a variety of topics, ranging from didactics to testing, and from ethics to workplace learning. Each chair has a knowledge network ('kenniskring') of four or more teacher educators who each get 166 hours (0.1 fte) per year to conduct practitioner research. The chairs are responsible for supervising the research in such a way that it contributes to teacher educators' professional development, improves the teacher education curriculum, and shares and develops knowledge with schools in the surrounding areas.

So two research projects will now be described that were supervised by the chair of teachers' professional ethics. These projects may be classified under the rather different headings of 'teaching morally' and 'teaching morality'. Teaching *morally* means that teachers teach 'in a manner that accords with notions of what is good or right' (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe & Sanger, 2009: 8). It includes all the subtle ways in which teachers bring moral considerations into the classroom, even when schools do not have a specific moral curriculum. However, teaching morally contrasts (despite any relations between these processes) with explicitly *teaching morality* to students, which is more a matter of 'providing to another person the means for becoming a good or righteous person' (Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe & Sanger, 2009: 8). From the virtue ethical perspective adopted by the chair, teaching morally is understood as teaching virtuously, whereas teaching morality refers to attempts to cultivate students' and pupils' qualities of good character through role modelling and other methods. Still, in both research projects, teachers and teacher educators were concerned with how to integrate the cultivation of students' and pupils' virtues into their own lessons by following a research-based educational design (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

Project 1: Stimulating Moral Talents

A project was set up with a secondary school in the east of the Netherlands that offers HAVO (5 years) and VWO (6 years), programmes of general education that lead to higher education. After an introductory lecture about moral and character education for about 30 teachers in the school, six teachers decided that they wanted to participate in the 'Stimulating Moral Talents' project. The main concern of the project was with the question of how secondary school teachers might integrate virtues in a variety of lessons. Five participants taught a particular subject – mathematics, chemistry, German, English or Classics – and the sixth was the school's counsellor. In the course of half a year, these teachers had six three hour research meetings at their school, also attended by two teacher educators who were members of the professional ethics knowledge network. The teacher educators did not conduct practitioner research themselves, but supervised the teachers' practitioner research.

The meetings followed the steps of a research-based educational design process divided in two phases. Phase 1 consists of exploration and diagnosis in order to clarify the problem and discuss possible solutions. Phase 2 consists of making and testing various educational designs. First, participants explored a conceptual framework for moral education. For example, in the light of lectures and articles they explored such questions as: What are the differences between norms, values and virtues? What character traits are virtuous and why? Can and should virtues be taught in school? Secondly, they identified a problem that they had experienced with moral education in their own classroom, and what they wanted to know. For example, two participants noticed that their students were quite passive, showing little responsibility for their own learning and waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do. They therefore chose 'responsibility' (for oneself) as the central virtue. Two other teachers chose 'self-knowledge' as the central virtue needed in their classrooms, and 'justice' and 'courage' were identified by the other two.

The second phase involved teachers designing a lesson programme for their students that aimed to solve the problem. They looked at existing teaching materials concerning virtue education, such as lessons developed by the international *The Virtues Project* and the English Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (see, for example, Carr and Harrison, 2015). On the basis of these examples, they designed a lesson that featured at least the core virtue they had picked. For example, the English teacher designed three lessons for the 16 and 17-year-olds in year 5 of the VWO. Her lessons were about the virtue of justice in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*. The participating teachers tested their educational designs in their own classrooms in between two meetings. After they had delivered the lesson, they evaluated the successes and weaknesses of the design by surveying or interviewing the students they had taught, formulating a number of recommendations as to how to improve the design. Finally, they considered how to integrate the revised lessons in their daily teaching and how to make the results accessible to others.

The lessons designed by the teachers of English and Classics were edited and – combined with a number of educational designs from Project 2 – included in a programme for (foreign) language teachers focused on the exploration of virtues in fiction.

Project 2: Reading for Life

Another teacher educator participating in the knowledge network set up a pilot to develop, implement and test a course focused on virtues in European novels. During an earlier research cycle, she had designed a lesson exploring the virtues and vices of characters in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Several language colleagues had become so enthusiastic about this, that she involved them in new cycle of research-based educational design. This group consisted of five teacher educators who either taught Dutch, English, French, English or Spanish language and culture. The main question of this project was that how they might integrate virtues in a new course on European literature. During the academic year 2015-2016, these teachers had monthly meetings to prepare the module that they would teach in the spring of 2016. The audience consisted of about twenty-five students. For two-thirds of the students, those in their third year of studies to become Dutch language teachers, the module was compulsory. The other third consisted of other language students who received one ECTS (equivalent to 28 study hours) for the course.

The teacher educators generally followed the steps of the research-based educational design process. They approached a conceptual framework for moral and character education, by reading and discussing an accessible Dutch introduction to virtue ethics. In addition, they identified a problem that they had experienced with moral education in their own language classes. These teacher educators considered that their literature courses had been rather too academic or 'technical', focusing less on the (moral) experience of the reader and more on more formal and stylistic aspects of the works studied. They were persuaded that literature may play a valuable role in our understanding of what it means to be morally educated – since, for example, reading novels may be associated with developing empathy and compassion for other people (Nussbaum, 1990). The goal of the project was to enable students to recognise virtuous characters in novels, to help them relate these virtues to their own lives and to help them develop lessons for secondary school pupils.

The teacher educators therefore proceeded to design a module with lessons about some particular book that they wanted students to study, such as Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale*, Jean de La Fontaine's *Fables* or Von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther.* They also identified a core virtue on which to focus, such as 'love' in the lesson about *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and 'temperance' in *The Pardoner's Tale.* This approach was inspired by and built on the work of Bohlin (2005) and Carr & Harrison (2015), who had focused on virtues in other novels. The course started with a lecture about the relationships between virtue, literature and moral education and followed the structure of format developed by SLO, the Dutch centre on curriculum development. The teacher educators agreed that the selected novels should first be considered in their socio-historical contexts, such as the *Fables* in relation to the Age of Enlightenment, and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in relation to the Romantic age. They then proceeded to discuss the virtues and vices of the main characters of these stories, before helping students to relate these virtues to themselves and current affairs. Students were required to write an account of what they had learnt about their own character. In addition, they had to design a lesson for secondary school pupils.

The students' assignments were used to evaluate the successes and weaknesses of the course, and the teacher educators formulated recommendations for revision in the light of these. At the same time, they persuaded the team leader of the language department to give further space to the course in academic years to come. In the second year, an extra introductory lesson was added, so students were not only acquainted with the language of virtues from a theoretical perspective, but were invited to engage in exercises exploring their own character development from the outset. Three of the five lessons designed by the teacher educators were revised and, combined with two lessons from Project 1, included in a teaching programme designed to assist (foreign) language teachers to address the moral dimensions of literature (Sanderse, 2017).

Conclusion

So far, we have introduced practitioner research as applied to education, briefly examined three received perspectives on such research, and explored a further Aristotelian approach, which aimed at extending and refining teachers' practical wisdom through self-reflection. We have also presented two practitioner research projects of a broadly Aristotelian character, in the sense that cultivation of moral virtues plays a central role in both of these. It is hoped that these projects may inspire teachers who want to contribute to students' character development and are looking for a research-based ways of pursuing this. However, it should be noted that the main issue for this chapter has not so much been that of whether the research projects were good or bad examples of practitioner research in general, or whether Aristotelian issues about virtue are significant research questions. The primary question is rather whether the research projects lately noted might be considered examples of the kind of Aristotelian practitioner research described by Eikeland (2005). Have the projects been concerned to extend and refine teachers' practical wisdom, and has this occurred through participating self-reflective communities? In closing, I will address these questions separately.

First, fostering teachers' or teacher educators' practical wisdom was not one of the explicit aims of the lately discussed projects, and we did not evaluate the development of practical wisdom in the participants during or after the project – though this is something we might have done by (for example) having them keep a diary in which they described how they dealt with moral quandaries. Still, while the projects did not set out to develop teachers' practical wisdom as such, there are indications that it had some such effect. In this regard, the teachers who participated in Project 1 were interviewed about whether they thought the project had been valuable to themselves, their pupils and the school at large. While no explicit questions were asked about practical wisdom, their answers sometimes pointed in this direction. For example, the Classics teacher said that he first considered a 'virtue' to be something "big, complex and theoretical". Through the project, he had learnt to make virtues 'small' and more accessible by relating them to pupils' lives. More specifically, he said that he knew now how to integrate considerations of virtue into his lessons in such a way as to make them meaningful to pupils. Another teacher said that she had always been interested in virtues, but explained that now "I am more aware of the virtues in the classroom and that I have changed in the way that I formulate things". Although we cannot conclude from these comments that the participants developed practical wisdom as such, there are therefore pointers in this direction. Again, we should not forget that the educational programmes developed are themselves evidence of teachers making characterful efforts to address the significance of virtue education in their own particular contexts, which may itself be regarded as expressive of practical wisdom.

The second present question, however, is that of whether the research groups in Projects 1 and 2 met the criteria of self-reflective Aristotelian communities. Again, the projects did not set out to be Aristotelian communities. Rather, a research-based design approach was chosen that first explored and diagnosed problems and their possible solutions and then set out to conceive and test an educational intervention. However, participants in both projects did take the time to sit down for a couple of hours, on at least six occasions, to exchange reflections on the moral aspects of teaching and the prospects of building virtue learning into their lessons. In a concluding interview, one of the participants in Project 1 observed: “It gave me less of a feeling that I am on my own. I realised that moral education is not only something that occupies me, but other colleagues as well. That is for me the most important lesson”. Another participant mentioned that the project had offered a rare opportunity to meet colleagues teaching other subjects than her own, and that she enjoyed learning how her colleagues integrated character education in ways suited to their subjects. If we recall Eikeland’s distinction between theoretically oriented *dialogical* action research and practically oriented *deliberative* action research, the emphasis of both these projects was firmly on the latter. It was assumed from the outset that practitioners knew roughly what virtues meant, so that most attention was then paid to explore and implement ways to let pupils learn about these in the context of the classroom. The projects might have been more strictly ‘Aristotelian’ if participants had been given more time to talk freely, for example about the principal question of how they saw their responsibility for cultivating students’ virtues (Eikeland, 2008: 463).

In sum, an Aristotelian approach to practitioner research may be relatively justified in theory, but is still in its infancy in terms of more practical application. The practitioner research projects described in this chapter represent efforts to develop this approach further, while simultaneously raising the question of when practitioner research can be called Aristotelian. These projects have had positive results, such as a new approach for Dutch teachers who wish to explore virtues in literature, but if practitioner research is also to contribute to teachers’ practical wisdom, future research projects should not only yield lessons about virtues for pupils. Wise teachers may use teaching methods and programmes to contribute to students’ character development, but this is not all. Focusing on practical wisdom should also assist practitioner research to take a broader perspective on how teachers’ own virtuousness reveals itself in the complex relationships with children in the classroom.

References

Anderson, G.L. and Herr, J. (1999) ‘The new paradigm wars: is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities?’, *Educational Researcher* 28 (5), 12-21.

Annas, J. (2011) *Intelligent virtue*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aristotle (1985) *Nicomachean ethics*, transl. T. Irwin, Indianapolis: Hackett.

Baskerville, R.L. and Wood-Harper, A.T. (1996) ‘A critical perspective on action research as a method for information systems research’, *Journal of Information Technology* 3 (11), 235-246.

Bohlin, K. (2005) *Teaching character education through* literature, London: Routledge.

Bolhuis, S. (2012) ‘Praktijkonderzoek als professionele leerstrategie in onderwijs en opleiding’, in Bolhuis, S. & Kools, Q. (ed.) *Praktijkonderzoek als professionele leerstrategie in onderwijs en opleiding*, Tilburg: Fontys Lerarenopleiding Tilburg, pp. 15-42.

Carr, D. and Harrison, T. (2015) *Educating Character through Stories*, Exeter: Imprint Academic

Carr, W. (2006) ‘Philosophy, methodology and action research’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 40 (4), 421-435.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming critical. Education, knowledge and action research*, London: Falmer.

Dewey, J. (1929) *The sources of a science of education*. New York: Liveright.

Dewey, J. (1978) ‘The relation of theory to practice in education’, in Boydston, J.A. (ed.) *John Dewey: The middle works*, *1899-1924: Vol. 3, 1903-1906*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, pp. 249-272.

Dunne, J. (1997). *Back to the rough ground. Practical judgment and the lure of technique*, Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press.

Dunne, J. (2011) ‘‘Professional wisdom’ in ‘practice’’, in Bondi L., Carr, D., Clark, C. & Clegg, C. (ed.) *Towards professional wisdom: practical deliberation in the people professions*, Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 13-26.

Eikeland, O. (2008). *The ways of Aristotle. Aristotelian phronesis, Aristotelian philosophy of dialogue, and action research*, Bern: Peter Lang.

Elliott, J. (1991) *Action research for educational change*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Elliott, J. (2015) ‘Educational action research as the quest for virtue in teaching’. *Educational Action Research* 23 (1), 4-21.

Fenstermacher, G. Osguthorpe, R., and Sanger, M. (2009) ‘Teaching morally and teaching morality’. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 36 (3), 7-19.

Habermas, J. (1987) *The theory of communicative action, Vol. 2: The critique of functionalist reason*, Oxford: Polity.

Herr, K., and Anderson, G. L. (2005) *The action research dissertation: a guide for students and faculty*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kinsella, E. A., and Pitman, A. (2012) ‘Engaging phronesis in professional practice and education’, in Kinsella, E. A., & Pitman, A. (ed.) *Phronesis as professional knowledge. Practical wisdom in the professions*, Rotterdam: Sense, pp. 1-12.

Kitchen, J., and Stevens, D. (2008) ‘Action research in teacher education: two teacher-educators practice action research as they introduce action research to preservice teachers’, *Action Research,* 6 (1), 7–28.

Kristjánsson, K. (2007) *Aristotle, emotions, and education*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Kristjánsson, K. (2015) *Aristotelian character education*, London: Routledge.

Lewin, K. (1951) *Field theory in social science*, New York: Harper & Bros.

Liston, D., and Zeichner, K. (1990) ‘Reflective teaching and action research in preservice teacher education’. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 16 (3), 235-254.

MacIntyre, A. (1984) *After virtue. A study in moral theory*, 2nd ed, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

McKenney, S. and Reeves, T.C. (2012) *Conducting educational design research*, London: Routledge.

Nussbaum, M. (1990) *Love's knowledge. Essays on philosophy and literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Price, J. N. (2001) 'Action research, pedagogy, and change: the transformative potential of action research in pre-service teacher education', *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* 33 (1), 43–74.

Sanderse, W. (ed.) (2017) *Lezen voor het leven. Deugden in de wereldliteratuur*, Leusden: ISVW.

Sanderse, W. (2016) 'Aristotelian action research: its value for studying character education in schools'. *Educational Action Research*, 24 (4), 446-459.

Schön, D. A. (2011) *The reflective practitioner. How professional think in action*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Sockett, H. (1993) *The moral base for teacher professionalism*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Stenhouse, L. (1975) *Authority, education and emancipation*, London: Heinemann.

Zeichner, K. M. (1993) 'Action research: personal renewal and social reconstruction'. *Educational Action Research*, 1 (2), 199–219.