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Editorial

Advocating for Practitioner Research

Arlene Borthwick, Wendy Gardiner, and Linnea Rademaker
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If you're reading this journal, you are, most probably, an advocate for practitioner research. As we ourselves embrace practitioner research as an essential form of educational research by requiring students in our programs to plan, implement, and share inquiries into their professional practice, we find affirmation of the importance of our efforts in recently-released reports on teacher preparation and we look for new opportunities for expanding the use of collaborative practitioner research.

The Council of Chief State School Officers is currently working on an update of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support (InTASC) standards which serve as guidelines for many teacher preparation programs. The draft standards (there are 10) include a standard on *Reflection and Continuous Growth*.

The teacher is a reflective practitioner who uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, families, and other professionals in the learning community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner (CCSSO, 2010, p. 19).

Essential knowledge that is a part of meeting this standard includes use of self-assessment strategies, analysis of practice based on student data, and the examination of the influence of personal experiences and perspectives in considering one's expectations and interactions.

The importance of reflective practice was confirmed in research by the Consortium on Chicago School Research in *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago* (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). Findings from the study are described in a framework of essential supports including collaboration and critical dialogue among teachers as they "examine new ideas and experiment with new approaches in their classroom...where analysis of evidence from shared practice creates the common ground for disciplining and improving practice" (pp. 55-56). This element of the framework focuses on professional capacity of faculty and staff, while other elements address leadership, parent-community ties, a student-centered learning climate, and the instructional guidance subsystem.

The Center will be an advocate for practitioner research as an essential form of educational research.
--Excerpt from the Mission Statement of the Center for Practitioner Research at National-Louis University

Released in November of 2010, *Redefining Teacher Education for Digital-Age Learners: A Call to Action* (Resta & Carroll, 2010), recommends that teacher learning teams support student learning through use of assessment data that likewise is used to increase teacher effectiveness. The report also calls on teacher education programs to “embrace, demonstrate, and model assessment as an integrated and continual process” (p. 6) throughout the teacher preparation program, encouraging faculty to be “extensively involved in clinical settings and practice” (p. 7). As we write this editorial, we await recommendations from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education’s (NCATE) Blue Ribbon Panel which we expect will emphasize more clinically based preparation of teacher candidates. What remains to be seen is whether this report will highlight collaborative inquiry in K-12 settings by teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and university faculty.

Increasing our own efforts to connect school-university research, our college recently received a Federal Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant to support faculty residencies to improve preservice and inservice teacher preparation for high needs schools. Requirements for faculty participants include the study of teacher candidate learning in a school-based context and the development of updated university course syllabi based on data collected during the residency. Grant funding will support reassigned time for faculty to become more “embedded” in a school site. As outlined in the grant abstract, “Faculty need to be provided with a collaborative structure to support scholarship that leads to a better understanding of the intersection of theory, practice, and local context and, subsequently, utilize insights gained to redesign coursework” (Gardiner & Salmon, 2010).

Each of the descriptions above reflects a different form of advocacy for practitioner research—advocacy through standards, report recommendations, research, and grants. Additional affirmation of the value of and advocacy for practitioner research comes through the articles in this issue of *i.e.: inquiry in education*.

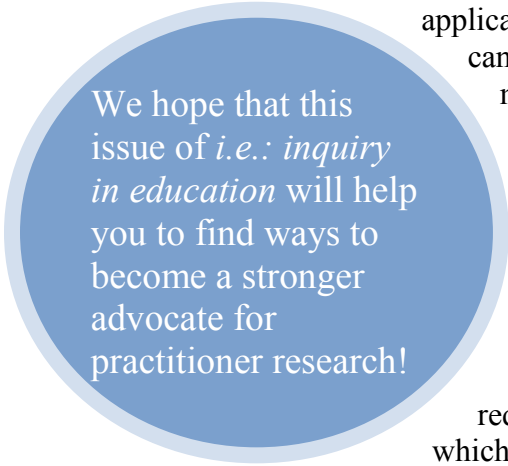
Jack Whitehead, in an invited article, discusses a lifetime of learning experiences that inform his work as an educator. He advocates for the use of visual (multimedia) data to enhance the development of our living educational theories, extending what can be learned through propositional and dialectical methods.

From a theoretical perspective, Ted Purinton offers a provocative viewpoint in arguing that traditional forms of research and inquiry do not contribute to the professionalization of teaching. Such traditions promote what Purinton refers to as a “Marxian” subservience of teaching to other professions when teachers are forced to engage in traditional research. Instead, Purinton advocates for a teacher inquiry model that is unique to the teaching profession, and theorizes what that model might entail.

In a unique “action research project about an action research project,” Alisa Bates and Laura Pardo advocate for the use of teacher action research as a specific way for teacher candidates to learn about what the authors term as “student diversity.” The authors studied their elementary teacher candidates as these preservice students conducted action research projects as part of a year-long residency certification program. This project helped the authors to examine their own practice, and to move their theory of how to develop teacher knowledge about student diversity into actual practice.

Tracie Constantino completed a reflective action research project about her own practice working with doctoral students, sharing her perceptions of the use of a theoretical model of reflection promoted by the Carnegie Initiative for the Doctorate. The model, the Critical Friends Group, uses regular peer critiquing in an atmosphere with defined behavioral constructs to support the development of scholarship in new doctoral students.

Xiuwen Wu offers us a look at Universal Design for Learning---its roots in architecture, its application in education, and its unique application for teacher candidates. The author advocates “using UDL as a collaboration model for curriculum design and instruction,” and suggests that such a model can help students take ownership of their teaching and be empowered to design learning environments that will help all children succeed.



We hope that this issue of *i.e.: inquiry in education* will help you to find ways to become a stronger advocate for practitioner research!

Lonnie Rowell describes the practitioner research center at the University of San Diego. As founder of this center, Rowell has worked with student counseling candidates. Currently, the graduate program in student counseling at USD requires a year-long, collaborative action research project in which students work with their internship sites to create unique and complex action research projects. These projects are presented at the now internationally known conference that attracts students, higher education faculty, and school personnel from across the U.S. and around the globe.

Finally, Delia Leavitt’s review of *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation* highlights authors Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s attempt to broaden the concept of “teacher” research to involve other practitioners, including administrators, community activists, and parents.

We hope that this issue of *i.e.: inquiry in education* will help you to find ways to become a stronger advocate for practitioner research!

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