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Practitioner Inquiry and Community Engaged Research

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Community-engaged research (CEnR) is a framework or approach for conducting research, not a methodology in and of itself. It is characterized by the principles that guide the research and the relationships between the communities. I will say more about what I mean by *communities* but first will admit that you may quite legitimately be wondering: Why is this relevant here?

This is why: I was asked recently what the relationship is between action research, practitioner inquiry, and CEnR. It is easy to say that action research is a kind of practitioner inquiry, often focusing on social issues and conceived as critical or emancipatory; but our conversation and new thinking about where CEnR fits in became so nuanced and interesting, I didn't want it to end.

CEnR has often been defined as academic researchers being engaged in certain ways with communities. But if we think more closely about the word *communities* we can have exciting ideas about interdependence, about practitioner researchers within each of the communities, of communities of various kinds of inquiry interacting with each other and becoming generative alliances of new community.

Research is a kind of practice and it is not better or worse than any other kind of practice; it simply yields a variety of different results. Multifocal research by interdependent agents can be a hallmark of CEnR when we underscore that everyone involved can benefit in an assortment of ways by explicitly legitimizing the value each agent can bring. Some ways in which academic work is valued may have to change for this to happen in the fullest sense, but many academics have been wishing for this since probably before I was born, and have been working on such things for years without fanfare.

In short, community engagement is more than even a two-way street. It exemplifies the saying “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” and practitioner inquiry is an excellent way to conduct research in newly created interdependent communities of research and practice. The timing is perfect for this idea to go truly and properly viral—not just in education, but also everywhere in life. Join us, and let us help.

Back to action research itself: This issue of *i.e.: inquiry in education* will give the readers a bounty, and we hope you enjoy it.

Rogers offers a look at Hannah Arendt's theory of "action" in action research from the perspective of Rogers' own work. Through the lens of Arendt's work, Rogers examines her own practice to explain the relevance of action research for today's teaching contexts.

Doqaruni chronicles an action research study providing key insights into the development and spoken confidence levels of ESL students in Iran through quantitative analysis of experiential questionnaires. The work further suggests that action research has a great potential to help second language teachers become autonomous.

Bays et al. provide an interesting inquiry into pre-service teachers' perspectives on their field experiences. The authors discuss a "sophisticated" and a "naïve" view found in teacher candidate narratives. Read how candidates' epistemological beliefs can lead to a wide variance in understanding, such as, "A higher percentage of sophisticated learners viewed the field experience setting in a broader context, wondering how schools fit into a larger system" (p. 10).

Gutierrez reviews Greenleaf's work on microfeedback assessment as a type of action research. Microfeedback assessment includes multiple rounds of formative assessment on small, targeted learning outcomes, exemplifying the cyclical nature of action research.

Now, don't forget: We are interested in your community engagement, and in your thoughts on what it means to you as a researcher, a practitioner inquirer and inquiring practitioner. Pass it on. Let's do this.

Further Reading

Cochran-Smith, M., & Donnell, K. (2006). Practitioner inquiry: Blurring the boundaries of research and practice. In J. Green, G. Camilli, P. Elmore, A. Skukauskaite, & E. Grace (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Community-Institutional Partnerships for Prevention Research Group (2006). *Developing and sustaining community-based participatory research partnerships: A skill-building curriculum*. Retrieved from www.cbprcurriculum.info

Family Health International (2004). *Research ethics training curriculum for community representatives*. Retrieved from <http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Training/trainmat/ethicscurr/retccr.htm>