

Chapter 31

Self–Study as an Emergent Methodology in Career and Technical Education, Adult Education and Technology: An Invitation to Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

In this manuscript, the authors explore self-study as an emerging research methodology with the potential to open up spaces of inquiry for researchers, graduate students, and teachers in a broad array of fields. They argue that the fields of career and technical education (CTE), adult education and technology can leverage self-study methodology in similar ways. They argue that self-study has a great deal to offer both theoretically and practically to those interested in improving their practices as researchers, and for those involved in shaping adult vocational educational experiences. After reviewing the history of self-study as a research methodology, they provide examples of self-study research that have direct implications for those in CTE and adult education and technology. They conclude the manuscript by providing practical guidance to those researching and/or working in schools, community centers and workplaces.

INTRODUCTION

In our manuscript, we explore self-study as an emerging research methodology with the potential to open up spaces of inquiry for researchers, graduate students, and teachers in a broad array of fields. Initially, self-study methodology was developed by and for teacher educators to investigate and improve their

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8598-6.ch031

own practice with more explicit attention to themselves. The Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) Special Interest Group (SIG) is the largest SIG within the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Since the mid-1990s self-study methodology has been used by pre-service teachers, inservice teachers, nursing educators, as well as institutionally to review and improve practices. We argue that the fields of career and technical education (CTE), adult education and technology can leverage self-study methodology in similar ways.

Self-study is self-initiated and focused, improvement aimed, interactive at one or more points during the process, conducted through diverse methodologies of qualitative research, and validated through a process based on trustworthiness (LaBoskey, 2004b). Russell (2004) added that making the research public has its benefits in that the move from private to public leads to additional layers of understanding through thinking about and articulating the process and findings of the researcher's experience. So, the process for doing self-study is one initiated by the practitioner-researcher, whereby they: 1) develop a focus or question for the inquiry, recruit collaborators to plan and work with, establish a systematic plan for collecting and analyzing data, and share what they learned with others including clear implications for changing practice as an educator. As an emerging methodology, self-study has a great deal to offer both theoretically and practically to those interested in improving their practices as researchers, and for those involved in shaping adult vocational educational experiences. After reviewing the history of self-study as a research methodology, we provide examples of self-study research that have direct implications for those in CTE and adult education and technology. We conclude our manuscript by providing practical guidance to those researching and/or working in schools, community centers and workplaces.

WHAT IS SELF-STUDY? HISTORY OF SELF-STUDY METHODOLOGY

The birth of the self-study in teacher education movement around 1990 has been probably the single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research. (Zeichner, 1999, p. 8)

Ken Zeichner, a prominent scholar in the field of Teacher Education, boldly declared the significance of self-study just nine years after its emergence. At the time, self-study was a methodology of teacher education practices and specifically for teacher educators. Its emergence coincided with a growing number of scholars interested in practitioner inquiry, of which there are several forms or methodologies today (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006). Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015), in what might be the most comprehensive history of self-study methodology, described the emergence of self-study as a field and its growth over nearly 30 years. Their report highlighted notable benchmarks in the field, including the 1993 establishment of the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices Special Interest Group (S-STEP SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). This foundational organization has since served as the keystone of the field, bringing colleagues together annually. In addition, the field has organized an international meeting called Castle in East Sussex, UK held in the summer of every even numbered year. Literature in the field has proliferated with the *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teacher Education and Teacher Education Practices* (2004), twelve edited volumes published by Springer, the Taylor and Francis journal *Studying Teacher Education* and an array of publications in journals like *Teaching and Teacher Education* and *Journal of Curriculum Studies* speak to the influence of self-study scholarship as it grows.

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