

Principles to distinguish between Research and Field-based professional inquiry

The OISE/UT Initial Teacher Education Program is a professional program which is Research-based and Research-driven.

The teaching profession that teacher candidates are to enter is governed by codes of conduct, that teacher candidates have the responsibility not only to become familiar with but also to put into practice during the course of their program, and especially while they are doing their practicum and their internship. OISE/UT has a responsibility in informing teacher candidates of their professional codes of conduct.

As research-based and research-driven, the program is both drawing from knowledge generated by scholars and practitioners through past and current research conducted in the field of education, and building on students' hand-on experience of the objective and systematic collection of facts on which they make professional judgments and interventions. In some cases, through course assignments or simply their own individual interests, teacher candidates might engage in activities that go beyond the mere field-based inquiry for professional intervention and growth, which involve the use of human subjects, i.e. data collection from human beings, with the intention of advancing knowledge and sharing it with a broader audience.

While evidence gathering aimed at professional intervention and professional growth is governed by professional codes of conduct, research involving the use of human subjects must undergo research ethical review. As stated in the U of T Guidelines on the Use of Human Subjects state, "*Any procedure carried out by one person involving the person of him or herself or another or the privacy of another is research which involves the use of human subjects, if it is done with the intention of advancing knowledge*".

(<http://www.research.utoronto.ca/tblconhu.html>)

Practitioner based inquiry differs from research mainly with regard to intention or finality, nature and means of intervention, and audience.

The finality of evidence gathering aimed at professional intervention and growth is the improvement of practices of an individual as a professional who is part of a community of professionals (such as school teachers) and citizens (beneficiaries, such as school students). The finality of research is the generation of new knowledge and its sharing with a broader audience for the benefits of society.

Objective and systematic collection of facts aiming at making informed professional judgments and interventions and at supporting professional growth is generally made in a naturalistic context where the intervention of the professional on the conditions in which participants act and interact does not modify the usual professional environment, and where the techniques of inquiry are minimally invasive. Research involving the use of human subjects often involves some manipulation by the researcher of the conditions in which participants act and interact, and research techniques that are invasive, in that they are not part and parcel of the common professional practice but rather designed specifically to collect data and generate knowledge to be shared.

Guidelines for Field-based Professional Inquiry (for B.Ed. students)

Field-based professional inquiry is an extension of what teachers naturally do in the course of their daily practice to reflect on and improve their work with students and others within the school environment.

Most of the school or student related inquiry you will be engaged in as teacher candidates in OISE/UT's Bachelor of Education Program is characteristic of this latter form of practitioner research. As an instrument in your ongoing development and growth as new teachers, such field-based study is consistent with recommendations from current literature on teachers as inquirers or researchers within the scope of their practice. It supports the Ontario College of Teachers' Professional Learning Framework that promotes the use of "research activities" by teachers as both best practice and a continual aspect of their professional responsibilities.

Although most activities relating to practitioner inquiry may not require formal procedures of ethical review they nevertheless must be conducted with the strictest adherence to standards of professional ethical practice.

The following guidelines provide some strategic information on how you should approach your inquiry in professionally and ethically attentive ways. These guidelines reinforce and complement other professional and ethical expectations as set out by the Ontario College of Teachers' Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice; OISE/UT's guidelines on professionalism for teacher candidates; the Ontario Teachers Federation's (and its affiliates') regulations on professional conduct; and all policies and procedures governing such activity as required by school boards and individual schools. For the purpose of these guidelines, all practitioner oriented inquiry activities are referred to as "research."

- Recognize that your research serves primarily an educative purpose for you as a teacher candidate and, by extension, your peers in the B.Ed. Program. In this respect, you may write about and/or discuss your activity with only your faculty instructors and other teacher candidates and only to satisfy course work requirements for the duration of your program. If you want to use information you compile in schools for other purposes that are not directly part of your responsibilities as a teacher candidate (e.g., a subsequent research project for graduate studies, conference or workshop presentations, any form of publication or dissemination purposes), you must get formal ethical review approval prior to conducting the research.
- Respect and safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and others within the field by removing all names of schools and individuals in any written presentation or oral discussion of your research with OISE/UT faculty and colleagues. Do not divulge information you compile to anyone else unless there is a compelling professional reason to do so (e.g., report a student's disclosure under your duties prescribed by the *Child and Family Services Act*). An obvious exception to this follows from your teaching responsibilities in the school. If your research is about the learning activities and experiences of students, we strongly encourage you to share its results with your associate teacher or other teachers, in order to fulfil the obligation to use information to improve the chances and learning outcomes of students, either individually or as a class group.
- Avoid revealing to students what their classmates did or said in the contexts of private interviews or observations. In more public contexts, be vigilant in your duty of care and avoid any comments or actions that might embarrass individual students or compromise their right to privacy.
- Refuse to engage in "gossip" about students, teachers, or others within the school for any reason at any time. The substance of your research is for the improvement of practice, not the entertainment of others.
- Be cautious of the tone you employ, either verbally or in writing, when reflecting on the conduct and practice of your peers and your associate teachers (and other professionals in the school). You are not in a legal or ethical position to evaluate or criticize other teachers. Instead, focus your research and subsequent discussion of it on the description of actual behaviour and/or expressed points of view and the learning you glean from it.
- If you are tape recording interviews, find out from the school what procedures you should follow (e.g., obtaining parental consent, student consent, and/or administrator assent). These recordings are for your use only and must not be shared with others (although the content may be shared according to the

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specifications above). Upon completion of your program, you must destroy all tapes and any transcripts you generated from them (note again that no names must appear on transcripts). We strongly discourage the use of videotaping unless it is a necessary and integral part of your program/course requirements. If so, follow school procedures to provide information to parents and, where necessary, secure their consent. Most schools have policies relating to the taking of photographs and their subsequent use or display. Find out what these are before engaging in such activity and adhere to their guidelines.

- Treat students' work with the same care and consideration you are expected to extend to the students themselves. Do not use test results, assignments, creative projects, and other samples of their work for any purpose other than to inform your own reflection and improved teaching practices or to showcase publicly in a positive sense selected classroom exercises and activities. This would exclude the displaying of test results or other material that would compromise the students' right to privacy.
- Be alert to the possible negative implications of an emotional or psychological nature of talking with students about sensitive issues, especially if they directly concern their own private circumstances and/or personal characteristics (e.g., asking students about experiences with or opinions about racism, sexual orientation, health problems, suicide, etc.). **Consult your OISE/UT instructor before proceeding.**