Using I Poems to Hear the Voices and Understand the Actions of EdD Students Conducting Action Research

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Abstract

There is a movement to redefine and refocus the Educational Doctorate to improve its effectiveness in producing scholarly practitioners, that is, individuals who have the ability to blend their practical wisdom and professional knowledge to identify, frame , and solve the problems of practice they face. The EdD at Arizona State University has chosen action research as its signature pedagogy to help students develop the habits of the mind, hands and heart they need to be effective leaders. This paper describes the program and provides six I Poems developed from dissertation proposals. I Poems helped us come closer to each student's world and uncover the complexities, nuances, and tensions of their individual situations. I poems developed for this manuscript revealed that students worked to find space and time for teachers to collaborate, gain an inquiry stance, and grow; helped children become passionate about literacy; and increased parental involvement to help children pass mandated tests. Students acting as scholarly practitioners approached problems in their workplaces from a variety of viewpoints to enact positive change. This study has implications for doctoral program development, action research, and the value of poetry as data and methodology.

Keywords

Education Doctorate, Action Research, I Poems, Signature Poetry

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There is a movement to redefine and refocus the Educational Doctorate to improve its effectiveness in producing scholarly practitioners, that is, individuals who have the ability to blend their practical wisdom and professional knowledge to identify, frame, and solve the problems of practice they face. The EdD at Arizona State University has chosen action research as its signature pedagogy to help students develop the habits of the mind, hands and heart they need to be effective leaders. This paper describes the program and provides six I Poems developed from dissertation proposals. I Poems helped us come closer to each student's world and uncover the complexities, nuances, and tensions of their individual situations. I poems developed for this manuscript revealed that students worked to find space and time for teachers to collaborate, gain an inquiry stance, and grow; helped children become passionate about literacy; and increased parental involvement to help children pass mandated tests. Students acting as scholarly practitioners approached problems in their workplaces from a variety of viewpoints to enact positive change. This study has implications for doctoral program development, action research, and the value of poetry as data and methodology. Keywords: Education Doctorate, Action Research, I Poems, Signature Poetry

The education doctorate (EdD) has been plagued by a lack of identity and for many, is seen as nothing more than a PhD lite (Golde, 2006; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2005). According to Levine (2005) EdD programs are failing to prepare school leaders who can take action and make the effective and lasting changes schools need. To Levine, students enrolled in EdD programs are receiving an outdated, watered-down curriculum and being passed along based on low standards and expectations. The views of Murphy and Vriesenga (2005) align with those of Levine because they believe that despite training, EdD graduates are not making things better. Likewise, Evans (2007) suggests these doctoral candidates are failing to turn theory into practice, change practice, or critique and challenge the status quo.

In contrast, Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, and Garabedian (2006) suggest that with reflective thought and a willingness to change these challenges could be overcome, and in response to this the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) was formed. In 2007 CPED and institutions working with them began to re-envision, re-define, and reclaim the EdD as a distinct professional degree for the next generation of school leaders (CPED, 2010; Perry & Imig, 2008). To accomplish this, the consortium articulated a set of desired qualities EdD students should gain from their doctoral experience and from these worked backward to determine the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to develop these qualities. According to CPED, EdD graduates should become scholarly practitioners, that is individuals who have the ability to blend their practical wisdom and professional knowledge to identify, frame, and solve the problems of practice they face (CPED, 2010). To achieve these qualities CPED members developed a set of guiding principles and design features institutions could use to design or redesign their programs. Institutions part of CPED believe the professional doctorate in education:

1. Is framed around questions of equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems of practice.
2. Prepares leaders who can construct and apply knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities.
3. Provides opportunities for candidates to develop and demonstrate collaboration and communication skills to work with diverse communities and to build partnerships.
4. Provides field-based opportunities to analyze problems of practice and use multiple frames to develop meaningful solutions.
5. Is grounded in and develops a professional knowledge base that integrates both practical and research knowledge, that links theory with systemic and systematic inquiry.
6. Emphasizes the generation, transformation, and use of professional knowledge and practice.

Students in CPED-influenced programs take core courses, learn in real world settings (laboratories of practice), are taught with signature pedagogy, and write dissertations in practice as their culminating experience. Dissertations in practice exhibit each graduate's ability "to think, to perform, and to act with integrity" (Shulman, 2005). Signature pedagogy is used to prepare students to write these dissertations.

Lee Shulman (2005, 2007) defines *signature pedagogy* as "the characteristic forms of teaching and learning… that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions" (p. 52). Signature pedagogy for doctoral students is built on an apprenticeship model and immerses novices in experiences that allow them to gain insight into their profession's implicit rules, values, and norms (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008). Signature pedagogy respects the practical wisdom students bring to the learning experience while it extends and stretches it with wisdom from the field. Signature pedagogy places students in problem-solving situations that require complex thinking and public displays of what is being learned.

As an affiliate of CPED, Arizona State University has adopted their principles. The mission of our EdD in Leadership and Innovation program is to prepare scholarly and influential practitioners who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to resolve the problems of practice they face. Table 1 contains the qualities we want students to display.

Table 1: *ASU's Program Goals*

Lead
- Render visions and plans for the future
- Act as agents of change in the service of others
- Maximize the contributions of all participants
- Anticipate responses to shifting educational circumstances

Uphold access and excellence
- Maintain high and positive expectations for learning
- Ensure equitable opportunities to meet and surpass rigorous academic standards
- Respond to the strengths and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners

Collaborate
- Build professional development communities of practice

- Partner with others inside and outside education to address mutual concerns
- Honor multiple perspectives

Apply ideas and information
- Direct scholarship wisely to problems of practice
- Examine the professional and research literature of education critically
- Employ information technology strategically
- Embrace systems as a perspective for interpreting local situations

Apply systematic inquiry
- Adopt action research as a stance for resolving local issues and for developing professionally
- Initiate cumulative action research that results in principled data-based decisions
- Apply theoretical frames, methodologies, and methods strategically

To help students develop these we use a cohort structure and require students, who are all full-time working professionals, to take core courses focused on action research, leadership, innovation, and change. Each of these foci is threaded throughout our program. They are taught in core courses (12 hours) and research courses (9 hours) and further developed in Leader-Scholar Communities (18 hours). Leader-Scholar Communities are comprised of a chair, 4-5 students, and a second committee member who work together to help each student plan, write, and defend his or her proposal and dissertation.

Action Research as Signature Pedagogy and Capstone

Students learn about leadership, change, innovation, and research as they perform multiple cycles of action research in their workplace settings. The scale of each cycle is small, yet substantial enough to demonstrate positive benefits for participants. In our program performing action research as a doctoral student is high-stakes. Students must lead change and innovate as they investigate. Actions are built with student's practical knowledge and with current and good literature. Literature reviews in proposals and dissertations are focused, selective, practical, and relevant to the context they serve.

Students engage in action research and in our program use mixed methods. Experimental designs using random assignment to treatments and control groups are not appropriate. The action research conducted by our students is not concerned with generalizability, universal principles, or theory confirmation Dissertation proposals consist of the first three chapters of our six-chapter dissertations. The content of each chapter is briefly described below.

> *Chapter 1: Leadership Context and Purpose of the Action.* This chapter explains the challenge driving the posed action and the student's responsibility, authority, and role. Chapter 1 contains the research questions and a brief overview of the posed innovation and student's leadership role.
> *Chapter 2: Review of Supporting Scholarship.* This chapter identifies and explains the theoretical lenses used to understand the problem, the solution, and how the innovation/action will be measured.
> *Chapter 3: Method.* This chapter contains the setting, participants, plan of action, and data collection tools and procedures.
> *Chapter 4: Analysis and Results.* This chapter explains the analytical procedures and what was discovered from each data collection tool.

Chapter 5: Findings. This chapter synthesizes findings and draws implications, including disconfirming or unanticipated effects.
Chapter 6: Conclusions. This chapter explains the personal and professional consequences of the action, lessons learned, and next steps.

In our program, the faculty is using action research as signature pedagogy because they believe it has potential to make life better for everyone (Hinchey, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Like Pine (2009) we believe action research is a conceptual and philosophical framework that becomes ingrained in one's mind and heart. Educators conducting action research do not impose their actions. They listen to the voices of those around them, find their own voice, and encourage change from the inside out (Stringer, 2007). Action research aligns with CPED's principles and our own mission and goals. Action research and action research proposals and dissertations encourage students to find and report their experience and their own voices. Using the word I or we as opposed to they or them is permissible in action research work. Students' voices are respected because they are insiders, with a unique vantage point (Collins, 1990; Plano, Clark, & Creswell, 2010). Insiders play many roles and are engaged in relationships that often reveal the nuances of organizational learning, leadership, and change (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Herr & Anderson, 2005).

However, even with these ideals and potential, there has been little research on action research as signature pedagogy and even less research on action research proposals and dissertations in EdD programs. Even though our faculty believes action research is transforming students into scholarly and influential practitioners, we are only beginning to collect evidence to support this claim.

I Poems as Evidence

To begin to understand if our beliefs are correct, we constructed *I Poems* from dissertation proposals written by our third cohort (Piston, 1947). We chose I Poems because they are built on the work of Carol Gilligan who is known for helping women find their voice at a time when researchers only examined male perspectives (Gilligan 1982; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003). To Gilligan, voice is expressed physically with breath and sound, psychologically with emotions, and culturally with ideals. These ideas align with the philosophical stance of qualitative research and researchers who use poetry.

Poetry is gaining legitimacy as a rigorous, substantive, and valuable qualitative research strategy because it allows a researcher to document lived experiences in an interesting and artful manner (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Brearley, 2002; Hass, 1999; Eisner, 1997). Resting on the shoulders of feminism, post structuralism, critical theory, and semiotics, poetry as a research method and tool changes a researcher's perspective, brings the voices of participants to the forefront, and rails against positivist ways of knowing (Burg, 2004; Cahnmann, 2003; Eisner, 1997; Hass, 1999; Langer & Furman, 2004; Rose & McClafferty, 2001). Eisner (1997) notes that poetry helps both the researcher and the researched develop relational ways of knowing, that are deep, accurate, and meaningful. Poetry as data is bi-directional because it allows the subjective experience of the researcher and researched to be known. Cahnmann (2003) notes that the craft and practice of poetry prepares scholars in multidimensional and penetrating ways. However, despite being convinced poetry is a legitimate data source and process, Barone and Eisner (1997), Piirto (2002), and Burg (2004) caution that researchers using it face risks because it interrogates dominant narratives, it is unfamiliar, and it pushes the boundaries of traditional research.

Despite these risks and because of its qualities, poetry as data and method is vigorously being used in projects that matter. For example, in her graduate classroom,

Sullivan (2005) used found poems as an educative strategy and research tool to help her students to tolerate the ambiguity of conducting action research and find their voices. Similarly, Poindexter (2002) used Gee's (1991) linguistic system to create poems to reveal the narratives of HIV patients and their caregivers and Furman (2003) used poems as autobiographical data to explore step-fatherhood. Likewise, using quilts and poetry Burg (2004) was able to uncover the voice of five women in terms of literacy, discrimination, colonization, identity and relationships. Each of these researchers developed sensitivity to the voice and positionality of their participants and understand the value and power of unseen narratives.

As researchers who adopt a qualitative stance, we developed I Poems to answer our research questions. Constructing I Poems is very different from constructing poems, which uses literary forms like rhythm, ambiguity, and alliteration to achieve particular effects. I Poems are products of a data analysis strategy based on the *Listening Guide* method designed by Gilligan (1982). Gilligan was attempting to reveal the identity and moral development of women so she used a series of sequential interviews and listenings to come closer and closer to each participant's experience. Researchers using the *Listening Guide* first interrogate their data in order to understand who is speaking, to whom, in what order, and why. Important to this method is uncovering each individual's narrative in terms of the context (where they are), the characters (who is there), and the plot (what is happening, when, with whom, and why). Repeated images, metaphors, and themes are noted along with contrapuntal examples and tensions. I Poems are constructed after a narrative is formed (Debold, 1990; Gilligan, et al, 2003). Specific steps used in this study are provided in the analysis.

Method of the Study

Participants

At the time of this study, eighteen students in our third cohort had just defended their proposals. These students worked full-time as teachers (elementary, middle, high school, community college, college), principals (elementary, middle, and high school), and district administrators as well as in various other positions (e.g., Director of Human Resources, Department of Education employee).

Data Source

Shortly after each proposal was defended, we constructed I Poems from six proposals written by students in our third cohort. The selection of these proposals was based on numerous instances of the words I. Proposals analyzed are a representative sample of those written in our program. We chose proposals over dissertations because they are a crucial stage in becoming a scholarly and influential practitioner. Proposals are defended when students are at the end of their second year of our three-year program. Proposal defenses occur after most coursework has been completed and a cycle or two of action research has been conducted. Proposal time is a critical incident in students' lives as action researchers. It shows if a student has landed on a problem of practice, developed an intervention/innovation, is ready to lead an intervention/innovation, and has an organized data collection and analysis plan. Proposals lay the groundwork for the first thee chapters of the dissertation. Given this, anxiety, motivation, and enthusiasm run high at proposal time and written products are evidence of hard work, reflection, and thought. Unfortunately few studies have looked at the richness of the work written at this crucial time.

Creating I Poems

The two researchers created I Poems by altering the Gilligan (1982) and Gilligan, et al (2003) *Listening Guide*. Gilligan applied her method to interviews, but in this study it was used to analyze artifacts. We felt justified to do this because action research allows and encourages the use of first person, I. The steps used are explained below.

Step 1 Reading for the plot. Each selected proposal was read by each of the researchers to understand the plot (problem and action), characters (student and other participants) and the context each student and their participants were nested within (personal, local, and national forces). At this stage, attention was paid to our own responses and subjectivities. As each proposal was dissected, we reflected on it and documented our connections with the author, the text, the characters, and the contexts in memos.

Step 2 Coming together to understand the narrative. After our first separate readings, we came together to discuss what we read. Our goal was to form the overall narrative. It was not to agree or give up our own personal perceptions or connections with the text. We came together to explore each resonance, and interpretation and in the end understood the narrative.

Step 3 Constructing I Poems. With a shared narrative we began to construct the I Poems. We worked together and underlined each first person I sentence within each proposal.

I will recruit four faculty mentors who teach first-year major-specific courses within ASU's College of Nursing and Health Innovation's four majors: Exercise & Wellness, Health Sciences, Nursing, and Nutrition. I will also recruit four students to serve as peer leader mentors within the program. These peer leader mentors will be targeted per their previous or current roles as peer advisors, residential college student leaders, or officials within the college's major-affiliated student organizations. I will also enlist four first-year commuter student participants from each major and assign them as mentees to each of the four corresponding faculty and student peer leader mentoring teams. I will also personally participate as the program's director by assisting with the academic and social engagement promotional process within each mentoring team…

We then cut these and placed each of these into a new document. Making sure to preserve their sequence. We then went through this new document and underlined associated verbs and a few other words that seemed salient.

- I will recruit four faculty mentors who teach first-year major-specific courses within ASU's College of Nursing and Health Innovation's four majors: Exercise & Wellness, Health Sciences, Nursing, and Nutrition.
- I will also recruit four students to serve as peer leader mentors within the program.
- I will enlist four first-year commuter student participants from each major and assign them as mentees to each of the four corresponding faculty and student peer leader mentoring teams.

- I will also <u>personally participate</u> as the program's director by <u>assisting</u> with the academic and social engagement promotional process within each mentoring team.

We then lined up these phrases like lines in a poem.

- I will recruit four faculty mentors, four students to retain, and four first-year commuter students to serve as peer leader mentors them.
- I will personally participate as the program's director and operate as a boundary-broker.

Each poem was constructed to explain the challenge each student was facing and the actions they took in response. If the student included a salient quote or said something important (without the word I), we used this quote as an introduction.

We believe our procedure was a valid analysis strategy. We worked independently, reflectively, and collaboratively and kept an audit trail (Plano Clark, & Creswell, 2010).

Results: I Poems

I Poems provide a unique way to present the challenges that sparked students' actions and the actions they took in response. From our analysis we pose that students' actions focused on teachers -- developing collaborative learning spaces, developing cultures of inquiry, and increasing teachers' capacity to plan instruction; and students -- inspiring students to read, and retaining commuter students.

In the first I Poem an art teacher perceives that his school is a controlling environment for teachers. He wants to take action and change this into a collaborative environment where teachers can exercise their creativity and become a transformative learning organization. To carry out his vision he talks with the teachers at his school and from this they decide they need ways to integrate the arts into the curriculum through professional development and work with mentors. This student wanted to work with teachers and create a collaborative and creative learning space; and to do this, he relied on the notion of Ba, or transformative space with a "here and now" quality.

Ba is a Japanese word that is roughly translated into the English word *space*. Nonaka (1994) proposed that the management of knowledge revolves around the concept of individuals being involved in a knowledge conversion process that is carried out in "context" and is embodied by the Japanese idea of *Ba*. *Ba* is a shared space energized with interactions - an intentionally designed exchange between the "right mix of people" for developing relationships. (Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000).

The action he planned involved three spaces (public/social, private/social and public/individual spaces) in which teachers could work to integrate art into the curriculum. As an action researcher he wanted to understand the effects of these actions with data. So he developed surveys and set up time and space for semi-structured interviews, on-line conversations, focus groups, and observations. This student wanted teachers to incorporate the arts into their lives and his action was to inquire, lead, collaborate, and learn with teachers. The I Poem is below.

SUPPORTING AND FOSTERING COLLABORATION WITHIN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AROUND THE PEDAGOGY OF ARTS INTEGRATION

If schools desire to move away from a "top-down" and controlled teacher learning environment, only heightened by current accountability measures, then schools must convert into transformative learning organizations. As such, the need for effective teaching practices coupled with collaborative and creative learning space is imperative for this transformation.

I prescribed to the idea that creating a three dimensional form is not necessarily about creating interesting positive space - the tangible sculpture - rather it is about creating interesting negative space.

I am attempting to craft other types of "invisible" spaces - collaborative learning spaces.

As a social artist, I desire to help and be of service to teachers by developing spaces for creative collaboration, built by an intentional design of participation and engagement.

As an action researcher, I approach this study as a means to inquire *with* teachers to expand arts integration learning and personal professional development.

I exist to inquire, lead, collaborate, and most importantly, to learn.

I will intervene to develop a Dialoguing Ba (a public/social space for reflecting and sharing experiences), a Systemizing Ba (a private/social space for collective interactions of existing knowledge with outside information), and an Originating Ba (a public/individual space for face-to-face interactions to share feelings, emotions or to observe).

I will collect and analyze data to gain perspectives about the process of teachers learning about arts integration practices within the knowledge construction model.

I am confident that the varying types of data I collect and analyze will lend themselves to valid, trustworthy, outcomes and findings that will answer the research questions I pose.

I am also confident that I will be able to, via triangulation, come to some valid and dependable conclusions about the intervention I develop in which teacher participants involved in this study are engaged.

I am hopeful this study will carry with it a solution for teachers in my district.

I am hopeful this study will impact classrooms.

The second I Poem was constructed from a proposal written by a principal who, through personal experience, understood the potential benefits of action research and wanted to help the teachers at his school gain this insight. This student wanted teachers to grow professionally in the context of their own classrooms by inquiring about their day-to-day activities. To do this, he plans to work with teachers in their Professional Learning Communities. As an action researcher he wants to understand the effect of this work by collecting data from surveys, interviews, transcripts, journals, and other artifacts. This student strives to make things better at his school by helping teachers understand the benefits of action research in their classrooms. His action provides teachers with professional development so they will have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to carry out action research on their own. The second I Poem is presented next.

COLLABORATIVE PRACTITIONER INQUIRY:
PROVIDING LEADERSHIP AND ACTION RESEARCH FOR TEACHER
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Throughout my career as a classroom teacher and principal, it has been my belief that there is always more we educators can learn about our practice and ourselves via a culture of inquiry.

I believe exploring one's intellectual curiosity is the hallmark of learning.
I am finishing my fourth year as principal of a large, suburban high school. Seven years ago, I completed my first classroom action research project as a participant. I found action research to be rewarding and gained the conviction to encourage classroom action research.
I want the teachers at my school to bring individualization and relevance to their professional growth by learning from their day-to-day activities and within the context of their classrooms.
I propose that the best way to achieve this kind of professional development is through practitioner research and professional learning communities.
I will combine collaborative professional development with self-directed, individualized professional development in practitioner inquiry.
I believe these will complement each other if guided by me as an instructional leader.
The members of the Action Research Professional Learning Community I will work with are professionals who have varying degrees of training and experience with action research.
I will email professional literature regarding practitioner inquiry, action research, professional learning communities, and embedded professional development to all teachers.
I will present fifteen hours of professional development in action research to a cohort of teachers that choose to receive the training.
I will introduce and explain the concept of collaborative practitioner inquiry and how developing models of inquiry can be used as embedded professional development.
I will collect surveys, interviews, transcripts, journals and other artifacts.
As a member check, I will ask each interviewee to review my transcriptions and provide a written response to its contents.
I will record my observations and reflections in a research journal that will serve as a way to record the impact of my action research innovation.
I will conduct an integrative analysis to construct assertions that answer my research question following guidelines by Erickson (1986) and Smith (1997).
I will conceptualize key linkages across data sources by examining both descriptive statistics and coded spreadsheets.
I will use an inductive analytic approach to determine and test patterns of data in order to formulate assertions.
I will list the assertions relative to my research question and systematically examine each assertion across the data sources to record the descriptive statistics and codes that support or refute them.

The third I poem was constructed from the work of a second grade teacher who wants to help her students gain a love for literacy. To do this she plans to devote more class time to

reading, teach comprehension strategies, listen to students read, engage students in meaningful dialogue, and model her own passion for literacy. As an action researcher this student wants to prove her effectiveness through traditional reading measures as well as qualitative measures. She wants to delve deep and understand what her students think and feel about literacy. Ultimately, her goal is to use this insight to help her students to gain a love for literacy. Her action was to incorporate instructional strategies to help her students develop this love.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SCAFFOLDED SELF-SELECTED READING TO A THIRD GRADE CLASS' READING MOTIVATION AND ACHEIVEMENT

Of all the subjects I teach, I feel reading is the most important.
I am committed to inspiring students to become motivated to love literacy but when it comes to independent reading my students are not engaged.
I need to devote more time to reading because when my students tell me what they did over the weekend, it is not about a great book they have read.
I have come to realize that I need to motivate my students to read. I need to provide time for my students to read and have meaningful talk, or dialogue, about their reading with each other and with me.

I will verify students are reading independent level books.
I will model sustained silent reading.
I will confer with students one at a time about their reading.
I will model effective and ineffective dialogues, and the students will role-play effective ways to dialogue.
I will prompt students to talk about the comprehension strategies they are using.
I will have students read aloud to me, and I will take notes about their oral reading.

I will collect data (Oral Reading Record, *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills,* surveys, observations, interviews, and field notes) on this innovation.
I will integrate qualitative data with quantitative data to form assertions.

The fourth I Poem was composed from a proposal written by the Director of a Community Education Department working in a district with a high Hispanic population (85%) and children living in poverty (92% free or reduced lunch). This student was living in a state where Hispanic parents feared deportation and lived under constant fear. Given her role and her belief in the power of parental knowledge and involvement, this Director wants to help teachers and parents collaborate. Her innovation Academic Parent-Teacher Teams is designed to do this because it educates teachers to work with parents and teaches parents how to work with their child/children so assessment scores will rise. As an action researcher this student will collect data using surveys, interviews, and observations. Her dream is to have students in her district learn and pass mandated tests and her action involves parents and teachers working cooperatively to achieve these important goals.

ACADEMIC PARENT-TEACHER TEAMS: A NEW MODEL OF SCHOOL PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOCUSED ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A parent made drawing that shows one mother's dreams for her four children. The picture demonstrates that even though the mother was of minority descent and lived in an impoverished neighborhood she still had high aspirations for her four children. These aspirations include a pilot of Air force One, a language teacher abroad, a naval officer, and an Olympic skier.

I believe all children deserve a successful educational experience that includes teachers and parents skillfully collaborating to guide their steps as they develop into assertive learners and critical problem solvers. The problem is that only some parents have the knowledge of what actions to take to help their children succeed. Educating all parents with this knowledge and providing a strong supportive infrastructure is my goal.
I seek to develop a stronger parent involvement program. This conviction guides my professional and educational compass.

I currently serve as the Director of the Community Education Department. My work and passion are focused on meaningfully connecting parents and teachers to improve student learning in a unique setting. Our district is composed of 5% African American, 5% Native American, 5% White, and 85% Hispanic students. Our district has a 40% to 45% mobility rate, a 7% absenteeism rate, and suspends or expels an average of 8% of students each year. Of considerable importance to my context is the issue of immigration. Since 2007, our local Sheriff, has used his power and resources to arrest and deport undocumented immigrants. Families in my school district live under constant fear of being targeted. Parental involvement in school for district families translates into leaving the safety of their own homes and taking the significant risk of being arrested. These challenges faced by community members in my district are the social backdrop upon which my action research study is set.

I created Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) and am personally responsible for developing professional development to all participating staff and working with parents as teachers work with them. To ensure success of this program I will participate in many of the parent-teacher team meetings and will be available to clarify any questions or concerns that arise.

To prove the effectiveness of APTT I will personally interview, observe and survey parents, teachers, and students.

The fifth I Poem was composed from a proposal written by an Academic Advisor who had concerns for recruiting and retaining the commuter students in his college. He envisions a plan to remedy this and call it Sky Leaders. He creates a program that brings faculty and peer support for his first year commuter students. He plans to form mentoring teams and build peer leader mentors to support commuter students in academics as well as provide opportunities for social engagement, He is hoping that this innovation encourages the commuter students to stay in school. As an action researcher, his role will be a full participant-observer, facilitator and boundary-broker (Wenger, 1998) between the mentors

and students. He plans on providing training and assistance to each mentoring team. As an action researcher he wants to understand the effects of Sky Leaders so he will collect data using observations, interviews, and surveys. He vision provides support to commuter students who might otherwise drop out of school.

LEVERAGING FACULTY AND PEER LEADERS TO PROMOTE COMMUTER STUDENT CO-CURRICULAR ENGAGEMENT: A COLLEGIATE RETENTION INTERVENTION STUDY

I intend to make an immediate positive difference within my college —a goal that is particularly appropriate to the action research (Stringer, 1999) tradition.

I am responsible for recruiting and retaining students in our college.
For my action research I will focus on our commuter student population.
I will establish a sustainable approach I call Sky Leaders.

I want to know how and if the Sky Leaders program impacts first year commuter students' decisions to get involved with academically purposeful activities and ultimately re-enroll in classes at ASU.

I will recruit four faculty mentors and four students to serve as peer leader mentors for four first year commuter student participants and create the Sky Leaders program.
I will operate as a boundary-broker between the Sky Leaders program mentors and ancillary campus co-curricular engagement officers.
I will assist with the academic and social engagement within each mentoring team.
I will provide training for the faculty and student peer leader mentors.

I will seek to determine if the Sky Leaders program impacts the following: students' initial and subsequent institutional goals and commitments, institutional experiences (with an emphasis on co-curricular engagement), academic and social integration, and re-enrollment decisions.
I will also seek to gauge the effectiveness of each of the program's components.

I will use a quasi-experimental, mixed methods approach to investigate the effectiveness of the Sky Leaders program.
I intend to collect evidence from a variety of sources in a variety of ways, which will enable me to triangulate data to support my assertions.
I will observe, interview and survey the mentor and mentee participants using an observational protocol.
I will be acting as a full participant-observer within the study.

The sixth I Poem voices a seventh grade reading teacher's thoughts on collaborative planning, professional relationships, and the challenge he sees with these in his context. Although he and his team have the same students and plan and work together, he feels that his team is not as productive as it might be. He plans to use ideas in the literature to increase his teams' capacity to collaborate and plan cooperatively. To do this he will take on three roles: learning team member, facilitator, and researcher. As an action researcher he wants to understand the effects of his innovation so he will collect data using journals, transcriptions of meetings, interviews, other artifacts, and a survey. This teacher envisions a

more effective team and he is going to work with them to become a productive professional learning team.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO A MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAM'S COLLABORATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

When I entered my first classroom with my name above the door I realized the struggle classroom management could be. But through discussions with co-workers and trying new things I was able to learn how to manage my classroom.

In my experience as a teacher, I have come to realize the importance of teachers collaborating to overcome challenges and obstacles. I am working in my sixth year as the Reading teacher for the 7B Team at Horizon West Middle School, a school where teams of teachers follow the D3 process - we plan and work together and have the same students the entire year.

The D3 process is promising, but I believe it lacks structure so I am seeking to promote stronger professional relationships among team members. I will be using Anne Jolly's (2004) Facilitator's Guide to Professional Learning Teams to develop a professional learning team that can meet achievement goals. I will use this guide because I have grown as a teacher because of situated learning and a community of practice. I have learned more on the job from colleagues than from the teacher preparation that preceded my career.

These ideas and Jolly's Guide fuel my study's action. I will provide professional development opportunities to develop our Team's capacities to collaborate and plan instruction.

During this study I will take on three roles: learning team member, facilitator, and researcher. The responsibilities I will have vary for each role.

As a learning team member, I will seek to gain professional knowledge in accordance with the learning plan set by the Team. As a Team member I will seek to improve my level of collaboration with others and my instructional planning. As a facilitator, I will work to keep our Team focused on: student achievement, increasing collegiality and collaboration during team meetings, and adjusting the professional learning team process. I will lead Team meetings and present tools and processes to facilitate collective learning and instructional planning.

As a researcher, I will observe the process, collect and analyze data, then report findings and implications. My data will consist of: research journal entries, artifacts, meeting transcriptions, interviews, and a survey. I will integrate these data sources to identify patterns of interaction, track changes, and eventually make assertions, or warranted responses to my research questions.

Discussion

This study used a unique analysis strategy (*Listening Guide*) to construct I Poems from a unique data source (dissertation proposals). Our goal was to understand the action research work of scholarly and influential practitioners in their own voices and through their own words. Given these goal and findings, we offer the following thoughts. First, action research in EdD programs can be used to develop scholarly and influential practitioners. Our analysis shows that our students are striving to make things better by taking on complex problems of practice in their workplaces. They are using their practical wisdom and blending it with the professional knowledge they are learning through signature pedagogy in core courses to make small but important changes. Our students are making things better for students, their parents, and teachers, encouraging opportunities for collaboration, and creating learning spaces. These actions strive for equity and social justice and allow the voices of those silenced to be heard. Through action research our students are developing habits of heart.

Second, we believe that when practitioners conduct research they should be allowed to construct their own narrative and write it in their own voice. "I statements" reveal commitments, actions, and emotions; and are an important component to any action research study, even if it is for a proposal or dissertation. The voices of insiders matter and expose the reality of school life. Academics can learn from the voices of those in the field because they can tell us how to turn theory into practice and ground theory in reality (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007).

Our analysis of proposals shows that action research can be used as signature pedagogy to create school leaders with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to identify educational problems, design solutions, and lead change. We believe that our newly designed EdD aligns with CPED's principles, which work to redefine and distinguish the EdD as a professional practice degree with its own vision and mission. Through action research students can become scholarly practitioners with the minds, hands and hearts they need to be leaders and agents of change (CPED, 2010).

The philosophy of action research aligns with qualitative work because it encourages social justice, encourages collaboration, and allows the voices of participants and researchers to be heard simultaneously (Hinchey, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Like qualitative research, action research adopts an activist stance that and rails against positivist ways of knowing (Burg, 2004; Cahnmann, 2003; Eisner, 1997; Hass, 1999; Langer & Furman, 2004; Rose & McClafferty, 2001). Given this, creating I Poems out of action research proposals encouraged us as researchers to read data for its plot, work together to develop a narrative, and work collaboratively to develop each poem. I Poems helped us become closer to each student's narrative and capture this narrative in a unique and meaning way.

This work, we believe, has implications for other investigators, program developers, and scholarly practitioners because it documents lived experience and enlivens findings. Poetry is gaining legitimacy as a rigorous qualitative research strategy and tool (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Brearley, 2002; Cahnmann, 2003; Hass, 1999; Eisner, 1997). Our use of it provided bi-directional gains and because of this should be considered as legitimate methodology for researchers and researching practitioners. Poetry prepares scholars in multidimensional and penetrating ways (Cahnmann, 2003). This is the aim of our program and the way we model and embrace research methods.

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