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Editorials

The Power of Collaboration

Julian Kitchen, Mandi Berry & Tom Russell

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Collaboration has long been one of the defining characteristics of self-study (Lighthall, 2004). The eight articles in this issue of *Studying Teacher Education* delve into collaborative relationships with peers, students, and the wider educational community. The authors of the first four articles convey how conversation and collaboration with peers can have a powerful impact on educators' confidence, capacity for professional growth, and willingness to share their practices with others (Clark, 2001). The next

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In his history of self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP), Loughran (2004) recalls that the initial aim was 'to better understand the problematic worlds of teaching and learning' (p. 9) with a view to better serving the teacher candidates taught by teacher educators. The impetus for the founding of S-STEP was a 1992 American Educational Research Association conference symposium in which the Arizona Group 'publicly articulated, and honestly portrayed their personal and professional struggles in interactions with their students as they endeavored to enhance their learning about teaching' (Loughran, p. 14). This collaboration by four emerging academics resonated with established professors, such as Tom Russell and Fred Korthagen, who were exploring similar questions. Together, and alongside a growing community in the S-STEP Special Interest Group, they engaged in conversations, collaboration and relationship: face-to-face with colleagues, with their students, between disciplines, and across institutions (Lighthall, 2004). Within the S-STEP community, teacher educators have been able to converse about their practices and develop an international dialogue on understanding, improving, and disseminating critical inquiry into teacher education practices. The authentic and generative nature of this community is captured in issues 14(3) and 15(1) of *Studying Teacher Education* that focus on the authors' learning experiences at the 2018 international conference at Herstmonceux Castle, UK.

While collaboration is a hallmark of S-STEP, more could be done to make this explicit in our scholarship. The first article in this issue suggests that cross-disciplinary work among teacher educators is 'relatively rare' while the second reports a 'dearth of knowledge reported in the literature about teacher educator collaboration.' These impressions should prompt us to become more explicit about the cross/inter/trans-disciplinary and collaborative nature of our work. This could be addressed by including such terms in article titles and in the keywords that are critical to searching online databases. Also, there is value in turning to the *International Handbook of Self-Study of*

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Teacher Education Practices (Kitchen et al., [in press](#)) to understand the nature and development of self-study. The articles in this issue affirm the power of collaboration in self-study and offer fresh perspectives on building collaborative relationships.

Collaboration and Conversation with Peers

Self-study 'provides fertile ground for investigating and developing your knowledge about teaching with evidence that is immediate and personal,' according to Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 43). They also describe it as 'multiple and multifaceted ... using different theories, various research methods, with numerous purposes' (p. 46). Thus the S-STEP community is likely to be receptive to studies that build bridges between self-study and other approaches, such as *Building Bridges: A Cross-Disciplinary Peer Coaching Self-Study* by Charles Hohensee and William Lewis. This article describes a collaborative project that combines cross-disciplinary self-study (between teacher educators in mathematics and language arts) with peer coaching. Hohensee and Lewis introduce readers to productive conditions for peer coaching and specific peer coaching strategies. Their account illuminates how peer coaching can serve as a targeted approach to collaboration across disciplines within a teacher education program.

Self-Study Enabling Understanding of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: An Exploration of Collaboration among Teacher Educators for Special and Inclusive Education by Fiona King, Anna Logan, and Adrian Lohan also considers cross-disciplinary collaboration. Linking self-study to the scholarship of teaching and learning (Boyer, 1990), they suggest that combining self-study with such a widely known public theory can promote the value of self-study as a collaborative strategy for improving practice and enhancing teacher education research. Their study illustrates how self-study can create safe spaces for collaboration. The authors note that the reflective dimension of

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disciplines and co-process results.

Critical friendship has emerged as an important form of collaboration in self-study. Schuck and Russell (2005) state that 'a critical friend acts as a sounding board, asks challenging questions, supports reframing of events, and joins in the professional experience' (p. 107).

Supporting Collaborative Self-Study: An Exploration of Internal and External Critical Friendships by Anne O'Dwyer, Richard Bowles, and Déirdre Ní Chrionin illustrates how an external critical friend can help deepen insights by adding a second layer of collaboration and criticality. Also, by summarizing the pedagogies employed in the internal and external critical friendship processes, this article is useful as a guide to practitioners interested in harnessing the power of collaboration.

The fourth collaborative self-study involves online teaching, which is expanding rapidly in initial teacher education, graduate education, and ongoing professional development. Michael Dunn and Mary Rice, in *Community, Towards Dialogue: A Self-Study of Online Teacher Preparation for Special Education*, study a teacher educator's efforts to inform teacher candidate beliefs regarding reading instruction for students with disabilities in an online special education course. The article is notable for Michael's commitment to engaging in authentic dialogue that both challenges teacher candidates to take responsibility for assessment and builds a collaborative culture of solidarity with them. Mary actively questions Michael over the course of the study and helps organize the data and articulate the findings. While this particular self-study focuses on Michael's work, it is a reciprocal relationship as they also drew on their 'collective learnings to guide Mary as she built a course of her own for a future semester.' The 'critical collaboration' in this article is similar to the external critical friendship presented in the previous article, while the pedagogy studied offers insights into both online teaching and special education in teacher education.

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understanding' (Loughran, 2004, p. 21). The S-STEP literature, according to Loughran (2004), 'also illustrates that students are crucial participants and mirrors for information, feedback and advice' (pp. 21–22). This is evident in the next three articles, which explore collaborations with graduate students and teacher candidates.

Collaboration with Teacher Educators' Students

In *When a Postgraduate Student Becomes a Novice Researcher and a Supervisor Becomes a Mentor: A Journey of Research Identity Development*, Melinda Kirk and Kylie Lipscombe explore the dynamic between an M.Ed. student (Melinda) and her supervisor (Kylie) as Melinda engages in a self-study while assisting on a research project. The focus is the dynamic that developed as Melinda shared how the experience contributed to her research identity development and how Kylie's feedback stimulated deeper insights into mentoring novice researchers. Melinda's story brings to light feelings of vulnerability and self-doubt among novice researchers as they confront both their own development and the institutional power dynamics between student and supervisor and scholars and research assistants. Melinda also serves as a mirror informing Kylie about the effectiveness of the emotional support she provided and advising the reader about ways of mentoring graduate students as they transition into new identities as researchers.

Applied Theater and Mixed-Status Families: A Collaborative Self-Study with Teacher Education Candidates narrates a collaborative, arts-based self-study arising from the citizenship status of Latinx students in the community. Authors Erin Miller, Beth Murray, and Spencer Salas worked in an interdisciplinary fashion to develop a sequence of workshops that applied theatre teaching strategies to issues of race. Their detailed findings are notable for the verbatim dialogue among participants, which brings to life the workshops and its impact on teacher candidates. This study reveals

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about if you are doing games ... But at the same time, you are still taking it all in.'

Amber Simpson takes a different approach to collaboration with teacher candidates in *Being 'Challenged' and Masking my own Uncertainty: My Parallel Journey with Elementary Prospective Teachers*. After examining her experiences using video data, she reframes her understanding through interviews with two teacher candidates. She discovers that 'silent uncertain moments became a shared experience in that my journey as an elementary mathematics teacher educator was parallel to that of my participants in their journey as an elementary mathematics teacher.' This leads Simpson to become interested in developing co-learning partnerships with teacher candidates through conversations about mathematics teaching. This self-study validates Loughran's insights into students as crucial participants who mirror information, feedback and advice for teacher educators. This article and the two other articles on collaboration with students increase the trustworthiness of the teacher educator accounts.

Collaboration with Schools

The final article in this issue examines the power of collaboration between teacher educators and schools. While teacher educators recognize the need to engage meaningfully with schools, self-studies tend to focus primarily on practices within the university setting. Even the practicum, the vitally important field-based portion of teacher education programs, is under-researched (Petrarca & Van Nuland, *in press*). A *University and Local School Partnership: Utilizing Tension as a Catalyst for Growth* is a self-study in which a new professor, Matthew McConn, recounts his collaborative experiences with a secondary school English department. Offering support 'with the intention of creating a partnership,' Matthew became involved in planning, observing, and modeling lessons alongside the teachers. This self-study examines the 'productive tensions' between him and the teachers as they grappled with 'competing discourses'

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Matthew offers insights into the challenges of collaborative relationships with teachers and the benefits of engaging with their knowledge and skills.

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