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Protocol nr. 14

Name of the material: Comparison between academic research and Practitioner Inquiry

Sources: Rutger van de Sande and Willem Maurits

Purpose of the material:

In project Linpilcare we distinguish two types of research that are valid and functional in the face of evidence-informed teaching: academic research and practitioner inquiry.

Content:

In the field of education as well as in other disciplines, research is a concept that is often reserved exclusively for *academic* (or *scientific*) research: a type of research conducted by scientists, whose job it is to add to the academic body of knowledge in a certain field. In most cases, academic research is designed in ways that enable the researcher to generalize conclusions to different schools, teachers, or (groups of) students.

Like many other have done before us, we consider 'practitioner inquiry' a different, but certainly not less valuable, type of research. Practitioner inquiry (or 'teacher inquiry', 'action research', 'lesson-study', 'self-study', etc. is conducted by practitioners (mostly teachers), whose job it is to facilitate student learning as well as possible. Practitioner inquiry always takes place in the specific educational practice of the inquirer. The validity of findings following from practitioner inquiry are therefore in principle also restricted to this practice, although it can serve as a source of inspiration for other practitioners.

See the table on the next page.

Quick scan questions:

- ✓ Is the research you are planning to conduct focused on your own practice?
- ✓ Is the goal of your research to change something in your teaching or students learning?
- ✓ Are there practitioners involved as critical friends?

If the answers on this questions are "yes" you are planning practitioner inquiry.



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Table 1: Comparing academic research and practitioner inquiry (based on tables from Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Bolhuis & Kools, 2012)

	Academic research	Practitioner inquiry
<i>Goal</i>	Expand academic body of knowledge in a certain field	Provide insight into teaching in an effort to make change
<i>Conducted by</i>	Scientists	Practitioners
<i>Conducted in</i>	Controlled settings (labs) or in vivo (in schools)	A specific educational practice
<i>Impact on the academic community</i>	Broad on the academic community through publications in peer-reviewed journals	Very limited
<i>Impact on educational practice</i>	Very limited	Profound on the practice at hand
<i>Scope of findings</i>	Generalizable; valid for and transferable to different contexts	Limited to specific practice at hand.
<i>Involvement of practitioners</i>	Source of data and/or actor in implementation of intervention	As researcher or as critical friend in practitioner inquiries of colleagues