

SOAR Research Proposal Summer 2014

The Role of Action Research in Reclaiming Teachers' Professional Lives in an Era of International Accountability

Faculty Researcher

Dr. Joseph M. Shosh

Associate Professor & Chair, Department of Education

Student Co-Researchers

Brianne Schoolcraft

English and Art double major

Class of 2015

Christopher Ossont

English major

Class of 2015

Project Duration: May 27 – August 1, 2014 [With pre-SOAR participation in ARNA Conference hosted on the Priscilla Payne Hurd Campus from May 22-May 24]

Description of the Project

The 2014 research team will identify historical definitions of *professionalism* for teachers and explore how current international calls for accountability impact contemporary definitions of what it means to be a professional educator, while examining the role that action research plays in enhancing teacher professionalism. According to Smith (2002), what we are now witnessing in the global arena is “the perversion of education and the exploitation of learners.” With leadership by a powerful network of corporate and conservative political interests, “a fundamental attack on the notion of public good, and upon more liberal ideas of education” (Smith, 2002) is taking place. In some instances, the proliferation of business, ‘social enterprise,’ and global philanthropy initiatives to shape education policy and practice in developing countries is remaking the vision of education as a public good in those countries (Ball, 2012). Much of this phenomenon is an extension into the global marketplace of the ‘privatization’ trend evident in the United States (Ravitch, 2013), and the lack of transparency of this trend (Burch, 2009) can inhibit the development of civic society in countries ‘targeted’ as ‘markets’ for privatization.

In the United States and around the world, educational gaps between rich and poor are increasing at an alarming rate (Reardon, 2013). Noam Chomsky (2012) warns, too, of the attack on public education around the globe and the concomitant ‘corporatization’ of the universities. Compton & Weiner (2008) discuss what is now recognized as a ‘global attack’ on teachers and teacher unions and applaud the stories of courageous resistance against the assault. New forms of networking between and among practitioners offer great promise for meaningful reform (McDonald & Klein, 2003; Shosh, 2013; Rowell, Inoue, & Getz 2014). In sum, this project attempts to explore how action research positions teachers as professionals in an era calling for greater accountability and professionalism—even, and perhaps especially when teachers feel de-professionalized by the accountability. The results of this project will inform a special issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Educational Action Research* to be edited by Dr. Lonnie Rowell of

the University of San Diego's School of Education and Leadership Sciences and Dr. Shosh.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Research Team

Pre-SOAR Week [May 22-24]:

Participate fully in the 2014 Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) conference hosted by Moravian College and maintain a journal documenting the ways in which conference sessions define and provide evidence of teacher professionalism.

Week 1 [May 27 – May 30]:

Read and write précis reports on each of the chapters in the Goodson & Hargreaves seminal text (1996) *Teachers' Professional Lives*.

Week 2 [June 2 – June 6]:

Conduct literature review on historical views and definitions of professionalism in teaching

Week 3 [June 9 – June 13]:

Identify the views of professionalism espoused by leaders in the international action research movement in the bibliography created by the summer 2012 SOAR project entitled "Teacher Action Research: Contemporary Leaders in Practitioner Inquiry and Their Epistemological Belief Systems."

Week 4 [June 16 – June 20]:

Identify the key arguments and evidence provided by American educational historian Larry Cuban in his *Inside the Black Box of Classroom Practice: Change without Reform in American Education* (2013).

Week 5 [June 23 – June 27]:

Begin conducting digital video interviews of Moravian teacher education alumni begun in the summer 2013 SOAR project, "How Do Teachers Define Their Values & Virtues? An Examination of Moravian College Action Research Studies 2003-2013 and Teachers' Reflective Responses."

Week 6 [June 30 – July 3]:

Identify pros and cons of the Common Core Standards movement in the context of teacher professionalism.

Continue conducting digital video interviews.

Continue coding index of digital video interviews.

Week 7 [July 7 – July 11]:

Identify pros and cons of international accountability efforts in the context of teacher professionalism.

Continue conducting digital video interviews.

Continue coding index of digital video interviews.

Week 8 [July 14 – July 18]:

Conclude digital video interviews.

Conclude coding index of digital video interviews.

Week 9 [July 21 – July 25]:

Develop theme statements on teachers' professional lives from inductive analysis of research data.

Re-connect interview findings with the professional literature.

Week 10 [July 28 – August 1]:

Write summary of SOAR 2014 research project findings.

Prepare presentation of SOAR 2014 research project findings for presentation at ARNA 2015 Conference, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Summary of SOAR Student Researcher Benefits

- Opportunity to engage in research of professional practice in dialogue with a fellow English major and professor who has published in this field of inquiry;
- Participation in the design and implementation of a small-scale ethnographic study from review of the literature, through the refinement of data collection plan, to the gathering and analysis of data, to the sharing of research findings;
- Enhanced understanding of practitioner inquiry theory and research methods;
- Opportunity to participate in the 2014 Action Research Network of the Americas conference and to present findings from this study at the 2015 conference at OISE, University of Toronto;
- Opportunity to contribute to a special edition of *Educational Action Researcher*, guest edited by Dr. Lonnie Rowell & Dr. Joseph Shosh.

Budget Items

Student Stipend of \$7.50 an hour for 40 hours per week for 10 weeks X 2 (\$6,000)

Student On-Campus Housing (College contribution)

Faculty Supervision for Two Student Researchers (\$1,750)

Total Requested = \$7,750

References

- Ball, S. J. (2012). *Global Education Inc: New policy networks and the Neoliberal imaginary*. London: Routledge.
- Burch, P. (2009). *Hidden markets: The new education privatization*. New York: Routledge.
- Chomsky, N. (2012, April 4). The assault on public education. *In These Times*. Retrieved from: http://inthesetimes.com/article/12985/the_assault_on_public_education.
- Compton, M., & Weiner, L., eds. (2008). *The global assault on teaching, teachers, and their unions: Stories for resistance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McDonald, J., & Klein, E. (2003). Networking for teacher learning: toward a theory of effective design. *Teachers College Record* 105(8), 1606-1621.
- Ravitch, D. (2013). *Reign of error: The hoax of the privatization movement and the danger to America's public schools*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Rowell, L., Inoue, N., & Getz, C. (2014). Reflective practice and motion sickness: thoughts on the first North American action research study day. *Educational Action Research* 22(2) In Press.
- Shosh, J. (2013). Re-articulating the value and virtue of Moravian action research. In Jean McNiff, ed. *Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research*. Dorset: September Books.
- Smith, M. K. (2002) 'Globalization and the incorporation of education,' *the encyclopedia of informal education*, www.infed.org/biblio/globalization.htm.



Student Opportunities for Academic Research (SOAR) Summer Research Grant: Proposal Cover Sheet

Name: Christopher Ossont
Email Address: stcdo01@moravian.edu
Mailing Address: 1216 Winthrop Street Archbald, PA, 18403
Major: English
QPA: 3.42

Project Title: "The Role of Action Research in Reclaiming Teachers' Professional Lives in an Era of International Accountability"
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Joseph Shosh

Request On-Campus Housing (yes/no): ☒

Hours of Work Per Week: 40
Number of Weeks: 10

Expectations

By signing below, you agree that you will:

- Meet regularly with the other members of the project.
- Attend regular meetings where SOAR participants share their work (unless the project work site is remote from Moravian College).
- Work with Public Relations to produce a profile of you and your project.
- Participate in the next Moravian College Scholar's Day.
- (Student) Submit by October 1 a one to two page report to the Director of SOAR describing your accomplishments for the project.
- (Faculty Mentor) Submit by October 1 a one to two page report to the Director of SOAR assessing the project.

Student Signature: _____

Date: 3/10/2014

Faculty Mentor Signature: Joyce M. Alsd

Date: 3/10/14

The role of Action Research in Reclaiming Teachers' Professional Lives in an Era of International Accountability

Student: Christopher Ossont

Major: English

Expected Graduation Date: May, 2015

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Joseph Shosh

On Campus Housing: Yes

During the course of my academic career here at Moravian, I developed a love of teaching, an appreciation for the role of education in today's society, and an understanding of how educators are moving forward in an age of constant change. That being said, I have always been fascinated about the role educators play in the development of teaching practice. When did teaching become a profession? How have we improved our teaching skills over the course of time? How can we better our students' learning? These are just a few of the various questions that I have asked myself as I have prepared to become a secondary English language arts teacher at Moravian College. These questions have also been asked by a larger audience throughout the world. Teachers are constantly examined, evaluated, and judged by the results of tests and classroom performance, and many people believe teaching has no professional goal other than to ensure that students meet up to the latest *standards*.

When I first spoke with Dr. Shosh about a research project involving Action Research and the professional development of teachers, I was immediately on board with the project. One of my life goals is to eventually attain a Ph.D. in education with particular focus in teacher and curriculum development. Working on a summer SOAR Action Research project will be an important next step towards that goal. As I understand it, the basic goal of Action Research is to take reflective teaching practices, implement them within the classroom, and generate new knowledge about best teaching practices. The goal of our project is to see how Action Research can be used to reclaim what our team calls a "loss of professionalism" within the education field. This project, along with the education that I have received from Moravian thus far, will help put me on the right course for future graduate school studies in teacher education. The project is more than just a summer research opportunity for me, it is the start of a professional career involving research of teaching that I intend to pursue after graduation from Moravian.

There are various outcomes to this project, but there are two in particular that sum up the goal of the research as a whole. The first is to better understand Action Research and its role in supporting teacher professionalism inside the classroom. I have begun to gain a general understanding of how action research impacts teacher professionalism, but there is so much more information for me to unpack, develop, and analyze. Through our research, I hope to learn much more and develop my own ideas about it. The information that we research, will serve as a great starting point for my future endeavors in field. From our findings, I will have a better grasp of Action Research and be able to use it in a classroom setting when I student teach in the spring of 2015 and I have acquired a job in the field of education in just a few short years.

The second, and equally important outcome of this project, is understanding teacher professionalism and why so many stake holders seem to feel it is lacking. The history of education is a long one. In fact, one can argue that education has been going on since the beginning of time, but that is not what we are here to debate. Instead, this project will shed light on modern day teaching and education as it has evolved into a modern profession. It is known that education has evolved from access of only the elite to practically everyone that wishes to pursue it. What is unclear to me is where along the way teachers lost respect as professions, why some people feel that teaching is not a profession, and what our research team can do to help

**The role of Action Research in Reclaiming Teachers' Professional Lives in an Era of
International Accountability**

Student: Christopher Ossont

Major: English

Expected Graduation Date: May, 2015

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Joseph Shosh

On Campus Housing: Yes

teachers reclaim their professionalism. Our conclusions will be made based off in depth analysis of the Action Research data that we gather throughout the summer of 2014. We intend to answer the tough question of what professionalism is and how it may be strengthened through Action Research.



Student Opportunities for Academic Research (SOAR) Summer Research Grant: Proposal Cover Sheet

Name: Brianne Schoolcraft
Email Address: stbjs04@moravian.edu
Mailing Address: 2031 Pinehurst Rd. Bethlehem PA 18018
Major: Studio Art
QPA: 3.92

Project Title: The Role of Action Research in Reclaiming Teachers' Professional Lives in an Era of International Accountability
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Joseph Shosh

Request On-Campus Housing (yes/no): ☒

Hours of Work Per Week: 40
Number of Weeks: 10

Expectations

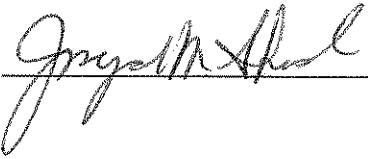
By signing below, you agree that you will:

- Meet regularly with the other members of the project.
- Attend regular meetings where SOAR participants share their work (unless the project work site is remote from Moravian College).
- Work with Public Relations to produce a profile of you and your project.
- Participate in the next Moravian College Scholar's Day.
- (Student) Submit by October 1 a one to two page report to the Director of SOAR describing your accomplishments for the project.
- (Faculty Mentor) Submit by October 1 a one to two page report to the Director of SOAR assessing the project.

Student Signature: Brianne Schoolcraft

Date: 3-9-14

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18018-6650

Faculty Mentor Signature: 

Date: 3/10/14

Project title: The Role of Action Research in Reclaiming Teachers' Professional Lives in an Era of International Accountability

Student: Brianne Schoolcraft

Major of student: Studio Art (English minor)

Expected graduation date: 2015

Faculty mentor: Dr. Joseph Shosh

On-campus housing: Not requested

During the summer of 2012, by participating in the project Teacher Action Research: Contemporary World Leaders & Epistemological Belief Systems, my SOAR partner and I researched teacher action research and the belief systems held by leaders in the field, compiling a bibliography of important action research works, brief biographies of the key leaders in the field of teacher action research, and a list of the top colleges and universities both locally and within the United States as a whole, in order to serve as a valuable reference to Moravian College faculty and students in the field of education or even beyond. It was through my first SOAR experience that I got my first taste of in-depth research and organization of large amounts of information. During the summer of 2013, over the course of our project How Do Teachers Define Their Values & Virtues? An Examination of Moravian College Teacher Action Research Studies 2003-2013 and Teachers' Reflective Responses, our SOAR team looked beyond what academics in the field of action research were saying, instead reaching out to Moravian College alumni from the Master of Education program to understand the ways in which the use of teacher action research, and Moravian College's Master of Education program, impacted the teaching and belief systems of practicing teachers. My SOAR partner and I created a survey, conducted digital video interviews with the alumni, coded findings in the video interviews as well as thesis documents written by alumni, compiled this information in a series of graphs and videos, and shared our findings in front of an international audience at York St. John University in England. This second project gave me my first experiences with coding and conducting professional surveys and interviews, broadened my world view during the abroad portion of our project, and allowed me to face my fear of public speaking by giving me the opportunity to share our research findings in front of an audience of educators. The success of these previous projects, both through the generation of useful and meaningful information as well as my own personal academic and professional growth, serves as my rationale for returning to participate in SOAR a final time in the proposed SOAR project for the summer of 2014: The Role of Action Research in Reclaiming Teachers' Professional Lives in an Era of International Accountability. This project would serve as a conclusion to the work I was fortunate enough to be a part of during the previous two summers.

This project, in comparison with the previous projects, would focus on the teaching profession as a whole, not limited to but including Moravian College alumni in the teaching field, to learn more about the role teacher action research can play in combating the various struggles faced by contemporary teachers. By working on this final project, I would have to draw and expand upon the research, organization, coding, writing, and social skills I gained through my past participation in SOAR. Through the collection of new information, as well as the inclusion and expansion of the large amounts of data we have collected so far, we will be able to draw conclusions about the impact and potential of teacher action research on the teaching practice. Not only would this project challenge me to think critically, it would also help me learn to draw connections and write conclusive summaries of data. This information would be shared,

verbally, once again, in front of an international audience at the 2015 Action Research Network of the Americas conference at OISE, University of Toronto, but also in a written form in an edition of the *Educational Action Researcher*. By presenting our findings in both verbal and written formats and, additionally, by preserving our data to be accessed and referred to by the faculty and students of Moravian College we, more than ever, have the opportunity to reach out to a vast audience of individuals, sharing information which could potentially influence educators during this time of great need in a field that is such an integral aspect of society and our future.