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A Guide to Practitioner Research in International Education

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Co-publishers

International Education Association of Australia

IEAA strives to empower professionals, engage institutions, and enhance Australia's reputation as a provider of world-class education. We provide advocacy and member services relevant to professional staff, academics and teachers across all sectors.

IEAA delivers high-quality professional learning to advance members' careers and enhance the quality of Australian international education. We also drive new research to highlight emerging trends, inform strategy and policy, and enrich the sector's knowledge.

Together with affiliated bodies, corporate partners, and government, we work together to promote the benefits of international education to the broader community.

NAFSA: Association of International Educators

NAFSA is the largest and most comprehensive association of professionals committed to advancing international higher education. Based in the United States, we provide programs, products, services, and a physical and virtual meeting space for the worldwide community of international educators. The association provides leadership to its varied constituencies through establishing principles of good practice and providing professional development opportunities. NAFSA encourages networking among professionals, convenes conferences and collaborative dialogues, and promotes research and knowledge creation to strengthen and serve the field. We lead the way in advocating for a better world through international education.

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Practitioner Research in International Education

International education is both a scholarly field of research and a dynamic profession which has benefited from the willingness of practitioners to share their expertise in order to benefit their colleagues, their institutions, and the field more broadly.

> *"While practitioners make international education possible and scholars have taken up the study of international education as a line of scholarly inquiry, the scholar-practitioners of international higher education by the very nature of their work bridge both areas. They leverage existing research and scholarship to inform practice and share the collective aim of scholars to advance the theoretical and empirical foundations of the field."*
> (Streitwieser and Ogden 2016, p.32)

As the quote above illustrates, while both practitioners and scholars can play important roles independently, scholars and practitioners can also join forces to connect and learn from those who work with the underlying principle that professional practice is better informed by research. The term 'scholar-practitioner' has come to be used widely to refer to such hybrid roles[1], based on the following definition:

> *"The scholar-practitioners of international higher education are collaborative educators who engage in the research process and use and disseminate their knowledge and information in the form of concepts, procedures, processes, and skills for the benefit of those who are engaged in international education. While they do not necessarily need to maintain an active research agenda, it is important that they understand, utilize, and facilitate research directions."*
> (Streitwieser and Ogden 2016, p.32)

Scholar-practitioners play important roles in international education, bridging the gap between 'field' and 'profession.' Streitwieser and Ogden (2016) describe the position of scholar-practitioners as connecting to both the field (i.e., academics) and the profession (i.e., practice) within a continuous cycle.

1 If you are interested in reading more about the scholar-practitioner phenomenon, we recommend Bernhard Streitwieser and Anthony C. Ogden's 2016 book *International Higher Education's Scholar-Practitioners: Bridging Scholarship and Practice.*

Research in international education is encouraged, but it needs to be applied to inform practice, and as practitioners use research to inform their practice they can also assist in the determination of foci for future research, and so on and on. Within this cycle, the 'practice' part of the equation is just as important as the 'research' aspect.

This guide is written to encourage practitioners to deepen their practice and provides assistance in developing or strengthening skills for practitioners to more purposefully share findings with others.

Many guides and textbooks have been written on how to conduct scholarly research, including some specific to international education (see Further Resources at the end of this section for some examples). However, there is a dearth of resources written for international education professionals/staff/practitioners interested in doing research of their own. Such research is important to both the field and the profession of international education—in bringing new voices and different perspectives to speak on current topics and identifying where there are gaps (and a need for more attention). These efforts should be nurtured to foster the passion and curiosity that can drive international education, writ large, forward.

This guide is intended for anyone working (or hoping to work) in international education who is interested in conducting research and/or systematically reflecting on practice and sharing the insights to benefit others. Please note that throughout this guide, we use the term 'practitioner' to distinguish individuals who work as professionals/staff members in the field of international education. Whether you identify as a 'scholar-practitioner' or prefer to relate more to the practitioner side of the equation, we hope this guide is useful as it focuses on several issues uniquely related to conducting research as a professional and an international educator. This guide is written to encourage practitioners to deepen their practice and provides assistance in developing or strengthening skills for practitioners to more purposefully share findings with others.

How did you use research to inform professional development and institutional strategy?

"Do we realise that using English-Medium Instruction impacts the whole university experience, not just the classroom?"

Amanda C. Murphy, PhD
Director of the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI) at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

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With a background in language and linguistics, Amanda's interest in internationalization lies in its nexus with English-medium instruction in countries where English is an international language. Teaching through English attracts international students, but research shows that few countries and institutions adopt specific policies to ensure the quality of the teaching. Amanda's research on institutional support requirements found that universities that invest in training that enables teachers to explore an internationalized mindset in the classroom, and problematize their approach to what they teach, provide students with a more satisfactory educational path. This led to the creation of professional development programs that were delivered across her own university and offered to other institutions.

Bowles, Hugo, & Amanda Murphy (eds).
2020. *English-Medium Instruction and the Internationalization of Universities*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

What is Practitioner Research?

In this guide, we are focused on research being undertaken by international education practitioners. We refer to this kind of research as 'practitioner research' throughout this guide, not to set it apart from other types of research (or researchers) but rather to highlight the wide range of work being done to impact the field. Practitioners may self-identify as professional staff, academics, students (graduate/postgraduate), and those in student and staff support services. This includes program leaders and student advisors researching the experiences of those they advise, teachers evaluating an aspect of their teaching practice, or institutional leaders analysing the strategic implications of a new government policy.

Practitioner research may be focused on specific institutions or systems, or may be generalized to wider educational systems and conditions. (A later section of this guide focuses on different types of practitioner research.) However, there are some key elements that all practitioner research has in common—being applied and transformative, systematic, engaged, and shared—and these features are broadly consistent across different fields of professional practice in which the term is commonly used (Shaw and Lunt 2018).

Applied & Transformative

Practitioner research addresses problems and challenges that are considered important to professionals working in the field; it aims to inform practice and to improve the way we do things in the future. It often focuses on achieving immediate practical benefits for professionals, organizations, teachers, and students. The transformation might be 'internal,' within an institution, where the purpose might be to inform the work of developing strategy, marketing programs, or delivering services. Or the transformation might involve persuading one's peers to adopt more effective approaches.

Engaged

In practitioner research, practitioners conduct a substantial proportion of the research and are involved in the design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination phases. All applied research seeks to address real-world problems, but is often undertaken by researchers who are not engaged in professional practice on the question /s being investigated. Practitioner research is applied research that involves those engaged in practice as leaders and key members of the research team.

Systematic

Practitioner research often seeks to answer a defined research question and, as such, should include a review of as much of the existing research on the topic as possible. (Many lessons can be learned by reviewing what others have done already and shared, including what new directions to take or what pitfalls to avoid.) Such systematic and structured studies can involve significant data collection and analysis. It is also common to reflect on professional practice, with the aim of learning from experience and adapting how we work to be more effective in the future.

Shared

A final characteristic is that practitioner research is usually meant to be shared with the community of professionals whose practice the research aims to inform. This could be on a small scale, say within a team in an organization, or on a large scale through presentations or dissemination across large and diffuse professional networks. Depending on the data collected, and the aims of the research endeavor, it is important that individuals beyond the research team are informed of the findings.

Using this Guide

This guide aims to help practitioners integrate scholarship and practice in international education. It is designed to be useful whether you are a professional staff member with an interest in research or a faculty member with an interest in reflecting on practice.

The guide is comprised of the following sections with suggestions regarding:

- Research Questions
- Varieties of Research
- Resourcing
- Ethical Issues
- Dissemination

In each section, we provide an overview of the issues that international education practitioners encounter and some strategies for developing your own research interests. We have provided links to further resources and included some short examples of practitioner research in our field.

Note that this is not a research methodology guide. We won't be explaining how to conduct interviews, how to analyse data, or how to write a literature review. Most of these skills are quite generic and applicable to research in many fields, and we assume you have access to a wide range of general resources about how to undertake research. If you are looking to develop your general research skills, see the section on Research Training in this guide for some advice about what types of professional development might be most useful for you.

Why are you a scholar-practitioner?

"Seriously, do we really have a choice?"

Anthony C. Ogden, PhD
Associate Vice Provost for Global Engagement at University of Wyoming

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Some years ago, Anthony was invited to make a brief address to his university's Faculty Senate. What was to be a 10-minute presentation on education abroad became a 45-minute discussion on the existing research and scholarship underscoring the institution's support of and further investment in education abroad programming and practice. Fortunately, he felt quite comfortable responding to those questions and became ever more convinced that as a practitioner, he is professionally obligated to stay abreast of existing research and scholarship that informs his practice and that he too has a role in shaping the scope and direction for future research.

Ogden, Anthony C., Bernhard Streitwieser, & Christof Van Mol (eds).
2020. *Education Abroad: Bridging Scholarship and Practice*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.

Further Resources

Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion, & Keith Morrison. 2017. *Research Methods in Education* (8th edn). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hayden, Mary, Jack Levy, & Jeff Thompson (eds). 2015. *The SAGE Handbook of Research in International Education* (2nd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Punteney, Katherine. 2019. *The International Education Handbook: Principles & Practices of the Field*. Washington, DC: NAFSA.

Streitwieser, Bernhard, & Anthony C. Ogden (eds). 2016. *International Higher Education's Scholar-Practitioners: Bridging Scholarship and Practice*. *Oxford, UK:* Symposium Books.

What Types of Questions are Suited to Practitioner Research?

Research can be considered as a journey, with various twists and turns and unexpected findings along the way (Trochim and Donnelly 2008). Research involves going beyond a general interest in a topic to focusing on a structured endeavor in order to either answer a question, solve a problem, or learn more about a specific topic. Research may be intended to help expand the way we think about a certain topic (i.e., theory) or change the way we do something (i.e., practice).

While practitioners can certainly engage in theoretical research if they are so inclined, this guide focuses more on research that is tied directly to practice. One of the first issues that comes up when contemplating research is — *what topics are most suited to practitioner research?* Some likely candidates would include research topics connected to your day-to-day work or job, related to projects that you are already professionally involved with, or research to inform your current projects. Think about program evaluations, professional assessments, and surveying students. All of these count as research when approached in a certain light and with the intention to share findings with others.

Think about program evaluations, professional assessments, and surveying students. All of these count as research when approached in a certain light and with the intention to share findings with others.

The next step is deciding on your research question/s. In essence, this boils down to *what do you want to know?* You may have a specific question in mind, a broader general area of interest that you want to learn more about, or already be involved in an effort to solve a particular problem or improve current circumstances. Research questions help others know a bit more about your thought process and what you are focusing on. You may have one overarching question or many sub-questions that are all related in some way. Good research questions will not result in a simple yes or no answer, but rather aim to find out more about the how or why something occurs in a certain circumstance or environment. In articulating your question/s, you also need to make sure that you are asking a question that can, in fact, be answered with the data that you have (or will have) access to.

International education practitioners have unique insights and access to data at multiple levels and with different stakeholders — from national policy to individual HEIs' missions, from undergraduate students to visiting international scholars, from staff, faculty, and senior institutional leaders — which mean certain research questions should be being asked by practitioners or in collaboration with practitioners, at the very least.

Research questions are often best formulated with WH-words (e.g., what, why, when, where, and how). Some types of questions that practitioners are particularly suited to and may choose to undertake (examples in italics), include:

Questions of an applied or practical (rather than theoretical) nature:

- *What approaches do university staff in the international office at [University] utilize in communicating important program and support updates to students?*
- *How does participation in Program A influence future career development?*

Questions based on privileged access to insights about data or practice for a particular population:

- *Does study abroad Program A or Program B have a more positive impact on students' GPA?*
- *How do faculty or staff collaborate with other departments to increase support for underrepresented or minoritized students/staff/faculty on campus and in the community?*

Questions which emerge from both a practitioner's position and what they have access to, as well as the problems being faced in their work:

- *How do particular national immigration policies impact student recruitment from a certain region or country?*
- *When should annual diversity and inclusion training be offered to HEI staff, to both best inform practice and not conflict with other responsibilities or other training?*

How did you become interested in diversity and access issues?

"I'm interested in questions that help us better understand what policies and practices will improve access to international education for all students."

Melissa Whatley, PhD
Postdoctoral Research Scholar in the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research at North Carolina State University

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After leading several study abroad programs, Melissa became frustrated with the lack of diversity among her students. In an attempt to understand what could be done to make study abroad groups more representative of her institution, she designed a survey to collect data about students' interest in and barriers to study abroad. This survey turned into a dissertation and, later, the general direction of her research. Now, Melissa works primarily on issues in community college international education as she found that the community college model holds great promise for access and equity in international education. Unlike many four-year institutions, community colleges approach international education like they do other educational opportunities — with an open-access mindset.

Whatley, Melissa, & Rosalind Latiner Raby.
2020. "Understanding Inclusion in Community College Education Abroad: An Investigation of Policies and Practices." *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 32, 1:80-103.

Why did you want to research the career impacts of learning abroad?

"Many people say that learning abroad is life-changing. But do we have the evidence to support this? I wanted to do research to help us understand the reality of this claim."

Davina Potts, PhD
Associate Director for Careers, Employability and Global Learning at the University of Melbourne

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As a learning abroad practitioner, Davina had read a lot of the ERASMUS impact work dating back to the late 1980s and was motivated to bring that approach to Australia. When you're building off a foundation of good prior research, you don't need to make too many changes to the questions. Some of the best studies replicate previous work, and apply the same lens to a new situation, to bring new knowledge to the field. Maintaining consistency makes findings generally comparable and helps practitioners to understand the bigger picture.

Potts, Davina.
2019. *Career Outcomes of Learning Abroad: Short-Term Programs*. International Education Association of Australia.

Characteristics of Good Research Questions

It is often much easier to decide on a topic you want to investigate than to craft a workable question. Don't rush the process of clarifying your questions. As it is one of the most important tasks in the whole process, spend some time crafting questions along these lines:

Clear

Do not be daunted by the idea that a question might be too simple. Seemingly simple questions can potentially be answered more thoroughly, and it may be that you are able (as a practitioner) to ask a complex question in a more straightforward manner because you have a greater understanding of the nuance involved in what you are asking.

Relevant

The implications of the research and its findings should be apparent. Who does it impact? How can the findings be used? What can others learn from the research being done? Research is rarely done in a bubble and the insights gained from research findings may have implications for everyone from current or future students to senior level staff members and faculty to national and foreign policy.

Required

A literature review, which is usually undertaken when refining research questions, will tell you whether your intended topic has already been investigated by someone else, and whether answers to your questions are already available. Your research questions are likely to develop based on your reading about previous studies, and this might lead to you asking similar questions to previous studies, but in a different context, or using a different method, or with insights from a different perspective as to interpreting the results.

It is often much easier to decide on a topic you want to investigate than to craft a workable question. Don't rush the process of clarifying your questions.

Answerable

There are many important questions that we just can't answer, either because they are too vague (e.g., is study abroad important?) or because the data required to answer them is not available (e.g., is the number of international study tours increasing?). Your questions will be shaped by what data already exists or is able to be collected.

Manageable

The scale and scope of the research involved in answering your question needs to be appropriate to the resources available. In practice, this usually means looking at a particular educational institution, a specific population, or utilizing a unique method or dataset.

Agile

It is likely that you will need to refine a research question in the initial stages of the research. For example, you might discover that the data you would need to answer your question is not available, or that the issue is more complex than you had imagined and you need to narrow your question to focus on a single dimension.

Further Resources

What makes a Research Question Answerable? Michigan State University Doctoral Program in Teacher Education.

Varieties of Practitioner Research

> *"To be a good social researcher, you must be able to work well with a variety of people, understand the specific methods used to conduct research, understand the core of the subject that you are studying as well as its boundaries, convince someone to give you the funds to study it, stay on track and on schedule, speak and write persuasively, and on and on."*
> (Trochim and Donnelly 2008, 4)

It is important to note that international education research can come in many forms. There are generally three different research designs or methodologies for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (see Creswell 2009). In basic terms, some practitioners may want to focus on statistics and crunching numbers (i.e., quantitative methods), while others may be interested in interviewing individuals and finding out more about a specific lived experience (i.e., qualitative methods).

There are also those who merge the two (i.e., mixed methods), and incorporate features of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It is important to note that some have difficulty in distinctly separating quantitative and qualitative research, as Trochim and Donnelly (2008, 11) argue "All quantitative data is based upon qualitative judgments; and all qualitative data can be described and manipulated numerically." However, this is not a problem necessarily as it can make the findings from research more robust and understandable by different audiences if presented using different methods.

Brief Reviews of Different Types of Studies

Beyond research design, practitioner research may focus on various forms and, in conducting these different types of research, practitioners must be aware of the advantages and limitations of each type and design.

Descriptive Studies

Sometimes it is valuable to systematically describe a phenomenon or the current state of knowledge on a particular topic. Such research can be highly effective in translating research into practice, by synthesising a large amount of information and disseminating it in a readily accessible form. Examples include systematic literature reviews, reflective practice, and case studies of specific institutions or programs.

Relational Studies

Relational studies seek to inform practitioners about the relationships between different factors/variables, going beyond descriptions, yet the results do not imply causation. Examples would include analysing existing institutional data to find relationships between different factors and specified outcomes (i.e., socioeconomic status, course grades, time to graduation, etc), as well as some student evaluations or research involving faculty perceptions.

Causal Studies

Causal studies endeavour to find out whether a particular factor/variable either causes or affects a particular outcome of interest. In most cases, causal studies rely on having a control group to compare data against. However, education research is rarely based on random assignment of individuals to control and intervention test groupings. These studies are made more difficult when there are multiple outlying factors beyond the researcher's control, but which may also impact the outcome being investigated.

Why did you do research using institutional data and what are some next steps for community college international education research?

"By using institutional data in my research, I can share the real impact of internationalization on our students and community. For next steps, I hope to encourage other community college practitioners to share data for a bigger picture view of the community college sector in higher education internationalization."

Dawn Wood
Dean of Global Learning at Kirkwood Community College

Dawn has been a career international educator across many institution types and locations and found her niche in her current role of 11 years in the community college sector. As she learned more about community colleges, she observed that the published data in the broader international education field was not necessarily germane to the community college sector academic programs and student populations. So Dawn wanted to take a deeper dive into the available institutional data to better understand the community college student profile. She is currently using this data to pursue her dissertation in analysing the community college students' access to intercultural experiences with a focus on the commitment to open access and equity and the overall impact on community college students and their communities.

Wood, Dawn R., & Melissa Whatley.
2020. "Community College Study Abroad: Institutional Context, Geography, and Field of Study." *NAFSA Research Symposium Series* 4:102-117.

How do you work to get institutional research into the public sphere?

"My aim is to make a difference in the professional endeavors I am engaged in and to have an impact on the policy settings for HE in Australia and abroad."

Angel Calderon
Principal Advisor for Institutional Research and Planning at RMIT University, Melbourne

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Years ago, when Angel was a planning research officer, he got involved in analysing data and writing reports about a variety of themes: student admissions, equity, international education, etc. After doing a descriptive study on emerging markets for international student recruitment and considering what it meant for his institution, it became easier to embark on research to examine cause and effect. It also provided an opportunity to use other methods, including theory, to examine impacts on civil society, market forces, and the state. By being an active practitioner, he translates facts and figures into insights and considers the policy implications over the mid- to long-term.

Calderon, Angel.
2020. "What Will Follow the International Student Boom? Future Directions for Australian Higher Education" *Australian Universities' Review* 62, 1.

Examples include action research with specific interventions for target populations towards a particular outcome and directly questioning different stakeholders (student, staff, faculty, institutional leaders) to find out how certain decisions, (in)actions, or other circumstances affected them.

Depending on what type of research you plan on conducting, there are various types of resources that need to be considered. The most common considerations of resources for practitioner research are covered in the next section.

Further Resources

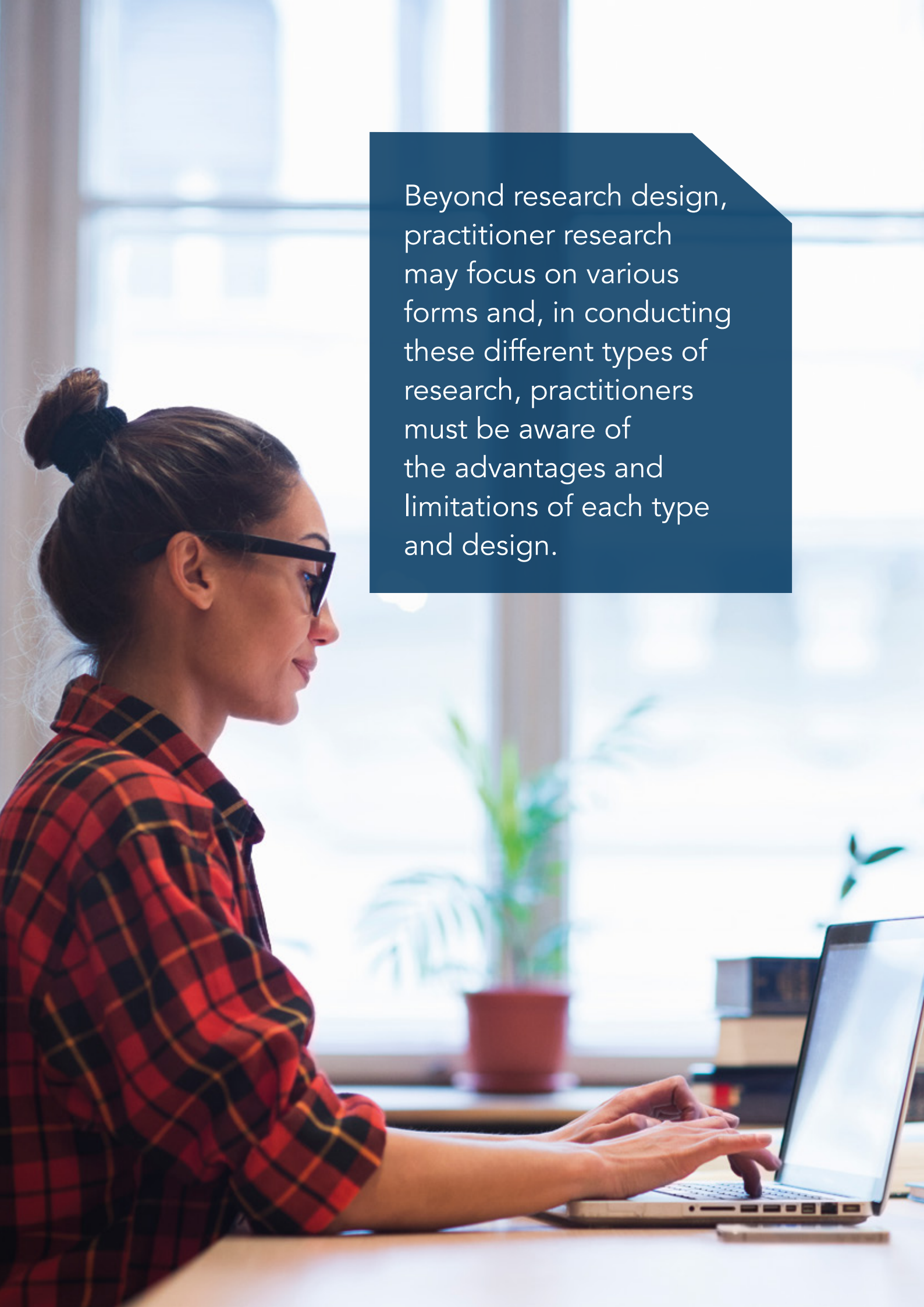
Deardorff, Darla, Hans de Wit, John D. Heyl, & Tony Adams (eds). 2012. *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Hayden, Mary, Jack Levy, & Jeff Thompson (eds). 2015. *The SAGE Handbook of Research in International Education* (2nd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Mitchell, Pru. 2016. *From Concept to Classroom: What Is Translational Research?* Camberwell, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Miles, Matthew B., A. Michael Huberman, & Johnny Saldaña. 2019. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (4th edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Saldaña, Johnny. 2015. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (3rd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.



Beyond research design, practitioner research may focus on various forms and, in conducting these different types of research, practitioners must be aware of the advantages and limitations of each type and design.

Resourcing Practitioner Research

If you've been around universities for a while you'll probably have seen many examples of Stephen Aguilar's disturbingly accurate flow chart (below) of getting an idea and starting a project, yet seemingly never being able to finish.

To avoid this trap, you need to be sure (before you get underway) that you have the resources in place to support the project. We will focus on three types of resources here—time, people, and money. You may also need other resources that are specific to your particular project, such as specialized equipment or software, so be sure to plan for these too.

Finding Time

Your time is likely to be a major factor limiting what type of research is possible, and you'll need to be clear about the extent to which you can conduct research as a part of your professional role or if you will need to do this work in addition to your regular role.

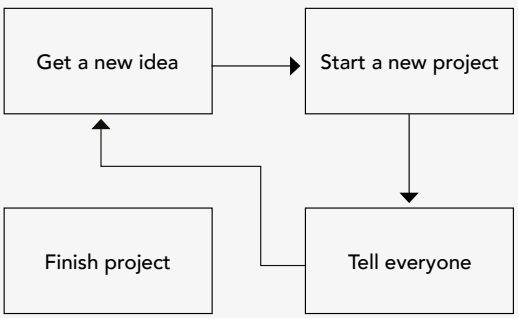
Making Research Your 'Core Business'

Ideally, the research you undertake would be highly valued by your employer and they would free up some of your time so that you can focus on this new and important work. It is worth trying, but you'll most likely need to make the case in a formal manner, as you would when approaching any other organization for support.

Stephen Aguilar
@stephenaguilar

I've found the master plan of every academic!
#AcademicChatter
#phdchat

23 December 2019



Talk to your supervisor or experienced colleagues about what type of proposal might be required — depending upon what you are asking for and the culture of your workplace, this could vary from an email with some bullet points and a timeline, to a fully-detailed research project plan. The organization's willingness to invest time in your project will be influenced by the resources your supervisor has at their discretion, but also by the promised return on that investment.

Be clear about how the organization will benefit from your project. This might be in terms of a reduction of future expenses due to new efficiencies, improved program effectiveness, or profile-raising within the institution or externally. Even if you are not provided with sufficient time to complete the project, you might be able to negotiate to spend some of your working time on it.

Doing Research 'On the Side'

It is very likely that you will not be able to undertake the entirety of your project within your day-to-day role, and will need to work on it outside of working hours. This is difficult, but many of us are accustomed to taking on courses and professional development projects 'on the side,' in the expectation that these will lead to career advancement down the track.

Some tips that we've found useful are:

- Try to schedule regular blocks of time to keep working towards a finished product (in whatever form that may be) and, if applicable, set up appointments to work with or check in with another member of your research team (meetings with the whole research team may be more sporadic, but should still be blocked on everyone's calendars).
- Consider writing or working retreats or meetings (in-person or virtual) to continue to make progress during the creation and development stage/s.

Accountability partners and writing challenges (i.e., goals with word counts or time per day) may also be helpful. You'll need to be realistic about when you can fit the work in, and be sure that the encroachment into your personal time is worthwhile.

How did you build a research team?

"When you're picking your team, you've got to think about two prongs. You've got to have people who have the skills to do the research, and you've got to have people who have the passion and will drive the project."

Amanda Daly, PhD
Senior Lecturer and Director of Learning and Teaching at Griffith University

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While reflecting on the early life experiences that led them both into this type of work, Amanda and Rebecca thought that it would be interesting to know how influential early intercultural experiences were in the careers of others in the sector, and how this knowledge could be used to support career development for others. Emi, Rebecca's daughter, was studying business at the time and was keen to get research experience before undertaking an honours research program. Kik was an experienced researcher who had worked with Rebecca previously. Amanda was the project manager and worked closely with Kik on the research design and data analysis, which required some brushing up on their quantitative analysis skills. Emi was very strong in social media engagement, recruitment of participants, and crafting presentations, while Rebecca was able to assist across varied aspects of the project. Because there was no funding for the project, progress was dependent on the availability of team members. This made planning difficult, but in the end each team member was able to step up at different times to complete the project.

Daly, Amanda, Emi Hall, Rebecca Hall, & Kirrilee Hughes.
2019. *Early Intercultural Experiences and Careers in International Education*. International Education Association of Australia.

Building Research Teams: Who to Work With?

Most research projects will involve several collaborators, each with different roles. We are assuming that in your professional life you've gotten really good at teamwork, so we're not going to explain how to get along with others. However, there are some particular issues involved in working in research teams, and you need to think carefully about who needs to be involved.

Focus on adding people to the team where they are clearly needed, as each new person increases the complexity of project management and increases the likelihood of diffusion of responsibility.

It is common for us to immediately want to invite people who we like working with = "it will be fun, we'll get to see each other more, and we may be able to travel to a conference to present together!" Resist that urge and instead start with identifying the skills, knowledge, and experience you need, and then set about finding people that would fill those roles. Focus on adding people to the team where they are clearly needed, as each new person increases the complexity of project management and increases the likelihood of diffusion of responsibility. And keep in mind that through the collaboration you may be in a position to provide a professional development opportunity for a mentee or student or be able to build a professional relationship with someone or with a partner organization.

To help think about who needs to be involved, consider which of your team members have the following skills:

- **Knowledge of the field** of scholarship: You will need someone who knows the research that has previously been done on this topic, who undertook the research, how they did it, and what they found.
- Research **methodological expertise** related to the approach you have in mind: Who has the experience to be able to lead the research design?
- **Access to the data source/s** required: Whether you are interviewing students, analysing large data sets, or evaluating a program, you will need someone who is very familiar with how to access and interpret each of the data sets you will be collecting.
- High-level **writing**: Who will take the lead in structuring and polishing the research proposal, reports, presentations, and scholarly papers?
- **Profile** in the field: Working with someone who has an established reputation within the sector can be particularly helpful in gaining access to funding, publication outlets, and recognition for your research, as well as the experience they bring to the project.
- **Time**: It is common for the most experienced team members to be very time poor, so you may need a research assistant who can devote a considerable amount of time to the project, working under close supervision.

You may have several people in mind or you may have to tap into your networks to find exactly the person you need. For a small project, you might be able to build a team from those you work with closely and who you know well, which will make coordination easier. But to achieve impact on a larger scale, you may need to build a more diverse team of experts from different fields of scholarly or professional practice, institutions, and countries.

Accessing Funding

The time of team members, as we've outlined above, is the main resource you are going to require, but there are probably also things that you will need to pay for, which might include remuneration for some team members.

It is important to mention before we go on that much research does not require additional funding. For example, software licenses can often be sourced through your institution, and colleagues with particular expertise might be willing to help you with specialized tasks such as creating an online survey or analysing statistics.

Internal vs. External Funding

For practitioner research, it is usually easier to obtain internal funding from your institution, than external funding. This is because the research is often centrally related to your institution's mission and has benefits for its core business. Persuading senior managers to invest in research and development is possible, but you will need to make a strong case and allies within the organization.

If you can't access funds from within your institution, consider applying for external research funds, which can be broadly separated into competitive academic research grants, industry grants, government grants, and philanthropic funds.

Industry & Professional Funding

A quicker route to obtaining funding is to approach organizations in the international education sector that have an interest in the work you are proposing to do. Professional associations, such as IEAA, have small grants available for strategically important projects that will benefit the sector, and they are often on the look-out for good ideas. Commercial providers and not-for-profit organizations that work with education providers also often have more discretionary funds, and are looking for ways to bolster their engagement with the sector by supporting projects that will be widely valued, and which they can put their name on. If you can, tap your professional networks and talk to people who have experience in working with these organizations and can advise you on the best approach.

How did you find time to write a book?

"Finding time to write a book is impossible. You make the time to write a book."

Katherine Punteney, PhD
Associate Professor and Program Chair of the MA in International Education Management program at Middlebury Institute of International Studies

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Somehow, during a seven-month sabbatical, Katherine only wrote four chapters of her book. At the end of the sabbatical, she found herself with four chapters still to write, due in 4 months, while working a full-time job. She wrote most of those final four chapters on evenings and weekends, forcing herself to set aside blocks of time to write. She used some silly writing aids for motivation and had weekly meetings with a colleague to keep accountable. She worked with the editor to set deadlines for each chapter draft to keep on pace to launch the book at a major conference, knowing that missed deadlines would mean waiting another year.

Punteney, Katherine.
2019. *The International Education Handbook: Principles and Practices of the Field.* Washington, DC: NAFSA.

Academic Research Grants

Proposals will need to be submitted by academics/faculty with an impressive research track record in the field. While the significance of the project for professional practice and for organizations might be helpful in selling the project to assessors, these projects are primarily assessed on their potential contribution to scholarship rather than practice. Some scholarly funding schemes emphasise industry links, but even these place a premium on the scholarly reputation of lead researchers rather than practical benefits.

Government Grants

Governments sometimes run grant programs that can be used to support international education research. Consider various levels of government (national, state, local) and various agencies; while the education department might be first place to look, you may be able to identify relevant programs within other arms of government related to public health, security, export development, or employability, for example. Government schemes tend to be quite specific, so you will need to first be realistic about whether your project fits with what the funding body has in mind. A brilliant research proposal will not be funded unless it aligns very clearly with the policy objectives driving the program.

Philanthropic Funding

There are many philanthropies that support international and intercultural education. There are a huge number of funders, each with its own area of focus and ways of working. The challenge is to find those whose interests align with the purpose of your study, and then to articulate that clearly in a funding application. Where possible, look through listings of past projects to see whether your research is the type of initiative that they support. Here are some resources to get you started:

- For the USA, Inside Philanthropy has a comprehensive grantfinder search function.
- For Australia, Philanthropy Australia provides guides and a search function for fund seekers.

Further Resources

NAFSA. 2020. *Scholar-Practitioner Resources Hub - Research Resources.*

University of California-Berkeley, Berkeley Research Development Office. 2020. *Funding for Education Research, Programs and Training.*

University of Florida, College of Education. 2020. *Funding.*

If you can't access funds from within your institution, consider applying for external research funds, which can be broadly separated into competitive academic research grants, industry grants, government grants, and philanthropic funds.

Ethical Issues in Practitioner Research

While the ethical codes governing research may differ depending on the national or cultural context, there are two basic rules of thumb:

1. That no harm should be caused to the subjects of the research.
2. That research subjects should be informed as to the purposes of the research, what is required of them, and how the data being collected will be used.

Beyond these two overarching concerns, it is also important to exercise judgment about any potential cultural and ethnic concerns, and to have an awareness of your own positionality in conducting the research (and efforts toward impartiality). Depending on the nature of the research, confidentiality may become a prime concern, requiring project leaders to consider the potential for unintended disclosure of information that may identify research participants (be they students, staff, faculty, or others).

Approvals & Considerations

If you are doing research at or with a university, you will need to apply for approval via an internal review process overseen by an Institutional Review Board (in the USA), a Human Research Ethics Committee (in Australia), or similar body in other countries. These processes provide guidance and standards for research regarding sensitive information, data collection and storage, and acknowledging or handling potential conflicts of interest. It should also be noted that many of the requirements and processes for approval are largely dependent upon institutional policies. Some institutions may only require noting any potential conflicts of interest with supervisors, while others may need more detailed documentation.

Many international education practitioners are not affiliated with universities, but the issues noted for those at universities should be thoroughly considered to ensure not only the safety of participants but also the validity and credibility of the research (i.e., sensitive information, data collection and storage, and conflicts of interest). Permissions may still need to be obtained from supervisors or to gain access to participants, although the processes might be less formalised.

Here we will focus on several notable ethical issues that international education practitioners doing research should consider.

Who Can Be a Lead Researcher?

Many universities' approvals processes restrict who may lead a research project. The lead researcher may need to have a doctorate or be a faculty member/academic, for example. This could be considered an opportunity for practitioners/professional staff to partner with a faculty member/academic who is an experienced researcher who will act as the formal lead for institutional purposes. This may also be an issue for projects that are led by practitioners outside the university system but involve an academic team member who may need to obtain institutional permissions.

If you intend to present or publish your findings, it is likely that you will need to apply for permission to use this information for research purposes.

Privileged Access to Data

Practitioner research often draws upon data that is available to those who work within an institution but is not publicly available, such as enrolment data, demographic information about students, grade distributions, or student evaluations and financial information, to name a few. You may have access to such information in your professional capacity, and may be able to use this for internal quality assurance, planning, and program development.

How do you manage tensions between roles?

"Be really clear on your role and what objectives you are using the data, resources, and time to meet; those of your job or your research. Even if the end result of your research is intended to benefit your institution and the students you work with on a daily basis, that clarity as you navigate internal systems and access requests will help you operate ethically and maintain the privacy of your study participants."

Jennifer Malerich
Executive Director for Academic and Global Engagement in the Office of the University Provost at Arizona State University

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In her role with the Office of the University Provost, Jennifer has access to a wide variety of institutional data. An important part of her educational journey as a PhD student was understanding the limits of that access in her role as a student researcher. Going through the IRB process to obtain access to data that she had access to on a daily basis seemed strange at first, but was a great learning experience and has set her up to be able to share results with confidence. In situating her research within her institutional context, she has a unique lens through which to consider the results of her research and its implications as a practitioner. She has also found being transparent with her supervisor and university leadership about her research and interests has led to rich, in-depth conversations with experienced researchers and educational leaders that have benefited her professionally and academically.

Malerich, Jennifer.
2020. "The Impact of Short-Term Study Abroad on Online Learners." *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* 11 (Winter):145-149.

What keeps you motivated to keep doing the work you do?

"I wanted to figure out how to get past what we think we know, and what we are most comfortable with, and move towards new, data-driven practices that can better serve our students."

Nick Gozik, PhD
Director of the Office of International Programs and the McGillycuddy-Logue Center for Undergraduate Global Studies at Boston College

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Starting in the field of education abroad, now more than twenty years ago, Nick became discouraged by the refrain of "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." For an intellectually curious person — and let us face it, a nerd in all of the best ways — what is the fun in that? Moreover, how do we know whether we are actually maximizing our efforts, without trying and testing new approaches? Nick was thrilled to find like-minded colleagues through committee work and conference presentations who were asking similar questions. This desire to think innovatively has led, among many projects, to the publication of *Promoting Inclusion in Education Abroad*, the first volume to consider how we might increase participation among various groups that have been historically underrepresented in education abroad.

Hamir, Heather Barclay, & Nick Gozik (eds). 2018. *Promoting Inclusion in Education Abroad: A Handbook of Research and Practice.* Sterling, VA: Stylus and NAFSA.

However, if you intend to present or publish your findings, it is likely that you will need to apply for permission to use this information for research purposes. This will be considered through the ethics approval process but you may also need approval from the 'owner' of that data within your institution, who will want to know what data you will be accessing and what is to be made public.

Conflicts of Interest

It is common for international education practitioners to encounter some tensions between the different roles we perform. Earlier, we discussed the extent to which you can use resources (information, time, funding) associated with your professional role in order to undertake research, and these are all issues that you should discuss with the appropriate people in your workplace. You should also consider how funding bodies, research subjects, collaborators, and your audience will view potential tension/s between your roles. For example, in our field we commonly see small-scale case studies of initiatives that the researcher has been involved in leading, which usually use internal data to demonstrate how successful the innovation was. While showcasing effective practice is useful for the development of the sector as a whole, there will inevitably be questions raised about whether the research was sufficiently impartial, given the obvious interest in generating positive results. It is important to take steps to publicly identify and manage such tensions in order to reassure all involved.

While these issues are the most common for international education scholar-practitioners, there may be additional issues that should be considered in your research. In short, you need to make sure that you are being as open and honest with your research subjects as you can, that you have obtained the appropriate and necessary permissions for gathering/analysing data and disseminating your findings to others, and that you are considering issues of representation, power, and your own positionality in your research.

Further Resources

American Educational Research Association. 2011. *AERA Code of Ethics.*

British Educational Research Association. 2018. *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (4th edn). London: BERA.

Dissemination

If your research goal is to transform professional practice and impact the field of international education, then reaching an audience of practitioners (as well as scholars) is critically important. The two key considerations in deciding how to share your research are 'who do you want to reach?' and 'how does my audience access research?'

Some research projects are conducted solely for internal purposes, and you will need to think about an engagement strategy within your organization in order to communicate what you have learned. This is likely to be the case if you are investigating sensitive topics or are drawing on data that cannot be publicly disclosed.

Here we focus on public dissemination of your research, or literally 'publication' in its various forms, for projects where it is clear that you have permission and ethics clearance to be able to share your data and findings.

To get the maximum exposure for your research with the audience/s that matter to you, think carefully about which outlets are visible to the people you want to target. For a specific group of practitioners, a small but targeted forum organised by a professional association might be best. Whereas if you want to shift the thinking of other researchers in your field, an article in a leading scholarly journal might make more sense.

Alternative contemporary dissemination outlets for expanding the reach of international education research and related content may also include social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.) and posting on various platforms such as Google Scholar and Academia.edu.

An important thing to note about the process of sharing your research with others is that it may involve steps of peer review, editing, and revision. Even after you have produced what you think may be the best work possible—after submitting it for consideration as a conference proposal, a journal article, book chapter, or other publication—you will likely receive critical feedback on your work.

An important thing to note about the process of sharing your research with others is that it may involve steps of peer review, editing, and revision. Even after you have produced what you think may be the best work possible—after submitting it for consideration as a conference proposal, a journal article, book chapter, or other publication—you will likely receive critical feedback on your work. Please note that critical feedback provided from peer review and editing is not given because you (personally) have done something wrong, but rather with the intention of helping you to improve the work further for the intended audience.

Read the critique/s given and then set it aside for a few days. Return to it with a calmer perspective and, rather than being defensive, consider what you can do to address the feedback you have been given. It will be a better product overall in the end.

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the most important types of outlets. As you are conducting a literature review in the early stages of your project, pay attention to where previous research on your topic was published. Which conferences, journals, or publishers were involved?

Presenting at Conferences & Seminars

Conferences and seminars provide a highly structured opportunity to share your research with peers. One of the benefits of presenting at a conference is that a full paper is usually not required as part of the proposal process, allowing you to present recent projects and receive feedback that can help to finalise written pieces on the project.

To help you decide which event is right for your project, we've provided some listings of key international education events. Pay particular attention to the conference's guidelines for presenters, and in particular the description of its key audience so that you can be sure that the people who attend that event are those that you most want to reach. Those conferences run by professional or industry associations will usually welcome practitioner research, whereas those run by scholarly associations may tend to prefer more analytical and theoretical contributions.

While it might seem prestigious to present at a large event such as the NAFSA Annual Conference & Expo, you may be able to reach a more targeted audience and receive better feedback at a smaller local or niche event. A good way to tell which conference is right for you is to look through recent programs to assess whether your topic would fit in.

- NAFSA's website includes listings of the association's Programs and Events as well as Conferences (regional and national).
- IEAA Events includes details of the association's forums and conferences, as well as a listing of major Sector Events in Australia and internationally.
- The Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) also produces a comprehensive list of upcoming international education conferences.
- Multiple conferences and events target specific aspects of international education (i.e., education abroad, international student/scholar services, TESOL and ESL programs, etc).
- Other major international education conferences and events are held by both regional and national associations including the African Network for Internationalization of Education (ANIE), the Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE), the Brazilian Association for International Education (FAUBAI), the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), and the European Association for International Education (EAIE), just to name a few.
- There are also a large number of academic/scholarly conferences that may be of interest, such as the Comparative & International Education Society (CIES), the Oceania Comparative and International Education Society (OCIES), the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) and its Council on International Higher Education, in particular.

Journal Articles

There are a large number of scholarly journals publishing research in international education. The key advantage to publishing in journals is that submissions are peer-reviewed, providing authors with valuable feedback and assuring the quality of published work.

As each journal has their own requirements for publication, you will need to identify where you want to publish and which journal is the best fit before you start seriously writing. Look at the content of previous issues and submission guidelines, and beware of predatory journals who will charge you to publish.

Below is a list of some of the most prominent journals in international education. Each journal's website includes a statement about the focus of the journal, the types of articles they seek to publish, and a guide for authors.

- Journal of Studies in International Education
- Journal of Research in International Education
- International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives
- Journal of International Students
- Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad
- Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
- Higher Education Research & Development
- Asia Pacific Journal of Education
- Studies in Higher Education
- International Journal of Educational Development
- Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management
- Globalisation, Societies and Education
- Higher Education

The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education, has a fabulous listing of hundreds of education journals which will help you to identify niche journals such as *Professional Development in Education* or *Journal of Special Education*, which may well have a smaller readership but could be the best way to target a specialist audience.

What are scholarly journals in international education looking for?

"It's critical that researchers and practitioners in international education are themselves internationally aware and informed. We publish articles that bridge theory and practice, are informed by international scholarship, and offer insights, challenges, and ideas of interest to our readers from all over the world."

Professor Betty Leask
Co-Editor-in-Chief for the *Journal of Studies in International Education*

Since Betty has been involved with JSIE, she has read hundreds of proposed articles on a surprisingly small number of topics. She finds it most frustrating when she sees articles that address issues of importance to international education across the globe that do not draw on prior relevant work that has been published in other places and spaces. She says, "It's critical that in our field, our scholarship and practice extends the boundaries of our own knowing." She believes this requires that individually and collectively we look up and out, are more open to new ideas and ways of thinking, that we ask different questions and draw on a broader range of cultural, national, and disciplinary perspectives and methodologies as we seek to answer them. One of her goals is to ensure that JSIE supports a global community of scholars and practitioners who learn from each other to improve international education across the world.

The *Journal of Studies in International Education* is managed by a network of international education associations, including NAFSA and IEAA.

Book Chapters

Publishing your research in an edited collection with a series of other chapters on related topics is a great way to reach audiences interested in a broad theme. Book editors often have more flexibility than journal editors and can more easily include case studies and practice-oriented pieces.

Normally, a team of editors will submit a proposal to a publisher for an edited collection of chapters on a particular topic[2]. Often editors will send out calls for expression of interest from interested authors, either before approaching a publisher or after an initial proposal has been given provisional approval. Editors will then select chapters for inclusion and work with authors to review drafts and propose revisions.

Below are some of the big publishers' pages where they list book series related to international education. When you find a series that looks interesting, pay attention to who the editors are, and whether they are currently calling for proposals for future books in their series.

- Springer - Education & Language
- Routledge - International & Comparative Education
- Palgrave MacMillan - Education

Professional Association Publications

A more direct way to influence practice might be to publish with an international education association. For example, practical guides (like this one) are plentiful in the international education sector, and are published by a wide range of professional associations, commercial service providers, universities, and government agencies. If you have a compelling proposal that aligns with the priorities of the organization, once you have provided a manuscript that has been accepted, the publisher will usually provide a style guide, a review process, graphic design, product promotions, and sometimes will arrange for the research to be presented at forthcoming events.

NAFSA — Engage with Scholar-Practitioners

NAFSA regularly works together with practitioners on publications and authors are encouraged to submit manuscripts related to international education that present research and/or expert knowledge furthering the discussion of a topic. A few specific opportunities for publication with NAFSA include:

- Each of NAFSA's five Knowledge Communities engages regularly with practitioners and scholars (and scholar-practitioners) in the publishing of materials relevant to their communities and across communities.
- International Educator (IE) is NAFSA's flagship magazine, published in monthly digital issues. IE welcomes ideas for potential articles, opinion essays, and interview subjects from members and others in the field.
- Trends & Insights are short pieces written by respected international education leaders and NAFSA's extended community which highlight current and future trends in the field.
- The Global Studies Literature Review features a compilation of book reviews covering recent literature.
- The NAFSA Research Symposium Series highlights research which has been recently presented at biannual Research Symposium events, with annual compilations of articles.

IEAA — Engage with Research

IEAA actively drives new research to influence government policy and inform institutional decision-making. IEAA provides evidence-based research to highlight emerging trends, inform long-term strategy and enrich the sector's knowledge base. The Research section of the IEAA website outlines each of the publication options available:

- Research in action is a set of campaigns that each involve research to develop resources, shape events, and inform a communications strategy around a key topic.

2 If interested in finding out more about how to write a book proposal, there are several guides available including Herman and Levine Herman's (2016) *Write the Perfect Book Proposal*.

- IEAA publishes a variety of research Reports, some of which are commissioned by, or undertaken by, the association, while others are conducted independently, with IEAA becoming involved as a publisher and disseminator where the research is clearly of relevance to members.
- Research digests present a concise synthesis of key research findings on important topics in international education. They are designed to better inform public understanding and policy, and to improve institutional policy and practice. While primarily having an Australian focus, the digests add to the stock of high quality research to help inform the internationalisation of education around the globe.
- IEAA's Professional Networks each have a budget to support small research projects and publications, and often these form a major part of the network's annual forum. Contact the network conveners with your ideas.

You can also join IEAA's mailing list to keep abreast of the latest developments and write for IEAA.

Short Articles, Blogs, & Infographics

If your aim is to reach other practitioners and non-scholarly audiences, there are numerous channels for promoting your research through short and shareable articles. This style of writing is more concise and engaging, similar to journalism or editorials, and may focus on topics that are considered a bit more bold, new, or possibly controversial. Do a scan of your various feeds and inboxes to identify the channels and formats that you find most relevant. Below is a list of some of the most prominent outlets in which you can publish short, research-informed international education pieces.

- LinkedIn
- The Chronicle of Higher Education
- University World News
- Inside Higher Education
- The Conversation
- International Higher Education

Why did you publish your research on student services and its impact on the satisfaction of international students?

"Conducting and publishing research allows you as a researcher, educator, or practitioner to make a permanent contribution to the literature base on a topic that really matters to you. It enabled me to reach a wider audience, strengthen my arguments in support of important initiatives, and make a social impact on my campus."

Ravi Ammigan, PhD
Associate Deputy Provost for International Programs and Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Delaware.

As a scholar-practitioner, Ravi has always felt that his work and contribution to his institution is much more impactful when supported by research and analytics. He argues that "evidence-based findings and recommendations can be extremely important in supporting the decision-making process at an administrative level, just as much as how practice can help enhance research." One of the ways Ravi connects these dots is through data-driven research that helps improve our understanding of the international student experience with various aspects of the university setting. He actively partners with colleagues in professional organizations, seeks guidance and opinions from former academic advisors, collaborates with other faculty and scholar-practitioners, and identifies opportunities to publish in journals and book projects relevant to his area of interest. As a former international student himself, Ravi does research mostly because he is passionate and curious about his research topic, and he is committed to developing comprehensive support models for students and for their host institutions.

Ammigan, Ravichandran.
2019. "Institutional Satisfaction and Recommendation: What Really Matters to International Students?" *Journal of International Students* 9, 1:253–272.

Research Training

If you're looking to gain further training in either conducting or disseminating research, there are a number of opportunities available. While it is difficult to provide an extensive, all-encompassing list, most applicable training falls into four main categories: independent study, seminars or courses, mentoring, and degree programs.

Independent Study

There is an inexhaustible supply of books and journal articles available (see references for this paper and the sections on further resources) from which you can find both general overviews and detailed explanations of different research methodologies and theories. If you find that you are particularly intrigued by a specific theory, method for data collection, type of data analysis, or style for presenting findings, you can certainly learn more about it in order to decide whether it is fit for your purposes.

Check with your local library as libraries often offer a variety of resources for research training and librarians are great resources, whether for finding literature and narrowing search terms or learning about citation and data management software (among many other tasks). These services are often free at public libraries (and many university libraries), but there may be a fee for consultation services or to access specific items or programs.

Short Courses

The second option is to undertake a seminar or course to learn more about how to extend your research repertoire. There may be online courses or 'how-to' videos available for specific tasks, but you also may want to check with your local library or university (or university library) to see if there are any research courses or seminars available. Both IEAA and NAFSA offer online training modules and conference workshops focused on research that might be of interest.

Short seminars can focus on anything from introductions to data management and citation software to creating engaging visualizations of results, usually lasting from a couple of hours to a full day (or two if it is an in-depth seminar), whereas full courses allow for both broader and deeper learning of a topic. Going in-person or online allows you to ask specific questions from the instructor about any aspect that needs further clarification. Some university courses and seminars are fee-based while other types of practical research training may be free and open to the public, as well as to university staff, faculty, and students.

Both IEAA and NAFSA offer online training modules and conference workshops focused on research that might be of interest.

Mentors

Another option for international education practitioners interested in furthering their knowledge and experience with research is to seek out mentors. Is there someone you know who is currently doing research who you would like to work with and learn from? Look across your institution or organization, at what you've been reading that has sparked your interest, and in your professional networks. Could you reach out by phone or email (or in person) and ask for a meeting to chat about and learn from their experience with research? Are they active on social media? (LinkedIn and Twitter are common spaces to connect and communicate around research interests.)

What professional development opportunities have you found most useful (in regard to your research)?

"Inclusion and equity work is a personal investment for me, and I see my writing as one way to advance the conversation around these issues in international education."

Lily López-McGee, PhD
Director for the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Program at Howard University

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Lily was introduced to some of the mentors and co-conspirators in writing activities by getting involved in collaborative projects. She has volunteered to participate in committees, task forces, and other activities that have connected her to folks across the international education field, and these experiences have led to collaborative conference presentations, side projects, and more. She has also been fortunate to have had professional positions that have given her a chance to travel quite a bit. The travel has taken Lily to campuses and conferences across the United States, which has given her a chance to interact with people in a way that has informed her research interests. Having been able to hear about the work and efforts of so many colleagues has given her clear insight into the different issues in the field.

López-McGee, Lily, David Comp, & Eduardo Contreras. 2018. "Underrepresentation in Education Abroad: A Review of Contemporary Research and Future Opportunities," in Heather Barclay Hamir & Nick Gozik (eds), *Promoting Inclusion in Education Abroad: A Handbook of Research and Practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus and NAFSA, pp.17-44.

What made you decide to do a PhD?

"I'm a firm believer that, despite language barriers, different cultural norms, and the uncertainty of the times, education is the bridge to mutual understanding and peace. This perspective motivated me to complete my degree and share my insights with the international education community."

Lauren Nehlsen, PhD
Director of the Center for International Education and Programs at Elgin Community College

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Lauren decided to pursue a PhD because she wanted to advance her learning in higher education administration, current trends and issues in higher education, and develop her leadership skills and knowledge. As the first female in her family to pursue a graduate degree, it was both a professional and personal undertaking: Lauren had been in the field of international education since 2004. She desired advanced training to better understand the role of community colleges in U.S. higher education, as well as its role in international education. As a mother, it was important to her to demonstrate the significance and value of higher education to her three young children. It took excellent time management and resilience to complete her PhD while working full-time, balancing the job of a parent and wife, and conducting relevant, applicable research.

Nehlsen, Lauren.
2020. "Seeking Global Citizenship: Perceptions of Community College Educators in a Short-Term International Exchange Program." *NAFSA Research Symposium Series* 4:118-135.

Perhaps there is a way you could help them with their current research, based on your own experience and interests, and even become a future research partner for expanding research interests and resources. There are also opportunities to reach out and learn from others in professional associations — IEAA has the Research Committee and NAFSA has the Research and Scholarship network and the Research Connections online community (note: the NAFSA networks do require a login to access, but are open to non-members).

Research Qualifications

Finally, for those that want to go further to learn more about both the breadth and depth of possible research, and do their own in-depth scholarly research on a particular topic, there are numerous masters and doctoral programs available. Some may want to pursue further education in order to advance future career prospects.

Depending on your availability and the course structure, there are full-time and part-time programs available that may take place in-person or online. Deciding on the right fit for a degree program depends on numerous factors, both personal and professional, so it is beneficial to compare programs and offerings available. In the United States, NAFSA has produced an International Education Graduate Programs Database listing masters programs, doctoral programs, and some certificate programs currently available that focus on international education.

Conclusion

This guide has covered several key topics for international education practitioners who are interested in working with others on research endeavors and conducting their own research project/s.

Several points should be reiterated from the content presented within the guide, especially given the examples provided by international education practitioners across many areas of expertise and across the world:

- **Practitioner research is important to the field.** It is important for the field and profession to have intersections between practice and research—both can learn from and inform the other, with scholar-practitioners bridging the gaps.
- **Practitioners can answer some questions better than scholars could**. Having a different perspective is a good thing, especially where research intersects directly with professional responsibilities and can provide unique and specific insights.
- **Practitioner research comes in many forms and varieties**. There is not just one type of international education research and valuable lessons can be learned through different methods and approaches.
- **Practitioner research requires resources, but also leads to opportunities**. Conducting research takes time but projects can be boosted through professional collaborations and identifying available funding sources.
- **Practitioner research can be shared with others in many forms**. Whether it is through conferences/seminars, journal articles, book chapters, professional publications, or short pieces, it is important to share research with others to inform the field and profession.
- **A variety of learning and training opportunities are available**. For anyone who wants to strengthen their skills or dive deeper into the research process, there are several avenues available to explore from independent study to short courses, mentors, and academic qualifications.

We hope this guide serves as a resource to inspire future research endeavors and collaborations to positively impact the field and better connect us all as professionals in the wonderful world of international education.

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