



1.1 Advice from a Self-Study Scholar

Openness and Collaboration

Establishing a team of critical friends is an important first step for self-study teachers. Critical friends are important to self-study because self-study calls for openness and collaboration. Openness means making your classroom teaching public and sharing your work and ideas with colleagues and students. Openness is crucial to improving your teaching, but it also leaves you vulnerable and open to critique. Trust, then, becomes a vital element in establishing and sustaining a team of critical friends. Finding and choosing colleagues who are honest, supportive, collaborative, and committed to the goals of self-study is vital in the process of helping you consider and gain insight into your work.

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1.2 Advice from a Self-Study Scholar

Personal Professional Accountability

In many instances, the catalyst for self-study is similar to a problem in relation to reflective practice. Being confronted by a problem (curious or puzzling situation) can cause one to stop and look again at taken-for-granted aspects of practice. Jack Whitehead (1989) described this as being a living contradiction, and in terms of personal professional accountability, it seems to me that a central issue for self-study is being sensitive to, or actively seeking to find, instances of being a living contradiction in our teaching. As Tom Russell (e.g., Russell, 2002) has highlighted many times, the way we teach has much more influence than what we say. Therefore, if we are to genuinely be scholars of teaching, we need to be able to demonstrate that we learn through the challenges created by our own actions in our practice. In that way, self-study is an important touchstone to personal professional accountability.

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