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Encouraging Reflective Practice in Educational Supervision Through Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry*Jeffrey Glanz and Revital Heimann***Introduction**

We begin this chapter by contextualizing action research (AR) and appreciative inquiry (AI) within the overall structure of educational supervision. Our purpose is not to review action research and appreciative inquiry in all their facets but rather to focus on the relationship between action research and appreciative inquiry regarding educational supervision.

Supervision based on collaboration, participative decision making, and reflective practice has evolved from its bureaucratic origins (Bolin & Panaritis, 1992; Foshay, 1994; Glanz, 1998; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014; Sullivan & Glanz, 2014). Action research has gradually emerged as an important form of instructional supervision, at least in advocated theory, to engage teachers in reflective practice about their teaching and as a means to examine factors that aim to promote student achievement (Calhoun, 2002; Sagor, 1992, 2011; Zepeda, 2012). Appreciative inquiry, too, serves to enhance our understanding of educational supervision because of its emphasis on social system inquiry as a collaborative process (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) beyond the classroom by focusing on organizational change (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

In this chapter, we review research on AR and AI related to supervision by summarizing studies culled from scholarly publications in the form of peer-reviewed journals, presentations at conferences, monographs, and online resources. We point to trends as well as deficiencies in the research. We also indicate gaps in the literature and research and proffer recommendations for further research. We rely on a theoretical model from which to understand AR and AI (Dick, 2004). Related to this model, we highlight five types or “forms of engagement” of action research, and situate appreciative inquiry within some of them. We draw from the work of Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) who identified eight forms of engagement used by AI practitioners. Our typology focuses on the individuals

that initiate or partake in the inquiry. We examine its research base and discuss its usefulness in supporting or bringing about change in schools, on an individual level or for the organization as a whole. Implications for educational supervision and areas for further research for each form of engagement are discussed. The chapter includes suggestions for those involved in educational supervision to further enhance their understanding of the theory and practice of AR and AI as forms of educational supervision that encourage reflective practice.

Contextualizing Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry within the Overall Structure of Educational Supervision and Instructional Leadership

In this section we define and explain the nature of AR and AI, and their relationship. We also share our understanding of supervision as well as the connection between it and action research, and, by extension, appreciative inquiry.

Action Research

Practitioners often assert that much educational research has a minimal effect on their practice (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Willemse & Boei, 2013). Educational practitioners, in general, are suspicious of research, claiming that “research can be made to support anything” (Calhoun, Allen, Halliburton, & Jones, 1996, p. 54). Breaking such stereotypical thinking based on erroneous assumptions and beliefs is difficult, although not impossible. The many attempts in the educational supervision literature and practice to involve teachers and principals in action research projects attest to its efficacy (Gordon, 2008a; Gordon, Stiegelbauer, & Diehl, 2008).

Although originally developed primarily for the professional development of teachers (Zehetmeier, Andreitz, Erlacher, & Rauch, 2015), action research is a kind of research that has re-emerged as a popular way of involving practitioners, both teachers and supervisors, as well as professionals in other fields (e.g., health care practitioners) so that they better understand their work (Gordon, 2008b; Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). Corey (1953) explained that AR is undertaken “by practitioners in order that they may improve their practices” (p. 141). Corey was the first educator to include supervisors as they “attempt to solve their practical problems by using the methods of science” (1953, p. 141).

Action research, as a type of applied research, is a form of deliberate inquiry that is conducted by practitioners to improve practices in educational settings. AR, like other types of research, uses an array of methodologies and approaches. AR, however, differs with traditional research in three ways:

- 1) AR does not rely on advanced statistical techniques to analyze data.
- 2) The initiative for conducting AR is usually to solve specific problems.
- 3) Findings from AR are very contextualized, therefore are often not generalizable to other groups and situations.

These differences do not minimize the benefits of AR. Properly used, the research can have immeasurable benefits such as creating a system-wide mindset for school improvement, and promoting reflection and self-improvement, among many others (Oolbkkink-Marchand, van der Steen, & Nijveldt, 2013; Rodgers, 2002).

Appreciative Inquiry

Although some conceive appreciative inquiry (AI) as distinct from action research (AR), albeit somewhat related (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010), we discuss it as a form of AR (Breslow, Crowell, Francis, & Gordon, 2013, 2015; Calabrese et al. 2008; Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001). Pioneered by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (1987), two professors at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, AI is an action research model used to analyze a given situation in an organization in terms of decision making and fostering strategic organizational change.

The major premise behind AI is the goal of deep organizational reflection and understanding by portraying shared and unified vision based on the strength of the organization. In contrast to a problem-solving approach that addresses a specific area of concern and that fosters limited discussion and group participation, AI is more encompassing in terms of its encouragement of wide and deep conversations and reflections among many members of a given organization (Ludema et al., 2001).

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) based AI on three premises: (a) the need to move beyond the problem solving approach, (b) the notion that organizations are socially constructed realities, and (c) the power of new ideas as a force for change. Appreciative inquiry builds on an organization's existing strengths (Bushe, 2012a) and differs from problem-solving approaches, including more traditional forms of action research, by focusing on “how people think rather than what people do” and a commitment “to let go of control in planned change efforts and nurture a more improvisational approach to the action phase” (Bushe & Kassam, 2005, p. 176).

There are five foundational principles that guide AI:

- 1) The *constructionist principle* views reality as a socially constructed entity, and organization members can recreate a new and enhanced reality through collaborative inquiry and decision making.
- 2) The *principle of simultaneity* is founded on the idea that inquiry and change are inextricably connected.
- 3) The *poetic principle* views life in an organization as a collection or association of people with positive stories to tell.
- 4) The *anticipatory principle* creates a positive vision of the future, and this vision encourages organization members to work as a unit to actualize the stated vision.
- 5) The *positive principle* is premised on the notion that the inquiry process should promote positive images, experiences, social bonding, joy, and celebration (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Evans, Thornton, & Usinger, 2012).

Members of an organization can use AI to examine the organization as a whole or, instead, focus on a particular aspect (Bushe, 2012b). Regardless of the focus, advocates of AI assert that the area of focus should be collaboratively developed. There are four primary phases associated with AI, explicated in detail by Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2014). These are listed along with the process that occurs at each phase (Ludema et al., 2001):

- 1) *Discovery*: organizational members discuss the beliefs and values they hold dear about the organization, their fellow members, and their work within the organization.
- 2) *Dream*: organizational members discuss their hopes and aspirations for the future of the organization as well as their own growth within it.
- 3) *Design*: organizational members discuss concrete plans to reach organizational goals that were mutually developed.
- 4) *Destiny*: organizational members discuss the manner to implement and assess their goals.

Supervision

Defining supervision has been a source of much debate (Bolin, 1987; Glickman, 1992; Gordon, 2016; Ponticell, 2016). Debate has centered on considering supervision as a function of administration, curriculum, staff development, action research, and, or a combination of these and other activities (Sullivan & Glanz, 2014; Glanz & Zepeda, 2016a). Alfonso and Firth (1990) noted that the study of supervision, at the time, lacks focus largely due to the “lack of research and continuing disagreement on the definition and purposes of supervision” (p.188). Since the 1990s a voluminous amount of literature has emerged to reinforce the view that supervision is the center for the improvement of instruction (Glanz & Zepeda, 2016a; Halim, Buang, & Meerah, 2010; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011; Sergiovanni, Starratt, & Cho, 2013). Supervision is widely acknowledged by scholars in the field as an ongoing process of engaging teachers in instructional dialogue for the purpose of enhancing reflection about teaching and student learning to modify teaching practices aligned with increasing student achievement.

Various forms of supervision have emerged in the literature (Glanz & Zepeda, 2016b; Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2014; Sullivan & Glanz, 2014). We see supervision as an activity, process, or function situated within the larger frame of instructional leadership (Backor & Gordon, 2014; Taylor Backor & Gordon, 2015; Zepeda, 2009; 2012). Instructional supervision may be conceived as a form of instructional leadership, although there are scholars who view the two terms synonymously (Burke & Krey, 2005; Derrington & Campbell, 2013; Klar, 2012; Ylimaki, 2014). All agree, though, that instructional supervision as best practice is a school-wide process that focuses exclusively on practices that directly enhance teaching and learning as the core of the school’s mission.

AR and, much more recently, AI have been viewed as complementary approaches to the process of supervision (Breslow et al., 2013, 2015; Calabrese

et al., 2007). They are seen as very much aligned to the goals of supervision by encouraging deep reflection for positive change within a school organization or classroom level.

Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry as Instructional Supervision

Gordon (2005, 2008a, 2014, 2016) explained that the field of instructional supervision has embraced AR as a function of supervision. He notes that many supervision scholars, in their writings, have called attention to the importance of AR (Glickman et al., 2014; Nolan & Hoover, 2011; Sullivan & Glanz, 2014). According to Zepeda (2012), AR is a natural extension of traditional supervision: “As an extension of instructional supervision, action research assists a teacher’s inquiry into classroom practices. Integrating aspects of action research with processes of supervision yields a powerful and seamless form of learning” (p. 259).

Gordon (2014), drawing on the work of many scholars in the field, considers AR as a full-fledged supervisory process: “Action research, as a component of the teacher supervision and evaluation system, is the process of practitioners asking well-defined questions about their practice, systematically gathering and interpreting data to answer those questions, and consequently taking action to improve practice” (p. 2). According to Sullivan and Glanz (2014), AR “creates a system wide mind-set for school improvement” (p. 156).

Therefore, AR is a kind of research that has re-emerged as a popular way of involving practitioners, both teachers and supervisors, so that they better understand their work. Although originally developed primarily for the professional development of teachers, action research has recently gained favor among administrators, supervisors, other educational leaders, and school-based managed teams including parents, community members, and even students, as a way of improving schools.

AI has only recently, in the last few years, been recognized as a possible adjunct to assist supervisors and those who perform school supervision to reflect on their work for the purpose of stimulating instructional improvement (Calabrese & Hester, 2010; Cooperrider & Avital, 2004; Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, & Black, 2009; San Martin & Calabrese, 2011). AI, too, is fairly new in terms of its perceived efficacy. Researchers still question the degree to which AI has lived up to the expectations set for it (Vaart, 2016). Certainly, in regards to supervision, little work has been done.

AR, as used in the examples provided, has a clear connection in supervision to improving teachers’ classroom practice. It is a problem-based approach. AI is intended to cast the net more broadly—“a searching of best practices, discovering opportunities, and identifying the ‘elements of the organization’s positive core” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 11). AI is aimed at generating new visions and aligning strengths for positive and strategic changes in the organization, not just in the classroom.

Evolution of Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry as Complementary Approaches to Supervision

Supervision based on collaboration, participative decision making, and reflective practice is the hallmark of a viable school improvement program designed to promote teaching and learning. AR has gradually emerged as an important form of instructional supervision to engage teachers in critical and reflective practices about their teaching and as a means to examine factors that aim to promote school and student achievement. We indicate that supervision has evolved and moved toward AR advocacy and is used as a direct route to improve teaching and learning and to promote learning communities in school.

Although first popularized in the 1940s by Kurt Lewin (Adelman, 1993), AR was first systematically applied in education by Corey, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University. Corey (1949) encouraged teachers and supervisors to use AR to improve their own practice. He advocated that fundamental change could not occur without direct involvement of teachers and supervisors.

AR gained further legitimacy when distinguished educators such as Taba and Noel (1957) advocated action research in the late 1950s. They believed that AR contributed much toward curriculum development, and they saw two basic purposes for AR:

- (a) to produce evidence needed to solve practical problems; and (b) to help those who are doing the action research to acquire more adequate perspective regarding their problems, to deepen their insights as to what is involved in their task and to extend their orientation toward children-toward methods of teaching them or toward what is significant in content of learning. (Taba & Noel, 1957, p. 2)

Interest in AR waned in the 1960s because it was questioned as a viable research method by the scientific establishment. Foshay (1994) explained that the educational research establishment opposed action research, which was often reported merely in case study form, because "no attempt was made to see whether the examined population was representative of a larger population" (p. 320). Foshay continued, "...the data often were flawed..., the movement was ridiculed in the publications of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and it did not spread" (p. 320). Yet, AR emerged again in the late 1970s with the work of Stenhouse and Elliott in the UK (Oja & Smulyan, 1989).

Historically, AR served as a problem-solving strategy for improving the school organization (Corey, 1949, 1953; Lewin, 1946), as a process of individual reflection on classroom practice (Elliott, 1991), as a process to support staff development (Oja & Smulyan, 1989), as a collaborative process to support teachers' professional development (Sagor, 1992, 2011), and as a strategy to guide site-based school improvement (Glickman, 1995).

While few educators described the role of administrators or supervisors beyond overseeing or administering the AR process, thus enabling teachers to successfully complete a particular project, Taba and Noel (1957) and Corey (1953) were among the first educators to envision the supervisor as integral to

the process. Taba and Noel (1957) believed that supervisors "needed to become learners along with the teachers Instead of acting as experts, they had to become helpers ..." (p. 50). Taba and Noel explained that supervisors needed expertise in AR not only to facilitate teachers' work, but also to "act as a research technician, devising, adapting, and borrowing research techniques as needed" (p. 50). Still, the suggestion that supervisors themselves might benefit from AR without engaging teachers was unrealized.

Over the last half-century, myriad models, theories, and practices of AR have been proposed (Barnes, 2015; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; Cornelissen & van den Berg, 2014; Costello, 2011; Dustman, Kohan, & Stringer, 2014; Foster, 2014; Somekh & Noffke, 2009; Wong, 2014). Dickens and Watkins (1999) conclude that, although most of these models include some version of Lewin's recurring cycle, "action research has not evolved into a unified theory, but has resulted, instead, in disparate definitions and characterizations" (p. 127).

Yet, it is evident that AR, particularly for and among teachers, has been widely advocated, if not implemented on a wide scale (Burns, 2010; Heron & Reason, 2008; Lyons, 2012; Nuthall, 2004). In contrast, AR for supervisors and school administrators gained only some momentum and mostly in advocated theory (Columbro, 1964; Dana, Tricarico, & Quinn, 2009; Firestone & Shipps, 2005; Glanz, 1999, 2014; Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2014).

Unlike AR, appreciative inquiry has a much shorter history and its application to supervision is in its beginning stages (Boyd & Bright, 2007; Calabrese, 2006; Shuayb, Sharp, Judkins, & Hetherington, 2009). The origin of AI was based on the positive psychology approach (Barrett & Fry, 2005; Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008) and it mainly focuses on the strengths rather than weaknesses of the organization. The inquiry seeks to reveal the root causes of success instead of problems to be solved. As a method for professional and organizational development, it is easier to adopt AI since it is more pleasant to celebrate successes than discuss weaknesses and problems. Its focus is also on generating new ideas to improve the functioning of an organization (Bushe, 2007). Critics of AI indicate that focusing only on success stories is unrealistic (Grant & Humphries, 2006). Bushe (2007) suggests that AI is most productive when it provides new avenues for inquiry and reflection.

At first, AI was commonly applied to work in businesses and industry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Messerschmidt, 2008). It was only later that AI was applied in schools (Calabrese & Cohen, 2013; Duncan & Ridley-Duff, 2014; Gibbs, 2004; Hammond, 1996; Lewis, Passmore, & Cantore, 2008; Schall, Ospina, Godsoe, & Dodge, 2004; Yaeger, Soresen, & Bengtsson, 2005). Little research has been conducted on AI and supervision.

A Review of Research on Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry Related to Educational Supervision

Our main thesis in this section is that there is a paucity of extant research related to action research (AR) and, especially, appreciative inquiry (AI) involving school administrators and supervisors. Much of the literature focuses on opinion-oriented pieces advocating the possible benefits of AR and AI. Studies, for the

most part, were conducted by professors of education with their students, especially at the doctoral level, attempting to implement a form of AR and AI in a school situation. A perusal of the last several volumes of handbooks devoted to AR and AI (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), as well as a review of the major journals in educational leadership and administration, including journals in action research itself (*Action Learning*, *Action Research*, *Action Research International*, *International Journal of Action Research*, *Journal of Practitioner Inquiry*, and the *Canadian Journal of Action Research*), indicate the lack of attention to applying these instructional leadership strategies in schools initiated by school administrators and principals.

This problematic situation is linked to the fact that the research literature in instructional leadership, and more especially instructional supervision itself, as the broad categories from which AR and AI emanate, are insufficient. For instance, researchers have documented the fact that there have been “few studies” that have “empirically linked specific instructional leadership behaviors to school performance” (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013, p. 433). Calls for more empirical work in instructional supervision too indicate the unsatisfactory state of research (Heck & Hallinger, 2005).

A few studies have been published on topics tangential to supervision. For instance, Day (2015) reviews data from 27 final reports of AR projects in the area of instructional coaching undertaken as part of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement. Funding was provided to every school district to allow teachers to create site-based, AR projects they believed would engender school improvement. Teachers created and directed the research, designed the research methods, collected and analyzed data, and reported findings in their own words following completion of the project. Aside from findings related to teaching, this study shed some light on leadership. Findings suggested that leadership support by administrators was lacking. Consequently, implications for supervision and leadership centered on ways administration needs to support teacher action research.

Another study that had strong implications for leadership, if not for supervision specifically, was Kekäle and Pirttilä's (2006) participatory action research project. The study raised important issues for school leaders to support teacher research by encouraging a democratic approach of participatory action research (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009).

Perhaps the most research into AR and educational supervision has been conducted by Gordon (2005, 2014) and his doctoral students, along with Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2014). Similarly, but even to a greater extent, the paucity of research into AI and supervision is marked. Its potential benefit to educational supervision, though, we feel is significant, especially with its emphasis or focus on the change process at the organizational level. The ability to create a culture for collaboration (Emihovich & Battaglia, 2000) is key to effective supervision. More research and literature are needed to explore such avenues of benefit to the field of study and practice. Yet, again, work that examines AI and supervision in education is nearly nonexistent. Research we could locate that links the two was conducted by Breslow and his colleagues (2013) and by Boyd and Bright (2007). Their research does point to further avenues of needed research. Boyd and Bright

(2007) point out the success of participatory appreciative inquiry in a community where action research failed to achieve change.

A Theoretical Model from which to Understand Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry

Five Types of Action Research Related to Supervision

Organizations are complex entities, and as such it is necessary to be cognizant of the varied cultural norms, professional practices, and, or political contexts that impinge upon work and life in a school organization. Awareness of these complexities will enable educators to circumvent the inevitable pitfalls that may be encountered and, thus, be in an optimal position to solve seemingly intractable problems. Isenberg, Loomis, Humphreys, and Maton (2004) point out that “the relationship between researcher and researched always includes a third interested party, namely the society at large that may be affected by the study's results” (p. 124). There are several powerful methods one can use to begin to understand, use, and apply in grappling with the aforementioned complexities. We refer to these methods as “five forms of engagement.” Each form of engagement possesses advantages as well as risks. One's ability to identify the contextual issue or problem and then select the appropriate form of engagement is critical to success.

The focus of this section of the chapter includes five types or “forms of engagement” that are both reflected in the literature and found in practice, to varying degrees, in some schools. There are many different typologies of action research; however, we are discussing AR and AI as approaches that engage a staff within a school organization related to aspects of educational supervision. We situate AR and AI within the five types and analyze the opportunities and risks that each type invites:

1. External-Internal Collaboration

An example of this collaboration would be a school principal in consultation with an outside agency work together on a common issue. As the title implies, this form of engagement centers on the often dynamic, yet complicated interactions among school-community constituents. External constituents often have their own agenda, goals, and orientations. Whether they are invited by school members, hired by a district to work with a school, or solicit entry for some research purpose, interests and ways of operating may vary greatly. External and internal partners may not necessarily share the same values and views toward the educational process (Pompper, 2014).

A major advantage of working with an external constituent may center on the additional resources, financial and otherwise, that are brought to bear in a given situation to solve a particular problem. Moreover, the external researcher/advisor brings his own knowledge, expertise, and critical points of view to help solve a seemingly intractable problem that internal constituents either could not envision or solve. In the appreciative inquiry mode, the external agent can point

out strengths and opportunities that sometimes are not manifest to organizational members. Moreover, AI can help articulate, define, and create a vision of excellence for the organization. Generative questions, as suggested by Bushe (2007) may lead to generative conversations and actions. Certainly, working with outside agencies might raise critical questions about the school organization's values, beliefs, and even its rules and regulations in contrast to expectations from the external body, which possesses its own norms and requirements. Consequently, asymmetrical power relations between researcher and researched may become evident (Pompper, 2014; Postholm & Skrøvset, 2013).

Although AR and AI, at their best, aim to strive for equity between parties, disagreements and conflicts may arise. For example, if the external partners are university professors, a "researcher and practitioner" dichotomy may develop (Gelling & Munn-Giddings, 2011; Postholm & Skrøvset, 2013). The university researchers are interested in gathering data for a particular research project (e.g., understanding ways practitioners deal with the ethical dilemmas they confront). This project, initiated by the external constituent (professor), generally has the approval of the school head, and an announcement of some form is made about the purposes of the study that may involve interviews with school staff, classroom observations, and questionnaires anonymously completed. School staff, if not "real" partners in the research project, may become suspicious of the researchers' intent and may withdraw from the study or thwart efforts for study completion.

AR and AI implemented properly, though, lends itself to shared cooperation between the two constituents. Among the best examples of such efforts is found in the work of Gordon (2016). Prior coordination as well as commitment to a common end are critical to success, according to their research.

Researchers caution that participants should be sensitive to certain issues including loyalty to different partners. Remaining sensitive, for instance, to the authority of the internal management is essential. Opportunities for professional sharing and collaboration between partners is crucial (Dickson & Green, 2001; Heimann, 2013; Hillon & Boje, 2007). Other questions or issues that may arise could include: "What is the role of each party?"; "What occurs when conflicts or misunderstandings arise?"; "Will teachers or administrators perceive any threats to their own security by outside forces?"; "What are the shared expectations and responsibilities?"; "Who is ultimately responsible for the process as whole?"

This form of engagement, not uncommon, has advantage over individual engagement in that more resources, including person power, are brought to bear on a school problem. Given the additional personnel, though, social complexities and challenges are more likely.

2. Internally or Organizationally Based Collaboration

An example of this is when a principal leads an initiative to study or improve a given phenomenon in a school. Some describe this approach to action research as most effective for bringing about change in an organization because the individual is motivated to action while at the same time attending to organizational constraints and opportunities (Coghlan, 2007; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; Datta et al., 2014; Ragsdell, 2009). Internally initiated efforts, sometimes referred to as *action learning*, create meaningful conditions to engage staff in professional

development and change. This form of engagement is based on the experience and involvement of the staff, and it is assumed that they will be in the best position to identify and analyze dilemmas or discover what is needed for themselves as well as for the organization. It is defined and understood by the internal complexities and, often, the politics of a given situation in the particular school (Burbules & Berk, 1999; Duffy, Rogerson, & Blick, 2000).

The manner in which an idea emerges and develops is contingent on several internal factors. Some of these factors may include the principal's role in the school, perceptions about her leadership style, experience level of the teaching staff, staff motivation, knowledge of AR and AI. Engagements of yesteryear were premised on the notion that practitioner's knowledge was limited as well as unreliable (McKay & Marshall, 2001). As the field of education has matured, there has been a heightened realization of the value and importance of practitioner involvement at every level of systemic change and growth in a school or district (Sullivan & Glanz, 2006). Trustworthiness in action research is based on the internal, varied experiences of the participants. Their insights and experiences are critical for the success of AR and AI within a school or district (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; Feldman, 2007; McNiff, 2013; McTaggart, 1991).

A threat to this collaboration and engagement in learning, however, may come from a "top-down" approach to action research, even to appreciative inquiry. Initiated, most often, by a school leader (principal, department chair, or teacher leader), this type of engagement is often fraught by the politics of a given situation in the particular school. The primary motivation for using such an approach comes from a desire to solve a problem or to discover a new opportunity to improve the educational process. The leader's energies are devoted to convincing participants that time and effort in the venture will eventually be rewarded, not only in terms of improvements to the school organization but also having benefits to each of them. Critical to the success of a top-down approach are adequate supervisory supports, resources, and other logistical and administrative processes. Although a top-down approach may be initiated by a school leader, the ultimate goal would be to work towards encouraging participatory governance.

This form or method of engagement raises questions such as: "Who is taking the responsibility for reform initiatives?"; "How does one convince or encourage a staff to participate in the inquiry?"; "How does one deal with resistance?"; "Is it possible for a staff member to examine her/his own praxis critically?"; "How does a school determine levels of success in the initiative?"

This form of engagement is powerful because of its focus on organizational development and attempts at enacting systemic change.

3. Participative Inquiry

An example of this occurs when groups of teachers conduct action research to implement differentiated instruction or analyze success at a given grade even or even school-wide. In contrast to the first form of engagement, this approach fosters a "bottom-up" process that has the potential to transform a school's staff into a professional learning community (Arredondo Rucinski, 2012; Jacobs & Yendol-Hoppey, 2010; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011). Within such an approach, the opportunities for staff engagement are high. The ultimate goal in this form of

engagement is to facilitate an environment for reflective inquiry and professional development (Sagor, 2000). One's praxis is elevated by the encouragement of team involvement and collaboration.

One important perspective from a supervisory point of view is the challenge to identify and analyze data that already exist in the school system that are often ignored (see Step 4 in Sagor, 2000) or not used at all. A case in point is the first step of Appreciative Inquiry—discovery, which in fact asks participants to look for data in the organization as a team in terms of the best of what is in practice, goals and procedures. Research demonstrates that this approach is particularly suited to encouraging teams to make every effort to achieve shared goals. Still, it is necessary that such inquiry be accepted by the school management if it is to receive appropriate and sufficient support.

Here too, issues of power abound. Questions may include (Bergold & Thomas, 2012; Boothroyd, Fawcett, & Foster-Fishman, 2004; Isenberg, Loomis, Humphreys, & Maton, 2004):

- "Who is included/excluded and why?"
- "What are the group dynamics of the team?"
- "Who are the natural leaders?"
- "What impact would power struggles have on the effectiveness of the research inquiry process?"
- "What factors encourage or impede the development of a community of learners in solving mutually agreed upon problems in order to improve the school?"
- "What is the role of the supervisor or school principal in this process?"
- "How can s/he deliberate the inquiry and, at the same time, remain a significant partner without dictating priorities?"

This form of engagement is ideal given the willingness of participants within a school or district to work together to solve or understand an issue or problem. Challenges exist in terms of conflicting individual personalities, political constraints, and social dynamics among organizational members as a whole.

4. Individual Inquiry

An example of this occurs when an assistant principal or lead teacher examines ways of improving science instruction in the school. Our distinction among individual, internal organization, and self-study (the next form of engagement) in the context of supervision aims to emphasize Carr and Kemmis's (1986) differentiation among action research discourses: technical, practical, and emancipatory. It seems to us that the same distinctions and insights can be made about those who are engaged in AI since individuals, too, may affect organizational realities. Initially, the researcher should attend to the technical and practical aspects of the research. Individuals are motivated by this form of engagement when they perceive a felt need to improve some aspects of the classroom/school. This effort is supported by Whitehead's (1989, 2014) living theory approach that focuses on the question: "How do I improve my practice?" Coghlan and Brannick (2014) observe: "Typically, first-person research is characterized as a form of inquiry and practice that one does on one's own, and so addresses the individual's ability to foster an inquiring approach to their own life, to act out of awareness

and purposefully" (p. 7). Individuals, either of their own volition or prompted by an outside entity (supervisor or college professor), undertake serious research inquiry (Ragsdell, 2009). This process requires that the researcher remain flexible to opportunities and willing to examine her own dispositions and practices.

Although the academic community has historically remained skeptical about the "science" of action research, additional concerns may be raised in cases in which individuals are the sole investigators. Despite such concerns, the individual form of AR, and now AI, has grown in popularity and processes are set in place to ensure applicability of results. Still, personal, but also epistemological and ontological questions are raised, including: "What are the motivations for conducting this inquiry?"; "What kinds of data are available?"; "Can objectivity be ensured?"; "Are the memories, narratives, and stories valid and reliable?"; "What processes are set in place to avoid bias?"

This form of engagement is probably the most common form of engagement in the field of supervision. Here an individual, somewhat versed in AR and AI, initiates an investigation to solve a particular problem. A major drawback, though, is that sustained improvements are short lived because they rely on the efforts of one, or a few individuals.

5. Reflective Self-study

An example of this occurs when a school principal examines personal practices, strengths and weaknesses around building communication with teachers. The individual form of engagement differs from reflective self-study in terms of depth. This form of engagement is reflected in the emancipatory typology research by Carr and Kemmis (1986). Here we go deeper into the researcher's mind and sensitivities (Batagiannis, 2011; Dinkelman, 2003; Postholm & Skrovset, 2013). Batagiannis (2011) argues that it is unlikely that school principals will use the action research methods in schools unless they have experienced the process themselves. Therefore, reflective self-study is a valuable tool for developing a leadership or educational identity. Exploring, more deeply, one's motivations, desires, interests, proclivities is essential, not optional, with reflective self-study. This exploratory process can be described as a journey wherein one delves beyond the surface issue to discover or uncover congruencies, inconsistencies, and contrasts between one's thoughts and praxis, for instance (e.g., espoused theory versus theories-in-use). One may reflect on priorities and choices or engage in critical meta-analytic ways of thinking. The questions of concern are more fundamental and somewhat more philosophical than the previous forms. Questions posed attempt to reveal taken-for-granted notions of doing things, uncovering blind areas of Johari's window, for instance (Luft, 1969).

AR and AI here too finds relevance with avenues for exploration (Dinkelman, 2003; Whitehead, 2014). A powerful example can be found in Delong's (2013) work where she established a culture of learning and developing following Whitehead's (2014) approach to action research (the living theory):

One of my learnings into the nature and improvement of my life as a superintendent and later as university professor was that quality relationships can be deepened and strengthened through a willingness to let others

into my world and let down the walls of protection to expose my vulnerabilities. Sustained trust is at the heart of my educational relationships and essential to the creating of a culture-of-inquiry where human flourishing can thrive. My commitment to build trust and respect focused on the power of rational argument not on the power of position. As part of trust building, the process of establishing democratic evaluations started when, as superintendent, I asked the principals in my family of schools to chair my evaluation process to elicit critical feedback on how I might improve. (p. 30)

The same principles of trust and democratic values find relevance for those who work, through AI, as they seek to better understand organizational structures and then create mechanisms for change and improvement.

Summary and Future Directions

In this chapter, we have explored action research (AR) and appreciative inquiry (AI), as disciplined forms of inquiry that have been advocated in the literature as invaluable tools to allow educational leaders to reflect on their practices and programs. Yet, a dearth of research exists on the efficacy of these approaches to inquiry related specifically to educational supervision. Therefore, in this final section of the chapter, we offer suggestions for further research and study. We urge educators to pursue such avenues for research vigorously. Without such a concerted effort, the field of supervision, particularly related to the application of AR and AI, will wallow in conjecture and unfounded advocacy, which will further diminish the potential benefits educational supervision may have on theory and practice. Especially, we urge organizations and associations such as the Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision (COPIS), the American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group (AERA SIG) for Supervision and Instructional Leadership, along with perhaps the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration and the University Council for Educational Administration, to marshal forces to construct a research agenda for the field of supervision so that efforts are well coordinated to build theory and research. Without such a unified effort, individual studies may emerge from time to time, but the accumulated impact of such efforts will, in our view, be ephemeral.

Avenues for Research

Deficiencies in research about AR, and especially AI, abound as they relate to educational supervision. Unfortunately, as in education as a whole, the field of supervision relies excessively on advocated theories and practices without adequate research to support their implementation. This seemingly negative assessment, though, points to possible fruitful avenues of research. We highlight specific areas we believe can positively impact the field, at least for a start.

External or Internal Collaboration

Collaborations with community, initiated by school personnel or otherwise, are fruitful avenues for research to:

- increase the understanding of organizational culture and the challenges associated with it;
- investigate collaborations with external partners or potential partners;
- determine the ability of staff to decide and participate in a change;
- create team leadership with a mission orientation;
- develop the efficacy and ability of the internal leadership to continue growth process using AR or AI methodology as a management paradigm.

Internally or Organizationally Based Collaboration

School administrators, lead teachers, and other educators working within a school may initiate AR and AI studies to:

- assess the effectiveness of a given program or practice;
- ascertain the most effective way to motivate the teaching staff as a community of learners;
- determine necessary changes within the school organization to enhance teacher participation or communication among staff constituents;
- reconfigure organizational structures to facilitate change;
- examine the progress made in prior ventures or projects.

Participative Inquiry

This is a powerful method that involves all the school's staff to:

- assess the curriculum and the informal activity in school;
- foster a community of learners in the school;
- determine the order of priorities related to resources used;
- examine ways to develop new visions or new goals for the school;
- clear reasons for dissatisfaction and help to solve dilemmas disputes;
- create innovative and democratic supervisory processes.

Individual Inquiry

This process focuses on individual attitudes and actions in order to improve practices. The role of the supervisor in this context is to encourage staff to conduct research by giving the time and resources that are needed and also to support and celebrate the results. A supervisor can conduct her own action research study. This approach will:

- assess the congruency between espoused theories and the theories in use;
- examine the details of one's own actions;
- develop critical thinking on one's own praxis;
- contribute to the ability to modify tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge;
- improve teacher self-efficacy and morale.

Reflective Self-study

Motivations, thought processes, attitudes, and beliefs are the central focus in self-study (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Foremost to this approach is to:

- examine one's own motivations and interests in improving educational processes;
- compare one's personal and professional beliefs to the school's value system;
- reveal strengths and weaknesses in one's attitudes and actions;
- develop self-efficacy and identity in one's professional role;
- encourage self-development for lifelong learning.

It is important to underscore the relationship between AR and AI regarding future areas for research. AR has been seen, at least in advocated theory, as a fruitful strategy to promote teacher reflection, a major goal of supervision. AR is not yet widely practiced on a daily basis, as are traditional approaches that rely on a supervisor entering a classroom to provide assistance. AR, when used, focuses exclusively on the individual classroom to better understand teacher behavior, student achievement, and the like. At times, it has proven useful to gather data about a particular issue for a whole grade: for example, teachers who gather data to improve student writing in the fifth grade. AI, on the other hand, is more useful to better understand organizational dynamics in a school. By exploring, for instance, school-wide mechanisms that support teacher decision making in curriculum issues, AI can contribute to improving coordination among diverse members in the school organization. AI, though, has not yet caught on in terms of a major alternative to or adjunct with educational supervision. Sometimes, also, the relationship between AR and AI can become blurred where efforts are not coordinated and each group works in isolation from the other. Moreover, the benefits of AI for better enhancing work in AR is often ignored. For instance, fruitful results obtained from using AI on an organizational level are not analyzed to see the nature and quality of its impact on teacher behavior in the classroom. Efforts to link AR and AI are uncoordinated. We believe that as the benefits and usefulness of AI are more widely appreciated, such murkiness between the two can be alleviated. Therefore, some areas for further research should include:

- using AI to better understand organizational dynamics;
- understanding the extent to which AI can inform work among those individuals who are using AR to reflect on classroom practice;
- ways of coordinating AR and AI from the start on a particular problem of practice;
- promoting change in the school organization using both AR and AI;
- using AI as a form of or alternative to educational supervision.

Thus we see that much work remains to further support the use of both AR and AI, separately, and more importantly, in coordination, to improve the practice of educational supervision in schools. Opportunities, however, do abound. We have tried to point out several possible avenues for direction.

Conclusion

Action research and appreciative inquiry are particularly suited to the notion of constructivist, democratic educational supervision given their emphasis of encouraging school personnel to reflect deeply on their practice, both at the classroom and organizational levels. Although AR and AI have the potential to serve as valuable tools for scholars and practitioners of educational supervision to improve a variety of aspects of life in schools, scant research has been conducted on ascertaining their relationship and efficacy for improving practice. We reiterate our call for professional organizations as well as individual scholars in the field to develop strategic research efforts. Without such a concerted effort, we believe AR and AI will simply wallow in obscurity, albeit occasionally used by some, and join the countless other approaches that are prevalent in the field of education that have not had the benefit of scholarly scrutiny and affirmation.

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