



University of Toronto

Ethics Review Office

Teacher-Researcher Conflicts of Interest

Reflective teaching and teacher development are part of the teaching enterprise and the Education Research Ethics Board does not wish to place restrictions on what aspects of practice can be studied. However, its primary responsibility is protection of the research subjects, and therefore once a teacher's research moves beyond what would be considered standard reflective practice, measures need to be introduced to minimize the impact of the teacher-researcher conflict of interest.

If the activity or exercise to be examined can be integrated into regular classroom activities, is of value to study, and involves the entire class, the teacher can proceed without introducing measures to separate her dual role as both researcher and teacher. If the subject of the research is then the teacher, i.e. self-reflection on the practice, there is no need for consent. However, if any materials (e.g. papers, tests, etc.) produced by the students are to be collected and analyzed, consent/assent is needed by parents and/or students. Fully informed consent on how the materials will be used, with guarantees of confidentiality are essential. The consent form should explicitly state that no penalties will result by not agreeing to "participate". If possible, teachers should wait until grades have been submitted to the school so that a real or appearance of potential for evaluative effect on student/participants no longer exists.

If the teacher/researcher intends to involve some students as participants, and not others, a third party should be involved in recruitment and selection to provide some distance between teacher/researcher and student/participant. The teacher/researcher should not be aware of who has agreed to participate while the teacher-student relationship still exists. It is normally advisable that identifiable data be analyzed only after grades have been submitted to the school so that a real or appearance of potential for evaluative effect on student/participants no longer exists.