

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN DEANS OF EDUCATION

ACCORD ON RESEARCH IN EDUCATION



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Education is essential to a vibrant and healthy democracy and the development of an engaged citizenry. Educational research is equally essential to personal, social, cultural, political, and economic development, not only in Canada, but worldwide. In putting forward this Accord, ACDE's goal is to ensure that the contributions made by and through educational research are widely recognized, communicated, and supported.

SECTION 1 | CONTEXT AND GOALS FOR THE ACCORD

The Accord on Research in Education emerges from the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE), a network of deans, directors, and chairs of education faculties from across Canada¹ who are committed to “contributing to national, public discourse on the importance of public education in developing and sustaining a civil society” (ACDE *General Accord*, 2006, p. 1). Members of ACDE are committed to nurturing and promoting educational research (see the ACDE *General Accord*, pp. 3-5). This Accord emerges from this shared commitment across members of the ACDE network.

This Accord is designed to speak to a diversity of stakeholders, including not only university-based academics, but also funding agencies, ministries and departments, institutions, and agencies, practitioners, learners and learning communities, and any others who engage in, build from, respond to, challenge, interpret, judge, or extend educational research. While the Accord has been developed by a network of deans of faculties of education across Canada, the goal is to inform and provoke discussion among educators and others across institutions and communities worldwide who are similarly concerned with understanding the nature, quality, and impact of educational research.

Putting forward an Accord on Educational Research is critically important at this moment, given the acceleration of efforts, internationally, nationally, and locally, to define, evaluate, and judge research.

¹ In this document, the term “faculty” is used inclusively to refer to faculties, colleges, schools, and departments concerned with the study of education.

For example, internationally, decisions about funding levels for universities are increasingly being tied to judgments about “research outputs” based on particular indicators of research quality and impact. Within Canada, attention is increasingly being focused on ensuring that the value derived from research investments is better understood. To that end, government ministries and departments, funding agencies, organizations, the public, and others are making implicit and explicit judgments about how and what research contributes to the broader societal good. Within academic communities, traditional pressures on researchers to account for productivity are being elaborated with calls to account for tangible research contributions. Thus, at this moment, it is imperative that the educational research community take action to shape conceptions about research and the ways in which it benefits society. To that end, ACDE’s Accord advances principles designed to ensure the development and application of robust, inclusive frameworks for thinking about the nature, scope, value, and impact of research in education.

ACDE engaged in an extensive consultation process to define the principles and commitments put forward in this Accord. A working group was established and charged with drafting the Accord in June 2007. In Fall 2007, a two-day Research Summit engaged Canadian Deans, Associate Deans of Research, and invited guests (international, national, local) in developing guidelines for the Accord development (see <http://foe.educ.ubc.ca/ACDEResearchSummit2007>). Building from the Research Summit, successive drafts of the Accord were reviewed, critiqued, and revised across a series of working group meetings, with regular consultation with ACDE members, and informed by feedback solicited from others. In June 2010, this *Accord on Research in Education* was ratified by ACDE. A more elaborate discussion is provided in *Background to the ACDE Accord on Research in Education* (www.csse.ca/ACDE/home.shtml), which was endorsed by ACDE as a companion document that provides a more in-depth justification and explanation of the principles put forward here.

SECTION 2 | THE TERRAIN OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Educational research is about improving what is at our core: education in and out of schools and across the lifespan. Educational research has an intimate relationship with everyday life. It unearths and elucidates the skills, strategies, and attitudes needed to address the frontiers of day-to-day learning. It addresses how we might approach our long-term needs, challenges, and imagined futures.

ACDE considers that the collective strength of educational research emerges from its diversity, in research foci, forms of research enacted, and ways of making contributions. ACDE emphasizes the importance of this diversity to addressing issues, mobilizing communities, advancing knowledge, and supporting change in the interests of human and societal development.

One way in which educational research is diverse is in its attention to teaching and learning whenever and wherever they might occur. For example, educational research has studied early literacy development, differences in achievement for boys and girls, the role of alternative schools in supporting marginalized youth, and how and why education in the arts might be important. But educational

research also addresses issues related to education, culture, teaching, and learning across formal and informal settings, from infancy through to adulthood. For example, in community and out-of-school settings, educational research has investigated the roles of museums in education, risk factors for and interventions to prevent falls for older people, and dimensions of union-management conflicts. By focusing on education in and out of schools and across the lifespan, educational research's contributions are fundamental. Research in early childhood education lays a foundation for children's success in schools and society. Advances related to education and sport in the school years can profoundly impact individuals' lives as adults. A focus on adulthood acknowledges how education and learning do not stop when individuals leave initial formal schooling.

Educational research is also diverse in the ways in which research is conceptualized and enacted. For example, forms of inquiry adopted in educational research may draw strongly from a single disciplinary perspective applied to the study of education, be specifically constructed to address a given educational question, or draw on interdisciplinary or emergent forms of inquiry. Educational research is designed and enacted by researchers working alone or in partnership, across university or community sectors and settings. As the forms of educational research are diverse, so, too are the ways in which educational research makes contributions. For example, university-based researchers may seek to extend knowledge or build theory in ways that can be taken up in policy or practice by others working across sectors. In other cases, educational researchers may engage with communities and individuals in forms of participatory research that are ongoing and developmental. The influence of educational research on society is mediated in a multitude of ways, and understanding the nature and processes of research are key to better conceptualizing, describing, and documenting its contributions.

SECTION 3 | PRINCIPLES

The signatories to this Accord on Research in Education endorse the following principles, which are designed to guide individual and collective efforts to understand, enhance, and promote educational research:

1. Educational research is essential to a vibrant and healthy democracy, and to the development and sustenance of individual, social, cultural, political, and economic well-being in Canada and worldwide.
2. Educational research is responsible both to the scholarly community and to a complex network of social, political, and cultural organizations and communities that share a desire to foster understanding and societal betterment through research-generated insights and solutions.
3. Educational research may be driven by any one, or a combination of goals, such as advancing theories, exploring the utility of new frames of reference, synthesizing or critiquing knowl-

edge, solving a problem, addressing a societal issue, informing or critiquing policy directions, engaging in change efforts or developing communities of practice or inquiry.

4. In order to achieve these diverse goals, multiple forms of research must be applied, including discipline-based, community-based, and interdisciplinary forms of research. Indigenous knowledges and forms of research provide essential contributions to the study of education.
5. Respectful dialogue and multiple interpretations spurred by research conducted with a diversity of foci, goals, theoretical perspectives and forms of research is both desirable and necessary to advancing theory, research, practice, policy, and development.
6. The quality of educational research must be judged by applying criteria well matched to the goals and modes of research adopted. Criteria for judging quality must accommodate the diverse, emergent, generative, and dynamic nature of educational research.
7. The importance, value, and contributions of educational research must be judged in ways that reflect a robust conceptualization of forms of influence, including consequences, impact, ongoing engagement, uses, or outcomes, and of how that influence emerges over time and across sectors.
8. Ethical dimensions are foundational to any consideration of the quality, integrity, roles, or influence of educational research as well as to the principles that govern the relationships and expectations among those involved.
9. Investment in educational research is essential, including support for the diverse range of educational research (goals and forms) necessary to knowledge advancement, societal development, and enhancing the public good.

SECTION 4 | COMMITMENTS

The principles put forward above have important implications for action, on the part of ACDE members, and on the part of individuals in Canada and worldwide with an interest in education and educational research. ACDE contends that these principles should be applied in dynamic ways to inform and motivate action in any context where educational research is being conceptualized, enacted, or judged. In this respect, implications are too numerous, situated, and emergent to be listed here. Nonetheless, certain central and immediate actions are suggested, and form commitments by ACDE signatories to this Accord.

ACDE members commit to:

- assuming an educative role within and outside of the academy, raising awareness and fostering understanding about the nature, quality, influence, and significance of educational research and ongoing pursuit of inquiry.
- building learning communities across sectors (academic, professions, community, or government) through the respectful involvement of multiple stakeholders in the conceptualization, conduct, critique, or integration into policies or practices of educational research and further inquiry.
- ensuring educational research is brought forward to inform dialogue, debate, and decision-making in public discourse or policy-making related to education.
- advocating for and facilitating the development and adoption of robust, inclusive conceptions of educational research, its quality, and its ongoing influences.
- advocating for the development and use of frameworks for conceptualizing knowledge mobilization that recognize the diverse ways in which educational research is enacted, shared, taken up, and applied, and supporting efforts to ensure that educational research makes a difference across the lifespan, in and out of schools.
- fostering respectful dialogue among researchers and others working from different perspectives, in recognition of the value and importance of research diversity (i.e., in goals, theoretical perspectives, forms of inquiry) to the advancement of education.
- advocating for the creation of a standard for respectful and collaborative interaction with individuals and communities who are participants or partners in the research process, with due consideration for the embedded attitudes, backgrounds, life circumstances, goals, and cultural contexts of those involved.
- working with ethical review boards to refine and apply criteria and processes for judging ethical practices across forms of research applied in education.
- advocating for investment in educational research endeavours that is commensurate with its importance and value to society.