Learning to Teach: Building Global Research Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision Making. First Report

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Abstract

The character and worth of teacher preparation is fiercely debated worldwide. While most nations rely on university-based teacher education, this approach is currently challenged by other models, many of which advocate for shorter or school-based training. A multitude of alternatives to traditional models of teacher preparation have emerged over the past decade across the world, yet without empirical support for their effectiveness. These changes are occurring rapidly and have important consequences for teacher quality and the future of the profession. Policies and initiatives that support these changes are based more on tradition, politics, ideology, and recently on business interests, than on research-based evidence.

This WERA-IRN symposium brings together education colleagues across different world-settings interested in pursuing context-driven collaborative historical, theoretical, and empirical work seeking to answer the elusive question about the conditions that best support initial teacher learning and to develop capacity to produce in-country research to back such conclusions.

Paper 1

Learning to Teach: Building Global Research Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision Making. Aims, Significance and Work Plan

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We aim to rescue the global wisdom accumulated through years of research on the theory and practice on teacher learning; find whether there are common features that distinguish effective approaches to learning to teach; and challenge current policies and practices not supported by sound research. In addition we aim to create capacity to engage in new research undertakings on learning to teach throughout the lifecycle with emphasis on the subjects that teachers teach, and more specifically, on the needs of teachers who practice in challenging contexts.

A backward mapping strategy (beginning with the latest research and working backwards to past research) will help chart the evolution of the research that has supported current and past innovations in teacher preparation to answer the general question: Does the research literature point to common
features of effective teacher preparation (broadly understood such as pre-service, alternative routes, in-service, professional development, etc.) across countries and contexts?

An initial search has allowed us to develop definitions valid across different country / contexts.

References


Paper 2

An International Approach to Searching the Relevant Literature

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The objective of this paper is to discuss different approaches to searching the international literature. It will discuss more specifically the strengths of Slavin's approach known as "best evidence synthesis". The author will use his recent experience in directing a literature review for Scottish Government: "LITERATURE REVIEW ON TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21st CENTURY" to comment on the conceptual and methodological challenges in this undertaking.
Based on this experience the initial task for the group was to find at least five pieces of high quality research to help answer the question of: how and where teachers learn to teach effectively. The results of this work are reflected in the development of the database we will ask Alastair Hamilton to update us on this effort, and on the next three presentations.

References


Paper 3

*Investigating the Contingent Historical and Political Trajectories affecting Teacher Training and the Education System in Finland*

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This paper illustrates the Finish team approach at selecting research literature for the review. The first four articles are picked after systematic reading of the journal Kasvatus, the main educational publication in Finland, for the years 2008-2014. The team chose the three most relevant articles according to their understanding to map out different perspectives. In addition, there are two relevant articles and one report from other sources on research-based teacher education, a socio-historical analysis on PISA and teacher education, and a research report on gender issues in teacher education.

This presentation will provide material to discuss a case approach study to answer the research questions of this IRN.

References


Paper 4

Learning to Teach: Building Global Research Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision Making. Pilot Synthesis I

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The objective of this presentation is to provide a brief summary or compilation of the research literature that collaborators in this IRN are finding. The Learning to Teach: Building Global Research Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision Making. Pilot Synthesis I has compiled articles that deal more generally with the conditions and abilities required for teachers to become effective. This literature also deals with larger political and social movements which influence teachers' effectiveness.

Examination of the results of this pilot effort will serve to develop a clearer direction for the literature review and will help answer questions such as how well the sources found answer the overall aim of this IRN.

References


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Learning to Teach: Building Global Research Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision Making. Pilot Synthesis II

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The objective of this presentation is to present a synthesis of the research literature that collaborators in this IRN are finding. The Learning to Teach: Building Global Research Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision Making. Pilot Synthesis II has compiled articles that deal more specifically with the conditions and abilities required for teachers to become effective in teaching particular subject matters and within a specific school curriculum. This literature also seeks to answer questions of how what teachers learn correlated with how they teach and how they support their pupil’s learning.

Examination of the results of this pilot effort will serve to develop a clearer direction for the literature review and will help answer questions such as how well the sources found answer the overall aim of this IRN.

References


