



Editorial

By Juan de Dios Oyarzún / Editor-in-chief Journal

Perspectiva Educacional

As Journal Perspectiva Educacional we are pleased to publish our first special issue entitled "New perspectives on teacher professional learning in collaborations for research practice", which was supported as guest co-editor by academic David Contreras (PUCV). This Special Issue is part of the Implementation Plan for the Initial Strengthening of Teachers of the Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso; PM2 of Teacher Training.

This issue has the contributions of different researchers from Chile and other countries, from which the issue contributes with a national and international vision around teacher training in its various modalities of collaboration with the school system, positioning the place of research and reflection in the processes of teacher development. As a Journal we seek to expand the horizons of knowledge around areas of contemporary relevance for education in its various contexts, and we believe that the sphere of study presented in this special issue is of high importance for the development of teachers, and the articulation between teacher training systems and school systems; at the level of local institutional experiences and at the level of public policy. We hope that this issue will provide input in this area of research and development for teaching policy in different national and regional contexts.

We thank Mel Ainscow; Alejandra Nocetti-de-la-Barra, Maurine Muñoz, Pablo Montoya, Álvaro Bustamante and Alejandra Sáez; Leyton Schnellert, Mehjabeen Dato, Donna Kozak, Miriam Miller and Graham Giles; Sergio Galdames and Paulina Bravo; and Omar Aravena, Carolina Villagra, Carolina Troncoso and María Elena Mellado for their outstanding and original articles gathered in this special issue. Both its thematic, theoretical and methodological diversity enrich the proposal of this issue. We also thank Chris Chapman for his kind and insightful introduction to this publication.

Finally, as Journal Perspectiva Educacional we inaugurate with this Special Issue "New perspectives on teacher professional learning in collaborations for the practice of research", the first of several thematic issues to be convened and developed annually in the future, around advanced research in education, where we hope to continue contributing to the development of frontier knowledge in Latin America and the world.

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Introduction to the Special Issue: Achieving Equity through Research-Practice Partnerships for Teacher Professional Learning?

By Chris Chapman, University of Glasgow

The Challenge of creating more equitable education systems has become a preoccupation for many governments, policy makers and researchers, not to mention educational practitioners around the globe. Huge amounts of resources including time and financial investment have been invested to in an attempt to narrow the achievement gap between those from more affluent and the poorest backgrounds, so that all achieve their full potential irrespective of where they come from.

Unfortunately, it is well documented that the successes tend to be the outliers rather than the norm. Despite decades of research and innovation, not to mention the considerable attention from the governments and other stakeholders around the world, it seems that for the most part education systems tend to replicate rather than reduce educational inequities.

The 'equity challenge' is ubiquitous. It transcends communities and regions. It is as significant an issue in isolated rural settings as it is in our cities, although for the most part it is in the latter where variations appear most stark and tend to be most visible; we must not have blind spots and develop strategies to promote equity in diverse contexts.

The 'equity challenge' is also compounded by the severe and wide-ranging impacts of a global pandemic; which are becoming clearer. There are also climate and geo-political uncertainties, a related cost-of-living crisis, and the prospect of medium to long-term financial austerity. All of these factors are likely to entrench and probably exacerbate educational inequity rather than reduce it.

The scenario that I've outlined above make this special issue more important and timelier than ever. Nevermore, has the quality of the educational workforce mattered more than now. Furthermore, we know that the quality of teachers and schools matters most for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Those without the access to out of school tutoring, other forms shadow schooling or a vast array of cultural extra-curricular activities. Put simply, an education system cannot outperform the quality of those charged with the responsibility of supporting the learning of our children and young people. The research evidence suggests that investment in professional learning is fundamental to developing and sustaining a high-quality workforce (Robinson et al., 2009).

Where there are indications that authentic professional learning can support the development of more equitable and inclusive practices (cf. Messiou and Ainscow, 2021), they tend to share one common

feature - working across boundaries. It is here we need to focus our energy. In order to move promising experiments from the margins to the mainstream we need to create new ways of working within, between and beyond schools. This is not a simple task. Stretching endeavour across boundaries is challenging because it requires fundamental rethinking of roles and relationships within the system.

Our late colleague, Denis Mongon promoted the framework for analysing school leadership within, between and beyond schools (Chapman *et al.*, 2009), this has subsequently applied as an ecology of educational equity (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick and West, 2011) and for examining school improvement (Chapman, 2014). Traditionally, the focus has tended to be on change within schools. This has delivered some returns: at worst - tactically ratcheting up test scores widening the achievement gap and at best – perhaps, increasing schools’ capacity to manage change.

Improving the learning level is crucial and within-school approaches rightfully have a place within an improvement agenda. However, it is becoming clearer that within-school approaches are a necessary but insufficient lever for creating an equitable education system. It is likely the pursuit of within-school approaches alone will generate lower and lower returns for the energy invested.

Richer rewards will be gained from building collective capacity between schools through school-to-school collaboration. There is emerging evidence from a range of school-based networks to suggest that collaborative inquiry-driven approaches, underpinned by the intelligent use of performance and contextual data, can improve learning outcomes for marginalised and disadvantaged groups of students.

Promising examples include the development inquiry-based and collaborative action research processes that move knowledge and expertise across classroom and school boundaries. These may include *learning rounds, lesson studies, professional learning communities*. Research suggests the introduction of information systems to support school-to-school challenge and support and experimenting with new models of pre-service teacher education may also offer ways forward.

Stretching the focus from within- to between-school improvement can strengthen the collective capacity for developing more equitable outcomes, but it is no panacea. Schools cannot compensate for social inequities on their own. The final component requires crossing another boundary into beyond-school improvement. By this I mean the involvement of a coherent range of broader stakeholders and services that create the context whereby children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds can effectively engage in the educational process.

In addition to taking a multiagency or place-based perspective, universities have a key role to play in beyond school improvement. Through the development of Research Practice Partnerships, universities can act as the catalyst for change by shifting the nature of roles and responsibilities in the system to support the development of a *Networked Learning System*. The idea of a network learning system was developed and tested in a Research Practice Partnership between PUCV, Chile initial teacher educators,

preservice teachers, and local schoolteachers and was later expanded to include researchers, teachers and students in Scotland.

A Networked Learning System promotes professional learning and is defined as a system that is connected through networks across different types of boundaries. These may be physical (eg. classroom, organisational, geographical) and/or professional (eg. phase, sector, curricula). Secondly, a Networked Learning System is driven by design-based research and collaborative inquiry to innovate, test and refine practice and to build leadership capacity through practice-based professional learning (Madrid Miranda and Chapman, 2021).

Networked Learning Systems bring to bear all of the available resources and expertise that exists within an educational system in a connected and coherent fashion to deliver the best possible results for all learners. It is important to highlight the important role of universities within the Networked Learning System. As longstanding institutions with a focus on evidence, research and knowledge creation universities are ideally placed to support evidence-informed practice and stimulate innovation in education systems.

Universities also have a unique position and can act as 'honest' or 'neutral' brokers within the system and therefore, are ideally placed to build coalitions and promote collaboration between different parts of the system and with key partners outside of education. All of this is a physical manifestation of the civic role of the university, which in these complex and challenging times is becoming increasingly important in different parts of the world.

For all this to become a mainstreamed reality, a significant cultural shift in how we construct our professional identity and perceive our position within the education system is needed. Those of us working within schools will need to develop a more outward-looking perspective, where working with colleagues from different institutions and sectors becomes second nature. We will have to rethink not only with whom we work, but also how and where we work. This will involve the blurring of institutional boundaries and the emergence of new practices. It will mean that those of us whom left schools and classrooms some time ago will be likely to find themselves back in them again, while those who have never worked outside classrooms or schools will be required to do so for the first time. Frankly, it is no longer acceptable to hide in your classroom, school, town hall or university office replicating practices of the past.

In my view, the key priorities for supporting the cultural shift required to support a more equitable education system can be distilled into three areas:

- *A focus on professional learning: This is the key to constructing a new genre of education professional- linking initial teacher preparation and continuing in-service education in a way that challenges assumptions about traditional roles and responsibilities. This will have a*

profound effect on how new and established education professionals view themselves and understand their work, and perhaps most importantly challenge established cultural norms and enhance leadership capacity within the system.

- *A commitment to ownership over what 'works and why': This galvanises and reinforces the appetite for change-* investing in a range evidence-based localised experiments, monitoring their impact and using findings to inform refinements. This will promote models of practice that is locally owned, tailored to specific contexts and more likely to meet the needs of all students.
- *A dedication to joined up public service provision: This is a pre-requisite for tackling educational inequity-* mobilising elements public services to provide a co-ordinated framework for within-, between- and beyond-school improvement. This will have the effect of challenging equity issues that the educational system cannot deal with in isolation.

These three areas must be addressed if the optimism and energy sparked by broadly positive policies and interesting experiments. Maintaining current ways of working will reinforce the status quo and is likely to result in flawed implementation and ultimately failure. This will leave another generation of our most disadvantaged children condemned to an inequitable educational experience and the resulting consequences. We cannot allow this to happen.

This is difficult and complex terrain requiring a fundamental rethinking of roles and relationships within the system if implementation is to be successful. There will need to be more flexibility and diversity of roles to support new ways of working within, between and beyond educational institutions. Continuing as we have done in the past will only lead to a failure of implementation and continue to replicate educational inequity.

The papers that form this special issue offer important insights in how things can be done differently in ways that are likely to catalyse and sustain the development of Networked Learning Systems in diverse education services.

Taking each article in turn, The first paper by Mel Ainscow draws on his extensive experience and expertise in navigating this terrain. Ainscow takes the challenge of rebooting education systems through Research Practice Partnerships on after the pandemic head on. In addition to highlighting the potential and challenges associated with Research Practice Partnerships evidence and collaboration are the key themes that permeate the argument in this paper.

The second paper by Nocetti and Medina adopts a case study approach to explore teacher reflection in relationship to school and university settings. This methodological approach is underpinned by a

reflective analysis between teacher educators, students and school staff reveals how new understandings and meanings for teaching can be developed.

The third paper by Schnellert and colleagues explores innovation in rural settings in Canada. This Research Practice Partnership involves government, a university and a network of rural schools using a process of collaborative inquiry to innovate and develop learning and teaching practices.

The paper concludes that teacher educators' subjectivity is centred around the boundary between school and the university identities and relationships, conditions and cultures.

The fifth and final paper by Aravena, Villagra & Mellado also focuses on the professional learning of science educators in Chile. This paper focuses on the the need to develop high quality professional learning that is likely to support the effective development of teachers so that they can support the learning of all of their children and young people.

In their own way, each of the papers in this volume highlight the opportunities, issues, tensions and dilemmas associated with developing meaningful Research Practice Partnerships to support professional learning that can catalyse and sustain the development of a Networked Learning System where all children and young people can achieve irrespective of their background.

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