

# **WERA International Research Networks (IRNs)**

## **2012-2013**

### **Global Ethics in Higher Education**

*IRN Start Date: May 1, 2012*

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The focus of this IRN is on global ethics in higher education, particularly in processes of internationalisation: how trans-national subjects, relations and ideals are constituted and framed, their historicity, political economy, and implications for educational practice and research in higher education. The literature on the internationalization of higher education presents two major influences: market oriented discourses (i.e. related to fostering economic performance and competitiveness) and humanitarian discourses (i.e. related to altruistic or charitable concerns for enhancing the quality of life of disadvantaged communities) (see for example Matthews and Sidhu 2005, Rhoads and Szelényi 2010, Khoo 2011, Altbach 2011). Recent literature also indicates that concepts associated with "global citizenship" (ideas of social responsibility, mobility, interculturality and cosmopolitanism) expressed in higher education mission statements, policies, curriculum, and international initiatives (e.g. international cooperation, study abroad and service learning schemes) have come to combine and embody both market and humanitarian influences (see for example Jefferess 2008, Kelly 2000, Pashby 2009, Khoo 2011, Andreotti et al 2010, Rhoads and Szelényi 2010).

### **An International Knowledge Base for Educational Effectiveness**

*IRN Start Date: July 1, 2012*

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This IRN attempts to develop a theoretical framework that can be used to provide answers to current debates on the improvement of learning outcomes and on specific issues concerned with educational policies in the participating countries such as national policy on quality of teaching, policies on teacher initial training and professional development, and policy on the establishment of the learning environment of the schools. In this project we will also help participating countries to establish an evidence-based and theory-driven approach for designing reform policies. Specifically, the extent to which the dynamic model of educational effectiveness (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008) can be used as a starting point for establishing such approach is investigated.

### **Teacher learning – Teacher competencies – Teacher performance**

*IRN Start Date: December 1, 2012*

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Teachers play a central role in the preparation of future generations of K-12 students, and teacher competencies are among the most important characteristics that influence student achievement worldwide (Hattie, 2009). Examining them is therefore an important measure to ensure students' individual growth and school quality. Assessing teacher competencies is still a neglected research field. The progress made in empirical research on student achievement since the 1990s has revealed that only few comparable efforts exist with respect to teachers (Hascher & Neuweg, 2012). The research deficit can be traced back to the complexity of teacher competencies (Neuweg, 2011; Klieme, 2012).

The purpose of this IRN is to promote collaborative cross-country research on teacher competencies (for example, see Blömeke et al., 2012, 2013): how they develop during initial teacher education and professional development and what effects they have on classroom performance. A report, in which the state of research on this issue is synthesized will be produced, with an anticipated publication date of the WERA Meeting in 2014. The report will have a methodological focus, where benefits and limitations of promising assessment approaches will be presented and discussed. The report will also have a substantive focus in which empirical results on teacher competencies are summarized. Importantly, this IRN will advance education research, by stimulating collaborative research work in promising research directions of worldwide significance. Such directions, for example, include standardized assessment approaches that aim to come as close as possible to situated cognitions and action of teachers.

### **Theory and Practice of Pedagogical Design for Learning in Digital Classrooms**

*IRN Start Date: December 1, 2012*

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The advocacy of learner-centered learning and the emergence of digital classrooms lead to the demand for transformation of pedagogical design, with the goal of supporting learners to effectively develop twenty-first century skills through domain knowledge learning supported by digital technologies. This IRN aims to establish a professional network with 14 active scholars in the field of technology enhanced learning from 11 cities/countries across five continents, for the collaborative endeavors of practice-driven research for building theories that inform and direct the pedagogical design conducive to effective implementation of learning in digital classrooms. Through regular face-to-face meetings in conjunction with participation in important international conferences, and continuous sharing and discussions using social media tools, the IRN will make a collaborative effort in preparing common publications and applying common funding in order to investigate, develop, and disseminate new theories and innovative practices of pedagogical design for supporting learning in digital classrooms.

**Teacher Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Developing teachers who are thoughtful, reflective and inquiring**

*IRN Start Date: December 1, 2012*

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The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by a rapidly changing, technology-based economy and an increasingly diverse and complex world. In this landscape, education has to be structured to meet current needs while anticipating emerging trends and challenges for students. Successful teachers must be professional leaders who are thinkers and researchers, and not “technician, consumer, receiver, transmitter and implementer of other people’s knowledge” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 16).

Teacher education literature points us to inquiry-based approaches as a way of preparing teachers who are thoughtful, reflective and inquiring. Nonetheless, there is limited amount of theoretical and

empirical work done in teacher education where the outcome is teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Thus there is a need for more conversation internationally on inquiry in teacher education, and more high-level research, especially globally, that defines critical components of teacher education programs that prepare teachers to be inquiring thinkers and researchers.

*Aims and Objectives of this IRN include:*

1. To create an international platform for teacher educators to share and learn about practices of teacher education programs with strong inquiry components.
2. To facilitate conversations amongst teacher educators and researchers from different cultures and continents on what it means to be a thoughtful, reflective, and inquiring teacher.
3. To establish a network of researchers who focus on inquiry-based approach in teacher education.
4. To facilitate collaboration among researchers internationally to examine key components of teacher education programs that impact teachers' learning, especially from the perspective of being thoughtful, reflective, and inquiring.
5. To collate documentary accounts of strong teacher education programs that aim to prepare teachers who are thoughtful, reflective, and inquiring.
6. To have a professional voice on teacher education to influence governments and policy makers by working through appropriate networks such as WERA and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization [Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development](#) (SEAMEO RIHED).

### **The Impact of Globalisation on Higher Education**

*IRN Start Date: December 1, 2012*

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Globalisation and the competitive market forces have generated a massive growth in the knowledge industries that are having profound differential effects on educational institutions and nations in general. One of the effects of globalisation is that educational organisations, having modelled its goals and strategies on the entrepreneurial business model, are compelled to embrace the corporate ethos of the efficiency, accountability and profit-driven managerialism. Hence, the politics of higher education reforms reflect this emerging neo-liberal paradigm of standards-driven policy change (Zajda, 2010a).

This IRN examines the impact of globalisation on higher education. It focuses on globalisation of higher education curricula, together with the accompanying global standards of excellence, globalisation of

academic assessment (OECD, PISA), global academic achievement syndrome (OECD, World Bank), and global academic elitism and league tables—the positioning of distinction, privilege, excellence and exclusivity. It reviews the complex nexus between globalisation, ideology, and education reforms.

### **Financial Literacy a 21st Century Skill - Cross-cultural Approaches to Research**

*IRN Start Date: February 1, 2013*

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This IRN primarily seeks to develop frameworks, models, and instruments for international discussion on research relating to financial literacy. A second objective is to produce a publication resulting from the collaboration and discussions within the IRN. The IRN will draw on the expertise and perspectives of researchers on an international scale and cross cultural basis, and will add valuable insights on how future research on this important topic may be framed and implemented.

The subject of financial literacy is important in all countries and cultures in the world. However, formal education for fostering financial literacy varies greatly around the world. Research has been conducted on some aspects of this issue, for example on respective curricula, on statistical evidence on indebtedness and/or poverty indicating poor levels of financial literacy. A larger number of reports exists which claim insufficient levels of knowledge for financial issues throughout the world. The OECD has followed the issue for more than two centuries, and has developed a framework for an international Large-Scale Assessment on Financial Literacy. The Importance of financial literacy for individuals as well as for economies, however, has no equivalent in systematic research activities. In a recent report (OECD 2012) notes that "...there are currently very few data on the levels of financial literacy amongst young people (...), and none that can be compared across countries. (...) This is a serious omission." This IRN will bring together scholars from around the world who have the potential of stimulating important research on financial literacy issues.

### **Theory into Practice of Educational Assessment and Measurement**

*IRN Start Date: February 1, 2013*

Organizer:

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This IRN builds on the organizational structure of The Assessment Research Centre (ARC), at The Hong Kong Institute of Education, and seeks to expand the network to include scholars from around the world. ARC takes a leadership role in cutting-edge assessment and measurement research in education and related areas in health and humanities, and teacher development and professional services in assessment for learning. Currently, there are four major research strands, each led by a senior member of ARC, including (1) IRT/CAT (item response theory & computerized adaptive testing) led by Director Wang, Wen Chung; (2) EAR (e-assessment and reporting) led by Co-Director Magdalena M.C. Mok; (3) PAM (personality and affective measurement) led by Co-Director Dennis McInerney; and (4) MAHA (medical and allied health assessment) led by Co-Director Lo, Sing Kai.

All strands function as a whole to produce quality research outcomes. Research projects in different strands share a common research procedure of test development, administration, data analysis, validation, reporting, and application. Each strand, however, has its own focus: The IRT/CAT strand focuses on building theory, the EAR strand focuses on tool/instrument development, while the PAM and MAHA strands focus on applying developed tools in different areas. The four existing strands will form the core of the IRN, but other strands may be added as scholars join the network. In addition to a report synthesizing significant research in the core areas, the IRN will promote collaboration among international scholars, produce high-impact research outputs, and identify promising research directions.

### **Research network on Marketization and Privatization in Education**

*IRN Start Date: March 1, 2013*

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This IRN is designed to facilitate collaborative work on the relatively recent rise of markets and the institutionalization of private interests in education. While the emergence of markets as a model and mechanism for organizing education is increasingly prominent in different contexts around the globe, research on their proliferation and impact has tended to be rather isolated, and therefore likely misses the important comparative nuances in policy variation and contextual factors across different sites. Participants in this network seek to expand the knowledge base on the impacts of market in education, pursuing strategic collaborations on a key set of issues with cross-national implications. Using the WERA communications and archiving tools, we will establish working groups around critical issues, expand our

network, identify and target research possibilities, and organize conference and publishing opportunities to advance the research aims of the network.

### **Sociology of Education on Educational Inequality**

*IRN Start Date: March 15, 2013*

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This IRN creates a global networking space to discuss educational inequality, equity, and related policies. To build a global community of scholarship on these topics in the 21st Century, there needs to be an interactive, real-time, and accessible venue in which to discuss contemporary issues in education and education research methods and data. The Center for Research on Educational Opportunities (CREO) is a premier sociology of education research center at the University of Notre Dame. With its network of scholars and its resources, it is well-equipped to field to a global audience an online lecture series on sociology of education research on educational inequality and related policies. The lecture series will have a live webcast, hold an interactive and global question-and-answer session live with the speaker, facilitate an online discussion board after the lecture, host a blog space for international participation, and house the past video of lectures in an archive. This format of this IRN will thus make an education resource easily accessible to a global audience, and create space where synthesis of knowledge, critical examinations, and promising collaborations/work groups can begin.

### **International and Cross-cultural Educational Leadership Collaboration and Teaching**

*IRN Start Date: March 15, 2013*

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Educational leadership has experienced impressive development over several decades, but a robust international and comparative branch has failed to emerge. This IRN promotes International and Cross-cultural Educational Leadership research relating to teaching, learning, collaboration, policy, and practice. Rigorous conceptualization and measurement of international and cross-cultural issues in educational leadership form the core of this research network, which will be developed through collaboration among participating scholars representing a variety of perspectives. In this IRN, educational leadership refers to administration roles at schools, universities, and other educational institutions that go beyond traditional management and administrative tasks.

A case is built for comparative and international educational leadership based on the knowledge that conceptual frameworks and instrumentation are imperative to keep abreast of globalization of policy and practice. Countries included in this IRN are the United States, China, Jamaica, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Kenya. Strategic partnerships among the participating scholars underscore the importance of interconnectedness in terms of qualitative research, collaboration, and cooperation and critical thinking skills in Educational Leadership.