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**Networks as intermediaries of innovation:
Why the theory and practice of networks matter to education
research and policy**

VOLUME EDITORS

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VOLUME DESCRIPTION

Global reform efforts by governments locally, nationally and internationally to improve policy development and service provision within education are moving away from a centralized approach based on sectoral isolation, bureaucratic control, mechanistic delivery and accountability and towards an approach that encourages sector interdependence, service integration, collaborative practice, co-production, innovation and personalisation (Black, 2008; Fullan, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003, 2010; Muijs, West, & Ainscow, 2010; Robinson & Keating,

2005; Sanders, 2006). Networks generally and education networks more specifically have been and continue to be a central theme in education reform discourse.

Education networks, as we understand/define them, may take many forms, from informal, idiosyncratic and short-term arrangements between schools districts, universities, community agencies and/or government to permanent and widespread alliances and collaborative partnerships that reach beyond the education sector.

This book will link theory, research and practice networks as intermediaries of innovation in various educational contexts. The book will be an edited collection, providing conceptual and theoretical structures, processes and rationales as to how networks operate as intermediaries of innovation across various educational contexts.

Here innovation is defined as the generation and application of new ideas and skills to produce new products, processes and services that benefit students, families, and their communities.

Using case studies from a variety of stakeholders across the education sector, broadly conceived, and related sectors in the province of Ontario, Canada this book will explore contemporary issues in network research in education. Building upon the understandings of the on-going educational reform efforts in Ontario (Fullan, 2010; Fullan & Boyle, 2014; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014; Pascal, 2009), we critically examine the role of networks as intermediaries of innovation. More specifically, we look at these networks through the juxtapositions and synergies of research, policy and practice as essential elements of a robust reform agenda - one that makes inter-sectoral boundaries more permeable and strives for successful outcomes for all children and young people.

We are specifically seeking cases of networks that take a systems approach (Best & Holmes, 2010; Ghate, Lewis & Welbourn, 2013; Laszlo, 2012; Welbourn et al, 2012; Wheatley, 2008) to conceptualize their knowledge to action efforts. We anticipate that a variety of scholars will contribute case materials and empirical studies through a lens of policy, practice and research in an effort to illustrate both the challenges and affordances of network-initiated innovation.

What are the preconditions necessary in order for networks to be able to function as initiators and intermediaries of innovation in education to support student achievement, well-being and success? Where are the opportunities for knowledge mobilisation, who are the key actors, what are the rules of the game, how constrained are networks, what types of novel approaches to use resources creatively are there, where are the linkages between research, policy and practices to achieve sustainable networks and social innovation.

Chapters in this volume may explore other questions which include but are not limited to:

- How networks are defined - network of actors or organisations or communities?
- The value of champions in sustaining network
- What sustains the existence of the network?
- How do the structure and leadership of the network support its work? What are the enabling conditions of this network?
- Where's the tipping point when they can become self-sustaining, take off on their own? Likewise, what causes a network to falter or dissolve?
- How has your network transitioned and morphed over its lifespan?
- Do networks develop to service a broad-based need, or do they bring people/ organizations together, so the people keep it going even if the network loses momentum?
- What role does their network plays in terms of advancing education/providing opportunities for innovation for the purpose of improving outcomes, policies, etc [educational gains]?
- What's been your impact - How does your network 'see' innovation - how is it manifests through your work?
- How do you take what's happening locally in Ontario more broadly?
- How has your network evolved? What was the initial need/rationale and does that still exist or how had that evolved?
- If you're grounded in practice, how do you evaluate the impact of your work on research and policy?
- If you're grounded in policy, how do you evaluate the impact of your work on practice and research?
- If you're grounded in research, how do you evaluate the impact of your work on practice and policy?

- At this point in time, is your network having impact in a ‘final’ way, or will that be something that is still emerging/happening?
- What makes your network innovative or what comes out of your network that would be considered innovative? How do you understand innovation in the context of your network?

We are grouping chapters in this volume under three headings to acknowledge which context that each emerged out of [practice, research or policy] and how they connect to the other two contexts. As such, to date we are proposing chapters that fall under these headings:

Networks grounded in Practice and linked to Research and Policy

Networks grounded in Policy and linked to Research and Practice

Networks grounded in Research and linked to Policy and Practice

Our aim is that the chapters in this volume will individually and collectively stimulate and inform debate about these issues, not only in the education sector, but across all sectors vested in the social outcomes of children and youth. And not only in Ontario, but looking globally beyond these situated cases to the ways these issues are invoked, challenged and engaged with across the world. We hope this collection is a contribution to addressing Green’s (2006, cited in Best & Holmes, 2010, p. 145) sage reminder that if we want more evidence-informed practice, we need more practice-informed evidence.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for this edited volume includes: network scholars, researchers, academics, policy makers, educational leaders, network developers, practitioners and emerging and current leaders in various sectors.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Chapter authors will be identified based on an initial proposal to be submitted electronically to the co-editors by 5 February 2015. The proposal should include:

- the proposed chapter title;
- author(s) names, addresses, affiliations, e-mail addresses and phone numbers;
- a 500-700 word outline of the chapter including its purpose, content, and

indicative key references; and

- a short description about how you see the chapter fitting into the book, both in terms of which heading your chapter fits under and how it connects to the broader aims of the book.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the co-editors.