

# A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MODEL FOR SCALING UP SMALL SCALE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: COUNTRY WIDE HEI/SCHOOL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH NETWORKS?

## **Why create country wide Collaborative Research Networks?**

The goal of such networks is to improve the quality of the evidence base underpinning educational practice in schools and in teacher education in order to strengthen the claim of the sector to be professional so that the sector is less vulnerable to the 'eureka' moments of policy makers.

The context in which educational research is conducted and funded means that:

- 1) A major source of funding for educational research is academic staff time. Combining some of this resource through collaborative projects to scale up promising small scale research could create a powerful research tool producing findings of national and international significance. The outcome of such collaboration being greater than each of partner could produce individually.
- 2) There will never be enough funds from governments or charities to fund all the studies that could improve the knowledge base of educators.

## **Would the network favour one method of research over another?**

The network would recognize that teaching is both an art and a science and that the evidence base for professional practice includes case studies and conceptual papers as well as large scale studies including randomized controlled trials where appropriate.

The research methods used would be down to the network working on the topic. The research could be around attitudes or structures for example. A small scale study might find that underachieving boys find factors such as x,y and z about school organisation really prevent them learning. A finding of this scale among 100 boys in one school is interesting. If say something like 80% boys from a structured sample of 4000 across a structured sample of schools across the country or across a number of countries agreed then there might be a case for national pilots, changing practice in school structures in a sample of schools and testing out if this was more conducive to them. The form of test would be down to the research group and what they think will lend weight to their results. The figures here are just matters of judgement of course.

## **What might this Collaborative Research Network do?**

- 1) Through an annual competition, put out a call for nominations for research papers which report on small scale research which is likely to be nationally or internationally significant.
- 2) Invite the appropriate staff from HEIs and their partner schools to volunteer to scale up the research and so test out the findings more widely. The collaborating institutions would be selected to give the type of sample appropriate to the research. In the UK, national opinion polls predict the outcome of elections on the basis of 1000 responses to a stratified sample so this sampling technique might be appropriate and sufficient for some studies ie of teachers and pupils.
- 3) Publish reports endorsed by the recognized national professional educational organization which take advantage of 21<sup>st</sup> C technologies. For example, reports might include video and other images, prose and flow chart approaches to publishing findings.
- 4) Draw findings to the attention of government and other potential stakeholders where appropriate.

## **Membership**

- Open to university education department staff, their PhD/EdD and M level students as well as their partnership schools

## **Costs**

Initially studies would have to be done within current resources to demonstrate proof of concept. It may then be that the Collaborative Research Networks might contract for the kind of large government projects currently won by private companies.

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