

Warwick Education Research Network

Summary and Action Points

Thursday 15th May 2014, 0900-1100

In attendance: Phil Whitehead (CES), Jo Trowsdale (CES), Leucha Veneer (Computer Science), Sue Maguire (CEI), Catherine Bennett (WMS), Christine Bradford (Library), Ursula McKenna (CES), Ronni Littlewood (RSS), Richard Sutcliffe (CES), Faadhila Dadabhai (CES)

The initial idea behind the Warwick Education Research Network is to connect education researchers with practitioners and policy makers. This is detailed in the attached paper.

This initiative aims to build an infrastructure for public impact and wider research that can be shared across departments with interests in education.

This would plug into existing initiatives and infrastructure around impact and public engagement at Warwick - such as the Public Engagement Network, which is an informal network of expertise as well as resources available at faculty level.

It also differs to the scope of the Education Researchers' Network in its focus on Public Engagement and Impact. There is scope however to change the group's name and focus as appropriate (e.g. there may be some confusion in terms of the name of the group among internal audiences, with the name given to try and attract an external audience of policy makers and practitioners).

This overarching question this group is considering is: How can CES best support impact and public engagement activities in education?

Publication

In terms of producing a regular publication to disseminate educational research, there are questions around the demand for this from the wide variety of external audiences who may have an interest. If something was produced and if it is too broad, how would others recognise their relation to it? Therefore specificity is required. It is question of different audiences and how broad the network should be.

There are fundamental questions around how the outside world would value Education research and in what way might Education Research be relevant to their own interests and agendas.

Targeting different stakeholders

Polymakers- It is important to impact civil servants and ministers. It is important to identify what research we can use and who has influence in this. An example of a possible activity here is inviting civil servants to the University to attend lectures of ongoing projects. Loughborough has done this in the past, with civil servants getting a list of ongoing projects prior to the event and choosing which they would be interested in hearing more about.

Department of Education- 2015 is election year and so any activities should be prepared and its impact thought of beyond this time (e.g. Purdah). Much of the responsibility of commissioning research (to EEF) has been devolved but still offer fellowship opportunities that Warwick academics could become more involved in.

Parliamentary Outreach Service and Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology- There is a Parliamentary Research Event in May which is not subject specific but about building a relationship.

HE Academy – An ideal location to advertise Education research however it is dependent on their current focus.

Schools- What is the impact of CES' MA students' research in their own schools; in what way is it publicised and how does it inform policy at school level? This could be considered in the Professional Practice & Educational Leadership Implementation Group.

Other Departments at Warwick

Computer Science- This subject is now in the National Curriculum with teachers that do not have Programming skills encountering sweeping changes in the new school year. Department of Computer Science have developed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in response to this. There could be a joint research project here looking at the impact of the MOOC on perceptions of computer science.

Policy Fellow Programme

The group considered the role of Warwick in becoming more involved in capacity building in education research, and one way that was considered was in establishing a visiting or policy fellow programme. This would involve inviting policy makers to come to Warwick for a 1 to 3 month period to work on a specific research project (or vice versa).

There has been interest in the role of Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT) in education research, in particular a paper by Ben Goldacre. WERN could discuss how to embrace RCTs in education research and how it would affect policy building on experience in the Medical School and in Education.

A Fellow Programme would work well internally (although teaching responsibilities will need to be balanced) as well as externally. Policymakers and academics would be communicating more effectively and it would allow academics to present research findings in a timelier manner. This Programme could be extended to multi-agency practice such as social workers etc.

Could CES anchor engagement with Policy Makers with a specific post that engages, runs events, manages relationships and disseminates information around research and policy across all departments with interests in research.

Translational impact & public engagement:

In terms of translating research findings for more generalist audiences, there is a publication called "The Conversation" partly funded by Warwick which is an independent source of news and views, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public. This is an excellent, effective and timely way to translate academic research to the wider world (Sue had a

piece online within 48 hours). There is also the House of Commons and Lords magazine “The House” which could be used to disseminate research and evidence based opinion.

Research Participation / Co-production of research

Research participants can be from the practitioner and school networks leading to development of links and user involvement.

Advisory Board

Exploring the idea of establishing an advisory board for CES; the requirement for this would need to be defined as well as the involvement of its members; for example, an E-Advisory Board, College System etc. It may be a good idea as a temporary Board to allow idea generation but would need further thought and consultation across the department.

Format of WERN meetings

It may be useful to discuss “example research projects”, for example inviting a researcher to present for 5 minutes on their research.

Action Points:

1. Explore possibility of holding an event inviting policy makers to discuss current research informed by a two way mapping exercise looking at research strengths and potential interested stakeholders - Richard
2. Sue Maguire to find out if Loughborough still invite civil servants to a research conference once a year and circulate RCT paper by Ben Goldacre.
3. Consider joint position on RCTs in Education – Sue Maguire and Catherine Bennett
4. Promote use of “The Conversation” to raise the profile of education research - All
5. Sue to provide editor details for “The House”.