

Conference on Educational Innovation:

The Role of Innovation Networks

Joachim Herz Stiftung, Hamburg

June 27th-28th, 2017

Background

In recent years there has been a surge of interest in the role of networks in processes of school improvement. Cross-sectoral networks, in which schools and educational administrators, researchers, nonprofit-organizations and philanthropic foundations seek to address the multi-faceted problems of schools, play a particularly important role in this.

These networks are supposed to improve the flow of knowledge, enhance mutual learning, pool resources and thus facilitate collaborative problem solving. Hence, they are widely regarded as important tools when it comes to the development, implementation and sustainability of innovative solutions. The Hamburg-based “heimspiel” networks of Joachim Herz Foundation and Alfred Toepfer Foundation are characteristic examples of this approach.

However, these developments may also come with an inclination to treat networks as a panacea for any kind of problem. Yet, research and practice show that they also involve significant trade-offs and disadvantages. Furthermore, there is not the one best model but a large diversity of different types of networks which serve different purposes.

Against this backdrop, the conference will showcase and discuss three innovative types of networks both from the perspective of practice and research. Participants will learn more about their basic strengths and weaknesses and understand the underlying design principles. As a result, they will be able to understand the relevance and the potential of these networks for their own practice.

The Carnegie Foundations’ Initiative on Networked Improvement Communities is a major example for a highly specialized type of innovation network which was designed to develop bespoke new solutions to key educational problems.

Interest has also grown in the collective impact model as pioneered by Cincinnati’s Strive partnership. This type of network is supposed to coordinate the contributions of many different local actors in order to be able to address the complexity inherent in attempts to improve schools as a system. In Germany, Foundation Mercator has adopted the approach as a blueprint for its RuhrFutur program.

Nonprofit-organizations such as Success for All in the U.S. or the Freudenberg Foundation in Germany further demonstrate the importance and relevance of networks when it comes to the distribution and continuous development of rather standardized school improvement “products”.

By putting these examples in focus, the conference seeks to deepen the understanding of the virtues and shortcomings of different types of networks, to facilitate both cross-sectoral and transatlantic discussion, to explore options for action and, ultimately, to trigger new collaborative initiatives based on advanced network knowledge.

Agenda

Moderator: Manuel Hartung, DIE ZEIT

Tuesday, June 27th

12:00 – 13:00 Arrival & Light meal

13:00 – 13:15 **Welcome**

Andrea Pauline Martin (Joachim Herz Stiftung)

13:15 – 13:30 **Introduction to the conference**

Ekkehard Thümler (Joachim Herz Stiftung)

13:30 – 15:30 **Part 1. Networks as tools for the development of innovative solutions**

Keynote speech: The role of networked improvement communities for a science of improvement

Tony Bryk (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching)

Response from a scientific perspective

Hans Anand Pant (Deutsche Schulakademie)

Response from a practitioner's perspective

Joachim Herrmann (Hamburger Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung)

Discussion (All)

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 18:00 **Part 2. Networks as tools for collective impact**

Collective impact in the U.S.: The case of Strive

Bridget Jancarz (StriveTogether)

Collective impact in Germany: The case of RuhrFutur

Mark Becker (RuhrFutur)

Collective impact through the lens of network analysis

Nina Kolleck (FU Berlin)

Discussion (All)

18:00 – 18:15 **Wrap up** (Ekkehard Thümler)

18:15 – 21:00 Conference dinner

21:00 End of day one, transfer to hotel

Wednesday, June 28th

9:00 – 9:30 Arrival

9:30 – 11:30 **Part 3. Networks as tools for the distribution and development of solutions**

The case of Success for All

Bob Slavin & Nancy Madden (SFA and Johns-Hopkins University)

School improvement networks and large-scale education reform

Donald Peurach (University of Michigan)

One Square Kilometer of Education

Tanja Salem (Freudenberg Stiftung)

Discussion (All)

11:30 – 12:30 **Panel discussion: A concluding dialogue between research and practice, politics and funders**

Participants:

- Anthony Bryk
- Hans Anand Pant
- N.N. (BMBF)
- Joachim Herrmann
- Thorsten Altenburg-Hack (Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung Hamburg)
- Maren Riepe (Joachim Herz Stiftung)

12:30 – 12:45 **Where do we go from here? Wrap up and goodbye**

Ekkehard Thümler

12:45 Light meal