WERA

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK

OVERCOMING INEQUALITIES IN SCHOOLS AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES: INNOVATIVE AND AUDACIOUS EDUCATION FOR A NEW CENTURY

First Report

1st June 2016
INDEX

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 2
Research Activities .......................................................................................................... 3
Research Visits and Exchanges ......................................................................................... 3
Dissemination .................................................................................................................. 4
  Workshops and seminars .............................................................................................. 4
  Conferences ................................................................................................................... 6
  Publications .................................................................................................................... 7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the activity conducted by the International Research Association (IRN) "Overcoming Inequalities in Schools and Learning Communities: Innovative and Audacious Education for a New Century" during its first year (2015-2016).

The main objective of this IRN is to advance knowledge and research through worldwide collaboration that address educational social exclusion as a challenge impacting poor, disadvantaged, and otherwise underserved populations. The research activity of this network focuses on the exploration of successful actions with children, youth and communities of learners historically excluded and systematically underserved to overcome educational and social exclusion.

The establishment of this IRN for this first year has allowed us increasing worldwide cooperation in the study of successful actions ranging from the consideration of Indigenous students first in their families to attend university (Australia), to educational leadership from a Maori perspective benefitting Indigenous learners (NZ) to new explorations of successful educational actions with the Roma people in Schools as Learning Communities (EU and Brazil), to model teacher education programs across national boundaries that prepare teachers to work successfully with historically excluded students (US).

Research, visit exchanges, collaboration and dissemination activities have been some of the main activities conducted by the members of the IRN, together with other colleagues in the field.

Rocio Garcia-Carrion, Ph.D.
Ikerbasque Research Fellow, Faculty of Psychology and Education. University of Deusto, Spain
President of the Multidisciplinary Educational Research Association, AMIE
rocio.garcia@deusto.es

Lorri J. Santamaria, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education and Social Work. University of Auckland, New Zealand
l.santamaria@auckland.ac.nz

Arnetha F. Ball, Ph.D.
Professor, Stanford Graduate School of Education. Stanford University, United States of America
arnetha@stanford.edu

List of Participants
1. Aitor Gomez Gonzalez
2. Jo Lampert
3. Bruce Burnett
The IRN members applied for a EU-funded grant to a European Commission scheme entitled Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE). The project proposal presented was ‘SALEACOM’ (IP Aitor Gómez) very much related to establish and consolidate an international network through secondments and visit exchanges.

The SALEACOM project has been very positive for the IRN, allowing the exchange of researchers and increasing cooperation at international level has been increased among researchers working together to overcome inequalities.

In the framework of this project and as part of the IRN, we have carried out a literature review focused on learning environments, classrooms and schools that are improving situations of exclusion affecting students from systematically underserved populations: Roma, Indigenous, African American, Latino, Afro-Brazilian, among others. The topics reviewed and discussed by each of the members were:

- Successful Educational Actions and Schools as Learning Communities (Aitor Gómez & Rocío García-Carrión, Spain)
- Generative teachers serving in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms (Arnetha Ball, USA)
- Critical Leadership and indigenous populations (Lorri Santamaria, New Zealand)
- Exceptional teachers in high poverty areas (Jo Lampert & Bruce Burnet, Australia)
- Affirmative action and Learning Communities in Brazil (Roseli de Mello, Brazil)

This report contains relevant and useful material for the development of the Synthesis Paper to be produced by the IRN.

In addition, during the visit exchanges members of the IRN have had the opportunity to engage in some research projects conducted by the host institutions. This knowledge exchange and collaboration has allowed us to discuss and share empirical evidence from the Schools as Learning Communities in Spain, the Excellent Teachers for Disadvantaged Schools in Australia, among others.

During this period, several IRN members have conducted research visits with the objective of exchanging knowledge and information, contributing each other’s’ research and perspectives to move forward the field of reducing inequalities and exclusion through education.

Aitor Gómez (University Rovira i Virgili, Spain), Professor of Research Methods spent two months with Lorri Santamaria (University of Auckland) working with the Maori community and contributing his expertise with the Roma population in Spain and Europe. Similarly, Lorri Santamaria and one of her students, Sharona Jayavant, spent between one and two months in Spain contributing their knowledge and expertise in several universities and working with schools and the Roma community in Barcelona (Spain)

Jo Lampert and Bruce Burnett hosted another colleague from Aitor Gómez’s team for two months at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane (Australia).
DISSEMINATION

Several dissemination activities have been conducted for this period.

WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

WERA IRN Symposium. *Opening horizons to the world-wide perspective of the Basque Country educational research.* The IRN organised a WERA Symposium at the University of Deusto (Bilbao, Spain) and presented the main objectives and research activities of the Network. The symposium was chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Education, Dr Josu Solabarrieta, and three researchers presented: Sharona Jayavant, an early career researcher from University of Auckland, Prof Lourdes Villardón, University of Deusto and Rocío García Carrión. Around 50 people attended, mainly researchers and scholars in the field of education, psychology, and social sciences. There were also PhD and Master students, and some teachers and other stakeholders.

IRN-related seminars conducted in Australia

- Seminar hosted by the Children and Youth Research Centre at QUT: the impact of the Successful Educational Actions on the transformation of education and underserved students’ lives. This seminar was held in one of the main rooms of the Faculty of Education, QUT. 13 August 2015.

- Open lecture with pre-service teachers scheduled in the NETDS Programme. This lecture was mainly aimed at discussing with pre-service teachers about SEAs and their impact in students from ethnic minorities, such as Roma. Drawing on the evidences presented during the lecture, a discussion about the role of family involvement in the improvement of children’s performance was established. The session was also attended by other scholars from QUT as well as postdoctoral researchers in the field of education. 26 August 2015
IRN-related seminars conducted in New Zealand

- Seminar *Overcoming Inequalities through Successful Educational Actions*. 14 August 2015. Dr. Aitor Gómez.
- Dr. Aitor Gómez. Seminar *La Paz: going from a ghetto school to a magnet school. Transforming lives through communicative methodology*. 31 August 2015.

IRN-related seminars conducted in Spain


1) IRN WERA Symposium: Overcoming Inequalities of Systematically Underserved Communities from a Global Research Network: Teachers and Minority Women as Agents of Change. Presented at the WERA Focal Meeting at the AERA Annual Meeting, 2016, Washington, DC

   - Gendered Conceptions of Quality Teaching in Low-Socioeconomic-Status Schools in Australia: Mavericks and Dragon Ladies by Jo Lampert and Bruce Burnett
   - International Perspectives on Teachers as Agents of Change: Addressing the Challenges of Diversity in Teacher Professional Development in Transnational Contexts by Arnetha F. Ball
   - Intergenerational Solidarity Networks: The Case of Roma Women's Movement in Spain by Rocio Garcia Carrion
   - Applied Critical Leadership in Women Leaders Lifting Māori Education in Aotearoa New Zealand by Lorri Michelle Santamaria and Sharona Jayavant


PUBLICATIONS

A Special Issue proposal was produced with the basis of the debates and virtual meetings and exchanges visits. The focus of this Special Issue goes beyond a traditional approach of educational research in schools and communities by drawing on a transformative and successful actions approach to overcome inequalities.
Contributions discussed in this Special Issue aims at countering and resisting deficit approaches by valuing and respecting the practices and ‘ways of knowing’ for poor, underserved and otherwise disadvantaged learners as existing within their communities. Among the contributions we provide in the proposal, we highlight different strategies that partners involved in the IRN and other collaborators have identified in their countries according to their expertise. Thus, four successful strategies –which are achieving positive impact on the overcoming of educational and social inequalities, of traditionally undeserved students and their communities– are presented in the Special Issue proposal.

Firstly, we have focused on the positive impact generated by the Roma Women’s Association Drom Kotar Mestipen on combating early school leaving among Roma students in Spain. Secondly, we have provided evidence on the ability of Schools as Learning Communities to be successfully transferred to very different social and cultural contexts. This fact has been demonstrated by the positive impact generated in the school of Adult Education of São Carlos in Brazil. Thirdly, we have showed how NETDS program is responding in innovative ways to the inequalities suffered by students in high-poverty and culturally diverse schools in Australia, providing significant results both within teacher education and the disadvantaged schooling sector. Finally, we have focused on the potential that resides in the application of the Culturally Responsive Leadership approach in New Zealand Primary Schools. This contribution provides evidence on how through the implementation of educational leadership programs schools’ principals in primary schools with Māori students have gained practical knowledge that has allowed them to be more culturally responsive while raising achievement for Māori and other priority learners. All four successful strategies presented in this Special Issue are providing relevant knowledge to address the universal challenge this IRN aims at addressing.