From Research to Practice: Transforming the Professional Capital of Professional Associations Through Collaborative Research Partnerships, a Case Study from Ontario, Canada

Conference Sub-Themes:
- Partnering for Innovative Change

Proposed Proposal Format: Workshop Session

Intended For: School and System Leaders, Professional Associations

Speakers: Dr. Joanne Robinson and Dr. Katina Pollock

Abstract:
Creating sustainable and innovative change in education means investing in the capacity for, and commitment to research-informed student-centered leadership practices. How do professional associations around the world know what and how they can make the biggest difference to the quality of learning and teaching in their members’ schools and systems and ultimately improve student performance? Transforming the professional capital of school leader associations must be based on the best available evidence about the impact of different types of leadership on student outcomes.

This workshop will highlight an ongoing partnership between the Ontario Principals’ Canada (OPC) and the University of Western Ontario as a case study in the importance of research-informed practice for professional associations. Examining the changing nature of vice-/principals’ roles and the impacts of this change on the ability of administrators to meet the needs of their school communities, the research partnership has led the OPC to revise and reimagine the supports and professional learning opportunities provided to leaders and aspiring leaders across the system. We offer this case study as an example for other professional associations seeking to build partnerships with research to better support members as leaders in their school communities.

Outline:
Creating sustainable and innovative change in education means investing in the capacity for, and commitment to research-informed student-centered leadership. Professional associations play a critical role in the development of school and system change leaders by offering ongoing professional learning opportunities and advocating for policy that supports and encourages these leaders in their work. Responding to the diverse and changing needs of their members, unpredictable political environments and transforming educational demands of school communities, how do lead learner organizations develop a continuous amalgamation of precision and innovation, as well as inquiry, improvisation, and experimentation that deepen effective school change? How do professional associations around the world know how they can make the biggest difference to the quality of learning and teaching in their members’ schools and systems and ultimately improve student performance? Transforming the professional capital of school leader associations cannot be based on a fad or political trends but on the best available evidence about the impact of different types of leadership on student outcomes.
What is needed are professional associations that constantly and collectively build their knowledge base and corresponding expertise, where practices and impact are transparently tested, developed, circulated, and adapted. This is where collaborative partnerships between local research institutions and professional associations can play a key role.

This workshop explores key themes that have emerged and lessons learned from Ontario, Canada’s journey in school leadership development informed by a mix of best practice and next practice. This workshop will examine the results of two studies produced through an ongoing partnership between the Ontario Principals’ Canada (OPC), an organization representing over 5000 school administrators across the province, and the University of Western Ontario, one of Canada’s leading research institutes. Examining the changing nature of vice-principals’ and principals’ roles, and the impacts of this change on the ability of administrators to meet the needs of their school communities, these studies have led the OPC to revisit, revise and reimagine the supports and professional learning opportunities provided to leaders and aspiring leaders across the system. This collaborative partnership effectively brought together research and practice, producing real and impactful innovations in the organizations’ approach to and understanding of how professional associations can impact the underlying principles and pathways for deepening school change.

We offer this case study as an example for other professional associations seeking to build partnerships with research to better support members as leaders in their school communities. Participants will leave with a better understanding of how to establish and build partnerships with research institutions and how to translate research into effective and practical action on-the-ground.

**Speaker Profile:**

**Dr. Joanne Robinson** is an international speaker and consultant with extensive knowledge of curriculum, pedagogical, school, and system leadership models. With over 40 years of experience in education, Joanne brings a wealth of knowledge and insight gained as a teacher, principal and system leader to all her presentations and workshops. Dr. Robinson’s understanding of the critical role of strong leadership in a healthy education system informed her work in designing, developing and implementing the Ontario Principal’s Qualification Program and Supervisory Officer’s Qualification Program, as well as her ongoing dedication to creating opportunities for sustained and innovative professional learning for school and system leaders. This organizational capacity building is often cited as a contributing factor to one of the top performing educational systems in the world and the system success journey is often referenced by renowned educational authorities, such as Michael Fullan, Avis Glaze and Andy Hargreaves in their publications related to lessons learned, sustained success, and reform initiatives.

In her current roles, Joanne Robinson is the Director of Professional Learning for Ontario Principals’ Council and Chief Executive Officer of International School Leadership. She also works with countries around the world to support continued capacity building and school leadership development. Joanne has presented keynotes and workshops around the world.

**Dr. Katina Pollock** is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy in the field of Critical Policy, Equity, and Leadership Studies at the Faculty of Education, Western University. A scholar in leadership and policy, Katina has been awarded a number of research grants and contracts. Two of these projects are funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The first, a SSHRC insight grant (with Dr. Fei Wang), focuses on the contemporary work of secondary school
principals work intensification (2015-2020) and the second, (with Drs. Pinto and Winton), explores the complexities of policy layer enactment in Ontario secondary schools (2015-2020). Katina also completed a study of the nature of principals’ work funded by the Ontario Principals’ Council and is in the process of exploring the nature of vice-principals’ work in Ontario, also funded by the Ontario Principals Council. Katina is also Co-director for the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Researcher (KNAER), an innovative initiative supported by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Upcoming publications include 2 special issues in the International Journal for the Studies of Educational Administration that focuses specifically on principals’ work and co-edited book with Drs. Ken Leithwood and Jingping Sun entitled, How School Leaders Contribute to Student Success.