

## **FWF-Project: School Quality and Teacher Education Paper accepted for AERA 2020 San Francisco**

### **Title: Learning in Initial Teacher Education from school leaders: Processes of knowledge transformation**

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#### **Objective**

There are different ways to strengthen the research-informed knowledge base in preservice teacher education. We sought to raise preservice teachers' understanding of the relevance of school research by working with them on qualitative data providing exploratory insights into a relatively unknown dimension: school leaders' thinking about school effectiveness and school improvement. The structure involved a three-step-approach: (1) investigating school leaders' perspectives in two national contexts; (2) comparing these views in relation to different national frameworks of school improvement; and (3) using the findings with those engaged in preservice teacher education.

#### **Theoretical framework**

The paper is rooted in research within school effectiveness and improvement research, focusing on quality of teaching as understood within the dynamic model of educational effectiveness proposed by Creemers & Kyriakides (2006; Armstrong et al, 2012: 49). In accordance with translational educational research (La Velle 2015), we accept that theoretical insights and empirical findings from large-scale assessment or external school inspection have to be transformed into "knowledge for practice" (Guerriero 2017: 30). We therefore explore one particular strategy for translating our findings about the importance of research-informed practice from the head-teachers' perspectives into those of the prospective teachers.

#### **Methods**

We used qualitative methodology, allowing us to approach the thinking and reasoning of our population. In the first phase, 16 'expert interviews' were conducted with principals from highly effective and non-selective secondary schools in England (n=8) and Austria (n=8). All interviewees worked in schools in challenging circumstances, most of which had undergone recent processes of improvement. Data from this phase built the foundation for the next in which we conducted three focus group discussions with preservice teachers in Austria (in their third year of study) to examine how they made sense of the headteachers' reasoning about school effectiveness and improvement and the particular value they attributed to research use.

#### **Data**

Interviews and focus group discussions provided rich textual data which were subject to content analysis. Research in Austrian was approved both by the Austrian Institute for Research and Development in Education and by an Austrian University. Data collection in England was subject to ethical approval by the university that hosted the researcher.

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### **Results**

Phase 1 results show that the school leaders interviewed in England and Austria use different kinds of research insights concerning their “practical reasoning” (La Velle 2015) to improve schools. When teacher candidates compared the data from the two national contexts, they gained considerable insights into the importance of research for school improvement and into the different ways in which research can be used in school practice.

### **Significance**

This study took into account the fact that both educational sectors – schools and university-based teacher education in Austria – have begun building a new knowledge base, derived from school research, to suit both their different frameworks; i.e. with relevance both for improving schools and for educating preservice and early-career teachers. It shows how data from school research can be used, where there is cooperation between different educational stakeholders, in preservice teacher education to foster processes of knowledge transformation.



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The project School Quality and Teacher Education (SQTE) is based at the School of Education at the Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, and it is partly being conducted within a Visiting Research Fellowship at the University of Oxford, department of education. The project examines how head teachers and teachers in highly effective and improving schools in England understand and develop school quality and how their experiences and knowledge can be made useful for quality development in schools and curriculum development for initial teacher education and continuous professional development in Austria and England. In this context, special attention is given to schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged students and with pupils who don't speak English as a first language in the city of London (“London effect”) and in the so called “cold spots” or opportunity areas in England.