

# Promising Practices

## Cross-state Networks for the Improvement of Teacher Education: Deans for Impact

*Country category: United States*

*Teacher education pathway category(ies): Equipping teacher candidates with what they need to know and do; Supporting beginning teachers*

*Stakeholder category(ies): researcher; teacher educator; teacher candidate*

This case study describes a “promising practice” drawn from an OECD review of initial teacher preparation in the United States from 25-28 October 2016.

The OECD Review Team identified a number of “promising practices” in each country. These practices may not be widespread or representative, but seen in the context of other challenges, they represent a strength or opportunity to improve the country’s initial teacher preparation system – and for other countries to learn from them.

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## *Promising Practice 6.*

### *Cross-state Networks for the Improvement of Teacher Education: Deans for Impact*

#### Context

In OECD countries, decisions taken by schools in consultation with other levels of authority are relatively rare in education, with the exception of the United States, where more than 53% of decisions relating to lower secondary education are made in consultation with local school district authorities (OECD, 2012<sup>[1]</sup>). As states and territories in the United States are primarily responsible for local education and schooling, education policies related to initial teacher preparation (ITP) differ by region. The allocated power to the federal level is relatively small, and the federal role on ITP includes collecting data on the quality of teacher preparation, distributing and monitoring funds through the Higher Education Act of 1965 (United States Government, 1965<sup>[2]</sup>).

Due to this structure, cross-state networks in the United States are influential stakeholders in national education policy making – and it also applies to the field of ITP. These networks lead discussion to improve ITP and react to the federal and state legislation regarding various issues related to teacher education. There are three leading networks in the United States:

- The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) is an organisation that represents more than 800 higher education institutions with initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. Members of the organisation are mostly teacher preparation faculties in colleges and universities. It organises activities to raise the quality of ITE across the states and advocates for members' interests (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2018<sup>[3]</sup>).
- Another membership organisation, The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is composed of the highest ranking education official in each state. It represents the interests with regard to federal legislation, which can affect state policies and practices. The organisation provides space where state chiefs can exchange ideas to improve education, including ITP (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2018<sup>[4]</sup>).
- Deans for Impact is a relatively new organisation, established in 2014. It addresses the core issues in ITP, such as large diversity in ITE programmes, validity in data collection of ITE programmes and the low status of Colleges of Education. The concerns for ITP raised by the Deans for Impact, such as change resistance in many higher education institutions, disconnect between ITE programmes and faculties and the communities they serve, and decline in teachers of colour, are also shared by other major national bodies including AACTE and CCSSO (Deans for Impact, 2018<sup>[5]</sup>).

Other networks involved in ITP policy and practice include the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) and the Association of Public & Land Grant Universities (APLU). This case study looks at the Deans for Impact's case as a cross-state network actively engaging in transforming ITP in the United States.

## What does the work of Deans for Impact entail?

Deans for Impact focus their work on three major areas (Deans for Impact, 2018<sup>[5]</sup>):

1. *Empowering leaders.* The Impact Academy is a year-long fellowship for deans of ITE programmes. The programme combines intensive in-person learning experiences with ongoing coaching and mentorship from veteran members of Deans for Impact.
2. *Gathering common evidence and data.* Deans for Impact and its member deans believe that data are an essential tool for helping programmes understand how to better prepare teachers and, ultimately, to improve student outcomes. Deans for Impact is currently developing a Common Indicators System (CIS) to gather evidence of teacher-candidate knowledge and skills, and programme performance. Data collected through the CIS empowers participating programmes to engage in cross-institutional learning. Together, this network aims to achieve three goals:
  - improve data uniformity and comparability across programmes
  - support study into promising practices in educator preparation
  - contribute to the evidence base on educator preparation.

Thirteen diverse institutions are participating in the CIS prototype during the 2017/18 academic year and collecting common data on the development of more than 1 500 teacher candidates.

3. *Influencing policy.* The policy agenda of Deans for Impact contains two primary recommendations. First, states should provide educator-preparation programmes with better data on the performance of their graduates. Second, states should recognise programmes that are willing to be held responsible for producing effective educators. [\*Practice with Purpose: The Emerging Science of Teacher Expertise\*](#) (2016<sup>[6]</sup>) sets out Deans for Impact's working philosophy, which connects the principles of deliberate practice with the methods used to prepare and develop teaching skill. The principles of deliberate practice emerged from research in the science of expertise, which looks at domains as diverse as surgery, chess, writing, music and ballet. Deans for Impact believes that the principles of deliberate practice can help inform how teacher-preparation programmes prepare future educators.

Deans for Impact sees that there are vast opportunities for improvement of ITP but it needs to be framed in a positive way by engaging with other Deans with a teacher preparation reform agenda. In 2017, it published [\*Building Blocks\*](#), a digital publication exploring the transformation of teacher preparation in the United States using video, photos and interviews with stakeholders across 18 ITE programmes in 13 states. It identified four essential building blocks of effective preparation: modelling, practice, feedback and alignment (Deans for Impact, 2017<sup>[7]</sup>).

## Why is it a strength?

The OECD review team in its visit to the United States from 25-28 October 2016 concluded that a cross-state network such as the Deans for Impact was a strength in that it:

- *Empowers leaders of ITE programmes.* According to its strategy, Deans for Impact tries to mobilise leaders of ITE programmes to be vocal advocates for programme quality and professional preparation.

- *Addresses the importance of evidence-informed ITP.* The Deans for Impact urges states to adopt quality measures of teacher-candidate knowledge and skills, including those used in the new Common Indicator System (CIS). One of the organisation's goals includes the improvement of access to important outcomes data, including the performance and retention of their graduates.
- *Supports member institutions and schools.* Deans for Impact visits member organisations – they don't just visit the university campus, but also schools – principals and teachers trained by that institution – aiming to create a relationship that had not previously been there.

### How could it be improved?

The OECD review team also noted that:

- *Co-operation at scale is difficult.* Deans for Impact is, at present, a rather small organisation. Their focus has not been major expansion, but additional members from more states would broaden their impact. Deans for Impact has adopted a strategy for improving and transforming ITE programmes, but it cannot do it alone. Also, deans do not often stay in the same role, which causes a problem with continuity. Collaborating with other national bodies with similar interests and goals would improve the network.

### For more information

- American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (2018), *American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education*, <https://aacte.org/> (accessed on 28 May 2018). [3]
- Council of Chief State School Officers (2018), *Council of Chief State School Officers*, <https://www.ccsso.org/> (accessed on 28 May 2018). [4]
- Deans for Impact (2018), *Transforming Educator Preparation*, <https://deansforimpact.org/> (accessed on 13 March 2018). [5]
- Deans for Impact (2017), *Building Blocks*, <https://deansforimpact.org/building-blocks/> (accessed on 28 May 2018). [7]
- Deans for Impact (2016), *Practice with Purpose: The Emerging Science of Teacher Expertise.*, Deans for Impact, Austin, TX, [https://deansforimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Practice-with-Purpose\\_FOR-PRINT\\_113016.pdf](https://deansforimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Practice-with-Purpose_FOR-PRINT_113016.pdf). [6]
- OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-en>. [1]
- United States Government (1965), *Higher Education Act of 1965*, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg1219.pdf>. [2]