Promising practices

Transforming pedagogy in Initial Teacher Education: Strategic support for innovation at Ewha Womans University in Korea

OECD

This case study describes a "promising practice" drawn from an OECD review of initial teacher preparation in Korea on 4 8 December 2017.

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.

Promising practice 2.
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Context

Founded in 1886 as the first education institute for women, Ewha Womans University is currently a beacon for supporting innovation in Korea. Between 1998 and 2015, the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), which accredits initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in Korea, gave Ewha Womans University the highest evaluation rating "A" in all four national evaluations of ITE undertaken (Ewha Womans University, 2016[1]).

Several factors combine to create pressure for innovation in initial teacher preparation across Korea. First, the sense of urgency expressed by policy makers and others about preparing teachers and students for the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" (see promising practice 1). Second, the need to continue developing skills in creativity and collaborative problem solving using smart technology, which refers to an individual's skills in a situation in which they take part in problem solving with virtual team members on a computer. This resulted in Korean students ranked among the top-performing countries in collaborative problem solving in the last two cycles of the Programme for International Student Assessment's (PISA) (OECD, 2016[2]; OECD, 2014[3]).

How does Ewha Womans University support innovation in initial teacher education? The case of flipped classrooms

The teacher education faculty at Ewha Womans University is well aware of the innovation imperative in schools and universities. This awareness is illustrated in one of the faculty's goals, which states the need "to empower students to get prepared for the changing society and to promote their creativity and critical thinking throughout the ITE programmes" (Chung, 2016[4]).

In particular, ITE is targeted in Ewha Womans University as a priority for innovation, given the complexities and challenges surrounding teacher education. The interdisciplinary research carried out is designed around two goals to fuel innovation:

- To provide the university staff and students with the tools and competences to address the requirements of an increasingly international, sophisticated and information-oriented world.
- To create capacity building in research centres and schools to carrying out interdisciplinary education research activities to a very high standard. In this regard, the university makes a strong effort to disseminate the result of their research through regular monthly seminars.

Flipped learning (see Box 1) was offered as a powerful example of the way that innovation and the use of technology and interdisciplinary research are embedded in the Ewha ITE programme. The research and development funded by the Ministry of Education (MOE) initially focussed on the role of technology in supporting flipped learning and, once its potential was established through experimental piloting, it was introduced formally as a core method in ten ITE courses.

Box 1. Flipped learning

Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach based on the intensive use of technology and internet based resources to improve the personalisation of instruction while ensuring that there are more time in the classroom for meaningful face-to-face interactions. It requires that students try to understand the content of a topic using online resources at home and then trying to explain and apply this content in class with the teacher or other students as a means of deepening their understanding.

Doing "homework" in class gives teachers better insight into student difficulties and learning approaches. This enables faculty to tailor feedback individually to each student and, through integrating pre-class and in-class learning, give the students more responsibilities and a stronger sense of self-efficacy. This approach requires teachers to prepare in advance and organise content ahead of time, paying attention to the requirements of assignments and what kind of feedback to provide to assess the progress and engagement of all students, and particularly those with most difficulties.

Although the emphasis is placed on 1-1 instruction and technology, flipped learning should be acknowledged as a way to open up the classroom, innovate and introduce inquiry-based, student-centred pedagogies. It is thus a way to re-think traditional models of teaching and learning.

Source: Based on Paniagua and Istance (2018[5]), *Teachers as Designers of Learning Environments: The Importance of Innovative Pedagogies*, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing, Paris.

The process of introducing this model was highly challenging for professors who teach 15 classes per semester, so Ewha encouraged its faculty to introduce flipped learning incrementally rather than all at once. For students, it was also a challenge as they are more used to other conventional learning methods. Indeed, some of them initially tried to avoid flipped learning programmes.

Initially, in 2016, the "flipped learning plus" project was funded by the MOE, but later Ewha took over and funded this project itself. After improving the design and testing of the model, their efforts focused on expanding the model to other teacher education institutions. The technology component of flipped learning is also supported by the work of other institutions such as the Research Institute of Distance Education. This institute was established to take advantage of new technologies such as integrated audio-visual technology and network technology to conduct distance training for primary and secondary school teachers. This joint effort provides more capacity to test the effectiveness of developments like flipped learning – e.g. site inspection or analysis of online data -, which in turn enables teachers to learn and to do research according to their own needs and contexts.

Why is it a strength?

The OECD review team in its review of Korea on 4-8 December 2017 saw this as a strength of the system because:

- *This strategic approach to innovation is curated by research and development at multiple levels*. It starts from recognition and analysis of misalignment between modes of supporting learning in both ITE and in schools. Further, it positions ITE faculty, teacher candidates, and teachers doing post graduate degrees as active agents of innovation and requires them to implement innovation according to their own context.

- *Illustrates a successful implantation of innovative models.* The case of flipped learning in teacher education and its dissemination in other universities shows that this strategic approach to innovation in ITE is well designed and adaptable to different contexts.

How could it be improved?

The OECD review team also noted that:

- *It is necessary to strengthen the involvement of schools in the design of innovative models*. The OECD review team heard from teacher candidates how much they valued learning from serving classroom teachers. Involving experienced teachers early on in major pedagogic innovations would provide universities with a better access to evidence about how schools implement challenging new pedagogies. This in turn would improve the knowledge of classroom practice of teacher candidates.

For more information

Chung, J. (2016), *Rethinkin Creative Education focusing on teacher training system reform*, unpublished. [4]

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OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en. [2]

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