Qualified to lead? A comparative, contextual and cultural view of educational policy borrowing

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Qualified to lead? A comparative, contextual and cultural view of educational policy borrowing

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ABSTRACT

Background: Around the globe, education policy borrowing remains pervasive and prevalent. The strategies, interventions and innovations of education systems that perform well, in international assessments, are enthusiastically borrowed and copied in the anticipation of similar educational performance and outcomes.

Purpose: This purpose of the article is to highlight some of the implications and consequences of policy borrowing by comparing the preparation and development programmes for school leaders in various education systems. The article explores the way in which the leadership programmes and models are being adopted and developed by different countries.

Sources of evidence: The article draws upon findings from a contemporary, comparative study of leadership preparation and development across seven different education systems (Seven System Leadership Study). This large-scale, mixed-methods, comparative research study is collecting quantitative and qualitative data about the nature and impact of leadership development and preparation programmes in seven different education systems.

Main argument: The findings from the study reinforce how leadership preparation and development programmes are increasingly becoming standardised as a result of education systems borrowing and adapting from each other. This article also argues that in the contemporary policy discourse, important cultural and contextual influences that significantly affect subsequent implementation and outcomes are increasingly being side-lined and ignored.

Conclusions: This article highlights some of the limitations and unintended consequences of educational policy borrowing. It concludes that adopting some of the design features of effective interventions rather than simply borrowing policies or strategies, in part or in their entirety from very different contexts, may be a more productive way forward.

Introduction

The international race to secure improved school and system performance shows no signs of slowing down. Increasingly, educational policy solutions are being sought, borrowed and vigorously copied from the most successful education systems in the anticipation of