Taxonomy of DRL Job Tasks

OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE TAXONOMY OF DRL JOB TASKS

District research leaders (DRLs) are responsible for leading their districts' research portfolios and knowledge mobilization efforts, make valuable contributions to school systems, and play an important role in helping school districts increase their capacity for evidence use. A recent report[i] from the Center for Research in Education and Social Policy (CRESP) at the University of Delaware analyzed job descriptions and resumes of DRLs involved in a pre-existing community of practice. Using Bornbaum's (2015) Knowledge Brokering Task Framework[ii], the following taxonomy provides an inventory of 10 domains of work for individuals in DRL roles.

LESSONS LEARNED

DRLs engage in work across most domains and many tasks, but that work was unevenly distributed. Three areas– *Leading and Coordinating*; *Identifying, Obtaining, and Producing Relevant Evidence*, and; *Facilitating and Evaluating Evidence Informed Change* were common across all DRLs, suggesting these may be the core of DRL work (as the job is currently conceptualized). Greater variability was found in the other areas. Further, we were unable to detect any meaningful pattern in job design across districts. This may be an artifact of the emergent nature of the position and a resulting ad hoc approach to the development of job descriptions. However, it may also reflect a lack of systemic understanding about DRL work and its role in advancing districts' evidence use.

We note that these findings are based on job descriptions and resumes, which provide an important window into the expectations of DRL positions and to some degree, their actual work. However, they do not provide information about the prioritization of these tasks in their daily work, which may paint a different picture than we are able to here.

USING THIS DOCUMENT

Establishing a system wide conceptualization of DRL work identified, is an important way to strengthen the DRL position and to improve alignment between their knowledge and skills, organizational context, and job design. The taxonomy of domains and tasks can be useful for districts working on **job design**, creating an opportunity to reflect on the different dimensions of DRL work, how **they fit with district needs and expectations**, and what **knowledge and skills** may be a good fit to that work. Likewise, hiring managers can use these qualities as a basis for **developing job candidate assessments**. Specifically, assessments can be developed to measure whether a job candidate's knowledge and skills match with the position's most critical tasks. Lastly, this taxonomy can be used to develop plans to help DRLs to **continually develop skills sets** needed to successfully perform engage in these knowledge mobilization tasks.

The taxonomy may also be useful for current or aspiring DRLs to **reflect on or expand knowledge, skills and experiences** and how to **communicate those when seeking jobs or evaluating performance**. Additionally, the taxonomy may be useful when **seeking additional resources or supports** for knowledge mobilization work.

JOB TASKS OF DRLS

Domain	Example of tasks
Leading and Coordinating	• Directs operations • Assures compliance with board objectives and applicable laws/policies • Ensure that research activities align with board goals • Manages the review and evaluation of research requests • Supports and manages research activities and partnerships
Facilitating and Evaluating Evidence Informed Change	• Selects/connects external research projects with key district/department priorities • Provides guidance and analytics to support district decision makers in transferring knowledge into practice • Facilitates the development of outcomes/indicators for school and district success • Monitors, implements, and determines the effectiveness of programs and activities
Identifying, Obtaining, and Producing Relevant Information	• Develops the district research agenda • Obtains, summarizes and reviews existing evidence on issues pertaining to district priorities • Designs and conducts internal research/evaluation projects
Identifying and Engaging Stakeholders in Partnership	• Works with internal and external stakeholders to develop and/or pursue district plans/agendas • Coordinates and engages with stakeholders to conduct research activities and/or other partnership activities
Supporting Communication and Information Sharing	• Establishes or updates data sharing and data governance policies • Establishes or updates KMb/dissemination protocols • Establishes, updates, or maintains the 'external research' or 'data request' websites • Communicates with external researchers about the status of their requests • Communicates data sharing and district data governance policies to relevant parties • Disseminates findings/implications from research/evaluation to district decision makers & other stakeholders • Facilitates data sharing and knowledge dissemination among research partners
Supporting Sustainability	• Develops structures and/or systems to promote and strengthen collaboration and partnership • Develops policies/procedures/processes/structures/routines pertaining to research and data • Develops and maintain data management systems

Facilitating Development of Staff Skills	• Identifies professional development and training needs for district staff • Provides technical assistance and professional development focused on data, research, and program evaluation • Facilitates teacher action research projects
Creating Tailored Knowledge Products	• Determines appropriate project deliverables • Develops reports and presentations • Ensures publications are understood by both public and professional audiences
Facilitating Collaboration with Stakeholders	• Facilitates relationships and collaboration between internal stakeholders, partners, and research institutions • Liaises between department staff and other district departments for support as needed
Developing, Maintaining, and Facilitating Networks	• Leverages local and regional research networks to meet district research needs

[i] Shewchuk, S. & Farley-Ripple, E.N. (2020). *A Job Description and Resume Analysis of District Research Leaders*. Newark, DE: Center for Research in Education and Social Policy.
[ii] Bornbaum, C. C., Kornas, K., Peirson, L., & Rosella, L. C. (2015). Exploring the function and effectiveness of knowledge brokers as facilitators of knowledge translation in health-related settings: A systematic review and thematic analysis. *Implementation Science,* 10(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-015-0351-9

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