Teacher research

A contribution to changes in schools

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Cross-professional collaboration among school leaders, teachers and researchers, advisers and supervisors
Teacher in geography
Students 12-18 years old

Coordinator of teacher research team
Studies on innovations in school, such as iPads
Terminology

• Reflective practitioner
• Teacher self-study
• Teacher inquiry
• Teacher professional development
• Data driven decisions
• Working evidence-based
• Learning in professional communities

• **Teacher research**

Teacher

- Asks questions about teaching and learning
- Collects information about students
- Often feels overwhelmed and/or isolated

Teacher Researcher

- Intentionally asks questions about teaching and learning
- Organizes and collects information
- Focuses on a specific area of inquiry
- Engages in reflection
- Benefits from ongoing collaboration and support of critical friends

Goals:
- Facilitates teaching and learning and maximizes student potential

Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey 2008
Teacher research

Marylin Cochran-Smith & Susan Lytle 2009:

“…teacher research refers to the inquiries of K-12 teachers and prospective teachers, often in collaboration with university-based colleagues and other educators. Teacher researchers work in inquiry communities to examine their own assumptions, develop local knowledge by posing questions and gathering data...”
1. Context: collaboration in R&D projects in schools

2. Teacher research: contribution to change in schools

3. Future of teacher researchers in the US
Institute of Education Sciences

Moving forward, IES' rigorous research agenda will be informed by the voices and interests of practitioners and policy makers, who will be involved in *shaping the questions most relevant to their practice*.

We will seek to build the capacity of states and school districts to *conduct research*, evaluate their programs and make sense of the data they are collecting.

We will strive to develop a greater understanding of schools as learning organizations and *study how development, research, and innovation can be better linked to create sustainable school reforms*.

[emphasis added]
Our funding is aligned with our two current research interests. One interest is understanding programs, policies, and practices that reduce inequalities in youth development.

Our other interest focuses on the conditions surrounding the use of research evidence in policy and practice that affect youth—and how that process use can be improved.

The Foundation also provides limited support for capacity-building, communication, and advocacy activities. These awards, which are currently focused on improving the connections between research and practice, support and leverage our primary focus on research.
Literature on research-practice partnerships to consider:


• Kara Finnigan & Alan Daly (2014) *Using Research Evidence in Education*

R&D projects

Research & Development-projects
in secondary schools in the Netherlands

Funding of VO-raad (council for secondary education) aimed at practice-based research with schools

Driven by school interests in areas such as:
- evaluating literacy programs
- introducing games in lessons
- creating a school organization for students aged 10-14
- developing didactic methods for gifted students
Two examples, both on literacy

**Instrument for testing reading comprehension**
Purpose of the school: Evaluating the influence of lessons in which students read books
Purpose of the researchers: Developing a valid instrument for testing reading comprehension of students

**Literacy didactics**
Purpose of the school and researcher: Stimulating the professional development of teachers by supervising teacher researchers who design and evaluate their lessons on literacy didactics
Multi-case study design

Collaboration
Processes in the projects
Output of the projects

30 R&D projects, so-called SLOA projects, in the Netherlands

Study performed under supervision of Prof. Monique Volman, Prof. Jan van Driel, Prof. Femke Geijsel
Mixed method

• Qualitative study: 100 interviews with participants of 19 case studies, document analysis, meetings

• Quantitative study: survey in first year, second year and final year e.g. on school leadership, teacher professional activities, collaboration

Miles & Huberman 1994; Yin 2009
Cross-professional collaboration between researchers and practitioners:

a process in which a diversity of participants come together with divergent reasons to reach project goals via guiding, directing and performing research and development activities and mutual communication.

Schenke, Van Driel, Geijsel, Sligte, Volman 2012
Penuel et al. 2011; Van de Ven 2007; Wagner 1997
Boundary crossing provides participants in R&D projects with the opportunity to learn from each other and the world of the other

• E.g. a teacher that participates in research or an educational researcher that is working with school interests in mind
• Professional learning is stimulated by exchanging ideas with participants in a project who have other perspectives on for example school issues

Schenke, Van Driel, Geijsel, Volman *manuscript in preparation*
Akkerman & Bakker 2011; Engeström 2001; Hora & Miller 2011
**Teacher researchers**

In 14 out of 19 projects:
- presence of teacher researchers

In 7 out of these 14 projects:
- training and time for teacher researchers
- in close collaboration with researchers
- change towards a research engaged school

Schenke, Van Driel, Geijsel, Volman *manuscript in preparation*
In Project J, one of the teachers involved, said:

“Yes, you become more critical on what is happening in school and you say less easily you can’t change things. So you remind yourself to introduce this on the agenda of the next meeting.”

Teacher researchers in general:
- obtain research knowledge and skills
- change their professional attitude
- transform their own practice, e.g. their lessons
- share insights with colleagues, e.g. by presenting results

Schenke, Van Driel, Geijsel, Volman *manuscript in preparation*
Teacher research

YouTube: Ontario teacher researchers

Three questions while watching this clip:

1. What kind of positive effects on teachers who became teacher researchers in their school did you notice?

2. What, on the contrary, can be seen as negative consequences?

3. How can we relate teacher research to the goal of pursuing excellence in teaching?
Research engaged school

In 7 out of 19 projects:
- teacher research is stimulated by the school board
- school leaders themselves analyze data and make decisions
- close collaboration with researchers is common
- a professional learning community is encouraged

In Project A the school leader explained:

That is one of the goals we have set: to be able to perform research tasks on our own after three years. It involves a research attitude and educating people on this issue.

Schenke, Van Driel, Geijsel, Volman *manuscript in preparation*
Darling-Hammond 1994; Little 2006
Educational researchers

Their role in the 19 projects:
- 80% perform research with practitioners and 20% ‘from a distance’
- supporting school board with advice after performing research
- coaching teachers and teacher researchers
- being a ‘critical friend’ and an ‘involved outsider’

Schenke, Van Driel, Geijsel, Volman *manuscript in preparation*
Teacher research

Discussion

- Is there a future for teacher research in the US?

- What role do researchers and universities have in supporting teachers to become teacher researchers?
Closing thoughts

Cross-professional collaboration
Collaboration between researchers and practitioners encourages teachers to become teacher researchers

Teacher research
Becoming a teacher researcher involves a change in professional attitude and can have a direct influence on school practice, and even support a change into a research engaged school