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Developing teacher leadership and its impact in schools

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Preface

This doctoral dissertation focuses on teachers and teacher leadership. One might complain, 'Not again! Some outsider who does not belong to the teaching profession, talking about what teachers must be and should do!' This complaint reflects one of the key problems faced by the teaching profession: the debate on teaching appears to be dominated by all types of experts except for the teachers themselves. *'There has been an increase of discourse about teachers (...) but teachers were not the main authors of this discourse, in a sense, they have seen their territory occupied by other groups.'* (Novoa, 2007).

The absence of teachers in debates about teachers is for many a cause for worry, as it threatens to de-professionalize the profession and to reduce the teacher to a mere technician, teaching curricula that have been defined by politicians and using methodologies designed by 'educational specialists'.

However, as a teacher educator, I cannot avoid talking about teachers, as that is a main part of my job: preparing and supporting (student) teachers for their (future) jobs, making curriculum decisions about the essential elements that constitute the teaching profession, and determining how student teachers will best master these elements. In addition, as a teacher educator, I consider myself a teacher, albeit a special type of teacher, which lends me some legitimacy in discussing teachers.

As a teacher educator, I have always felt myself part of a profession—in my case, the profession of teacher educators. This feeling of being part of a profession creates a feeling of power: I am not on my own, and together we can shape our profession and influence policies. I am fortunate that the profession of teacher educators is formally organized, with a professional association of teacher educators (the VELON) which takes responsibility for the development of the knowledge base underlying the education of teachers, defines quality standards for teacher educators, and supports members of the profession in meeting these standards through registration. Through this professional body, teacher educators have a voice and are able to exert their agency. 'Teacher educators matter!', the policy statement that I wrote together with Johan van der Sande and other members of the VELON board in 2006 (VELON, 2006), powerfully verbalizes this ambition and the self-awareness of the profession.

It is my hope that every teacher will feel a similar ambition and self-awareness as part of a powerful profession and that teachers collectively will raise their voice and exert their agency and leadership accordingly. Through my involvement as a teacher educator in the Bachelor's, Honor's,

and Master's programs of the University of Applied Sciences Hogeschool van Amsterdam HvA, I am able to support teachers and student teachers in developing knowledge and competences to strengthen their voice, agency, and leadership. As a researcher at the Center for Applied Research in Education (*Kenniscentrum Onderwijs en Opvoeding*) of the HvA, I may contribute by studying how the development of these leadership competences actually contribute to leadership roles within schools and by clarifying conditions within schools that facilitate leadership among teachers.

Through the research project presented in this dissertation, I have been able to combine the two roles of teacher educator and researcher by working with teachers in academic development schools and Master's programs. Through this dissertation, I hope to contribute to teachers' voice and agency. Meanwhile, this dissertation would never have been possible without the inspiration, ambitions, and voices of the teachers involved.

Marco Snoek