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Developing teacher leadership and its impact in schools

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INTERMEZZO 1

From scenarios to contexts for research

1. Future scenarios for teacher development in the Netherlands

The review study presented in Chapter 2 indicates that the contexts and arrangements for teacher development vary according to the roles of different stakeholders and the extent to which the boundaries between the stakeholders' activity systems are crossed. Based on the 48 scenario documents, four typical scenarios for the future of teacher education can be identified in which schools, universities, and governments assume different positions towards each other. Each of these scenarios may be considered a realistic possible future for teacher education in the Netherlands, as the characteristics of each scenario may be recognized in the present arrangements and in recent policy measurements in the area of initial and post-initial teacher education.

The market-oriented scenario in the Netherlands

In a market-oriented future for teacher education, the activity system of the school is dominant. In a customer-provider relationship, universities must be responsive to the needs and demands of schools. In the Dutch context, this scenario may be recognized in the present arrangements regarding post-initial teacher development. In 1993, the government transferred the budgets for teacher development to schools. From that moment, schools could make their own decisions on how to spend their professional development budgets. The post-initial education of teachers became a competitive market in which universities could offer their services in terms of modules, courses, programs, advice, etc., and the universities were forced to compete with commercial training providers (Vermeulen & De Wolf, 2001). As a result, universities were required to be flexible and responsive and became largely dependent on the demands of schools.

From 2001, government policies defined schools as the core of the educational infrastructure, whereas teacher education institutes, educational research institutes, and post-initial providers were considered supportive institutions that would respond to the needs of schools (Ministerie van OCW, 2002; Onderwijsraad, 2001). These supportive institutions needed to develop their responsiveness and their flexibility towards schools, whereas schools were supported while formulating their needs. In many grant programs (such as those for the academic development schools), the schools are the key institutions that apply for grants, whereas universities must join with schools in partnership agreements.

The initiative of a group of school boards who created the Netherlands Institute for Masters in Education, NIME, also fits in the market-oriented scenario, as they literally turned the tables, inviting teacher education institutes to offer their proposals for Master's programs to the schools in a tender procedure in which the schools selected the best programs to draw up long-term contracts (NIME, 2008) (see also Intermezzo 2).

These developments have led to competitiveness between universities and to strategic partnerships to become the 'preferred supplier' to schools.

The bureaucratic scenario in the Netherlands

In the bureaucratic scenario, the activity system of the government and policymakers dominates the activity systems of schools and universities. This scenario may be recognized in the Dutch policy context in which the present dynamics between the Ministry, schools, and universities is based on bilateral performance agreements between the minister and the national councils of school leaders in primary, secondary, and vocational education (*PO-raad, VO-raad and MBO-raad*) and between the minister and the national councils for the universities (*VSNU and Vereniging van Hogescholen*). This structure leads to a strict separation between policies regarding initial teacher education (regulated through agreements between the minister and universities) and policies regarding post-initial teacher education (regulated through agreements between the minister, the schools and the teachers' unions). Even in contexts where the boundaries between schools and universities may be crossed, e.g., in academic development schools, where practice-based research may be considered an arrangement for initial- and post-initial teacher development, such a separation is dominant. One example of this strict separation is the set of criteria used by the evaluation committee judging project applications for the prolongation of academic development schools. These criteria focused on the contribution of the academic development school to the learning context for student teachers, ignoring the schools' ambitions to connect practice-based research to teacher development and school improvement.

Another example is the revision process for the teacher standards (*'bekwaamheidseisen'*), which are the formal minimum quality criteria that all teachers in the Netherlands must be able to meet (Ministerie van OCW, 2005b). In this process, the minister invited the new professional body of teachers, the *Onderwijscoöperatie*, to propose a revised set of teacher standards. The new set reflects the professional self-understanding of many teachers but, according to the teacher education institutes, does not consider sufficiently that these standards must also function as the guiding frame of reference for initial teacher education qualifications (VELON, 2012b; Onderwijsraad, 2014).

The professionalism scenario in the Netherlands

In the professionalism scenario, professional groups play a key role. Elements of this scenario may be recognized in recent developments in teacher policy in the Netherlands. Through the installment of a new professional body for

teachers, the *Onderwijscoöperatie*, the teaching profession may take a more prominent role in regulating professional development. The teacher register '*Registerleraar.nl*' will play a important role in this process. Teachers are expected to document their professional development activities in the register. The *Onderwijscoöperatie* has installed 'register committees', that have the task of assessing and accrediting the professional development activities offered by universities and other commercial or non-commercial providers of post-initial teacher education (*Onderwijscoöperatie*, 2013).

This role of the *Onderwijscoöperatie* could in time be extended to initial teacher education programs, similar to the Irish Teaching Council, which has a formal role in the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Ireland. However, the active involvement of the profession in regulating teachers' professional development remains in an initial stage.

The network scenario in the Netherlands

In the network scenario, the boundaries between schools and universities are crossed at an institutional or an individual level. In such scenarios, a boundary zone between both activity systems is created. Within the Dutch context, several possible boundary objects are suggested that may facilitate boundary crossing, e.g., communities of practice focusing on joint curriculum development or research (*Onderwijsraad*, 2011b). Within some academic development school partnerships, elements of this scenario may be recognized when schools and universities succeed in creating a partnership that transcends a customer-client relationship. In such partnerships, the school is more than a high-quality practice site for student teachers; the university offerings expand beyond support for schools in developing research competences, and the shared workspace may lead to changes in both activity systems (*Van Riessen*, 2010).

2. Teacher development and its impact in different contexts.

To study the impact of learning arrangements that focus on the post-initial development of teacher leadership, this research project will examine different contexts and arrangements, which vary in the activity system that is dominant. Because teachers as a professional group do not yet have an explicit role in teacher professional development, we will focus on arrangements that relate to three of the four possible scenarios:

- a (market) arrangement in which the school is the dominant stakeholder,
- a (bureaucratic) arrangement in which the university is the dominant stakeholder, responding to formal criteria provided by the government, and
- a (network) arrangement in which schools and university focus on external curriculum consistency through boundary-crossing activities.

The school as the dominant stakeholder: The academic development school

Since the transfer of the budgets for post-initial teacher development to schools, the dominant arrangement for post-initial teacher development is a

design in which schools take the lead in defining their needs –in connection to their local school agenda - and in selecting a university or other institution as a provider.

An example of this model is the Academic Development School Amsterdam, AcOA, a network of three secondary schools. Although the academic development school could potentially develop towards the network scenario, the initial stage of AcOA (2006-2008) may be characterized as an example of the market-orientated scenario. The schools that participated in the AcOA focused their research activities on creating a group of teacher researchers who, through their research activities, would stimulate and support school development (Van Riessen, 2010). Although two universities were formal partners in the AcOA, the focus of the activities was on the development of the secondary schools, and the role of the universities in the research activities was restricted to supporting the teacher researchers and safeguarding the academic quality of the research projects in the schools. Within this context, the activity system of the school remained dominant. This context for teacher leadership development fits within the market-oriented scenario and will be addressed in Chapter 3.

The university as the dominant stakeholder: A Master's program on teacher leadership

Although schools have become dominant in most arrangements for in-service teacher development, universities remain dominant in learning arrangements that are based on formal courses leading to (internationally) recognized qualifications. These arrangements may be characterized as bureaucratic because they are dominated by formal accreditation requirements established by the government that universities must meet. These requirements often direct the design of programs, and the role of schools is primarily limited to an advisory role. This is especially the case in programs in which participants come from a variety of schools.

This arrangement for teacher leadership development will be addressed in Chapter 4. The context of the study is the NIME Master's program Professional Mastery '*Professioneel Meesterschap*', focusing on teacher leadership and teacher research. Although the specific context of the NIME (based on demands and criteria from the schools) might suggest that the arrangement would fit in a market model, the study presented in Chapter 4 will show that the actual involvement of the school was almost non-existent.

A partnership focused on external curriculum consistency through boundary crossing

In the final context for teacher leadership development studied in this project, a network model was elaborated by establishing a partnership between three colleges for vocational education in the Netherlands and a university consortium around the Master's program *Professioneel Meesterschap*. Because the partnership was exclusively focused on these four partners, there were

opportunities to to cross the boundaries between the two activity systems of the university and schools. For this elaboration, the Master's program discussed in Chapter 4 was adapted, based on the preliminary outcomes of the study reported in Chapter 4. The outcomes of this redesigned program in terms of the impact on teacher development and school development will be addressed in Chapter 5.