Connecting practice-based research and school development. Cross-professional collaboration in secondary education

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Citation for published version (APA):

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About the author

Short biography

Wouter Schenke works as a researcher at Kohnstamm Institute, University of Amsterdam since summer 2010 and as teacher educator at the Institute of Teacher Education (ILO), University of Amsterdam since summer 2014. He studied human geography at Utrecht University and attended the teacher education program at IVLOS, Utrecht University. He began his career in 2006 as teacher in geography at Da Vinci College Kagerstraat in Leiden. From 2007 until 2014 he coordinated research in his school. His current research interests in education are organizational aspects of practice-based research in schools, cross-professional collaboration between school practitioners and researchers, teacher research, and professional learning communities.

A journey from teacher to researcher

On my journey from teacher to academic researcher in education I have noticed several personal changes. I like to reflect on these changes, as an opportunity to inspire others, but also for myself to have a better understanding of the researcher that I am today.

Rooted in practice

My motive as a researcher is rooted in practice: I started my career as a teacher in geography. Right from the beginning as a teacher I had the idea and wish to combine this work with performing research. Just one year later a great opportunity came along, which in retrospect meant the start of a life-changing experience: being research coordinator in my school of the project called ‘Expedition Dare, Share, Do’. We started a new research team of teachers who developed into teacher researchers. During the following years we began stimulating colleagues to become research engaged and be involved in small-scale research activities. In the meantime I became experienced as a teacher, for instance as a mentor of students. After a few years my curiosity and hunger for performing practice-based studies, organizational learning, collaboration with the academic world was not stilled yet; actually it just got started. Fortunately in summer 2010, my chance came along which I grabbed with both hands: an opportunity to work as an educational researcher to study R&D projects in schools. I began
working at Kohnstamm Institute, University of Amsterdam and a few months later I officially started my PhD.

**Identity as researcher**

For several years I combined the two jobs that I had: I worked for two days as a teacher at my school and coordinated the teacher research team on Monday afternoon, and the other three days I worked as a researcher. I quickly adjusted to this new rhythm of my workweek, although combining two jobs was not easy. I was actually crossing boundaries between the educational field and academic field (see Chapter 3 on the issue of boundary crossing). My learning mechanism can be characterized as *transformation*. Becoming a researcher came with new manifestations, such as other outfits and different vocabulary. It also brought me a different, broader view on the field of education. I learned new research knowledge (e.g. theoretical frameworks), practiced other research skills (e.g. analyzing large amounts of interview data), and experienced a more profound research attitude than I had before. School leaders and teachers working in innovative and research-engaged schools took interest in the findings of my PhD-study. At the same time I noticed that educational researchers were interested in my experiences as teacher, teacher researcher and research coordinator, and therefore I gave quite some presentations on these issues as well. Another example of transferring practice-based knowledge to the research field was my recommendation at my research institute for integrating some pedagogical approaches at research meetings to increase the interactivity between presenter and listeners.

Performing the study on the R&D projects, being part of Kohnstamm Institute and the community of researchers at the university changed my professional identity. In the beginning of my PhD, when people asked me: ‘What is your job?’, I answered them: ‘I am a teacher. And I work as a researcher’. I can still recall the moment when this question was asked again after two years of working on my dissertation, I answered for the first time without any purpose: ‘I am a researcher and I work as a teacher as well’.

**Finding new routes**

In the final year of my dissertation I decided to quit my job as a teacher. Combining both jobs felt harder to do than the years before and it was time for a new step. This decision brought new opportunities, such as my temporary move in the spring of 2014 to Stanford University, California, of which I would not even have thought as a teacher. From summer 2014 on I started working at the Institute of Teacher Education, where I educate teachers with commitment. One year later my dissertation is finished and I remain active as a researcher at Kohnstamm Institute.
My drive as an academic researcher is to encourage as many practitioners to learn from research and researchers to learn from practice. Based upon the findings of my PhD, I suggest school leaders, teachers, and researchers, advisers, and supervisors to find each other in cross-professional collaboration and aim for a research-engaged community in which all will be able to learn from each other.
Publications

Peer-reviewed publications

Papers in press

Papers in progress
This chapter is based on Schenke, W., Geijsel, F.P., van Driel, J.H., & Volman, M.L.L. (in preparation). Encouraging and integrating research engagement in schools: the school leaders’ perspective.

Other publications


Conference contributions


Lectures abroad

Papers in this dissertation and contributions of co-authors

Chapter 2 is based on:

Contributions:
Wouter Schenke is the first author of this paper. He reviewed literature, collected and analyzed data, and drafted the initial manuscript. The research team further consisted of Monique Volman (project coordinator) and Jan van Driel and Femke Geijsel (project leaders of the study), who were the supervisors of Wouter Schenke. The research team collaboratively conceptualized and designed the study. As a form of audit, the research team discussed all the steps in the process of analysis and its outcomes, and where necessary the primary data were rechecked. The supervisors contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data, and reviewed and revised the manuscript. Henk Sligte, senior researcher at Kohnstamm Institute, made a contribution in co-designing the study and in collecting data.

Chapter 3 is based on:

Contributions:
Wouter Schenke is the first author of this paper. He reviewed literature, collected and analyzed data, and drafted the initial manuscript. The research team further consisted of Monique Volman (project coordinator) and Jan van Driel and Femke Geijsel (project leaders of the study), who were the supervisors of Wouter Schenke. The research team collaboratively conceptualized and designed the study. As a form of audit, the research team discussed all the steps in the process of analysis and its outcomes, and where necessary the primary data were rechecked. The supervisors contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data, and reviewed and revised the manuscript.
Chapter 4 is based on:

Contributions:
Wouter Schenke is the first author of this paper. He reviewed literature, collected and analyzed data, and drafted the initial manuscript. The research team further consisted of Monique Volman (project coordinator) and Jan van Driel and Femke Geijsel (project leaders of the study), who were the supervisors of Wouter Schenke. The research team collaboratively conceptualized and designed the study. As a form of audit, the research team discussed all the steps in the process of analysis and its outcomes, and where necessary the primary data were rechecked. The supervisors contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data, and reviewed and revised the manuscript.

Chapter 5 is based on:

Contributions:
Wouter Schenke is the first author of this paper. He reviewed literature, collected and analyzed data, and drafted the initial manuscript. The research team further consisted of Monique Volman (project coordinator) and Jan van Driel and Femke Geijsel (project leaders of the study), who were the supervisors of Wouter Schenke. The research team collaboratively conceptualized and designed the study. As a form of audit, the research team discussed all the steps in the process of analysis and its outcomes, and where necessary the primary data were rechecked. The supervisors contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data, and reviewed and revised the manuscript.
Practice-oriented publications related to this study

The Dutch Council for Secondary Education published the following practice-oriented publications related to this study:


# Overview of schools and research and advisory institutes (in Dutch)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary schools</th>
<th>Research and advisory institutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2College, Tilburg</td>
<td>KPC Groep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlas College, Hoorn</td>
<td>Universiteit van Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bataafs Lyceum, Hengelo</td>
<td>Universiteit Twente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonaventuracollege, Leiden</td>
<td>Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burg. Harmsmaschool, Gorredijk</td>
<td>NHL Hogeschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comenius Lyceum, Amsterdam</td>
<td>Universiteit van Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corlaer College, Nijkerk</td>
<td>Oberon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS De Hoven, Gorinchem</td>
<td>KPC Groep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSG Prins Maurits, Middelharnis</td>
<td>KPC Groep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSG Reggesteyn, Nijverdal</td>
<td>Expertis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVO Rotterdam</td>
<td>KPC Groep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJburg College, Amsterdam</td>
<td>Universiteit van Amsterdam en APS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johan de Witt Scholengroep, Den Haag</td>
<td>Universiteit Leiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS Etten-Leur</td>
<td>AO Consult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcanti College, Amsterdam</td>
<td>CINOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merletcollege, Grave</td>
<td>Artéduc en Van der Burgt Computer Educatie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montaigne Lyceum, Den Haag</td>
<td>Oberon en Universiteit Utrecht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORS Lek en Linge, Culemborg</td>
<td>Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGS Slingerbos/Levant, Harderwijk</td>
<td>Universiteit Leiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROS Rijnland, Lisse</td>
<td>Universiteit Leiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sondervick College, Veldhoven</td>
<td>Technische Universiteit Eindhoven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stad College, Almere</td>
<td>Oberon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stad en Esch, Meppel</td>
<td>Rijksuniversiteit Groningen en NHL Hogeschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG Huizermaat, Huizen</td>
<td>Universiteit Leiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stichting Carmelcollege, Hengelo</td>
<td>KPC Groep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UniC, Utrecht</td>
<td>Hogeschool Utrecht en GameOn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vrije School Zutphen</td>
<td>Rijksuniversiteit Groningen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zernike College, Haren</td>
<td>NHL Hogeschool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Woorden van dank zijn zeker op zijn plaats. Ik wil veel mensen bedanken voor hun steun, vertrouwen, hulp en inspiratie om mijn proefschrift tot een mooi product te maken.

Voorop staat dat ik een promotiebegeleiding heb gehad waar ik vanaf het begin in de zomer van 2010 erg gelukkig mee ben geweest. Jullie hebben je eigen kwaliteiten ingebracht: Monique, je gaf me vertrouwen in het onderzoek en vormt voor mij de ideale begeleider. Je ingevingen en adviezen zijn doordacht en slim. Jan, je voorzag de stukken tekst van scherp commentaar en ik vond je daarbij altijd trefzeker. Femke, je bent analytisch en was geregeld in staat om de verbindende schakel te zijn naar andere projecten en mensen die je kent. Dankzij jou, Femke kon ik mijn promotietraject instappen. Tezamen vormden jullie drie een ijzersterk team en een belangrijke steun voor mij. Jullie hebben daarmee de voortgang gestimuleerd en bijgedragen tot dit proefschrift dat een product van kwaliteit geworden is.

Dankzij de VO-raad en SLOA-regeling was er onderzoek naar de ontwikkelingen in de scholen mogelijk. Ik ben daarom bijzonder dankbaar voor de inbreng en expertise van Maartje en Ditte. Alle betrokkenen bij de SLOA-projecten op de vele VO-scholen, dank ik voor hun deelname aan het onderzoek voor de VO-raad en daarmee mijn promotieonderzoek. Dat geldt met name voor de projectleiders, docenten en schoolleiders, en ook onderzoekers, adviseurs en begeleiders van de case studies in het onderzoek. De inzichten die jullie ons als onderzoeker gegeven hebben, bijvoorbeeld in de gesprekken op school of tijdens de kennisdeelbijeenkomsten, geven wij weer door. Mijn wens is dat het jullie en andere scholen inspireert om onderzoek in school verder te gaan ontwikkelen.

Bij het Kohnstamm Instituut heb ik de afgelopen vijf jaar mijn promotieonderzoek uitgevoerd. Een goede werkomgeving waar ruimte is voor interessante discussies over onderzoek en onderwijs. Henk, je bent inspirator en mentor voor me geweest; een belangrijke bijdrage aan mijn motivatie. Ook ben je voor mij richtingaanwijzer in de onderzoekswereld geweest. Daarnaast hebben Cissy, Merlijn, Edith en andere collega’s een belangrijke bijdrage gehad binnen het onderzoek. Voor de ontspannen momenten wil ik de lunches met Pjotr, Jaap, Yolande, Liselotte, Iris en co niet vergeten te noemen. Ook was en is de steun die ik vanuit het MT heb gevoeld belangwekkend - Jan, Guuske, eerst ook Marja en later Marjan en Irma. Dank voor de tijd en ruimte die jullie me gegeven hebben om persoonlijk
en professioneel te groeien in het onderzoeksproject. Ik heb veel interessante ontmoetingen met onderzoekers opgedaan. Hier wil ik zeker mijn Gentse vriend Ruben Vanderlinde noemen, die een voorbeeld is in het uitvoeren van onderzoek naar praktijkgericht onderzoek. Ook kon ik enkele maanden in de Verenigde Staten werken, waar ik mijn tijd aan Stanford University niet gauw zal vergeten; I like to thank Hilda Borko and Janet Carlson for this amazing opportunity.

Het uitvoeren van mijn promotieonderzoek heb ik gecombineerd met werk in het onderwijs. Op mijn school in Leiden – het Da Vinci College Kagerstraat – ben ik mijn carrière gestart en heb ik met veel plezier aardrijkskunde gegeven met mijn betrokken collega’s André, Boye, Marco, Martien en Joske. Ik heb veel goede herinneringen aan de leerlingen van mijn school. Vanaf 2007 heb ik op school met veel enthousiasme het onderzoeksteam opgebouwd. Annick en Dorine gaven mij de juiste groeimogelijkheden binnen de Expeditie Durven Delen Doen en waren steunpilaren voor mij om verder op te bouwen. Sarah, Jaap en Gonny wil ik bedanken voor hun begeleiding in het onderzoek op school en Sander voor het systemisch meedenken in onze organisatie. Daarbij reikten Astrid met haar visionaire blik en later Myra met haar praktijkgerichte blik mij de kansen aan om verbinding te leggen met de academische opleidingsschool. Het onderzoeksteam met William, Marie-José, Mira, Willy en Rommert; ik mis jullie nog geregeld op maandagmiddag. We houden contact.

Het lesgeven ben ik niet kwijtgeraakt; sinds 2014 heb ik een nieuwe werkplek gevonden bij de eerstegraads lerarenopleiding aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam. Bij de ILO wil ik in de eerste plaats Ineke en Carla bedanken, die me hebben onthaald bij de lerarenopleiding. Ik merkte vanaf het begin dat mijn collega’s hun hart op de juiste plaats hebben, namelijk bij die van de aankomende leraren. Het is mooi om te zien hoe de leraren-in-opleiding groeien in hun nieuwe rol als leraar. De lerarenopleiding vormt een goede omgeving om mijn werk met docenten en het onderwijs verder te ontwikkelen. Als inspiratie daarvoor heb ik Marca Wolfensberger, een van mijn docenten aan de Universiteit Utrecht, die als geen ander stimuleert om je eigen nieuwsgierigheid na te jagen en daarin ook anderen uit te dagen. Voor het geven van onderwijs biedt ook de opleiding Onderwijskunde bij de UvA mooie kansen. Dankzij het vak Schoolorganisatie krijgt het mesoniveau van onderwijs de nadruk die het verdient. Het verzorgen van dit vak, eerst met Louise, toen met Hein en later met Virginie en Femke, geeft mij een brede kijk op onderwijsorganisaties, die ik kan delen met studenten.

Lieve broers en schoonzussen, nichtjes en neefje, schoonouders, schoonzus en zwager, bedankt voor de momenten van ontspanning en gezelligheid. Die vind ik ook bij vrienden, Remko & Niels, Marjolein & Feiko, Bart & Liesbeth, Renée & Cor in leuke uitstapjes en etentjes. En natuurlijk ook in de maandagavond-eetgroep met Pauline, Edith, Jolanda & Julia, Maartje, Nanda & Jurriaan. Ook vind ik de nodige ontspanning bij gymvereniging Excelsior Leiden, waar we met sportieve energie de kinderen kansen geven om met plezier te turnen.

En bovenal Henk: je bent altijd daar, attent en lief als je bent. Je toont onvoorwaardelijke liefde, dank je wel.
In the last decade, a rise of research and development (R&D) projects in secondary schools in the Netherlands can be observed. In these projects, school leaders and teachers are engaged with researchers, advisers, and supervisors in various sorts of research and development activities. R&D projects in schools create the opportunity to connect practice-based research to school development through cross-professional collaboration. The results of the studies presented in this dissertation indicate that there is not one single type of cross-professional collaboration in R&D projects. The professionals shaped collaboration in different ways as a consequence of the variation in their reasons for collaboration, divisions of roles and tasks, and communication structures in the projects. Most school leaders grasped the opportunity of the R&D project to encourage research engagement in their school: Teachers discussed research results and reflected on the meaning for school practice. At the same time educational researchers developed a practice-engaged research approach, by being aware of the complexities of educational practice and thinking along with decision-making processes on teaching and learning in school.