Dutch National Knowledge Centre for Mixed Schools

How can research, policy and practice cooperate effectively?

EIPPEE Congress, The Hague, May 2012
1. Introduction
   of the Dutch National Knowledge Centre for Mixed Schools

2. Reflection:
   How does the set up of the Centre affect its functioning and role, its succes and failure?
1. Introduction
Dutch National Knowledge Centre for Mixed Schools

- Founded in 2007
  - on request of the four biggest Dutch cities
  - by the Ministry of Education (tendering)

- Funded by
  - the Ministry of Education (initially for 4 years)
  - assignments of local authorities and schools/schoolboards
Knowledge Centre

• Aims and purpose:
  – Dissemination of knowledge
  – Pushing for action.

• Target audiences:
  – Local and national governments
  – Schools and schoolboards
  – Parents.
Activities of the Centre

• Building a knowledge base
• Disseminate state of the art knowledge
  – Write and release manuals on how to create and maintain mixed schools
  – Publish a newsletter and reports
  – Provide a website & LinkedIn group
  – Organize national and local meetings
• Support (12) pilots in local communities
• Advise municipalities, parents, schools and their boards
Methods

• We need to link research, policy and practice in order to be able to reach our goals.

• Examples:
  – we organise ‘knowledge workshops’
  – we made an Argument Map
  – involving research, policy and practice.
Example: argument map

• Overview of arguments for and against mixed schools
• Useful for discussions, e.g. with parents

• The Knowledge Centre
  – aims at a dialogue with parents and professionals about mixed schools,
  – and respects the informed choice of parents
ARGUMENT MAP MIXING EDUCATION

What are the various important arguments for and against mixing students in primary education?

FOR

AGAINST

Students

Parents

Schools

Government

Mixing increases students' opportunities to develop

- Weaker students can benefit from the support of stronger students.
- Students can learn more by studying in mixed ability classes.

- Students can develop into higher achievers.
- Students can benefit from the support of stronger students.

Mixing reduces students' opportunities to develop

- Weaker students are likely to become slower learners.
- Students can become more frustrated by studying in mixed ability classes.

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Mixing can increase the social and cultural gap between students

- Students come to contact with 'like-minded' students of the same race, sex, class, religion, and background.

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Mixing has advantages for parents

- With multi-ethnic schools, parents don't have to 'trust' a one-race/mixed-race school environment.

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Mixing has disadvantages for parents

- Schools are less likely to improve cognitive abilities.

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Mixing improves schools for the future

- Mixing increases the quality of training for all students in the school.

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Mixing encourages schools to make conscious educational policy choices

- By mixing, schools can make conscious educational policy choices.

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Mixing makes teachers' jobs more rewarding

- Inter-racial teachers and students are more rewarding.

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Mixing has positive political priority

- Segregation is a high priority issue in the political agenda.

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Mixing is a theory of differentiated segregation

- Mixing promotes integration and social cohesion.

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Mixing is not just about equality

- For the purpose of skills that are strongly linked with success in education, it is necessary to maintain separate educational systems.

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Publication notes that multiracial communities are common and effective

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Mixing does not contribute to segregation

- Mixing primary schools can be successful if teachers, resources, and policies are appropriate.

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Mixing is difficult to execute

- Teachers in racially homogenous schools have greater responsibilities.

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Knowledge base

• Independent evaluation of the 12 pilots (Regioplan, 2012)

• State of the art manuels for promising interventions, developed by the Knowledge Centre in cooperation with stakeholders (website, 2012)
International knowledge base

- We can learn from other countries
- Therefor the Centre explored the international knowledge base
  - About ‘what works, for whom and why?’
  - About the context for implementation
  - About factors facilitating success
- Together with colleagues we produced a book on almost 20 countries and regions (Bakker et al, 2011; compare our paper)
International perspectives on countering school segregation

Joep Bakker, Eddie Denessen, Dorothee Peters & Guido Walraven (Eds.)
2. Reflection
What have we learned?

- There is no *magic bullet*, no easy solution.

- There are promising interventions:
  - Types of controlled choice
  - Parent initiatives
  - Information for parents (including brochures, websites, school tours)

- However: we need more research
What types of research?

• Independent evaluations of the process and the effects
• Qualitative and quantitative research
• Research with ‘practice based evidence’ -- using the experience and [tacit] knowledge of policy and practice
• Research focused on utilisation
How to cooperate effectively?

“old” model
- Motto: *speaking truth to power*
- Research vs application
- Focus on ‘truth’
- Technical rationality
- Hierarchical organisation

“new” model
- Motto: *knowledge as co-creation*
- Research involves policy and practice
- Focus on utilisation
- Reflective practitioner
- Learning organisation
Effective policy and practice

• The ‘new’ model fits best with
  – school effectiveness and improvement
  – evidence informed educational policy

• Because of: ownership

• To be matched with: empowerment
What makes a difference?

• Political will and enthusiasm of
  – local stakeholders (schoolboards, elderman)
  – the national minister (top-down)
  – groups of parents (bottom-up)

• Because: none of the stakeholders has the power to force a decision, consensus is needed (‘polder model’ or Dutch dilemma)
Information & contact

www.gemengdescholen.nl
(with page in English)

guido.walraven@planet.nl