

# From master student to master teacher: The meaning of teacher research for school practice

Carlos van Kan<sup>1</sup>, Patricia Brouwer<sup>2</sup>, Ben Smit<sup>3</sup>, Lia Spreeuwenberg<sup>4</sup>, Jacqueline van Swet<sup>5</sup> & Wilfried Admiraal<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>HAN University of Applied Sciences, Nijmegen <sup>2</sup>ECBO, Den Bosch <sup>3</sup>Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching, Leiden <sup>4</sup>AERES University of Applied Sciences, Wageningen <sup>5</sup>Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Tilburg

## Theoretical background:

- Teachers generally seem to have limited knowledge of, access to and interest in insights from academic educational research (Beycioglu, Ozer, & Ogurlu, 2013; Gore & Gitlin, 2004). Accordingly, the impact of academic research on the teaching practice seems to be disappointingly low.
- A possible way to bridge the gap between research and practice might be research by teachers (Admiraal, Smit, & Zwart, 2014). This line of reasoning has found its way to policy actions of the Dutch government, in which master programs for teachers are promoted.
- The assumption is made that teachers who have earned a master degree are able to generate knowledge and stimulate knowledge utilization in schools (Dutch ministry of education, 2013). Yet evidence of positive effects of teacher research, either as part of a master program or carried out by in-service teachers is minimal and somewhat ambiguous.

## Research questions:

Teacher research was operationalized by three aspects, that is as (1) having an inquiry stance towards the teaching practice, (2) applying insights from the (academic) knowledge base in the teaching practice, and (3) conducting research in line with a systematic approach. The current study aims to answer the following research questions:

- In what way do schools perceive the significance of teacher research conducted in the context of master programs for the school practice?
- In what way do schools perceive the significance of teacher research for school practice?

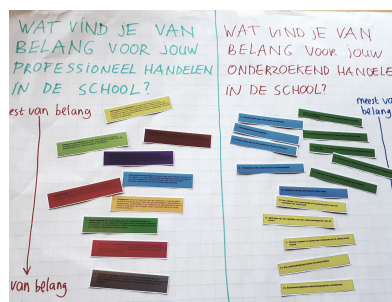
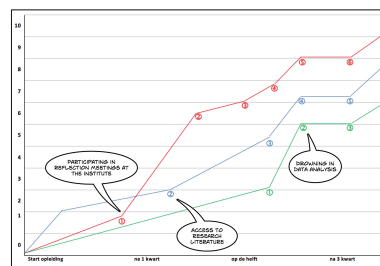
## References:

Admiraal, W., Smit, B., & Zwart, R. (2014). Teacher research on teaching and learning in secondary education. *IB Journal of Teaching Practice*, 2(1); Beycioglu, K., Ozer, N., & Ugurlu, C. T. (2010). Teachers' views on educational research. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1088–1093; Gore, J. M., & Gitlin, A. D. (2004). [RE]visioning the academic-teacher divide: power and knowledge in the educational community. *Teachers and Teaching*, 10, 35–58; Kelchtermans, G. (1993). Getting the story, understanding the lives: From career stories to teachers' professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 9, 443-456; Ministerie van OCW. (2013). *Lerarenagenda 2013-2020: de leraar maakt het verschil*. [Teacher agenda 2013-2020: The teacher makes the difference]. Den Haag: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap.

## Research design:

A mixed-method research design has been used:

- First, a biographical study has been carried out with 36 teachers from the master program educational needs, learning and innovation and academic teacher education. Data was collected for each participant: 6-12 months during the master program they attend, and 6-12 months following the completion of their master program during their career as a teacher. At the end of both periods, participants were involved in a biographical interview (Kelchtermans, 1993) using a story-line method. In this interview, participants reflected on their development as teacher and teacher-researcher and indicated crucial events in this development. Also, participants collected feedback twice from their colleagues in school on how they evaluated the knowledge utilization of the participants' research activities.
- Second, a Q-sort questionnaire was administered within a small group of teachers from each of the three educational sectors mentioned above, which measures beliefs about teacher research as a professional development strategy.



Question to discuss: How do you perceive the potential value of teacher research as an approach for both teachers' professional development and knowledge utilization in schools?

## Conclusions:

- a master program has a positive impact on teachers' professional development in terms of their increased ability to conduct teacher research in their schools.
- With regard to knowledge utilization teachers with a master degree could play an important role, but only in schools that have policies in place that support and strengthen the position of teachers with a master degree.
- The Q-sort findings show that teachers in general consider having an inquiry stance quite important compared to other teacher competences for their professional development. However, applying insights from the (academic) knowledge base and conducting research are considered much less important by teachers for their professional development.

## Impact:

Educational practice:

- Promote action research; researching and designing one's own practice fit (novice) teachers' concerns;
- Applying insights from the (academic) knowledge base should have a stronger focus in the first phases of the master programs;
- Make use of the story line method as a longitudinal reflection tool for teachers' professional development.

Policy:

- Invest in policy measures that focus on professional development in teacher teams as opposed to individual teachers;
- Define the capability of teachers in terms of their ability to use teacher research as a means to make complex situational decisions;
- Develop career pathway that provide opportunities for strengthening teachers' research capabilities.