

School-University Knowledge Exchange Schemes

Background and process

School-University Knowledge Exchange Schemes (SUKES) is a collaboration set up by an international group of educational researchers and consultants in 2012 to investigate knowledge exchange partnerships between researchers and practitioners. The aims of the collaboration are to identify existing active schemes and survey their purpose, form and characteristics. Questions being investigated initially are:

1. How are school-university knowledge exchange schemes funded?
2. What types of interaction between teachers and researchers are involved?
3. How is engagement with evidence supported?
4. How is new knowledge generated and shared?
5. What are the success factors and challenges?
6. What evidence is there of impact on teaching and learning?

An initial survey in 2012 identified 13 schemes and its findings were discussed at a workshop at the EIPPEE workshop in Frankfurt in 2013. While the survey responses revealed diversity in purpose, partners and funding, the following common factors were associated with success:

- capacity to collaborate effectively between dissimilar cultures: schools and academia
- building of mutual trust between academics and practitioners
- starting by accepting and reflecting on real issues in schools (“how it actually is”)
- recognising the value of different kinds of knowledge and of ways to manage them

In a workshop discussion suggestions were made for each of the key stakeholder groups:

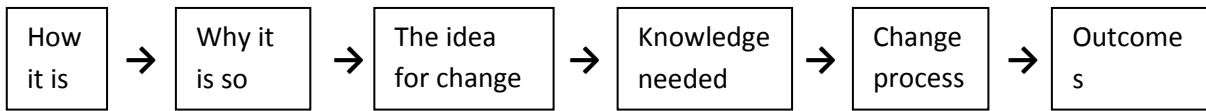
- for *leaders of schools*, encouragement of evidence-using cultures and growing them in partnership with universities and municipalities
- for *practitioners and researchers*, recognising differences in the forms of knowledge they work with, and how these forms interrelate, as they collaborate
- for *policymakers*, supporting locally-based schemes so they may access and assimilate the evidence being discussed between practitioners and researchers

From this initial study it was decided to draw on existing theory and further analytical empirical work to consider how to model the knowledge exchange process. The study group has taken this forward in 2014 by considering four specific schemes and relating experience in them to theoretical ideas about knowledge use, culture and institutions.

Leaders in the four schemes, in Iceland, Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK have developed a set of perspectives on important themes by combining practical experience of an actual scheme with theoretical ideas. The four perspectives are: concepts of organizational change; institutional and cultural factors; evidence-based policy and practice and the knowledge process in practice.

From discussions based on the four perspectives and the specific schemes studied we offer a simple conceptualisation of the process of change in which knowledge exchange is a part.

The process of change



Four perspectives

1. Organisational change

The Mennta Mioja Education Centre

Anna Kristin Siguroadottir, Iceland

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2. Institutional and cultural perspectives

The Essunga School Transformation & evidence placed in context

Per Skoglund, Sweden

We are focusing on collaboration between different **“institutional types”**, namely “research”, “policy making” and “school practice”. All three are grounded in certain ideas and institutional standards, implicit or explicit, and they do have a “practice”. Here I will focus mainly on the *relation between research practice and school practice*. By an amazing case of school development in Sweden (Persson & Persson 2012; Persson 2012; European Agency 2013a), I will illustrate how change is made by relating school to new research, reflecting the dominating culture, or “Thought-Action-Style”, which helped the creation of a new culture and institutional standards (Bogason 1987; North 1993; Johansson 2003:25; Hatch & Zilber 2012; Zilber 2012).

Some research relate to the challenge of school-research-collaboration and states that it is about “bridging the gap” (Green 2008: 120ff; Jansson 2011; Biesta 2007; Simons, Kushner, Jones & James 2003). In order to bridge the gap it seems crucial that researcher “know” the community, that the school professionals are fully involved and that it is a nonhierarchical and mutual relation (Reback, Cohen, Freese and Shoptaw 2002). Later research elaborate two ideal types of knowledge production, one based on problem formulation by research institutions and the other based on formulation by the school community (Bresnen and Gibson 2013:27).

Miserable outcomes by a segregative culture- A shock

Efforts in the Essunga municipality began in 2007, when open comparisons between schools in Sweden's municipalities were presented for the first time. Only 76% of the students were eligible for upper secondary national school and Essunga schools were in the very bottom. Three years later all pupils were eligible for upper secondary school and in 2011 the national average of eligibility was 87%, while 97% were eligible in Essunga. How was this possible? In essence it was a matter of a dominating culture and institutionalized standards of segregation of students with any difficulties in school. The results were falling in spite of teachers' ambitious work and school procedures. The number of students, moved from ordinary activities and placed into special groups, grew increasingly and these students did not return to the regular class room. The special pedagogues then started a discussion with the headmaster about how it might be possible to change the situation (Persson & Persson 2012).

Modes of transformation-a brief secondary analysis

Persson & Persson (2012) and later European Agency (2013a) and Skoglund (2013) uncover several aspects of transformation. The case illustrates how one can create a "knowledge and learning friendly context", consisting of a common culture and commonly stated institutional standards in order to "take care of" research evidence in order to get better outcomes.

The case uncover not one, but a certain *chain of "tipping-points"* (Skoglund 2013; 2014 forthcoming; Kim & Mauborgne 2003). The first step was to **accept how bad the situation was**, and thereby clarify a common understanding and certainty about this situation. Every organization facing a situation like this, is however based only on its own members "earlier way" of understanding and explaining school problems. This "thought style" (Persson & Persson 2012:78 based on Fleck 1935/1997:34) could be labeled the "blame theory", which constitutes of blaming others, the pupils, the parents and the bad surrounding society and its lack of "enlightment".

In order to create a new, as I will label it "thought-action- style", it seems necessary to get some input from the outside. In this case, Essunga asked for "counselling help" from the National Agency for special needs education and Schools. The help consisted on practice based and research based evidence of change and Essunga did get **support by "expanding models" of understanding**, pinpointing the leadership style, the organizing of competencies and teaching modes as key explanations to student outcomes.

In order to change, it is necessary to understand the causes, but it is not sufficient; it is also necessary to **create an idea or a vision of "another way of being as school and as professional"**. By using research evidence, summarized in small pamphlets the principal and the special pedagogue created new material to be reflected by all teachers in scheduled "reflective meetings" for a long period of time. This material and reflections helped the school to create a vision of a culture of sharing and learning for all: politicians, professionals, pupils and parents. Step by step, the professionals **refined strategy and practical procedures** which became commonly accepted and formulated institutional standards.

Conclusion

A fundamental change mechanism seems to be the creation of time and space to confront existing “knowledge in practice” with research “knowledge about practice” and shaping of arenas for developing a common “knowledge for practice”, the future work.

To generalize, Essunga schools moved from a “grid culture” (regulation from above) to a “group culture” where all stakeholders “accepted to learn” and to support each other (Persson & Persson 2012; Douglas 1986; Johansson 2003:27). The actors in Essunga also managed to make this to an institutionalized culture by political and executive formalization of statements here framed as “institutional standards” by the municipal system: all can learn, all shall succeed, all shall be challenged and supported, all teachers do use the same/a similar procedure of structuring the school day and so on. It was not an institutionalization from the “top” or the “bottom”, it was created from “within” humans and between humans in collaboration on different levels.

By this case one can tentatively state that the question of “utilization of research evidence” (Jansson 2010) is not a question of prime order, rather the Essunga case indicates a “dynamic sequence” (Skoglund & Erkingen 2007; Liljeroth et al 2011) by facilitation of a constructive/efficient way of using research evidence “in context”:

Is—Why---Idea of “better”---New knowledge---Change thoughts---Change procedures---New Outcomes---New culture and institutional standards---Is---Why→

Research evidence is by this “placed in context” and used for development with better outcomes. At the same time the change in Essunga has become new evidence by the researchers following the transformation and a constructive, but still not uncomplicated, dialogue continues between school professionals and researchers in Essunga and between these researchers and the counsellors in the National Agency mentioned. Therefore it is about the **collaborative investigation of “esse” and “essens”** and the key factor is “**inter esse**”, in the meaning of “to be in between with interest of the other”. How is it to be in practice, what is the essential factors of that being and which counselling support is needed to “merge” practice and research? (compare Hessels, van Lente & Smits, 2009)

3. Evidence-based practice and policy

The Yorkshire Informed Practice Initiative

Mary Sheard, UK

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4. The knowledge process, involving municipality, school, university

Tomislav Tudjman, Netherlands

Introduction

Very few people will doubt the need to use science to improve the results of educational practice wherever possible. There seems to be a widespread consensus about two elements. One is that educational practice, in order to be efficient and effective, can and should be informed by results from research. The other is that educational theory and research, in order to be valorised, can and should be informed by everyday educational practice. Despite this consensus, it is not common practice yet that educational practice and science inform each other in such a way that they gain from each other. In other words, despite this consensus, there is still a large gap between educational research and practice. We argue that bridging this gap needs more than a paragraph on practical implications in each research article, and more than a single course on research in the training of practitioners. We need to look at new ways of circulating knowledge through learning networks and cooperative knowledge production processes. In the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, a new innovative network has been set up that aims to bridge the gap: The Knowledge Network on Talent in Rotterdam (KNT).

Bringing parties together

The starting point of the Knowledge Network is that the development on the one hand and the use of knowledge on the other hand, should not take place in two separate areas but in one common area (co-creation). In other words, the knowledge network creates this common area by bringing together parties that deliver “evidence for practice” as well as “practice based evidence”.

The whole idea of the network is to have a professional, fast but loosely coupled group of people and institutes who work together in different mixture on different subjects. The network is not highly funded or granted. It largely works on professional standards of collegiality and on the experience that every one gains with the cooperation. We do so by creating a close cooperation between educational and knowledge institutes, having the commitment of school boards and municipality and importantly working in a non-competitive atmosphere. How do we manage that? Well, the KNT have earned a position in the Rotterdam educational surrounding where she, on the one hand, forms the ‘eyes and ears’ of the educational policy (what happens in the field?) and on the other hand a knowledge base where institutes can get informed and (hopefully in the future) trained. In that way we can keep up good relations among each other and create accessibility of knowledge on important current issues.

Activities

The KNT in Rotterdam has five types of activities:

1. *Knowledge exchange*

Exchange of knowledge takes place in different ways. We organise six regular meeting in a year where all involved organizations inform each other on what they

are doing, what they have learned from other networks or conferences and on what issues they can work together or get informed. Besides that we organize KNT specials in which a current topic, such as transition models, professional capital, career orientation etc.

Furthermore we have a virtual linked-in group and a website (www.kenniswerkplaats-rotterdamstalent.nl). With this we want to inform more and more policy makers, educational researchers and practitioners about our ideas, insights and activities on the agenda.

2. *Research*

We do a lot of research, not only within our own organization (these are the University and the Universities of Applied Science), but within the KNT. We always work with a minimum of 3 members coming from 3 different organizations. In that way the *best* researchers are appointed to do the job and, because we are a active network, we can come up with a consortium quickly. This is of great advantage for the client (municipality, schools), they often want quick answers. Research can range from explorations on certain themes that show what knowledge is already available to large-scale studies where multiple parties are contributing. Short opinions and advices are written too.

3. *Acquisition*

With building consortia for the activities explained under point 2, we use them also for doing acquisition in National and European funds.

4. *Educational Activities*

The KNT is designed to connect with all the schools in the city. The KNT delivers recent knowledge and information into education by giving presentations and trainings. Difficult is to actually engage practitioners more in our network and influential change educational practice (see 'issues for future development')

5. *The Network as a Professional Community*

These includes activities such as conferences, study visits, peer reviews in educational settings within our city and abroad share and collect knowledge.

Summarized

- Within our network important new research questions are formulated.
- Fast way of getting and transferring Knowledge
- Avoid duplication of studies carried out in the Rotterdam context
- Preferred supplier municipality
- Clear output: Research Reports, Advices, Literature studies etc.
- Impact on and transformation of the educational workplace
- Practical information (portal) on the website and discussions on LinkedIn.

Issues for future development

The ultimate goal of the network is to build a community of local educational expertise that supports policy development and educational practice in Rotterdam. That is a big challenge

in a complex educational area. We have to overcome the gap between theory and practice involving as many people as we can. This means also that we have to find a balance between the supply and the demand for knowledge. We need to translate abstract educational concepts to a very practical implementation level. The following questions give form to our future development:

1. How can we make sure that what we do has an impact (*effectiveness*)?
2. How do we get *knowledge* into school programs?
3. How can KWP further *strengthen* the professional education community in Rotterdam?

Preliminary conclusions

The four schemes share some very general characteristics:

1. practice is informed by results from research and research is informed by practice
2. Schools' engagement with research evidence is part of the its improvement agenda
3. The schemes provide a framework for communication and activities.
4. The schemes increase interaction between the various communities
5. Activities within the schemes involve researchers, practitioners and others
6. Schemes support the professional development of teachers in several distinct ways

The mode of operation depends critically on local circumstances - funding, leadership political context and individual personalities, among others. It is not expected that any scheme could be transplanted effectively to another context in its entirety.

We conclude by mapping the four cases in this study against the models outlined in the third perspective above. *EducationPlaza (EP) or MenntaMiðja* (www.menntamidja.is) is a collaborative virtual venue. As a knowledge communities model for reducing the knowing-doing gap, EP facilitates and develops channels of communication for sharing information and consulting on research and school development projects. EP also aims to connect the various activities and functions of actors in the school- and academic communities through new and existing communities of practice and other collaborative efforts. The role of the EP is to provide a framework for the various activities within five active plazas: language, science, special education, special education, ICT, and philosophy for teachers. Building more or less on grassroots initiatives has promoted interesting research questions about how to establish relationships between the academic community and schools in such an informal forum. Involving the academic community proved to be problematic. Researchers hesitated to join in and share or discuss their results. However, others found ways to work with the plazas to advance and add important dimensions to their research projects. This suggests that while functioning with some success as a knowledge community model, the initiative would benefit from involving researchers more by incorporating more features of the research development diffusion model, and developing the role of researchers as mediators. In the longer term, the evidence-based practice model should be adopted to provide evidence of the effectiveness of activities identified through the plazas. Similarly, the *Knowledge Network on Talent in Rotterdam (KNT)* is a professional, fast but loosely coupled group of people and institutes who work together in different ways on different subjects. It provides new ways of circulating knowledge through learning networks and cooperative knowledge production processes to bridge the knowing-doing gap. It aims to do so by organizing a variety of innovative activities (virtual as well as real) that involve researchers, and practitioners as well as policy makers. The knowledge network brings together parties that deliver "evidence for practice" as well as "practice based evidence".

An important observation is that much practical knowledge is not made explicit and is therefore also not transferable knowledge. The ultimate goal of the network is to build a community of local educational expertise that supports policy development and educational practice in Rotterdam. To do this successfully, the network has identified the following questions:

- How can we make sure that what we do has an impact (effectiveness)?
- How do we get *knowledge* into school programs?
- How can the knowledge network further *strengthen* the professional education community in Rotterdam?

Like the EP initiative above, KNT functions well as a knowledge community model for reducing the knowing-doing gap. However, the specific collaborations between researchers and practitioners are less clear, as in the Research Development Diffusion Model. Furthermore, while the Evidence-Based Practice Model for reducing the knowing-doing gap addresses the questions of effectiveness and translating findings from effective research into practice, it is not yet reflected in the KNT initiative.

The research question underpinning the *York Informed Practice Initiative* (YIPI) was ‘How are evidence-based programmes and strategies best selected, introduced, implemented and sustained in schools and what are the outcomes in terms of changes in practice and school improvement?’ A five-stage engagement process was used to structure the collaboration in evidence use through productive contact between researchers and practitioners. The schools welcomed the researchers’ provision of research evidence summaries for proven programmes and practices with potential to meet the needs identified by the individual schools and put them to practical use.

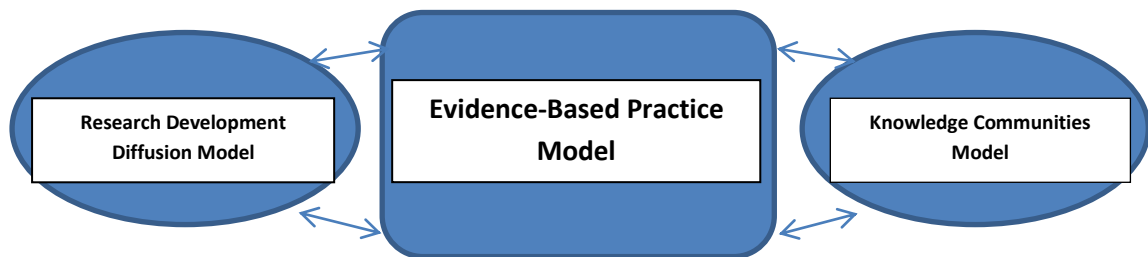
The initiative illustrated an important characteristic of the Research Development Diffusion Model, that of *expansive learning*: that learning expands up and outward from a subjective perspective to a socially shared perspective, then down and inward from those socially shared perspectives to a subjective perspective where learning is shaped by prior experience, personal sense of efficacy, emotion, identity, and moral commitment. The proposed development from this proof-of-concept study is to evaluate the process in a randomised control trial, recognising that only through the Evidence-Based Model can questions of effectiveness and translating into practice be addressed.

In the *Essunga study* from Sweden, which focuses on increased capability of inclusion and goal achievement through counselling and research cooperation, important work is done by questioning the existing practice and ethics accepting “uncertainty” as the mean of developing schools. Politicians, managers, principals, teachers, local supporting professionals, pupils, parents, counselors and researchers work together to search for common development of local schools within the local community. This provides an example of The Knowledge Communities Model. Early in the change process, the Education

Board decided that all work should emanate from current research evidence. Literature was summarised and given to all staff, from the preschool teachers to the staff at adult education and the content was discussed and connected to the teachers' own knowledge and experiences. This, in turn, represents the Research Development Diffusion Model, while the role of researchers as mediators is perhaps under-developed and may be given more emphasis in supporting and challenging schools in future work.

Applying the three models to the SUKES initiatives helps to identify their similarities and differences. Moreover, it suggests a new conceptual and pragmatic way forward for this knowledge exchange venture to reduce the knowing-doing gap in education. Figure 1 shows how the Evidence-Based Model, the Research Development Diffusion Model and the Knowledge Communities Model can form an integrated approach, with the Evidence-Based Model as the principal approach to addresses the questions of effectiveness and translating findings from effective research into practice.

Figure 1. An integrated model to address the knowing-doing gap



Developing this integrated approach will be one of the main challenges for SUKES in the future.

Appendix A

Initial survey of knowledge exchange schemes 2012

13 schemes were identified in six European countries in the first phase of the SUKES project: as shown in Table 1.

Country	Institution	Name of Scheme	Focus of Scheme
Iceland	The Education Center, University of Reykjavic	Menta Mioja	A framework for forums for research and development projects across different sectors and educational issues
UK	Institute for Effective Education, University of York	The Yorkshire Informed Practice Initiative (YIPI)	A school engagement process for selecting and implementing evidence-based programmes
UK	Coventry City Council and CfBT Education	The CfBT/Coventry Anti Bullying Project	Tackling bullying in Coventry schools
Netherlands	RISBO Research, Training & Consultancy Agency, Erasmus University, Rotterdam	Rotterdam Talent Knowledge Network	Building a community of local educational expertise that supports policy development and educational practice in Rotterdam
Sweden	National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM) in Sweden, & Borås University College,	Essunga Municipal School: Inclusion and goal attainment	Use of research evidence to create a culture of inclusion in the poorest goal attaining municipality
Sweden	12 municipalities and their schools, supported by National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM) in Sweden, other national Education Agencies and the university College of Malmö	Creating Inclusive Learning Environments	Creating more inclusive learning environments, using research as an impetus for change and for creating new knowledge through the project

Belgium	Vrije University, Brussels	CLiL Multilingual education	Multi-lingual education
UK	Aston University, Birmingham	How Language Works	Promoting learners' facility with subject-specific language to raise attainment in secondary schools
Germany	Ulm University	Scientific knowledge about effective learning	Identifying factors associated with effective learning through empirical research
UK	Teacher Development Trust, London	National Teacher Enquiry Network	A membership network providing support and resources to teachers
Germany	ZNL Transfer Centre of Neuroscience and Learning, Ulm University and the Sachsisches Bildungsinstitut, Radebeul University	Focus Kind	Development of teaching approaches based on lessons learned and their implementation in practice
Germany	Ulm University	EMIL-Learning emotion regulation	Cognitive neuroscientific research on learning
UK	Centre for the Use of Research Evidence in Education (CUREE), Coventry	Route Maps	Interactive Route maps providing evidence about effective teaching strategies

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