



# Dutch National Knowledge Centre for Mixed Schools

## How can research, policy and practice cooperate effectively?



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# Content of the presentation

## 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?

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# 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





# Knowledge base

- Independent evaluation of the 12 pilots (Regioplan, 2012)
- State of the art manuals for promising interventions, developed by the Knowledge Centre in cooperation with stakeholders (website, 2012)



# International knowledge base

- We can learn from other countries
- Therefore 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.)

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## 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

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