Connecting educational research, policy and practice: two innovative infrastructures from the Netherlands

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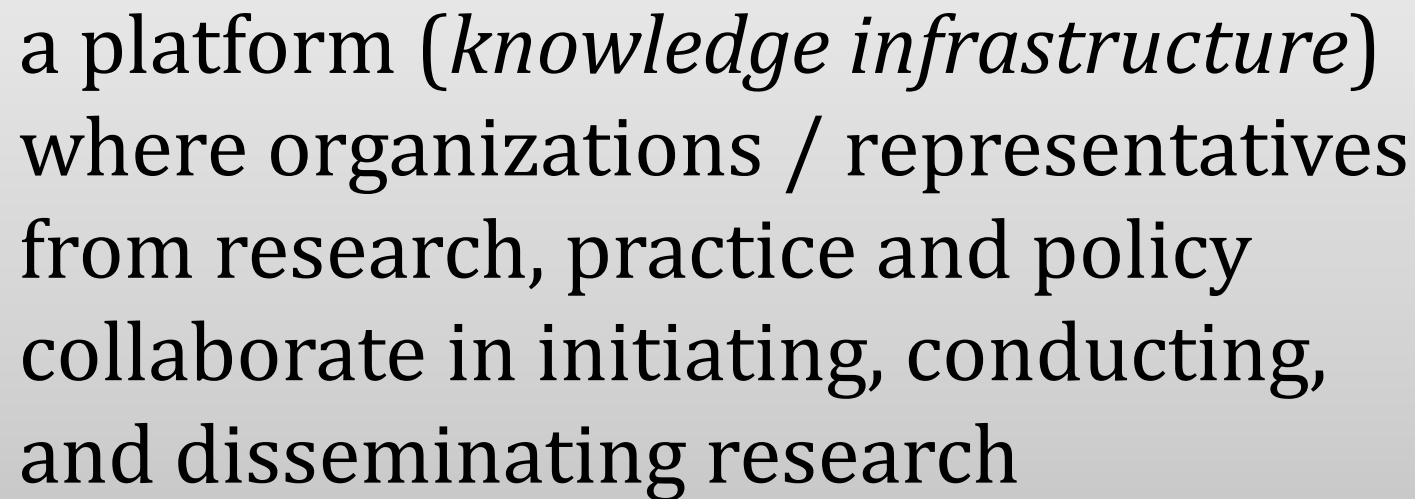
EIPPEE conference, May 15th 2014, Oslo

Outline of presentation

- Connecting educational research, policy and practice:
  two examples from the Netherlands

  - Academic Workplace Education (Louise Elffers):
    a research infrastructure with a focus on educational issues at
    the national level, including partners at the national policy level

  - Kaans (Karien Coppens & Raoul Haenbeukers):
    regionally oriented research program with strong partnerships
    with local schools and municipalities

- Sharing experiences & lessons learned

What is an Academic Workplace?

a platform (*knowledge infrastructure*) where organizations / representatives from research, practice and policy collaborate in initiating, conducting, and disseminating research

About Academic Workplaces

- Concept (originated &) developed in the public health sector
- Common goals:
  - **Sharing knowledge** between research, policy and practice
  - **Developing a research agenda** comprising issues that call for research to enhance the development of interventions (*nice to know* vs. *need to know*)
  - Strong focus on extensive and continuous **dialogue and collaboration** in programming, conducting and disseminating research
  - **Translation and dissemination** of research outcomes for policy and practice
  - (Sometimes: professionalization of practitioners through research fellowships)

Academic Workplace Education: key partners

Research
- **Maastricht University**
- Objectives (a.o.): stronger collaboration with educational field (more input than just data), disseminating output more actively to the field, contributing to policy and practice
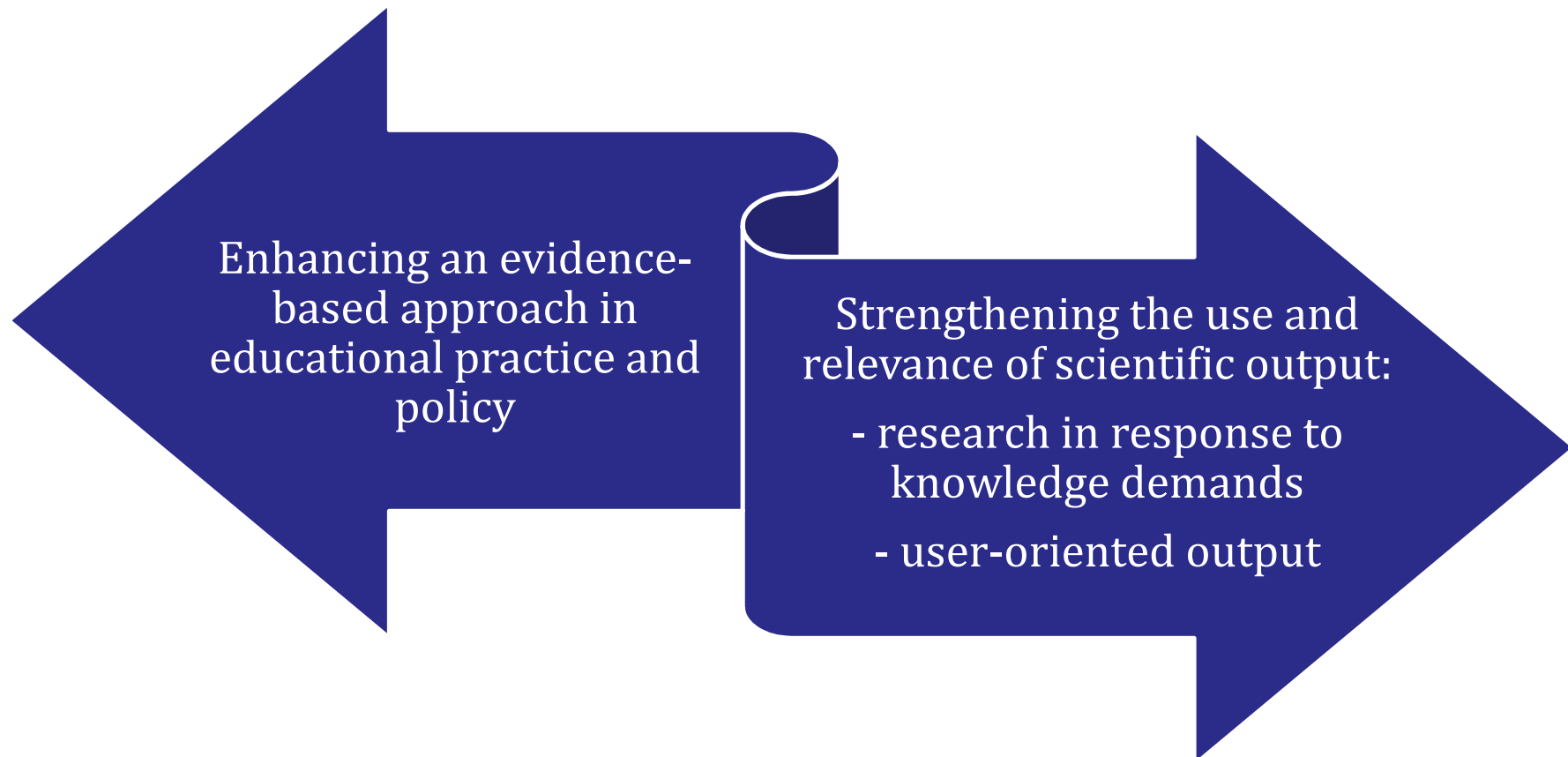
Policy
- **Dutch Education Inspectorate**
- Objectives (a.o.): improving research methods, effective use of existing data sets, innovative ways to disseminate annual monitor outcomes to help improve education

Practice
- **Various schools & school boards**
- Objectives (a.o.): input for school improvements, opportunity to prioritize/address problems that go beyond daily school issues, evidence-based professionalization

Two sides of the same coin

Enhancing an evidence-based approach in educational practice and policy

Strengthening the use and relevance of scientific output:

- research in response to knowledge demands
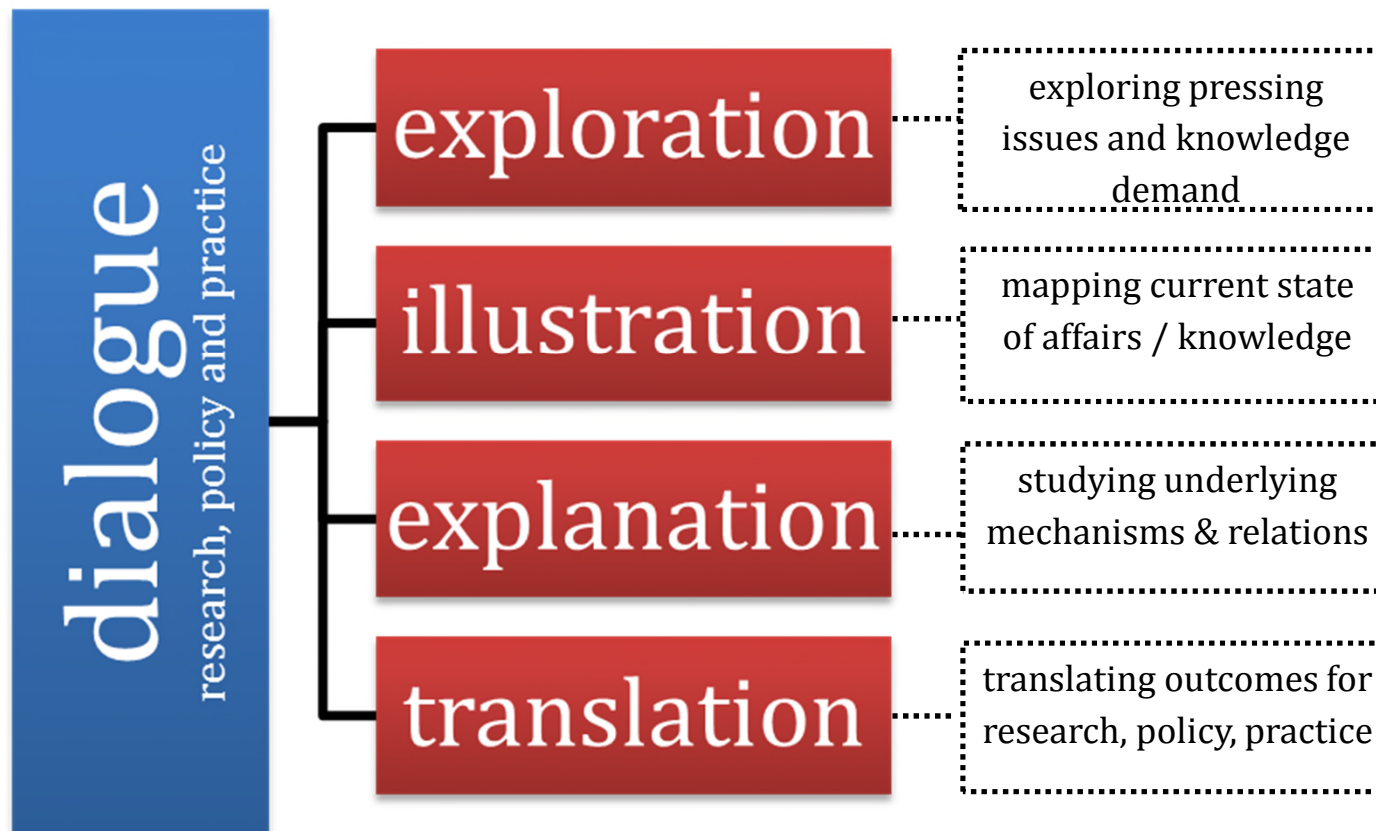
- user-oriented output

Research focus Academic Workplace Education

- Focus on research topics at the level of the educational system
  - Education Inspectorate monitors quality of educational system (in addition to the quality of individual schools)
  - Quality, access, efficiency of the educational system
  - Schools share problems that transcend their specific context, influence, and/or responsibility

Cornerstones of the Academic Workplace Education

dialogue — research, policy and practice

exploration	exploring pressing issues and knowledge demand
illustration	mapping current state of affairs / knowledge
explanation	studying underlying mechanisms & relations
translation	translating outcomes for research, policy, practice

Example of a research project: teacher quality

exploration — Researcher formulates research question in response to and in dialogue with the field: how does teachers' skill level compare to other Dutch professionals and to teachers in other countries?

illustration — Using international dataset PIAAC to map teachers' position in the professional skill distribution, and compared to teachers in other countries: are the expressed concerns justified?

explanation — Searching explanations for teachers' position relative to other professionals and teachers from other countries. Data analysis, discussion with teachers, teacher educators, Inspectors, etc.

translation — Complex graphs → writing a *fast facts sheet*, presenting outcomes to relevant stakeholders, formulating conclusions and objectives for further research.

Communicating research outcomes: infographics
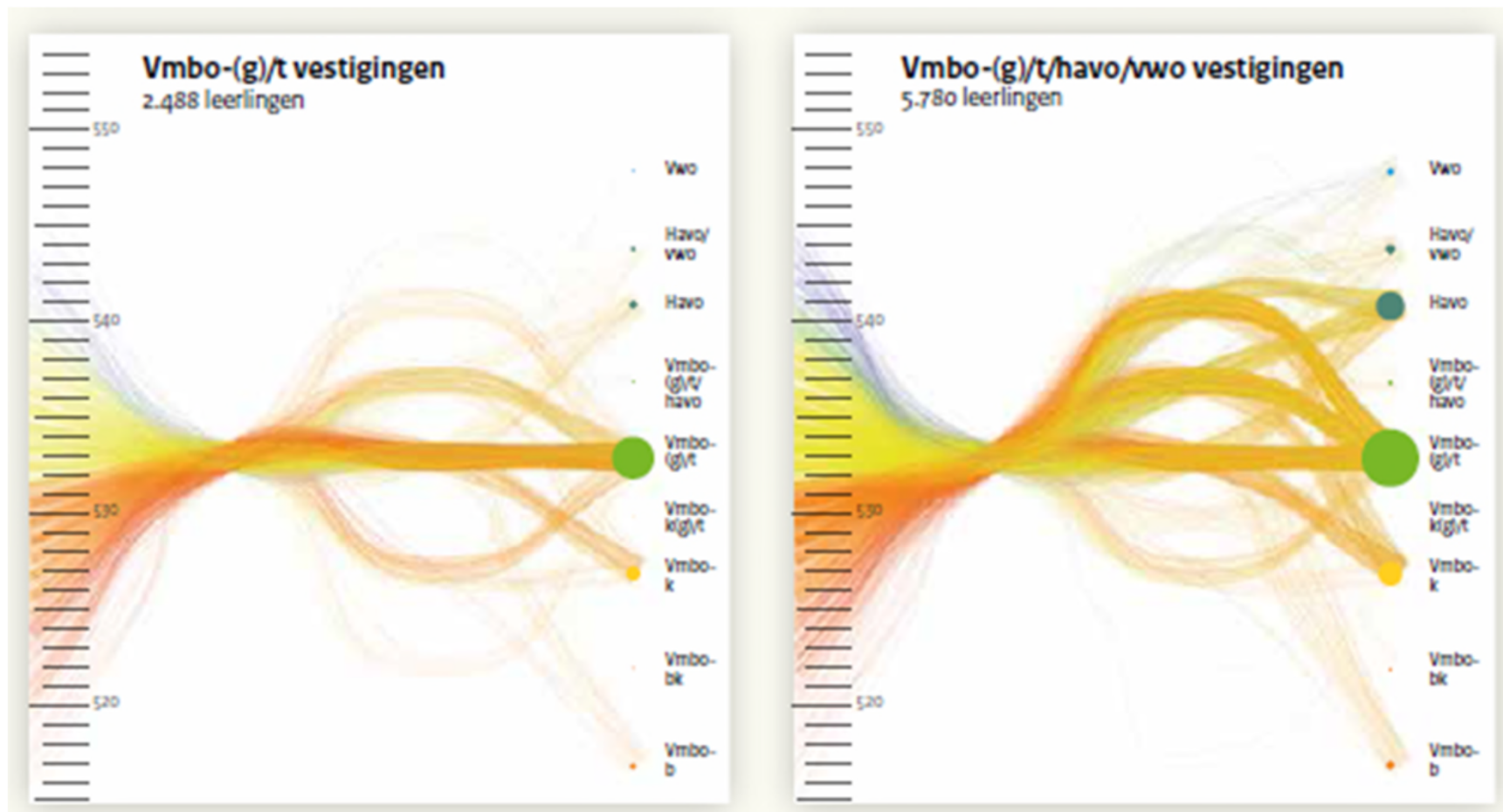
Source: Onderwijsverslag 2012/13

Lessons learned: some pitfalls

- Difficulty to let go of organizational routines:
  - Researchers: analyzing data before discussing problem definitions with relevant partners
  - Practitioners: difficulty to look across the boundaries of their specific context (class, school)
  - Policy makers: impatience with slower research cycle
- Research agenda: risk of blurred focus (many small, seemingly unrelated projects)
- Keeping it small: limited visibility, added value remains unclear
- Expanding fast: unclear structure, too much diversion in activities

Lessons learned: principles for successful collaboration

- Collaboration: means instead of goal
- Outcomes that cannot be realized by individual actors alone
- Shared output > individual input
- Each participating actor/organization has its own reasons for participation: acknowledged and accepted by all partners

- Safe environment where participants can:
  - break out of their usual working routines
  - explore new perspectives and approaches
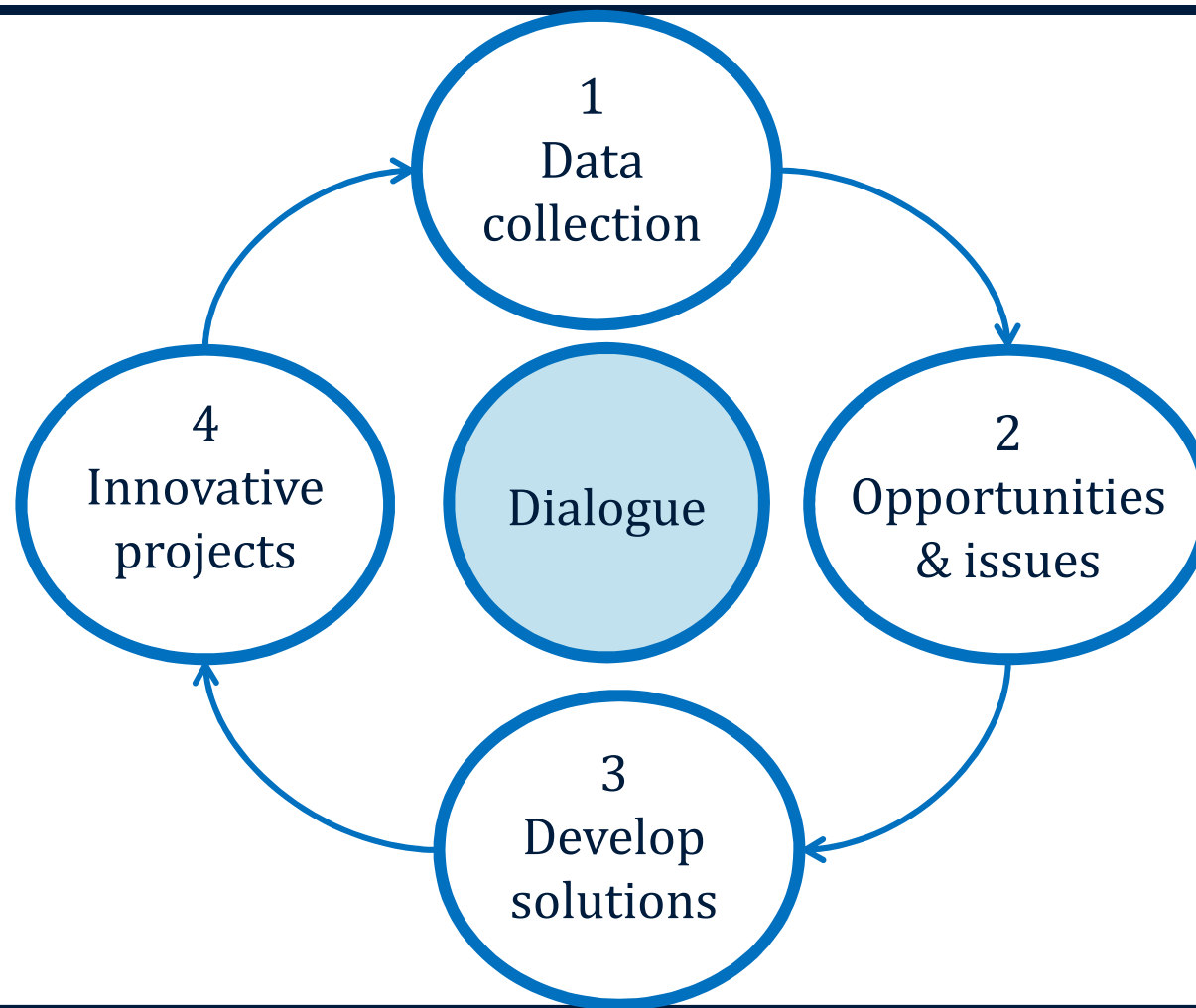 - discuss openly, act freely

Kaans: from toddler to teenager

A unique program which - supported by the Department of Education, local authorities, and educational boards - should lead to a concise and contemporary view of the changes and quality of education in the region

Kaans

1
Data collection

2
Opportunities & issues

3
Develop solutions

4
Innovative projects

Dialogue

Kaans - Moelejaan

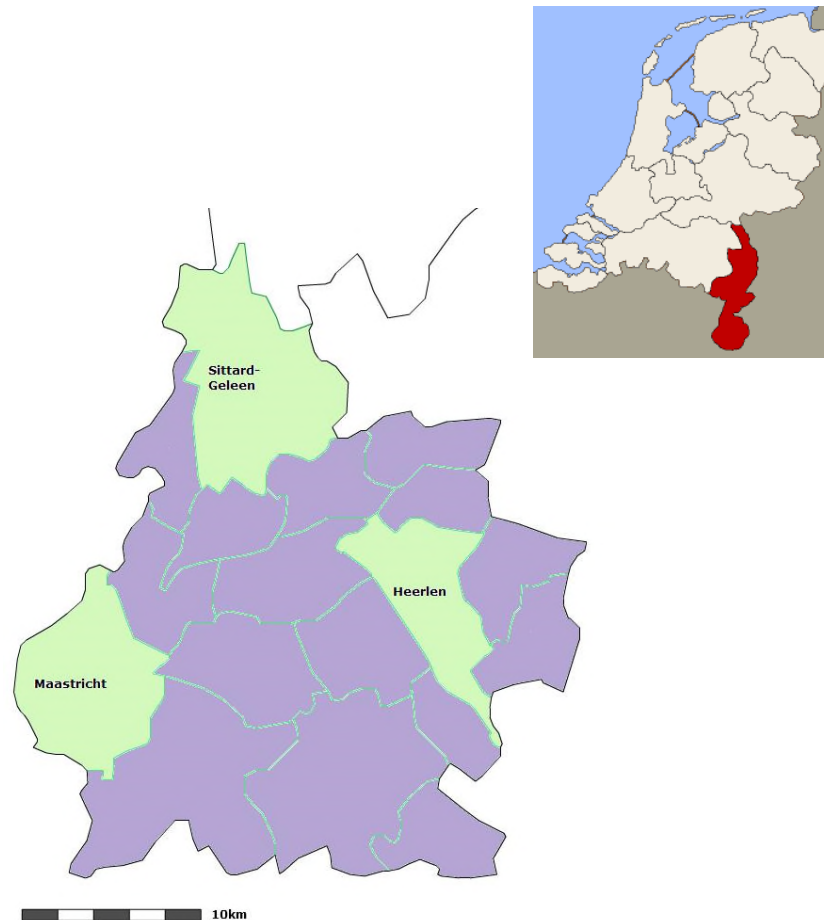2008 – 2010 Pilot Moelejaan
ECEC in the country side
56 groups in 52 centres
Monitor implementation

2011 - 2014 Convenant
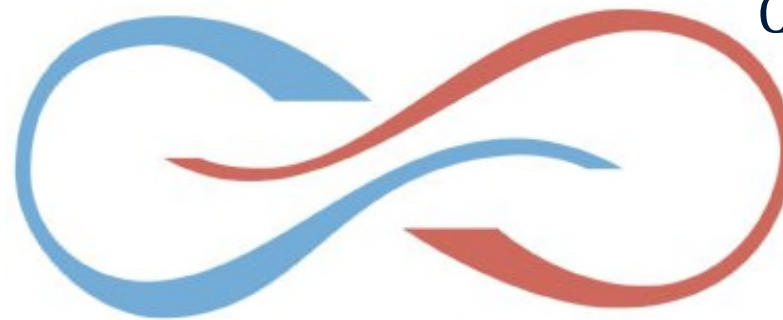18 participating municipalities
Result commitments

2015 - …

Kaans - Moelejaan

Preschool

↓

Primary school

↓

Secondary school

Policy & Practice

Changing policies and practice

Different stakeholders and interests

Research

Data collection: privacy - attrition

Results: long term - added-value

Kaans - Moelejaan

Dialogue

Continuity

Development

Kaans - Inventaar   *What?*

- 3rd year secondary education in Limburg

- every two years   2009/10; 2011/12; 2013/14

- questionnaire pupils / parents
  SES; personality; motivation; socio-emotional; satisfaction

- test (not school specific)   mathematics; Dutch

- data from school-administration
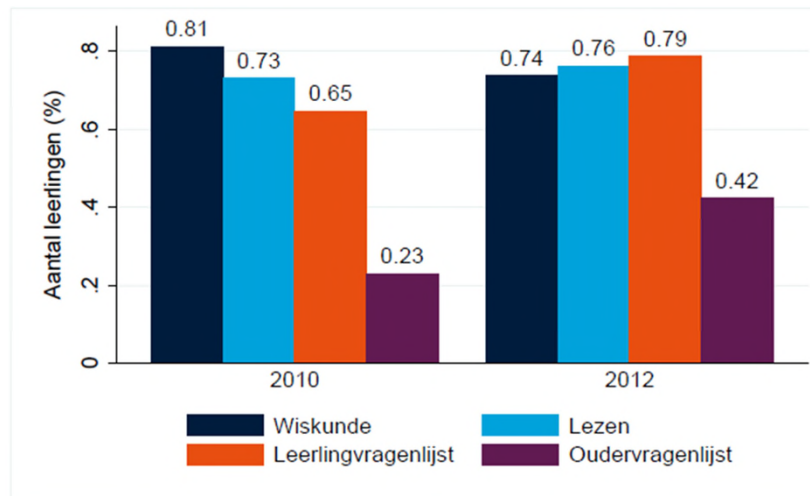 residence; grades; school-career; primary education

Kaans - Inventaar   *How?*

- during class – obligatory

- 50 min. questionnaire / 50 min. test

- digitally

- scheduling flexibility

- parents receive a questionnaire by mail

Kaans – Inventaar

Optimizing Response

- 79% of schools in Limburg (2009/10)
- 91% of schools in Limburg (2011/12)

- Minimize time and organizational demands
- Structural dialogue about themes and relevance
- Coordination with other research activities in schools
- Feedback about results
  - School- specific, benchmarking, tailored to the audience
  - In person, 'pressing'
  - Easy to digest, 'sexy'

Kaans - Inventaar   *From Questionnaire to Classroom*
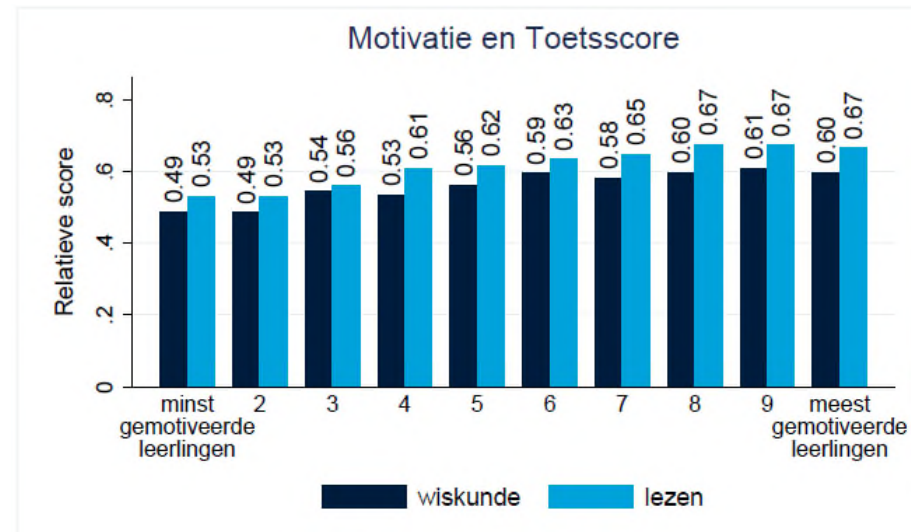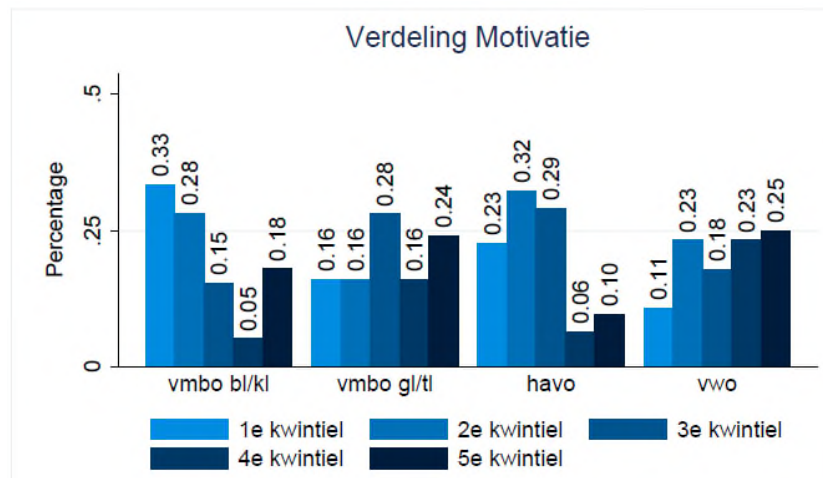
- Can motivation be stimulated?
- Does higher motivation lead to increasing test scores?
- Which pupils would profit most?

Kaans - Inventaar   *From Questionnaire to Classroom*

- During 7 months a weekly assignment to stimulate non-cognitive skills: motivation, introspection, etc…

- Assignments based on programs like Skills for Action (Lions-Quest) and 7 habits of highly effective teens (Covey)

- Selection of pupils from Inventaar (under achieving)

- Random allocation of schools over treatment and control

- Difference-in-differences model

- Results will be intensively disseminated to schools

Conclusion

- AWE: national focus, comprising several short term projects and partnerships
  - Advantage: opportunity to address current pressing issues, forming partnerships with most relevant partners for each project
  - Challenge: ad hoc partnerships → less continuity, less ownership
- Kaans: regional focus, comprising long term collaborations with all relevant stakeholders in the region
  - Advantage: continuity, ownership, strong network function
  - Challenge: requires a long breath, less room to address pressing issues
- Both:
  - staying aware of dominant routines in research, policy and practice
  - innovative platforms with great potential in connecting educational research, policy and practice

Thank you

- For more information about the *Academic Workplace Education*:
  - www.academischewerkplaatsonderwijs.nl (in Dutch)
  - email Louise Elffers: l.elffers@maastrichtuniversity.nl

- For more information about *Kaans*:
  - www.kaans.nl (in Dutch)
  - email:
    - Karien Coppens: k.coppens@maastrichtuniversity.nl
    - Raoul Haenbeukers: r.haenbeukers@maastrichtuniversity.nl