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Author(s)
Snoek, Marco

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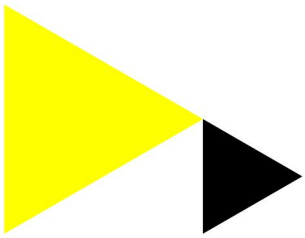

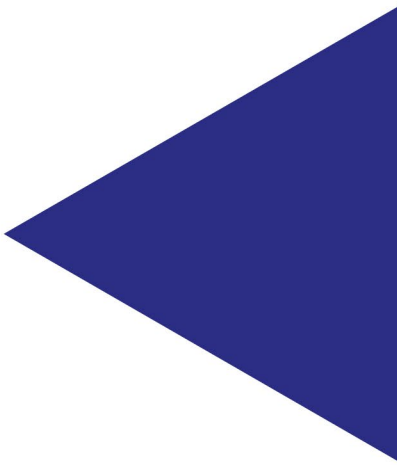

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Creating Tomorrow

CHAPTER 9

THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE IN SCHOOLS ON THE TRANSFER OF POST-INITIAL MASTER STUDIES

Marco Snoek

School of Education, Hogeschool van Amsterdam
University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

M.Snoek@hva.nl

Abstract

With a view to upgrade the teaching profession, much attention is given to Master's courses for teachers. As Master's courses require considerable investment in time and money, the question can be raised as to what extent the upgrading of teachers to Master's level will lead to improvement in teaching and learning in schools. This chapter presents the outcomes of a small scale study in which 7 teachers, who recently graduated from a Master's program in the Netherlands, were interviewed on the climate and conditions they experienced in their respective schools when seeking to apply their newly acquired knowledge, skills and professional attitudes in their daily work. This explorative study shows that teachers engaged

in a Master's program can meet considerable obstacles within the organizational culture of the school. There appears to be a considerable misalignment between the teachers engaged in the post-initial Master's program and their supervisors. While the teachers see the purpose of the Master's program both in private terms (personal development) and public terms (contributing to school development), they experience an organizational climate that leaves hardly any room for a wider public purpose, where they could use the competencies and skills they have developed outside the boundaries of their own classrooms.

Keywords

Teacher development - Master's programs - training transfer - organizational climate

Introduction

In European policies that aim to increase the quality of teachers, much attention is given to the upgrading of qualifications. The Bologna process has stimulated the development of a higher education area with qualifications at Bachelor's and Master's level. In response to the European Council's conclusions on 'Increasing the Quality of Teacher Education' (European Council 2007), many member states have started policies to raise the overall qualification level of teachers. However, the strategies that are used by member states vary. Some member states have decided to raise the minimum qualification level for teachers to Master's level. In other countries the initial qualification level for (part of the) teachers remains at Bachelor's level, while new post-initial courses are developed to create in-service opportunities for teachers to raise their qualification to Master's level. Although this second strategy, focusing on in-service Master's qualification programs, seems less ambitious than the first strategy aiming at ensuring a Master's qualification for all new teachers, the second strategy

is important as it focuses on the vast amount of teachers that already work in schools.

The ambition to increase the number of Master qualified teachers requires a considerable effort in time and money. In the Netherlands, the government has initiated a bursary system in which teachers can apply for financial support to follow an in-service Master's qualification course. This support covers both (part of) the annual study costs to a maximum of 3500 Euro and replacement costs for 160 hours per year with a maximum duration of three years (2010 figures). Until 2010 twenty thousand teachers applied for these study vouchers which involves an annual budget varying between 23 and 37 million Euro (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences 2011).

This raises the question whether this large sum of money is well spent: to what extent will the increase of Master teachers in schools lead to improvement in teaching and learning at schools.

The impact of training on the workplace has been an area of extensive research (Blume et al. 2010; Burke and Hutchins 2007; Baldwin and Ford 1988). However, this research on 'transfer of training' mainly focuses on training designs related to daily work procedures and with short duration and low intensity (Blume et al. 2010). Master qualification courses for teachers in school generally have a much longer duration and higher intensity (typically one day a week during two or three years part-time). Therefore the application of the outcomes of research on training transfer to the context of master qualification courses for teachers can be questioned and an explicit study on transfer of master studies to the workplace is justified.

1. The context of in-service master's programs in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, initial teacher education for teachers in primary and secondary education is provided by the universities for applied sciences ('hogescholen') at Bachelor's level (BEd). Teachers who wanted to upgrade their qualification could follow a postgraduate program at the universities for applied sciences. From 2006, these post graduate courses have been converted into in-service Master of Education (MEd) programs.

In 2007 a new Master's program was introduced: the MEd program *Learning and Innovation*, which prepares teachers to become an expert in teaching and learning and an innovator and change agent in school (Snoek and Teune 2006). This MEd program started at several institutions between 2007 - 2010. A second initiative to raise the qualification level of teachers was provided by the Dutch Institute for Masters in Education (NIME), in which the boards of a number of secondary schools are represented. In 2008 they initiated a tender for universities to offer a MSc/MA or MEd Master's program focusing on teaching, innovation, practice oriented research and collegial support (Snoek 2011). Both of these Master's programs focus on the one hand on the primary role of the teacher with respect to the learning of his/her pupils and on the other hand on the secondary role of the teacher that is connected to Hoyle's concept of extended professionalism (Hoyle and John 1995; Scheerens 2010; Snoek 2011). This implies that the purpose of the Master's program is twofold: a private purpose: contributing to the repertoire of the teacher within the context of his/her classroom and the learning of his/her pupils, and a public purpose: contributing to the school development as a whole, to collective innovation of learning and to supporting colleagues. However, this public purpose implies a change in the

general expectations towards teachers, as most teachers still operate within the confines of their own classrooms. The Master's program was intended to be a catalyst to change the isolated position of teachers, to increase the extended professionalism of teachers and to involve teachers more explicitly in school wide development processes.

2. Evaluation of training transfer

As these Master's programs require substantial investments in terms of finances and personal effort, it is essential to evaluate their effectiveness. Kirkpatrick (1998) offers a training evaluation model with four levels: participant satisfaction, assessment of acquired knowledge and skills, application at the workplace and impact on the results and outcomes of the organization/company. Kirkpatrick's model emphasizes the actual aim of the training: to have an impact on the outcomes of a company or organization. However, most evaluation instruments focus on participant satisfaction (level 1) as the higher levels in Kirkpatrick's model are more complex to measure. Although Kirkpatrick's model might help to change the focus from participants' satisfaction to actual impact, the model has also been criticized for being too simple as the causal relations between the levels can be questioned and intervening variables that affect outcomes are not taken explicitly into account (Holton III 1996). In the literature on training transfer a wider perspective is used, based on Baldwin and Ford's model for training transfer (Baldwin and Ford 1988). In their model, transfer of training is defined as the extent to which the learning that results from a training experience transfers to the job and leads to meaningful change in work performance (Blume et al. 2010). Baldwin & Ford's model focuses on the third level of Kirkpatrick's model and provides more detail. In their model, three negotiating elements are

identified that have impact on the transfer of training and therefore on the impact of the training on the outcomes of a company or organization. Not only training design factors (e.g. objectives, methods and opportunities for practice) will have an impact on the actual application of learned competences or skills at the workplace, but also trainee characteristics and work environment factors play an essential role in the application at the workplace. Trainee characteristics deal with ability, skills and personality of the trainee, but also with their motivation to apply the learned competences and skills in their daily work. Work environment factors deal with characteristics of the work place and how the organizational culture invites trainees to apply the learned competences and skills in their daily routines. According to Bunch (2007), much of the effectiveness literature focuses on training design, content and evaluation, but there is 'little recognition of the entrenched values, beliefs, assumptions [at the workplace] that prevent effective training' (Bunch 2007, 145). Bunch emphasizes that positive change will require organizational support. Arthur et al (2003) emphasize 'environmental favourability' as 'the extent to which the transfer or work environment is supportive of the application of new skills and behaviours learned or acquired in training' (Arthur et al. 2003, 242).

3. Indicators of organizational climates that stimulate transfer of learning

Indicators of an organizational climate that support positive transfer and that can be identified as predictive factors for positive transfer include (Rouiller and Goldstein 1993; Burke and Hutchins 2007; Baldwin and Ford 1988; Clarke 2002; Tracey and Tews 2005; Holton III, Bates, and Ruona 2000)

1. strategic alignment between the training program and the strategic direction of the organization,
2. cues that prompt trainees to use the learned knowledge or skills,
3. opportunities (or constraints) to use that learned knowledge or skills,
4. social support and feedback from supervisors and peers,
5. accountability for using the newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes and
6. cultural cues that have to do with the (implicit or explicit) importance that is given to training and professional development.

An elaboration of these indicators for an organizational climate that supports training transfer is given in table 1.

Table 1: Indicators for an organizational climate that supports training transfer

Main indicators	**Sub-indicators**	**Source**
Strategic alignment between the training program and the strategic direction of the organization		Burke and Hutchins 2007

Situational cues that prompt trainees to use the learned knowledge, skills and attitudes	Work routines that emphasize the need to apply new knowledge and skills Recognition and reward systems and career paths Accountability for using the newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes	Baldwin and Ford 1988; Rouiller and Goldstein 1993
Opportunities (or constraints) to use the learned knowledge, attitude and skills	A reduced workload to practice new skills The time interval between training and opportunity to perform Match between training content and trainee's work role Available equipment Autonomy to adapt work procedures to newly acquired competences	Blume et al. 2010; Baldwin and Ford 1988; Clarke 2002; Lim and Morris 2006; Mikkelsen and Grønhaug 1999; Bartram et al. 1993
Support and feedback by peers and supervisors	Social support and expectations from supervisors Feedback of supervisors Involvement and participation of supervisors in training Discussions with supervisors on the outcomes of training Support from peers	Baldwin and Ford 1988; Clarke 2002; Tracey and Tews 2005

Cultural cues with respect to the importance of training and continuous learning as supported by behavioural norms	Voluntariness of training Training seen as an expense or an investment The position and focus of HRM within the organization	

3. Focus and methodology of this study

3.1. Context and relevance

As stated in the introduction, the increase of Master teachers in Dutch schools aims to improve teaching and learning at schools. However, Tracey and Tews (2005) state that it would be '*unwise to implement new training programs if the work environment does not adequately prepare trainees for the learning process or support the use of newly acquired knowledge and skills on the job when trainees return to their jobs'* (p. 354).

Given the fact that in-service master courses for teachers require a considerable investment in time and money, a lack of transfer of learned competences to the daily practice in schools and therefore a lack of impact on teaching and learning in schools can be considered as waste of money and energy. From this perspective a closer look at transfer and conditions for transfer of in-service Master's programs is justified.

In this study we look more deeply into the opportunities and conditions for transfer that graduates of an in-service Master's qualification program experienced during and after their study. The context of this study is a Master's program offered by the Hogeschool van Amsterdam and supported by the

Dutch Institute for Masters in Education NIME. This Master's program started in February 2009 focussing on three key competences: entrepreneurship in teaching, research in teaching and learning and inspiring colleagues. Through these key competences the ambition of the schools was to develop teacher leaders. In January 2011 the first group of 7 participants graduated. This Master's program differs from other Master's programs as it has been initiated by school boards in secondary education. At the request of the school boards, the master course is not government funded. This creates a fundamental difference with other master programs. In the government-funded master programs the study is based on a contract between the participant and the teacher education institute, while the NIME-master is the result of a tri-partite contract between the participant, school board and the teacher education institute, guaranteeing the influence of the school on the content and quality of the program. As a consequence, the school boards have to cover the full fee and the costs for study leave (typically one day a week). Through this design, active involvement and engagement of the school board and the supervisor of the participant is built into the model. Given this design one might expect that the transfer of learned competences to the workplace is facilitated and supported by the school. On the other hand, the design requires new roles and relations between participants, schools, and tutors at the master programs to adapt to this new context. As a consequence, transfer of training might not be as self evident as the model seems to suggest.

To evaluate whether the model supports successful transfer of learned competences to the working place, a research study has been started looking at the experiences of graduates of the Master's program in

applying the learned competences to their daily work and in the factors that hindered or stimulated this.

In this article we will present the findings of the first phase of this study, focusing on the first graduates of the program. The aim of this phase study is to evaluate to what extent the indicators for an organizational climate that supports trainings transfer are also relevant for the context of a two years Master's course for teachers. As the indicators that have been identified in the previous paragraph have been validated mostly for short training designs (Blume et al. 2010) and in commercial sector organizations (Clarke 2002), it is necessary to investigate whether these indicators are also valid within the context of intensive two-year Master's programs in schools and to school organizations with a high number of autonomous (semi-) professionals, and to be open to new elements that might influence training transfer within this context.

Although the research population in the first phase is small, it can give a first indication of the effectiveness of the design of the Master's program in terms of transfer to the workplace and of essential factors influencing this transfer.

3.2. Research design

The main research question for this study was: To what extent do the participants of the Master's program experience a supportive organizational climate that supports them to apply the learned competences within their school?

To answer this question, we need to take into account the three negotiating elements that influence transfer of training (Baldwin & Ford, 1988): the willingness and motivation of the participant to apply the learned competences to the working place (Egan, Yang, and

Bartlett 2004; Noe 1986), the design of the course with respect to the way in which it actively stimulates transfer, and the organizational climate of the school. This last factor was broken down in separate subcategories, using the indicators for an organizational climate that supports training transfer as presented in table 1. Although the focus of our study is on the organizational climate, we needed to take the other two factors into account, as they might influence the extent in which active transfer takes place.

Indicators for the success of transfer of the learned competences are new roles or positions that the participants take up in the school, their job satisfaction and their intention to leave their jobs (turnover intention) (Egan, Yang, and Bartlett 2004; Tett and Meyer 1993; Noe 1986).

The resulting research model is summarized in figure 1.

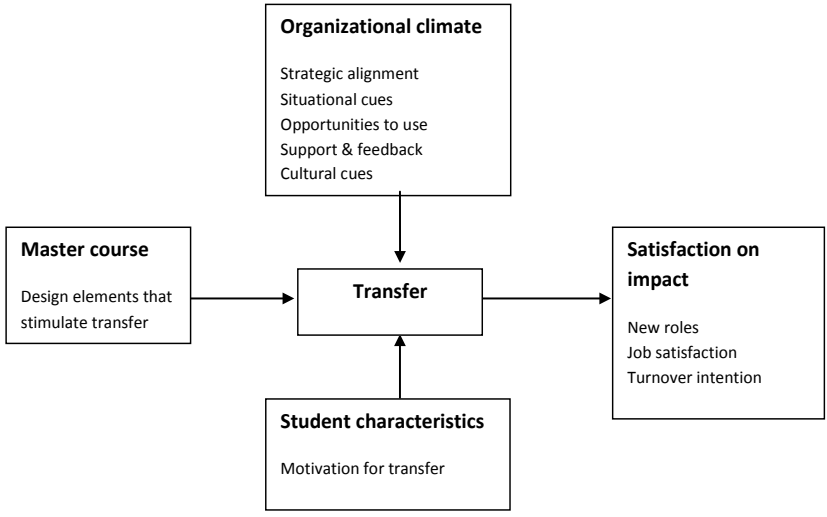

Figure 1: Research model

Most of the research studies on the impact of in-service training fail to look at Kirkpatrick's fourth level – the impact on student learning – (Van Veen et al 2010), and also this study is restricted to the first three levels of Kirkpatrick: satisfaction, (self) assessment of performance and application. Main input for the study are the perceptions of the graduates with respect to the extent in which they applied the three main competences of the Master's program in their daily work: entrepreneurship in their teaching, research in teaching and learning and inspiring colleagues. The actual impact of these three competences on student learning are not taken into account (apart from what the graduates report on this).

3.3. Research methodology

As the aim of the study is to verify to what extent the indicators for successful training transfers as listed in table 1 also apply to the context of a two years Master's course for teachers, and to identify a first indication of crucial elements in the organizational climate in schools that can help to improve the transfer of training outcome, we chose a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews. Through the use of semi-structures interviews it was possible to be open to new elements that might influence training transfer of Master's programs in schools. This fitted also with the small number of respondents. In the first phase of this study that is reported in this paper, we interviewed the graduated participants two months after graduation, so the participants could reflect on the full program and on transfer aspects both during the Master's course and after graduation.

The interviews were structured in such a way that the different elements of the research model (figure 1) were covered in the interview guideline. Each of the

interviews was recorded, typed out and analyzed by the interviewer, using the elements of the research design The seven interviews were compared to draw general conclusions with respect to the extent in which the Master participants experience a supportive organizational climate that stimulates them to apply the learned competences within their school. In the second phase of this study, the participant interviews will be compared to the supervisor interviews to find similarities and differences in the perceptions of participants and supervisors.

Information on the program design was derived from the course documentation that was used in the accreditation process of the Master's program (Centrum voor Nascholing Amsterdam 2010).

4. Findings

In this paragraph we will present the outcomes of the data collection, following the elements of the conceptual model.

4.1. Design of the curriculum and planned transfer activities

The curriculum focuses on three key competences: *innovation and entrepreneurship*, where the participants develop a deeper understanding in processes of teaching and learning, that can be used to innovate the teaching and learning process; *research*, where participants develop their research skills through practice oriented design research on a topic that is of relevance to the school; and *inspiration*, where participants are stimulated to develop their role and attitude as change agent within the school and to support colleagues in processes of innovation.

Candidates for the Master's courses needed to provide a letter of support from their school leader, indicating that the school leader considered the candidate as a talented teacher in the area of innovation and entrepreneurship, research and inspiration and that they would support the candidate in their study.

To stimulate transfer, their supervisors are invited once during the course, to join a lecture, to be informed about the design of the curriculum and invited to sign a symbolic tripartite contract, explicating the role of each partner in the contract. One of the conditions for the acceptation of the research theme of the participant is support from their supervisor, who has to confirm that the research theme is relevant to the school. The assignments connected to the lectures are designed in such a way that the participants are stimulated to elaborate on the topic from the perspective of their schools resulting in an essay or other type of product that can be shared with their supervisor and colleagues. Every semester ends with an integrative presentation on the main themes of the semester and participants are stimulated to use this presentation in their own school to inspire colleagues.

4.2. Participant motivation for transfer of learned competences

In the interviews, all of the participants reported that their initial motivation was at a personal level: to reach a deeper understanding of their teaching and of the learning of their students. At the end of the course all participants were motivated to use the newly acquired competences within their teaching. All of them explicitly indicate their eagerness to share their knowledge with colleagues and to come to a more coherent teaching approach within their team or the school.

> I realized that the things I heard during the master would be very interesting also for my colleagues. It opened up a whole new world which I was eager to discover. I wanted to share this: my colleagues had to know this…

4.3. Participant perceptions of the way in which the organizational climate supports transfer

For most participants signing up for the Master's program was their own initiative. Only two participants were explicitly invited by their school leaders to subscribe to this master. Six of the participants received a more or less positive response. One participant did not receive a positive response as the program was not part of the formal portfolio of professional development activities that were supported by the school.
According to the participants, explicit policies concerning professional development hardly exist within their schools. In most cases participation in CPD programs is the individual initiative of teachers and a negotiation about costs is necessary.

No explicit expectations were expressed by their supervisors beforehand. Several participants mentioned that the lack of explicit expectations could be explained by the fact that the Master's program was brand new and the initial announcement of the program was rather vague. As a result both participants and school leaders had no clear image of what they could expect from teachers who had done this Master's program.

The opportunities for participants at the Master's program to use the newly developed competences have largely been created by the participants themselves. All participants see ample opportunities to use their new competences in the micro-context of their classroom and their work with pupils. They

indicate that they have developed a stronger awareness towards individual needs of pupils and that they are motivated to use the outcomes of their research to improve their teaching or to develop their curriculum. Three participants have been engaged in projects or new roles where they are challenged to use their new abilities. They indicate that through these new roles their school leaders have created opportunities where they are challenged to apply their new knowledge.
All participants indicate that they try to use their new knowledge to inspire and challenge colleagues, but four indicate that this is not always welcomed within school cultures which are suspicious towards excellence.

> But there are also colleagues who were negative from the start. "Ridiculous, it costs lots of money, lessons are skipped, what does it have …?". One colleagues remarked "What can I learn from you?". Some people just don't want to learn. And I can understand why: They are just afraid. They have got their position now and are afraid to loose it.

Six indicate that they lack the formal position that gives them the recognition they feel that they deserve. Four participants indicate that they feel that they have to fight for recognition by school leaders by sending their essays, publications etc. One participants expresses the fear that after graduation it is 'back to normal' again.

> I have the feeling that I have to fight not to sink back into oblivion. After graduation I have the feeling "damn I'm all on my own". Everything goes back to normal, like nothing has happened. We've had our party, finished! But that may not happen, that can't be allowed. That is a waste of money, energy, time and expertise!

Two participants indicate that the lack of recognition is partly due to the fact that the Master's program does not fit in the regular structure of teacher profiles within the school.

My supervisor doesn't know the content of the study that I do. It isn't connected to a concrete task or role within the school, like a school counselor or special needs teacher. These roles are clear. But this course has a completely different content. I think that also the management is struggling with it: what kind of position do they have to give someone who has done a program like this.

Although all participants acknowledge that recognition within the school, either by colleagues or school leaders, is slowly growing, they do not have the feeling that they are held accountable for using their newly acquired competences. Only two of the participants that have new roles within their school feel that school leader and colleagues have new expectations towards their performance.

All participants, except one, were facilitated to follow the course: the school paid the course fee and gave them study time. The study leave was used to reduce the number of teaching hours, providing the opportunity to join course activities and to work on course assignments, but hardly left time for deliberate practice within the school.
All participants indicate that they have a large amount of autonomy when it comes to their lessons. In other areas, their autonomy is much more limited.

> In and around my classes I have a large autonomy. But in areas outside this, I have very little autonomy. I really want that to be bigger. I still get every year an overview: "This is what you have to do". I'm done with that. I want more professional freedom.

They can take initiatives concerning school or team wide activities, but it is not part of their job description. As a result three participants indicate that they hardly have the time to initiate initiatives that fit to their newly developed competences. One participant indicates that there is no time and opportunity for her to sit and discuss issues with colleagues.

> What I actually need is more time with colleagues. When you know that we don't even have a weekly meeting moment, you can understand that most has to be done in the corridors and time in between classes.

The three participants that have indicated that they have gained new roles within the school, indicate that they have autonomy to initiate things that go beyond their teaching role. One participant indicated that she searched for new roles outside the school context as she didn't get the recognition within her school.

> I prefer to put my energy in things where I can get that recognition and where I am valued. Like the professional association for vocational teachers. And next week I will contribute to a national management conference for vocational education. That is nice to do.

A large part of the interview focused on the discussions, expectations, support, feedback and active involvement from the school leader. Although most participants tried to inform their supervisors on the themes they worked on in essays and research, the number of discussions that resulted from these input{s} was limited. Little initiative came from school leaders and mostly discussions did not get a follow-up.

> I had asked whether they wanted to read it, but I got a evasive answer all the time: "if it is not too long… Is it useful for me …". These kind of

> remarks doesn't give you the feeling "Wohh, this is what they have been waiting for!"

Only one participant indicated that she had several discussions and that her input was used by the school leader.
According to the participants, none of their school leaders had expressed any explicit expectations towards their performance. Six participants indicated that they received no feedback. Only one received explicit feedback.

> I did get recognition. When I gave a presentation to parents, he said "well done". In personal meetings and performance evaluations he gives me detailed feedback on positive things and on what I can improve. And that is useful for me. He could see my growth, that I could look at the organization with more distance. […] I don't see myself as a leader in the frontlights, but he tells me "You should do that more often".

Only three school leaders showed their active interest by attending a course sessions where all school leaders were invited and only two school leaders attended the graduation ceremony.

With respect to contact and support from colleagues, involvement often depends on personal relations and on the culture in school. Five participants indicate that they have had frequent discussions with colleagues on elements of their study, on essays they wrote or on the research they did within the school.

Two indicate a lack of opportunities to discuss and share theories and research. Participants on a Master's program can also encounter hostile reactions from colleagues. Two participants give examples of such hostile reactions.

> I once had the opportunity for 4 – 5 minutes to tell something about my research. And to ask whether they wanted to co-operate. That gave an immediate negative response. They said: "No, I don't want that, you are not allowed to come into my classes". They considered it as very threatening. One colleague said that I had not to interfere with her lessons. The result was that she started a kind of offensive towards me.

Three participants indicate that they received no support from colleagues. Other were more positive with respect to the support they received from colleagues, in terms of support in editing final texts, willingness to take over lessons, to use questionnaires and collect data in their lessons or in being a sounding boards. One participant mentioned that support was hindered through a lack of formal position.

> The organizational structure is such that you are either a teacher or you are part of the management. Management is not something that I want to do. If they would organize it in a different way, I could have a different, better role. What I do now, is giving advice on my own initiative, unasked for. And then you often get a response "who are you as a teacher to tell us …"

All participant experience renewed expectations from their colleagues, as they expect new theory based contributions and ideas.

> They expect a kind of educational opinion from me grounded in academic theory and research. When I make a point during a meeting, they accept it. When I say it, they think that it will probably be valid.

Some participants do not feel confident yet with this role.

> It is just like your colleagues see you differently. Like you have become some kind of authority. But at the same time it feels uncomfortable that they give you a role, of which I am not always sure that I am able play that role.

Most participants do not receive feedback from colleagues and indicate that this is a sensitive issue within their schools. Some have received feedback on essays or on their role within the school.

> During the experiment, we had reflection moments every two weeks. During those sessions I sometimes was corrected by my colleagues: No …, we had agreed that we would do it together." Then I already had figured out how we should do it, what the plan should be, without consulting and involving them. I had to adjust things in this way, a couple of times. By listening to colleagues. I have learned from that.

4.4. Participant satisfaction of their role and position in schools

Although all participants indicate that they are happy in their jobs, six of them identify elements that they miss within their school, ranging from opportunities to further develop and implement the outcomes of their research, a culture in which they are challenged by their colleagues, a more professional school organization, a stronger position as a teacher in processes of school development, involvement in school based teacher education, to a formal position and acknowledgement through a higher salary scale.

This dissatisfaction can be recognized in the intention to change jobs. Three indicate that they might change jobs when there is an interesting opportunity and four are actively keeping their eyes open for other jobs. Six of them indicate that next to a task as a regular teacher, a new job needs to include a stronger

involvement in coaching colleagues, supporting teams or educating new or beginning teachers. Most participants fear that their development stops after ending the Master's course and that they will fall back in old routines. For four participants, the lack of recognition within the school is a strong motivator to look for another position.

5. Discussion

The findings show that in the design of the course attention was paid to activities and assignments that stimulated the transfer of newly acquired competences to the workplace. However, the contact of the course leaders with supervisors at the workplace was limited and the participants were used as the linking pin. The underlying assumption was that supervisors at the workplace were active partners in the decision for joining the course. In this first run of the course, the responses from the participants proved this assumption to be wrong.

The initial motivation of the participants was on a personal level, to deepen their understanding of teaching and learning and to be challenged at an intellectual level again. Their motivation for transfer was mainly focused on applying newly acquired competences at the level of their own teaching and their own classes. However, during the course they developed a strong motivation to a wider application of their knowledge towards their colleagues and towards the school as a whole. This was based on a stronger understanding of organizational issues and a desire to share their knowledge with colleagues.

With respect to the organizational climate, all participants indicate that there was no strategic alignment between the aims of the participants, the aims of the school and the aims of the course. Partly

this was caused by the lack of a clear profile of the course and partly by the lack of professional development policies within the school. According to graduates, situational cues were mostly restricted to the challenges that participants experience in teaching pupils. Only in three cases new cues were introduced through the involvement in new tasks within school that challenged them to use new competences. The participants experienced the formal recognition of their new competences and qualities as very limited.
The participants were given time for study leave. However, the participants did not recognize this as time to try and practice the new competences at the workplace. They reported especially a lack of time and opportunities to discuss, share and exchange with colleagues.

Most participants report a lack of recognition, involvement, expectations, support, and feedback from their supervisors. Few supervisors were interested in their work, and in most cases participants indicated that they had to fight for attention and recognition. Only three participants got new roles during the course which extended their teaching role and which allowed and invited them to use the newly acquired competences outside their classrooms.
The participants indicate several cultural factors that limit their opportunities to apply the new competences within their school. The vision and policies with respect to professional development seems weakly developed within six of the seven schools. Within the schools there doesn't seem to be a culture where critical feedback between colleagues is appreciated. As the schools are characterized by a strong culture of equality, engagement in school development seems to be restricted to formal leadership positions, hindering informal leadership based on personal qualities.

As a result, all participants feel that the competences that they have developed during the course - entrepreneurship in teaching, research in teaching and learning and inspiring colleagues - are not sufficiently recognized within their school. They indicate that they wish to enrich their daily work with activities that enables them to share their knowledge with colleagues and to contribute to school development. Therefore, more than half of the participants are looking for other job opportunities, either in schools that have a more open culture and offer space for informal leadership or in other educational institutions like teacher education institutes where they can share their expertise with student teachers.

Overall, the participants experience a lack of a supportive organizational climate within their schools and they feel unsupported in their attempts to transfer their new competences within their school. According to the graduates, this lack of support has partly to do with a lack of explicit school policies on professional development, a lack of commitment of supervisors towards the professional development of their teachers and a school culture that does not support informal leadership based on professional excellence. This acknowledges the factors that influence transfer of training that are known from transfer studies in other areas and listed in table 1.

This explorative study shows that within its limited design, focusing on the first cohort of a new Master's program, teachers engaged in this Master's program meet considerable obstacles within the organizational culture of the school. If they want to earn recognition outside the formal hierarchy of the school, they need to fight these barriers. If these barriers prove too strong, they might decide to change jobs and apply for a position at another school. On the one hand, this implies a waste of money for their school, while on the

other hand it creates opportunities for schools who have a more open climate that recognizes teacher excellence and that can attract these teachers. However the first phase of this study does not yet answer the question whether such schools exist in the Netherlands and how these schools have become more open.

Given the insight that the responses of the graduates gave during the interviews, the indicators for an organizational climate that supports training transfer as listed in table 1, seem to apply also to the context of an in-service Master's program for teachers. Except from the 'availability of equipment', all indicators of table 1 were considered as problematic to one or more graduates. At the same time all responses could be connected to one of the indicators of table 1. Therefore we can conclude that the conceptual framework from theories of transfer of training from table 1 can be used in next phases of the research project, both in terms of evaluating the impact of Master's programs and in finding levers within the program design and the embedding of the Master's program within the school, to increase that impact.

Conclusion

As indicated above, the design of this study was limited, focusing on the first cohort of graduates of a new Master's program. In next phases of the research study, the supervisors of the graduates will be included to get a more balanced and two-sided perspective on the use of master competences at the work place. The study will be extended by including next cohorts of graduates, to compensate for side-effects connected to the first run of the program.

Nevertheless, the outcomes of this study can lead to some preliminary conclusions on conditions for

transfer in the context of in-service Master's programs.

Several participants indicate that the preparation before the start of the course was insufficient. As the Master's program was new, initial alignment between program aims and the strategic agenda of the school could not be made beforehand. This could have been remedied in the course of the program as the focus and competences connected to this Master's program become much clearer. However, we can conclude that the course co-ordinators were too optimistic in their expectations with respect to the commitment of school leaders towards the aims and purposes of the course and only limited attention was given to involving school leaders in the design and aims of the Master's program.

Another problematic aspect of the course was that the course did not prepare for an existing teacher profile within the school. Participants indicated that other Master's programs have much clearer profiles: Master's courses that give a qualification for teaching in upper secondary school or Master's programs focusing on special educational needs or remedial teaching. School leaders and colleagues have clear and explicit ideas what competences are connected to these Master's programs and what role teachers can have after graduation. However, this study cannot give any evidence whether this assumption is true, as such Master's programs were not included in this study. However, the Master's program in this research study had a much less explicit profile as it did not prepare teachers for a specific job profile, but focused on 'teacher excellence' without specific relation to the system of job profiles that are used in many schools. This hindered participants in clarifying their position and competences. This might be closely connected to the organizational structure and culture in many

schools. School organizations in the Netherlands are egalitarian in nature as there is no formal hierarchy between teachers. Hierarchy is connected to formal organizational structures and responsibilities of team leaders and school leaders. This leaves little room for informal leadership for teachers, based on their professional quality and competences.

The study shows within the limited set of participants the implications of a misalignment between intentions of different participants, between the original purpose of school boards in starting this program and the perceived (lack of) involvement of the supervisors of the teachers that were engaged in the course, between teachers who changed through the engagement in a Master's program and a school climate that was not changed, and between teachers that developed informal non-positional leadership and formal hierarchical structures of the school system.

At the same time, this study contributed in revealing these obstacles and provides the course co-ordinators with input to strengthen their relations with the supervisors of the participants, contributing to a more supportive organizational climate within the school, and to support the participants in handling the obstacles they meet within their schools. The study also provides school leaders with insight in obstacles that the organizational structure and culture within their schools create and that might hinder the effective use of the competences that teachers acquire in Master's courses. This awareness might help them in supporting their teachers in the transfer of newly acquired competences to the schools, thus contributing to the development of the school as a whole.

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