

# Research as setting for workplace learning

Professorship Labourparticipation





# Program

1. Short introduction
2. Applied Science at the Hanze University Groningen
3. Professional knowledge
4. Laveren tussen belangen
5. Some critical remarks
6. Discussion

- 18 different schools
- 6 centers of applied research and innovation
- 38 professorships
- more than 25,000 students
- 2,800 employees



# Centre of Applied Labour Market Research and Innovation

- To contribute to solving the increasing discrepancy between question and demand in the labour market of the north of the Netherlands:
  - Demographic shift
  - Long term unemployment
  - Increasing demand for skilled employees
- Multi-level; aims to support companies in the north, employees, social partners and governments to strike a new balance between job demands and supply on the labour market within and between organizations.



# Labour Participation

- Mission: back to work again!
- 4 research projects:
  - Professionalization of social security service
  - Multi-problem
  - Cooperation between public services and profit companies
  - Healthy Ageing



# Theoretical basis

- Structuration theory of Giddens:
  - Agent acts according structural rules of system and reproduces this system
  - Reflection makes its possible to become aware of the rules and to change them
- Street level bureaucrat of Lipsky
  - Services is consumed at the moment the service is produced
  - Professional use their discretional space to put the policy into practice

# Professional knowledge

- Reproductive, general, practical knowledge;
  - preferably based on evidence base research
  - Ratio driven and fruitful
  - No room for moral problems
- Moral knowledge
  - Reason driven
  - Used by professional in individual cases



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# Limited knowledge

- A few evidence base research projects on the field of labour participation
- Lack of reproductive, general, practical knowlegde
- Professionals use tacit knowlegde



# Tacit knowledge

- Tacit knowledge is the opposite of explicit knowledge.
- Polanyi: 'We can more than we can tell'
- Thornton: 'Whatever is made explicit, something is always left implicit'.
- Every professional: doctor, police officer, social worker or rehabilitation specialist, knows that people are no machines. To solve the problem they use tacit knowledge



# 4 arena's of labour participation

Case managers of social services have to :

1. Execute the Law and follow the rules
2. Deliver costume made support
3. Take into account interventions of the local (national?) politicians
4. Have an eye for the needs and wants of the employers





- How do they navigate between all these different demands?
- Tacit knowledge seems to be their compass
- We have to make the tacit knowledge explicit



# Tacit knowledge

- For professionals this is difficult because they have not the good words for expressing what they know. The knowledge is connected with intuition and perception that presents itself partly in physical feelings.
- Wright: 'it calls for trust, face to face transaction and lots of time to do it' (to make it explicit)



# Participative research

Smaling: 'research with people and not about people'.

Heron and Reason: The inquiry group members work together through cycles of action and reflection developing their understanding and practice by engaging in what we have called an 'extended epistemology' of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical ways of knowing.



# Participative research

So how to make tacit knowledge visible?

Method :

Two types of case managers:

1. Experienced case managers (> 3 yrs.)
2. Unexperienced case managers (< 3 yrs.)



# Participative research

Assumption:

Experienced case managers possess tacit knowledge regarding how to deal with daily dilemmas

Unexperienced case managers will be the researchers' eyes and ears in order to reveal this tacit knowledge



# Participative research

Types of dilemmas (based on pilots and literature)

- operational dilemmas: how should we proceed?

e.g.: should I force an unemployed mother to search for a job?



# Participative research

Types of dilemmas (based on pilots and literature)

- lack of resources (time, money)  
e.g.: how much time should I take for an extensive diagnosis?





# Participative research

Types of dilemmas (based on pilots and literature)

- dilemmas concerning vision: what goal do we/I have?

e.g.: municipality wishes to send all clients to a certain program, while case managers doubts if that program is in the clients' interest



# Participative research

Types of dilemmas (based on pilots and literature)

- dilemmas concerning identity

e.g.: client fails to show up, case manager is irritated and thinks the client does not take him/her seriously



# Participative research

Types of dilemmas (based on pilots and literature)

- dilemmas concerning the client's behavior  
e.g.: aggressive behavior, unreasonably high standards concerning the behavior of others (colleagues, case managers, coaches)



# Participative research

- 15 duo's: unexperienced – experienced case manager
- interviews with unexperienced case managers to determine starting position

# Participative research

## Plenary instruction for unexperienced case managers

- What do we mean by “dilemmas”?
- Unexperienced case managers accompany experienced case managers (2 days)
- “Observe the dilemma’s and the way the experienced case manager deals with them”



# Participative research

Plenary instruction for unexperienced case managers

- “take the time to ask for reasons of observed behavior”
- keep track of your observations by means of a diary

# Participative research



Individual interviews with unexperienced and experienced case managers at the end based on the diaries:





# Participative research

## Unexperienced case managers:

- What would you have done and why?
- How would you (wish to) reflect on your behavior?
- What did you learn?
- Do you think you are capable of dealing with such dilemmas?



# Participative research

## Experienced case managers:

- Why did you act in the described manner?
- Did you reflect on your behavior? How?
- What did you learn?
- Do you think you are capable of dealing with such dilemmas?



# Participative research

## Research material:

- diaries
- interviews with (un)experienced case managers



# Participative research

## Global results

- operational dilemmas most frequently
- strategies are mostly individual choices
- not much consultation of colleagues
- own organization is not a big help
- personal standpoints are frequently referred to (as opposed to organization's standpoints)



# Participative research

## Participants' reflection:

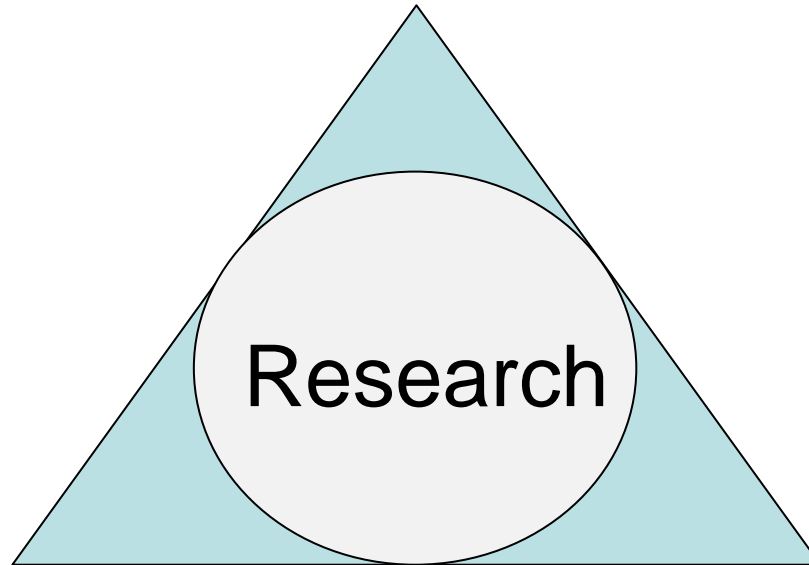
- all case managers positive about learning outcomes

“we should do this more often”

# Three parties involved



Professionals



Students

Researchers



# Participative research

Role of students

Karin's verhaal?





# Some critical remarks

- Quality of data
- Selection bias
- Validity
- Limited participation by professionals
- Time consuming



# Theses to discuss

- Participation of professional is no guarantee for valid outcomes
- Students lack necessary craftsmanship for research
- Applied research is more difficult to conduct as is research in a laboratory setting

Thank you  
for your  
contribution

