

Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice –
2014 – Volume 23, Issue 1, pp. 144–148
URN:NBN:NL:UI:10-1-116078

ISSN: 1876-8830

URL: <http://www.journalsi.org>

Publisher: Igitur publishing, in cooperation
with Utrecht University of

Applied Sciences, Faculty of Society and Law

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PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP. LASAGNA MODELS IN TRAINING FOR EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

TON NOTTEN

In the 21st century, Dutch Universities of Applied Sciences (*hogescholen*) are creating a genuine connection between teaching, research, professionalization and the innovation of practices and policies, going far beyond the academic approach taken by the traditional universities. In the city of Rotterdam, such networks are evident on at least three levels, each rather like a single piece of lasagna. The first relates particularly to economic, physical and educational innovation. The second focuses on the question of how to manage a project that has been running for two decades in some of the most deprived and problematic districts of Rotterdam (and indeed of the Netherlands). The third analyses the stratified support of some research and teaching institutes at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RU). The most important challenge is, of course, ensuring connections and exchange within and between these three levels (Notten, 2012).

(1) *The aim of the Rotterdam Children's Zone Programme (CZ) is to develop and support talented young people in seven deprived areas of Rotterdam-Zuid. Current issues with school performance must be addressed and school drop-out rates need to be reduced, possibly with the aim of preventing the problem of dropping out altogether. In many cities, such as Rotterdam, support for talent is provided by means of an integrated approach, in which not only the school but also the children's parents and local social, care and educational professionals all play a strong and active role (cf. Programma Beter Presteren, 2011a; Programma Aanval op Uitval, 2011b).*

The CZ programme is an innovative and inspiring form of talent development for schoolchildren between the ages of 3 (or sometimes even younger) and 18. The concept was first developed in the New York neighbourhood of Harlem NY, where an unorthodox structure and tailored working methods achieved remarkable results. The community approach of the CZ concept is distinctive because it involves intensive cooperation between teachers, parents and professionals in the fields of welfare, health and sports, and economics and the urban environment. Learning, motivation and support are the central concepts; challenge and high expectations are the motto. The programme comprises the development of a strong pedagogical environment both inside and outside the school. Schools, and state-funded schools in particular, need to be attractive places that focus on quality and achievement. This synergy has created the right conditions for developing talent in Harlem NY (website Harlem Children's Zone; Van der Ende, Notten & Spierings, 2005; Notten, 2009).

Social deprivation in Rotterdam-Zuid is widespread and deep, and it has proved persistent over several decades, in particular with regard to poor school results. It was for this reason that a National Programme was set up in September 2011. This programme aims to promote *the development of the talents of children and young people...* and the improvement of the economic and physical environment of these districts of the city. *Economic improvement and renewal:* in and around Rotterdam-Zuid, there are many companies in the growing energy, care, chemical and logistics sectors, and the young people of Rotterdam-Zuid need to be properly equipped to work in these sectors and to meet the related demands and challenges. A further aim is that the *physical quality of Rotterdam-Zuid will be enhanced:* within 20 years – again, one generation – one third of the housing stock in Rotterdam-Zuid will be improved or refurbished, including outdoor spaces. This amounts to around 35,000 houses, 12,000 of which are owned by housing corporations and 23,000 of which are privately owned. The investment planned in these three distinct areas is considerable – so much so, in fact, that the city and its housing corporations need to be made more flexible.

LASAGNE MODEL IN TRAINING FOR EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The innovative ambitions for Rotterdam-Zuid bear some resemblance to a *lasagna* recipe. Improving the economy and physical environment of seven deprived districts of Rotterdam-Zuid will require well-educated young people within two decades. The parties participating in the Rotterdam CZ have made a pledge: "We will bring you to College". The partners promise to help bring about a more successful future for children and teenagers. The focus is on "functional integration" (school → work → housing). Professionals in schools and youth care, and social workers will give young people the space to do what they are good at. The partners are currently looking for ways to shape this process effectively and, of course, they have all kinds of related questions.

(2) This trio of ambitions requires *new public managers* who can organize and support the progress towards achieving them. These managers need to be broadly educated and, of course, oriented towards innovation. The same applies to professionals in and around primary schools, secondary schools and colleges – and even the pre-school phase – who are connected with parental participation. Again, this is a complex and multi-level problem which requires continuing reflection, evaluation and innovation.

Too many previous and current practices and approaches have not been effective or coherent enough, and too often innovative projects have been discontinued for reasons which were unclear – Rotterdam is well known for its "project carousel". As such, the persistence and complexity of problems in Rotterdam-Zuid, which are "wicked" in nature, require supportive, innovative and professionalizing networks that bring in partners from various – and possibly competing – disciplines. The Zuid project will be supported by a *Centre of Expertise for Social Innovation* (CESI, in Dutch: EMI), a public-private partnership that requires the development of new knowledge in the field of comprehensive talent support in care, welfare and education. CESI will collaborate with the broad *Knowledge Workshop Rotterdam Talent*, an established partnership between various knowledge institutions and national government, under the auspices of Erasmus University Rotterdam, the City of Rotterdam and RU. Again, several levels of invention are being applied in several fields and levels – a *lasagna* formula.

(3) Let's focus on the specific CESI contribution of RU, particularly in the fields of training for teachers, youth care workers and social workers – at both Bachelor's and Master's level. The shared ambitions of the Institute of Social Work and the Institute of Teacher Training are threefold: (a) to research and improve the physical, social, educational, health and other conditions in which children and young people grow up, (b) to help enhance educational coherence and address any shortcomings and (c) to strengthen educational partnerships (with parents, within schools, facilitating entry to the labour market, access to leisure facilities, etc.).

These three ambitions are supported by Bachelor's and Master's students in their terms of probation, and in practical and innovative research projects. Both RU institutes have thousands of students at their disposal (from "first years" to "mid-career", ranging from 19 to 55 years old), hundreds of teachers/researchers (assistants, associates, professors) (Notten, 2012).

At this point, we introduce the third piece of lasagna into our metaphor, albeit a more complex one: first-year and mid-career students, junior and senior teachers/researchers, and their institutes, and directors, managers, and those responsible for external relations inside and outside Rotterdam.

(4) How can we bring these three pieces of *lasagne* (Italian plural) together? New public management and leadership must be communicative, innovative, supportive and so on, in relation to the first, the second and the third lasagne – which can be labelled, for the time being, as a Lasagne Innovative Model (for a first attempt, see Notten, 2013).

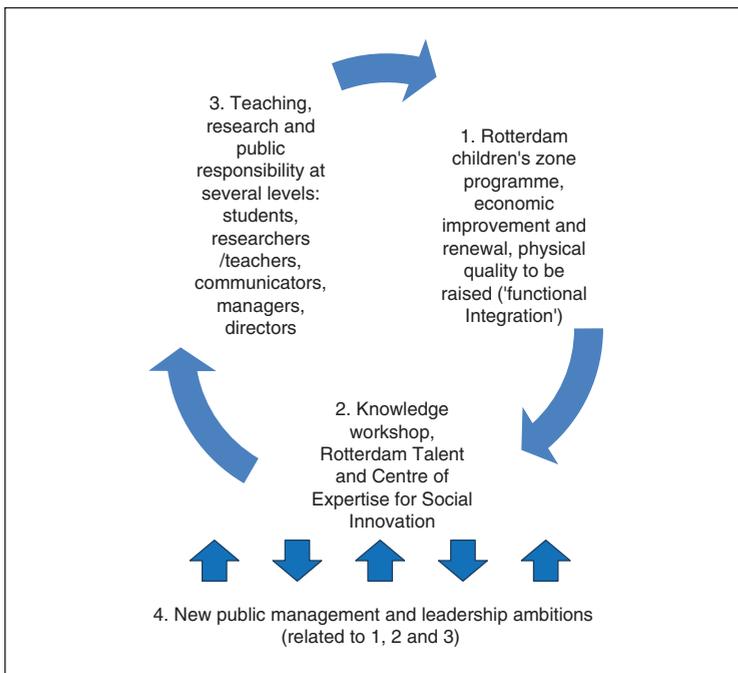


Figure 1: Lasagne Innovative Model.

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