

# BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP: SCHOOL – UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE SCHEMES

## SUKES

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# Background

- School-University Knowledge Exchange Schemes (SUKES) is a project that was set up by an international group of educational researchers and consultants in 2012.
- European project EIPPIEE – Evidence Informed Policy and Practice in Education in Europe.

# School-University Knowledge Exchange Schemes

- Called “**schemes**” to distinguish them from *ad hoc* relationships.
- The term “**exchange**” is used to indicate that the association between the parties is two-way. The term “**knowledge**” is used to indicate that it is not anecdotal experience or points of views that are exchanged but observations, findings, concepts and theories which may derive from research or reflections on experience.

# Educational improvement

- Changes that lead to sustainable, long lasting improvements are based on
  - capacity building
  - collaborative inquiry into daily practice
  - data driven decisions.

*(Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves and Shirley, 2013; Hopkins et al 2014; Stoll & Louis, 2007).*

# The process of using evidence to improve practice

- Is not straight forward – does not necessarily lead to better practice
- The data must be interpreted by the users for their own context
- What went wrong with the “what-went-right” Approach

# Method

The study was done in two stages.

- An online survey of various SUKES across EU countries. The survey, was sent to the 40 international partners of the EIPPEE project in 2013. Thirteen cases were reported back.
- Four cases were reviewed and analysed with regard to models

# Results from the survey

- A great variety in the mechanism of collaboration across the schemes.
- Leadership of activities varies: some are research-led, others school-led and others essentially a form of training
- Independent brokers play an important role in helping to link experiential with scientific knowledge
- Key challenges in many cases include: coordinating activity and using knowledge in practice

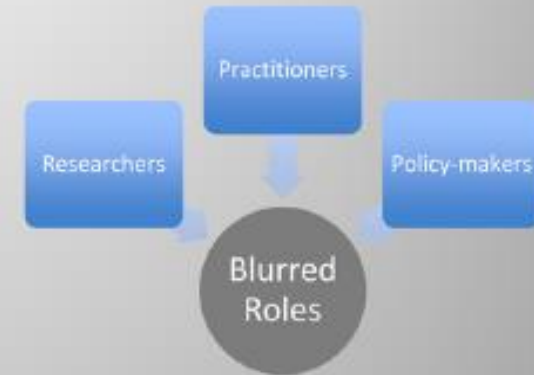
# Noticeable successful factors

- The capacity to collaborate effectively between the dissimilar cultures of schools and academia
- The building of mutual trust to overcome asymmetry of power.
- The importance of beginning a change process by accepting and reflecting on real issues in schools by using evidence.
- To recognise the value of different kinds of knowledge.



# How The Gap Can Be Addressed

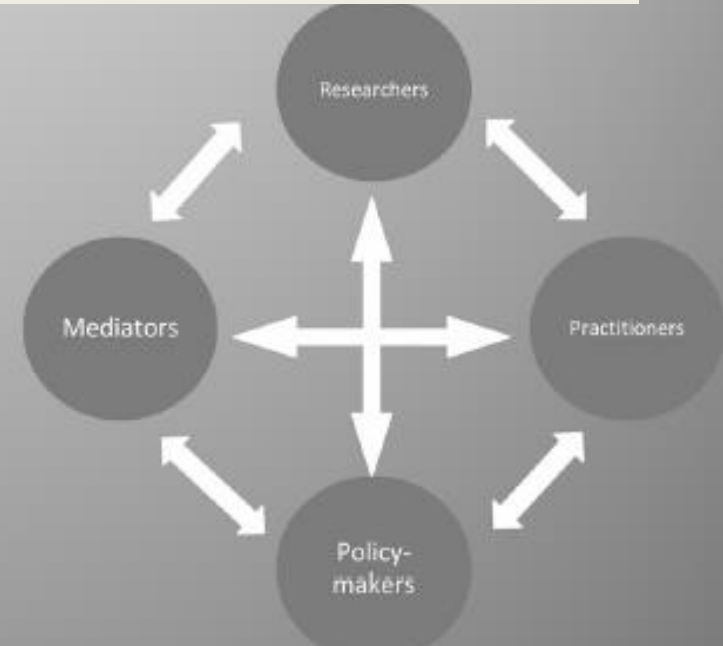
*The Boundary-crossing practice Model*



*The Research Development Diffusion Model*



*The Knowledge Communities Model*



*The Evidence-Based Practice Model*



# Two examples

## ■ *Menntamidja in Reykjavic*

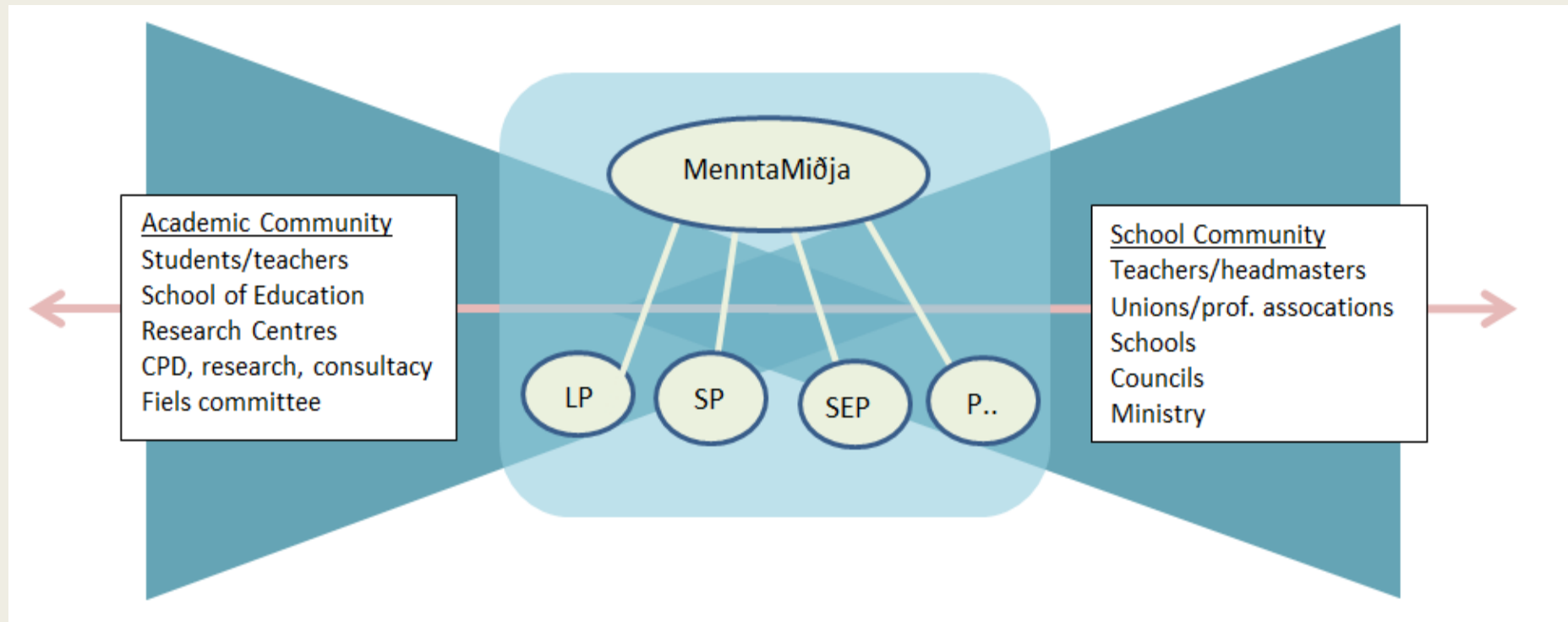
- *an online space for school and universities to share knowledge*

## ■ *Essunga partnership in Sweden*

- *local school politicians, leaders and teachers, regional counsellors, researchers in collaboration to mainstreaming pupils in need of special support.*

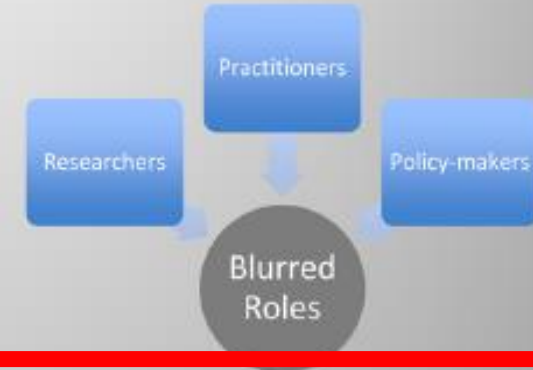
# MenntaMiðja - Education Plaza

- An open, virtual, collaborative venue in Iceland that is intended to increase collaboration/interaction between actors in the educational community and facilitate cooperation in school development.



# How The Gap Can Be Addressed

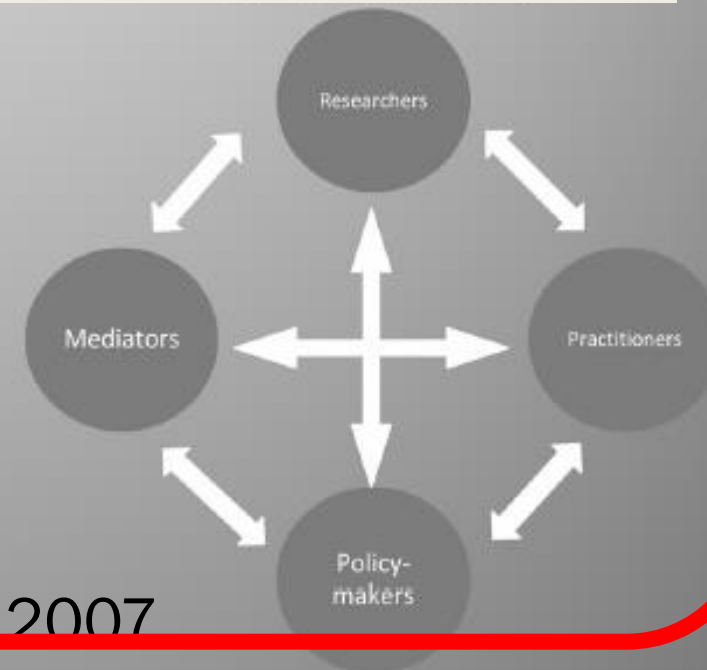
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# Education plaza

- It was launched in January 2012 in collaboration of different stakeholders, based on grassroots initiative in the School of Education.
- The purpose was to support communities of practice in education and strengthen ties between academics and practitioners
- This is done by: Facilitating dynamic flows of information, fostering critical and creative dialogue about issues affecting education and encourage innovative practice in education.

# Some challenges

- How to ensure long term commitment from partners?
- How to measure results and outcomes i.e. in order to secure funding?
- How is it possible to ensure professional quality in discussions and online publication.
- How to structure and manage, financially, professionally?
- How to make it more focused on evidence?

# The amazing "race" by schools of Essunga municipality 2007-2011

- 2007 "The poorest school achievements in Sweden": ¼ not eligible for upper secondary school
- 2010-11 "The top-3 school municipality in Sweden": 97% of students eligible for upper secondary school

## How was that possible?

Persson, E. (2012) "Raising achievement through inclusion." | *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 2012:1-16.

European Agency for Special Needs & Inclusive Education. (2013). "Organisation of provision to support inclusive education. Meeting the needs of all learners –A school transformation. Nossebro School, Essunga, Sweden, 26-28 Febr. 2013.

Skoglund, P, & Stäcker, H, (2016), 'How can education systems support all learners? Tipping-point leadership focused on cultural change and inclusive capability', in *Implementing Inclusive Education: Issues in Bridging the Policy-Practice Gap*. A. Watkins & C. Meijer (eds). London, Emerald Books

# The initial challenge

- A dominating culture and institutionalized standards of segregation of students with any difficulties in school.
- The results were falling in spite of teachers' ambitious work and school procedures.
- The number of students, moved from ordinary activities and placed into special groups, grew increasingly and these students did not return to the regular class room.



# The Essunga partnership was about

## The creation of a long term learning & knowledge community:

- a creation of a “knowledge and learning friendly context”, a common culture and commonly stated institutional standards in order to “take care of” research evidence in order to get better outcomes, by:

- a creation of time and space to confront existing “knowledge in practice” with research “knowledge on practice” and shaping of arenas for developing a common “knowledge for practice”, the future work.

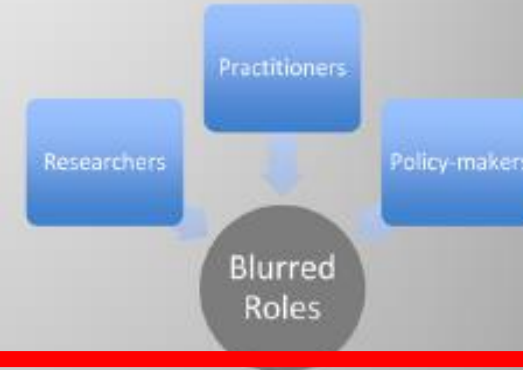
- relating school to new research, reflecting the dominating culture, or “Thought-Action-Style”, which helped the creation of a new culture and institutional standards

- research evidence “placed in context” and used for development with better outcomes.

- a move from a “grid culture” (regulation from above) to a “group culture” where all stakeholders “accepted to learn” and to support each other (Persson & Persson 2011)

# How The Gap Can Be Addressed

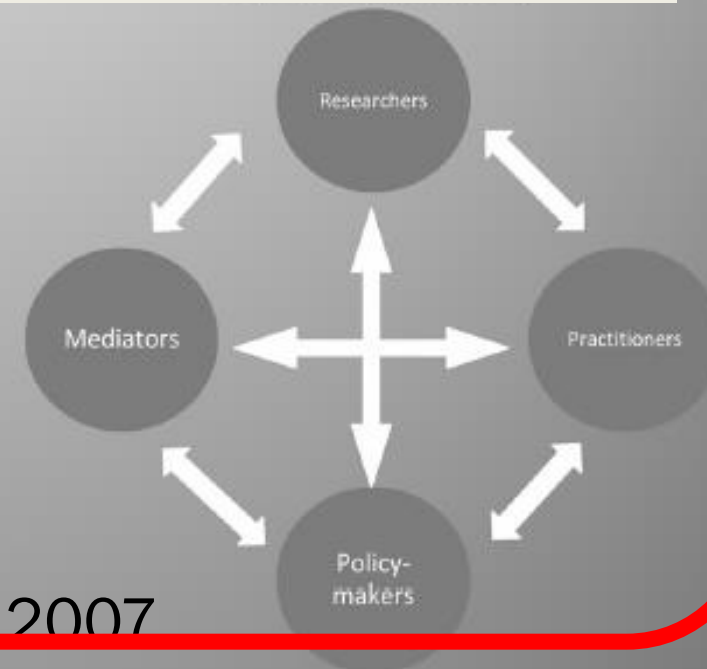
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# Essunga shows fundamental mechanisms for change: is-logic, analysis -> a need for alternatives

## 1. How is it actually?

-common perception of student achievement?

*From "it is as it is" to "it is not good at all"*

## 2. Why is it that way?

-common understanding of causes of bad achievement?  
Via counselling support & renewed analysis

*From "blaming the kids" to "understand oneself/ professionals as causing factor"*

## 3. "We need alternative ways!"

*→Research: findings & follow up*

-counsellors suggestions on reliable research findings  
-follow up research for 2 years, research counselling for 2 years, post-study for year

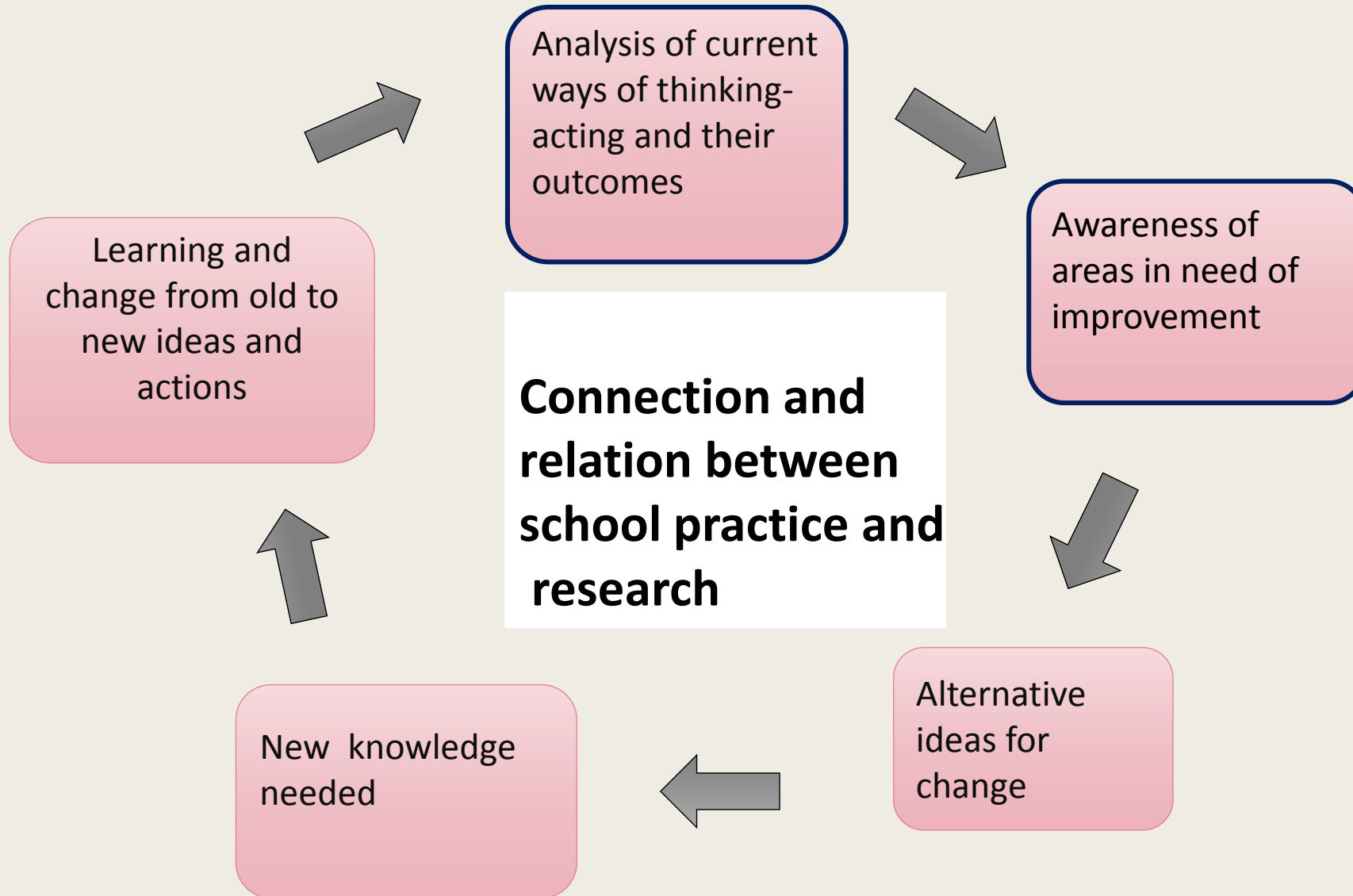
*From a "given", narrow horizon to a broader idea of what a school can and shall be for all learners*

# Some challenges

- To handle the **massive interest and sometimes “scepticism”** to success from media and other actors in rather intense way
- Practitioners, researchers and counsellors have been engaged in a long term (10 years) constructive, but still not uncomplicated, dialogue. **How can this be arranged on a broader “all school” or “all municipality” scale?**
- **How to uphold the spirit and the newly build up culture** of a successful school with new leaders, new teachers, new and challenging pupils, in a general climate of reactive and segregating way to solve problems.
- **How to support other schools and municipalities to avoid quick fix solutions** and engage in focusing on how it is, why it is and what kind of alternative knowledge and skills are needed to develop towards greater achievement?

# A model of connection and relation between school practice and research

- Exchange, in the meaning of both connection and relation, is not a quick fix or simple implementation.
- It is a complex human learning process.
- Two questions arise concerning :
  - *at which point in school development do the school and research communities connect to each other and*
  - *what kind of relation is built up when they do.*



- From what is known about successful school improvement more collaborative approach should be supported.
- School-University partnership should be a continuous process rather than ad hoc event – based on collaborative inquiry.
- There will be little improvement in schools, without active participation of school practitioners. No matter how much data are produced by the government or the academia.





What it's all about...



# Discussion points

- **Do these challenges resonate for you?**
  - Commitment over the long term
  - Funding
  - Accepting the need to change
- **Does the approach seem helpful?**
  - Focussing on the relationship between dissimilar communities
  - Establishing a common understanding of the problem
  - Developing new knowledge together
- **How could we help others contemplating partnerships?**
  - Create a network – for whom?
  - Offer advice – to whom?
  - Write and speak?