

Designing a responsive curriculum for teacher education in higher vocational education.

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Poster - Template following the submission system rationale

Type of Research or Methodology

qualitative research
(interviews/ observations)

To assist the scheduling process, we want to know in what domain your study took place, so which profession was studied (e.g., nurses, teachers, engineers, etc.)?

Teacher Education

Title

Designing a responsive curriculum for teacher education in higher vocational education: analysis and exploration of students' expectations

Keywords

Curriculum, design, teacher education, responsive

Abstract summary

[100 - 250 words]

Extended summary [600 - 1000 words, excluding references, use the headings as provided below]

Introduction and theoretical framework

The aim of the overall PhD-research of which this contribution is part, is to enhance understanding of designing responsive curricula for teacher education. A responsive curriculum is flexible, strongly connected to the world of work and embedded in society (Andrade Snow, 2018; Barab & Luehmann, 2003; Churchill, Bowser, & Preece, 2016). Dutch schools for secondary education face a shortage of qualified teachers and there is an urgent need to find, enthuse and train students to become futureproof teachers.

In general, a curriculum is an plan for learning (O'neill, 2015; Van den Akker, 2013). More specifically, in vocational education a curriculum is conceived as organizing, sequencing and stimulating learning experiences in practice settings like the workplace, and in school (Billett, 2011; author et al., 2012). We consider a curriculum as responsive when it is adaptive to a variety of contexts in occupational practice, adjustable to changing skill needs and takes individual differences and needs into account.

A global trend in (higher) vocational education is to link education closer to the world of work and prepare students for a changing and complex labour market (Andrade Snow, 2018; Billett, 2017; O'neill, 2015). This trend can also be observed in teacher education, level six of the European Qualification Framework (EQF). School contexts are divers and schools are

embedded in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing society which places new demands on teachers working in schools (Guerrero, 2017). In teacher education, curriculum designers are challenged to design curricula that are adaptive to these demands, attract and retain students with different backgrounds and prepare them for teaching in a variety of school contexts. At the same time, teacher education institutions are often considered as resistant to change and find it difficult to adjust their curricula in a timely manner (Ellis & Childs, 2019; Evans & Henrichsen, 2008). However, “Educational programs designed to prepare students for a dynamic future must be dynamic themselves” (Baldwin & Baumann, 2005, p.89).

Although there is some knowledge on responsive curricula in secondary vocational education (Author, 2017), in higher vocational education this knowledge is limited (Ameyaw, Turnhout, Arts, & Wals, 2019; Vreuls, Van der Klink, Boshuizen, & Nieuwenhuis, 2019). Furthermore the concept of a responsive curriculum is not unequivocal because of its complexity. A curriculum is an extensive, multi layered design object with different people (e.g. students, teacher educators and teacher supervisors) involved at the micro-, meso-, macro, and supra level (O’neill, 2015; Van den Akker, 2013). Little research has been conducted on how a responsive curriculum for teacher education can be designed taking these levels and the demands of the different people and practices into account. Students are involved in the curriculum at the institutional (meso) and program (micro) level (O’neill, 2015; Van den Akker, 2013). Although it is acknowledged that students’ voice and opinion in curriculum design processes are important for motivation and ownership of students, their potential contribution to curriculum change is often ignored (Könings & McKenney, 2017). The overall research question of the first part of the PhD-research project is: How to define and understand a responsive teacher education curriculum? For this contribution, we will focus on the following, more specific question: What do students expect from a responsive teacher education curriculum?

Research method and design

This overall PhD study follows a model of design based research in education including three design steps: 1) analysis/exploration; 2) design/construction; 3) evaluation/reflection (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

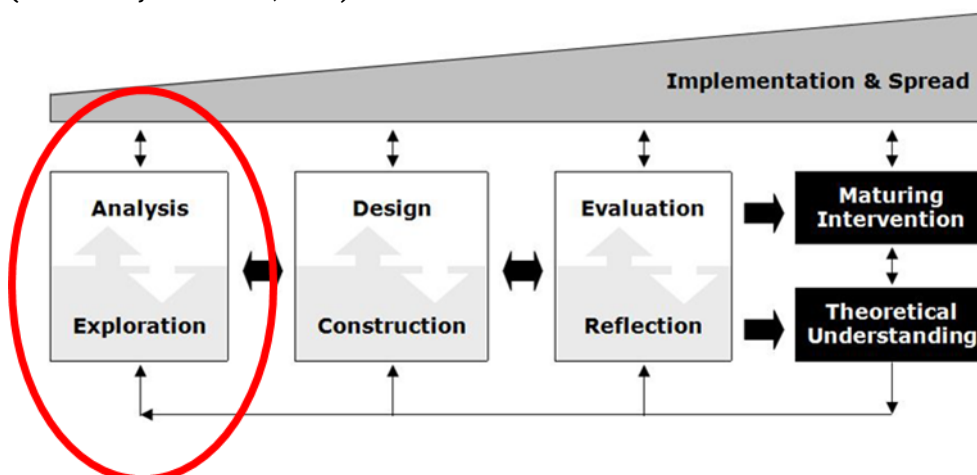


Figure 1. Generic Model of design Based Research in Education (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

The first part of this PhD-research project, the analysis and exploration, focusses on the significance of a responsive curriculum in the context of teacher education.

During the first design step, we start with analysis and exploration of the expectations of the main participants of a responsive curriculum: students, teacher educators and student teacher supervisors. For this contribution, we will focus on the expectations of students. Initially, observations and a series of interviews with students will be conducted. Adopting a human-centered design approach, which places the needs of people at the center of the design activities (Gasson, 2003), we will ask students what they expect from a responsive curriculum. The data will be analyzed qualitatively (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013) using templates (Brooks & King, 2012). We intend to synthesize the data to guide us to a better understanding of the concept of a responsive curriculum in the context of teacher education.

Results

The research will start in February 2020 and the preliminary results are expected in June. For this poster we intend to present the results from the initial observations and interviews and provide an analysis of what students expect from a responsive curriculum in the context of teacher education.

Conclusion and Discussion

A responsive, flexible and adaptive curriculum is a promising means to bridge the gap between learning in school and learning at the workplace to deliver graduates with broad skills and the ability to work in a variety of school contexts (Ameyaw et al., 2019; Baldwin & Baumann, 2005). In this first part of the PhD-research our goal is to increase understanding of the significance of a responsive curriculum for teacher education. Although we expect to disclose some findings of this phenomenon from the perspective of the students, many other questions will remain. For example, how a responsive curriculum is perceived by educational designers at the macro and supra level. Or, what the benefits are of a responsive curriculum from the perspective of schools where teacher students might be employed in the future. Besides discussing the results of this first study on student perspective, we hope that a constructive dialogue during the conference might be one of the catalysts for the next step in this PhD research.

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