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Chapter 8

What can we learn from the shift towards a more school centred model in Netherlands?

Critical issues

- Teacher education at school: who are the teacher educators?
- How do School-University Partnerships facilitate learning opportunities for student teachers?
- How a work based pedagogy in teacher education might look
- Changing roles of teachers educators in school

Being a teacher educator in the Netherlands, a short overview

In the Netherlands several routes are open to those who want to become a teacher.

Case study

On completion of secondary education students can study at a university of applied sciences to become a teacher in primary or lower secondary (general and vocational) education through a four year course. Subject knowledge and teaching knowledge are at the core of the curriculum.

To teach in higher secondary and pre-university education students' must initially achieve a Master's degree in a research university following which they can enrol in a one year post university course especially aimed at teaching aspects related to their subject. Students with a Bachelor degree can apply for a Master's course at a University of Applied Sciences and after graduation can teach upper secondary education.

These routes share an important characteristic: the education of the student teacher is firmly founded in a TEI (either at a research university or a university of applied sciences) and in school experience. All routes can be characterised as practical and school based meaning the concerns, problems and dilemmas of school teachers are at the core of the curriculum and school experience plays an important role in teacher education. Korthagen and his colleagues (Korthagen et al., 2001) named this *realistic*

teacher education. As a result, both at the institute and at school, professional guidance must be provided and teacher educators can be found in both institutions.

IBTEs work within the higher education context:

- providing student teachers with formal knowledge about teaching
- supporting student teachers in reflecting on their practical experiences
- discussing their development as a teacher centred around their portfolio of evidence.

In the Netherlands IBTEs do not have research obligations although some of them are involved in practical research or self-study projects. These teacher educators are seen as second-order teachers, that is teachers of teachers rather than teachers of pupils (Murray and Male, 2005; Swennen, Chapter 2) and they are working in a second-order context (i.e. the institute rather than a school).

To understand the role and position of teacher educators at school (who are second-order teachers in the first-order context of the school) we have to take a look at the two ways school experiences in the Netherlands are organised. Most students still experience a traditional situation where the school and institute hardly work together. In this case a cooperating teacher (mentor) is responsible for emotional support along with some coaching and feedback based on lesson observation. These cooperating teachers are not acknowledged as teacher educators. Some students (about 20%) are educated in School-University Partnerships in Teacher Education which started to evolve in the early years of this century inspired by similar developments in England (like the Oxford Internship Model, (Benton, 1990) and the USA (especially the upcoming of Professional Development Schools, Holmes-Partnership (2006). School-university collaboration is based on formal agreements, and both the institute and school are responsible for the education and assessment of student teachers. To realise this, a shared vision of teacher education and a shared curriculum are needed, along with a shared quality assurance system. Most partnerships consist of several TEIs and schools.

Over the years, two types of cooperating teachers have developed in these schools. The first one is called a school based teacher educator (SBTE). These are acknowledged as teacher educators and they have to meet the same professional standards as their colleagues at the institute. They are responsible for:

- the coordination of the professional development of teachers in their school
- the overall guidance of student teachers
- maintaining the link with the TEI's.

The second kind of cooperating teachers at school are the traditional teacher mentors, generally an experienced teacher and, in secondary education, teaching the same subject as the student teacher. They are responsible for the daily supervision of the student teacher. As a rule mentors have had some training in coaching, observation and providing feedback. Until now, in the Netherlands, mentors have not been seen as teacher educators but we have found that they actually can act as teacher educators, whilst being a teacher, when they are guiding student teachers (Van Velzen, 2013) and see below). IBTEs work alongside SBTEs in schools on a regular but not full time basis.

Critical question

- What challenges do your teachers face when taking on the role of teacher educator?

The roles of teacher educators in school

In School-University Partnerships the school policy enables student teachers to experience being part of the school community as 'colleagues' rather than guests. They are able to increasingly participate in some of the practices, which is seen as legitimate peripheral participation in the social practice of the school (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Ragonis and Hazzan, 2009). Cooperating teachers provide guidance to support the student teachers and facilitate opportunities to observe in the classroom. An important prerequisite at school level to realise this peripherality is the 'safety net' built by the school to avoid putting pupil learning at risk.

Another aspect of the work of cooperating teachers is opening up the social context of the school for their novice colleagues. Student teachers are not only introduced to school life but they are entitled to participate in all teaching and teacher-related activities supported by the SBTE and the mentor. For instance,

- they attend staff meetings about grading pupils or new teaching techniques
- assessments are prepared together
- the regular talks with parents about individual pupils are observed
- student teachers are also involved in all extra-curricular activities like school camps, parties and even redesigning the teaching spaces.

The most important aspect, however, is the daily guidance of learning how to act and think as a teacher, working with pupils and the school curriculum. This being work-based learning, different pedagogical approaches are required than those used at the institute.

Three important features of a pedagogy of work based teacher education can be identified based on (Billett, 2001):

1. the affordance (or invitational quality) of the school which is facilitated through seeing student teachers as colleagues, opening up all teaching activities for student teachers and having a clear policy for initial teacher education.
2. the agency of student teachers i.e. their individual abilities and willingness to participate in school and to be supervised.
3. structure aimed at integrating theory and practice:
    a. during actual teaching to support the student teacher in learning to think and act as a teacher in a particular context
    b. after teaching, or other school experience, to aid the student teacher in rethinking knowledge needed to act in new situations and other contexts.

To achieve the above, in partner schools support is given by the SBTE and/or the mentor depending on the kind of activities. Of course it is important to remember that working this way is rather new for all the stakeholders. In practice the stories are

sometimes less attractive. In the example, based on the research of (Timmermans, 2012), we show that the affordance of these partner schools is still based on the individual decisions of mentors instead of on shared views regarding the training of student teachers. Consequently, (either more or less peripheral) participation in all teacher related activities at school is not always practiced yet.

The affordance of partner schools in primary teacher education

Four types of activities are available for student teachers at school:

1. activities with or for pupils e.g. planning, teaching and assessment;
2. activities at school level e.g. communicating with parents, colleagues and other professionals;
3. accessibility and use of school based resources e.g. pupil files, school data, intranet and staff library;
4. activities aimed at teacher professional development e.g. staff professional learning opportunities and feedback talks with the mentor;

Individual mentors, even within schools, differed considerably in which activities they asked from student teachers, which activities they allowed them to do and which activities were not available.

Research showed that:

- most activities were related to working with pupils and the use of school based resources;
- more activities were allowed during the final year student teachers were enrolled in the teacher education course, probably based on ideas and convictions of mentors derived from their traditional practical experience; before the partnership was established;
- in the first three years most activities were voluntary. In the last year activities became mandatory expecting the students to perform as teachers already;

- there was no sign that mentors provided activities related to the learning needs of the individual student teachers
- the implicit ideas of individual mentors determined the work based curriculum of the student teachers instead of the content and cadence of the work itself, which is characteristic for work based learning

(Timmermans, 2012)

Critical question

- What learning opportunities do your partner schools really afford to your student teachers?

Mentors: teacher educators modelling their teaching

All Dutch student teachers are supervised by a mentor in daily practice although in different ways and with different aims. Mentors provide their student teachers with opportunities to experience teaching and support them emotionally in the process of learning to know what it means to become a teacher and to develop the self-esteem needed.

The practical knowledge of the experienced teachers acting as mentors *encapsulates the essence of being an accomplished practitioner* (Loughran, 2010) p. ix). Deconstructing this knowledge and sharing it with student teachers is seen as important because it can:

- prevent each individual student teacher from feeling pressured to *reinvent the wheel* (Loughran, 2010);
- help to overcome the limitations of learning through observation alone (Lortie, 1975);
- be a tool for learning and instructional decision making (Little, 2007);
- contribute to student teachers becoming knowledgeable professionals (Thiessen, 2000).

Making practical knowledge explicit is not easy, so the collaborative mentoring approach (below) was developed to help mentor teachers (a) to show experienced teacher behaviour and critically discuss this with student teachers (a process we called work based modelling) and (b) to support the student teacher during actual teaching (by modelling - mentor behaving as teacher, and scaffolding - mentor behaving as a teacher educator).

The Collaborative Mentoring Approach

This approach consists of cycles of lessons that are collaboratively prepared and evaluated by a student teacher and a mentor. The focus of discussions is the learning needs of the student teacher, but of course other issues can be discussed. The first lesson in the cycle is taught by the mentor. They model experienced teacher behaviour relevant to the learning needs of the student teacher. If, for example, the student teacher's focus is related to motivating the pupils the mentor demonstrates this as clearly as possible. The third lesson will be taught by the student teacher, employing this teaching strategy, while the second lesson is co-taught by both teachers. Co-teaching means they are not just dividing tasks but each is responsible for the whole lesson (Roth and Tobin, 2002). Before the actual teaching starts agreements are made about signs teachers can give to each other when the student teacher wants help or the mentor wants to provide support. By intervening the mentor can address pupils and complete student teachers' statements or ask additional questions. In the interventions the mentor takes the teacher role (modelling) and the student teacher observes. The student teacher can then imitate the behaviour of the mentor exploring whether this behaviour also works for them. If a lesson stalls, the mentor can step in and provide the student teacher with (whispered) hints and brief suggestions (scaffolding). Subsequently the student teacher continues the lesson.

Modelling and scaffolding practical knowledge

Mentoring conversations about modelling and scaffolding practical knowledge may include:

- telling about teacher behaviour or ideas;
- explaining own behaviour or ideas;
- discussing effectiveness of lesson plans;
- discussing observations of lesson enactment by mentor or student teacher;
- discussing alternatives: reframing the situation and/or teachers' behaviour;
- providing suggestions, discussing expected effectiveness of these suggestions;
- asking student teachers' suggestions and discussing expected effectiveness of these suggestions;
- giving feedback underpinned with vocational expertise;
- comparing and discussing reflections written by the student teacher and the mentor.

- Ways of modelling and scaffolding practical knowledge while teaching a co-taught lesson:
- demonstrating experienced teaching behaviour by the mentor;
- stepping in, taking a teacher's role showing experienced teacher behaviour which the student teacher observes and may imitate (modelling);
- stepping in, taking a teacher educator's role making short statements or small discussion on how to continue a lesson (scaffolding).

Van Velzen, 2013

Depending on the needs of the student teacher more than one lesson can be taught by the mentor or can be co-taught. At the same time the student teacher may have their own classes to teach where they continue to develop new teaching strategies. One can understand it is not an easy task for mentors to make the transition between the roles of teacher and teacher educator. Finding the right way (either as a teacher or as a teacher educator) and the right moment to intervene is one of the challenges mentors have to face.

Last, but not least, cooperating teachers should support student teachers while performing practical inquiries related to the improvement of their practice. All student teachers must perform such inquiries in their schools. Usually IBTEs provide this support; however, in partner schools this is a new role for cooperating teachers. Practical inquiry in these schools is not only a learning strategy for student teachers but also an important tool for school development. At the moment this role is seen as challenging and in most schools only a few teachers are able and willing to provide this support and alongside their student teachers they are pioneers in school based inquiry. In Chapter 4 (Roberts) there are practical ideas to support teacher educators in undertaking this extended role.

Providing social emotional support and the development of self-esteem, sharing practical knowledge and performing practical inquiries are the three important facets of mentoring student teachers (Wang and Odell, 2002). Each of them places unique demands on the mentors and choosing when a specific approach is needed is an important aspect of their professionalism.

Critical questions

- How are you enabling your mentors to develop their pedagogical approaches?
- Are you fully using the opportunities that exist fior work-based learning in your context?

In a nutshell

The assumption that student teachers must be educated at schools and at TEI's and that schools and universities must collaborate in order to provide student teachers with the best from both worlds underpins school-university partnerships. In practice, however, this is not always easy to realise. The learning opportunities that are needed for educating student teachers are broadly acknowledged within partner schools although not always recognisable in daily practice. SBTEs are frequently in contact with

their colleagues at the institute and, more specifically, with the IBTE placed at school. As an outcome of this collaboration these school mentors are less isolated than those in more traditional school contexts. Clearer leadership by the school management, however, would be helpful, as shown in the example of Timmermans (2012).

Reflections on critical issues [A]

- *As a result of the growing responsibility of schools for the education of student teachers we need a work based pedagogy*
- *The guidance that cooperating teachers provide is an important aspect of such pedagogy*
- *The acknowledgement of mentors being teacher educators in actual practice is still somewhat controversial even among mentors themselves. Emotional support and supporting self-esteem is a well-known aspect of a pedagogy of work based teacher education, but sharing practical knowledge, co-teaching and intervening in the lesson enactment of the student teacher is less known but seen as important and helpful*
- *New learning arrangements (both formal and at the workplace) have to be developed for mentors in order to support the expansion of competences needed*
- *Supervising practical inquiries is seen as even more difficult. It is helpful when teachers themselves start to systematically question their own practice but until now this is not standard practice*
- *At the moment, a lot of cooperating teachers do not experience these activities as 'teacher educator' or 'researcher' as part of their profession, let alone of their identity. Becoming second order teachers in a first order context indeed is hard and changing these convictions is one of the most important challenges in work based teacher education we have to face right now.*

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