



Vocational Assignments on diversity

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General system of teacher training in the Netherlands

Teacher training for secondary education in the Netherlands consists of two tracks. The first track (university of applied science) is a bachelor course within a specific school subject (180 ects). These bachelor programmes also offer educational science courses and an internship. The vocational track allows teachers to teach in the first four grades of secondary education. The second track is the academic track. This consists of a master course (60 study credits, equivalent to one year full time studying) that combines subject specific didactic courses and general educational science courses. Students are eligible after completion of a bachelor programme in the same subject in a research university. The academic track allows teachers to teach in the higher grades (pre-university tracks) of secondary education¹.

The Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

The teacher training program (vocational track) consists of seven “vocational assignments” which integrate knowledge, skills and practice components. Two of these assignments focus

¹ Recently more tracks have been designed and piloted to attract more students given the expected teacher shortage. A description is beyond the scope of this short description of a good practice.

on diversity, this focus aligns with the general focus of the university on preparing its students for working in an urban context.

1. The problem it addresses

Research on starting teachers has shown that one of the things they find difficult in their first years of teaching concerns dealing with diversity². Furthermore, several researchers in the urban education research programme have shown the importance of learning about diversity. Teaching in an urban context is different because the diversity is larger (super-diversity) and the concentration of learning and language difficulties. This is the reason for the teacher training institute to address diversity in its programme.

2. The context

The two vocational assignments are organized by the educational science department of the teacher training institute. The 'discipline' departments generally focus didactics, all though some of these department address diversity as well.

3. The content

The first of the two diversity vocational assignments focuses on processes in the classroom. The student teachers develop their views on diversity and learn to differentiate while zooming in on strengths and stimulating factors (instead of deficits).

Differences between pupils and differentiated teaching

In the first year, student teachers (during the course Development of the Adolescent) have learned about different types of pupils. In the current vocational assignment, student teachers learn how they can (must) address diversity by differentiated teaching. Diversity refers to learning styles, levels, backgrounds as well as learning and behavioural problems.

Excerpt from the course plan

The learning goals of this assignment include

*being able to work according to a method and a plan and being able to execute teaching strategies

*being able to map relevant pupil characteristics by using valid instruments

*addressing relevant pupil characteristics and acting upon it (by differentiated classroom management, instruction, learning material, teaching methods and assessment)

² <http://www.oberon.eu/ons-portfolio/item/monitor-samenwerking-lerarenopleiFlinkding-en-scholen.html>

An example of a task is to first make a group picture and describe the pupils in their internship classrooms on the basis of pupil files, including socio-emotional factors and the support structure in the home situation. Then student teachers describe what their pupils need and they design, on the basis of this needs assessment, an educational activity.

The second diversity vocational assignment focuses on the urban environment and includes three themes: urban education, educational innovation and the pedagogical role.

The teacher in the school context

As a teacher, you are not only dealing with your own classroom and school, but also with the school environment. In this vocational assignment the following themes are central: pedagogical quality, educational innovation and 'urban education'.

Excerpt from the course plan

The learning goals of this assignment include

- *being able to describe the three tasks of schooling and relate these tasks to one of the three themes of this vocational assignment
- *being able to describe the diversity of pupils, parents and school environment
- *being able to describe the role of the teacher in preparing pupils of participation in a pluriform society
- *further explicating their own opinion (vision) regarding education and adding a paragraph on the relationship between education and society
- *begin able to formulate recommendations of their won practice on the basis of personal experiences and supported by theory

One of the tasks is to design an observational tool and apply this tool during for example an interview or a field visit. Another task is a dialogue assignment concerning an ethnic/cultural sensitive topic (such as homosexuality and Islam)³. This assignment uses the so-called "dialogue as citizenship instrument". This instrument describes a stepwise method to conduct a dialogue on sensitive topics with pupils. In every step, recommendations are described that can help to create a dialogue as well as ways to assess pupils' needs before and after the dialogue. The instrument aims to support (young) teachers in developing their reflections skills and their roles as a moral compass. It also describes possible pitfalls in the process. (Below, a description of the ten minute version is added).

Internships in an urban school

³ <http://downloads.slo.nl/Documenten/definitieve-methodiek-dialoog-als-burgerschapsinstrument.pdf>

Aside from these vocational assignments, the student teachers are required to do one of their internships in an urban school.

4. The student-teacher competences that are developed

The student teachers develop their observational skills, their design and research skills. In more general terms, the assignments aim to increase pedagogical, cooperative, reflective competence as well as competence in bridging the theory-practice divide.

5. The theoretical underpinning

The teacher training institute cooperates with the researchers in one of the research groups of the university itself (the urban education research group). They have supplied the teacher training institute with the relevant resources to improve the curriculum on diversity. Important theoretical sources are:

Berben, M. & Van Teeseling, M. (2014). *Differentiëren is te leren! Omgaan met verschillen in het voortgezet onderwijs*. Amersfoort: CPS.

Geerts, W. en Kralingen, R. van. (2013). *Handboek voor leraren*. Bussum: Coutinho.

Klarus, R. (2012). *Wat is goed onderwijs?* Den Haag: Boom Lemma Uitgevers.

Lieshout, T. van, Lieshout, B.E.M. (2009). *Pedagogische adviezen voor speciale kinderen*. Houten: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum.

Pameijer, N., et al. (2012). *Handelingsgericht werken in het voortgezet onderwijs*. Leuven: ACCO.

Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling en Diversion. (2015). *Dialoog als burgerschapsinstrument*. Geraadpleegd op:

<http://downloads.slo.nl/Documenten/definitieve-methodiek-dialoog-als-burgerschapsinstrument.pdf>

Wal, J. van der en Wilde, J. de (2011). *Identiteitsontwikkeling en leerlingbegeleiding*. Bussum: Coutinho.

6. The impact on student teachers

The student teachers have evaluated both vocational assignments positively, although the dialogue task was considered to be a difficult one. The new curriculum has not been implemented long enough to describe its impact on teacher competence after graduation.

Acknowledgements

This description of a good practice resulted from programme documents and an interview with Herald Hofmeijer, program manager of the Educational Sciences department in the teacher training institute of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and several policy documents of the same institute.

<p>The ten minute option</p> <p>The ten minute option is a short version of the method Dialogue as citizenship instrument. It can reduce tension and within ten minutes, pupil's opinions can be confronted with other perspectives as well as with the constitution.</p>		
<p>Stage 1</p> <p>Do not deny the world view of your pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Repeat in your own words what has been said -Ask if you understood it well -react: Can you explain this? On what sources do you base yourself? Where did you hear, read or see this? <p>Actively ask students to react:</p> <p>How do you think about this? Explain this? Do other students think differently? Did you encounter this yourself? Are there other people who think differently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Try and get an answer to your question: Why does this topic bother (or does not bother) your students? -Realise from a pedagogic point of view that your students are developing individuals. 	<p>Stage 2</p> <p>Focus on the opinions and ideas of your students, involve the whole class in the conversation and provide opportunities to correct and add to each others points of view: Does anyone think differently? Can anyone imagine that other people think differently? Do you know other opinions about this? From politics, the paper, tv or internet?</p> <p>Confront, where necessary in a positive way</p> <p>Is this the same as ...? How does this relate to the freedom of What would be the consequence if everybody would think like this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Make sure the discussion is not dominated by one or two pupils. -Use differences of opinion to teach the pupils about the topic and to support them in their development 	<p>Stage 3</p> <p>Make sure there is enough time to end the discussion in a positive way, and show your pupils that different perspectives and opinions may co-exist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -pay attention to the possibility that some students may feel excluded -thank your pupils for their contributions and their openness -reflect on the process afterwards: Did your pupils need to blow of steam or was something else going on? Share your worries and questions with your colleagues and/or with your management.