

**PhD Research Proposal: How can effective Self-Directed-Learning be designed in an educational-pedagogic perspective for the Faculty of Education**

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The research methodology will be developmental research, defined as *'The systematic study of designing, developing and evaluating instructional programs, processes and products that must meet the criteria of internal consistency and effectiveness.'* (Richey and Nelson, 1996, p. 1213). Using this kind of methodology will allow me to find outcomes on a Self-Direction Learning (SDL) design process - together with colleagues and student teachers - and to carry out several designed learning arrangements from an educational perspective. From the pedagogic perspective I intend to improve the relation between teacher trainer and student teacher with the accent on development, stimulation and support of SDL. This will be done during the design and carrying out of learning arrangements and also by training teacher trainers in the necessary skills of SDL in the context of relational/pedagogic didactic. Looking from both related perspectives it will lead to a construction of an SDL-environment in which teacher trainers and student teacher will learn effectively together.

*Motivation*

In my opinion it is very important to prepare student teachers for their future work in education. The educational world is part of a society that promotes life-long-learning, employability and the development of a knowledge economy. The Dutch 'onderwijsraad' talks in 2003 about a knowledge economy that needs new forms of education and other learning opportunities.

Within the educational field, there is already a transformation going on and it is shown in concepts such as: 'natural learning', 'powerful learning', 'life based learning', 'collaborative learning', 'problem based learning' and 'action learning'. The design of the above mentioned concepts are all different; there can be seen one general point namely active and socially constructed knowledge.

To prepare student teachers better for their job in schools, the Archimedes Teacher Training College has chosen for an educational model (so called 'leerlijnenmodel') that is build upon Social Constructivist ideas on education. There has been a shift going on from Teacher-Directed Learning (TDL) to Self-Directed Learning (SDL). The last concept of learning has been object of research since the sixties and until now there has not been found one definition of SDL. Thousands of pages of research reports by several prominent researchers such as Candy (1991), Knowles (1975), Cross (1981), Simons et al (2000) and Merriam (2001) did not result in an unambiguous definition but result in four general similarities. All of the researchers emphasizes the importance of two dimensions namely process and product, that SDL refers to some personal attribution such as autonomy, it also refers to self-management in which the learner takes the lead in his own education, it refers to a 'method' to increase learner-control and it does not have to take place only in institutional settings. It is clear that SDL cannot be unambiguously defined and that fact is also the opportunity to look from one's own perspective on SDL. In my case it will be an educational-pedagogic perspective.

*The contribution that my work will make to the field*

Nowadays there is an interesting discussion in newspapers, in articles and on television about 'new learning' caused by a dissertation of Van der Werf (2005). In her dissertation she puts two learning concepts (traditional learning as instructive learning and 'new learning' as constructive learning) against each other and draws the conclusion that there has been not enough empirical research yet about the effects of 'new learning'. Another conclusion is that everyone gives his/her own meaning to the concept of 'new learning' and she is not sure if 'new learning' effectively prepare students for their job and life in a society in which economy of knowledge is on the rise.

Her dissertation is received in an educational field which transforms schools from 'traditional learning' to 'constructive learning' and from TDL to SDL. Therefore it is time and also necessary to do empirical research to find out in what way 'new learning' is effective with the focus on SDL.

As a member of the 'lectoraat Vernieuwende Opleidingsmethodiek- en didactiek', I will contribute with this research through knowledge development for a learning concept named 'Levend Leren' (Jansen, 2005), which focus on SDL, pedagogical relation and educational learning arrangements in and outside institutions. My intention is to develop a didactic that is based on various pedagogic aspects and fits within 'new learning', especially SDL.

My research will contribute to the design of effective SDL learning arrangements from an educational-pedagogic perspective. My research will also contribute to an improvement in the relation of the teacher trainer and the student teacher by training teachers and student to develop SDL-skills, attitude and knowledge.

Development of knowledge about effective 'new learning' will contribute to our work as teacher trainers and will benefit the student teacher. Outcomes of the research will support the Hogeschool Utrecht to become an important actor in debates about 'new learning' on national level.

During the PhD research I will start the development of an Europese SDL-expertise centre, in which the Hogeschool Utrecht will be the leading actor. That means that the Hogeschool Utrecht will be an actor on international educational debates too.

Research of SDL will be done in close collaboration with Dubravka Knezic, who will research one special aspect of SDL, namely: Stimulating Reflection through Socratic Dialogue.

Although these are two separate PHD proposals, they will be submitted together to show their consanguineous relation.

#### *Personal motivation*

I work since the eighties in the educational field (VO-MBO) and the last six years as a teacher trainer at the Faculty of Education. I am part of the transformation in the educational field and at the same time an actor in that process.

As a teacher trainer (instructor, coach) it is constantly searching for ways to design SDL and to develop the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge in collaboration with colleagues and student teachers. This year I started a small experiment with four student teachers to apply SDL-principles in our collaborated learning. During the coming three months we broaden our scope to carry out several activities, such as: an intensive course for student teachers about 'new learning' with the emphasis on SDL, a workshop for a team of teachers at an MBO-school, three workshops for VO-MBO teachers, one workshop at the international program at the Faculty of Education and the last activity is in March at the Autonomia University in Barcelona. We will give several workshops for teachers and student-teachers of an international course at the university. The outcomes of all the activities will be reported and will serve as a small pre-research for the PhD research.

Since 1997 there is a flow in me about the topic of SDL. During the Master program Educational Advisor (graduated in 2000) my focus was on Self-Directed teams and the relation with aspects of an organisational culture. During the Master program Human Resource Development (graduation in June 2006) my focus of SDL shifted towards design of learning arrangements and the pedagogic relation between teachers and students.

With this PhD proposal I can combine two important perspectives (Educational and Pedagogic) that are centred about the main topic Self-Directed Learning.