

Towards sustainable innovations

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Valorisation addendum

During my job as a teacher in higher education, I saw many new initiatives that received considerable attention and financial resources. Then, however, I saw those same innovative ideas fade away or be quietly relegated to the bin. This development is not only visible within the educational sector, but is also reflected in society as a whole. Many innovative initiatives turn out to be hardly sustainable (Onderwijsraad, 2011). Fortunately, in recent years, increasing attention has been paid to improving the sustainability of innovations and to the employees who can make this possible. After all, they are the social capital of a company or educational institute.

This was the reason which prompted me to research the innovative behaviour of teachers and the way in which sustainable educational innovations can be stimulated. Teachers from different educational institutions participated in this research (VET-HE-University), but the valorisation activities mainly related to Zuyd University (HE) in which I myself had various roles (teacher, researcher, advisor, and manager).

This valorisation addendum both discusses the transfer of our findings into past valorisation activities that formed part of my PHD project and describes present and future valorisation opportunities.

Past valorisation activities

Since the start of my PhD course, I have participated in a wide range of activities that have jointly contributed to boosting change within specific study programmes and across Zuyd as a whole. In this chapter, I describe the most impactful activities.

The educational innovation and continuous professional development (Lectoraat Professionalisering van het Onderwijs) research centre, of which I am a member, has the objective of conducting research into Zuyd University's own education in order to develop and disseminate new insights, both within and outside this university. The centre has the ambition of fulfilling the R&D function for educational questions within Zuyd. This involves both research into the benefits of educational innovations (e.g., student learning outcomes), the way in which innovation processes (ideally) take place, and the supporting conditions, including the professional development of teachers. By conducting this research, knowledge has been developed on how to measure the innovative work behaviour of teachers, what supporting factors there are, and what actions can be taken to strengthen IWB. This knowledge was shared with members of the research centre, key persons within Zuyd, and interested parties outside of the university. Presentations were given at both national and international conferences (e.g., ORD, EAWOP, EAPRIL, EARLI SIG) and, on request,

I have provided tailored advice to consultants, directors, training managers, and teacher teams. Through my work in this research centre, I have helped to design a number of innovations within Zuyd. One of these innovations was the beginning of 'Succesvol Studeren' [improving student success], a university-wide programme launched in 2017. Until the start of the programme, local projects were initiated. The programme opted for a programmatic approach with a long-term perspective and a joint focus. As a member of the programme's core team, I developed an approach that stimulates teacher teams to demonstrate IWB, which is accompanied by activities aimed to boost the professional development of teacher teams. The knowledge gained from my research, namely the focus on sustainability by creating a supportive learning environment in which IWB is expected, and providing the right preconditions, such as time and resources, to work on innovations and stimulate professional development, has hereby been taken into account. For a detailed description of this programme, I refer to the publication 'Een ander hoe, studiesucces als veranderproces' (Kwakman et al., 2019).

The development of the 'Successvol Studeren' programme and the focus on sustainability is aligned with the conclusions from Study 2.

Quote from the conclusion of Study 2:

'The study seeks to describe, explain, and predict teachers' IWB and the factors that impact their behaviour as a means of generating insights into how to develop appropriate contexts and initiatives to further encourage such behaviour. Furthermore, we can increase the long-term success of innovations by paying attention to the sustainability phase.'

In my role as the programme's educational advisor, I have guided and advised my colleagues, including in terms of programme management. Moreover I was involved in advising various teacher teams in order to improve curricula that are more effective in terms of student success, and at the same time fit the needs of the teachers and university. For a detailed description of the programme and its impact, please see the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5B58Mt3OW8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgdnF8ZC8Nc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLQSnvoM2oY>

At the Business school, I provided support to both the management and the teaching team (e.g., members of the project teams, coaching writing groups, organising study days, and individually coaching teachers). The advices I gave to the management included how to create a supportive work environment, the effective use of time and resources, the composition of writing teams, and clear communication about the renewal process (e.g., during study days). Additionally, I also contributed to the content of the study days with the entire teaching team, where much emphasis was placed on their professional development.

Quote from Tamara Mayer, Business School Manager:

'We really see the support from the 'Succesvol Studeren' programme as 'working together' with Peggy Lambriex on the quality of our education. Thanks to this approach, we have improved our courses in many ways. A wonderful blueprint for the new curriculum as a starting point for the curriculum committee in the coming years and the professional development of the teaching team are good examples of this. This helps us for the future, but certainly also in the present where online education plays a very important role.'

Within the Law school, I have worked as a supervisor/advisor collaborating with the management team to build a supportive learning environment and to inspire the teaching team by conducting professional development activities aiming at their understanding of active learning.

Quote from Annemie Heuts, Former Manager of the Law School:

'Making innovative work behaviour more sustainable is a 'must' in guaranteeing high-quality education. The contribution of the 'Succesvol Studeren' programme is essential in this regard.'

In the coaching of both schools, the role of the manager or the management team, the creation of a supportive learning environment, and teacher professional development were the main foci. My advice (e.g., creating a supportive work environment in which IWB is expected) provided the right preconditions, such as time and resources, to work on innovations and stimulate professional development were grounded in the research results and implications of my thesis.

Quote from the implications of Study 2:

'This study provides evidence for the significance of environmental factors influencing IWB while controlling for individual factors. Here we present four implications. Firstly, the results show that managers should create a supportive work environment in which IWB is expected, teachers feel free to develop and discuss new ideas, and teachers are given the opportunity to participate in innovative projects. Secondly, managers should provide the right preconditions, such as time and resources, to work on innovations.'

With practice-based research, our research centre contributes to the development of expertise in the field of three interrelated themes: [1] active learning in a (digital) learning environment, [2] educational development, and [3] sustainable implementation in teams. The expertise gained in my PhD research contributed to the evolution of the research activities related to the third theme. Whereas the theme previously focused on 'teacher teams', the emphasis is now on 'sustainable implementation in teams'. This shift shows that this research theme is mainly concerned with educational innovation in a team context, and in particular with developing knowledge about the sustainability of innovations - precisely because the perpetuation of innovations appears to be problematic. As the main person responsible for this research theme, I am the driving force behind various research projects. An example is a literature study on sustainable innovations (Van Genugten, 2022). This research is closely linked to the literature study and the results of Study 1.

Quote from the general discussion in Study 1:

'By adding the sustainability dimension to the current conceptualisations of IWB, we strongly accord with the innovation cycles of West and Farr (1989) and Fullan (2007), who emphasised a stabilisation or continuation phase as a vital stage to completing an innovation process. The emphasis on this sustainability phase can help schools firmly anchor innovative ideas in their organisations, preventing losses of time and energy through unfinished innovations.'

My research also has an impact outside of Zuyd University [Zuyd Hogeschool]. I regularly meet with researchers from all over the country who are working on the theme of IWB or sustainable implementation. One of these meetings resulted in being the starting point of a research path of the Landstede (practoraat) research group, 'Teaching professionalism' (a research group within VET). Landstede developed and implemented a research box based on the IWB phases. This research box won the incentive prize for most innovative research method at the MBO (VET) Research Day 2021. Later, an article was published: 'De onderzoekbox; op creatieve wijze mbo-docenten uitdagen en prikkelen' (Korsmit, 2021). It is pleasing to see that our research on the phases of innovative work behaviour and the emphasis on sustainability has inspired new initiatives.

Quote from Ceciel Korsmit, Landstede Researcher:

'We had contact with each other quite some time ago. At the time, I was in the exploratory phase of my research on the innovative capacity of VET teachers. [MBO docenten]. Your investigations [this dissertation] and the phases of IWB have become a starting point in my line of research.

Since your dissertation source has been a wonderful input, I am happy to share it with you. And of course thank you very much for that!'

Besides the national impact, my research has also received international attention - especially for the validated IWB questionnaire. A group of Turkish researchers has transferred the scales into Turkish and conducted a validation-reliability study in their country. They concluded that the scales are valid and reliable (Muhammet & Balaman, 2021).

Quote from the limitations and future research section of Study 1:

'Firstly, even though we used data from a heterogeneous sample including teachers from different professional institutes, the results confirm a five-structure model of IWB in the vocational educational sector only. Hence, future studies might benefit from the validation of our instrument by using the measures and operationalisations in samples consisting of professional and general college level and/or university level education. Secondly, our study only included Dutch participants. The obtained Rasch measures are invariant, but we have not yet explored internationally composed samples.'

In addition, the number of citations (50 in total, spread over 2 years) to my articles demonstrate the appreciation of my work on IWB and the developed measuring instrument.

Present valorisation activities

During my PhD trajectory, I also noticed a change in myself. As an advisor and supervisor of the 'Succesvol Studeren' programme, I was able to learn a great deal about stimulating and activating teaching teams, group dynamics, and innovation processes. Through these learning experiences, I began to feel that I wanted to take a more leading role in innovation projects rather than merely provide advice or guidance from the side-lines. It became my dream to be able to manage a team myself and create a learning environment in which all team members would be inspired to give their best in order to achieve maximum team performance. That opportunity came in 2020. Within Zuyd, a position became vacant as education manager of the Academy for Speech and Language Therapy. Since then, I have been fulfilling my dream, and working with my team towards a sustainable new curriculum that inspires both teachers and students to learn, and teachers to guide our students within a simple organisational structure. I have combined this management role within my work as a researcher at the educational innovation and continuous professional development (Lectoraat Professionalisering van het Onderwijs) research centre. This is a perfect combination because I can immediately apply the knowledge I gain in research and because this practical knowledge also provides input for new research. I also share the knowledge gained from all the research conducted by our research group with the team of education managers within the health and welfare domain.

Quote from the practical implications of Study 3:

'More specifically, if principals offer support for, and expose their teachers to, various innovations, sustainable innovations are more likely to succeed. In other words, a supportive management that facilitates learning and structures the way in which employees are brought into contact with innovations is of crucial importance to the long-term success or failure of innovations. The manager is key to creating the learning climate needed for successful innovation.'

Future valorisation activities

My work as a principal researcher for the theme of 'sustainable implementation in teams' will be continued by initiating future projects aimed at, gaining insights into the role of managers in creating supportive learning environments, how professional development can contribute to more sustainable educational innovations, and the formation of teams that are highly capable of achieving sustainable innovations.

Quote from the practical implications of Study 3:

'For schools and their principals, it is important to know how each distinct learning climate dimension relates to their teachers' IWB and in which phases. Ultimately, the way that the school evolves and deals with ongoing environmental change depends primarily on the school's human capital, that is, its teachers (Sherry, 2002).'

Having conducted this research, I would like to apply for a Comenius grant for one of the topics indicated above. A Comenius grant would allow me to collaborate with education professionals and other universities to conduct an innovation project that would contribute to improving higher education. In order to generate even more attention for the sustainability of innovations, I am going to publish a magazine about my research that targets managers, HR staff, and teachers. This magazine will focus on the phases of innovative behaviour, the attention for sustainability from the start of a project, and what is needed to promote sustainability. It will also contain concrete tips and tricks to promote sustainable IWB, such as reflection on the process itself rather than on the content of the innovation.

Quote from the practical implications of Study 4:

'Second, it was found that teachers seem to marginally reflect on the innovation process, steps to be taken, and the innovation behaviours required. Through short evaluations at the end of every meeting or even through the use of reflection tools, teacher teams could be stimulated to reflect on these aspects. Moreover, special attention could be paid to ensuring the sustainability of the innovation, from the start of the project onwards.'

In my role as manager of the Academy of Speech and Language Therapy, I will continue to focus on sustainable innovations, together with my team and my fellow managers from both within and outside the domain. By spreading project funds over

a longer period of time, deploying team members in those phases of a project where they are at most value, paying attention to professional development, and, above all, by focusing on the team members and offering them a safe and stimulating learning climate, I hope to implement educational innovations more sustainably. I will be able to use the practical insights gained directly in my work within our research centre.

A combination that keeps me working at Zuyd University is the wonderful mix of new challenges and pleasant meetings with colleagues who offer a lot of inspiration for both the present and future.

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