

THE AHEAD JOURNAL

No. 4

A Review of Inclusive
Education &
Employment Practices

This electronic journal is not a newsletter nor is it an academic journal. It is a space for you working out there 'on the ground' to share innovations and your examples of good practices that deserve to be showcased.

ISSUE 4, NOVEMBER 2016

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ISSN 2009-8286



Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

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Eye Opener - How can teacher trainers coach students during internships taking the diversity of students into account?



Katrien Durinck

Katrien Durinck has a Master of Science in Educational Sciences with main subject: Special Education, Disability Studies and Behavioural Disorders, a Master of Science in Speech Languages and Hearing Sciences, and an additional teaching degree. She is a lecturer at the Department of Secondary Education at the University College Ghent (Flanders – Belgium). Apart from teaching, she is also responsible for the coaching of students during their internships. Her areas of expertise are diversity in education and pupils with special needs. She served as the coordinator and one of the process managers of the Eye Opener project.



An Standaert

An Standaert has a Master of Science in Educational Sciences with main subject: Special Education, Disability Studies and Behavioural Disorders and an additional teaching degree. She previously worked as a special educator in different primary schools for special education and as a practice teacher in a secondary vocational school. She is a lecturer at the Department of Orthopedagogy – Special Education at the University College Ghent (Flanders – Belgium). She is involved in different educational projects such as the Eye Opener project where she took the role of process manager.

Introduction

The Expertise Network of teacher training of the Ghent University Association (ENW AUGent) funded the Eye Opener project. The main goal of the project was to support teacher trainers in adequately addressing the diversity of students during their internships. During the academic year 2014-2015, six teacher trainers of three different teacher training institutes in Ghent (University

College Ghent (HoGent), Ghent University (UGent) and Adult Education Center Kisp (CVO Kisp)) participated in an inter-vision group guided by two process managers.

One of the inspiring frameworks that was used to improve the quality of student coaching was Universal Design for Learning (UDL; Rose & Meyer, 2002). Other frameworks that were used were Solution Focused Coaching (SFC; de Shazer, 1985) and Core Qualities (Ofman, 2007).

This article will focus on the concept, the process and the product of the Eye Opener project. In addition, three good practices will be discussed in-depth.

The concept

The Eye Opener project used inter-vision as learning method. By using this structured method (Terpstra, 2010), the teacher trainers reflected within the group on how they could coach their students during internship, taking the diversity of students into account. The inter-vision group consisted six teacher trainers, and was organised five times in one academic year. Two process managers stimulated the process of inspiring, motivating and activating each other. The strength of the Eye Opener project was the co-creation of new ideas and actions, and to develop a broader vision on diversity of students. In the following sections, the three guiding frameworks will be discussed.



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The first framework used in the Eye Opener project was UDL (Rose & Meyer, 2002). During the first session, an expert explained the UDL vision and principles, and provided different examples of UDL implementation in (higher) education. The teacher trainers were asked to discuss in groups the extent to which they had already realised some UDL principles in the coaching of students. Furthermore, the teacher trainers mentioned challenges for further implementation of UDL in their coaching of students in internships.

For the Eye Opener project, the UDL principles (CAST, 2016) were transformed into **questions** which activated the teacher trainers:

- The **why** of learning: How do you stimulate interest and motivation for learning?
- The **what** of learning: How do you present information in different ways?
- The **how** of learning: How do you differentiate the ways that students can express their skills?

Solution Focused Coaching (SFC)

In contrast with a problem-focused approach, solution-focused thinking focuses on the future. Critical to SFC is to identify the goal to move toward, to discover strengths and capacities, and to identify and take small steps toward the solution. During the sessions, the process managers used solution-focused questions to coach the teacher trainers. They asked about solutions, strengths and actions (Caufman & van Dijk, 2011; Visser & Schlundt Bodien, 2009).

Core Qualities

Each teacher trainer had their own strengths, own preferences and own experiences. By using the framework of Core Qualities (Ofman, 2007) during the sessions, the teacher trainers became more aware of their own qualities, pitfalls, sensitivities and challenges. These aspects of the identity of the teacher trainer have a substantial impact on their professional relationship with the students.

Process

Inspired by the cycle of action research (Ponte, 2006), the teacher trainers were encouraged to investigate and to improve the way they coach their students during internships. The starting point of the sessions was to share and reflect on each teacher trainer's own experience in coaching students. In the next step, the teacher trainer formulated at least one personal learning goal. Then followed a brainstorm in the inter-vision group of possible actions according to the personal goal. At the end of the session, the teacher trainer chose a corresponding action fitting their own professional identity which was carried out in their own coaching of students. This resulted in new experiences which created a new starting point (Van de Putte, et al., 2010).

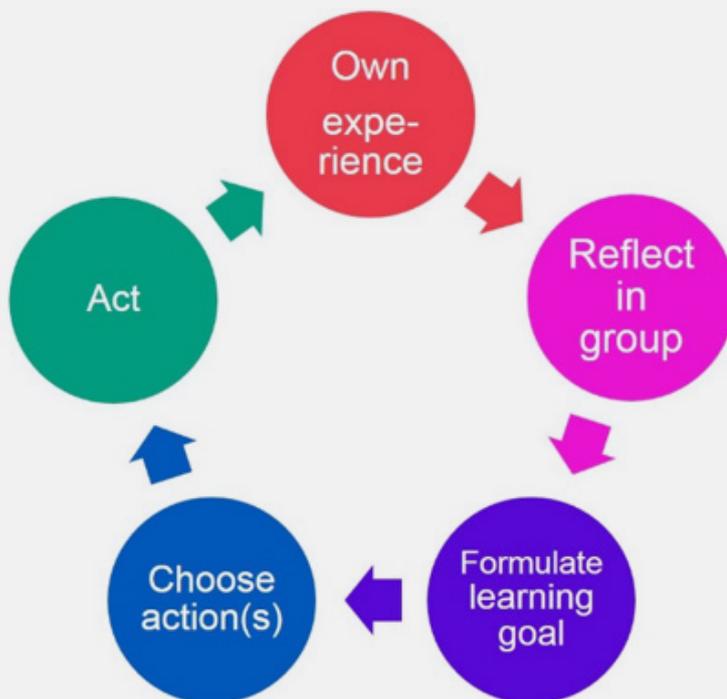


Figure 1: The cycle of action research used in the Eye Opener project

Three examples of good practice

Each of the teacher trainers in the group of Eye Opener carried out different actions during their own coaching of students in internships. Following the process inspired by action research, this resulted in a number of good practices. In this article, three good practices are illustrated and linked with the UDL principles.

Good practice 1: How to activate students?

The first good practice focuses on the coaching session, which takes place after a lesson taught by the student. This session involves a conversation and reflection between the student and the teacher trainer. The goal of the first good practice is to reinforce the input of the student during this coaching session.

The coaching procedure created in the Eye Opener project involves different steps. In step one, both the student and teacher trainer write down three positive experiences about the lesson on three yellow post-its. In step two, both the student and the teacher trainer write down three ideas to improve the lesson on blue post-its. In step three, the student starts a conversation with the teacher trainer about the lesson, using the positive experiences he has written down on the yellow post-its. These experiences are compared to the ones written down by the teacher trainer. At the end, the student receives all the post-its generated during the coaching session.

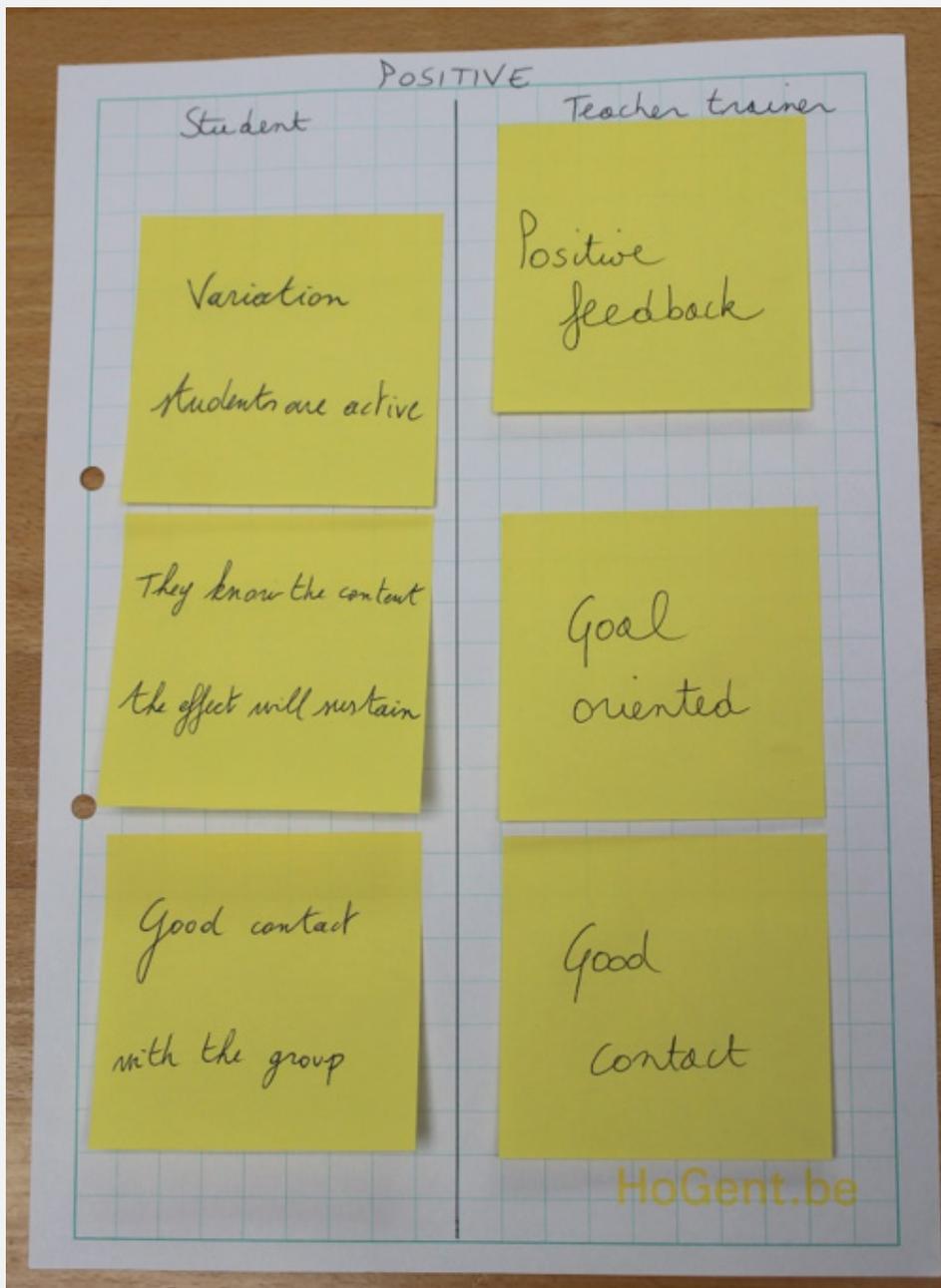


Figure 2: Example of the use of post-its in coaching (translated in English)

Link to UDL principles

This first good practice can be linked to all the UDL-principles. The **why** of learning is met because the input of the student is clearly recognised. The student does not only listen to the findings of the teacher trainer, but also contributes actively in the conversation about his performance. The **what** of learning is met by giving oral and visual feedback. The visual feedback is reinforced by using keywords on the post-its and using different coloured post-its. The **how** of learning is that the post-its help the student to reflect on his/her own performance and to formulate priorities.

Good practice 2: How to make information accessible

The second good practice focuses on the application procedure for an internship. In Flanders (Dutch speaking part of Belgium), this is a rather complex procedure for all teacher training institutes supported by the government. In the past, there was a text brochure available for students and a group session was organised to inform the students. For a lot of students, particularly those who could not attend the information session, it was very difficult to complete the application procedure in a correct way. In order to provide more accessible information about the application procedure for internships, an instruction movie was developed. Screencastomatic© was used with a voice-over that explained the procedure step by step. In addition, different visual cues were added (for example colours, symbols, screenshots).



Figure 3: Screenshot of an instruction movie (in Dutch)

Link to UDL principles

This second good practice is an example of the **what** principle of UDL because the information is presented in different ways: there is an explanation in voice-over, as well as visual markers like structures, colours and symbols.

Good practice 3: How to encourage students to express their skills

In the third good practice, the teacher trainer encourages the students to express their competencies in a **personal and creative** way. For example, some students may use artwork while others make a video or comic to describe the policy of a school. For both the student and the teacher trainer, this 'freedom' of expressing skills feels more pleasant: the student can show his/her talents and the teacher trainer gets a broader view of the student.



Figure 4: Student's report of extramural school activity (in Dutch)

Link to UDL principles

This third good practice is an example of the **how** principle of UDL, because the students are given the opportunity to express their skills in their own personal way. In addition, this also enhances the motivation for learning, as mentioned in the **why** principle.

Conclusion

The main goal of the Eye Opener project was to professionalise teacher trainers in adequately addressing the diversity of students during their internships, by means of an inter-vision group. The participants concluded that it was an inspiring and motivating project. Reflecting and learning together created a new and broader vision on diversity of students. They came to the realisation that small actions can have a big impact. They enjoyed the strength of sharing and co-creating which gave them new energy to explore more possibilities to take the diversity of students into account.

Contact

For more information about the Eye Opener project contact:

Katrien Durinck: Katrien.Durinck@hogent.be

An Standaert: An.Standaert@hogent.be

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ISSN 2009-8286



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A Review of Inclusive Education & Employment Practices

AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation.

AHEAD provides information to students and graduates with disabilities, teachers, guidance counsellors and parents on disability issues in education.

AHEAD works with graduates and employers through the GET AHEAD Graduate Forum and the WAM Mentored Work Placement Programme.

AHEAD coordinates LINK, a worldwide network of professionals promoting the inclusion of students & graduates with disabilities in Higher Education managed by 6 European partner organisations.

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ISSN 2009-8286

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AHEAD, East Hall, UCD, Carysfort Avenue,
Blackrock, Co Dublin, Ireland