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Enschede 2023

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We wish to thank all those involved in the project. Special thanks go to the organizers of the Leergang Onderwijsinnovatie of the [ComeniusNetwerk](https://www.comeniusnetwerk.nl/default.aspx). The ComeniusNetwerk is a network of innovators of post-secondary education in the Netherlands

Funded by the Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO)

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# Role Descriptions

## Educational Innovator

Enactor, emphasis on student-centred education

As an inspired educational innovator, your heart is dedicated to education. For the past ten years, you have been contributing your expertise to the health sciences department at *Comenius University*, where you are determined to build a career focused on educational innovation. You draw motivation from the challenging aspects of your work and are not afraid to engage in tough discussions.

Two years ago, together with three colleagues, you initiated an ambitious project to develop student-centred and transdisciplinary education, funded by a prestigious external grant. You consider it a necessity to develop education that not only focuses on acquiring specialized knowledge but also on cultivating broad skills and ways of thinking in students. For you, education doesn't end at Comenius University; you see students as individuals and want to help them realize their potential as young professionals.

As a passionate educational innovator, you aim for visibility within the university. You want to inspire others and catalyse change, and you are frustrated when people resist or adopt bureaucratic stances. Your ambition is to broaden the implementation of your approach and break through the rigid structure of the educational system. The traditional course and examination structures are not suitable for this form of education. For you, it's about the process students go through, the challenges they encounter, their attitude toward complexity, and what they personally gain from the experience.

To have a positive impact on the educational landscape and bring innovation to the way students learn and grow, you need the necessary solid ground. Implementation in a bachelor programme would secure a place to develop transdisciplinary education further and ensure funding for educational staff. Implementation aligns perfectly with the needs of your project to better respond to the changing needs of students and to involve external partners more deeply.

Interests: Developing education for students, own career as an education innovator

Irritations: People who always see a problem instead of a solution, bureaucracy

Habits: Not easily discouraged, talkative, enthusiastic gestures

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| **Factsheet** |
| Students have shared positive experiences in reflection interviews:   * "I felt a kind of freedom in the minor; I could truly decide what to do for the first time in my studying life." - Psychology Student. * "Our project with HealthWise could really contribute to what they do in the local healthcare institution, and I found that really awesome." - Biomedical Technology Student. * "This is how I envision my ideal work in the future." - Business Administration Student. |
| In addition to the positive experiences with the pilot, you have also realized that coordination with the external party took a lot of time for both students and teachers. It is crucial to clearly align expectations regarding time investment from the company and expected outcomes. |

## Roles Session 1 and "Contrastive version"

## Biomedical Technology Student

*Enthusiastic - Critical*

As a third-year student in biomedical technology (BMT), you participated in the pilot. This offered a completely different learning experience than your regular courses. The difference was so significant that it felt like you were studying at an entirely different institute. During the pilot, you worked with a team of three on the analysis of the societal context surrounding e-health innovations. The possibilities in the project were endless, and your team had the freedom to explore any direction. Your group chose to focus on patient autonomy, while other students investigated various aspects such as policy context or people's healthcare experiences. Your teacher played a very supportive role during this process, for which you are very grateful.

You believe that the minor can improve in terms of clarity during education. Unclear expectations cause stress among students, mainly stemming from inadequate communication about assignments and assessments. Additionally, the project did not unfold as you were accustomed to. A lot of time was lost in coordinating with other students and clarifying confusion during discussions. Despite these initial challenges, the project ran smoothly after the first five weeks, and everyone was highly motivated.

As a BMT student, you are not used to open and creative processes. You typically work more from a theoretical perspective. Your specialized BMT knowledge was of little use in the project. However, you gained valuable experience in collaboration and gained more confidence in your abilities. This insight led to the realization that you are not just a theoretical scientist but a practical professional who develops technological solutions to change people's lives and have a positive impact on society. In your future career, you want to follow this path.

Interests: Sustainability and good citizenship are important to you; you stand up for others.

Irritations: People who only think of themselves or are very conservative.

Habits: Activist behaviour enthusiastically talks about experiences with the pilot.

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| **Factsheet** |
| You have formed a group of friends from the minor, fellow students whom you can rely on when you're in a rut. Three out of the five members of your friend group have found jobs. In the job application process, the project unexpectedly turned out to be a significant advantage for them. The other two are continuing their academic studies. |
| By taking responsibility for your tasks within the project and successfully completing them, you have gained more self-confidence. This has also benefited you in your personal life; this season in your hockey club, you dared to become a member of the board. |

## Chair Examination Committee Psychology, Lecturer in Cognitive Psychology

*Critical*

As the chair of the examination committee for the psychology program, you bear the legal responsibility for ensuring the quality of assessment and the academic value of the program's diploma. Students from your program participated in the pilot, and the program director of psychology is interested in its structural implementation.

While you see the minor as an opportunity for students to leave a personal mark on their education, you have concerns about the impact on the status of the diploma when this minor becomes an integral part of the program. You have been in contact with examination committees from other programs, such as biomedical technology and health sciences, and they share your concerns. The difficulty in formulating learning outcomes that often vary per student is the major concern.

You aim to standardize teaching methods. This involves formulating specific assignments for students with defined learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Ideally, you would like to see the student's learning experience divided into manageable components with specific examination and grading, incorporating rubrics and a test plan. This way, a representative overview can be provided of what a student has learned upon graduation.

As the chair of the examination committee, you are committed to upholding academic standards and ensuring the quality of the educational program. You are determined to create a system in which the value of the program is optimally recognized for students, while simultaneously promoting the standardization of the educational process. You work closely with other members of the examination committee to achieve this goal and provide students with the best possible educational experience.

Interests: Standards and frameworks, reassuring to know where one stands

Irritations: Hasty actions without weighing the pros and cons

Habits: Expresses disapproval with body language, often places folded hands on the table while speaking

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| **Factsheet** |
| You consider it important that students' educational activities do not translate into work for external parties in disguise. Education should remain a learning experience, not unpaid labour. |
| Unemployment for graduates of research universities and universities of applied sciences one year after graduation continues to steadily decline, although students in the language and culture sector are twice as likely to be unemployed as students in the technical sector in 2021. |
| The Dutch higher education system is considered among the top 10 in the world, partly due to the high-quality output it delivers. |

## Faculty Administrator, Portfolio Holder Education

*Enthusiastic-Critical*

As a faculty administrator, you are responsible for leading and shaping educational innovation within the faculty. You see the pilot as the beginning of a completely new way of educating students into responsible and democratically oriented individuals. For you, education goes beyond acquiring knowledge; the educational institution must also collaborate closely with local partners of Comenius University and be rooted in local society.

You are aware of the tension that this innovation brings to the organization, and that is simultaneously your greatest concern. While you find the idea of educational innovation beautiful, it is essential that the organization remains stable. Your predecessor had to leave the position because she was too far ahead of the troops, thereby increasing tensions within the organization. You are careful not to make the same mistake, but you still want to leave your mark on education within the faculty.

You acknowledge that the workload on staff is already high, partly due to growing student numbers in recent years and a tight labour market. Despite this, you notice that this educational innovation brings positive energy to the team. Some staff members seem to derive a lot of energy from the project despite the extra workload. However, you are concerned about those who could become overworked and the potential loss of people who do not derive energy from the innovation. Ideally, you want teachers to not have to make extensive preparations to be able to teach transdisciplinary education.

In a recent meeting with the Executive Board, they expressed a willingness to allocate funds for the financing of educational innovation within your faculty. Your educational vision is shared by the Board. However, there are also other important themes, such as blended learning and student well-being, where projects are ongoing and also require funding. There is money, but ultimately resources are limited, and not all educational innovations can be financed.

Interests: Leaving your own mark through your work, a positive work atmosphere, holding things together

Irritations: A negative mentality, people who resist collaboration

Habits: Uses crutch words, sits upright to be heard

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| **Factsheet** |
| Since 2015, the number of students in higher education has significantly increased, from approximately 700,000 to almost 820,000 students. Expectations are that this growth will continue in the coming years, especially for master students. Afterward, the growth in student numbers will flatten, favoured by Dutch demographics. |
| Subsidies for educational innovations rarely lead to (lasting) impact on education beyond what is taught by the respective teacher. |

## Director of Health Sciences Program

*Enthusiastic-Critical*

As the director of the Health Sciences program, you are responsible for the educational quality of the program including guiding and organizing the development of new teaching materials, evaluating this education, and ensuring the coherence of the program. You are the starting point for educators who want to make changes within the program.

Transdisciplinary education has come up more often in conversations with other innovators, and you see its strength. You have had good contact with the educational innovator when setting up the pilot. Now the question arises whether this innovation will actually become part of the permanent curriculum of the Health Sciences program, among other things.

The current learning objectives of the program seem to align with the education that the innovation aims for. Direct contact with external parties stimulates the connection of education with professional practice, and the complex learning environment contributes to the autonomy of the student. However, it is uncertain whether students in this educational module also learn subject-specific knowledge specific to Health Sciences. The students research material that is relevant to their part of the project, which in turn contributes to their self-reliance.

The complexity of the innovation means that it cannot be articulated what students will learn in the project beforehand. There are so-called 'learning surprises,' experiences where students gain important insights, but which are different for each student. The beauty is that these align very well with the development of the student themselves, but the challenge is that this cannot be included as a learning objective. This also means that there can be no accountability in the conventional way, and it cannot be guaranteed through a form of assessment. This can only be confirmed afterwards through reading reflections or having conversations with students. According to you, this needs a lot of attention for the concept to succeed within conventional education.

What is also important is that students and the professional field express very positive views about this type of education. Students are given genuine freedom of movement and responsibility, which often contrasts with traditional education and gives them the opportunity to make mistakes in a safe environment. The professional field stays in contact with the progress in their field through this method, receives a critical view of their activities, and establishes contact with potential future employees. This is something they highly appreciate in times of labour market tightness.

Interests: Providing beautiful education and motivating students

Irritations: Undervaluation of students and one's own work

Habits: Enjoys passionately sharing experiences with students

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| **Factsheet** |
| The Health Sciences program exists since 2010 at Comenius University and currently receives about 100 students per cohort. |

## Colleague, Lecturer in Statistics

*Defensive-Critical*

As a lecturer in statistics, you are an expert in your field and thrive in a structured environment where expectations and how to meet them are clear. Striking a good balance between work and personal life is important to you. You were part of the team that conducted the pilot, and you had mixed experiences. Collaborating with the industry was interesting and innovative, something you had not done before. However, the quality of the statistical analyses was a bit disappointing, mainly due to challenges in obtaining high-quality data from the practical work environment.

The team leader has asked you to be part of the teaching team when the minor is implemented in Health Sciences. Although you did not immediately decline, you were surprised to be asked. You feel comfortable and confident in delivering the current courses, which are well-structured and highly appreciated. Due to your clear lectures, you were even nominated as the teacher of the year by students in the mathematics program last year. You are familiar with providing students with subject information in algebra and statistics.

However, the prospect that this educational innovation may influence your teaching is not appealing to you. While you, as a lecturer, are expected to provide student-centered education, you see that this form of education requires much more effort and uncertainty than you are used to. You are looking for ways to incorporate the content of your previous courses into transdisciplinary education when it is rolled out, so you can reuse the material and keep your workload manageable.

As a lecturer, it is important for you to continue delivering high-quality education while participating in educational innovation. You are willing to take on the challenge of adapting your teaching approach to the new requirements if you receive the necessary support and resources to be successful in these changes.

Interests: Numbers and facts, work-life balance, not overburdening colleagues

Irritations: Uncertainty, idealism without realism, high expectations and ambitions

Habits: Slightly nervous, tends to touch face when feeling uncertain

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| **Factsheet** |
| From your previous interactions with companies where students collaborate on their final assignments, you have noticed that the technical competencies of students are highly valued. Soft skills are acquired gradually in the working life. Hard skills should be the core of an education. |
| You have heard from several students in the pilot that they found it challenging to incorporate their disciplinary background into the project they were working on due to the complexity in which it was placed. |

## Role descriptions session 2 of “Progressive version”

## Policy Officer Ministry of Education, Quality Assurance Team

*Enthusiastic - Critical*

As an employee of the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (OCW) in the quality assurance team, you are passionate about educational innovation and are eager to give it space. The system should not hinder innovation. At the same time, it is crucial that (prospective) students can clearly understand what they can expect from this innovative education.

You believe that student-centred education is the future, and you observe that the Ministry is moving along with this trend, supporting more process-oriented objectives within programs. However, this places a greater emphasis on training the facilitators of this process to ensure the quality of the learning experience. It is crucial for the quality and transparency of education to clearly translate this process into disciplines, activities, and assessments. Transdisciplinary education is challenging to establish as a program because it does not meet the substantial content requirement.

You see this educational innovation as a wonderful opportunity to keep up world-class higher education in the Netherlands. The country has achieved this position with the current institutional organization and requirements, and you have no intention of deviating from that. This innovation must also fit well into existing structures.

The Netherlands is internationally praised for its quality education, of which you are very proud, especially because international students play a significant role in Dutch society and the economy. This national-level educational innovation could also attract international attention. You are aware of the growing workload within institutions.

Additionally, you emphasize the importance of maintaining the public character of higher education. It is essential to keep a distinction between private entities and public educational institutions. For instance, the industry should not dictate what students should learn, and educational institutions should not become consulting firms for private entities. The development of the student and society should remain central in the offered educational activities.

Interests: Quality assurance of Dutch higher education, being among the world's top, student-centered education

Irritations: Denial of the general public importance of education, considering education only relevant for the economy

Habits: Likes to keep people on good terms, expects attention from others, calm, attentive

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| **Factsheet** |
| Internationalization is of great strategic importance for the Netherlands. In higher education, the intake of international students has increased significantly from 28% in 2015 to 40% in 2021/2022. Currently, 23% of the total student population are international students. |
| Subsidies for educational innovations rarely lead to lasting impact on education beyond what is taught by the respective teacher. |

## Professor of Educational Sciences

*Defensive - Critical*

As a Professor of Educational Sciences at the University of Flevoland, you are a prominent expert in your field. With years of experience and numerous publications, you have established yourself nationally and internationally as an authority in the field and play an essential role in promoting understanding and critical thinking about educational innovation.

You believe that the proposed educational innovation, as is often the case with so-called innovations, is not yet sufficiently supported by evidence, and you are concerned that widely implemented transdisciplinary education may undermine the quality of long-standing and well-implemented programs. Your critical stance towards supposed educational innovations is often expressed publicly, for example, through opinion pieces in The Guardian.

You also express concerns about the emphasis on soft skills that students are expected to learn nowadays, such as transdisciplinary collaboration and self-development, at the expense of subject-specific knowledge. You fear that genuine expertise may be lost, and you are critical of the orientation of this education towards multinational corporations. You question whether the public interest and science also benefits.

You attach great importance to ensuring the quality of education. Therefore, you emphasize the need for effective methods to assess and standardize new educational forms to ensure quality. As an example of successful standardization, you have contributed to the development of an edubadge that certifies students' skills in searching for and correctly using scientific literature.

You participate in this meeting to contribute with your expertise and experience to ensure the quality of education and to critically assess the impact of this innovation.

Interests: Research discipline, academic values, training competent experts, quality preservation within Dutch higher education

Irritations: Pragmatically motivated choices, unfounded statements

Habits: Interrupts others with questions or comments when irritated, very expressive, taps on the table when thinking

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| **Factsheet** |
| The effectiveness of educational innovation in terms of learning outcomes for students is anything but obvious. Rarely is information collected about the effectiveness of innovations, and even less often is this shared more broadly. Evidence-based innovation should be the standard. |
| Subsidies for educational innovations rarely lead to lasting impact on education beyond what is taught by the respective teacher. Educational innovations should be set up with the intention of being shared and implemented more broadly. You see institutional collaborations as a good way to ensure this. |
| Edubadges are digital certificates of acquired knowledge or skills and are awarded for accredited educational programs and activities. They contribute to a more flexible education system and to "Life-Long-Learning." Research has shown that the adequate assessment of prerequisites for edubadge programs and the fear of the fragmentation of education pose a significant challenge for educational programs. |

## Board Member Dutch National Student Association (ISO)

*Enthusiastic - Critical*

As a Board Member of the Dutch National Student Association (ISO) and former student of liberal arts and sciences at a University College, you play a crucial role in representing student interests and advocating for quality and inclusive education. You are highly impressed by the proposed educational concept and see it as a valuable innovation in the educational landscape.

You are very enthusiastic about student-centred education and believe that this should be the standard for all forms of education. You think it is essential that education aligns with the needs and interests of students, as they are the ones who should benefit the most. The proposed educational concept promises to prepare students well for the job market and addressing major societal issues.

You emphasize the importance of students having the freedom to choose what appeals to them the most. However, you also stress the importance of good academic guidance to support students in navigating this degree of freedom and ensuring their success, both inside and outside the program. This is something you would like to see reflected in how transdisciplinary education is organized.

You are concerned about whether the intensive guidance of students will be maintained after its success in the pilot. You see this as essential for a good learning experience. You advocate for reducing administrative burdens for teachers and attracting more well-trained educational staff. You are a supporter of accessibility to education for all students and emphasize that within the EU/EEA, discrimination between students is prohibited.

The well-being of students is high on your priority list. You are particularly concerned about the mental health of students, which has been declining for years. You acknowledge that the autonomy students gain in this educational concept poses a significant challenge, with some thriving on the sense of freedom while others may suffer. You anticipate that the pressure on students will increase due to the proposed educational concept, which can have both positive and negative consequences.

Interests: Student-centred education, student well-being, equality, and improvement of the world

Irritations: Feeling disregarded as a student, being interrupted

Habits: Inclined to exaggerate, repeats own viewpoints in discussions, slightly activist, speaks energetically

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| **Factsheet** |
| According to the Ministry's research, 50% of students in the Netherlands experience mental health issues. 1 in 9 students experiences severe mental health issues. Almost 7 in 10 students experience emotional exhaustion. There is a correlation between resilience and the absence of mental health issues, so it is proposed to focus more on addressing loneliness among students in educational practices. |

## Board Member VNO-NCW

*Constructive - Critical*

As a Board Member of VNO-NCW, the largest employers' organization in the Netherlands, you represent the interests of employers. You are the founder of a rapidly growing ICT company in the eastern part of the country and frequently engage in projects with students from Comenius University, including the pilot of the educational innovation discussed here.

Based on research within VNO-NCW on collaboration between students and companies, employers expressed the importance of graduates being proficient in transdisciplinary work. These skills are crucial for projects within companies, but domain-specific knowledge is also vital and should not be neglected in the curriculum. Especially in the beta-technology sector, there are severe shortages of labour. You emphasize the importance of the educational system meeting the labour demand of the business sector. Therefore, VNO-NCW advocates for flexible and demand-driven education that is oriented towards beta-technology and imparts transdisciplinary skills to students.

You highlight the value of professional learning and recognize the importance of continuous development of skills and knowledge within the business sector, also known as lifelong learning. You have experienced this yourself, one of your project leaders attended an external course. While you see the value of this, it was challenging to free up enough time for the project leader, as it was costly and often had to be arranged last minute.

While you are very satisfied with the outcomes of student projects within the pilot, you also have concerns about the potential impact of your involvement in this project on your company, particularly regarding personnel costs, time investment, and available resources. This could be a significant challenge, especially for smaller companies within VNO-NCW. You wonder how the returns weigh against the expenses you have to make.

Interests: Advocating for the role of the business world in education, facilitating the organizational and financial development of employees, pragmatic and future-proof solutions

Irritations: Academic hubris, feeling disregarded

Habits: Down-to-earth, likes to take the lead in discussions, often leans back

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| **Factsheet** |
| In the last quarter of 2022, one-third of the total number of open vacancies was in the technology and ICT sectors (107,000 out of a total of 335,000 vacancies). Approximately one-fourth of these vacancies had been open since the fourth quarter (30,000 out of the 107,000 vacancies). |
| There are currently only 23 government-recognized training options in the Technology and ICT sector at the bachelor's and master's levels with a maximum duration of 12 months. Thirteen of these are full-time programs. |
| You are familiar with the concept of professional learning certificates and see this as a suitable form for this educational concept due to its effective integration with the work environment. |

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Enschede, 2023

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