



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Preparing and supporting beginning teachers for the challenges of teaching in urban primary schools

Gaikhorst, L.; Volman, M.L.L.

**DOI**

[10.1007/978-3-030-59533-3\\_40-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59533-3_40-1)

**Publication date**

2022

**Document Version**

Final published version

**Published in**

Palgrave handbook of teacher education research

**License**

Article 25fa Dutch Copyright Act (<https://www.openaccess.nl/en/in-the-netherlands/you-share-we-take-care>)

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Gaikhorst, L., & Volman, M. L. L. (2022). Preparing and supporting beginning teachers for the challenges of teaching in urban primary schools. In I. Menter (Ed.), *Palgrave handbook of teacher education research* (Living ed.). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59533-3\\_40-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59533-3_40-1)

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

*UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<https://dare.uva.nl>)*



# Preparing and Supporting Beginning Teachers for the Challenges of Teaching in Urban Primary Schools

Lisa Gaikhorst and Monique L. L. Volman

## Contents

Introduction .....	2
Structure of the Chapter .....	3
The Challenges of Beginning Teachers in Urban Primary Schools .....	3
Teaching in Urban Environments .....	3
“Urban Specific” Challenges? .....	5
Preparing Teachers for the Challenges of Urban Teaching .....	6
Dimensions of Urban Teaching in Primary Schools .....	6
Focus on Urban Dimensions in Teacher Education Institutes .....	7
The Experiences of Student Teachers with Preparation for Urban Teaching .....	8
Continued Teacher Professional Development for Teaching in an Urban Context .....	9
Example of a Policy Development Outside the School with an Urban Focus .....	9
Support Culture and Structure in Primary Schools in an Urban Environment .....	10
Summary and Policy Implications .....	12
References .....	15

## Abstract

Teacher educators, researchers, and policy makers wonder how to prepare teachers for teaching in urban environments. The literature on urban teaching mainly focuses on teaching children from low socioeconomic status (SES) and/or culturally diverse backgrounds. In many European cities, however, schools are populated by both children from relatively high and from low SES backgrounds. This chapter provides an overview of the challenges that (beginning) teachers face in urban schools with different student populations. Then, the chapter discusses how beginning teachers can be adequately prepared and supported for these challenges. It is argued that beginning teachers at urban primary schools experience various “urban-related” problems, but that the nature of these

---

L. Gaikhorst (✉) · M. L. L. Volman  
Research Institute of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam,  
The Netherlands  
e-mail: [L.Gaikhorst@uva.nl](mailto:L.Gaikhorst@uva.nl); [M.L.L.Volman@uva.nl](mailto:M.L.L.Volman@uva.nl)

problems is related to the specific student populations of their schools. Furthermore, adequate preparation and support through which teachers learn how to manage the issues associated with urban teaching can transform these issues from problems into challenges, which energize and motivate teachers. Therefore, it is important that initial teacher education and teacher support programs address the various problems that teachers may be confronted with when they start teaching at urban schools. The insights from this chapter can be used to articulate policies at the school and national level needed to develop adequate preparation and support for beginning urban teachers.

---

**Keywords**

Beginning Teachers · Teacher Education · Professional Development · Urban Teaching · Teacher Retention

---

**Introduction**

... The high workload was a problem for me. .. the school was almost closed, we had to work very hard to stay open. The children's results really needed to be improved. That puts pressure on you as a teacher, that you have to take the children to a higher level ... (Lilian, teacher from urban primary school with primarily students from low-SES families).

I have trouble communicating with parents, especially with bad news conversations. I think this problem is related to the big city and especially to teaching at a school like this with highly educated white parents, they are extremely critical, those children are really their golden eggs (Mary, teacher at urban primary school with primarily students from high-SES families).

These excerpts provide a glimpse into the complexity of teaching in urban schools. The quotes come from two beginning teachers who participated in a descriptive study on the challenges of urban teaching (Gaikhorst et al., 2016). These teachers were employed in urban primary schools in Amsterdam (the capital of the Netherlands). These examples illustrate the diversity of urban schools and the related challenges faced by their beginning teachers.

Beginning teachers often enter the teaching profession inadequately prepared for the specific challenges of the urban classroom (Ingersoll et al., 2012). This can lead to attrition from these schools and from education more generally. The problem of early exit and turnover of beginning teachers is especially strong in urban areas, in particular in high-need schools (De Vos & Fontein, 2019; OECD, 2019; Siwatu, 2011). Urban schools with high proportions of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, with special needs, or whose first language is different from the language of instruction have the most difficulties to attract and retain high quality teachers (OECD, 2019).

Adequate preparation and support programs can help teachers to deal with the challenges of urban teaching (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). Research has shown that it is key for these programs to focus on the problems and support needs that

teachers experience in the specific context in which they operate (OECD, 2019; Siwatu, 2011). Therefore, in order to develop good preparation and support for urban teachers, it is important to obtain a clear picture of the problems they face. The literature on urban teaching mainly focuses on teaching children from low socio-economic status (SES) and/or culturally diverse backgrounds. In many large European cities, including Amsterdam, however, schools are populated by both children from relatively high and from low SES backgrounds. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the problems and support needs of teachers from urban schools with different types of student populations.

Because the problems of urban teachers are so diverse – as illustrated by the quotes from the two teachers at the beginning of this chapter – teacher education cannot fully prepare teachers for all the challenges they may encounter. Therefore, there should also be opportunities for continued professional development aimed at teaching in an urban context. The insights from this chapter can be used to articulate the policies needed to develop adequate preparation and support for beginning urban teachers.

## Structure of the Chapter

This chapter starts with a discussion of the challenges faced by beginning teachers in urban primary schools. Subsequently, section “[Preparing Teachers for the Challenges of Urban Teaching](#)” focuses on the preparation of beginning teachers for urban teaching. Finally, section “[Continued Teacher Professional Development for Teaching in an Urban Context](#)” focuses on the organization of continued professional development aimed at equipping beginning teachers for teaching in urban environments; both forms of teacher support outside and within the workplace are discussed as well as the need for policy action in this critical arena.

---

## The Challenges of Beginning Teachers in Urban Primary Schools

### Teaching in Urban Environments

Teachers have been shown to encounter numerous problems in their first years of teaching. These problems include classroom discipline, collaboration with parents, relationships with colleagues and principals, insufficient preparation and spare time, the burden of clerical work, and insufficient guidance and support (Alam, 2018; De Jonge & De Muijnck, 2002; Schuck et al., 2012). The problem of a high workload and the associated high levels of stress has also been pointed out in several studies (Abbott et al., 2009; Gaikhorst et al., 2016; Jomuad et al., 2021).

Beginning teachers in an urban context appear to have more difficulties than elsewhere, because on top of these problems, they run into problems that are even more complex. First of all they are confronted with *cultural diversity* (Groulx, 2001; Erskine-Cullen & Sinclair, 1996; Duncan, 2014). Urban teachers work with children

and parents from different cultures, with different backgrounds and values many of whom may and who speak a language other than the teacher's native language (Gaikhorst et al., 2019). Zeichner (2003) points at the increasing gap between the backgrounds of students and teachers, which makes it difficult to teach at urban schools. Groulx (2001) argues that teachers need to develop the cultural competence to address the difficulties of cultural diversity. Villegas and Lukas (2002) emphasize the importance of "culturally sensitive teachers" who have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds and see resources for learning in their students rather than difficulties to overcome. According to Levine-Rasky (1998), beginning teachers find it difficult to bring cultural sensitivity to their dealing with culturally diverse groups of students. In the study of Erskine-Cullen and Sinclair (1996), urban school teachers identified working with parents, and especially communicating with parents, as one of the biggest challenges of teaching at urban schools, primarily because of language barriers.

Another important challenge for education in an urban context is that teachers are confronted with relatively large *differences* within their own classrooms. Teachers must deal with differences between children in terms of character, behavior, norms, and values and attitudes, together with differences in the students' cognitive and language development (Kooy, 2006; Swanson Gehrke, 2005; Cajklera & Hall, 2012). Regarding differences in language development, second language learners can sometimes present a major challenge for urban teachers. According to Camacho and Parham (2019) urban teachers must also deal with a relatively high number of students who are at risk of academic failure.

Furthermore, *violence* and *poverty* are important challenges for urban education. Teachers in urban schools felt anxiety about the students' use of violence at school and also showed fear of the neighborhoods in which they worked (Smith & Smith, 2006). Many teachers in Smith and Smith's (2006) study left the school or the teaching profession because of violence-induced stress. Urban teachers must also address the numerous material factors that impact students' learning and development, including hunger, anger, fear, illness, conflict, and death (Swanson Gehrke, 2005).

Many large (European) cities are referred to in the scientific literature as "global cities" (Hooge, 2008; Van der Wouden & De Bruijne, 2001; Sassen 2002). Global cities are characterized by a large financial sector, many business services, the headquarters of many large (multinational) companies and pioneering activities, and achievements on a global level (Bridge et al., 2014). Characteristic of "global cities" is that they are marked by social polarization: on the one hand there are many low-educated residents with low incomes who often live in relatively poor, unsafe neighborhoods and, on the other hand, there are highly educated individuals with (extremely) high incomes who populate relatively safe and rich neighborhoods (Hooge, 2008; Van der Wouden & De Bruijne, 2001). A reason for this polarization is the economic structure of "global cities"; on the one hand, there are opportunities for people to earn exceptionally high incomes and, on the other hand, a demand exists for low-paid, peripheral, low-skill workers. Middle incomes are marginalized (Van der Wouden & De Bruijne, 2001; Sassen, 2002). Social polarization is often

reflected in schools in “global cities”: some schools primarily educate children from high SES families and others educate children from lower SES families and often also from culturally diverse backgrounds. Also “mixed schools” can be found where the student population is a combination of both types of students (Hooge, 2008). Beginning teachers in global cities may thus be confronted with a variety of student populations.

A study conducted among beginning primary school teachers in two Dutch large cities showed that the most prominent problems for beginners are high workload, high levels of stress, and insufficient guidance and support (Gaikhorst et al., 2016). Furthermore, this study showed that the problems of the teachers were related to the type of urban school in which the teachers work. Teachers from schools with predominantly students of low SES and/or culturally diverse backgrounds mainly had problems related to the diverse student population, while teachers from schools with predominantly native Dutch students from highly educated families and teachers from more mixed schools had other problems, such as dealing with critical parents and applying differentiation for both the better and less well-performing students.

### **“Urban Specific” Challenges?**

A key question is whether the challenges of beginning urban teachers can be characterized as “urban-specific” challenges or whether these are more general societal wide challenges that are also experienced by teachers outside an urban environment. Several challenges that teachers experience in urban schools, such as dealing with differences between students and contact with parents, are not formulated in “urban-specific” terms. However, beginning teachers in an urban environment do experience these problems as related to working in a school in a large city (Gaikhorst et al., 2016). For example, they have difficulty in contact with parents, which they believe has to do with the specific “urban” group of parents at their school. The type of urban school appears to play an important role in the European context; in schools with predominantly highly educated parents, the problem of parent contact mainly refers to the extreme involvement, demands, and expectations of highly involved parents and in schools with parents from culturally diverse backgrounds to the different backgrounds of parents (Gaikhorst et al., 2016). The problems experienced by beginning teachers in urban schools are thus influenced by the specific urban context, and in particular by the type of urban school in which the teachers work.

Not all teachers perceive the challenges of urban schools as problems; some see them as challenges through which they can further develop themselves. These are usually the teachers who also receive good preparation and support (Gaikhorst et al., 2016). Adequate preparation and support through which teachers learn how to manage the issues of urban teaching can transform these complexities from problems into challenges that motivate and energize the teachers. This is in line with studies that show the value of good preparation and support for beginning teachers (e.g.,

Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Kardos & Moore Johnson, 2004). This chapter contributes to existing knowledge on teacher preparation and support programs and provides suggestions for policy and practice for beginning urban teachers.

---

## Preparing Teachers for the Challenges of Urban Teaching

As described, teaching in urban areas implies specific challenges for beginning teachers that were influenced by the specific student populations of their schools. It is important that initial teacher education addresses the variety of problems that teachers may be confronted with when they start teaching at urban schools. However, the question is to what extent and how beginning teachers are actually prepared for those urban-related challenges, and to what extent student teachers perceive their teacher preparation as supportive for their teaching jobs. This chapter now turns to a literature-based framework for what urban-related content should be covered in teacher training curricula; an indication of what content is actually offered and how teachers feel prepared for urban-related challenges, based on research in a specific context, the Netherlands.

### Dimensions of Urban Teaching in Primary Schools

In this section we present a framework that identifies the different areas of expertise that teachers need in order to perform adequately in urban contexts; in what follows seven dimensions of urban teaching are distinguished. The framework is based on the challenges of beginning teachers in urban primary schools, described in the previous section, and is supplemented with insights from a review of the international literature from both the US context (from which much of the research on urban teaching is derived), and literature from the European context. The first dimension is *language development*, which refers to attention to second language learners, multilingualism, and differences between home and school language (Severiens et al., 2014). A second dimension is *adaptive teaching*, which refers to differentiated teaching based on social (including socioeconomic and cultural) and individual (cognitive) differences between students (Severiens et al., 2014). Third, *lesson content and critical knowledge construction* was identified (Banks, 2004). This dimension addresses integration into lessons of knowledge that is relevant for and respectful of students' different cultural backgrounds. Critical knowledge construction refers to reflection on how knowledge is always constructed from a particular perspective. *Social processes and (in)equality* is the fourth dimension that was identified, involving sensitivity to aspects such as stereotyping, power relationships, and the social development of children (Banks, 2004). Next, *cooperation with parents* refers to the importance of parental involvement, and interaction and educational collaboration with all parents including those from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (McDermott & Rothenburg, 2000). The dimension of *(inter)professional collaboration* refers to collaboration with colleagues at the

**Table 1** Framework with seven dimensions of urban teaching

	Dimension of urban teaching	Aspects
1	Language development	Second language learners, multilingualism, school, and home language
2	Adaptive teaching	Applying differentiation, social (socioeconomic and cultural) and individual (cognitive) differences, culturally responsive teaching
3	Lesson content and critical knowledge construction	Meaningful education, funds of knowledge, perspectives on knowledge, bias, assumptions
4	Social processes and (in)equality	Social development, racism, power relations, stereotyping, discrimination, prejudices, intercultural dilemmas, pedagogical climate, identity, norms, and values
5	Parental collaboration	Parental involvement, educational collaboration between school and parents, differences between parents in socioeconomic status, education, and ethnic/cultural background
6	(inter)professional collaboration	Colleagues, network partners
7	Context of the school	Environment, neighborhood, community, (un)safety, policy, geographic location

school as well as with professionals from outside, such as from youth care agencies (Hooge, 2008). (Inter)professional cooperation does not occur solely in an urban context; however, here it is often more intensive and complex than in nonurban areas (Fukkink & Oostdam, 2016). In urban contexts, there is a higher concentration of institutions (such as youth care organizations) and professionals, which makes greater demands on teachers' competencies for collaboration among various professionals (Hooge, 2008; Fukkink & Oostdam, 2016). The final dimension focuses on the *context* of the school and refers to aspects such as the school's neighborhood, collaboration, and dialogue with the local community, and themes such as (un)safety and the impact of municipal and national policy on the community and the work of teachers in schools (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). See Table 1 for an overview of the different dimensions and related aspects of teaching in urban environments. At heart, there needs to be a real commitment toward socially just policies and practices that engage with urban communities respectfully, where teachers can engage with children and their families and interact with aspects of diversity and difference, in order to construct more inclusive forms of schooling.

### Focus on Urban Dimensions in Teacher Education Institutes

A key question is to what extent the seven dimensions of urban teaching are reflected in the current curricula of teacher education institutes. A study in Dutch teacher education showed that the extent to which these dimensions were addressed differed between institutes (Gaikhorst et al., 2019). More specifically, the dimensions of



language development, adaptive teaching, and (inter)professional collaboration appeared to receive more attention in the teacher education programs than the dimensions of lesson content and critical knowledge construction, parental collaboration, social processes and (in)equality, and context. Furthermore, the results showed that several urban-related aspects within these dimensions were not addressed, or only to a limited degree. For instance, all institutes addressed adaptive teaching. The focus was, however, mainly on differentiation, based on cognitive differences between children, and less on other aspects such as social or cultural differences. Another example was parental contact. The focus in the institutes was *not* specifically on differences between the SES-backgrounds of parents whereas class background does play an important role in the challenges that beginning teachers experience in (European) urban primary schools (Gaikhorst et al., 2019).

## The Experiences of Student Teachers with Preparation for Urban Teaching

Student teachers do not always feel sufficiently prepared for urban teaching. Several students note a lack of explicit knowledge about the cultural, ethnic backgrounds of their future students in their initial teacher education programs (Gaikhorst et al., 2016). This is illustrated by this quote from a Dutch student-teacher: “*Sometimes things are just missing, particularly in terms of backgrounds and differences between students.*” Furthermore, the dimension of collaboration with parents was insufficiently integrated in the teacher education curricula.

Student teachers who did an internship at an urban school judged the preparation for urban teaching (at their training institute) more positively than students who did not do such an internship. An internship at urban schools was perceived by students, teacher educators, and directors as a very valuable way to prepare teachers for urban teaching. The internships helped students to develop a positive attitude and self-efficacy regarding urban teaching. However, urban internships were not always compulsory for student teachers. The following quote is from a Dutch student teacher who did not participate in an urban internship:

I would have liked it, an internship in the city in the second or third year [of the study program]. . . . I am not inclined to work in a big city now. . . . I would have felt more confident. Yes. (...) Also because you do hear that in the big cities there are the most jobs and so they need the most people, that's the way I mean it. So then I think, yes, then it is actually a missed opportunity.

Some of the dimensions of urban teaching, and, more specially, certain urban-related aspects within these dimensions (e.g., considering social differences between children, (in)equality and collaboration with parents from diverse backgrounds), were not addressed or were addressed only to a limited degree in teacher education programs (Gaikhorst et al., 2019), whereas it is known from previous research that it is important for urban teachers to develop expertise in these areas (see, e.g.,

Severiens et al., 2014). Internships in urban schools can help student teachers to be better prepared for urban teaching (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). Nevertheless, it appeared that not all student-teachers (have the opportunity to) do such an urban internship (Gaikhorst et al., 2019). Therefore, we conclude that a valuable step forward in the preparation of urban teachers in the Netherlands could be to require an internship in an urban school as part of all teacher education programs.

Initial teacher education has to address the various dimensions and related challenges that teachers may be confronted with when they start teaching at urban schools. In the Netherlands, there is no fixed program in teacher education for teaching in an urban context. Because the professional requirements of urban teachers are diverse, teacher education cannot fully prepare teachers for all the challenges of urban teaching. Therefore, it is also important that opportunities for policies are constructed that provide teaching in an urban context and that urban schools themselves provide good and specialized support for their (beginning) teachers. In the following sections, insight is provided into how continued professional development in- and outside the school, with a focus on the urban dimensions, can be organized.

---

## **Continued Teacher Professional Development for Teaching in an Urban Context**

### **Example of a Policy Development Outside the School with an Urban Focus**

In the period 2009–2014, an in-service training program (called “Mastery”) was offered and evaluated, aimed at supporting beginning Amsterdam primary school teachers in their work in an urban context. The municipality of Amsterdam provided the funding for the program; teachers could participate for free. Educationalists and teacher educators from different knowledge institutes (including the Free University, University of Applied Sciences (iPabo), and an educational consultancy office (ABC)) developed the content of the program. The content focused on the acquisition of competences necessary to deal with the specific challenges faced by teachers in an urban environment. These competences include dealing with (cultural) diversity and (language) differences between students, creating safety in and around the school and being able to cooperate with the environment (including parents). The program consisted of four different modules that had a broader focus than teachers’ own classroom practice. These modules were not only aimed at direct classroom practice, but also specifically at subjects such as language policy and dealing with parents from different (cultural) backgrounds. The central themes of these modules were: Cultural Diversity, Language, School and Environment, and Safety.

The training lasted 1 year and consisted of the following three parts: group meetings (in which the four urban themes were further elaborated and explored), application within their own classroom (in which participants applied newly acquired insights in their own teaching practice, after which they discussed their

experiences during group meetings), and, finally, a lecture series (in which experts substantively discussed urban themes and linked them to research results). In addition, Mastery provided a context for beginning teachers to share their experiences and exchange expertise.

The evaluation study on the Mastery-program policy showed that the program had made a positive contribution to the teachers' competences for teaching in an urban context and to their self-efficacy (Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, et al., 2014a). In addition, by following the program, the teachers developed a broader view on teaching than their own classroom (for example, they also became interested in the school policy on Language and Safety). The teachers considered the network in which they could share experiences and expertise with other beginners and the modules with broad, urban themes as the most valuable elements of the program. Teachers were inspired to look beyond their own classroom and reported feeling better equipped to teach in an urban environment. Based on the research on the Mastery-program, we argue that policy is needed to set up more support programs with a broad, urban focus, where teachers can share their experiences and expertise with teachers from other urban schools.

The Mastery evaluation study shows that professional development program outside the workplace are valuable for beginning teachers in an urban environment. Teachers can meet starters from other schools in such programs, which is not always possible in their own school. The teachers who participated in Mastery greatly appreciated the contact with other beginners, because it enabled them to reflect collectively on experiences and to exchange substantive expertise. Contact with beginners from other schools also made it possible to transcend their own school: teachers were provided with information about the situation in other schools and learned about different ways of working. Network learning proved to be a valuable element of professional development interventions, and policies should ensure that this should be encouraged both within and outside the workplace.

Professional development interventions outside the school are also valuable for beginning teachers, because they can support teachers in their complex teaching task, for example, by contributing to the development of relevant competences, in this case for teaching in an urban environment. However, out-of-school professional development programs cannot respond to the specific situation within each individual school. That is why – in addition to investing in support programs outside the school – it is necessary that schools themselves organize good guidance and support for their beginning teachers. The next section discusses how schools can realize a good support structure and culture.

## **Support Culture and Structure in Primary Schools in an Urban Environment**

Research shows that schools need to invest in both a good support structure and culture to achieve effective support practice for their beginning teachers (Devos et al., 2012). Support structure refers to guidance measures that a school can take to

steer beginning teachers (for example, introducing an introductory handbook for starters). Support culture refers to the extent to which a school's culture is intended to be supportive for beginning teachers (for example, starters can easily turn to colleagues for advice).

A comparison between the support culture and structure of primary schools where teachers assessed the guidance they had received as a beginner revealed valuable elements of the suggestions (Gaikhorst, Volman, et al., 2014b). In terms of support structure, it was found that support measures were in place in all schools, but in schools where teachers were satisfied with the guidance, these support activities were carried out more consistently than in the other schools. For example, appointing a coach was a support activity undertaken at every school, but this guidance often fell short in schools where teachers were less satisfied with the guidance. In schools where teachers were satisfied with the guidance, the coach also took more initiative than in the other schools. The following measures proved to be particularly valuable for beginning teachers in urban primary schools: classroom visits, guidance by a (trained) coach, and video interaction guidance. All these measures have one thing in common; that there is interaction with a counselor about the actions and questions of the beginning teacher.

In addition, a good support culture appears to be very important for beginning teachers in an urban environment, as the support culture largely determined the extent to which teachers reported that they were positive about the support available at their school. In schools where there was a positive assessment of the guidance, there was an open culture, in which novice and experienced teachers collaborated, novice teachers could easily come to colleagues for help and felt taken seriously. In the other schools, the culture was much less open and teachers had difficulties in approaching colleagues for support.

The following elements of the support culture were particularly valuable for the teachers: (spontaneous) collaboration between new and experienced colleagues, encouraging teachers to keep developing themselves (by the school management), taking beginning teachers seriously (by both the school management as colleagues), showing interest in the beginning teacher, and offering the opportunity to ask colleagues questions. In many ways, what was present was a process of interactive professional respect.

Providing a support structure and culture in urban primary schools that match the problems and needs of teachers is also important for beginning urban teachers. In the schools where teachers were satisfied with the guidance, these schools offered specific guidance in the field of language, during parent discussions or in creating a good and safe atmosphere in the classroom. The teachers who participated in the study indicated that they began to experience the problems of teaching in an urban environment as interesting challenges when they were properly guided and supported in this regard (Gaikhorst et al., 2016).

Teachers could benefit when schools implement support measures consistently and embed them in an open culture. It is critical that schools pay attention to the specific urban challenges that beginners have to deal with in the school. Good support, aimed at the urban challenges experienced by starters, can lead to a

reduction in the complexity of teaching in the urban environment. However, not all schools take up this challenge themselves; there is also a part to play for public policy when it comes to preparing and supporting teachers for teaching in urban primary schools.

---

## Summary and Policy Implications

This chapter describes the challenges of beginning teachers in urban primary schools. On the one hand, some of these are general challenges, which are also experienced by teachers outside urban schools, such as insufficient guidance and support and a high workload. On the other hand, teachers experience problems that are referred to in the literature as typical “urban” challenges, such as dealing with cultural diversity and structural differences between students such as poverty and exclusion. Some challenges experienced by beginning teachers are influenced by the specific urban context in which the teachers work, and in the European context, in particular by the type of urban school.

A conclusion from this chapter is that with adequate preparation and support, in which the focus is on the urban challenges experienced by teachers, the complexity of teaching in urban schools can be supported more effectively. When they are properly guided and supported, teachers report experiencing the situations they face in urban schools no longer as problems but as challenges to be welcomed. Teacher education as well as in-service training institutes and schools bear some responsibility when it comes to equipping beginning teachers to teach in an urban environment. However, it is also important that after completing their initial teacher education, teachers receive continued support in the form of in-service professional development programs outside the school (in which they are adequately equipped for teaching in an urban environment and where they have the opportunity to exchange experiences and expertise with other teachers) and in the form of guidance at the school itself (in which both the support structure and culture play an important role).

In this chapter we have presented and briefly explore a framework of dimensions of urban teaching. This could represent a first step toward a self-evaluation instrument that could be applied by other teacher training institutes to evaluate their programs. This framework offers a broad overview of some of the key areas of expertise that teachers need to perform adequately in urban contexts. This framework is a helpful tool for teacher training institutes to reflect on and improve their own curriculum with regard to urban teaching. It could also be taken up by various educationalists and policy leaders in order to produce a more grounded approach toward consistency in this area of initial teacher education.

This chapter has also attempted to contribute to the scientific debate on teacher education. Two main points in the debate were addressed. First: is there a need for context-specific or general teacher education? In the scientific literature, several researchers have pointed to the importance of context-specific teacher education, in order to understand how the social and political contexts of schools influence both

students and teachers' opportunities in urban schools (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Milner, 2012). Other researchers have referred to the risks of preparing teachers for particular schools and contexts, as this may narrow their views of the teaching context generally, and restrict their ability to transfer their expertise to other settings (Williamson et al., 2016). In the multiple case study (Gaikhorst et al., 2019) we found that the dimension of *context* receives little attention in the Dutch teacher education programs. Based on these outcomes, we argue that it is essential to pay more attention to the school context in (research on) teacher education. The concept of "context-conscious" teacher education instead of "context-specific" education (which is often used, see, e.g., Matsko & Hammerness, 2014) may be more appropriate in this respect. This alternative concept can help with focusing on the importance of teaching future teachers how to disentangle the school context and become aware of the fact that what happens in their school and classroom is influenced by this specific context (which is also called developing a context-conscious mindset for (urban) teaching, see Williamson et al., 2016). For this reason, it is important to provide student teachers with opportunities for internships in different (urban) contexts, to give them the tools to disentangle and make use of the context, and to let students share their experiences with students from internships in other contexts. Because of the large variety in (European) urban schools, the importance of undertaking internships in both high- and low- SES and mixed schools is underlined in this chapter. As became clear, this is not the case at this moment. Further research could also focus on conditions in those internships that enhance the development of a context-conscious mindset.

Another contentious point that emerged from this study is: who is responsible for teachers' preparation for urban teaching? Because of the complexity of urban teaching, teacher education cannot fully prepare teachers for urban teaching, and schools themselves also have a role in this, for instance by offering adequate induction. Based on current and previous studies in which the complexity of urban teaching was emphasized (see, e.g., Johnson et al., 2012; Feiman-Nemser et al., 2014), it could be helpful to (further) develop and investigate collaboration arrangements between schools and teacher education institutes, in which each can complement and reinforce the other.

A review of the national education policy in the Netherlands conducted by the OECD shows that co-operation between teacher education institutions and schools in the Netherlands is insufficient and induction programs for starting teachers are not routine and systematic (OECD, 2016). One of the biggest issues of teacher education at this moment, not only in the Netherlands, but also internationally, is a disconnect between teacher education content and the specific school context (OECD, 2019).

There is often little connection between teacher education curricula and the realities in schools. To some degree, partnerships between schools and teacher education institutes can facilitate a better alignment between schools and initial teacher education curriculum. Such partnerships are important in enabling teacher educators based in initial teacher education institutions to keep in touch with school-based developments of practice and vice versa for school professionals to be informed with new insights and theories from research (OECD, 2019). An important

recommendation from OECD is therefore not only for the Netherlands but also on an international level, to invest more in collaboration networks between schools and teacher education institutes (2016, 2019).

We conclude this chapter with recommendations for schools, teacher education institutes, and policy makers to invest in the further development of adequate teacher preparation and support through which beginning teachers learn how to deal with the challenges of teaching in urban primary schools.

### **What School Policy Is Needed?**

Schools are instrumental in developing their own school-specific policies from the “bottom up.” Schools can evaluate their own support structure and culture through asking themselves the following questions:

1. Are support measures taken, such as video interaction guidance or guidance by a coach? If so, are these measures implemented consistently? Where are any points for improvement?
2. Is there an open culture in the school? Can starters easily walk in to colleagues for support? Is there collaboration between more and less experienced colleagues? Is the (new) input of the beginning teacher taken seriously? Where are possible starting points for improvement?
3. To what extent does the current method of support at school match the urban challenges experienced by novice teachers? Is it known what specific problems the teachers experience at the school? To what extent is the support tailored to these problems?
4. Do beginning teachers have the opportunity to participate in in-service training programs in which they meet beginning teachers from other schools and exchange experiences? Do these programs focus on urban themes?

Furthermore, schools can try to set up collaboration partnerships with teachers education institutes, in order to facilitate the alignment of schools and initial teacher education curriculum. However, it is not enough to rely on individual schools to rise to this challenge and this is where national policies have a part to play.

### **What National Policy is Needed?**

In order to facilitate alignment between teacher education curricula and the needs of urban schools, national educational policies should encourage and support teacher education institutions to initiate and maintain close collaboration with urban primary schools. Also partnerships between teacher education institutes, urban schools, and research institutes should be supported, so that new insights from research on urban teaching can be integrated in the curricula of teacher education institutes and in teaching practices in primary schools. In order for beginning teachers to learn how to navigate the challenges of urban teaching, policies that make internships in urban schools a compulsory part of teacher training would also be helpful.

Additionally, policy leaders can promote and facilitate continued teacher professional development opportunities for beginning urban teachers, with a particular

focus on urban themes. The Mastery-program that was described in this chapter is a concrete example of how local policy (in this case from the municipality of Amsterdam) can create opportunities for continued valuable professionalization for beginning urban teachers.

Furthermore, policy leaders and teacher education institutes can use the framework with the seven dimensions of urban teaching (described in this chapter) to produce a more grounded approach toward consistency in this area of initial teacher education. There needs to be a real commitment toward socially just policies and practices that engage with urban communities respectfully, where teachers can engage with children and their families and interact with aspects of diversity and difference, in order to construct more inclusive forms of schooling. However, the dimensions introduced in this chapter should not be seen as static and unchangeable: contexts are changing fast, specifically urban ones. Therefore, teacher education institutes, schools, and research institutes together, should remain sensitive to the developments and needs in education within urban educational contexts.

---

## References

- Abbott, L., Moran, A., & Clarke, L. (2009). Northern Ireland beginning teachers' experiences of induction: The 'haves' and the 'have nots'. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(2), 95–110.
- Alam, A. (2018). Challenges of beginning teachers and prerequisite support to retain and sustain them in the profession. *International Journal of Creative Research Thought*, 6(1), 333–338.
- Banks, J. A. (2004). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In J. A. Banks & C. A. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 3–29). Wiley.
- Bridge, G., Butler, T., & Le Gales, P. (2014). Power relations and social mix in metropolitan neighbourhoods in North America and Europe: Moving beyond gentrification? *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(4), 1133–1141.
- Cajklera, W., & Hall, B. (2012). Multilingual primary classrooms: An investigation of first year teachers' learning and responsive teaching. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(2), 213–228.
- Camacho, D. A., & Parham, B. (2019). Urban teacher challenges: What they are and what we can learn from them. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 85, 160–174.
- De Jonge, J.F.M., & De Muijnck, J.A. (2002). *Waarom leraren de sector verlaten. Onderzoek naar de uitstroom uit het primair en voortgezet onderwijs* [Why teachers leave the profession. Research on the outflow from primary and secondary education]. SBO/EIM.
- Devos, C., Dupriez, V., & Paquay, L. (2012). Does the social working environment predict beginning teachers' self-efficacy and feelings of depression? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28, 206–217.
- Duncan, M. (2014). How the cultural contexts of urban teaching affect novice science educators: Implications for school leaders. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 9(1), 3–17.
- Erskine-Cullen, E., & Sinclair, A. M. (1996). Preparing teachers for urban schools: A view from the field. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 6.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2003). What new teachers need to learn. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 25–29.
- Feiman-Nemser, S., Tamir, E., & Hammerness, K. (2014). *Inspiring teaching: Preparing teachers to succeed in mission-driven schools*. Harvard Education Press.



- Fukkink, R., & R. Oostdam, eds. (2016). *Onderwijs en opvoeding in een stedelijke context* [Education and Pedagogics in an Urban Context]. Bussum: Coutinho.
- Gaikhorst, L., Beishuizen, J. J., Zijlstra, B. J. H., & Volman, M. L. L. (2014a). Contribution of a professional development programme to the quality and retention of teachers in an urban environment. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(1), 41–57.
- Gaikhorst, L., Volman, M. L. L., Korstjens, I., & Beishuizen, J. J. (2014b). Induction of beginning teachers in urban environments: An exploration of the support structure and culture for beginning teachers at primary schools needed to improve retention of primary school teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 42, 23–33.
- Gaikhorst, L., Beishuizen, J. J., Roosenboom, B. H. W., & Volman, M. L. L. (2016). The challenges of beginning teachers in urban primary schools. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(1), 46–61.
- Gaikhorst, L., Soeterik, I., Post, J., & März, V. (2019). Teacher preparation for urban teaching: A multiple case study of three primary teacher education programmes. *European Journal of Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2019.1695772>
- Groulx, J. G. (2001). Changing preservice teacher perceptions of minority students. *Urban Education*, 36, 60–92.
- Hooge, E. (2008). *Op de grenzen van het onderwijs. Professioneel onderwijs in de grote stad* [At the boundaries of education. Professional education in a large city]. Hogeschool van Amsterdam.
- Ingersoll, R. M., Merrill, L., & May, H. (2012). Retaining teachers: How preparation matters. *Educational Leadership*, 69(8), 30–34.
- Johnson, S. M., Kraft, M. A., & Papay, J. P. (2012). How context matters in high-need schools: The effects of teachers' working conditions on their professional satisfaction and their students' achievement. *Teachers College Record*, 111(10), 1–39.
- Jomoad, P. D., Antiquina, L. M. M., Cericos, E. U., Bacus, J. A., Vallejo, J. H., Dionio, B. B., Bazar, J. S., Cocolan, J. V., & Clarin, A. S. (2021). Teachers' workload in relation to burnout and work performance. *International Journal of Educational Policy, Research and Review*, 8(2), 48–53.
- Kooy, M. (2006). The telling stories of novice teachers: Constructing teacher knowledge in book clubs. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(6), 661–674.
- Levine-Rasky, C. (1998). Preservice Teacher Education and the Negotiation of Social Difference. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19(1), 89–112.
- Matsko, K. K., & Hammerness, K. (2014). Unpacking the “urban” in urban teacher education: Making a case for context-specific preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 65(2), 128–144.
- Milner, R. H. (2012). But what is urban education? *Urban Education*, 47, 556–561.
- OECD. (2016). *Netherlands 2016: Reviews of national policies for education*. OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2019). *A flying start: Improving initial teacher preparation systems*.
- Sassen, S., ed. (2002) *Global Networks, Linked Cities* (New York, Routledge).
- Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Buchanan, J., & Russel, T. (2012). *Beginning teaching. Stories from the classroom*. Springer Science + Business Media Dordrecht.
- Severiens, S., Wolff, R., & Van Herpen, S. (2014). Teaching for diversity: A literature overview and an analysis of the curriculum of a teacher training college. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(3), 295–311.
- Siwatu, K. O. (2011). Preservice teachers' sense of preparedness and self-efficacy to teach in America's urban and suburban schools: Does context matter? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(2), 357–365.
- Smith, D. L., & Smith, B. J. (2006). Perceptions of violence: The views of teachers who left urban schools. *The High School Journal*, 89(3), 34–42.
- Swanson Gehrke, R. (2005). Poor schools, poor students, successful teachers. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 42(1), 14–17.
- Van der Wouden, R., & De Bruijne, E. (2001). *De stad in de omtrek* [The city in the periphery]. Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau.

- 
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers. Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20–32.
- Vos, D., & Fontein. (2019). *Arbeidsmobiliteit van leraren primair onderwijs*. CentERdata.
- Williamson, P., Apedoe, X., & Thomas, C. (2016). Context as content in urban teacher education: Learning to teach in and for San Francisco. *Urban Education*, 51(10), 1170–1197.
- Zeichner, K. M. (2003). The adequacies and inadequacies of three current strategies to recruit, prepare, and retain the best teachers for all students. *Teachers College Record*, 105(3), 490–519.