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## Fostering teachers' professional development for citizenship education



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### H I G H L I G H T S

- Teachers' professional development for citizenship education is reported.
- Collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development benefits teachers' development.
- Citizenship education has an implicit presence in teachers' practices.
- Enhancing professionalism and practical wisdom takes time and room for experimenting.

### A R T I C L E I N F O

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### A B S T R A C T

This article reports of a research project with eleven schools for primary and secondary education in which teachers were involved in collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development for citizenship education. Its main purpose was to get a better grasp of teachers' understanding of citizenship education, what teachers consider the professionalism needed for citizenship education and how this professionalism could be encouraged. The results show an increase of teachers' awareness of citizenship education and its implicit presence in their practices. According to teachers enhancing pedagogical professionalism and practical wisdom with respect to teaching citizenship education takes time, room for experimenting, and the possibility to collaborate and exchange ideas among colleagues.

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## 1. Introduction

Citizenship development and the role of education has been increasingly discussed by educators, politicians and researchers over the past decades (e.g. Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Hansen, 2011; Johnson & Morris, 2010; Kennedy, 2012). This includes the teacher's role to support students to be active, responsible and socially engaged citizens. Despite the compulsory character of citizenship education (CE) in many countries around the world (Euridyce, 2005, 2012), teachers do not always consider it easy to establish CE, are not aware of this task of schools or even refuse schools' responsibility regarding enhancing citizenship. A majority of teachers did not receive any training to teach citizenship education

(cf. Akar, 2012; Willemse, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008; Barr et al., 2015; Chin & Barber, 2010; Euridyce, 2012; Thornberg, 2008) and, as a consequence, they do not feel confident about teaching it or struggle with how to establish CE practices (Akar, 2012; Chin & Barber, 2010; Outlon, Day, Dillon, & Grace, 2004). Moreover, many teachers lack clear concepts of CE, in the sense of an interpretation of what 'good citizenship' in a democratic society entails and what the task of schools therein can and should be. This is an even greater concern seeing that there is an international trend towards greater autonomy of educational institutions and increasing decentralization (OECD, 2011; Ranson, 2003) which places greater demands on teachers' professionalism.

In this article, we report on a two-year research project with eleven schools for primary and secondary education in the Netherlands in which teachers were involved in collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development in cooperation with us as

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researchers during a period in which educational policy mandated schools to explicate their vision and make curricular choices regarding citizenship. The project was based on the assumption that participating in such activities would encourage teachers to explore and develop their own concepts of CE and professionalism in relation to teaching CE. This would empower them to shape CE more thoroughly and enhance teacher professionalism with regard to CE. Our involvement in the project enabled us to get a better grasp of the development of teachers' understanding of CE during the project, of what teachers consider the professionalism needed for citizenship education and to explore how teachers themselves think this professionalism can be fostered.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Framing citizenship education

Governments in many countries have introduced citizenship education as an obligatory part of the curriculum in the last decades to foster social cohesion and more active participation by citizens in social and political life (Euridyce, 2005). This mandate for CE can be seen as a response to social changes, such as the rise of individualization and the emergence of a multicultural society (Karsten, Cogan, Grossman, Liu, & Pitiyanuwat, 2002; Veugelers, 2011; Geijsel, Ledoux, Reumerman, & Ten Dam, 2012), or poignant events in society, such as 9/11 (Torney-Purta, 2002). In 2005, the Council of Europe proclaimed that year as the European Year of Citizenship through Education (Euridyce, 2005) and 2011 as the year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship in which schools were expected to play an important role (Euridyce, 2012). In the US, notwithstanding a long tradition of citizenship education (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006), in 2012 the Obama administration released a nine step road map to enhance civic learning and engagement in democracy (<http://www.ed.gov/civic-learning> retrieved July 2013). However, the compulsory inclusion of CE in the formal curricula has also been criticized. Biesta and Lawy (2006; Lawy & Biesta, 2006) argued that this type of educational policy suggests that citizenship is an achievement, an outcome of education, and focuses on individuals who lack the proper knowledge and skills, the right values and correct dispositions. This largely ignores that young people already participate in everyday (social) life and learn in schools from interactions with teachers, subjects and peers, and from activities such as participation in school councils, as well as in other contexts and practices like with their family, friends, media and other leisure activities. The authors plea for a focus on 'citizenship-as-practice' instead.

In our view, young people's development of 'citizenship-as-practice' cannot be considered separately from their moral and social development, identity development and development of critical reflective capacities. This broader concept of citizenship of youngsters can also be recognized in other scholarly work, either augmenting or opposed to a narrower focus on citizenship as knowledge to be achieved of the political functioning of our societies (Geboers, Geijsel, Admiraal, & Ten Dam, 2013; Banks, 2004; Haste, 2004; Veugelers, 2000).

In the present study, departing from a broad concept of citizenship, we situate CE as part of teachers' pedagogy and connect it to the tenet that teaching fundamentally is a moral activity aimed at identity development (e.g. Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Hansen, 2001; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). From this perspective, contributing to CE is part of the responsibility of all teachers -and not just those who teach subject matter that can easily be related to citizenship, like civics or history - to meet the overarching purposes of education (cf. Fischman & Haas, 2012; Pykett, 2010; Sanger, Osguthorpe, & Fenstermacher, 2013).

### 2.2. Teachers' professionalism regarding citizenship education

In comparison with other teaching domains, the moral dimension of teaching citizenship is quite prominent (e.g. Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Sanger et al., 2013). For example, teachers are moral persons themselves and (role) models for their students (Leenders, Veugelers, & De Kat, 2008; Oser, 1994), through their interactions with students (Hansen, 2001) and through what they emphasize when they are teaching particular value-loaded knowledge and skills (Cleaver, Ireland, Kerr, & Lopes, 2005; Torney-Purta & Barber, 2004). Besides, teachers as moral agents are responsible for students' moral development as well as for their social and intellectual development (Bergem, 1990). Therefore as educational professionals, they need to make normative professional judgments of what is educationally desirable in all teaching domains. In the past few years, the current technical, evidence-informed and qualification-oriented trend in education is being criticized and it has been argued that education also needs to be understood by its normative nature in the sense that teachers need to balance the different purposes of education (e.g. Biesta, 2010, 2011; Kelchtermans, 2009, 2012). In order to become professionals capable of making educational and pedagogical judgments, teachers need to possess practical wisdom (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). Bergem (2003) refers to this capacity as *pedagogical professionalism*, which concerns teachers possessing *professional ethical competences* (the understanding of teaching as a moral enterprise and understanding the moral dimensions of teaching), *educational competences* (the ability to teach, foster and nurture students' development) and *academic competences* (the skills to gain, or make use of knowledge and theories in their teaching practices). Given our broad view on citizenship as mentioned before, pedagogical professionalism is essential for teaching CE.

Teachers' professionalism regarding CE at least partly depends on values, beliefs, personal and professional knowledge and skills which teachers may not be fully aware of (Hushu & Tirri, 2007; Kennedy, Jimenez, Mayor, Mellor, & Smith, 2002; Patterson, Doppin, & Misco, 2012). For instance, Thornberg (2008) argues that 'a common formal ethical language as well as knowledge based on educational and behavioral scientific theories and research' (p.1793) is lacking among teachers. Consequently, teacher practices are often reactive, unplanned and partly unconsciously performed instead of guided by common theories, knowledge and language (cf. Hansen, 2001; Thornberg, 2008). This could mean that, although teachers do not always have clear concepts of CE, they sometimes establish more CE practices than they are aware of. Besides, Patterson et al. (2012) argue that teachers' (unconscious) pre-existing beliefs or concepts may filter out any ideas they cannot reconcile.

Thus, professionalism regarding CE in particular means that teachers need to become aware of and explore their (implicit) concepts of CE, develop practical wisdom and recognize the moral dimensions of teaching. In addition, they should learn to use their educational and academic competences to establish an environment in which reflection on citizenship-as-practice is fostered. This asks for a (shared) pedagogical language and knowledge to foster teachers' professionalism.

However, not all teachers are used to thinking about themselves as moral agents, or to talking about moral aspects in their teaching practice (Socokett & LePage, 2002; Klaassen, 2002; Thornberg, 2008; Campbell, 2008). One explanation for the latter is an overemphasis on academic achievement in modern society. Another explanation might be that teaching in general, and perhaps in particular when it comes to citizenship education, is still often practiced in an individual, isolated way with a high degree of autonomy (cf. Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; Levine & Marcus, 2010). According to

Buzzelli and Johnston (2002; cf. Campbell, 2008) one of the major challenges to teachers' professionalism is the process of awareness: "Our message is that teachers do have a moral sense. Teachers inherently know that teaching is a moral activity. What we are suggesting are ways of confirming, affirming and nurturing that awareness" (p. 131). Recently, the European committee also called attention to fostering teachers' professionalism regarding citizenship education: More efforts are needed to strengthen teachers' competences in teaching citizenship (Euridyce, 2012, p. 15).

The latter might in particular apply to teachers in countries where schools and teachers are autonomous in how they interpret citizenship education. Even though in many countries compulsory CE has been introduced, its forms and approaches differ between countries. CE can be taught as a stand-alone-subject or integrated in other subjects (Euridyce, 2012), taught by specific CE teachers (Akar, 2012) or by all teachers (Kennedy et al., 2002), using a national curriculum, or leaving it largely to schools. The latter is the case in the Netherlands (Veugelers, 2011), rooted in the constitutional freedom of education (Dronkers & Robert, 2008; Glenn & De Groof, 2002). The Dutch Government obliged schools to work on active citizenship and social integration, however, they gave schools the autonomy to decide how to incorporate this in their curricula. This increases the need for schools and teachers to become aware of how they conceive citizenship and citizenship education, decide how they want to teach CE and reflect on their existing practices and roles.

### 2.3. Collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development as professionalization

Various authors have proposed the method of inquiry of teachers' own practices (e.g. Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002; Sitornik, 1990; Sockett & LePage, 2002) to enhance teachers' awareness of their beliefs, values and the (implicit) theories they hold. Leeman and Wardekker (2014) argue that conducting teacher research includes thinking about the aims of education. It helps teachers to understand their practices in the context of the school, neighborhood, the school system and of the society as a whole.

In a review study on the impact of teacher research, Zeichner (2003) reported that it encourages teachers to question assumptions about themselves and their students and to develop new perspectives regarding their practices. Teachers who are involved in teacher research learn to articulate and examine their own ideas about teaching and learning and develop greater interest in curriculum development. Several scholars emphasized that teacher research preferably should take place in collaboration. Collaboration, among other things, contributes to a better understanding of the relation between theory and practice, it generates knowledge that is useful for teachers themselves and fosters teacher professional development (Meijer, Oolbekkink, Meierink, & Lockhorst, 2013). In addition, Christie and Menter (2009) mention benefits as 'joined-up thinking'; through exchange of teacher practices, collaboration contributes to a better understanding of each other's practices. Chai and Tan (2009) too emphasized the importance of a community setting for professional development. Besides, they argued the importance of working with the authentic practices of schools and teachers and the allocation of time for in-depth reflection and understanding.

Teacher involvement in curriculum design - participating in joint activities related to developing, implementing and evaluating lesson series - has also been shown to stimulate improving teaching and learning (Boersma, Krol, Ten Dam, Wardekker, & Volman, 2013; Huijzinga, Handelsatz, Nieveen, & Voogt, 2014). It can thus function as a meaningful professionalization strategy and may enhance the quality of CE.

### 2.4. This study

This study aims to get a better grasp of the development of teachers' understanding of CE through teachers' involvement in collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development. Besides, it aims to get insight in what teachers consider the professionalism needed for citizenship education and how, according to them, this professionalism could be encouraged. The latter provides us with a better understanding of how to improve support for pre- and in-service teachers in order to strengthen their competences in teaching CE.

Therefore, the main question of this study is: How does being involved in collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development in the domain of citizenship education affect teachers' understanding of a) citizenship education and b) professionalism regarding teaching CE?

More specifically, we focus on:

- 1 a) Which changes in their understanding of citizenship education do teachers report and  
b) how do they explain these changes?;
- 2 a) Which changes in their understanding of professionalism in relation to CE do teachers report and  
b) how do they explain these changes?;
3. How do teachers themselves reflect upon becoming CE professionals?

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Context and participants

In a two year research project (2010/11, 2011/12) in which teachers were supported in citizenship education curriculum development, six schools for primary education and five schools for secondary education participated. Within each school one or two teachers participated (N = 17; see Table 1 for an overview). The project concerned the two upper grades of primary education and the two lower grades of secondary education with students between 11 and 14 years old, as early adolescence is of great potential for developing citizenship competences (cf. Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2011). The mixture of primary and secondary schools in the project also provided teachers with the opportunity to take note of other and different practices and to reflect on their own practices.

School principals of the participating schools were also involved in the project. In order to make sure this project would not become a standalone project but would be grounded in everyday school life, principals were asked to commit themselves to the aims of project, and to provide support within the schools. All principals were frequently informed via mails, meetings and phone calls. The schools are located in the Middle and Northern part of the Netherlands.

The teachers participated voluntarily in this project. School leaders and teachers in these schools were highly motivated to improve their citizenship education practices by means of curriculum development. By collaborating with these schools in which CE in all likelihood, according to the need that was expressed, was not yet sufficiently established, we supposed we would get a better understanding of the possibilities for developing teachers' understanding and pedagogical professionalism. Therefore, the schools were considered to consist of a rich illustrative variety of information for understanding the phenomenon – in this case teachers' understanding of CE – more in depth (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 27; Eisenhardt, 2002).

**Table 1**  
Overview of participants.

Area/region	Level	Number of teachers	Grade, <sup>a</sup> gender and age	Subject <sup>b</sup>	Years of experience
Northern part	primary education	2	• 5th grade, female, 35	–	15 years
		2	• upper grades coordinator, female, 36	–	16 years
	secondary education	2	• 6th grade, female, 26	–	5 years
		1	• Upper grades coordinator, female, 51	–	20 years
		2	• 6th grade, male, 35	–	13 years
		2	• 7th –12th grade, male, 35	• History	14 years
		2	• 7th –12th grade, female, 35	• History	10 years
		2	• 7th–9th grades pre-vocational education, female, 33	• Biology	3 years as teacher and before 17 years as teaching assistant
		2	• 7th–9th grades general education, male, 27	• History	2 years
		2	• 7 <sup>th</sup> –9th grades general education, female, 54	• English literacy	11 years
2	• 7th –12th grade, female, 47	• Economics	17 years		
Middle part	primary education	1	• 6th grade, female, 50	–	18 years
		1	• 5th grade, female, 52	–	20 years
		1	• 6th grade, female, 29	–	7 years
	secondary education	1	• 7th–9th grades pre-vocational education, male, 47	• Social studies	12 years
		2	• 7th–9th grades pre-vocational education, male, 53	• social studies	5 years
		2	• 7th–9th grades general education, male, 38	• Math	13 years

<sup>a</sup> In the Dutch school system children attend primary education from the age of four (group 1) to twelve (group 8). Group 3 is internationally known as grade 1, and group 8 as grade 6. Secondary education starts with grade 7 and consists of pre-vocational education tracks (till grade 10) and general education tracks (till grade 11 or 12).

<sup>b</sup> In Dutch schools primary education teachers teach all subjects.

### 3.2. The project

The project was designed in such a way that 1) teachers were invited to develop curriculum units closely related to teachers' daily teaching practice and teachers' own needs; 2) teachers worked in close collaboration with colleagues. The school management was supposed to support the project by, for example, facilitating the participating teachers, who were appointed by their management on the basis of their initial interest in citizenship education, to enable them to invest enough time in the project, and in addition the project needed to be aligned with school policy (Meijer et al., 2013; Van Veen, Zwart, & Meirink, 2011).

During the project the participating teachers systematically explored their teaching with regard to citizenship. Four social tasks that can be considered exemplary for young people's actual citizenship practices served as a stepping stone for this: acting democratically, acting in a social and responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences (Ten Dam, Geijsel, Reumerman, & Ledoux, 2011, Ten Dam & Volman, 2007). Teachers were asked to identify concerns or topics for which improvement, or curriculum development was needed in their perception. In the project, teachers (re)designed practices according to the cycle of a) problem analysis, b) design, c) experimenting, d) evaluation, e) adjusting the design (Van den Akker, Gravemeijer, McKenney, & Nieveen, 2006). As most participating teachers lacked experience using inquiry-based methods, around 12 meetings in two years were organized to introduce these methods. During these collaborative meetings teachers were invited to exchange experiences and to discuss progression of their projects. During some meetings keynote speakers were invited to deliver input about the concept of citizenship education. In between the meetings researchers from the universities visited the schools to support teachers working on their projects.

Within eight of the eleven participating schools specific lessons were developed. Topics of the lessons varied, for example: 'encouraging students to contribute to clean and sustainable school environments', 'improving debating skills for ill-communicating students', 'exploring students' preconceptions about Islam', 'philosophy and religions' and 'dealing with diversity in the classroom and beyond'. Teachers from the other three schools chose to develop tools for citizenship practices like 'a high school student mediation training', or 'an inquiry-based discussion list to start a

dialogue among teachers about supervising students' conflicts and bullying'. This variety of topics illustrates the broad range of citizenship education in schools.

### 3.3. Data collection

Interviews were used to address the research questions. All teachers were interviewed twice using semi-structured interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2002), once after the first year of the project and once at the end. Each interview took about an hour and a half and audio recordings were made. The interviews were transcribed and sent to the teachers, which gave them the opportunity to correct factual mistakes, add information and offer an alternative interpretation ('member check'; see Merriam, 1998).

During the interviews teachers were asked about:

- I) their experiences with the project,
- II) their developed citizenship lessons/practices,
- III) what citizenship education was about according to them,
- IV) what kind of professionalism was needed in their opinion to teach CE.

In the second interviews, the interviews at the end of the project after two years, we also added questions about changes:

- V) whether their understanding of citizenship education had changed and, if so, what had caused these changes,
- VI) whether they felt their professionalism had increased
- VII) how they think teachers develop professionalism to teach CE and whether and how pre-service teachers need to be prepared for CE.

In addition at the start of the project and preceding the final interview, teachers were invited to illustrate their understanding of citizenship education and pedagogical professionalism in a word web. The word webs were used as a point of reference in the interviews to deepen the conversation only, and were not processed and analyzed separately. Teachers were first asked to explain their concepts of CE and pedagogical professionalism and whether these concepts had changed and subsequently asked to deepen the explanations with use of their word web illustrations and their ideas behind the changes between the two webs.

### 3.4. Analysis

Data were analyzed in two stages (see Table 2). In the first stage one researcher analyzed the transcriptions. An analysis (Patton, 2002) was performed identifying interview fragments on the basis of categories derived from the research questions as sensitizing concepts (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, the content of the interview fragments were further categorized based on the issues that emerged from our data. For example, regarding the question about changes in their understanding of CE teachers referred to 'becoming aware of teachers' roles, 'developing a vocabulary', et cetera. Regarding the way in which professionalism for teaching CE can be developed, teachers mentioned 'experiences during internships', 'experience in society as a citizen', 'participation in CE curriculum development' and 'participation in inquiry-based CE practices'. In the second stage, four researchers compared the interview fragments within each category. Analyses for the first and second round of interviews were run separately and compared afterwards. In addition, similarities and differences between answers in the first and second round interviews as well between teachers were discussed and compared. As a result, category labels were refined and adjusted with full consensus of all researchers. Moreover it was noted that teachers' understanding of CE had changed but hardly any differences were found in teachers' understanding of professionalism regarding CE when comparing the first and second interview round. We therefore used the interview fragments referring to 'professionalism' given in the second round of interviews.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. About citizenship education (CE)

Interviews were analyzed for the changes teachers reported in their understanding of CE and pedagogical professionalism and the explanations they offered.

**Table 2**  
Categories used in this study.

Categories as sensitizing concepts based on research questions	Examples of subcategories emerging from the data	Examples of quotes
Changes in understanding of CE	Broader definition Awareness of implicit practices	<i>It is more than teaching about democracy, [ ... ] (teacher secondary education)</i> <i>I've discovered that I already did a lot of things, not being aware it was about CE (primary education teacher)</i>
Teachers' explanations for the changes in understanding of CE	Collaboration and exchanging practice Participating in the project	<i>Just by talking, exchanging and collaborating that helped me, like the other teachers told about what they did and I know I thought ... yes that's a good idea (teacher primary education)</i> <i>Well to be honest participating in the project. If my manager hadn't said ( ... ) 'do you feel like participating in this project?', I would still not be thinking about CE (secondary education teacher)</i>
Understanding of professionalism	Possessing pedagogical-educational competences Being a role model	<i>One needs to have and to use appropriate teaching and pedagogical skills to involve society and civic related topics in one's teaching (secondary education teacher)</i> <i>Due to the fact that you are an example you need to be aware of your own beliefs and opinions and you need to behave as a good citizen and make this explicit for your students (primary education teacher)</i>
Changes in understanding of professionalism Developing as a citizenship education professional	More reflection on their acting Experimenting Time/aging	<i>I started to reflect on and evaluate more what I'm doing, like I did this and this, but does it help/contribute? (secondary education teacher)</i> <i>You just have to start and experience. Teach and learn from your teaching, reflect on it, but just start. You cannot learn it from books only (teacher primary education)</i> <i>To develop professionalism takes time and aging. As you become older you gain more experience and you become wiser. I have learned a lot in all those years since teacher education and I'm still learning. (secondary education teacher)</i>
Preparing pre-service teachers for CE	Fostering the development of pre-service teachers' norms and values	<i>You have to let them think about their own norms and values in general, society, citizenship and the relation with education and then you have to ask them to write their own personal statements about it. Like your personal theory (primary education teacher)</i>

#### 4.1.1. Changes in understanding of CE

Teachers' concepts of CE in the first interview compared to the second interview showed changes for more than half of all teachers (ten teachers). Besides, teachers emphasized they became more aware of their concepts and their existing (implicit) practices, or developed their understanding of CE during the project. Even before the question about concepts of CE came up, almost all teachers spontaneously mentioned an increasing awareness about citizenship education as a result of the project. A striking finding was that eleven of the seventeen teachers explained that before the project started they had less, or no idea of what citizenship education was about, telling us for example: "I'd never thought very carefully about CE before. The term CE always sounded like not interesting" (Secondary education teacher history); "I discovered what the legal demands are for CE. It made me think about what CE is about" (secondary education teacher history). This is surprising since CE has been legislated since 2006 in the Netherlands (Dutch Ministry of Education and Science, 2005) and one would suppose teachers would have given CE some consideration.

At the end of the project half of the teachers (eight) expressed a broader definition of CE stating CE is about 'being' a citizen through participation and experiencing things both within the school seen as a "little society" but also outside the confines of the school. They explained that it was about 'showing respect', 'social behavior', 'developing critical thinking', 'knowledge of history and democracy', 'gaining knowledge of and respecting through experiencing different cultures and religions', 'dealing with diversity' and 'moral and social development'.

Eight out of the seventeen teachers described a process of becoming aware of the fact that CE was already an implicit part of their teaching practices. This might indicate teachers' practices are partly unconsciously performed (Thornberg, 2008). "I'd no idea what CE was about and I discovered it is integrated in all parts of my teaching practice" (primary education teacher); "I've become aware that CE is more than talking about democracy. It is also about schooling, nurturing and social development" (secondary teacher English literature); "I've become aware that a class is a small society

in itself” (primary education teacher). This illustrates teachers expanded and changed their understanding of CE and discovered that CE is more than learning about democracy, but also about moral dimensions of education and that classrooms are small scale societies. Not only did they broaden their understanding, as a result two secondary school teachers and two primary school teachers explicitly mentioned their vocabulary extended with regard to CE: “Concerning every word in my word web I’ve become capable of explaining what I meant with it. At the beginning of the project I wouldn’t have been able to do so. I have even added a lot of words” (primary education teacher). Some teachers explained they started to talk and exchange more about CE with colleagues during the project. Three secondary school teachers mentioned they became aware that their roles in being a (role) model and making their behavior explicit is part of citizen education. “I’ve become more aware of my role and responsibility. If students do struggle in their development concerning citizenship, I need to support and teach them, but also make explicit why I behave like I do” (secondary education teacher). In addition, six teachers (primary and secondary education) spontaneously mentioned that the project made them more aware of how CE is embedded in their teaching approaches and daily practices.

When talking about the word webs the teachers made at the beginning and at the end of the project these results were confirmed. A teacher said: “You can see that I’ve become more aware of the central role of teachers as part of CE. I just placed it in the center of the web” (secondary education teacher of history). Other teachers explained differences in their word webs pointing out they became more aware of what they meant and therefore changed their webs, or they removed words because the content was not applicable anymore: “In my first word web I added time and development of a shared view, but during this project we got time for CE and within the team of teachers we talked about our views. Therefore I did not mention that in my second word web” (primary education teacher). Another one emphasized: “In the first word web I just wrote down everything that came to mind and in the second word web I was very aware of what I wanted to write down” (secondary education teacher of history).

#### 4.1.2. *Teachers' explanations for the changes in their understanding of CE*

When during the interviews teachers mentioned changes in the way they interpret citizenship education, i.e. their concepts of CE, they were invited to explain what caused these changes. Overall, teachers connect the changes in their awareness or concepts of CE to their involvement in the project. Three main explanations emerged in their reflections about what particularly had contributed to the changes in their understanding and grown awareness: 1) participating in the project in general; 2) systematic inquiry-based curriculum development and exploration of teachers' practices; and 3) collaboration and exchanging experiences.

First of all, four of the nine teachers who mentioned the project in general fostered their changes stated that without participating in the project they now probably still would not have had any ideas about CE. Noteworthy is that a majority of them (twelve teachers) told they were appointed by their management without knowing what the project was about. Others explained they volunteered to participate in the project because they considered participating in a project ‘a nice extra task’ next to their teaching tasks.

Secondly, six teachers emphasized that especially their involvement in curriculum development for their own practice encouraged them to (re)focus on CE, their understanding thereof and views. They considered using their own authentic teaching practices as a starting point for curriculum development valuable. This helped them to think about CE within their natural habitat.

Six other teachers explicitly mentioned inquiry-based methods for curriculum development as contributing to their development:

“I had never experienced those inquiry-based methods before. [ ... ] we had chosen to focus on debating skills for communicating students, but how could we examine and develop this? It took a lot of thinking, but it [inquiry-based working] also brought me a lot and I got better at it. [ ... ] I discovered through inquiry that I was on the right track and I consider what it means to the school and especially for students in grade 6 and 7. I think it's great if students have the opportunity to say what they want in a safe environment. When I was young this opportunity was not provided. Regarding my students, I think this safe environment is something we can and want to provide. Every opinion counts. It does not matter if you have an opinion that is different from your class mates' or teacher's opinion. [ ... ] and due to this inquiry-based working I became aware of the fact that I consider this important and that this changed my teaching” (primary education teacher).

This example illustrates that teachers experienced that the inquiry-based methods used in the project contributed to a better understanding of their own teaching practices. In this particular case, the teacher discovered what she considered important and how that impacted her teaching. Another teacher (English literature in secondary education) explained that without the project she probably would have started developing lessons without any systematic reflection on the needs of students, the aims of the lessons and so on; she would have done things routine wise. In her experience, inquiry-based working is not a part of teachers' daily practice and culture in schools. Teachers emphasized that this way of systematic working encouraged them to (re)consider their teaching practices from a different perspective, thus providing them with more insights for improving their CE practices and adapting the curriculum to the needs of the students.

The third explanation concerned collaboration and exchanging experiences. Teachers explained that the meetings during the project and especially those in which keynotes were given by invited experts provided input about CE: “He [the keynote] made me realize that CE was much more than we figured. And I thought to myself: “Actually I'm teaching a lot about CE, it's more integrated in my lesson than I thought. The only thing is I'm not telling my students: this is about citizenship” (secondary education teacher of economics).

Seven teachers stressed the importance of exchanging ideas, concepts and experiences regarding citizenship education: “Then [after another teacher explained their context and practice] I thought: ‘Ok, this is also a possibility for teaching it’. I think it was interesting and nice to discover how other schools designed CE. It was totally different but it was CE too.” (primary education teacher). Another (secondary education) teacher described his conversation with colleagues about CE and their discovery, based on exchanging ideas, that CE was a much broader concept than they had been thinking before. Finally, some teachers (four) explained that also talking about CE during the interviews, after the project was finished, helped them to become more aware of how they interpreted CE. The process of increasing awareness and the development of teachers' understanding of CE is apparently a dynamic and ongoing process.

#### 4.2. *About teacher professionalism in relation to teaching CE*

To get a deeper understanding of teachers' understanding of professionalism and how this professionalism is developed, teachers were asked what they considered professionalism

regarding CE, and whether and how their professionalism increased during the project.

#### 4.2.1. *Understanding of professionalism*

Our analyses of teachers' understanding of professionalism revealed four dimensions of professionalism: 1) possessing pedagogical-educational competences, 2) being a role model, 3) possessing knowledge about CE and 4) the competence to establish safe classroom environments.

Almost all teachers (fifteen) mentioned that a teacher should possess *pedagogical-educational competences* in order to teach CE. A variety of examples were given by the teachers. Pedagogical-educational competences refer to teachers' capability to: interact with students and adapt to their level of interest and age; encourage students' reflection; be flexible and adapt one's lessons to the needs of students and to encourage critical thinking; use appropriate teaching and pedagogical skills to involve society and civic related topics in one's teaching. A secondary biology teacher commented: "Teaching civics is not possible without this kind of professionalism, because professionalism in teaching CE is about being capable of using teaching skills and tools and to know what your educational and pedagogical goal is".

The second dimension of professionalism in relation to CE concerns *teachers as role models*. Most teachers (twelve) emphasized that professionalism implies that teachers are aware of their roles and the fact that their behavior and teaching set an example for their students: "Due to the fact you are an example you need to be aware of your own beliefs and opinions and you need to behave as a good citizen and make them explicit for your students" (primary education teacher).

Furthermore, as a third dimension, teachers stressed that professionalism is about *'possessing the proper knowledge'*. With this they meant knowledge about society, citizenship, citizenship education, ethical knowledge, 'knowledge about multicultural issues', subject knowledge and knowledge of students' social/psychological development. Like a secondary education teacher stated: "To act 'pedagogically' you need knowledge. [ ... ] Knowledge about students, their concerns and of course subject knowledge".

Teachers mentioned that professional teachers establish *safe classroom environments*. In order to teach, the climate in the classrooms needs to be safe and open. This is considered a fundamental condition for CE. This last dimension of professionalism was explicitly mentioned by primary education teachers, but nevertheless endorsed by every teacher.

#### 4.2.2. *Changes in understanding of professionalism*

In particular we were interested if, through teachers' involvement in the project, their understanding of professionalism had changed. The results of our study indicate that teachers' concepts did not change so much, but that they primarily became more aware and conscious of their own professionalism. Even inviting the teachers to compare their word webs during the interviews confirmed that their concepts hardly changed. However becoming more conscious was in particular mentioned by the participating secondary school teachers. In their explanation of what precisely they had become more aware of it appeared that they had started to connect the dimensions of professionalism to their CE teaching practice, for example their role as CE teacher: "I've become more conscious of my own role, being an example for my students, and I realize I've started to pay more attention to it during my teaching" (secondary education teacher of social studies). Teachers emphasized they started to reflect on their roles and what teaching CE demands of their professionalism: "I started to reflect on and evaluate more what I'm doing, like I did this and this, but does it help/contribute?" (secondary education teacher of history). "I've

become more aware of the pedagogical side of my profession and besides I have discovered how important it is to collaborate and exchange experiences with colleagues regarding the pedagogical side of teaching" (secondary education teacher of biology). Another quote of a secondary teacher of economics illustrates that becoming aware of aspects of their professionalism contributes to the development of a professional language in this area: "I do use the word pedagogical more often [...] before I did not use this word at all and now I realize more what it means and it is funny but sometimes if I teach I think to myself: 'well this was quite pedagogical'".

Four teachers emphasized that they had changed their practice. They started listening more carefully to students, having more conversations about moral and citizenship related topics. "Instead of leaving it to students and expecting they should know this [moral and civic topics], or let them figure it out themselves ... instead of that I now intentionally start a conversation about it [ ... ] and by talking about it, again it makes me more conscious of it too" (secondary education teacher of economics).

#### 4.2.3. *Explanations of their changes in understanding of teacher professionalism for CE*

Most of the teachers (eleven) struggled to point out what precisely contributed to their increased awareness about how to teach. Five teachers felt that talking with colleagues and taking note of the curriculum projects of the other participating schools contributed to their awareness. One teacher thought that observation of a colleague's teaching practices made her reflect on her own practice.

#### 4.3. *How do teachers develop as citizenship education professionals?*

This study also aimed to find out how this kind of professionalism for teaching CE could be developed. This knowledge might be useful to support pre- and in-service teachers in order to strengthen their competences in teaching CE. The fact that teachers consider the four dimensions of professionalism as a *conditio sine qua non* for teaching CE made us even more curious about how this professionalism is obtained and whether they have been prepared during their education to teach CE.

The majority of teachers (twelve teachers) argued that experimenting, practicing and reflection contributed to their professional development. "New graduates possess basic skills perhaps, but you can only develop through practicing" (secondary education teacher of social sciences). Some of them added that time, aging and experience are also key elements in this process. "Through gaining experiences over and over again. Like I gained skills with this project" (secondary education teacher of math), or: "As you become older you become more experienced [ ... ]" (secondary education teacher of history).

Another way to develop professionalism according to the participating teachers is through the exchange of concerns and ideas, talking with colleagues, asking them for input, and through observation; "I think the only way is to observe your colleagues and discover how they perform [ ... ] there are so many ways to act ... and you need to talk and exchange: 'why are you doing it this way? Because I do it like that' and that helps you to choose what is best for you because everyone acts in different ways and it needs to suit you in a natural way" (secondary education teacher of economics). "You can also ask a colleague to observe your teaching. His or her feedback can help you a lot" (primary education 6th grade).

It is striking that only three teachers stressed the need to gain knowledge through training, education or reading. Although the teachers did consider possession of knowledge as a dimension of the professionalism needed to provide CE, the classical way of



knowledge development as a means to increase professionalism was mentioned by hardly any teacher. Perhaps this is also due to the fact that they implicitly referred more to the knowledge which is gained in practice and through time and experience.

Almost all teachers (fifteen) said they had no preparation in teaching CE. Only three teachers remembered classes during pre-service teacher training that they now realized involved topics of citizenship education, like multi-cultural society and education, religions, social development and safe classroom environments. One of the explanations for this lack of preparation can be that most teachers received their training before CE became compulsory in the Netherlands. However, it is still remarkably that most teachers mentioned they did not receive any in-service support or training after the legal introduction of CE in primary and secondary education. We took the opportunity to discuss with the teachers in our research project whether and how pre-service teachers need to be prepared for CE. All teachers agreed on the importance of preparation of their future colleagues and emphasized the importance of knowledge about citizenship and citizenship education. According to them, student teachers need to gain knowledge of societies, democracy, participation, types of citizenship, students' actual citizenship practices and of teaching strategies for citizenship education. Additionally, during teacher training, attention to student's personal beliefs, values, norms and how to become a role model was considered important. When asked how this should be incorporated in teacher education curriculum, most teachers (twelve) emphasized that pre-service teachers need to be prepared through experience. They stressed that they need to gain experiences through practicing citizenship education during their internships and to gain experiences in society as responsible and conscious citizens themselves. Five teachers emphasized that involvement in citizenship education curriculum development and participating in inquiry-based citizenship educational practices would support student teachers most.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

In this study we aimed at a deeper understanding of the development of teachers' understanding of CE and corresponding challenges for their professionalism in the context of teacher participation in collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development regarding CE. The results first showed that during teachers' involvement in collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development and (re)designing teaching practices, their understanding of CE indeed changed and broadened. Moreover, they discovered that CE was already an implicit part of their teaching practices and they developed a vocabulary to understand these practices. Teachers explained that participation in the project helped, especially because it focused on teachers' daily practices and concerns, systemic examination of their teaching practice and collaboration in observing each other's practices and exchanging experiences between teachers. Teachers in the study differed for their backgrounds (gender, age, seniority). Given the small amount of participants, a comparison of groups of teachers is not in order. Moreover, based on our analyses, there were no indications that such differences seemed to matter considerably for teachers' attitudes towards citizenship education and pedagogical professionalism.

Besides teachers' involvement in curriculum development, the interviews with the researchers also appeared to be helpful for the development of their concepts of CE. They enhanced their reflection on the topic. This also underlines that the process of developing concepts of CE is essentially dynamic (Kennedy et al., 2002); the development of teachers' understanding of CE, initiated through

the project and continued during the interviews may continue even after the project.

All teachers in this study underlined the need for professionalism in relation to CE. They reported and valued an increased awareness regarding their roles. Their ideas about the constituent elements of professionalism are in line with Bergem's (2003) definition of pedagogical professionalism. The teachers consider professionalism regarding teaching CE as possessing pedagogical-educational competences, possessing knowledge and being competent to establish safe (classroom) environments. Development of such professionalism is, according to the teachers in our study, primarily a process of time, aging, experience, collaboration with colleagues, exchanging concerns or ideas and observing each other's practices. Input of experts may boost this process. Making use of internal and external resources is encouraged through a project as described in this study. The teachers' views of how professionalism develops reflects how various scholars have described the development of practical wisdom (Biesta, 2010, 2011; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010).

The outcomes of this study indicate that teachers struggle with the concept of CE and their CE practices are not always very conscious and planned (Hansen, 2001; Thornberg, 2008). In the Dutch educational context schools are allowed to develop their own interpretation of citizenship education and formulate their own goals (within the constraints of constitutional democracy). For the individuals and teams of teachers in this study this appears to be a difficult task. The relative freedom the Dutch system offers, has obviously not resulted yet in clear concepts of citizenship education and the professionalism needed for citizenship education. Our study underscores that explicit attention is needed for developing such concepts and that this might also contribute to a shift in teachers' understanding of citizenship as an 'achievement' into considering citizenship as a 'practice' (Lawy & Biesta, 2006).

In view of the fact that CE has been compulsory for many years, the lack of preparation in pre- and in-service teacher training that teachers point at is problematic. The awareness of the role of teachers as moral agents (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002) should take root there and (new) teachers should have opportunities to gain knowledge and good practices and discuss about how to deal with this as part of their teaching practices. The results of our study indicate that learning through participating in collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development offers promising opportunities. Moreover, our study indicates that through researching and developing one's own practices not only did teachers' understanding of CE develop but they also became more aware of their teaching strategies. Using teachers' own (authentic) practices (Chai & Tan, 2009) thus seems to be a powerful starting point for critical reflection and interrogation of concepts and practices of CE among teachers. In addition, the results show that involvement in curriculum development contributes to developing a vocabulary that facilitates the exchange of ideas and experiences with peers about the moral dimensions and pedagogical goals of teaching. Such vocabulary, a language in which moral issues can be discussed and pedagogical goals are jointly revisited, is often missing in classrooms and in teacher education (cf. Willemse et al., 2008) or the intensity level of teacher collaboration does not offer opportunity for joint-sense-making (cf. Kelchtermans, 2006), particularly in relation to concrete practices. This in turn hampers teachers when teaching children how to think and reflect on moral issues and citizenship (Sokkett & LePage, 2002). Thornberg (2008) has pointed out that a lack of a common language and knowledge is an obstacle for teachers' professional development and their teaching practices concerning value education. Moreover, a concrete practice-based vocabulary to discuss citizenship education in schools might play a role in the distribution of citizenship project learning and other

outcomes among those teachers that were not initially involved (i.e. school improvement). We consider this an interesting starting point for follow-up or future research. After all, Extending one's vocabulary or developing a 'moral language' is not a goal in itself. The ultimate goal of a research project aimed at enhancing teachers' professional development is improving educational practice. This requires the involvement of more than one of two teachers in the school. Ideally, the teachers involved in the project should be able to transfer the acquired knowledge and insights to their colleagues. This holds in particular for teachers with a coordinating role in the school, as stimulating teachers and realizing a coherent curriculum is part of their job.

In our study only seventeen teachers were involved and we focused on the perceptions of teachers and not on their actual teaching practices. In order to develop insight in how sustainable CE teaching practices can be realized, further research is needed, involving more teachers and a broader range of data collection methods. Involving teachers in collaborative inquiry-based curriculum development, like we did in this project (and cf. the systematic inquiry Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) advocated), seems to be a promising approach, but it is also expensive and time-consuming. Future research could investigate how this approach can be up scaled to other schools and to teacher training.

In this study only one or two teachers from each school participated. However, since teacher collaboration and communication, exchanging concerns or ideas and observing each other's practices seems important for developing professionalism in teaching CE and developing understanding of CE, it is necessary to involve more teachers within one school. Moreover, it appeared that the selection of teachers schools was not always very thoughtfully processed despite the fact that schools volunteered to participate in this project. It emphasizes the importance of deliberation when setting up such projects within schools. The involvement of more teachers in one school might also change the current isolated practices pointed out by Levine and Marcus (2010).

But then again, as it came to front in this study that teachers need inquiry in their own practice to understand citizenship education, it will probably remain difficult to motivate teachers to become involved by the start. As mentioned above, future research into the gaining of meaningful school-based vocabulary on moral and pedagogical professionalism in relation to the practice of citizen education might offer insights on this issue. Question for instance are under what circumstances project teachers are able to build a school-based vocabulary, how it is connected to a knowledge base, and whether and how such vocabulary helps enlarging the involvement of others towards school improvement.

In addition, it is necessary to understand the processes of developing professionalism regarding CE over time and in actual teaching or school practices. Does involvement in curriculum development in the domain of CE change those practices in the long term and does it provide a shift in focus on CE? Furthermore, despite the increased awareness about teachers' professionalism in relation to CE, it is remarkable that teachers struggled to point out what contributed to this awareness. This is interesting because all teachers were very clear about what is necessary for developing this kind of professionalism: time, experience, observation of colleagues and communication. This struggle might point out that developing such awareness, or even such professionalism, is not always a conscious process or at least not easy to articulate. In this respect it is remarkable that teachers did not mention the development of their understanding of CE as a contribution to an increased professionalism.

The question may also be raised what this means for teachers' preparation. The lack of preparation which the participating teachers in this study reported does not only apply to these

teachers, or to the Netherlands alone, but applies to teachers in other countries as well (cf. Akar, 2012; Willemse et al., 2008; Euridyce, 2012; Goodlad, 1990; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). Sanger and Osguthorpe (2013) suggested to pay more attention to the concepts pre-service teachers already possess of the moral work of teaching, and to build on these concepts during teacher training. As time and experience are needed to develop concepts of CE, pedagogical professionalism and practical wisdom, this should be addressed as early in teacher education as possible. Partnerships between schools and teacher education institutes offer the opportunity for pre-service and in-service teachers to collaborate in projects as described in this article. This offers learning opportunities for pre-service teachers and at the same time contributes to the development of teaching practices for citizenship education.

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