A little less balance in new teachers' professional development

An international teaching internship as a significant personal experience in becoming a teacher

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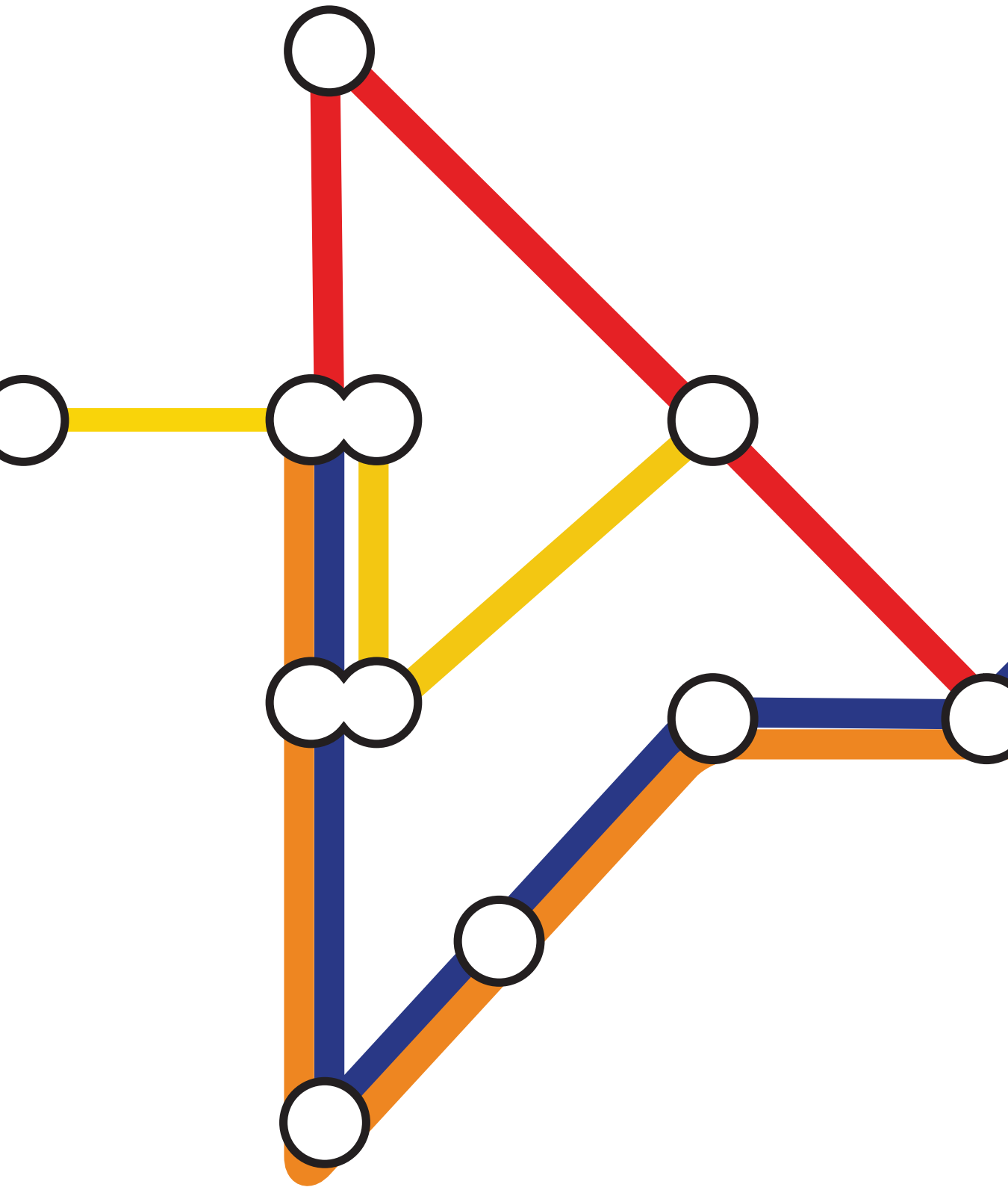
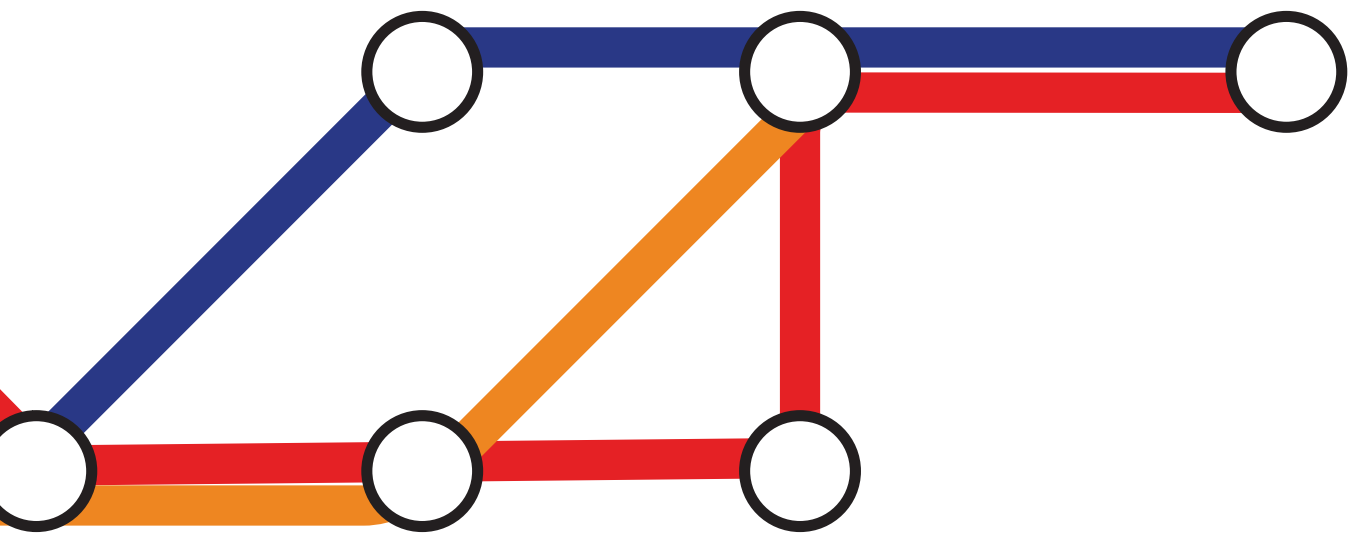


CHAPTER 1

General introduction



1.1 Positioning this study

1.1.1 Who I am in how I teach

'Who I am in how I teach is the message', according to Geert Kelchtermans (2009, p. 257). Nias (1989, p. 202-203) notes a teacher's self-image matters to both themselves and their students since, in contrast to other professions, a teacher cannot be separated from their teaching. Britzman (1991, p. 8) has described how learning to teach always has a focus on the self: "it is a time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach - like teaching itself - is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become". Kelchtermans (2009, pp. 260-261) goes on to describe how essential a teacher's 'personal interpretative framework' is within the profession. This framework reflects the basis on which a beginning teacher grounds their personal decisions or judgements for action and answers the questions: 'how can I effectively deal with this particular situation? and 'why would I work that way?' (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014, p. 118).

Although teacher educators acknowledge the importance of personal aspects in teaching (Britzman, 2003; Kelchtermans, 2009; Korthagen, 2016; Nias, 1989; Olsen, 2008), in practice they often struggle to determine how to make personal aspects explicit and constructively reflect on these aspects in beginning teachers' professionalization (Bakker, 2016; Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2010; Korthagen, 2010; Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos 2009; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011; Warnick & Silverman, 2011; Willemse, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008). There is limited empirical and theoretical evidence of how beginning teachers' perceive their personal concerns, interpretations, or beliefs and reflect on them (Martínez, Castro, Vystrcilová, & Mogliacci, 2017; Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2009; Rots, Kelchtermans, & Aelterman, 2012; Van Kan, 2013). Korthagen (2017, p. 399) argues that for educators to fully understand the process of their students becoming teachers, they have to focus on student teachers' actual concerns and real experiences, and take the person of the teacher into account by asking: "What do the teachers think, feel, want, what are their ideals, what inspires them, what kind of teachers do they want to be? And above all: What is their potential?" The most obvious example of what Korthagen (2017) describes as a real experience is a teaching internship.

1.1.2 Workplace learning

In 2006, the Dutch Education Professionals Act (Wet op Beroepen in het Onderwijs/BIO) translated the previous teacher qualifications into a list of competences (Kroeze, 2014). One of the main consequences of the BIO was that workplace learning became an important part of teacher education (Kallenberg & Rokebrand, 2006). Workplace learning is a process characterised by work and learning and involves three interacting parties:

the teacher training institute, the school, and the student teacher (Kroeze, 2014; Fuller & Unwin, 2010; Tynjälä, 2008). Teaching internships and school collaborations became key aspects of Dutch teacher training programmes. Workplace learning is organised at secondary or vocational schools and is based upon a close co-operation between university-based teacher educators and the school teachers who gradually become school-based teacher educators (Korthagen, 2017; Martin, Snow, & Franklin Torrez, 2011).

Workplace learning offers various opportunities for educators interested in personal aspects of student teachers' professional development. During teaching internships, student teachers usually begin to understand the aspects of the mandatory knowledge and skills they were taught that they personally value and believe to be useful for their classroom (Alsup, 2006; Biesta, 2014; Kelchtermans, 2009). Teaching internships also function as experiences where student teachers attempt to connect theoretical insights from their teacher training programme with actual practice in meaningful ways to either affirm or reject theories underpinning particular practices (Korthagen, 2010; Horrowitz, Darling Hammond, & Bransford, 2005; Tilson, 2017; Zeichner, 2014). Internships give students an opportunity to experiment with teaching activities, or alternative educational ideas. Critical reflections on such experiences can expose implicit beliefs, existing personal practical theories, or tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2000; Kelchtermans, Ballet, Peeters, März, Piot, Robben, & Maes, 2008; Kroeze, 2014; Levin, He, & Allen, 2013; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Girvan, Conneely, & Tangney, 2016; Olsen, 2008). Kroeze (2014) concludes that workplace learning is a key student experience that combines personal development and social interaction, and where the student teacher learns to find his or her position in the field of education.

1.1.3 An international teaching internship as a case

This study uses an international teaching internship as a case to explore how workplace learning influences beginning teachers' personal interpretative frameworks. For several reasons, an international teaching internship can be a relevant case for educators who want to further understand student teachers' personal interpretative frameworks.

First, being exposed to another culture, including one with a disparate and unfamiliar teaching practice, can make personal aspects in teaching more explicit. When a student teacher works and lives without a familiar social network, their existing beliefs and modes of action do not necessarily succeed or become invalid (Cushner & Brennan 2007; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Hofstede, 2005; Marginson, 2014; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). In a new culture, one lives in a state of disequilibrium with his or her cultural background (Marginson, 2014, p. 12), which frequently triggers a student's contemplation about their home culture and their position in it (English, 2013; Nanda & Warms, 2004; Weaver, 1998). One has to rediscover his or her new role, including their personal 'voice' (Weaver,