Teacher teams at the University of Twente: curriculum design, implementation & teacher professional development during TOM

Abstract
The recent introduction of a curriculum innovation called TOM has brought about a lot of changes for the teachers of the UT. They now have to work in teams and redesign the whole curriculum. Each year is now divided into four modules which are based on the principles of project-based learning. Two PhD projects were set up to study the implementation of TOM. The first project focuses on the professional development of UT teachers during TOM, while the second project researches the various module designs of the teacher teams. Both studies make use of quantitative as well as qualitative research methods.

Objective
The goal of both studies is to get a better understanding of the implementation of TOM at the UT. One study specifically focuses on the way UT teachers professionalise while designing and implementing the new curriculum and on how the professional development of UT teachers can best be facilitated. The other study looks at the process of curriculum design and researches how inter- and intra-team-learning relate to the design of the various modules and various student outcomes.

Context
The UT has recently reformed its bachelor programmes by introducing a curriculum innovation called the Twente Educational Model (TOM). Each bachelor year is now divided into four modules consisting of a central project and various additional courses. Teachers now have to work together in (multidisciplinary) teams to re-design the whole curriculum. However, it is still unknown what a “good” module looks like and how it can best be designed. Furthermore, it is assumed that teachers develop professionally while working on the curriculum re-design. However, it is unknown how teachers professionalise while working on TOM and how their professional development can be facilitated.

Practice
To study the process of curriculum re-design on the one hand, and the professional development of UT teachers on the other hand, two PhD projects were set up. In our projects we make use of quantitative as well as qualitative methods. A total of 20 UT module teams from 10 different bachelor programmes take part in our studies. We collect our data by means of various surveys, conduct interviews with UT teachers and observe team meetings.