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SPECIAL ISSUE: GOOD PRACTICES IN HONORS EDUCATION



EUROPEAN HONORS COUNCIL

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Journal of the European Honors Council

The aim of the Journal of the European Honors Council is to share research results, knowledge and good practices related to talent development and honors programs in higher education.

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Instructions for authors

We invite you to submit research papers, as well as notes on good practices or preliminary research results to the Journal of the European Honors Council. Instructions on how to contribute can be found on the website www.jehc.eu.

There are two options for contributors: peer-reviewed papers or edited notes.

1. Peer-reviewed paper

This is a contribution of between 1,500 and 5,000 words (approximately). After receiving your paper, the editorial board will send it to two reviewers who remain anonymous to the authors. The reviewers can indicate if they accept the paper (with minor changes), ask you to submit a new version with major changes, or reject the paper. Major considerations are:

- The paper is written in English, in a clear and concise language that will help editors and reviewers concentrate on the scientific content of your paper.
- The paper is relevant in the context of the EHC goals (see below).

2. Edited note

This is a contribution of between 500 and 1,500 words (approximately), briefly summarizing (preliminary) findings or good practices. Notes are edited by the editorial board. They need to be written in English, in a clear and concise language that will help readers to concentrate on the content, which should be relevant in the context of the EHC goals (see below).

In all cases, authors should send in their manuscripts following the template which can be found through www.jehc.eu. Contributions are considered in the order they are received. Once accepted, we aim to publish as quickly as possible. Online publishing is in pdf-files.

In case of questions, the Editorial Board of the Journal of the European Honors Council can be contacted by e-mail: journal@honorscouncil.eu.



The European Honors Council pursues the following goals:

1. Supporting and stimulating development of honors education and its structural embeddedness in the education system
2. Creating a common language
3. Supporting teacher professionalization (within honors)
4. Creation and exchange of knowledge about honors programs
5. Stimulating and facilitating research about honors
6. Enabling networking for people involved in honors
7. Stimulating spin-off of successful honors practices to regular education
8. Promoting an easier flow of talented students from secondary to higher education
9. Stimulating professional development of honors students and connection to working life / research career
10. Stimulating collaboration and inspiring student exchange at honors level



Note

Introduction to the special issue: Good practices in honors education

Maarten Hogenstijn

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Published: 7 January 2019

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The Editorial Board is honored to present a new special issue of the *Journal of the European Honors Council (JEHC)*, focusing on good practices in honors education. We present nine examples of good practices and a paper with an overall analysis of the use of good practices in honors education.

1. The importance of sharing good practices

The *JEHC* aims to share knowledge and good practices regarding honors programs and talent development programs in higher education. The nine examples presented in the notes cover a rich variety in both content and form, ranging from disciplinary to multidisciplinary and from short activities to complete programs. They even include cross-curricular educational applications.

A crucial addition to the nine notes is the introductory paper to this issue by Pierre van Eijl and Albert Pilot. The paper introduces a theoretical framework with a collection of keywords and analyzes the content of the good practices. In addition, the paper provides the necessary structure for the collection of notes, making them easily accessible and applicable for honors educators. The authors also provide thoughts on the transfer of good practices, both to other honors education contexts and to regular education. The educational innovations developed in honors education can thus be of benefit to a wide student population, both within and outside of honors programs.

2. Creating this issue

This special issue would not have been possible without the extraordinary efforts of Dutch honors scholars Pierre van Eijl and Albert Pilot. Starting in The Netherlands, they have taken the initiative to collect good practices in honors education. They have overcome the initial

difficulties in gathering the good practices and developed a framework (format) for their description. From their work in The Netherlands, they selected seven good practices to share with an international audience. In addition, they invited two experienced American honors educators to contribute a good practice from their own contexts.

Working closely with the authors of the individual good practices, they helped to create a collection of notes that can benefit honors educators around the globe. Additionally, they wrote a paper providing the necessary context, framework, and analysis to place the good practice collection into perspective.

When the collection of contributions was complete, professor Beata Jones and copy editor Saffyre Falkenberg at Texas Christian University (USA) worked hard to correct 'Dinglish' expressions from the Dutch good practices and generally make sure that language in the articles is used properly.

3. Final remarks

The Editorial Board of *JEHC* hopes that this collection of good practices inspires you to critically reflect on your own teaching and to innovate, making use of experiences elsewhere. We realize that perspectives in this issue are still limited; we only present good practices from The Netherlands and the United States. We are sure that there are many more good practices worth sharing not only in these countries but especially in other countries. Therefore, we invite you to think about good practices in your own education, or that of a colleague's, which are worth sharing. You are invited to submit these practices to *JEHC*. However, these are not the only types of contributions you can submit. *JEHC* publishes contributions on research into honors and talent development in higher education. The Editorial Board invites you to contribute to the next issue(s) of the journal by sending in your papers and notes. All information on contributing can be found on the website www.jehc.eu.

Paper

Good practices in honors education with examples to follow

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Abstract

Honors education offers students challenging experiences and teachers a laboratory for educational innovation. Successful innovations can stimulate other teachers to experiment and improve their educational practice. This requires that innovations become known to other teachers. For this reason, a project on good practices in honors education has been started in The Netherlands, where good practices in honors education of universities were described and published on a website of the Dutch Honors Network. Until now, 19 good practices are described, 17 from The Netherlands and two from the United States. Nine are selected for this issue. In this introductory paper, the good practice project and research about good practices are described. Different views and principles about honors education are discussed. A series of keywords to bridge the different views and the principles with the nine good practices published in this issue are presented. An analysis of the collected data of the good practices is carried out, followed by conclusions, discussions, and reflections. It appears that six good practices already led to innovations elsewhere in curricula.

Keywords: good practice, honors, higher education, transfer

1. Start of the good practice project in the honors network

The 'good practice project' started with the observation that, in many honors programs, there are good examples of innovative educational practices which can be a source of inspiration for other teachers. Good examples have been developed thanks to the favorable conditions in an honors program for a teacher to experiment and with students willing to take on a new challenge.

These good practices are only known to a small circle of people. If a teacher tells others about his or her experiences at an honors conference, more information from the good example can trickle down to others. It spreads even further if a good example is presented in a workshop and the participants experience that example. A visit to the class of the good

practice can also help spread awareness but is not always easy to organize. To make good examples of honors education more widely known, they have been published by the Honors Network in The Netherlands on a website. On this website, examples of good honors education are posted according to a format (presented in Appendix A). Readers of this good practice can contact the teacher. In this project, we use a simple description of a good practice: 'a piece of honors education that functions, in the opinion of the teacher involved, so well for the students that it may be an inspiring example for others.'

Three questions were central in this project about good practices in honors education:

1. Is it possible to collect good practices in honors education via an honors network?
2. What are the characteristics of good practices in honors education as described by their teachers?
3. Do teachers of these good practices think these can be applied in other educational programs?

In this paper, the authors describe the project, the theoretical background, and provide an analysis of this set of good practices.

2. Desirable characteristics of good practices

Honors is often a laboratory of educational innovation (Wolfensberger, van Eijl & Pilot, 2004; 2012) and a gold mine for innovative ideas. Innovation in education is often a difficult process, but 'a good example tends to be followed' and can inspire others.

We identified four desirable characteristics:

1. The good practice should have the characteristics of a model

According to Earl (1983), a good practice of a course (or activity) can function as a model in (re)designing a piece of education. This requires a description in which 'the typical pattern of steps or activities' of the good practice becomes clear for the reader. Bardach (2011) stresses the importance that the 'core' of the good practice (why and how it works) has to be clear when adapting it for another source in another context. Robust smart practices are adaptable to various conditions, have many operational features, and can employ similar but diverse ways to achieve their goals. They should have the characteristics of a model.

2. The good practice description should provide insight

The good practices need to provide insight into the factors or conditions that determine what is going on in the practice. Presenters of a good practice need to go beyond the description and address the 'why' question.

3. The good practice should be clearly described

The good practice has to be described in a rich, detailed way, in line with what Geertz (1973) has called 'thick description.' This description must allow the reader to understand in enough detail the way things are working in that particular situation.

4. The good practice should be presented in a collegial way

The authors of the good practices should address the audience as colleagues and fellow professionals, inviting them to think along (using the understandings and insights offered) to

link the presented experiences and knowledge to their own professional context and situation. The linking implies interpretation and translation to one's own context, working conditions, imagining and hypothesizing ways to transfer the insights to one's own practice. As such, the basic message of the good practice is a call for dialogue between professionals, for sharing their understanding of their practices, and for inviting others to join the thinking in order to take the growing understanding a step further.

For the acceptance of good practices, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2009) also mention the importance of the source of the good practice. The authority of the source influences the acceptance.

3. Applying good practices: 'translating to own context'

Proven through rigorous research is not a criterion for a good practice. That would be nearly impossible to do for most teachers of good practices because of the complexity and the resources needed for such research. The context of the practice is also a major issue in the generalization of such research. It means that a good practice usually cannot be copied. However, the educational design of the good practice or elements of it can be inspiring. In order to draw lessons from experiences or insights from colleagues, practitioners need to translate a good practice into their own local situation (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2009). These practices had to be analyzed and interpreted with their own context in mind (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins, 2001). The premise is that good and comprehensive information (e.g., in the form of a good practice) as such will lead to educational innovation. It is certainly not tenable that the example will result in a desirable change in practice (Van den Berg & Vandenberghe, 1995).

More specifically: one aims to be useful (for one's own context) and feasible (in one's own context). Teachers listen to innovation proposals mainly from a perspective of usability for their own practice. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2009) mention this support as a critical success factor for the effectiveness of good practices. This support can take various forms, such as imbedding the application of a good practice in a renewal project, working in a team of like-minded colleagues, or being part of a renewal policy of the institute. Honors programs typically have the advantage of often being laboratories of innovation (Wolfensberger, van Eijl & Pilot, 2004; 2012).

4. Different types of impact of good practices

The researchers of good pedagogical practices, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2009), distinguish three usage variants of good practices:

1. Superficial use

Tips, methods, and supplied materials are taken over without applying the practical examples as a whole and without really changing the views of those involved. This variant is most common.

2. Adoption

In this variant, the good practice is taken over almost integrally and even copied in a teacher's own practice. Adoption can, however, become imitation when one starts acting differently without changing one's own insights and opinions. It is more about

superficial implementation: one takes over a form without a thorough understanding of the content. In that case, it is unlikely that the renewal will be implemented sustainably.

3. Integration

In the third variant, the good practice is analyzed deeply and thus adapted to the specific local context and / or characteristics of those involved. In the research mentioned, this often leads to teachers trying to attune the working conditions in the school to the content of the good practice.

5. Good practices can bring a change in view on education

Taking note of a good practice can work as an eye-opener and can also change the frame of reference of the teacher involved. According to Kelchtermans, Ballet, Peeters & Verckens (2008), this can have different effects on the views of the teachers involved.

1. Confirmation of own views

Taking note of a good practice and the underlying vision can lead to a confirmation of one's own views by recognizing one's own vision in the example. This can give the teacher involved a good feeling because he or she is meeting teachers who are on the same 'road.'

2. Extension of existing views

A good practice can give a new view on an approach of an educational practice, which can give an expansion of the teacher's existing frame of reference.

3. Development of micro-instructional policy

By attempts to introduce a good practice in the teacher's own context, some respondents became strongly aware of the need to think and act in a micro-instructional policy and strategic way (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2009). This is particularly important if it is an inter- or multi-disciplinary project or a project at the level of a study program or institute. These teachers develop strategies to convince their colleagues and school leaders to join the project, among other things. They anticipate different structural and organizational conditions that could complicate the implementation and should therefore be addressed in a targeted manner, if one wants to start using the good practice.

4. Rejection

A fourth pattern is distinguished: the (immediate) rejection of the good practice. This was the case when participants in the research of Kelchtermans et al. (2008) experienced a big and insurmountable difference between the conditions and views in the proposed good practice and their own work context and personal interpretation framework.

6. Transfer in honors: 'Maybe this is not new for another, but in my education it is'

In a recent research project, Otto, de Jong and Zunderdorp (2018) interviewed teachers of one university (Utrecht University, The Netherlands) about the transfer (or transition) of honors innovations to other educational programs. This university has an explicit policy to apply successful innovations in honors education into the regular programs. The rector magnificus of Utrecht University (Kummeling, 2018) declared, when presenting the Honours Teacher of the Year Award 2018: 'Honors programs are vital to our university. Not only are these hugely beneficial to the students who have taken them, but they also serve a vital

experimental function for the university: a space where teachers can test and hone pedagogical ideas before deploying these ideas in the regular programs. A small investment in the few for the great benefit of the many.'

A goal of the research project of Otto et al. was to collect data about the transfer of honors education to regular education and to find out whether an additional policy of the university was necessary. The authors interviewed 10 persons in three honors programs: among them were a member of the council of the department from each program, an honors director, and one or more honors teachers. The three honors programs differed in size, type of organization, and frequency of pedagogy transfer.

The respondents said that they considered their honors programs as laboratories of change because they could try out new educational methods and content with the honors students. For a minority of the respondents, the transfer of programs was part of the purpose of a 'laboratory of change.' The authors mention many common elements in their honors programs experiments. Elements mentioned were: 'stimulating personal development of the students' and 'to direct their own study' and 'to work with real life cases.' In addition, inter- and multi-disciplinary study were often mentioned, as well as the offering of new content. What was experienced as new was different, depending on their frame of reference and the context of the respondents. As one respondent expressed: 'maybe this is not new for another, but in my education, it is.'

The respondents said that it was difficult for them to see if transfer actually took place. In their opinion, a transfer of an honors good practice has a good chance to succeed if it solves a problem in the regular program. A culture that encourages innovation helps, too. If honors teachers have an extensive network within their department, it will help the spreading of innovations. Some respondents said that transfer of honors good practices to the regular program can fail because the attitude of regular students is less active than that of honors students. Other respondents did not agree with that view, saying that regular students also like more challenging education. In all cases, the teachers could realize the transfer because they know where an honors good practice matches with the regular program. The respondents considered the visibility of honors innovations as crucial for transfer. The authors have some recommendations to enhance transfer of honors innovations. For the honors teachers, it will be to work together with colleagues and share your experiments with others both inside and outside the institute. For the honors directors, it will be to invest in the visibility of honors good practices, encourage innovative teachers, and involve innovative teachers in curriculum changes.

In earlier studies, Wolfensberger, van Eijl, and Pilot (2004, 2012) already report spin-off effects of honors programs for regular programs. Spin-off effects were found in the content of courses, the pedagogy, and the structure of an educational program.

Transfer of good practices is not always a visible process but a process of 'silent transfer.' Sometimes, teachers take notice of good practices and may decide to do something with them. Perhaps they get ideas or change their frame of reference. In previous projects (van Eijl & Pilot, 2016; Coppoolse, van Eijl & Pilot, 2014), we encountered examples of transfer of good practices of teachers who had read a good practice in one of the publications and

contacted the teachers involved. These contacts inspired them to use elements of that innovation in their newly designed honors program.

7. Educational principles of honors education: different views

Good practices in honors education can be seen as illustrations of the principles of honors education. Considering examples in relation to principles can, according to van Parreren (1970), result in (more) insight into these principles. This insight makes the acquired knowledge agile, so that it can also be applied more easily in a different context. This is essential for the transfer of good practices. But what are the pedagogical principles in honors education?

Principles of honors education are expressed in different ways by different authors. Organizational characteristics and educational (pedagogical) principles are sometimes closely linked. First, a brief overview of the characteristics and principles of both American and Dutch honors programs is presented here. Then, different views from some researchers of honors education follow. This section ends with a series of keywords for honors that represent the different views.

7.1 Basic characteristics and key points of a fully developed honors program (NCHC, U.S.A.)

The definition of honors education by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC, 2013) highlights many educational aspects: 'in-class and extracurricular activities that are measurably broader (multi- and interdisciplinary learning), deeper (learning in depth), or more complex than comparable learning experiences typically found at institutions of higher education.' Also service learning, leadership, experiential learning and learning communities are mentioned as important aspects of honors education. Honors experiences include a distinctive learner-directed environment and philosophy, provide opportunities that are appropriately tailored to fit the institution's culture and mission, and frequently occur within a close community of students and faculty. In most cases, the honors community is composed of carefully selected teachers and students who form a cross- or multi-disciplinary cohort dedicated to achieving exceptional learning and personal standards. In universities and colleges, the credit points refer to the number of contact hours per week in class for one term. Students are generally expected to spend two to three hours outside class studying and doing homework for every hour spent in class.

7.2 Ten key points for honors programs (Netherlands)

For Dutch honors programs, ten key points for honors programs were formulated by van Eijl, Pilot, and Wolfensberger (2010). The honors pedagogy focuses on excellence with challenging assignments of a high content level and is diverse in design with an emphasis on 'discovery learning.' Attention is being paid to leadership, as well as to communicative and social skills. Excellent performance is valued, and there is plenty of room for new ideas and creative initiatives from students, for which facilitation is provided. The program pays a lot of attention to feedback from teachers and fellow students on individual talent development and personal development. Students also stimulate each other through team work, honors communities, and extra-curricular activities. The work load of a course in Dutch higher education is expressed in ECTS, an acronym for European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. A full study year normally consists of 60 credits. One ECTS (often abbreviated to EC) is, in The Netherlands, an equivalent of 27.5 hours work by the student, including classes,

other relevant meetings, homework, group work, and assessment.

7.3 The three pillars of honors pedagogy

In search of a pedagogy for honors education, Wolfensberger (2012), after literature review and interviews with experienced honors teachers, formulated three pillars of honors pedagogy. These pillars are: creating community, enhancing academic competence, and offering freedom.

To become intrinsically motivated, three psychological needs of students in (higher) education have to be met, which are, according to Ryan & Deci (2000), autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The three pillars of honors pedagogy, as formulated by Wolfensberger, meet these psychological needs. Because honors students prefer autonomy to make their own choices, they appreciate an autonomy-supportive teaching style characterized by relatedness and a good balance between autonomy and structure (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Reeve, 2009; Sierens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, Soenens & Dochy, 2009). In a literature study, Kingma, Heijne-Penninga, and Wolfensberger (2018) elaborate on the autonomy-supportive teaching style and mention three clusters of teaching strategies that can foster the offering of freedom:

- Strategies that create space for students' questions, choices, and initiatives' scaffolding
- Strategies that foster a sense of excitement and experimentation
- Strategies that treat honors students as 'junior colleagues' in research and education (activities).

The psychological relatedness resonates with the notion of a sense of community. Autonomy is clearly related to (a certain degree of) freedom. In her 'integrative model for excellent performance,' Wolfensberger (2011) emphasizes that talented and motivated students need 'bounded freedom.' This means that students must be given the space to develop their own passion, to be able to follow their interests, to be able to make their own plans, and to meet people. But, the teacher also has to set limits to channel creativity because choices have to be made, decisions taken, and deadlines met.

7.4 Characteristics of practice-oriented honors programs

In universities of applied sciences in The Netherlands, there are quite a number of practice-oriented honors programs. In these programs, a complex problem in the professional work field is central in the student's work. From her experience and research with practice-oriented honors programs in Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Lappia et al. (2014) and Lappia-Van Es (2015) name five characteristics in which 'Learning to innovate' is a key issue.

1. Multi-disciplinary practice

Students work on a real, but wicked, multidisciplinary problem with students of different disciplines. The problem cannot be solved with a routine approach and requires development of new knowledge and higher-order learning.

2. Authentic learning environment

The supervising teachers, in collaboration with partners from professional practice and researchers, realize a challenging learning environment. This learning environment

requires 'situated learning'; that is, learning in a context that is similar to the situation in which graduates in the professional field have to work on innovations.

3. Professional excellence

The goal that is being pursued and assessed is that students learn to innovate and to contribute to innovative solutions for practical issues. Weerheijm & Miltenburg (2017) describe professional excellence as a generic learning objective of an honors program.

4. High expectations

The learning environment and the multi-disciplinary problem mentioned above are very suitable for students who want and are able to do more than what the regular program offers. Honors students ask for challenges in the form of complex tasks and high expectations, coupled with more autonomy and space for their own initiatives (Scager, Akkerman, Pilot & Wubbels, 2013). Students and teachers are expected to have a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2006), and teachers see practice-based honors programs as a means to stimulate students' abilities, creativity, and task commitment to an above-average level.

Honors students are mainly recruited and selected on the basis of motivation. Teachers search for teaching strategies to stimulate the passion of honors students to tackle the practical problem.

5. Learning work community

Because, in honors, much emphasis is placed on autonomy and self-directed learning by students, it is very important that students and teachers build up a bond of trust and form a close community. This learning community is an important part of an authentic learning environment and forms the portal for the various communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) that students are involved in after their studies.

7.5 Relationship between challenge and other characteristics of honors

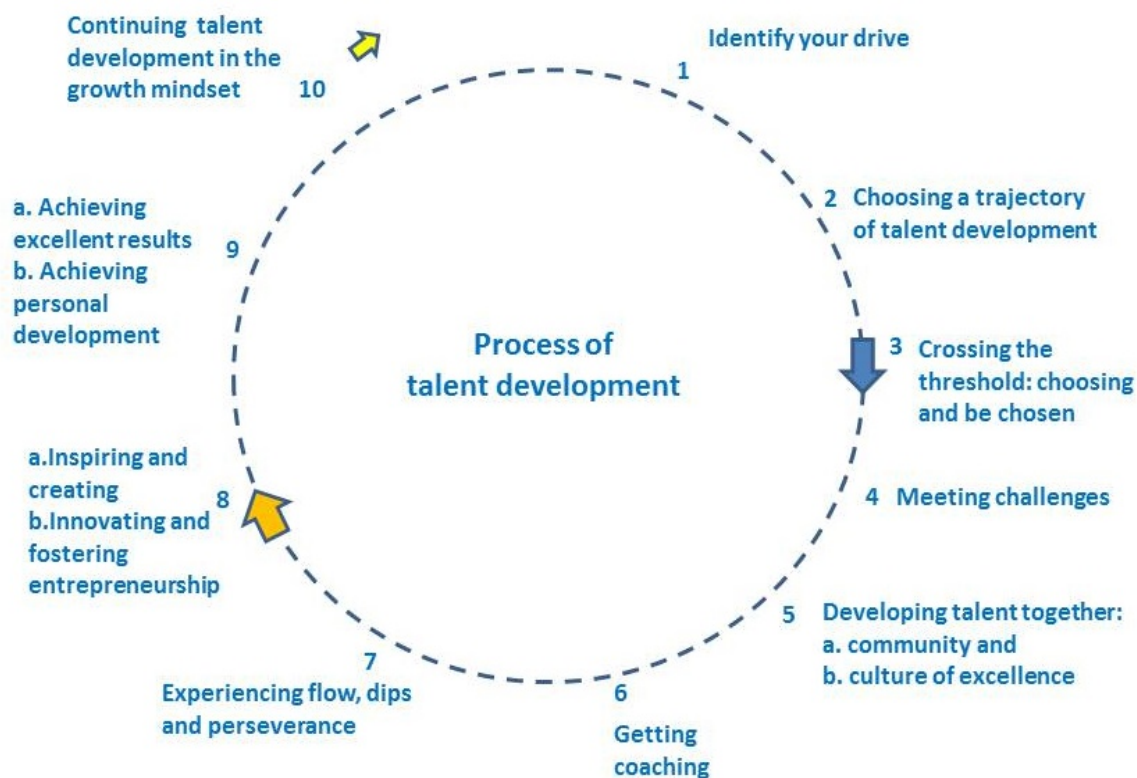
Scager, Akkerman, Pilot. and Wubbels (2013) investigated the relationship between challenge and other characteristics of honors in six honors courses of a liberal arts and sciences college of Utrecht University, The Netherlands. They used focus interviews guided by the story-line method and analyzed course materials and audio-recorded classes to describe how challenge was established.

Students appeared to experience the highest level of challenge when three factors occurred simultaneously: autonomy, complexity, and high expectations of teachers. Autonomy became visible in the choice of assignments, control over achievement, student responsibility, non-directive feedback, and openness to student initiatives; all of these factors match the descriptions of autonomy-supportive teaching behavior (Reeve, Bolt & Cai, 1999). Complexity referred especially to the novelty (and abstractness) of the course material, high level of questions, and the requirement for critical thinking. High teacher expectations had a strong influence on the perceived level of challenge. Important here were the teacher's reputation, the announcement of challenge (the difficulties students were expected to face), the teacher as co-learner, the need for active participation, and the need to prepare for class. The challenge level varied between courses but also between different activities within a course.

7.6 Circle of talent development

In 2015-2016, van Eijl and Pilot (2016) did a project, 'The Honours Experience,' in which they interviewed forty honors students of different honors programs in The Netherlands about their learning experiences in their honors programs. They asked questions about what challenged them, about their ups and downs and how they had overcome their dips, what inspired them, and what their process of talent development involved. In addition to the student interviews in this project, they also interviewed eight of the teachers that were involved in the coaching of these students. The results were published in a book that provides a common thread in their findings and the sections linking these to research literature on talent development. As a framework for the analysis of the student learning experiences, they used the Circle of Talent Development (van Eijl & Pilot, 2016; van Eijl, Pilot, Gelink & Dibo, 2017) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Circle of Talent Development



Source: van Eijl & Pilot, 2016, p. 13

The Circle of Talent Development starts (step 1) with the identification of a student's drive to do something more or different from the regular program. This can lead to step 2, the choice for a trajectory of talent development. An honors program is such a trajectory. Step 3 reflects the admission procedure, where students have to pass a selection procedure to be admitted to the honors program. The challenges (step 4) students meet in the program are of central importance for their learning. This can ignite their interest and get their process going of discovery learning and sometimes hard work. The student is usually not alone but works with other honors students, a teacher/coach, or outside experts. An honors community (step 5a) can develop, in which students stimulate each other in their interests

and thinking about the challenge. Gradually, a culture of excellence (step 5b) can grow if students start striving to results that matter. Coaching (step 6) is of key importance to support the students in their study and to inspire them to make an extra effort in their work. Coaching is also important because students not only experience a flow in their work but also dips (step 7). Perseverance is sometimes necessary to keep on track in an honors activity, when it is difficult and stagnation threatens to block the process. A creative insight or an entrepreneurial type of initiative (step 8) can bring a project or other honors activity a new perspective. At the end (step 9), students can attain excellent results but also, and sometimes even more importantly, a gain in personal development. After a project or activity is completed, students may benefit from the growth mindset (step 10), which is developed or reinforced during their honors work. Altogether, this Circle of Talent Development is an organizer for important honors activities of students, but the sequence of steps 4 to 8 is not strict.

Additional information about the steps in the circle, illustrated with brief quotes from student interviews that support the framework of the circle, are given in the book 'The Honours Experience,' for which a synopsis in English is available (van Eijl & Pilot, 2016). The steps in the circle are used in the format of good practices in this issue to give a characterization of the strengths of these practices in the experience of the teacher.

7.7 Honors keywords as a bridge between educational principles and practice

The educational principles and characteristics of honors programs mentioned before by different authors have a significant overlap. However, there is also a lot of variation in it. The same is true for honors programs and good practices in honors. To bridge the gap between educational principles and the practice of honors education, we have chosen a series of keywords out of the principles presented above that are recognizable in the good practices. The keywords presented below are in sequence with the steps in the Circle of Talent Development.

- challenge (*broader, deeper or more complex*)
- authentic (*real world problem; realistic learning situation*)
- (honors) (*learning*) community (*team work, cooperation*)
- inter/multi-disciplinarity
- bounded freedom/autonomy (*choices offered*)
- creativity
- coaching (*autonomy supportive teaching style*)
- (self)(critical) reflection
- excellence (*culture of excellence; engendering academic competence, high expectations*)
- personal development (*personal leadership*)

These are the keywords one may expect in good practices of honors programs, courses, and activities. Not all good practices will necessarily have all the keywords because different practices will have different emphases. In the good practices published in this issue, the keywords are in italics in the texts.

8. The collection of good practices for the Dutch Honors Network

The collection of good practices started as part of the activities of the Dutch Honors Network of honors teachers. The leading idea was that we can learn a lot from each other and 'a good example tends to be followed.' Good examples could be inspiring for other honors teachers but also for teachers in the regular programs. Each member of the network was asked to

look around in their institution for suitable good practices. To make the good practices easily accessible for a reader, a format was developed for the description of the good practices. The good practice could be a part of an honors course, a complete honors course, or an honors program. It should be a practice that a teacher has good experiences with, that students value, and that may be inspiring for other teachers. For the format, we also consulted Eyckmans (2017) of the University of Antwerp, who had experience with a special format used to internally exchange information about their courses and the experiences with them. The format we developed in this project was tried out two times with different teachers and then modified into the present form.

The format (Appendix A) contained typical elements for a description of the practice, such as name, place in the curriculum, type of assessment, size, and length, but also why this good practice was developed (what was the original challenge for the teacher who developed it?) and the educational design (the description of the build-up of the practice, so the reader could get insight in the strength of it), experiences with the good practice, and possibilities for transfer to another educational situation. In Appendix A, the format is described. The description of the educational design (item 7) refers to the 'model' (Earl, 1983) and the 'core' (Bardach, 2011) of a good practice described in section 2. The description of the 'why' statement (item 4) refers also to section 2 (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2009). An e-mail address (item 2) is included to contact the author for additional information.

We invited teachers via the Honors Network to contribute to this project with the help of the format developed. At the start of the project, an extra effort by means of interviews with honors teachers was necessary in order to arrive at good descriptions. Some teachers contributed without interviews, only on invitation with feedback on their draft descriptions from the project leaders. After the texts of the descriptions were checked by the teachers (member check), the descriptions were published on the website of the Honors Network (mostly in Dutch). Apart from the honors teachers connected with the Dutch Honors Network, we also invited two American honors teachers with a long experience in honors education to contribute a good practice.

So, the 19 good practices in this study were the result of initiatives from member-teachers of the Dutch Honors Network and two American colleagues of NCHC. For this issue of the *Journal of the European Honors Council*, we selected nine good practices that we considered to be the most informative for the international readers of this journal (those including much information about the why and the how of the practices).

During the project, we used the term 'best practice,' but to avoid misunderstandings, we use the term 'good practice' in this paper.

9. Differences and common characteristics in the good practices

By early 2018 (a year into the project), 19 good practices had been collected. An analysis yielded the following remarkable differences and common features.

Rich variety

All good practices are very different in terms of content and form. There is apparently a rich variety of good practices in honors programs. The good practices vary from subject-specific

to cross-curricular examples and from disciplinary to multidisciplinary. Most good practices come from universities of applied sciences because we focused mainly on this type of university (not on the research universities).

Extent of the good practices are very different

The extent of the good practices varied from three relatively short activities, five shorter courses of a couple of days, eight longer courses, projects, or trajectories of weeks or months, and two programs of a couple of years.

Many common characteristics

In addition to differences, there are also a number of common elements. Giving the students autonomy (the teachers describe this as openness) is present in (almost) all good practices presented here. We interpret this as autonomy because students were allowed to contribute a project to work on or to self-direct an activity. In all practices, the ideas of students were taken into account.

Often a real, 'authentic' problem which required a solution was the focus of student activities. This could be an assignment from the work field of an external client. Students often worked on a product that is going to be used in practice. This can be strongly motivating for them.

Intense interaction and collaboration are striking in the teams working on a project. This involves learning by presenting and discussing new knowledge, insights, and ideas. Mutual feedback often took place, as well as development of new ideas through brainstorming and interest in each other's ideas.

External assignments were often linked to multidisciplinary groups of students because more disciplines are necessary to come up with a valuable solution for a problem.

In most good practices, there is an explicit stimulus for personal development. Sometimes working on the content of a project and personal development are strongly intertwined. The teacher often has a coaching role. He or she is an inspirer, not someone who prescribes the learning experiences of the students. Expertise is sometimes obtained from outside the learning situation: either from the external client, researchers, or other experts.

10. Analysis of the descriptions of good practices

In the format, some elements are especially of interest for the value of a good practice to other teachers. The challenge for the teachers is to develop the core of a good practice (item 4 in the format), the educational design (item 7) and the possibilities of transfer (item 13). We will start in section 10.1 with the educational design of the good practices, which can contain a 'model' for other teachers.

10.1 Analysis of the educational design information in the good practice descriptions

The descriptions of the educational design vary, and each design has its own approach to fostering students' learning. Some common elements can, however, be distinguished. Remarkable is that students often have the freedom to decide for themselves on the subjects / problems to be studied and how to approach them. The idea of 'bounded freedom' is regularly a key element because students have to take care of constraints and time limits. Much learning takes place in interaction with other students, in teams, work

groups, and / or communities. Progress in activities, new ideas but also drawbacks, are discussed in these interactions. It is striking that, in a number of good practices, multidisciplinary or international teams are mentioned as being essential. Students have to plan their activities in their own way, but, for a large project, a team of students makes a project, planning with consultations, reports, and coordination.

The scope of the activities varies greatly, from short-cycle work of a few days to long-term trajectories of (many) months for an external client.

Personal development plays an important role in many good practices. Students have to formulate their own learning objectives, practice with aspects of personal performance, and give feedback on personal performance of other students.

Regular reports of progress and the use of portfolios by students to discuss their own learning process is present in some good practices with the underlying goal of an intense learning process.

In the design, teachers typically are given a coaching role. Often, the possibility to consult external experts is provided in a project.

10.2 Analysis of why this good practice was developed

In the format (item 4), teachers described why they developed this good practice: what was the challenge for the teacher, and why was it designed this way?

All good practices are aimed at offering more challenge to honors students, who (in The Netherlands) often do honors in addition to their regular curriculum. The challenge they offer students varies from being more in charge of the regulation of their lives and study activities to thinking more about what they really care for in life and looking for their own goals to addressing complex wicked problems with a multidisciplinary group to working with real problems with a client and an emphasis on experiential learning. This should promote ownership of learning. The method followed is also intended to support the honors community.

Most projects are aimed at further personal and social development of students in which international cooperation, working from different perspectives, and social responsibility are key components.

Sometimes, the good practice is mainly developed by students. In some honors programs (in the social domain), students determine themselves what they will do together. Some programs offer the opportunity to discover and further develop talents, such as critical thinking, collaboration, leadership, creativity, and giving or receiving feedback and learning from each other's ideas. Reflection on experiences and one's own actions is sometimes the key issue. This reflection then focuses on the process of cooperation and the effectiveness of the individual in it. So, students can become aware how learning can be meaningful, practical, transferable, and durable as a life-long endeavor.

10.3 Analysis of transfer in good practices

Our goal of the description and publication of examples of good practices is also to promote the transfer of honors innovations to regular and other honors programs. In the format, teachers are invited to write about their experience with the transfer of their good practice to other programs and what they see as possibilities. A short impression of completed transfer items in the good practices follows below.

Every teacher of a good practice saw possibilities for transfer to other honors education or regular education. Even more important was that many transfers already took place. Six good practices have already inspired other teachers. In one example, teachers from two other universities were inspired because the good practice was published earlier in a book. The educational ideas of a couple of other good practices were used (or are intended to be used) in curriculum renewal not only in honors programs (two times) but also in regular programs (five times). To appreciate a good practice, it can be necessary to experience it, some teachers said.

Once tested and perfected in honors, another teacher said, the portfolio model could easily be transferred to other programs, strengthening teaching and learning throughout the institution. Many teachers said that transfer of elements of the good practice is a possibility. Sometimes, teachers mentioned adjustments: e.g., shortening the activity; less open and better defined projects; more workshops; a stricter timetable; and more guidance. Conditions for transfer were specified: e.g., participants from different disciplines; complex themes; cooperation on a project; motivation of students in regular education; appreciation of challenges; extra time needed for slower students.

Besides the information from the transfer item in the format, we received spontaneous remarks from teachers who had read (some of) the good practices and mentioned that these gave them new ideas for their own teaching. This is a form of 'silent transfer' as mentioned earlier in this article.

11. The good practices in this issue

To illustrate the diversity and richness of good practices in this project, we selected nine good practices for publication in this issue. Seven good practices come from Dutch honors programs and two from American honors programs. These examples come from educational systems the reader may not be acquainted with. When you read the good practice, it is good to keep in mind some of the differences between the American and the Dutch higher educational systems.

11.1 Some differences between the American and Dutch university systems

In the USA, honors programs are usually part of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum in a higher education institution. The bachelor program lasts four years. Students can earn credits toward graduation for completing honors courses. For the honors program, students are selected on the basis of a set of admission criteria.

In The Netherlands, a university bachelor degree lasts three years (in research universities, where students are eligible with a six year high school program) or four years (universities of applied sciences, where students are eligible with a five year high school program). The master program is one or two years. The students are selected for the honors program on the basis of a set of admission criteria. The honors program is often an extra curriculum

parallel with the regular curriculum. Most honors programs are during the bachelor degree, but some are in the master program (van Ginkel, van Eijl, Zubizarreta & Pilot, 2012). The regular bachelor curriculum is mostly discipline oriented, e.g. chemistry, pedagogical sciences, medicine, or law. However, some bachelor curricula are of the 'liberal arts and sciences' type. In most honors programs, students do not earn extra credits for their regular bachelor or master diploma. However, they earn extra credits necessary for their honors diploma. Some honors programs are inter- or multidisciplinary or have elements of interdisciplinarity.

11.2 Nine examples of good practices in this issue

To illustrate the rich diversity of the good practices in this project, we choose nine of the 19 examples for publication in this issue of *JEHC*. These examples come from different universities and different disciplines and have different educational approaches. We preferred honors activities and courses above whole curricula because it is easier to make use of a good practice in a small part of the honors program. Teachers had to be willing to spend time to edit their good practice description for a note in this issue.

The nine examples of good practice in this issue of *JEHC* are:

1. 'Personal leadership' is an example of an honors course where personal development is the focus.
2. 'Honors project within the regular minor program' shows that it is possible to combine a regular minor program with meaningful honors activities for deepening the content with projects and assignments from the professional field.
3. In 'Innovation labs,' students from different disciplines work together in multidisciplinary groups to tackle an authentic and wicked problem from professional practice.
4. In 'Writing a book,' honors students are stimulated to develop 21st century skills, including communication and cooperation competencies. In this program, students are challenged to write a (science) book for the regular curriculum or design a website on a subject that is relevant for their discipline during one academic year.
5. The 'Facilitator training for the Saxion Top Talent Innovation Days' is a training for honors students and teachers to prepare them for guiding groups of students in projects with authentic problems.
6. 'Presentation student's personal learning journey' is an honors activity where students complete their first year's honors program with a presentation in a small theatre for family and friends.
7. The 'International Honors Summer Institute on Holocaust Remembrance' is a two-week summer school for an international group of honors students with visits, projects, and teamwork.
8. 'Improving and assessing honors student learning with learning portfolios' presents the learning portfolio as a tool for helping students to develop the skills and habits of meaningful critical reflection.
9. In 'Scaffolded, Collaborative Project-based Learning (PjBL),' students confront real-world challenges, collaborate to create solutions, and present their results in a public setting. In PjBL courses, the project is at the core of the curriculum, involving an in-depth inquiry and requiring revisions and reflections of the artifacts developed.

11.3 Good practice in relation with the Circle of Talent Development

We asked the teachers who publish their good practice in this issue how they rate their good practice in relation to the steps in the Circle of Talent Development (see Appendix B). This rating can give the reader an impression of the strengths of a particular good practice. We posed this question in relation to each of the 10 steps in the Circle of Talent Development. The question was: How important are the activities of the Circle of Talent Development in your good practice description '...'? Please, give each step in the circle a score: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant.

Answers were compiled and visualized in Figure 2.

With a mean of 2.9, 'Meeting challenges' was the highest rated step of the circle, closely followed by 'Experiencing flow, dips, and perseverance' (2.8), 'Results,' 2.7, 'Getting coaching,' 2.6, 'Continuing talent development in the growth mindset,' 2.6, and 'Developing talent together,' 2.4. The first three steps had a lower score: 'Identify your drive,' 2.2 ('moderately important'), 'Choosing a trajectory of talent development,' 1.3 ('somewhat important'), and 'Crossing the threshold: choosing and be chosen,' 1.8 ('moderately important'). These scores are probably lower because these steps refer to student activities at the time when they are deciding to start an honors program. The other steps refer to activities during their honors courses. The published examples are all honors courses or honors activities.

Figure 2: Circle of Talent Development with total scores of the nine good practices related to each step: total number of '+' and the average score.



We added a second question for a verbal statement about the attractiveness of a good practice for other teachers: What makes your good practice attractive for other teachers?

Some teachers emphasized that the learning process of the student(s) also interacts with their own learning process.

At the end of each good practice in this issue, the results of the two questions are presented.

In a third question, we asked the authors where they are interested in: What aspects make other good practices attractive for you? A summary of their answers in two parts is presented below.

(a) Innovative aspects which teachers can use and adapt to their own specific situation. Aspects which could facilitate/challenge students to get the best out of themselves, and strategies and methodologies that focus on deepening and extending student learning. Good practices which help students gain content expertise, but also help students to make connections between different disciplinary ways of thinking, help them to explore divergent ideas, help nurture their creativity, invite them to take risks, and reinforce their excitement for learning.

(b) Aspects you can learn from as a teacher.

A quote of one teacher gives a nice summary of all teachers' answers: 'I'd like to see more good practices that can make a difference. As a teacher, I am always inspired by strategies and methodologies that focus on deepening and extending student learning. I am attracted to active learning approaches that engage students in more than knowledge, competencies, outcomes, or grades. I gravitate toward teaching that, of course, helps students gain content expertise but also helps students make connections between different disciplinary ways of thinking, helps them explore divergent ideas, helps nurture their creativity, invites them to take risks, and reinforces their excitement for learning.'

12. Conclusions

The leading questions in this project led to the following conclusions.

1) Is it possible to collect good practices in honors education via an honors network?

It turned out to be possible to collect good practices in honors education by means of the Dutch Honors Network, but a large investment in time and effort was necessary to get the descriptions of the good practices according to the format that was developed. First, a format was developed for description of a good practice. This format was tested in two try-outs, via the Dutch Honors Network teachers who were invited to contribute to this project and fill in the format. At the start of the project, an extra effort by means of interviews with honors teachers was necessary in order to arrive at good descriptions. Some teachers did this on invitation with feedback on their draft description from the project leaders.

2) What are the characteristics of good practices in honors education as described by their teachers?

The 19 good practices are very different in terms of content and form. There is apparently a rich variety of good practices in honors programs. The good practices vary from subject-specific to cross-curricular examples and from disciplinary to multidisciplinary.

Also, the extent of the good practices is very different: short activities of some hours, shorter courses of a couple of days, longer courses, projects, or trajectories of weeks or months, and honors programs of some years.

Most good practices had many characteristics in common: giving the students autonomy; focus on a real, authentic problem requiring a solution; intense interaction and collaboration in the teams working on a project; and an explicit stimulus for personal development. A broad range of issues that are relevant and inspiring for us in this project focused on the possibilities to enhance the quality of honors and regular education by describing, analyzing, and making available inspiring activities about: 'offering personal development,' 'to develop creative possibilities,' 'learning to work in a multidisciplinary group on a complex project,' and 'to further personal and social development of students in which international cooperation, working from different perspectives and social responsibility.'

A key point in the educational design of the good practices in honors compared with the regular curricula was more freedom for students to decide what they want to work on, how they will work on something, and with whom they will work on it. But, it is a freedom within certain limits (bounded freedom).

Other important themes mentioned were: 'often working on a real problem is put central, sometimes in cooperation with an external client,' 'offering space for personal development always comes forward as important,' and also 'the coaching role of the teacher' and 'the possibility to consult experts.'

3) Do teachers of these good practices think these can be applied in other educational programs?

The analysis of the 19 good practices shows that all teachers involved thought a form of transfer of their good practice to another program is possible. In seven good practices, transfer has already been realized or is already underway, usually but not always within the institution itself. However, some teachers said that transfer is only possible under appropriate conditions. For example, because there should be a multidisciplinary target group of students. Or because it requires schedules that offer the possibility for students to join both the regular and the honors program. Scheduling is also an issue when students from different programs are participating.

There are also signs of 'silent transfer,' in which a good practice is read and valued by someone, but the original teacher does not hear anything about it being applied.

13. Discussion and reflection

A simple idea of how a good practice works is that it sells itself. However, in this project, we discovered a lot of good practices that were unknown to us and many others. So, describing good practices, and showing different perspectives of honors education in a model to order good practices, may be an important step to enable innovation. However, we also think that more effort is necessary to cover different disciplines and types of honors approaches.

Interactions in workshops, conferences, and personal contacts can deepen the understanding of a good practice and lead to new ideas.

Not all good practices are interesting for teachers. But, when there is a need for course and curriculum renewal in an institution, teachers have much interest in good practices elsewhere that can help in the renewal process. In many good practices, the focus is on challenging students. This may be the result of a widely felt need for more challenges in Dutch higher education some 10 years ago. This stimulated the development of honors education, but it is still an issue in regular education nowadays. This makes these good practices very relevant today.

In the project, we used the term 'good practices' for 'a piece of honors education that functions, in the opinion of the teacher involved, so well for the students that it may be an inspiring example for others.' Bardach (2011) discusses the use of the term 'best practice' in policy analysis. He proposes that a 'promising practice' can be field tested and investigated intensely to arrive at a 'field tested best practice' or even a 'research validated best practice.' In the same way, as resources are available, it is relevant to do research on the good practices and their possibilities for transfer described in this project. This can lead to new insights in the relations between these practices and the theories and principles of honors education that we described in this paper. However, most teachers do not describe their practices in terms of underpinning theories or research evidence. This is what we also saw when we collected the good practices in this study. Therefore, we added a theoretical framework by using keywords and the model of the Circle of Talent Development (Figure 1).

14. Possibilities for follow-up

This project showed the richness of successful innovations in honors education. The good practices have to be communicated and discussed more widely in the coming years to come to a full impact of their potential. At the same time, the scope of the good practice project can be enlarged. In North American and European countries, many good practices are present but not yet well known. The description and exchange of good practices gives possibilities to strengthen the concept of honors and to grow to a greater awareness of the value of honors education for innovation in both honors and regular programs. It might also inspire research into the characteristics and effects of these good practices. This can contribute to a further development of a Science of Honors Education (Jones, 2016).

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For more information about good practice, in Dutch, become a member of the free Slack Honours Network.

1. Go to: <https://honournetwork.typeform.com/to/efHb6B>
2. Then you will receive an invitation of the moderator to become a member.
3. As a member you get access to other good practices and are able to discuss them with the teachers.

Appendix A

Format for best practice description for publication on the website of the Dutch Honors Network.

Title: #BP[serial number] [Title] [name institute]

[Explanation: BP stands for Best Practice. With the pre-fix '#' and a serial number, the best practices are easily found in the files of Slack, channel Best Practices. Choose a descriptive title that is informative and preferably also appeals to the reader; state the name of your institution in brackets]

Trailer:

[Describe in a few sentences the essence of the best practice, so that the reader immediately has an idea what it is about. You may also have an appealing picture.]

Keywords:

[One or more key words add to the information of the trailer and can facilitate the search in the files on Slack website of the Honors Network]

Description of parts of the good practice

- 1. Name best practice:**
[Title possibly with subtitle]
- 2. Contact persons (with e-mail):**
- 3. Is the best practice part of which course or curriculum?**
- 4. Why is this a best practice (What is the challenge for the teachers)?**
- 5. Target group:** [Students for whom this education is meant. Some good practices may also include teachers in the target group]
- 6. Size:**
[How many hours or ECs (European Credit Points) requires the good practice?]
- 7. Design of the good practice:**
[What is the structure of the best practice, i.e. the successive educational activities and the coaching? Describe this in such a way that others understand why this works so well. An example can clarify.]
- 8. Assessment:**
[How are students assessed?]

9. Experiences with this best practice: Insights and skills developed

(Reactions from teachers and students and (evaluation) results)

10. Time requirement for teachers:

[Estimation of time necessary for this best practice, possibly to be split in first time, second time over]

11. Tips for teachers:

12. Tips for students (of other students):

13. Incorporation of honors activities in the regular program (transfer):

[Is there potential for transfer to other honors programs or to regular education? Is it recommended? What kind of adjustments are desirable? Is there experience with it? If so, tell us!]

14. Additional information (hyperlinks):

Appendix B

Questions about good practices in relation with the circle of talent development

- 1) How important are the activities of the Circle of Talent Development in your good practice description 'Name good practice (Name institution)'? Please, give each activity in the horizontal row a score: +=somewhat important; ++= moderately important; +++= very important ; - = not applicable or irrelevant

↓Good practice →Activity of the Circle of Talent Development	1 Identify your drive	2 Choosing a trajectory for talent development	3 Crossing the threshold	4 Meeting challenges	5 Developing talent together : A: Community & B: culture	6 Getting coaching	7 Experiencing flow & dips	8 Creativity and innovation	9 A: Excellent results and B: personal development	10 Continuing: growth mindset
Name good practice (Name institution)					A: B:				A: B:	

- 2) What makes your good practice attractive for other teachers?

.....

- 3) What aspects make other good practices attractive for you?

.....

Additional information about the Circle of Talent Development in van Eijl and Pilot (2016) and van Eijl, Pilot, Gelink & Dibo (2017).



Good practice: Honors course Personal Leadership

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Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

The course '*Personal Leadership*' is offered at the start of the honors program (TopClass) of the second bachelor year of the Health Care program, HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, The Netherlands. It is a course lasting half a year with weekly meetings, on top of the regular program, in a group of 15-17 honors students. It is part of a three year honors program offered parallel with the regular program and totaling a time equivalent of 5 ECTS. A large majority of the students are overwhelmingly positive about the course. The students feel as if they're being respected as people throughout the program. They find the course exciting but difficult at times. Ultimately, they consider the course to be a fruitful and extremely educative experience. During an interview, an alumna mentions the fact that she regards the leadership course as the place where she acquired a different perspective on things. She says: 'The characteristics of effective leadership described in Stephen Covey's book were important to me. Using these characteristics as a basis, interactive meetings were organized. Students were also asked to write a *reflection* report using the aforementioned characteristics. I still use the things I learned during the course in daily life, as it is useful on both a personal and professional level. This is possible due to the fact that we worked on efficient leadership very consciously for the duration of the course. Especially the concept of "paradigm shift" that Covey often discussed, has brought about a change. The concept focuses on increasing your empathy for others, leading to improved contact with internationals, as well as with patients.'

2. Why this good practice?

Students come from an educational system in which everything is reasonably fixed, such as study content, study activities, and exam requirements. They have not yet fully learned how to shape

their own studies, how to make their own choices related to said studies, or how to approach other people. Therefore, this course aims to further develop *personal leadership*, which can be described as follows: '*Personal leadership* means that you are in charge of your own life. You take responsibility for who you are. You make the choices yourself and do not allow choices to be determined by others. When you allow others to determine it, it is a consciously made choice. You are at the wheel of your own life, you think about what you really care about and where you want to go. Likewise, recognizing your "drive" and developing your qualities as part of an honors program is your own decision. By living so consciously, you also develop as a person. It is about an internally driven development: you "grow" as a person. You can think of dealing with your emotions or difficult situations, increasing your confidence or facing your *challenges*. You as a person become stronger and more stable. You can position yourself vulnerably in the - constant - process of *personal development*. You dare to face your mistakes and are prepared to take risks so that you can learn from them. You ask for feedback and *reflect* on yourself. Your *personal development* comes from being consistent and focused on a development which comes from within and which is based on your own inner values. Furthermore, developing a safe relationship with the course group (*community*) is of utmost importance for inspiration, as a safety net, and for mirroring one's own experiences.'

3. Target group and target group size

Second year bachelor students of the Health Care program are the target group of this course. The program follows alongside the regular bachelor program. This leadership course lasts half a year with one meeting every two weeks. If a student follows the TopClass, it is their only compulsory course in the honors program. Part-time students can also opt to take this course. In 10 active meetings students are *challenged* to get to know themselves better and to investigate what suits them. If they finish the course successfully, students are awarded the equivalent of 5 EC, which do not count for their regular bachelor program but which fulfills the requirement for an honors star. At the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, a 'star' system has been developed for the honors program, in which students can take part in individually chosen activities and can propose to obtain a 'star-qualification.' The achieved star can become part of an honors qualification for the student. These activities can have both a curricular and an extra-curricular component (Riteco, Kleyn, & Lamerichs, 2017).

4. Educational design (structure)

The TopClass (honors program) starts with a *Personal Leadership* course (Van Eijl & Pilot, 2016). The TopClass encourages students to get more out of themselves and *take responsibility for their own development (personal development)*. The leadership course lasts half a year and is the only compulsory course in the TopClass. In the two years that follow in the honors program, students decide for themselves what, how, and with whom they want to learn. This requires *personal leadership, creativity*, and perseverance, which is why the program starts with this course. In 10 active meetings students are *challenged* to get to know themselves better and to investigate what suits them. Awareness is the key word. It is therefore not about giving guidance to others but about giving guidance to yourself, making choices from authenticity that ultimately can lead to actual leadership.

Contents of the course

The content of the course is related to the seven habits of highly effective people described by Stephen Covey (1989). These habits are briefly summarized as follows:

An overview of the seven habits:

1. Be proactive (anticipate, take initiative, and do not be reactive).
2. Start with the end in mind (what do you want people to say about you at your funeral?).
3. Start at the beginning (focus initially on what is urgent and important).
4. Think in terms of win-win (strive for mutual benefit in all interactions).
5. Try to understand first, only then to be understood (try to listen empathically and to move in the frame of reference of the other person, and then come up with your own message).
6. Work synergistically (the whole is more than the sum of the parts; combine the strengths of people in positive teamwork, so that goals can be realized that no one could have realized alone).
7. Keep the saw sharp (maintain yourself well, both physically [condition, diet, stress], social-emotionally [service, empathy, synergy, inner security], spiritually [values, dedication, study] and mentally [read, write, plans], which helps to develop a sustainable, effective lifestyle).

The students work in groups of about 15. In every meeting, a specific theme is central, often linked to one of Covey's habits. There is no classical form of teaching; the central focus is on what students learn from each other. Many experiences are exchanged and new things are tried during the meetings. It is intended that students connect their own lives with the seven habits of Covey, and their willingness to look at themselves is nurtured. Halfway through the course, there is an individual meeting with the teacher based on a *reflection* assignment. In this assignment, the students describe a situation that they themselves have experienced, on which they *reflect* using the first three habits. This means that the content relates to themselves, and that makes the feedback they receive in the conversation more personal.

5. Student assessment

There is no detailed and strict assessment. *Personal development* cannot be judged in the same way as knowledge and skills. However, a report can be made on the steps taken in the *personal leadership* development process, the use of the content of the course, the shown commitment, and contribution to the group. This report is discussed with fellow students and the teacher. Sometimes, this can lead to additions. The assessment by the teacher is based on the development experienced by the student and described in the final report (personal masterplan), a final presentation (a *creative* presentation, meaning not using a PowerPoint or similar software), participation during the meetings, and the contributions during discussions.

6. Experiences

In this section, experiences of the teachers are first described regarding the development process in the course towards a joint process, the organization within the course, the final assignment, and the personal development. Then students' experiences and the follow-up of the course are described.

-Development towards a joint process

'In the course, we don't define the exact learning outcomes for the students. The only assignment they receive is: *Challenge yourself*. We have a program for each meeting, but

that is reasonably open, and we encourage the students to constantly think along and show leadership. If they want the evening to go differently, that happens. After a while, it becomes a joint process. This means that, as a teacher, you have less control and that you have to be able to respond to unexpected situations.

At the beginning of the course, the students are more closed and often find it “vague.” Gradually, trust grows, and everyone dares to open up more. The number of students in the training groups (15) is an important quality driver. Having more students would truly be at the expense of the quality of the meetings. Students learn so much from each other. There is room for every opinion, for every perspective. They support each other and sometimes give each other very honest feedback, which is wonderful to see.’

-Organization within the course

‘The physical layout of the classroom is very important to create that trust; the tables are set aside, and we are in a circle. This means students are not “safe” behind a table with a laptop. In this way, you create equality, focus on each other, and ensure that you are listened to. As a result of this, confidence grows. When the energy goes down, we often do an “energizer”: a physical exercise to become more active again. There is also resistance to it (“Oh no, we have to jump again”), but it often has a positive effect. We experiment a lot with different work forms. We improvise and see what works. That is different in every group. We as teachers therefore also learn, and that can certainly be exciting. But, we also have to do ourselves what we ask of students. So, we step out of our comfort zone. That’s what students feel as well, and that is, I think, the secret behind the success of this course.’

-The final assignment (personal master plan)

‘The final assignment is a personal master plan, in which students describe their ideal leader on the basis of two heroes and reflections based on the seven habits of Covey. They also describe their development path and their personal mission. This implies a unique part of this course by making a strong connection between personal profiling and talent development. They can write a love letter to themselves for bonus points. We do not want to force that, so it is not a mandatory part of the assignment. In any case, they can give their own twist to the assignment. Most students write that love letter to themselves, and they always come to the core, which is wonderful to see! They also give a final presentation about what they have learned during the course. Those stories are always very special and sometimes emotional as well. It’s nice to see how the students have grown in half a year and that they also know that they are not finished with that process yet.’

-Personal development

‘The teachers and *coaches* involved give students the space and the confidence to do new things and make mistakes. Learning in the TopClass therefore extends beyond subject-related knowledge: it concerns *personal development*. Discover what you really find important and stand for your choices. Students therefore receive little guidance but learn to steer themselves. This is often accompanied by (learning to deal with) uncertainty and sometimes (overcoming) resistance. As a teacher, it is wonderful to be able to give such a course to honors students. I am proud of our students. I’m a little sad every time when we say goodbye to each other at the end of the course!’

It is important to create an atmosphere in which everyone can participate and that a mutual

confidence grows, causing students to open up. This requires that the lecturers also open up, show things of their own, and show genuine interest. The group is essential for this type of learning, and, therefore, students have to share something in the group.

-Experiences of students

In evaluation, the majority of the students are overwhelmingly positive about the course. Frequently, students give the book by Covey as a gift to family members or other acquaintances. That has a lot to do with the space for personal attention. Students feel like they're being seen as people. They find the experience of being seen very exciting and sometimes difficult but also very inspiring.

During an interview, an alumna mentions the fact that she regards the leadership course as the place where she acquired a different perspective on things. She says: 'The characteristics of effective leadership described in Stephen Covey's book were important to me. You will also find these qualities in Buddhism. Using these characteristics as a basis, interactive meetings were organized. Students were also asked to write a *reflection* report, using the aforementioned characteristics. I still use the things I learned during the course in daily life, as it is useful on both a personal and professional level. This is possible due to the fact that we worked on efficient leadership very consciously for the duration of the course. Especially the concept of 'paradigm shift' that Covey often discussed has brought about a change. This creates more empathy for others, which leads to better contact with international people as well as with patients.' 'Sometimes, students only realize the importance of some things that have been discussed during the course, which is also part of the process of developing *personal leadership*. "Seeds" are planted, but they do not know whether they will germinate and grow later.' This also requires a different mindset from the supervising teachers.

-Follow-up

After the leadership course, students get to study more independently in the TopClass. They devise projects or research, go abroad or register for a course or premaster. For their honors program, they are supported by a *coach*. Although the teachers in the *Personal Leadership* course are also *coaches*, in practice, it means that most students get a *coach* that they barely know. This means that it can take some time to get used to each other because that *coach* did not share the process in the *Personal Leadership* course with that student. Every *coach* or teacher also has a different approach. That can cause insecurity again in the beginning but also a new stimulus, a situation that also requires *personal leadership* of the student. In the two years after the leadership course, students work independently and meet at TopClass *community-meetings* or TopClass workshops. We notice that many students fall into a kind of dip after the leadership course and that they need each other for inspiration and support and can give each other a huge boost. This is also a way to hear from each other about what everyone is doing and to make new plans together. Students often work together in (*interdisciplinary*) groups on an assignment or project. This is not devised by teachers or *coaches* but comes from the students themselves.

7. Time requirement for teachers

It is difficult to express the time investment in hours. Time is necessary for the meetings, the individual preparation, the preparation in the team of co-teachers, and reading and discussing portfolios, as well as other products of the students, which is about the usual time

investment for such a course. But, it is also about preparing yourself mentally for the course and the development processes of students, which are unique for each student and, at the same time, ensuring that you don't fall into routine. That can affect the authenticity and openness of yourself to the students.

8. Tips for teachers

Tips are given for the preparation of the course and during the course.

-Before the course

Before the course, when it comes to the honors information events, it is of vital importance that enthusiastic honors *coaches* or coordinators are present in the different regular programs. They can inform the students about the honors program, including the leadership course, and possibly address suitable students and make them aware of these opportunities. The teachers have the impression that many more students than those who do an honors program have sufficient capacities to participate. Some students may not be ready for this *personal development* program. However, they might be ready later on in their studies. Preparation of teachers for this course now takes place through a basic orientation of teachers, individual preparation, and a joint talk, discussing the course meetings with fellow teachers. The latter is considered as being very important. From these joint talks, new, refreshing, ideas can come up. And, moreover, in this way, a start is made in the spirit of the course: the teachers also become more open and vulnerable to each other and willing to learn. This stimulates an open attitude to the students. New teachers must be well prepared for this program. They have to be socio-emotionally suitable, meaning, for example, that they also dare to be vulnerable towards the students and are able to stimulate them. Occasionally, *coaching* by teachers with more experience with this course is desirable.

-During the course

During the course, you are, as a teacher, a role model for your students. It is important for students that they feel heard. For example, it may be important to ask about their interests. By promoting mutual discussion, the process of *community* building can get started. Another tip is to give students control over their own workspace. This gives them a sense of ownership and gives them the opportunity to come up with their own plan, where they feel at home and can work well together. At the same time, at a certain moments, a teacher can also set *limits to freedom (bounded freedom)* when, for example, the situation is likely to become a mess.

There is often during the course a 'switch' moment for students, a moment in which students get to know how to take initiative and open up to you. For this to happen, the start of the course is important. The start weekend of this course was organized together with a 'Talent Center.' The Talent Center instructed *coaches* and student-assistants how to observe students and how to give them feedback on perceived talents during the start weekend. That worked extremely well (student: '[It was] so special; I've never experienced that before!'). Often, after two to three weeks in the course, the 'penny drops'; for example, there is a feeling of new possibilities and the realization that their life can look very different. Openness and social security in the course group are essential in this approach. The teacher is important, but the fellow students are as well. If three to four students are more open

during a group discussion, the rest will follow automatically.

9. Tips for students

The tips for the students are for the choice to do this course and to their behavior and attitude during the course.

For students, it is important to really choose this course out of their personal interests and not feel compelled to do so by external forces. They also had to be able to do this course alongside their regular study program. If all their time is needed to do the regular program, participation in this course is not recommended.

During the course, students must be willing to *share their experiences about their own development with fellow students in their course group and to open up to them (community)*. They have to prepare to listen to others, even though they might have experience and opinions which differ from their own, and to give constructive feedback.

Interest is expected from them to shape their process of *development for personal leadership* even though not everything is clear in advance, which can sometimes be difficult. Sufficient 'emotional intelligence' is required, that is, to be able to verbalize their own experiences and express their emotions, experience empathy for others, and, at least, minimal cooperation skills are required as well.

10. Transfer to other programs

The leadership course is given for students of the TopClass (the honors program) but is also offered to students who, at their own initiative, do all sorts of projects outside the TopClass to intensify and enrich their study. With this, they can earn 'individual honors stars.' This is a very mixed group of students in terms of both age, ranging from 17-42 years old, and previous education, with both full and part-time study programs in different educational programs related to Health Care.

The design and experiences of the leadership course was also an inspiration for the design of an honors program at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands (for medical students), and at another university of applied sciences.

11. References, additional information and relation with Circle of Talent Development

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Relation with Circle of Talent Development

In the introductory article of this issue of *JEHC*, the 'Circle of Talent Development' has been described. Based on interviews with forty honors students and literature about honors programs, it reflects relevant activities of students regarding the development of their talents in an honors program. The author of this note has been asked to score the good practice in relation to the activities in the Circle of Talent Development. The meaning of the scores is: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant. The scores are intended to illustrate the strengths of a good practice for the reader.

Figure 1. Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'Honors course Personal Leadership' with the teacher's scores



Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'It's the possibility to stand beside the students and work on their *personal development* as well as your own. The central issue is to create *challenges* for yourself (student and teacher) related to the seven habits by Covey (1989) or otherwise connected to expand your possibilities and dreams to develop awareness and to focus on changing unwanted patterns in order to become more effective.'

Note

Good practice: Honors activities within regular minor program

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Keywords: minor, honors program, active relation with work field

Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

Some bachelor students doing a minor want to learn more than just the regular program offers. For those honors students, a practical model has been developed for honors activities and a real world (*authentic*) *challenging* assignment on top that is related to the activities in the eight minor programs of the Institute of Human Movement Studies at HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, The Netherlands. Central in this extra-curricular honors program are projects and assignments from the professional field, from one of the researchers (research centers), or from the educational program itself. Students are stimulated to make their own choice, and they can also develop their own project.

The development of the honors program and the guidance of the honors students during the program do require extra effort, but teachers and students alike are enthusiastic about the opportunities.

2. Why this good practice?

Honors teachers noticed that some students are looking for extra *challenges*. They explored the possibilities to perform an additional *authentic, challenging, broadening, or in-depth* project and assignment next to the regular curriculum. Teachers have to be able to differentiate to offer honors students extra and other *challenging* activities during the regular program. Differentiation requires insight into the needs of different students. Teachers find differentiation within regular courses difficult for multiple reasons: they spend little time with students (eight weeks) and they focus on preparing the whole group for the test and assignment at the end of the regular course.

Students choose a minor in the last phase of their disciplinary bachelor curriculum. A minor is a semester of specialization to deepen knowledge and skills in a specific area. Students can

choose from all minors offered within the university. A small team of teachers (four) is responsible for a specific minor program. Guest speakers are also flown in. The setting is like a learning community and is ideal for giving room for an extra honors project and honors activities during the program, including a real world assignment on top.

Most students choose a minor that is related to the major of their bachelor curriculum. During minors, a small group of teachers (approximately four) supervises a group of about 25-30 students continuously during six months within a program that matches the affinity of the students and the teachers. This offers teachers the opportunity to get to know the students well and invest time in them. An honors minor provides for optional extra activities (deepening and/or broadening *authentic* project and assignments). Therefore, the minor is the perfect place to offer students extra honors activities embedded in the minor of the regular program.

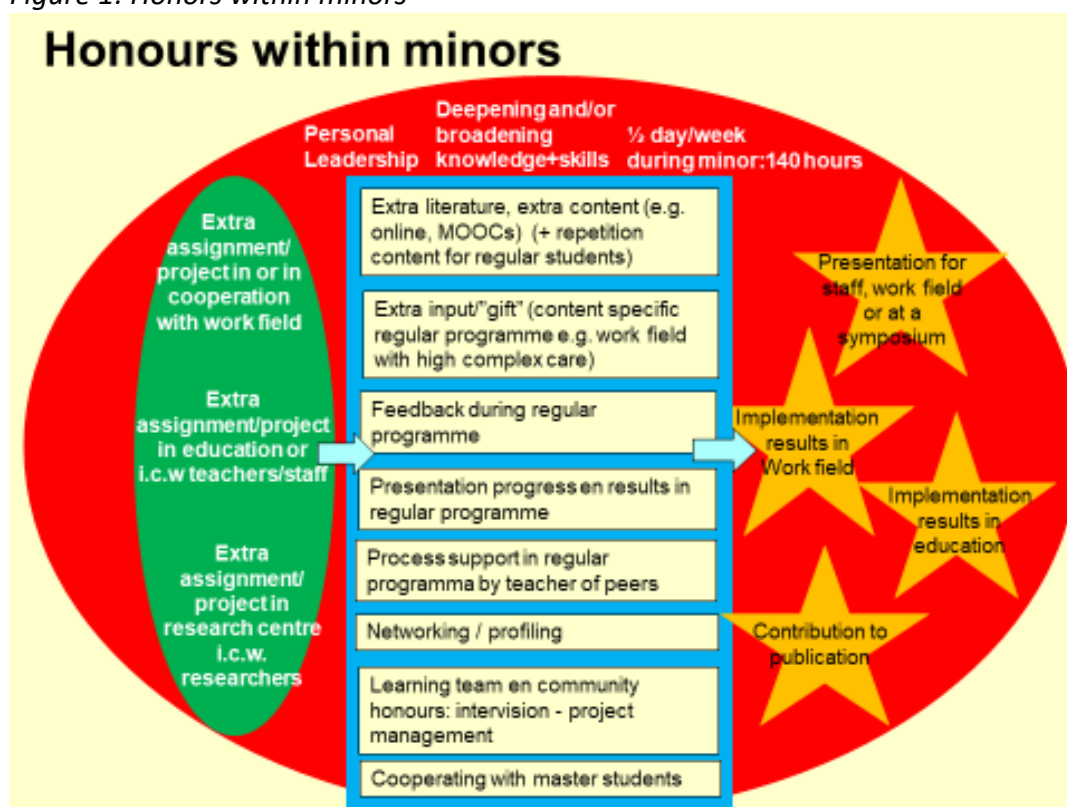
3. Target group and target group size

Students can apply for an honors project before starting or during the first weeks of the minor. They spend an additional 100-140 hours (about 5 ECTS) while taking the minor consisting of 30 ECTS. This includes preparation time and time to write a report afterwards for the star request of the honors system of HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (Riteco, Kleyn, & Lamerichs, 2017).

4. Educational design (structure)

There is a basic design, the 'model,' for honors activities in minors, which is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Honors within minors



Source: Author

On the left in the green part of Figure 1 is the extra *authentic challenging* projects and assignments for the honors program gathered or prepared by the honors teachers. The blue part in the middle is the honors activities of the students during the honors minor, with some of them embedded in the regular minor. *Personal leadership* and deepening and broadening knowledge and skills are leading goals (within the half a day per week time available). The yellow stars reflect the results of students' honors activities. The arrows show the flow from extra projects and assignments to deepening and/or broadening of knowledge and skills, resulting in extra stars (competences). Each part of this model will now be explained further.

Green part:

The coordinator of the minor develops a parallel program of approximately half a day a week (with no official ECTS linked to it) to facilitate *challenging* deepening / broadening for students in a relevant professional practice, either in one of the research centers linked to the minor and / or an educational project. The program leaves room for the students' own wishes and contributions (*creativity*); they can also design their own project.

The available projects, based on input from the professional field, the research centers, or the education programs, are presented three months prior to the start. These projects need to be valuable to the client concerned, *challenging*, inspiring and instructive for the honors student, and fitting the honors approach well (giving room for *creativity* and responsibility). The interested honors students apply for a project and register, preferably before the minor starts. Students and projects are matched, considering the needs and preferences of both the student and the (external) partners involved. The chosen set-up focuses on a range of *challenging* opportunities for students instead of a fixed program.

Blue part:

Teachers in the minor need to create time and extra *challenge* for the honors students within their lectures and meetings. They offer extra or other (e.g. more in-depth and complex) content or other or extra assignments or products for some of the students. They make some changes (more flexible) in the structure and organization of their regular minor program, including time for extra personal *coaching*.

For example, homogeneous groups work on different assignments or on the same assignments but at different level, or they work in heterogeneous groups where the honors students *coach* the other students. The approach chosen also depends on what the students want to learn. Honors students are allowed to present their progress, to request and receive feedback, and to share their honors experiences with their fellow students. Honors students choose their own projects (green part) but are working together with other regular or honors students on project management issues, sharing experiences, sharing feedback, *coaching*, and intervision. Honors students of various minors can connect and build an *honors community*.

The eight minors are connected to research groups and master programs on the same subjects and themes, offering interesting opportunities for the honors students, like, for example, working together with researchers and master's students.

The blue part challenges not just honors students but honors teachers, too. The differentiating didactics wished for are necessary to fully implement the honors program into the regular minor program. In other words, if the teachers are able to differentiate, honors within minors will be more successful.

5. Student assessment

The stars in the figure refer to the extra and *challenging real-world* assessment. At the end of this honors program, the student presents his or her results to the teaching team, the research group, the related work field, and / or fellow students during a symposium, a congress, or in a publication. With sufficient results, which means with enough value for the people involved, a student can earn a 'star' that can contribute to his or her honors certificate (Riteco, Kleyn, & Lamerichs, 2017).

6. Experiences

Both students and teachers were immediately enthusiastic about the idea of honors projects embedded in the minors. It seems logical that this form of honors education should be available, but the investment in terms of time and effort is substantial. Contacts with the professional field and the research group need to be formalized, so that a continuous flow of projects and assignments can be assured. If a project exceeds the time frame of the minor, attention should be given to the transfer of projects / assignments to subsequent honors students for next year. Joining an honors program remains a free choice for students, and, therefore, there must be room for personal *creativity* and responsibility. This also implies a *challenge* for the teachers. In daily life, however, it turns out to be difficult to take into account all the wishes of honors students.

The biggest *challenge* for most of the teachers is to apply differentiating didactics in the meetings. It is a totally new experience that requires starting with small steps, sharing good practices, visiting each other's lessons to give or get feedback, and becoming more confident and getting used to it. In fact, some of the teachers say that a new world opens up for them. After some trials, they say that it is fun to work with different groups in the meetings and to invest much more time in the content and organization of their lessons. This leads to giving room to honors students and giving room to the differences between students and appreciating them. These differences are not necessarily between weak or strong students but between being well or not prepared for the meetings, conceptual thinkers-practitioners, learning patterns, etc.

7. Time requirement for teachers

The first time this honors program was organized, extra time had to be invested in discussing the honors program to check opportunities for projects / assignments and building the educational structure. This has to be done in collaboration with partners in the professional field and in the research groups and will cost a few days.

The second time, a couple of hours are needed for each lesson to search and develop in-depth and / or broadening content, *authentic challenging* assignments, new feedback forms (peer, tutor, or digital feedback instruments) and a new organization of the meetings. When

this new approach is adopted, the teachers have to get acquainted with it and build trust in applying differentiating didactics in this new form of education.

8. Tips for teachers

Some lessons have been learned already (see section 6). Prepare yourself well, share experiences with fellow teachers in the same program, visit each other's lessons, make video recordings, and exchange feedback instruments and organizational forms, making it possible to differentiate. A good practice approach, in which teachers exchange examples of projects / assignments that deepen/broaden knowledge and skills presented in the online learning portal, is advised. Elsewhere in this environment, repeat assignments can be incorporated to get the other students to work during feedback moments for the honors students.

9. Tips for students

Reserve time and space for honors (at least half a day each week), make time and space to *reflect* on what you as a student want to deepen and / or broaden in your honors trajectory. Your intrinsic motivation must be high if you want real, in-depth progress and completion of the project to the satisfaction of the client (other people concerned) and yourself.

10. Transfer to other programs

I would like to recommend this approach because it provides a practical, flexible way of substantial and relevant honors activities next to the regular program and is appreciated by both teachers and students. Related professional field experts and research centers are interested to work together on their own projects related to the minor program with extra motivated students and teachers.

The program will also be used in our new regular, more flexible curriculum in which we will work with larger learning units, making it possible to get to know the students better. Transfer (from elements of the green or blue part) to other honors programs or regular programs is a good possibility, too.

11. References, additional information, and relation with Circle of Talent Development

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Relation with Circle of Talent Development

In the introductory article of this issue of *JEHC*, the 'Circle of Talent Development' has been described. Based on interviews with forty honors students and literature about honors programs, it reflects relevant activities of students regarding the development of their talents in an honors program. The author of this note has been asked to score the good practice in relation to the activities in the Circle of Talent Development. The meaning of the

scores is: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant. The scores are intended to illustrate the strengths of a good practice for the reader.

Figure 2. Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'Honors activities within regular minor program' with the teacher's scores



Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'They can easily use the format and adapt/translate it for their own context and content.'

Note

Good practice: Innovation Labs

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Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

In the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS) in The Netherlands an honors minor has been developed in which honors students from different disciplinary study programs tackle, in *multidisciplinary* groups, an *authentic* and wicked problem from professional practice: the Innovation Labs (I-Labs). The organization of these I-labs, where teachers, coaches, and external expertise can be requested by the students, will be explained in this note.

The majority of the honors program takes place in semesters three to eight of a four-year bachelor program. The Innovation Labs take place in semester seven (minor period). For the honors student, participation in the Innovation Lab is a minor of 30 EC (20 week program, 5 days a week). This honors minor replaces the regular minor for honors students.

2. Why this good practice?

An Innovation Lab offers what we call a Powerful Learning Environment, where honors students and teachers from different backgrounds and disciplines work together to develop a practical solution for an actual and wicked problem. This problem comes from the regional professional environment of the university. A problem is wicked if it has been widely regarded as *authentic* and as a major *challenge* for some time and if there is no obvious solution to it.

Examples: with which measures or services can the hospital offer innovations that are important to their patients? Or: how can young mothers in the city (Rotterdam) with often stacked problems (health, education, economic, etc.) become better self-employed citizens?

The 'powerfulness' of these issues is that we do not cripple the problem to make it 'workable' for students; it should be left as a whole. They really need to work with the actual problem to get really involved and really engaged with it. And, of course, this is also a major challenge for their teachers! They must be able to admit they don't have a solution either or do not know enough of the issue to provide students with a solution. They do need to have a network of experts for the students to turn to, however.

3. Target group and target group size

The honors program at RUAS lasts three years, from the second to the fourth and final bachelor year. The first part is done in the second and third bachelor year and is mostly on top of the regular program. Internships can be replaced by honors-internships, as well as projects in cooperation with external partners. The minor part, the I-Lab, a course of 30 EC, which is taken in the first semester of the final bachelor year, can be taken instead of a regular minor.

4. Educational design (structure)

The starting point for the design of the Innovation Labs is that students contribute to the *multidisciplinary* assignment from their own discipline. In this *multidisciplinary* context, students must learn to introduce their own knowledge and discipline: what role does their knowledge play in this issue? This requires mutual coordination but also specific in-depth issues in their own discipline. It is therefore deepening and enriching their disciplinary knowledge and also often their skills within a broader context. Most of the time, students find out there is still a lot of knowledge in their discipline they don't know yet and find out some of it might be helpful in this specific situation and cooperation. Students say they develop themselves as a person and as a professional.

When organizing the Innovation Labs, the university assumes a number of social themes that are actually within the city, the university of applied sciences, and the university's knowledge centers. For a longer period (preferably three to four years), this university, in cooperation with external strategic partners, selects one or more issues that meet the above conditions. The external partner (or partners) acts as the client. The client is supposed to be part of the learning *community* as well. Under the supervision of a research group (and possibly with contributions from other knowledge centers), an Innovation Lab will be set up around this theme.

-Different models

Different models for the learning community of the I-labs are tested. For example, there are models that are organized around their own study program, in which topics are on the agenda that provide different perspectives from the disciplinary knowledge on the input in the various Innovation Labs. There are also models that are organized around the content theme and that are very externally focused on clients, experts, and the professional field. Research has to clarify the value of the different models.

-Learning community

During the participation in the honors program, the student is part of the learning *community*. The learning *community* is led by a lecturer or (head) teacher and includes the students, the teachers who supervise them, and the lecturer-researchers associated with the

research center. At the I-Lab, the client of the project is also regularly involved with the community. If useful and available, external parties are also part of this community. The apprenticeship community is the home base for the student during the honors program. From the apprenticeship community(/ies), he/she participates in extra education in the form of workshops, symposiums, and training courses. Within the community, the student prepares for his graduation research.

5. Student assessment

There are many variants for the completion of the I-lab. The aim is to achieve a student-organized conclusion regarding the question: in what way do your products or findings best come into the limelight? In almost all cases, the client participates, including his / her organization.

The central question at completion of an honors project is always: what impact does your proposal, solution, or product have, and how does the client deal with it? What attunement has arisen between students, the problem, and the client, and how do you notice that the client values and carries the work and solutions of the students? In addition, teachers have an impression about the way in which students have behaved and developed professionally (and sometimes also give feedback on their *personal development*) based on the extent to which they have developed on the five competencies of the 'Learning to Innovate' profile' (Miltenburg & Weerheijm, 2018) (*assessment*).

The I-Lab in the hospital often organizes the final presentation in the symposium hall of the hospital and the students present their products and findings to those present at the various departments, the innovation center of the hospital, and (often) also to the board. Critical questions are asked, and it is soon noticed whether or not the end products 'catch on' with the stakeholders.

6. Experiences

The Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences started the first run of 11 Innovation Labs in February 2010 with over a hundred students. They focused on Rotterdam issues by working together in a *multidisciplinary* way, innovating and sharing knowledge with students, teachers, and lecturers from different fields. In that initial setup, one day per week was available for the Innovation Lab. Meanwhile, the Innovation Lab has grown into a full-fledged university-wide accessible minor with 30 ECTS.

Within this approach, the following is the golden rule: the issue is leading for the organization of educational activities. Teacher and coach stimulate by asking specific (*coaching* based) questions but are not necessarily the content experts. The *multidisciplinary* collaborating students will have to develop into innovative experts in their field. The competences of the Learning to Innovate profile of the university 'steers' the educational activities and the assessment framework for the student's learning process. The question to students: 'What did this honors education bring you?' they almost invariably answer as: 'Designing my learning process and learning from each other in multidisciplinary collaboration.'

In interviews, students say that they started the honors program having various motives: some needed more challenge, others had an inquisitive attitude, but there are also quite a few students who wanted to get more out of themselves or to distinguish themselves, like, for example, in their resume (CV), for more opportunities on the labor market. The challenge for them is not only in the theme but also in the I-Lab team, as a student said: 'The team of students that formed per I-Lab was very diverse in nature. It is also a challenge to let the whole team function as a *team* and to frame the theme in such a way that all students would benefit from it because of their study wishes' (Lappia, Weerheijm, Pilot & van Eijl, 2014).

Students experienced a great added value by working with other disciplines. Students indicate that *multidisciplinary* work has had special advantages for them, such as the experience of working together with the various disciplines: 'The different insights and expertise that come together are great'. And: 'There is enormous added value in working with other disciplines because you get to know those disciplines. This has two clear advantages: first, you learn to understand the other, making communication about topics on the interface of disciplines easier. Secondly, you learn how the other discipline works and adjust your own work so that it can be transferred with as few bumps as possible. Both aspects are indispensable in my field' (Lappia, Weerheijm, Pilot & van Eijl, 2014).

The honors program has made a remarkable contribution to the personal development for all students. Someone says that he has looked up the limits of his learning abilities and has developed further through the challenges and opportunities offered than all of his fellow students. Another says he has become more enterprising, and he became more aware that it is essential that, if you want to get something done, you should simply take steps to achieve that.

7. and 8. Time requirement for teachers and Tips for teachers

-First time: Under-structured and over-prepared

Innovation Labs are characterized by 'under-structured and over-prepared.' To make experimentation possible (as we have learned), the structure of the Innovation Lab must be open. Traditionally, it appears that, in descriptions of educational programs, the structuring has the focus, and the preparation is mainly involved in this structuring. Allowing an open structure often means that students can develop different speeds and can also take different routes to the approach of the problem. The group dynamics also require specific attention from the lecturer. How far we go into it illustrates the (somewhat, but not much exaggerated) approach of the I-Lab in the hospital. Teachers say: 'we have a workshop for day 1 and day 2, and on day 3, we ask: What are we going to do? Then, of course, students start panicking....'. In order to transform this panic to a meaningful learning environment, as a teacher you have to prepare a lot: what questions make them think about what to do? What prospects could students take up? Which experts are available? How do the individual students deal with this? How do I / do we ensure that they develop their competences? What do I have to 'prepare' and what to keep behind? Until when should I contain myself while students are struggling? How does their learning process develop?

It appears important to develop skills for both *coaching* the individual students and for *coaching* the group process. Keeping in mind the different steps in the well-known 'The Hero's Journey' (Campbell, 1949; van Eijl & Pilot, 2016) gives a pretty good idea of what might happen during the semester and maybe gives a certain grip of personal and group dynamics.

-Second time and further

Learn from the first time to do better next time, to become more experienced, to respond better to the differences between your students, etc. Teachers generally learn to 'sit on their hands' better and to intervene better at the right time.

Experiences with students are described in: 'Conversations with honors students: about personal and professional development' (Lappia, Weerheijm, Pilot & van Eijl, 2014; Blom, Bosch, Flipsen & Persaud, 2013).

9. Tips for students

The main tip for students is: 'Get in with an open mindset and be ready to find out what your education is about.'

The approach to the problem is essential. That determines whether a project leads to something that has value. Sometimes, the problem on hand is investigated in a systematic way, as the following statement from a student points out: 'We first looked at what the problem is, where this problem came from and how big the problem was. Then we made a division with our fellow students, who focused on which sub problem. This way we could bring everything together and we had examined every detail. After we had finished our individual research, a start was made to share the findings of each other's research. On this basis a "solution" was developed, which in this case was a new product' (Lappia, Weerheijm, Pilot & van Eijl, 2016).

In the multidisciplinary teams of the I-labs, disciplines have to be bridged. 'By trusting everyone in the knowledge from their own field and to give everyone an equal input,' says a student. It is also important to get to know each other better in the team: 'In the I-Lab it really helped that we started to get to know each other first. To talk to each other, but above all to attend the presentations of professionals and then discuss this. In another team it was important to first discuss where the qualities and expertise of the various disciplines lie. In this way you can move questions quicker or just pull them towards you in order to keep the momentum in a project and to keep discussions understandable' (Lappia, Weerheijm, Pilot & van Eijl, 2016).

10. Transfer to other programs

The approach of the I-Lab has already been applied to other courses in the university when working with case studies. It also inspired the 'Try-labs' (Try-out-laboratories) in the first and second year at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.

11. References, additional information and relation with Circle of Talent Development

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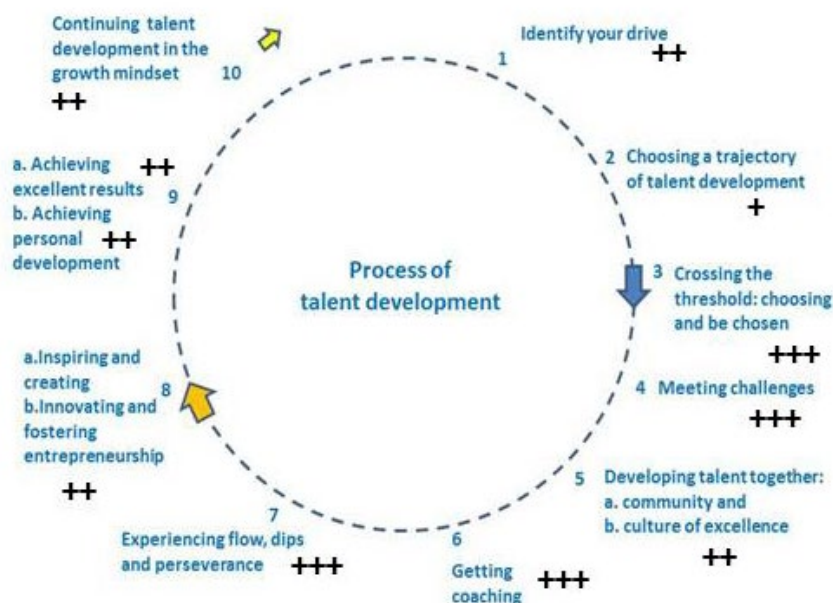
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Relation with Circle of Talent Development

In the introductory article of this issue of *JEHC*, the 'Circle of Talent Development' has been described. Based on interviews with forty honors students and literature about honors programs, it reflects relevant activities of students regarding the development of their talents in an honors program. The author of this note has been asked to score the good practice in relation to the activities in the Circle of Talent Development. The meaning of the scores is: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant. The scores are intended to illustrate the strengths of a good practice for the reader.

Figure 1. Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'Innovation Labs' with the teacher's scores



Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'What makes it attractive is that your role as teacher is completely different. The main role of a teacher in an innovation lab is *coaching*, but as in that *coaching* the *learning process* of the student. You need to be alert to signs you would normally find not important in regular class: what assumptions is the student working on, how did the student prepare him/herself, in what way can I (as teacher) encourage the student to ask questions to think further than the first thought? How can I facilitate this student to encourage and not interfere in the learning process he/she is in? An important issue is of course the design of the Innovation lab: what kind of possibilities are there in this 'issue,' which will enable the students to encounter all different kinds of experiences and knowledge to research?'

Note

Good practice: Writing a book

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Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

In order to stimulate 21st century skills, including communication and cooperation competencies, honors students are *challenged* to write a (popular science) book or to make an extensive website on a biologically relevant subject during one academic year. This is done, in partly extra-curricular fashion, within the two-year honors program at the Department of Biology of Utrecht University, The Netherlands. Honors students then work as a team where they have a lot of freedom in the choice of the main subject, chapter topics, working methods, and planning. The book is usually published by a commercial publisher and used in the first academic year of the regular program. The honors program is offered in addition to the second and third academic year of the regular bachelor curriculum. This good practice is programmed during the first year of the honors program (the second bachelor year).

2. Why this good practice?

The regular program has a clear structure in the first academic year with relatively little room for the students to follow their own interests. In the second year of study, it is clearer what their interests may be, and students who participate in the honors program can explore their interests in the context of a complex project. They have to work together on an open-ended project where they really depend upon each other. This usually results in a book that is published commercially. The project offers them the possibility of discovering talents and possibilities for further academic development, but it is also a *challenge* for them to build a *community* because all students participate in the same project. It gives them the opportunity to discover and further develop their talents, such as critical thinking, collaboration, leadership, *creativity*, and giving and receiving feedback.

3. Target group and target group size

The honors program has been designed for second- and third-year students of the regular BSc program in Biology who are willing and able to do more than the regular program requires. At the end of their first year, they can sign up for this honors program and are selected on the basis of their motivation, grades, and an interview. Usually, between 12 and 20 motivated and talented biology students are selected to participate in the program. Student activities take place in extra-curricular fashion during the academic year that they are working on this intensive honors group project. They invest between 200-400 study hours, which is equivalent to 7.5 - 15 ECs.

4. Educational design (structure)

The honors program starts with a meeting where the teacher introduces the (very open) assignment and where a number of suggestions for possible topics are given.

In a number of subsequent meetings the students:

- decide upon a topic in which all participants can contribute a subtopic based on their interests.
- ensure that there is no overlap in subtopics.
- determine the shape of the end product (book, website).
- determine the target group of the product: mostly last year high school students and first-year (freshmen) biology students.

Since this is a complex process with many different tasks, the students make a division of tasks into subgroups which usually looks as follows:

- Two editors-in-chief: they manage the entire process, determine the deadlines, and pay attention to the overall quality and coherence of the book. If there are more than two volunteers for being editor-in-chief, the group will select two of them based on a pitch by these volunteers in which they emphasize their experience and vision.
- An editorial team: they make a time schedule, set deadlines, and supervise the quality and consistency of the book chapters by organizing peer and expert feedback and monitoring the synergy between chapters.
- Illustrators: they are responsible for all illustrations and graphics, including the cover.
- Symposium committee: organization of the book presentation.
- Committees that are responsible for finances, PR, communication with the publisher, etc. (everything they deem necessary).

Then, they start writing chapters (alone or in pairs), monthly progress meetings are organized where the teachers are present, there are interim meetings of the various committees, peer feedback is organized, and experts are consulted who also give feedback on the written chapters, etc.

The teachers do not provide any pedagogical or subject-specific guidance during the further process (only in case of emergency) but do have regular consultations with the editors-in-chief about the process. In addition, they provide students with 'just-in-time' workshops or modules, for example, about academic writing, cooperation, critical and *creative* thinking, and ethics.

The teachers have a facilitating role as *coach* of the honors *community*. In the beginning, no

indication is given about the process and what the product should be. The teachers are critical and involved but do not take part in making the decisions.

The group project is an essential part of the honors program. The task is so complex that students have to work together intensively, divide tasks, and make joint decisions to achieve the desired result. They have to be able to rely on each other during the project.

The program starts in September, lasts throughout the academic year, and ends in May or June (Wiegant, Boonstra, Peeters & Scager, 2012). The process of writing a popular scientific book, and getting it published increases their sense of doing something relevant. In terms of reward, students emphasized that the intrinsic value of the end product such as a book, but also an article or research proposal, encourages them to complete the task. As one student of this course put it: 'We also had other project groups, but that was taken less seriously, that result would not go beyond the classroom, while in this project that is the case.' In this complex task of writing a book, a variety of different '21st century skills' were included: intensive collaboration, clear communication, organizing effective meetings, developing leadership skills, and developing *creative*, innovative, *reflective*, and critical thinking skills. In their next honors year, the students design and provide a piece of education for first-year students about the content of their project. In these sessions, first-year students also read and discuss one or more chapters of the book.

5. Student assessment

A final grade is provided to each individual student, which is based on the assessment by the teachers, by their peers, and by themselves. Both teachers assess the following aspects: presentation of their chapter to the group, quality of the written chapter, quality of the overall group process, and quality of the end product. Peer assessment by fellow students is based on the degree to which individual students participate in the group process as well as in committee activities in relation to their critical, *creative*, and collaborative input and skills. Finally, a written self-assessment is sent to the teachers, which includes a grade the students would give themselves for the project substantiated with arguments. Incidentally, it is striking that the students find the final product more important than a grade (Scager, Boonstra, Peeters, Vulperhorst & Wiegant, 2016).

6. Experiences

Some excerpts from interviews with honors students give an impression of their experiences.

An honors student wrote this about his passion for this project: 'Outsiders thought that publishing a book would not work, but it did and that is very motivating.'

Furthermore, the participants have also received a '*sense of community*,' the feeling of belonging to this group, and, in fact, the feeling that this group was their community. So, there was ownership. Statements by students about this include: 'Yes, togetherness' and 'For some, it was stimulating to get to know each other well. Silent people too become involved.'

Another feature of this community is that it gradually develops into a *culture of excellence*. Students feel *challenged* to get the best out of themselves, to achieve something that really

matters, and they do stimulate each other. Honors students have written the following about the culture of *excellence*: ‘You know that you have been selected and that feels special’ and ‘There is a different atmosphere than in the regular program: stimulating.’

In every *community*, a pattern of interactions has been formed through joint projects, working groups for program or product development, partly formal and partly informal. Contact via social media and other ICT applications plays an important role in this. Honors students have said about the internal organization of their *community*: ‘The editors were important, but there were also committees for finance, PR and illustrations. Everyone was active in one or two committees. There was also an editor in every committee’ and ‘There was also a layout committee with us. Every chapter was worked in pairs.’

Honors students reported about the function of the *community*: ‘I started reading more scientific literature, I became more interested in that. I have also developed my presentation skills more by the honors program and the community. The book project has also encouraged me to write more’ and ‘Through the community you can achieve more things that are otherwise unachievable.’

-About the role of the teacher

Students report in a majority (68%) that their coach encouraged the development of their skills (10% said ‘very strong’, 14% ‘a bit’ and 7% did not). A student explains this: ‘We were given the assignment to create something like a group project. We decided to write a book. The teachers gave us the opportunity and provided the right conditions, but we had to arrange the process ourselves.’ A teacher adds: ‘In the honors program, we have a group of students making a book together. It is important that they are responsible for the whole process, from the first brainstorm session to the final publication. They are *creative*, they work together and are critical of themselves, each other and the product. Students are the owners of their own learning in this set-up: that works better than someone else prescribing what and how they should learn. The learning pleasure is many times greater’ (Peeters, 2014).

-About the results:

In a poll among students about the extent to which they acquired 21st century skills, they found that they had learned more about *teamwork* and communication but also skills related to *personal leadership* and their ability to solve problem to some extent.

The series of books and one website which have been produced over the past eight years is shown in Figure 1.

7. Time requirement for teachers

Teachers have a role on the sideline. They are at the monthly (evening) meetings in which the various committees of students report their progress to each other, joint decisions are taken, and the editors discuss the progress, stumbling blocks, and deadlines in the overall process. Here, the teachers can, if necessary, ask critical questions about the progress of the process or the decisions the group make. In addition, teachers may provide ‘just-in-time’ workshops, such as on cooperation, *creativity*, and academic writing skills.

Figure 1. The covers of the popular science books as well as a website that have been produced by honors students at the Department of Biology, Utrecht University, over the past 8 years. Most books are available at Uitgeverij de Graaff in Utrecht, The Netherlands.



8. Tips for teachers

It is important that it is a student-driven process. Students must feel that they are the owners of this project. They are thrown into the deep, and they will, especially in the beginning, wonder how they have to solve specific problems they encounter as a group or within a committee. Because the teachers keep quiet at those moments that these problems are discussed in group meetings, they quickly feel that it is really up to them to take the helm.

Usually a document is provided that was once drafted by a previous editor-in-chief with tips for a next group of students. However, practice shows that each group comes to an end product in different ways.

9. Tips for students

The confusion that arises in the first instance among the students frustrates them because they are not used to that in regular education. It is precisely the lack of structure and not knowing what they have to 'meet' that will make them aim very high. They themselves create a structure that suits them and ensures that every student in the program fulfils his or her tasks. In the end, everyone feels that they have been heard and respected.

10. Transfer to other programs

Many students think that some honors activities are suitable for inclusion in a regular program. A number of adjustments are mentioned as desirable, such as shortening, organizing group projects around well-executable projects, more workshops, a stricter timetable, more guidance, giving real credits, not making it a compulsory but optional course, and reduce the level. A student had the opinion that the honors activities do not fit

in with the regular program because the honors program is specially designed for students who want to get more out of their studies.

11. References, additional information, and relation with Circle of Talent Development

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Additional information

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Relation with Circle of Talent Development

In the introductory article of this issue of *JEHC*, the 'Circle of Talent Development' has been described. Based on interviews with forty honors students and literature about honors programs, it reflects relevant activities of students regarding the development of their talents in an honors program. The author of this note has been asked to score the good practice in relation to the activities in the Circle of Talent Development. The meaning of the scores is: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant. The scores are intended to illustrate the strengths of a good practice for the reader.

Figure 1. Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'Writing a book' with the teacher's scores



Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'It is wonderful to see students become more mature, develop their competencies, and become a real team. This is an opportunity for being proud of what your students will achieve.'

Note

Good practice: Facilitator training for the Saxion Top Talent Innovation Days

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Keywords: facilitator, cooperation, interdisciplinary, critical reflection, experiential learning, flexible training, co-creation

Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

In recent years, Saxion University of Applied Sciences (The Netherlands) has developed a Top Talent program, currently consisting of 10 different honors programs and five excellence tracks. Students and teaching faculty are offered an introduction to participation in a Top Talent program with the 'Top Talent Innovation Days' (see appendix A), a two-day event requiring students to work in interdisciplinary groups on real-world problem situations. In this way, they are introduced to the philosophy and practice of the Top Talent programs. Participants (students and faculty) of previous Top Talent Innovation Days are prepared for their role as facilitators in interdisciplinary groups during the next edition of these Innovation Days. This preparation for facilitators is done in a three-day training course by experienced coaches. Thus, Saxion talent development is multi-layered, including participants, facilitators, and coaches. Roles are assigned regardless of formal positions: students can be the facilitator or coach of faculty. The focus in the training course is learning how to facilitate the group process and reflection on individual and collective effectiveness in interdisciplinary cooperation. The objective of the Top Talent Innovation Days is twofold: learning how to approach real-world problems and learning how interdisciplinary cooperation can be effective. The learning from experiences is key to the success of the Top Talent Innovation Days. The program for this training and for the Top Talent Innovation Days was developed in cooperation by both students and faculty.

2. Why this good practice?

The *challenge* is to provide all facilitators and, afterwards, the participants of the Top Talent Innovation Days (see appendix A) with insight in how to coach an *interdisciplinary* group in learning to work together more effectively.

This approach implies that it is possible, likely, and, to some extent, desirable that the process of cooperation derails. If cooperation is not smooth or far from smooth, there is room for improvement. And, that is where learning may take place, when obstructing factors can be addressed. The facilitator should intervene in the process and the role of the individual in the group; he or she should not intervene in the content or the quality of a new design as such that is not his or her responsibility. *Facilitation* is specifically aimed at the individual and collective effectiveness of cooperating in an *interdisciplinary* group with diverse backgrounds, i.e. a group of people who do not know each other at the start and have no affinity with the problem they are presented with (Davies & Devlin, 2012).

The *reflection* in this two-day session is focused on the cooperation process and the role and contribution of the individual participant. It is important that participants learn to sense how a group is functioning and how each participant is involved in the process. Facilitators have experienced Top Talent Innovation Days in a previous year as participants and now act on a different level. As facilitators, they are part of the group as a functioning entity but with another responsibility, role, and focus. They are prepared to assume this role and responsibility through the so-called facilitator training. Coaches provide this training and support facilitators during the Innovation Days.

3. Target group and target group size

The Top Talent Innovation Days are meant for all students enrolled in Saxion Top Talent programs. Usually around 100 Top Talent students register as participants for the event. The facilitator training is aiming at Top Talent teaching faculty and students with very diverse backgrounds, that have the ambition to learn to effectively facilitate dynamic group processes (from here on indicated as 'trainees'). The size of the group in this facilitator training varies from 20 to 30. The training is provided by five to six coaches. The formal training is offered through the Saxion Academy program and participants invest 60 hours.

4. Educational design (structure)

Here, the structure of the facilitator training is discussed. It strongly parallels the structure of the Top Talent Innovation Days but has a different purpose. During the Innovation Days, participants want to learn to effectively cooperate in an interdisciplinary setting, while, in the facilitator training, the participants want to learn how to effectively facilitate this cooperative process.

In preparation for the training, would-be facilitators get an assignment to prepare them for the activities: 'Make a note on what you want to learn and why you want to learn this, related to facilitating a group working on a wicked problem.'

The training consists of a 24-hour meeting including an overnight stay and is held outside the university. Shortly before and after this 24-hour session, respectively, an introduction and a final prep meeting is scheduled. Trainees in the course have to cooperate in a new and

unknown group, just as it is organized during the Top Talent Innovation Days. Three mixed groups of approximately 10 trainees are formed, varying in experience, background, and gender. The set-up of the Innovation Days is simulated, so that one can practice. Ample time is spent on interpretation and reflection. Formal functions are of no consequence: whether student, faculty, alumnus, or external person, you act as a facilitator-to-be. The training is organized and participants are coached by five to six coaches.

At the start, ample time is available for getting well acquainted. This part is important, since it provides the conditions for safe acting within a new group. It involves a set of activities that addresses backgrounds, motives, and current mood. The training is structured such that the trainee has options to choose from, depending on his or her assessment of the participants' needs. The program offers much diversity in activities (with energizers in between and drinks at the end of the days). Also, video-recording is used for feedback. The first day (and evening) involves a variation of activities with theory and practice of facilitating a team. The day is completed with an evaluation and an informal activity. During the second day, customized small group meetings are held for specific training of methods: techniques of *coaching*, *reflection*, role playing, and interventions in the group process. The second day is also completed with an evaluation. Facilitators constantly have to make decisions with regards to interventions and use the most effective method or tool to effectively facilitate or address the group process. There is no one recipe; it is a matter of grasping the essence of a group's (lack of) effectiveness and learning ability. This concept is thoroughly addressed in the training.

5. Student assessment

During the Innovation Days, the facilitators coach a fully new *interdisciplinary* group that works on a problem for a client. The *coaching* performed there is then also seen as proof of one's ability developed in the training.

6. Experiences

Some trainees say: 'The best course I ever did.' The course has provided them with real insight in the process of *interdisciplinary* cooperation. Everybody learns, regardless of formal function. Trainees recognize and appreciate the fact that their talents are used in a better way. Even if they, as facilitators, do not know anything about the content of a project on which the team is working, they can still help the group make progress. The trainees learn very much from *reflection* in-action and on-action directly during the activities of the group. The learning process of a trainee in the facilitator training resembles very much the learning process in the groups during the Innovation Days.

Teaching faculty who participated in this training understood that they can give students more freedom in a lesson or program while still achieving a learning result. Trainees appreciated the variation in content, the responsibility they were provided with, the equality within the group, and *personal development*.

7. Time requirement for teachers

Five coaches designed the training. For this designing, these coaches need meetings that take at least two days for each coach, spread over some months. For the initial edition, more hours are needed. The training takes three days plus a day for evaluation. Over the years,

the set-up, the structuring, and the organization of the Top Talent Innovation Days have changed and so has the facilitator training. Key ingredients are still in place, but new insights and the involvement of fresh minds have helped to further develop both training and innovation days.

8. Tips for teachers

- Ask the trainees at the start of the training what they want to obtain from it and what they plan to bring.
- Allow ample time to get acquainted initially. This is key.
- Allow ample time for trainees to experience aligning with what is happening in the group they facilitate and allow them to develop their own style
- Don't tell the trainees what they have to do, but ask questions, so they get the idea themselves for the next step.
- Reflect on moments of 'eureka' for the trainees. Focus on these moments because these moments will be well-remembered.
- Require that trainees take some time to register what they learned, and which insights they obtained throughout the proceedings of the training.
- Don't worry; teaching faculty who are participating will also obtain new and valuable experiences.

9. Tips for students

By focusing on the process in the group and the cooperation instead of only on the method and the content, you can experience the learning environment much more intensively, and you may be surprised about the results.

10. Transfer to other programs

For this transfer, the following conditions are required:

- Participants come from different disciplines.
- Groups consist of a mix of teaching faculty and students.
- Have participants to work on real-world problems (where there is not one solution available).
- Make sure to establish conditional safety within the group.
- Explicitly address the cooperation process.

Sometimes teachers of secondary education participate, and they are very positive about their experiences. This participation may be a first step to a transfer of this training to another educational program. The future will demonstrate.

11. References, additional information and relation with Circle of Talent Development

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTwTvbaAp68>

Blog of a participant in 2014:

<https://janinabanis.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/what-so-what-now-what/>

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Saxion Academy:

<https://saxionacademy.saxion.nl/Apps/SA/site.nsf>

Relation with Circle of Talent Development

In the introductory article of this issue of *JEHC*, the 'Circle of Talent Development' has been described. Based on interviews with forty honors students and literature about honors programs, it reflects relevant activities of students regarding the development of their talents in an honors program. The author of this note has been asked to score the good practice in relation to the activities in the Circle of Talent Development. The meaning of the scores is: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant. The scores are intended to illustrate the strengths of a good practice for the reader.

Figure 1: Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'Facilitator training for the Saxion Top Talent Innovation Days' with the teacher's scores



Additional information: step 6: Coaching also from peers! Mutuality in dialog (student vs. teacher); 9a: Results, learn a lot from failure!; 9b: Experience lead to insights in personal development.

Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'Teachers learn to become coaches and what different/new attitudes, skills, and behaviors are needed for coaches. Teachers experience it in this setting (experiential learning, learning community, learning by doing).'

Appendix A: Top Talent Innovation Days

The Saxion Top Talent Innovation Days is a two-day event with about 150 persons participating. It involves two consecutive days, including an overnight stay. The goal is to work on real-world issues in an interdisciplinary group with the focus on the group process. These days are organized annually by the Saxion Top Talent team. The participants are arranged in groups of six to eight students and teaching faculty. About 20 facilitators are required for process facilitation. The groups are *interdisciplinary* and very diverse in composition, with students, teachers, and alumni. Groups are facilitated in the interdisciplinary cooperation process but not with regards to the approach of content, the problem at hand. An aim is that students and faculty learn to effectively cooperate with persons of different disciplines. Another aim is that the participants learn to formulate an assignment for themselves, get a view on the innovative aspects of it, and experience the learning environment of honors education.

An aim at the background is that the participants learn about the complexity of society. So-called real-world problems, layered social problem situations for which not one solution exists, cannot be solved through a mono-disciplinary approach but need input from a diversity of disciplines (Vermaak, 2007). These problems require exploration from all perspectives, which allows for the development of appreciation for the perspectives of others (Checkland, 1988). That is not so easy because everybody has a filter. Facilitation stimulates different thinking and encourages participants to place themselves in the position of others and to understand the preferred approach of other disciplines. During this process, moments of *reflection* are programmed in different forms, and everybody gets feedback from everybody in the group.

Through cooperative learning from collective experiences with authentic themes and *real-world assignments* by actual clients, participants better understand the essence of honors education. Participating faculty learn what the power of honors education is.

There is no limit to the availability of wicked problems, contemporary real-world problem situations in society. The topics are not formulated as assignments but as themes by actual clients, who are present during the event. Every group starts by exploring the theme and then articulates the real-world problem to be approached. At least two groups are involved in each theme. The assignments originate in this way from *authentic* situations and involve an *authentic* client.

Sometimes, a new and unknown theme is surprising because the group cannot use traditional methods and has to find a new approach. Two examples of themes are '*The costs of healthcare are rising beyond what we can afford*' or '*Traffic jams in The Netherlands are an economic headache*'.

The results of the work in the groups is presented in pitches at the end of the two-day meeting. The clients of the assignments are also involved in these presentations. In these pitches, the final result, the approach, and the group's cooperation process are addressed. This allows for the explicit formulation of both content-oriented proceeds as well as the extent of perceived effectiveness of interdisciplinary cooperation. Within the groups, the method of 'hot & cold shower' is performed: one participant sits in the middle of the circle of participants. This participant is congratulated with the positive aspects that were

observed in his performance, e.g. contributions to the group (hot shower). This participant then receives suggestions for aspects that he or she might want to improve upon (cold shower). Then, the next participant comes to the middle of the circle. Every participant takes his or her turn. These proceedings take approximately 30 minutes.



Note

Good practice: Students present personal learning journey

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Keywords: Personal reflection, creativity, storytelling, participation of audience, presentation

Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

Honors students give a personal *reflection* on the past year at the end of the first year of the honors program 'Creativity in Finance & Management' from the FEM (Finance, Economy & Management, School for Finance & Accounting) and AMA (Academy Mens & Arbeid, School of Applied Psychology & Human Resource Management) academies at Saxion University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands. This is done by means of storytelling in a non-school environment (preferably a small theatre) and with an audience. The *reflection* involves a story about the student's *personal development* in the past year. The audience is brought in by the students (parents / friends / partners, etc.). The interaction with the audience turns out to be an excellent addition to the *reflection* moment of the student.

2. Why this good practice?

It is a big *challenge* for honors students to *reflect* in depth on their own *personal development* of the past year without using a portfolio or any other method of written recording. Such a reflection is very important in honors programs. In addition, most students in the university are 'flooded' with portfolios, and there are only a few students who are happy to make such a written portfolio. Furthermore, the people in the audience who are close to the student prevent the student from giving a socially desirable presentation.

3. Target group and target group size

Participants are first-year honors students of the extra-curricular honors program 'Creativity in Finance & Management.' These students are second-year students in the regular bachelor program of four years. The honors program only starts after the foundation year. The size of this activity is 3 hours for the execution. The preparation time varies per student and is about 8 hours. If the students want to take this assignment, they will have to do the

complete first year of the honors program (HP). The complete three-year honors program has the size of 30 ECs (which are virtual credits because the program is extra-curricular and comes on top of the regular program) divided over three years.

4. Educational design (structure)

At the end of year one of the honors program, students meet in a small theatre (Vestzaktheater) in the town of Enschede, The Netherlands, in the evening. This is a small, intimate setting (small room, 50 seats). A session usually involves about eight to 10 students, which is the maximum for one evening. The student brings along at least two people who know him / her well and / or are close to him / her (parents, boyfriend / girlfriend, etc.).

The intention is that students tell the audience about their learning journey of the first honors year: What did the student learn from this? What has he / she encountered, what has he / she overcome, what does he / she want to work on? The student does this individually using storytelling. There are only a few guidelines for the student:

1. It has to be a personal story
2. They have to take an object with them that symbolizes their development and incorporate this object in their story
3. It has to be creative
4. There must be emotion in it
5. The audience (including the people who do not know the student) must get a good, accurate picture of the student.

At the end of the story, called the 'learning journey,' the people in the audience can ask questions. The teacher often starts by asking the persons closest to the student if they recognize the student in the story. Then, other people from the audience can ask questions. The evening is concluded informally with a snack and a drink at the bar of the theatre.

5. Student assessment

The student and the lecturer give an assessment where the following aspects are taken into account:

- *Creativity* of the presentation
- Use of the chosen object and the link with *personal development*
- *Reflection* in presentation on *own development*
- *Reflective* attitude in question / answer-part

They can grade with insufficient / sufficient / good / excellent. Students assess themselves and, in most cases, the teacher will agree on the self-given grade.

6. Experiences

Until now, these meetings have been held for four years (so four times) at the end of the first honors year. It is an amazing event. The students generally find it very exciting, and they see the fun in it. The event quickly turns personal, and everyone is engaged - especially the people who are close to the student. It often generates a lot of (positive) emotions and creates an enormous bond. The audience that is brought in always reacts enthusiastically and parents are especially impressed by both the teaching method and the presentation of their son / daughter. The interaction with the audience is an excellent addition to this *reflective* moment of the student; not only the people who are closest to the student can give a reaction, but the rest of the audience will ask questions as well, showing genuine

interest.

7. Time requirement for teachers

Students have to do the main part of the 'work,' so the time necessary for the teacher is very limited. The teacher provides a good introduction of the assignment, makes a reservation for the theatre, and supervises the evening.

8. Tips for teachers

Give students free rein as much as possible; do not prepare anything. Check whether students are indeed preparing (just ask; they do not have to show anything) and ask if they will take people with them (this is very important!). Let it happen that evening, let it originate, and let it grow. As a teacher, you will talk in between the presentations, you will give the audience the opportunity to participate, and you will monitor time. In order to get the public acquainted, it is nice to do some 'exercises' with the audience first to create a confidential atmosphere. For example, everyone goes on stage and makes a row based on height or on the basis of age (even better: you are not allowed to talk!) - or, walk around, shake hands with someone you do not know, and introduce yourself in one minute.

9. Tips for students

The teacher gives the following advice to his students: 'Let's really see what you stand for and who you are. Link the object that you take with you to your own development (often as a metaphor). Be surprising, show emotion, and do not be afraid.'

10. Transfer to other programs

This approach is very suitable for other honors programs, but it does require a somewhat greater ability of the student for *self-reflection*. It is important that, in the first honors year, confidence has grown so that the student is not afraid to step out of his / her comfort zone and that the student has shown more of himself or herself and has been able to practice with all kinds of educational methods. What can be learned from this and can be applied to regular education is that all students, including the students who show no interest in *self-reflection* or have difficulties in writing a thorough *self-reflective* report, are particularly capable of *reflecting* in this way, once they are given the freedom and coached in the right way.

11. References, additional information and relation with Circle of Talent Development

Relation with Circle of Talent Development

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Figure 1: Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'Students present personal learning journey' with the teacher's scores



Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'It is a relatively simple and unique way to give students the opportunity to reflect in a group. This reflection is not in a way and a format that is described by the teacher, but it is a reflection from the heart. The amount of effort the teacher has to put in for this final event is limited, but the results (and impact) are high.'

Note

Good practice: International Honors Summer Institute on Holocaust Remembrance

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Keywords: international, honors, summer school, Holocaust, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary

Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen and Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork in the Netherlands have been working together for the last few years in organizing honors projects that connect lessons from the remarkable history of Camp Westerbork to issues and problems of today's society. One of the projects in this cooperation is the International Honors Summer Institute on Holocaust Remembrance, in which American and Dutch students work together in a project connecting past and present day issues in society. This summer school is open for honors students from the Dutch institutes Hanze UAS (Groningen) and Windesheim UAS (Zwolle), as well as American universities. Credits are awarded that can be applied to the student's regular program and/or honors program.

2. Why this good practice?

The purpose of the summer school is to further personal and social development of students by providing a project in which international cooperation, working from different perspectives, and social responsibility are key components. This is done by connecting World War II history with present day developments and their impact on modern-day society. In the past editions of the summer school, students were provided with the opportunity to collaborate with an international cohort to study Holocaust history. Students used these "lessons from the past" to examine, investigate, and critique problems in today's societies, concentrating on the theme of bystanders. The students also visited Camp Westerbork. This is a former concentration camp from the Second World War, which is now a memorial center and museum.

3. Target group and target group size

The target group consists of honors students from a few Dutch colleges (Hanze and Windesheim) and American universities. A maximum of 24 students can be admitted. US students must pay a course fee of 2000 euros (that includes participation in the entire program, participation in all excursions, participation in all social activities, housing, five dinners, and a rental bike). Dutch students pay a course fee of 250 euros. Students work intensively in the summer school for approximately two and a half weeks. There are also some preparatory lectures online.

4. Educational design (structure)

Before the actual summer school starts, students research Holocaust history. There are online lectures, readings, and assignments. The summer school itself is a program with excursions to several Holocaust sites in the Netherlands and Germany, as well as opportunities to work on projects on location at Memorial Center Camp Westerbork. In the first editions, students worked in small groups. They created a photo exhibition and a TED Talk video about bystanders in the past and what it is to be a bystander in today's society. Each team then presented their projects. By working together in an international group, creating their own project in relation to the complex problems of today's society and the use of their initiative and *creativity*, honors students used their 21st century skills to the fullest.

5. Student assessment

At the beginning of the summer school, students formulate their own learning goals. They reflect on the realization of these learning goals in the final reflection they have to write. They also reflect on the cooperation within their group, their group results, and their own role within the group. Participants receive a certificate upon completion.

6. Experiences

For this program, personal *reflections* on the program were used to evaluate the insights and skills students developed in the program. From these *reflections*, it became clear that students used all kinds of 21st century skills in this summer school, like cooperation in a diverse group, *creative thinking*, *critical thinking*, and taking different perspectives into account.

The participating students not only learned a lot about the history of WWII, but they also used their imagination and *creativity* in the assignments, making good use of the diversity in backgrounds, skills, and subject areas in their group, to create products that can be shown to different audiences and stimulate their awareness of social issues.

In the final *reflection*, all participating students agreed that this summer school enhanced their *personal development* by stimulating their thinking about society and their role in that society. All students agreed that the diversity in the group (both in nationality and in academic background) and the discussions in their group enhanced their thinking from different perspectives and their *critical thinking* and *creativity*.

Some quotes from American students on the summer school (2017 and 2018) include:
 -'The Hanze Summer School on Holocaust Remembrance was an experience I will never forget. The friendships I've made, lessons I've learned, and places I've visited follow me for

the rest of my life. From the bottom of my heart, I'm so grateful to have such an amazing opportunity to collaborate with individuals who have much to offer in insight, stories, and just overall personality. This trip fulfilled all my original goals of wanting to be culturally immersed in the Netherlands, as well as to collaborate with like-minded people who also have an interest in seeking to understand the Holocaust and the effect bystanders have to the past, present and future.'

-'The whole experience was extremely valuable in my development of speaking, critical thinking, and multitasking skills. The summer school allowed me to think for myself, be independent, but also collaborate with others.'

-'One part of this trip I'll never forget was when we talked to a Holocaust survivor in Westerbork and he recounted how his immediate family had managed to survive.'

-'I think I have accomplished each of my learning goals that I outlined at the beginning of the program. I have gained a better understanding of the events of the Holocaust and how these events can be compared to what is occurring in today's world, in particular the Syrian Refugee Crisis, which my group chose to focus on in our project.'

-'Some educators believe that the information [about the Holocaust] is too difficult to take in, hesitating to teach even older students the important details of how a single government caused the murder of millions of people. Now I believe, however, that it is our responsibility as global citizens to think critically about disasters of the past, even if it makes us uncomfortable for a while. This can help us be prepared to deal with urgent humanitarian issues today.'

-'Over the course of the past two weeks, I've learned a lot more about refugees then and now, and how not doing something can be just as bad as being a perpetrator of a genocide like the Holocaust. I also learned that it's important to evaluate your own country's role in the world, and how the history of your country can have a big impact on how other countries behave in reaction to your country. A very impactful program that used our time well.'

An additional remark on the organization of the summer school is this: American universities are very interested, but it is not easy to accomplish the program. Lack of funding for American students may be a problem, as well as schedules and logistics. Also, Dutch students have their schedules and study obligations, which can interfere.

7. Time requirement for teachers

This summer school requires full-time dedication from two teachers for the duration of the summer school and about 40 hours in preparation. Some of the preparation time is spent on discussing the pedagogical aspects of the summer school. Participating teachers need to give students freedom to choose and develop their projects in the summer school. An important aspect for teachers is to be able to handle the impact of the experiences in the summer school on students, since they can be very overwhelming. This is an important subject in the preparation of teachers.

Also, a student-assistant is needed to help with the social parts of the program.

8. Tips for teachers

In the summer school, an experienced honors teacher worked together with a representative of Memorial Center Westerbork as coaches for the participating students. In their *reflections*, students remarked that they appreciated the freedom and opportunity for

creative thinking they had in working on their projects. The coaches used a didactic approach of *coaching* by asking questions and stimulating students to exchange their ideas.

9. Tips for students

In this summer school, you'll get a chance to bond with foreign students while studying the fascinating history of Camp Westerbork and several Holocaust sites in Europe. By joining, you will enhance your 21st century skills in several ways.

10. Transfer to other programs

Although the summer school as a whole cannot be transferred to regular programs, elements of it may be used, like letting students work in *multidisciplinary* groups and working with assignments that require *cooperation*, *creative* skills, and using different perspectives. Also the combination of learning on location, speaking to different people related to the subject of study, and using this input in a real life project could work well in any educational setting.

11. References, additional information, and relation with Circle of Talent Development

Additional information

The Summer School on Facebook:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/hanzesummerschool/posts/?ref=page_internal

Website Hanze UAS:

<https://www.hanze.nl/eng/education/summer-courses/hanze-summer-school/courses/honours-summer-school-holocaust-remembrance/about-honours-summer-school-holocaust-remembrance>

Relation with Circle of Talent Development

In the introductory article of this issue of *JEHC*, the 'Circle of Talent Development' has been described. Based on interviews with forty honors students and literature about honors programs, it reflects relevant activities of students regarding the development of their talents in an honors program. The author of this note has been asked to score the good practice in relation to the activities in the Circle of Talent Development. The meaning of the scores is: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant. The scores are intended to illustrate the strengths of a good practice for the reader.

Figure 1: Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'International Honors Summer Institute on Holocaust Remembrance' with the teacher's scores



Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'The summer school is an intensive program with high impact. The power is in the combination of two elements: bringing together students from different backgrounds to research a topic that relates to societal problems, and asking students to use their *creativity* to create something to communicate their vision on these societal problems.'

Note

Good practice: Improving and assessing honors student learning with learning portfolios

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Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

The learning portfolio is a rich, convincing, and adaptable method of recording intellectual growth and involving students in a critically *reflective*, collaborative process that augments learning as a *community* endeavor and refines their educational experience. It is a concept that can be custom-tailored to suit many disciplinary, pedagogical, programmatic, and institutional needs. In honors, especially, the portfolio helps students achieve the goals of honors education to foster academic competence, *creativity*, critical thinking and writing, integrative learning, and metacognitive skills for deep and lasting learning. With today's technological advantages of digital media, learning portfolios created with e-portfolio platforms introduce new and exciting opportunities for honors programs to demonstrate and assess the value-added dimensions of honors courses and other experiences designed to *challenge* students and enhance their learning. This good practice is not related to a specific honors program or institution but is a more general description of a good practice based on experiences in many honors programs.

2. Why this good practice?

Portfolios - whether constructed as web-based e-portfolios, computer disks, multi-media productions, or paper binders - offer ambitious, motivated students a living, practical tool for representing and documenting their learning and real abilities, going far beyond the evidence showcased in a simple résumé or letter of recommendation for further educational endeavors or professional career aspirations. The documentation function of portfolios is useful for assessment of student learning and program effectiveness, but the core value of any sound portfolio project is an intentional, primary focus on learning. Such a focus leads to deliberate and systematic attention not only to skills development but to a student's self-

reflective, metacognitive understanding and appraisal of *what* is learned, *how* it is learned, *when* it is learned best, and, more importantly, *why* learning is meaningful, practical, transferable, and durable as a life-long endeavor.

3. Target group and target group size

Students in an honors program or college benefit from beginning construction of a learning portfolio in their first year, perhaps in a first-year seminar as part of an honors curriculum. They update their *reflections* and selected evidence of outcomes regularly each year in the program with the help of a peer or faculty mentor who offers feedback on the scope, richness, relevance, and structure of the portfolio. In a senior honors capstone, students can finalize the portfolio's content, consult with peer and faculty mentors and the program director, and decide what further use to make of the portfolio. A senior honors capstone experience could be a major activity situated within the final semesters of an honors program. Examples of this type of capstones include an honors thesis, senior papers or projects, or arts performances or exhibitions.

4. Educational design (structure)

The intrinsic merit of learning portfolios is that they involve students in the power of *reflection*, the critically challenging process of thinking about their learning and making sense of the learning experience as a coherent, integrated, developmental process. Such thinking is the linking pin of life-long, active learning, the key to helping students discover and understand what, how, when, and why they learn.

With *reflection* at the heart of portfolio work, students design their portfolios to include critical analysis and selected evidence of their learning. Selection of portfolio items is driven by purpose and goals, making each portfolio unique and expressive of individual accomplishments and aspirations. One issue that often surfaces in portfolio development is when students mistakenly perceive that the portfolio is merely a repository for every scrap of work they accumulate over time. An important reminder here is that a sound portfolio consists of selected evidence, and the regular faculty or peer mentoring mentioned earlier is an essential component of the portfolio process that offers students the timely feedback needed to help with judicious selection of portfolio materials.

Often, both *reflective* narrative and documentation are keyed to honors programs' stated goals and competencies, helping students and program directors to assess students' progress as learners and members of the program. Because the portfolio is a process as well as a product that comprises multiple sources of *reflective* and documentary evidence, students become more self-directed and self-regulating learners, and faculty and directors have more complete, diverse information to use for assessment and evaluation.

The structure of a portfolio can vary greatly, depending on purpose and goals and whether it is created electronically, on paper, or in some other alternative media (as in the case of portfolio video productions). The e-portfolio offers the advantage of allowing organized, embedded links to selected supporting information such as scanned essays in drafts with improvements from feedback, performance on exams, homework assignments, lab reports, videos of class or conference presentations, photos, samples of *creative* work, research results, résumé, letters of support or evaluation, internship evaluations, learning journals of

travel-study ventures or service endeavors, and more. The *reflective* component is at the center, helping to tie together the various other dimensions of the portfolio.

While critical reflection for deep learning should always be the main objective of portfolio development, technology is an asset that permits many ways to represent a student's growth in honors, and the e-portfolio is today's most popular medium. Many institutions use commercial platforms such as Blackboard, Canvas, Chalk&Wire, Digication, LiveText, PebblePad, or others. Some construct their own home systems. Many e-portfolio projects use free providers such as WIX, Weebly, FolioSpaces, Mahara, WordPress, or other open-source systems. Judging from the popularity of e-portfolios throughout the United States, Canada, European nations, Australia, New Zealand, and others, e-portfolios are clearly more than a passing trend.

5. Student assessment

Learning portfolios have diverse applications. They can provide a device for demonstrating the value of experiential learning or assessing credit for prior learning. In business and teacher education, portfolios have been used commonly as effective tools for career preparation. Some portfolios are shared by students and faculty advisors for the purpose of academic and career advising. Portfolios are also useful for assessment of student learning and program effectiveness. Since the portfolio includes multiple carefully selected, *authentic* types of evidence of learning keyed to program or college goals and competencies, it is a convincing source for documenting students' achievements as well as a program's successes and areas for improvement. With intentional, careful mentoring, a student can collect vital information from different courses and experiences to showcase and assess accomplishments in honors.

6. Experiences

In my own honors program at Columbia College, students began *creating* paper portfolios in the first year and other advanced classes more than a decade ago, a modest start to engaging them in the power of *reflective* practice. More recently, students use free open-source web platforms to design e-portfolios that include *reflective* writing in an online forum, formal essays, work in draft stages with feedback, class and reading notes, videos, presentation slides, photos, essay exam responses, research projects, and other samples of their work.

The portfolio concept is introduced to new students during their specially designed, student-led, three-day orientation to the program, giving them an introduction to how *reflective* practice is an important dimension of honors education. We instill in them an appreciation for how "portfolio thinking" - that is, embracing how all their encounters inside and outside the classroom are moments for critical *reflection*, for making connections, and for applying and extending their learning - is one of the ways in which their honors experiences in courses and out-of-class ventures will be unique, challenging, and fulfilling. When they begin to develop actual portfolios in a first-year honors course and later add or exchange selected evidence of their learning and achievement of honors program goals and outcomes, they assemble a record of their intellectual and personal growth as learners and as members of the program. Their portfolios have been used in professional conference sessions to

demonstrate the potential of learning portfolios in enhancing and documenting such student learning.

In most cases, their first portfolio project occurs when they land in my first-year composition and literature honors course, where the learning portfolio typically counts for about one-fourth of their final grade, high stakes enough for a serious effort but low stakes enough not to damage overall success in the course. Later, in other honors courses, students may encounter a “Portfolio Assignment” or “PA” designed to offer a viable sample of work that demonstrates competency in a particular honors program goal or outcome.

Many programs today use such portfolios to document the value-added benefits of honors and the effectiveness of their efforts to deepen students’ learning. Such programs must decide whether portfolios will be used in all or some honors courses, whether they will only be part of individual course assessments as chosen by instructors, whether they will “count” toward a student’s requirements for finishing honors, or whether they will factor in overall program evaluation for institutional review. All of these scenarios can be found today in the honors landscape, but in all cases, thoughtful and consistent mentoring is essential to ensure that students learn the important skills and habits of meaningful critical *reflection* and self-assessment. Introduction in an orientation, follow-up in different types and levels of courses, regular occasions to consult with the director, perhaps at Honors Student Association monthly meetings, and interaction with trained peers throughout progress in an honors program are viable ways of providing students with the mentoring that will help them produce sound portfolios.

Do honors students understand and appreciate the value of portfolio work? Here are some testimonials from students ranging from first-year to senior-level learners:

- This way of *reflecting* on my learning and showing real evidence of what I have accomplished has contributed to my personal life in that it has made me a better learner in all academic and other *challenges* I have faced.
- My learning ability reached its highest potential in this portfolio, and I feel like a brand new student. Some may call this “enlightenment” a point in my own journey in life, and the portfolio helped me understand myself and my learning on this journey. It was more than just a grade.
- Having to explore and improve my thinking through the components of a portfolio taught me how to adapt to different ways of learning, and it affected me tremendously overall.
- I can see my growth as a learner through the process of all my honors (and other) courses. To me, the portfolio was another way to think about what I got out of my education because I could transform my thinking into writing in a selective and intellectual way.
- I have found that my ability to think critically has been *challenged* by the portfolio. I often find that my level of thinking does not exceed the second or third levels of Bloom’s taxonomy, but I was able to spend significantly more time evaluating and *creating* material regarding my learning through my own opinions and thoughts rather than relying so heavily on empirical source work. Eventually, I was able to “get it” when it comes to the power of *reflection* in learning.

- While I have learned a lot about myself in this course through our portfolio, I have also learned about other classes and my personal life. I have used the *creation* of a portfolio in our class to think more critically in my different classes.
- The portfolio provided me with a *freedom* to choose how I wanted to show and discuss my learning and how my thinking process occurred. I could control how I approached the assignment. Before this class, other professors would give prompts to assignments or a selection of ideas I could choose from and focus on for the assignment. When I realized the *freedom* I would be given to create my portfolio and that I would not be given required prompts, it was a daunting concept at first for me personally. Also, I felt lost and unsure how I would tackle the parts of the portfolio. However, I slowly got used to the idea of having free reign in the design, and I began to enjoy organizing the portfolio to reveal my strengths and weaknesses in my learning.
- While the traditional school system of sitting in a hard desk, taking tests, and being an obedient silent mouse is what I knew before the honors program, this class and its emphasis on *reflection* and a learning portfolio altered my perspective on learning. The portfolio showed me that there are other ways to encourage learning without hanging a grade over my head. When a comfortable environment is created, *reflection* can be fun, useful, and can elicit greater learning.
- This semester, I feel I've grown as a reader, thinker, and learner because I've taken active control of my learning and directed the content to where I wanted to go in my portfolio. I loved that I had the *freedom* to explore my own wanderings and that I always had some place to share them. Being able to take control of my learning in this way gave me a feeling of confidence and excitement.
- I think I grew as a critical thinker through portfolio focus on *reflection*. I feel very deeply that I learned something invaluable, and that a veil was lifted from my eyes, which now allows me to see all my learning in an entirely new light and with much more depth than I was previously able to view it. I also had a lot of fun because of the portfolio's versatility, as I felt that I had the *freedom* to grow and explore on my own, and within the areas of my interest, while still being exposed to areas outside of my interests.

7. Time requirement for teachers

Honors instructors and directors interested in exploring the power of learning portfolios have many resources available on the web to help implement portfolios in courses and programs. Students tend to enjoy using web programs to design e-portfolios as they use their imagination to represent their learning in *creative* ways with the advantages of digital technology. I have found that my time investment has been fairly minimal because students take charge of playing with the technology and owning their own work with the portfolio and finding their individual voices as they collect, select, and *reflect* while constructing their portfolios. My investment consists of helping students to identify purpose, goals, and appropriate evidence; mentoring them in the *challenge* of writing meaningful *reflective* narratives; providing feedback on structure and content; and suggesting ways in which the portfolio can serve practical aims for further education or career pursuits. I start these conversations in honors orientation and follow up in a first-year course that either I or an honors colleague teach. I touch base with students periodically during monthly honors student group meetings. Some programs have a faculty "honors council" or "committee"

that can be tapped to help mentor students and provide written or oral feedback at the end of each academic year so that students know if they are on track or need to improve their portfolios for final assessment. Some programs use trained peer consultants to help with such mentoring, relieving some of the teacher's time.

One anxiety that teachers express is how much time is needed to assess and evaluate portfolios, especially if they are collected and used for programmatic review. I suggest that a revolving number of instructors in varied courses throughout a student's career identify one honors assignment or activity as a "Portfolio Assignment." The "PA" product is flagged as an item that can be included in a comprehensive portfolio. The selected work can be tied to program goals and competencies, and, with proper mentoring through academic advisement or peer consultation, the student can learn to distinguish what product best reveals achievement toward a program's stated outcomes. All such work will already have received feedback and will already have been evaluated in courses, and so the embedded assessment makes any final review of the portfolio very manageable.

Remember, however, that learning portfolios may be used only as partial fulfillment of individual course requirements ("course portfolios"), but if they are used as comprehensive demonstrations of student achievement of program competencies, then a review committee may agree to accept the embedded assessment of varied course artifacts in the portfolio and focus, instead, for example, on the quality of a final *reflection* and overall design. Depending on the size of the program, perhaps the "honors council" or a sub-committee of the group can constitute the review team. Conducting such a review early in the senior year - conveniently, perhaps, within an honors capstone seminar or advisement opportunity - allows for formative feedback and any improvements needed, and the portfolio can be part of the capstone grade, a requirement to earn honors graduation status, a showcased achievement in an honors scholars' celebration event, or a combination of such alternatives. Various possibilities exist for how portfolios are used and evaluated in courses, in final student learning assessment, or in overall program review, or whether they are graded at all but rather encouraged and supported for *personal development*.

8. Tips for teachers

Many books, articles, and web resources offer tips for tapping the benefits of learning portfolios, but one of the most important is to start slow and small. Do not jump headlong into a portfolio project, especially if it is electronic, expecting students and faculty to embrace the concept and understand the complexities of *reflective* practice, the skill of judicious selection of artifacts, the art of clear and compelling writing, the mechanical *challenges* of technology, and other issues. A modest portfolio assignment, integrated into the design and assessment of a course so that it is not simply another added requirement, is a good start. When more courses use portfolio strategies, then a program portfolio project can be the next step.

9. Tips for students

When students are skeptical or nervous about the value of portfolios, when they do not readily see how and why a learning portfolio is a vital and *authentic* representation of their honors education, when they question how a portfolio provides them with a practical showcase of their skills and accomplishments for further studies or career development,

then they can be referred to the internet to find innumerable examples of actual student portfolios that will show them how portfolios help prepare them for the next stages in their lives. An honors program web site can include a section devoted to the value of portfolios, with links not only to resources and templates but also to exemplary models developed by honors students with accompanying testimonials about the intellectual and practical worth of portfolios during and after participation in an honors program. Learning portfolios, especially in digital form, have evolved to be much more than a passing trend in honors and in higher education generally. Encouraging students to browse the wealth of information and samples on the web is an effective wake-up call.

10. Transfer to other programs

Learning portfolios today, particularly with the surge of institutional e-portfolio projects, are used in countless ways and in countless colleges and universities around the world. In honors, the implementation of portfolio strategies is growing as honors programs are increasingly pressed to demonstrate the value-added dimension of honors education. Because honors has a specific mission, working with a special population of students and faculty toward intentional pedagogical goals and outcomes, it is advantageously poised to be innovative and *creative* in using portfolios successfully to enhance student learning and design an effective programmatic assessment method. Once tested and perfected in honors, the portfolio model can more easily transfer to other programs, strengthening teaching and learning throughout an institution.

11. References, additional information and relation with Circle of Talent Development

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Zubizarreta, J. (2009). *The learning portfolio: Reflective practice for improving student learning*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1st ed. Bolton: Anker, 2004.

Zubizarreta, J., & Corley, C. (2012). The power and utility of reflective learning portfolios in honors. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* 13(1), 63-76.

Additional information

Europortfolio: <http://www.eportfolio.eu/>

IDEA Paper #44, <https://www.ideaedu.org/Research/IDEA-Paper-Series>

Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research: <http://incepr.org/>

Honors e-Portfolio examples:

<http://www.mnsu.edu/honors/portfolios.html>

<https://www.uh.edu/honors/Programs-Minors/co-curricular-programs/eportfolio/what-is-eportfolio/>

<https://www.odu.edu/honors/academics/eportfolios>

<https://honors.wayne.edu/eportfolio>

<https://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/>

<https://www.pace.edu/honors-college/pleasantville-students/opportunities/e-portfolio>

Relation with Circle of Talent Development

In the introductory article of this issue of *JEHC*, the 'Circle of Talent Development' has been described. Based on interviews with forty honors students and literature about honors programs, it reflects relevant activities of students regarding the development of their talents in an honors program. The author of this note has been asked to score the good practice in relation to the activities in the Circle of Talent Development. The meaning of the scores is: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant. The scores are intended to illustrate the strengths of a good practice for the reader.

Figure 1: Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'Improving and Assessing Honors Student Learning with Learning Portfolios' with the teacher's scores



Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'As a teacher, I am always inspired by strategies and methodologies that focus on deepening and extending student learning through innovative practices inside and outside the classroom, especially when they involve helping students develop the challenging skills and habits of meaningful critical *reflection* so that they learn and master not only content information but also how to learn, how to connect and apply learning, and how to value learning as a lifelong endeavor. I am attracted to active learning approaches that engage students in more than received knowledge, competencies, outcomes, or grades. I gravitate toward teaching that, of course, helps students gain content expertise but also helps students make connections among different disciplinary ways of thinking, helps them explore divergent ideas, helps nurture their *creativity*, invites them to take risks, and reinforces their excitement for learning.'

Note

Good practice: Scaffolded, Collaborative Project-based Learning

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Note to reader: honors keywords (see introductory article of this issue) *in italics* in the text

1. Introduction

'If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.'

~ Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Project-based learning (PjBL) is a philosophy of teaching and learning that includes a framework for how we will organize education in the future, according to Markham (2012). The framework involves interdisciplinary knowledge construction while completing a social activity that builds context-dependent self-awareness of learning and knowing (Tamim and Grant, 2013). For clarity purposes, we distinguish between project-based learning and problem-based learning (PBL). While there are many similarities between the two approaches, they both engage students in authentic tasks, are open-ended, involve *collaboration*, and simulate professional environments, the two approaches differ slightly. According to Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2005), the key difference lies in the focus of the two strategies. In PjBL, the end artifact developed in the course is the driver of the course planning, implementation, and the evaluation process, while, in PBL, the primary focus of the learning process is on the inquiry (rather than the end product).

PjBL emerged as one of the most effective active learning instructional practices (Buck Institute for Education, 2018a; Drake, 2012). In PjBL, students confront *real-world challenges*, *collaborate* to create solutions, and present their results in a public setting. In PjBL courses, the project is at the core of the curriculum, involving an in-depth inquiry and requiring revisions of and reflections on the artifacts developed. PjBL typically requires students to toil for weeks or months to complete the work and stresses student voice as well as instructor scaffolding in the course implementation.

The *collaborative* project-based learning environment described in this paper occurs in a U.S.-based business school, in an honors section of a core business curriculum course called Business Information Systems. In the United States, there are honors courses that are available to only honors students and there are courses that are required of all the students that can satisfy honors requirements by having students enroll in a special honors section. The honors sections of a regular course typically have somewhat different curriculum and use honors pedagogy to deliver the content. The course described in this paper is an example of the latter. It is required for all students interested in pursuing business education at Texas Christian University (TCU). TCU is a private, midsize university in Fort Worth, Texas. Neeley School of Business at TCU is an Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)-accredited undergraduate business program. The class described in this note met for three hours each week over a 15-week period. The students in the class were sophomore business honors students. They received the class with enthusiasm and achieved at a high level. A conference on information systems education also recognized the work described in this paper with a best paper award (Jones, 2015).

2. Why this good practice?

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) considers Collaborative Assignments and Projects as one of the ten high-impact practices that any course or curriculum could apply (Kuh, 2008). High-Impact Practices (HIPs) are techniques for teaching and learning in higher education that have been proven to benefit student engagement and learning among students from diverse backgrounds (Leap Resource Toolkit, 2015).

Figure 1. Essential Design Elements for Project-Based Learning



Source: Adapted from Mergendoller, Boss & Larmer, 2015

Working on projects in an honors course or program is a common practice in the U.S. and the Netherlands, as demonstrated in this issue of the *Journal of the European Honors Council*. However, completing a project as a part of a course is not equivalent to project-based learning. Project-based learning pedagogy requires instructors to include specific elements, as demonstrated in Figure 1. By giving students a fair amount of choice and responsibility, a sense of purpose, and practical activities that engage their hearts and minds over an extended period, PjBL leads to a deeper understanding, a greater retention of knowledge, and improvement in both teachers and students' enjoyment of learning (Strobel and van Barneveld, 2009; Buck Institute for Education, 2018b; Kingston, 2018). Project-based learning does not respond to a classroom *challenge* for the teacher, but it presents an opportunity for the teacher and the students to learn more, to acquire more relevant, 21st century skills that respond to the shifts in our economies (e.g. Seeley Brown, 2011; Setser and Morris, 2015), and to enjoy the process of learning: 'The new 21st century education (...) necessitates a new kind of teaching, one that focuses on learning how to learn – the single most important skill anyone can master' (Davidson, 2017). Project-based learning is thus a great vehicle for developing these important skills. PjBL helps students 1) handle complex problems and inquiry, 2) develop into better independent *critical* thinkers and innovators, and 3) develop *collaboration* and presentation skills – all key skills in our new economy. Students can develop these key skills without establishing any special environments for innovation at the college or university. Teachers can incorporate PjBL in almost any classroom with a little course re-design at a relatively low cost.

3. Target group and target group size

While this note presents findings from the project-based learning implementation with the second year honors students at a business school, *collaborative* project-based learning may be applied within any course offered by any college or program, regardless of course level, disciplinary focus, or class size. I have used this pedagogy in various other settings: with first and second year students in a study abroad course, with third year students in a specific discipline-related course, and in a number of third and fourth year *interdisciplinary* honors colloquia courses. Class sizes varied from 14 to 40+ students.

The practice described in this note carries three American credit hours, though a faculty member could implement project-based learning principles within any course, regardless of the number of credit hours. The practice is highly scalable and faculty can design courses around projects that require specific number of hours, per local requirements of their university, as needed.

4. Educational design (structure)

Scaffolded, Collaborative, Project-based Learning is a learning environment consisting of 1) project-based learning, 2) *collaboration*, and 3) instructional scaffolding. I describe each one of the three elements of this learning environment below, first theoretically and then with an example from a course.

Theoretical Basis of Project-Based Learning

- 1) Project-based learning requires that a teacher designs a project for the students with the following eight research-based elements (Mergendoller et al., 2015):

- a. Challenging Problem or Question – The course instruction should start with a question or a problem rather than a broadcasting of content. The problem or question should not have an easy answer that students can quickly derive by simple knowledge retrieval. The *challenge* should be relevant and engaging for the students without being intimidating, so they have a real need to obtain the answers and are capable of doing so. Teachers select the *real-world challenge* and should write the overarching problem in the form of a question.
 - b. Sustained Inquiry – The problem presented to the students has to be complex enough to require iterative inquiry over an extended period, which is more than just a few days or a week of a semester-long course. Students should investigate possible answers with the help of a range of available resources, using their *critical thinking* and/or *creativity* skills. They should research, assess the value of the information they found, and design solutions *collaboratively*.
 - c. Authenticity – Since *authentic* problems increase student motivation and learning, assigning *authentic* problems for the project is key to its success. *Authentic* problems can include those a professional in a domain area of study might face in his or her day-to-day work; it can involve use of *real-world* processes, tools, or techniques; it can have a tangible impact on others; it can address students' own interests or concerns or a combination of the aforementioned.
 - d. Student Voice and Choice - Giving students a voice to determine what they will work on in the project creates a sense of ownership, which results in their greater motivation to work harder. Letting students decide aspects of what they will work on and what tools or resources they will use will help with project outcomes. Teachers' willingness to adjust the *challenge* as needed, based on student feedback during the semester, is key to success.
 - e. Reflection – Throughout the project, both students and teachers should reflect on what, why, and how they are learning. *Reflection* may occur in class, in a blog or journal, or as a part of a formative assessment for the students/teachers. *Reflection* on experiences is key to one's learning.
 - f. Critique and Revision – Another key to a high quality outcome of the project is iteration and revision. Students should learn how to give and receive feedback and how to learn from it. Peers, faculty, or outside project stakeholders might offer formative feedback to the students in the form of comments or checklists/rubrics.
 - g. Public Product – In project-based learning, students always create a 'product' to share publicly. The product can be a performance, a tangible item, or a presentation of a solution. Public sharing creates a degree of student anxiety, which translates into student motivation to do well.
- 2) Collaboration – 'Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others and sharpening one's own understanding by

listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences' (Kuh, 2008). Collaborating with peers in solving problems prepares students to deal with the complex problems they will encounter after graduation. While students often do not appreciate group work, such work can, if implemented well, be enjoyable and lead to knowledge gains that last for an extended period (Buche, 2013).

- 3) Scaffolding refers to instructional techniques that provide support for student learning (Edglossary, 2015). Scaffolding techniques typically yield higher level of skill acquisition, and faculty slowly remove them over time, shifting the responsibility for learning onto the students. Research considers scaffolding to be an essential element of effective teaching. Some examples of scaffolding include giving a vocabulary lesson or test before applying the concepts in a problem, giving a model or an exemplar project for students to develop a better understanding of expectations, providing formative feedback, and coaching.

Example of Project-Based Learning within a Business Information Systems Course

- 1) Project-Based Learning implementation within a course included the following elements:
 - a. Challenging Problem or Question – On the first day of class, the instructor informed students of the nature of the course and added that the course would be a lot of work, but that, at the end, they would have accomplished feats beyond their expectations, thereby increasing employability. The faculty member also told the students that she intended to achieve the course objectives by applying new instructional methods relevant to 21st-century learners, assuming that learning occurs both inside and outside the boundaries of the physical classroom. The faculty member then distributed the project document, which consisted of approximately 30 pages of project details: the scenario, description of various deliverables, assessment forms, and samples of previous work. The instructor asked the students to prepare an information systems global expansion plan for a small business of their choice, which was the key *challenge* and the core of the class curriculum.

Throughout the course, the instructor treated students as business analysts working for a company on a project requiring tackling real problems facing companies, and producing tangible outcomes: a written report, an information system prototype, a *collaborative* website, and a project presentation. To set the tone for the remainder of the semester, the professor asked students on the first day of class to complete a new hire form instead of the usual student information sheet, and she continually referred to students as analysts.

- b. Sustained Inquiry – The syllabus for the course contained a detailed project timeline with multiple intermediate due dates, and students needed to implement a SharePoint calendar with alerts for all the due dates. The entire course revolved around the student project, integrating a traditional business information systems curriculum. To enable students to construct knowledge with multiple perspectives in mind, the instructor not only diversified teams by major but also assigned 'readings' that represented different genres of resources: primary research articles, TED talks,

video lectures, e-books, popular press articles, and websites. About 70% of the course was production-focused, including the various project deliverables and final adventure, plus some of the student engagement deliverables - LinkedIn Profile and Tech Talk.

- c. Authenticity – The project deliverables included authentic products that a business information systems analyst might prepare: a written report with recommendations for company expansion, suggestions for various technology implementations, a process model, a design for a mobile app, and other features (Jones, 2015).
- d. Student Voice and Choice - The project called for teams of students to pick real companies for which they wanted to conduct their inquiry as business analysts, taking into consideration the team members' common interests and passions. Not only did the teams pick a company for which they chose to "consult" based on their common interests and passions, but each student delivered an informal, five-minute Tech Talk at the beginning of class, based on his or her personal interest, connecting the topics covered in class to current events and their major field of study.
- e. Reflection – With each topic in the course and a new project part assignment, the instructor reflected in class with the students on the relevance of their learning to the business world and to the students personally. Additionally, students completed three *reflections* blogs, commenting on their learning, and two individual status reports pertaining to the project, which allowed them to share their progress and suggest project improvements.
- f. Critique and Revision – Periodically, the instructor provided formative feedback via SharePoint on students' weekly deliverable drafts, which allowed the students to better understand expectations and see how they could improve their work. Additionally, students received peer feedback at different points in the course. Toward the end of the semester, each team met out of class with the faculty member for a thirty-minute consultation to go over their entire project, ask questions, and report status. The instructor required the students to receive formative feedback on the project's final written report from the university's writing center and on the project's presentation from the business school's professional development center that routinely provides student presentation coaching.
- g. Public Product – the students presented their final project pitches in class and shared their presentations on a public presentation-sharing website, Slideshare, which is a part of LinkedIn. Additionally, they shared their presentations and various artifacts developed in class with the companies they consulted for to receive feedback.

2) Collaboration

- a. Within Team Collaboration - The instructor formed semi-random teams during the first week of classes, thus assuring the highest degree of heterogeneity by major and gender. Each team received a SharePoint site with the assignment to build it out during the course, supporting team *collaboration* throughout the project.

Periodically, during the first five minutes of each class, teams reflected on the group process and self-evaluated using the peer evaluation form at the end of the semester. Also periodically, the teams conducted stand-up meetings, reporting on what was going well, what was not going well, bottlenecks, and what they could do better. Twice during the semester, students submitted an individual status report with information similar to that of the standup meeting.

- b. Collaboration with Faculty - The faculty member was available outside of class to answer students' questions via email, a Facebook group, or Skype, creating more 'class time' through social proximity. For informal class communications, the instructor constructed a closed Facebook group where students could instantaneously connect with classmates and the professor. Initially, the instructor asked students to upload their visual résumé to the platform for a digital icebreaker, so students and the instructor could get to know each other. The class then used the platform to upload Tech Talk PowerPoints, often resulting in continued conversations on the topic outside of class as interest sparked or new developments occurred.
- c. Open Networking - To show the relevance of the material studied in the course, the instructor openly networked the course. Students attended a LinkedIn Workshop and then built their profile to connect with professionals, each other, and the instructor. Professionals spoke in class, but the course also expected students to attend a relevant speaker event outside of class, sponsored by the career services office, the Association for Information Systems professional student organization, or by other organizations. Through outside events, students made connections between classroom knowledge and relevant professional development opportunities. Through links to students' final adventures posted on a Business Information Systems Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/INSC20263>, liked by students from around the world, course attendees could see the relevance of their work and their shared purpose with others.

3) Scaffolding

- a. Teambuilding – With the heterogeneous teams in place, students participated in a teambuilding workshop in class and then had to complete a team contract and team résumé for the following class period. The teambuilding workshop facilitated a conversation within the group about communication styles present within the group and how to best work with each member. The team contract set the group *collaboration* expectations for the semester, while the team résumé was a fun way for students to share personal information and find common ground.
- b. Tinkering Workshops/Labs – The business reference librarian constructed an online resource for the project, available at <http://libguides.tcu.edu/BusinessInformationSystems>, and conducted an in-class workshop to help students become effective online researchers. Various technology tinkering labs throughout the semester allowed the students to experiment with new technology and be creative without incurring any grade penalties.

- c. **Flipped Classroom** - As Educause (2012) suggests, 'The flipped classroom is a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed.' The flipped classroom is a pedagogy that is radically transforming education (Bergman and Sams, 2012) and naturally lends itself to implementation in honors courses. Various flipped classroom models exist, some of which involve watching pre-recorded lectures or reading assigned material prior to class and then using class time for application of the material studied at home. This approach not only puts more of the responsibility for learning on students, but it gives them greater impetus to tinker with the ideas. The flipped classroom changes the role of faculty in the course from 'sage-on-the-stage' to 'guide-on-the-side' and the role of students from passive participants in the education process to engaged collaborators, leading to greater mastery of the material. Below is an account of the flipped classroom environment used in the course.
- i. **At Home:** For homework, students completed assignments involving e-book readings with quizzes (Pearson's MyISLab), labs (Pearson's MyITLab-simulations and assessments), and research, attended speaker events, participated in LinkedIn workshops, and worked on the project part drafts.
 - ii. **In Class:** After an opening Tech Talk, students used class time for project management and to work in groups on weekly deliverables that required a familiarity with the homework material. Speakers and tinkering workshops/labs changed the pace of the course occasionally.

5. Student assessment

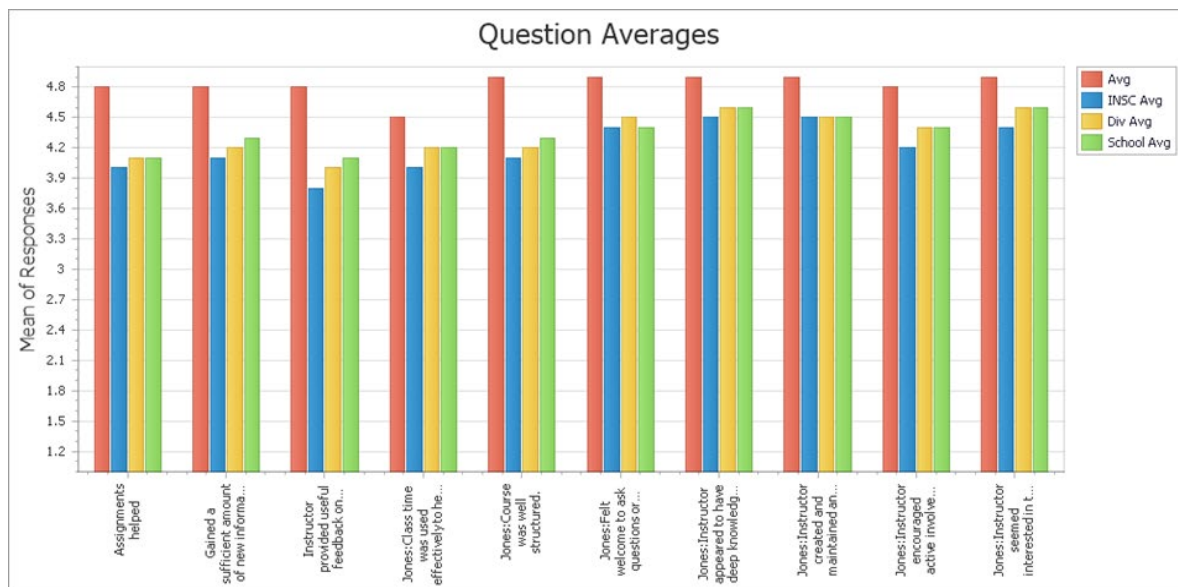
Students received a set of clear expectations for each deliverable of the project. The professor provided detailed evaluation forms/rubrics showing point allocations for each aspect of each deliverable. Additionally, she indicated that she would use the team peer evaluation findings to adjust the grades at the end. The professor used peer evaluations together with a division of work section of the written deliverable, which reported on each team member's contributions in the project, to adjust the final individual grades.

6. Experiences

1. Student Satisfaction

Students received the course with enthusiasm. The quality and caliber of their team deliverables, as well as the learning they took away from class, surprised them. Figure 2 below shows student perceptions of teaching (SPOT) scores for the course compared to the averages in the department, division, and school. The scale used was from 1 to 5, with 1 representing 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 representing 'Strongly Agree'.

Figure 2. Honors student perceptions of teaching- average scores (Avg red) for the PjBL course, compared to the averages in the department (INSC Avg, blue), division (Div avg, yellow) and school (School Avg, green). Note: Avg stands for average score.



Almost 100% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements provided on the anonymous SPOT survey. Overall, the professor's scores on the SPOT survey greatly exceeded the average scores earned by the department, division, and school. Quotes from students' anonymous comments section follow:

- 'By far the best class I've taken at TCU thus far!'
- 'Current setup is very conducive to learning.'
- 'The flipped classroom philosophy was interesting. It required a lot of the students, but it was manageable because the professor was easily accessible.'
- 'The class was very well structured so there was never any confusion on what needed to be done but at the same time there was lots of opportunities for us to make it what we wanted. I feel that I learned the most in this class as far as real-life applications.'
- 'Outside of class readings, quizzes, and assignments were great. I learned a lot about the subject.'
- 'Well-thought-out syllabus. Clear rubrics for every graded assignment. No confusion on due dates.'
- 'The big semester project was interesting; I gained many soft skills in working in a group. The textbook/as well as the project forced me to learn the more technical aspects.'
- 'The consulting project was the bulk of the work, which was a bit intimidating but worked well. I learned a lot about team dynamics as well as information systems by integrating class lessons with the project.'

2. Achievement of Learning Outcomes

The average GPA in the course was 3.77, indicating high level of faculty satisfaction with the student performance in the course. A typical, traditional section of this course yields an average GPA of about 3.0. These results are consistent with the finding of Strobel and van Barneveld (2009), who reported that, when implemented well, PjBL can increase long-term retention of material and replicable skills, as well as improve teachers and students' attitudes towards learning. We do not have results regarding our students' long-term retention.

3. Industry Relevance

The instructor sought input from two local consulting recruiters before initiating the project. Both consulting firms received the project with enthusiasm and provided minor feedback for improvement, which the professor incorporated into the assignment instructions. Some of the students interning with these consulting companies reported having received a similar type of a project as a part of their summer internship. Some students shared their results with the companies on which the projects focused and received positive feedback. In several instances, companies adopted parts of the student projects into their day-to-day operations. This feedback demonstrates that even introductory business core courses can make an impact on the business community.

7. **Time requirement for teachers**

Project-based learning courses require commitment of more resources than traditional, lecture-based or discussion-based courses. The approach is time consuming for the instructor as well as the students. For the instructor, this approach to teaching requires a considerable amount of time upfront, designing and planning the various course elements and, during the course, providing formative feedback to the students. For the students, the approach requires time to prepare for each class, which the traditional lecture approach does not need.

8. **Tips for teachers**

1. Before the course

A faculty member interested in shifting a classroom often does not know where to begin. He or she might feel discouraged to try a different course approach, especially if the current reward system at his or her institution does not take pedagogical innovation into consideration. Anyone interested in converting a traditional course into a PjBL can find resources available in print (e.g., Markham, 2012) and online (e.g., Buck Institute for Education, 2018c). The worksheet presented in Table 1 might assist faculty in the initial thinking when deciding to implement a PjBL course, while Caruana (2012) offers tips for getting started with scaffolding instructions.

Table 1. Project-Based Learning Course Design Worksheet

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING COURSE DESIGN FOR: _____
1. Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:
2. Course Topics/Content Areas/Skills to Develop: (Consider 21 st Century Skills & Meta-Skills, Such As: <i>Creativity</i> , Communications, <i>Collaboration</i> , <i>Critical Thinking</i> , Empathy, Learning To Learn, Design Thinking, & Systems Thinking)
3. Write Learning Objectives For Each Topic:
4. Select Essential Questions/Problems Within Each Topic:
5. Write A Real Professional Scenario To Drive The Project Giving Students Voice/Choice, Based On Degrees Of Freedom Available In Your Course: (Select Partner, If Appropriate, Write Audience, Key <i>Challenge(s)</i> , Motivation, Benefits, Deliverables)
6. Write A Detailed Assignment Narrative For Each Topic Within The Scenario, Addressing The Essential Questions/Problems:
7. Determine Assessment Of Learning Objectives For Each Topic's Assignment:
8. Create Prompts To Introduce Each Topic In Class & To Establish Need to Know:
9. Select Required/Optional Resources For Students To Kick-Start Each Topic's Exploration Prior To Class:
10. Design & Schedule In-Class Learning Experiences For Each Topic To Showcase Need To Know And Facilitate Completion Of Each Topic's Assignment:
11. Determine & Design Forms & Times For Formative & Summative Feedback: (Faculty, Peer, Professional)
12. Determine & Design <i>Reflection</i> Forms And Times For Students (e.g., Self-Pre-Assessment, Team Contract And Resume, Discussions, Blogs/Journals, Papers, Teammate Peer Evaluations, Other Team's Work Evaluation (Memos, Assessment Forms), Course Evaluations):
13. Determine Intermediate And Final Deliverables' Timing And Final Project Showcase:
14. Name The Project or <i>Challenge</i>/State Key Inquiry Question:
15. Put Together A Detailed Project Booklet & Syllabus With All The Information And Make Both Available Via A Collaborative Technology Platform:

Below are some other ideas to consider:

- a. Instructor Changing Role – An instructor should become comfortable with his or her changing role from the broadcaster of knowledge to a learning designer, mentor, and coach and comfortable with various technologies that facilitates team/class communication and teamwork, such as Learning Management Systems features that are helpful, social media platforms for building communities, discussion forums, and relevant mobile apps.
- b. Collaboration – An instructor should make project *collaboration* built into the course as a foundational skill and a part of academic work completed. Students learn to work effectively in teams over time, with guidance. Team building needs to be a part of scaffolding offered in a course with collaborative PjBL. If possible, the instructor should promote *collaboration* – within groups, between groups, between classrooms,

with different universities, or with professionals – to make learning social and more rewarding.

- c. Learning Space - If possible, an instructor should pick a learning space that facilitates teamwork and *collaboration*, where technology can easily assist the teams.
- d. Interdisciplinary Project Nature - If possible, an instructor should try to make the project *interdisciplinary*, even if the course subject matter is not, by including discipline-specific assignments involving a variety of 21st century literacies -- visual literacy, *critical* consumption of information, digital storytelling, *creativity*, etc.
- e. Global Scope - If possible, an instructor should focus students on *challenges* with a global scope to internationalize mindsets and improve global/cultural awareness.
- f. Partners - If possible, an instructor should find community partners to help with the project delivery: university support staff, librarians, the writing center, career services, student development services, companies, professional organizations, or other schools.

2. During the course

Once a course includes PjBL, an instructor might want to start their course by showing the relevance of project-based learning pedagogy to get student buy-in, which is key to success. There are multiple YouTube videos highlighting the future of work -- <https://youtu.be/Y9FOyoS3Fag>. An instructor can directly relate these videos in class to the importance of implementing PjBL. Another approach might involve having students create a video at the end of a PjBL course, highlighting the relevance of work completed in the course. An example of such a video, from the course I describe in this paper, can be found at <https://youtu.be/UqLxEkuY7R8>. A group of honors students has created the video in lieu of a final exam as a *reflection* on the course. I still show this video on the first and last day of my classes to highlight where we are going or where we have been and why.

With each implementation of a PjBL course, an instructor should reflect on its effectiveness and adjust accordingly, changing what has not worked well, based on student feedback and their perceptions.

9. Tips for students

Project-based Learning delivers key relevant skills for 21st century work and engages the students and their passions or interests. While the course involves a lot of work, the work completed is satisfying and allows a student to grow. Here are some key tips for students to consider:

1. Embrace Ambiguity – To succeed at work or in life, you will need to depend on your own resources. Your boss or friend/family member will not give you detailed instructions. You will need to ask questions and figure out a sequence of steps to follow to complete a specific endeavor. There is no time like the present to embrace ambiguity and learn how to resolve ambiguity in a given assignment.
2. Build Rapport and Accountability within Your Team Quickly – In a project-based learning course, a team completes the project and not an individual. The amount of work can be challenging for one person, and the skill sets necessary to complete the

project successfully will vary. Be sure to get to know your teammates' strengths and weaknesses quickly, so you know who can be an asset on which part of the project.

3. Do Not be Afraid to Experiment – When you graduate from college, you will work with new technologies throughout your lifetime. The best way to prepare for that reality is to start experimenting with various programs while you are in college, so you can learn to unlearn and re-learn the new tech quickly.
4. Stay on Track – In a project-based learning course, teams of students need to complete various small deliverables according to a timeline provided by an instructor. Be sure to stay on track, as falling behind can be rather overwhelming at the end of the semester.

10. Transfer to other programs

In the last three years, the Neeley School of Business has scaled down and adapted the honors Business Information Systems curriculum to the mainstream course required of everyone at the TCU's Neeley School of Business. Because of this adaptation, the number of Neeley School students choosing to major in Business Information Systems has tripled. The course syllabus and the project booklet are available from the author for adaptation at other universities. Since the course meets basic business curriculum requirements, other schools can easily adapt it.

11. References, additional information, and relation with Circle of Talent Development

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Relation with Circle of Talent Development

In the introductory article of this issue of *JEHC*, the 'Circle of Talent Development' has been described. Based on interviews with forty honors students and literature about honors programs, it reflects relevant activities of students regarding the development of their talents in an honors program. The author of this note has been asked to score the good practice in relation to the activities in the Circle of Talent Development. The meaning of the scores is: + = somewhat important; ++ = moderately important; +++ = very important; - = not applicable or irrelevant. The scores are intended to illustrate the strengths of a good practice for the reader.

Figure 3: Circle of Talent Development in relation with the good practice 'Scaffolded, Collaborative Project-based Learning' with the teacher's scores



Question to the teacher: What makes this good practice attractive for other teachers?

The teacher of this practice argues: 'Project-based learning incorporates the essence of honors: a *real-world challenge*, with bounded freedom for students to critically/creatively explore this *challenge* as a team, requiring *reflection*, which leads to deeper learning. Often,

we use the metaphor of the Hero's Journey to capture the student journey in honors education. Similarly, in project-based learning, a team of our course "heroes" goes on a project adventure, experiences varied crises along the way, only to win a victory at the end of the course, to come home changed and transformed by the experience.'

The *Journal of the European Honors Council* aims to share research results, knowledge and good practices related to talent development and honors programs in higher education.

It is published by the European Honors Council (EHC): a council for all involved in talent development in higher education in Europe.

This special issue of the Journal (volume 3, no. 1) is devoted to good practices in honors education and contains nine examples of good practices and a paper with an overall analysis of the use of good practices in honors education.

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