Collaboration in groups during teacher education
Dobber, M.

Chapter 2

The development of community competence
in the teacher education curriculum[2]

Teachers are expected to frequently collaborate within teacher communities in schools. This requires teacher education to prepare student teachers by developing the necessary community competence. The present study empirically investigates the extent to which teacher education programmes pay attention to and aim at stimulating the development of community competence in the intended curriculum, the implemented curriculum, and the attained curriculum. Various types of data are gathered and analysed in respect of these three curriculum representations. It appears that community competence is weakly conceptualised in the intended curriculum. In the implemented, and especially the attained curriculum, this results in no systematic and explicit practice in terms of the development of community competence.

2.1 Teacher education and community competence

It is increasingly emphasised that teachers, in addition to their primary classroom-related work, are expected to collaborate with colleagues within their schools (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). In the legislation of many countries (for example, for Australia, see Johnson, 2003; for the USA, see Anderson, 1998), collaboration is described as one of the key aspects of the teaching profession. Also in the Netherlands teachers are formally expected to make constructive contributions to different kinds of meetings within the school, to activities which enable the school to function appropriately, and to the continuing development and improvement of the school (Stichting Beroepskwaliteit Leraren, 2004).

This demand for more collaboration in schools is reflected in the educational and the organisational literature, where it is argued that collaboration can contribute to personal as well as organisational development. The construct of communities of practice has been suggested as a way to overcome the separation between personal and organisational development, as it brings together both the social structure within institutions and experiences of everyday existence and interpersonal events (Cobb, McClain, de Silva Lamberg, & Dean, 2003). In the context of schools, teacher communities are often mentioned as fruitful collaborative contexts as they provide an ongoing venue for teacher learning to improve professional practice, collective capacity, and continuing intellectual development (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Little, 2003; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). Hence, it is argued that teacher communities help teachers to "develop a vision for their practice; a set of understandings about teaching, learning, and children; dispositions about how to use this knowledge; practices that allow them to act on their intentions and beliefs; and tools that support their efforts" (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005, p. 385-386).

Although the effect of participating in communities on the teaching performance of teachers or the learning process of pupils is not straightforward, it is obvious that contemporary teaching practice demands collaborative teachers with sufficient community competence. Hence, it is important that teacher education at least partially focuses on the development of the community competence that student teachers need in order to collaborate with colleagues and to participate in teacher communities in schools. Some authors argue that teacher education institutes do not meet this expectation. For example, Beck and Kosnik (2001) state that, despite the emphasis on collaboration in schools, teacher education often remains rather individualistic. They base their statements on the empirical studies by Lortie (1975) and Goodlad (1990) which found that student teachers perceived teaching as an individual affair and they were not taught otherwise in the teacher education programme. In spite of the movement of the past fifteen years toward linking teacher

education to professional development schools, it has been suggested that the situation has not changed significantly since Lortie and Goodlad. In designing teacher education, Timoštšuk and Ugaste (2010), Whitford and Metcalf-Turner (1999) and Tom (1997) claim that we still largely ignore the social dimension of teaching and the value of community development.

In the present study we empirically investigated these claims by looking at the extent to which teacher education programmes pay attention to and aim at stimulating the development of community competence. Derived from a definition of social competence in the context of communities by Admiraal, Lockhorst, Beishuizen, and Pilot (2007, p. 64), we defined the community competence of a teacher as "the ability to establish, maintain and develop relationships with other professionals, to contribute to a professional learning and working culture in the school". Student teachers may have achieved a certain level of community competence from previous experiences in their academic, professional and social life (e.g., during their master's study at university or a secondary job) but most of them will not have had many experiences within the context of teacher communities. Consequently, we consider teacher education to play an important role in preparing student teachers for successfully functioning within the teacher communities they will come across at school. This means that student teachers have to learn how to collaborate as well as to reflect upon this collaboration. As such, we may expect that teacher education not only acknowledges the importance of community competence, but also actively organises activities to stimulate the development of community competence, including reflection on this development and suitable assessment procedures.

We report on a study into the current state of the art in three teacher education institutes in the Netherlands which represent the practices within the Dutch postgraduate teacher education curriculum. This provides an interesting context for studying community competence, as the educational policy differs from most other northern European countries: in these other countries the impact of governmental interference is stronger and more profound than in the Dutch system, in which the "content and shape of programmes (and the accompanying innovations) are the responsibility of the teacher education institutes" (Swennen, Volman, & Van Essen, 2008, p. 247).

To investigate the extent to which teacher education pays attention to and aims at stimulating community competence development we considered three different representations of the curriculum, as distinguished by Van den Akker (1998, based on Goodlad, 1994). These representations are the intended curriculum, the implemented curriculum, and the attained curriculum. The *intended* curriculum describes the original vision, basic philosophy, rationale, or mission underlying the curriculum, as well as documentation about the courses, which can have either a prescribed and obligatory or exemplary and voluntary status. The *implemented* curriculum concerns the teachers'

interpretations of what the intended curriculum intends and implies, and defines the nature and content of the interactions between teachers, students, and resource materials which take place in the classroom. Finally, the *attained* curriculum refers to the actual learning experiences that the students undertake and the learning outcomes achieved by the students, as recorded in the results of their assessments (Van den Akker, 1998). When attention is given to a certain type of competence on all three levels, we expect this competence to be better conceptualised within the programme and as such be more deeply embedded into the programme.

The Van den Akker's framework (1998) provides an opportunity to present a more detailed view of the extent to which the development of community competence is stimulated in teacher education. Therefore, it was possible to detect to what extent the statement that teacher education institutes are inclined to be individualistic is true for the three Dutch teacher education programmes under investigation. First, the methodology used in this study is described. Then, we present the results, describing how the development of community competence is embedded at the three curriculum levels. Finally, our conclusions are presented, based on our overview of the combination of the three curriculum levels and we discuss the implications of these findings for the teacher education programme. The research question central to this study was the following: *To what extent do the teacher education curricula in three teacher education institutes in the Netherlands pay attention to and aim to stimulate the development of community competence?*

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Setting

This exploratory study took place in three postgraduate teacher education institutes in the Netherlands. In the Dutch context, students enrolling in such programmes have already obtained a master's degree in a relevant school subject. The programmes consist of a one-year teacher training course during which half of the week is spent on school-related activities and the other half is dedicated to activities in the institute. School-related activities are performed in the form of an internship or a paid job at a school; they involve actual classroom teaching and sometimes class observation and classroom-related research as well. During this internship or job, students are supervised by a mentor in the school. The internship gradually shifts from students observing other teachers to handling classes independently. Students spend one or two days a week at the institute, and also perform activities for the institute at home or at school. There are great differences between teacher education institutes and schools in the Netherlands with respect to the design of the

partnerships between school and university (Maandag, Deinum, Hofman, & Buitink, 2005; Van Velzen & Volman, 2009). As we have already pointed out, since government influence on the teacher education curriculum in the Netherlands is less strong than in other North European countries (Swennen, Volman, & Van Essen, 2008), institutes have some freedom in designing their curriculum.

The three teacher education institutes investigated in this study are among the largest in the Netherlands, and each offers teacher education in approximately 15 different school subjects. In all three institutes, the programmes start with an introduction week in which the student teachers are assessed, formulate their own personal development plan, are oriented towards the teaching profession, and get to know each other. After this introduction period, student teachers get involved in different kinds of groups. All student teachers are enrolled in four different groups: mentor groups, subject matter groups, reflection groups, and research groups. In the mentor groups, student teachers work on their personal development as teachers, in the subject matter groups they learn the specifics of teaching their own subject (e.g., biology), in the reflection groups they reflect on their experiences of school-related activities, and in the research groups they carry out a small-scale educational research project. The development of the student teacher throughout teacher education is assessed by means of an electronic portfolio written by the student teacher and a final assessment by the teacher educator and the school mentor. In the portfolio, the students have to provide descriptions of and evidence for their growing teacher competences.

2.2.2 Data

We selected the three teacher education institutes on the basis of their involvement in university-based postgraduate teacher education and their size. These institutes are among the largest in the Netherlands, enrolling 100 to 200 student teachers per year. To consider the different curriculum representations and reach triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 1994), we gathered various types of data. Table 2.1 shows which data sources are related to the different curriculum representations of Van den Akker (1998). We studied the opportunities the program offered to stimulate the development of community competence by collecting information on the arrangement of collaboration within the programmes. Using the concept of collaboration facilitated the conversations with the interviewees because the (student) teachers were more familiar with the concepts of collaboration, collaborative activities and collaborative competence than they were with community (competence). Additionally, the arrangement of collaboration within the different programmes is seen as the context in which community competence can be used and learned.

Table 2.1

Overview of data sources related to curriculum levels and institutes

Curriculum representations (Van den Akker, 1998)	3 study guides	Interviews with 3 heads of department	Interviews with 13 teacher educators	Interviews with 9 student teachers	Portfolios of 46 students	Observation of 7 groups	3 electronic learning environments
Intended curriculum	x	x	x				
Implemented curriculum			x			x	x
Attained curriculum				x	x		
Institutes:							
Institute 1	1	1	7	6	14	5	1
Institute 2	1	1	2	2	10	2	1
Institute 3	1	1	4	1	22	0	1

The study guides of the three institutes were analysed to gain insight into the formal programme of each institute. The guides present the vision and mission of the teacher education institutes, which are potentially related to the development of community competence. Interviews with the department heads of all three institutes were also conducted as a source of insight into the intended curriculum. They answered generic questions about their visions and missions regarding the development of community competence. Similarly, interviews with teacher educators were conducted as a source of information on both the intended and the implemented curriculum. Regarding the intended curriculum, teacher educators talked about their vision on the development of community competence. Regarding the implemented curriculum, the teacher educators explained their perceptions of the curriculum, and specifically about whether and how they embedded the development of community competence in their teaching practice. We selected thirteen teacher educators from the three different institutes, as that number offered us the possibility to include teacher educators responsible for all types of groups and from different subjects, in order to obtain an overall view. Interviews with student teachers were held to enable us to describe the attained curriculum. They talked about possible learning processes concerning the development of their community competence. We selected nine student teachers from different subjects, so that all institutes were represented. They were in

the final phase of their education so that they could reflect on the whole study year and all types of groups in which they participated, and were willing and able to give a complete description of the kinds of activities undertaken during the programme. All interviews were semi-structured and mainly focused on the extent to which the development of community competence was deemed important, and how it was implemented in the curriculum. The interviews were the primary source of evidence in this study, combined with study guides, portfolios, observations and digital environments in order to have a complete overview of the way teacher education stimulates community competence development. The statements of the interviewees will be used in this article to exemplify the results of our study.

We randomly selected the portfolios of 46 student teachers to represent the learning outcomes in community competence, again of different institutes and different subjects. This relatively large number of portfolios gave us the chance to verify the data of the interviews with a larger group of student teachers. Different types of groups were observed to gain insight into the implemented curriculum. As there were no formalised research group meetings at the time we conducted this study, we were not able to observe these groups. We were also unable to attend the groups at one of the institutes. We included a total of seven groups in order to get an overview of all types of groups available at the time. Additionally, the logs of the electronic learning environments of each of the different types of groups were collected, to examine the process of the development of community competence taking place digitally.

2.2.3 Data analysis

The three curriculum representations of Van den Akker (1998) were used to analyse the different data. We used Atlas.ti (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany) for the analysis of the interviews. The derived analytic scheme was used by the first two authors to code all interviews during several rounds until full agreement was reached. The other data sources were analysed separately by the two first authors.

To determine the aim of the *intended curriculum*, we reviewed the study guides and analysed the data from the interviews with the teacher educators and the heads of department. In the study guides, we scrutinised all texts to search for references to (the development of) community competence. We included all sentences referring to the acquisition of community competence in the mission/vision statement, the learning aims, the course descriptions, and the assessment procedure. From the interviews, we used those parts in which the interviewees described what they considered to be the ideal way to educate student teachers in community competence. A distinction was made between their views on the importance of community competence for the profession and their views on the role of teacher education institutes.

The *implemented curriculum* was analysed on the basis of interviews with teacher educators, group observations, and the logs of the electronic learning environments used by groups. As mentioned before, we may expect teacher educators not only to recognise the importance of community competence, but we also expect them to stimulate community competence development by organising collaborative activities, including activities focusing on reflection on and assessment of community competence development. Therefore, during our analysis we searched within the interviews for teacher educators' comments about the way they stimulate community competence, and categorised these statements into the three main categories: collaborative activities, reflection and assessment. The collaborative activities are configured within different group arrangements: mentor groups, subject matter groups, reflection groups, and research groups. The activities within these types of groups, together with reflection and assessment, have an important role in the curriculum. Student teachers present their reflections in electronic portfolios, which are used by the teacher educators as a basis for assessment. Comments about the electronic learning environment were also considered, as this turned out to be a means of teaching in addition to face-to-face meetings. In analysing the observations, we focused on if and how collaborative activities were performed. The discourses in the electronic learning environments were analysed in two phases. First, we determined what kinds of activities were visible in the environments. Next, the environment was searched for evidence of collaboration. Evidence of collaboration was defined as the following: (1) when a student reported a collaborative activity with a colleague or fellow student, which occurred face-to-face or in the electronic learning environment, or (2) when two or more students were engaged in a discussion about an experience, a problem, or a product.

The *attained curriculum* was analysed on the basis of interviews with the student teachers and their electronic portfolios. We looked at those parts of the interviews in which student teachers explicitly talked about their experiences of the curriculum in relation to the development of community competence. Also in this case, the statements of the student teachers were analysed and categorised on the three main categories: collaborative activities, reflection and assessment. The portfolios were searched for instances of student teachers describing a learning experience concerning community competence.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Intended curriculum

To give an indication of the institute's intentions towards embedding the development of community competence within the curriculum, we give an overview of the visions and mission of the teacher education program, the heads of department and teacher educators. All institutes mention the development of community competence in the mission statement within the study guides. As a result, we infer that they define the concept as important. However, they barely explain how community competence is implemented in the curriculum. It appears that the development of community competence is weakly conceptualised within these curricula.

For example, the study guides of two institutes mention that a teacher should be able to collaborate with his/her colleagues. Concerning how they have to learn to collaborate, the three institutes mention roles in which community competence is expected to be acquired, namely "teacher outside the class", "teacher as a colleague and team member", and "teacher as a member of the school organization". According to the study guide of one institute, these roles are covered in the mentor groups and theme meetings; in the second institute the role is tackled in the mentor groups and in the portfolios and in the third institute, it appears that student teachers should develop community competence as a home study activity. There is no elaboration on what these roles entail or what exactly the student teachers learn during the mentor groups, theme meetings, internships or home study activities.

Regarding the vision of teacher educators and heads of department the majority of teacher educators and heads of department stated that collaboration was important for teachers, or even necessary in the teaching profession. An example of such a statement is the following: "If a teacher is not able to work with others, learn with others, then you have a big problem. I find that pretty obvious". Additionally, the majority of the educators (6 of 8) and one head of department we interviewed about the role of the teacher education stated that the teacher education institute should be a place where collaboration between student teachers and community development is stimulated. By contrast, two educators were not convinced that the teacher education institute is the place for student teachers to develop community competence. One teacher educator was convinced that it was necessary for student teachers to develop professionally in a way that is in accordance with their personality, meaning that if they do not wish or are unable to collaborate, the teacher educator did not intend to encourage collaboration. The other teacher educator stated that the development of community competence should have taken place in the master's

programme which the students followed previously, and therefore no longer needed to be a focus within teacher education.

2.3.2 Implemented curriculum

To distil the way in which the development of community competence is implemented within the curriculum, we will discuss in this section which activities are undertaken to stimulate community competence development, including reflection activities and assessment procedures. Because there are several differences between the four groups arrangements in the teacher education institute (mentor group, subject matter group, reflection group and research group), the characteristics of the different group arrangements are summarised in Table 2.2.

The majority of teacher educators state that they stimulate the development of community competence throughout the four group arrangements. In the mentor, subject matter en reflection group, the teacher educators state that they organise collaborative activities for the student teachers to stimulate community competence development. In the research group, collaboration is stimulated but student teachers are also allowed to carry out their research individually. However, the intention of the teacher educator to organise collaborative activities was not always visible in our observations or in the use of the electronic learning environment.

In the mentor and reflection group, we observed a lot of interaction between student teachers to discuss problems and questions and to give feedback on each other's products. However, in the subject matter group, we observed that the teacher educator played a central role in the classroom by providing a lot of individual tasks or tasks to perform in pairs. Also the electronic learning environment lacked signs of collaboration. The electronic learning environment is mainly used as an information tool. In the few instances in which the electronic learning environment is deployed as a collaborative environment, the teacher educator played a central role in stimulating student teachers to use the environment in a collaborative way.

Table 2.2

Characteristics of teacher education group arrangements

Group	Number of student teachers	Goal	How is collaboration stimulated?	Activity of teacher educator	Use of ELE (electronic learning environment)
Mentor group	15-25	Big picture of being a teacher	All teacher educators said they gave tasks requiring collaboration	Mostly communication between teacher educator and student	7 of the 8 groups used an ELE, of which 3 used it as a collaboration tool
Subject matter group	3-40	Content- related issues, procedures and methods	Five of eight teacher educators said they stimulated collaboration by setting collaborative tasks.	Not much communication between teacher educators and students or between students themselves	Mostly for information, 2 groups used it as a collaboration tool
Reflection group	3-4	Exchange experiences	Teacher educators said full collaboration was inherent in the group	All teacher educators provided the students with methods to exchange expe-riences. 3 were present and active as chairmen or participants, 2 provided help when needed, 2 were not present at all	2 groups used it as a collaboration tool to prepare the reflection group
Research group	Some individual, some in groups of 3-4	Performing practice-oriented research	All teacher educators stimulated conducting research in groups, but individual research projects were allowed	One teacher educator supervised the collaboration within the groups	Everybody used the ELE to reflect on each other's projects

Next, we will further elaborate on the specifics of the different groups. First, the *mentor groups* were groups in which student teachers worked on their own professional development as teachers. Most importantly, all five teacher educators responsible for such a group said that they stimulated community competence by setting collaborative tasks. The exact way in which they stimulated collaboration differed; three said they only used the "teach what you preach" method by collaborating with other teacher educators; one organised team-building activities and put verbal emphasis on the importance of collaboration; and one teacher educator used all three of these strategies. In accordance with the results of the interviews, we saw during our observations of four mentor groups

that in three of these there were many opportunities for student teachers to discuss problems and questions, and to react and give feedback on each others' products. In one mentor group, there was much collaboration between the teacher educator and individual student teachers, but less between student teachers. The electronic learning environment of the mentor groups shows a less positive picture of how the development of community competence is implemented within the curriculum. We found that seven mentor groups used it and one did not. Only three of these, however, were very active in their use of the ELE as a collaboration tool. These had an active teacher educator who stimulated the discussion by posting regularly. In one of these groups, the student teachers were obliged to react on each other on a regular basis.

Second, the *subject matter groups* were groups in which student teachers followed subject-specific courses. These groups were concerned with content-related issues, methods, and procedures. First, five of the eight teacher educators interviewed about this group said that collaborative activities were undertaken in these groups. On the other hand, during the observation of two subject matter groups, we saw that the teacher educators played a central role in the meetings. The student teachers usually had to perform tasks individually or in pairs. In addition, most subject matter groups used the electronic learning environment mainly as an information board, and only two educators tried to use the ELE as a collaboration tool in which the student teachers were obliged to contribute to the discussion forum. Although the teacher educators were closely involved and reacted regularly to the postings of the student teachers, the student teachers rarely reacted to each other.

In the *reflection groups*, the student teachers exchanged learning experiences. All nine teacher educators we interviewed about this type of group said that they gave the student teachers a reflection method which they could use to talk about their experiences. Seven teacher educators added information about their presence and role as an educator. With regard to their presence during the collaborative activities, two teacher educators reported they were not present at all during the meetings. Three said that they were present and active during the meetings; sometimes as participants only, sometimes as chairmen. Two did not participate in the meetings but were present in the classroom in case the student teachers needed help. With respect to the supervising activities of the teacher educator on the collaboration, two of them reported that they asked their students to post their experiences on the electronic environment of the mentor group or in the electronic portfolio in advance, and to react to each other's experiences. Five teacher educators also followed the collaboration within these groups afterwards; four asked for a report on the meetings to be put in the portfolio, and one teacher educator asked student teachers about the process of these groups on a regular basis in the mentor groups. In addition to the descriptions of the teacher educators, from the observation of a reflection group we found

that student teachers interacted a great deal with each other and provided their group members with feedback on their experiences.

The last type of group was the *research group*, in which students were expected to carry out a research project. With regard to the development of community competence in this type of group, all eight teacher educators who had experience with these groups said that collaboration in conducting the research project was stimulated, but they did allow student teachers to perform their projects individually. They reported that when student teachers collaborated in conducting research, the collaboration was predominantly on a meta-level. A teacher educator explained: "What we want in the collaboration here is to keep each other focused, to help each other in formulating the research question, in executing the research plan, and in monitoring the time path". Another teacher educator observed: "Most students kept each other posted on their planning, some did the same subject, and a few shared their data". One teacher educator said that she supervised the collaboration by asking her students how they collaborated, what they learned about it, and what added value this collaboration had for their research projects. Furthermore, we found that, with regard to the electronic learning environments, all research groups in each institute used the same environment and were asked to give feedback on each other's projects.

The second aspect we looked for in the interviews was whether the teacher educators specifically organised *reflection* activities to stimulate community competence development. Although most teacher educators stated that they stimulate community competence through collaborative activities, there was considerable variation between teacher educators in whether their students had to reflect on their development of community competence, either in a general way in their portfolios or about specific group processes after working in a group. It also depended on the level of the student teacher at the beginning of the project, as the following quotation exemplifies: "If I think it is difficult for a student I am more likely to ask him to write something about collaboration than students who already do it [collaboration] easily." While three educators asked the student teachers to reflect regularly on the process in the groups at the institute, one educator only intervened when conflict arose.

The last aspect relevant in determining whether teacher educators stimulate the development of community competence is whether and how this competence is *assessed*. On the basis of the interviews we can conclude that there was no consensus on how the development of community competence should be assessed. This is illustrated in the following quotations: "There is no final attainment level for this competence." "This assessment is very difficult; it is very subjective". Five teacher educators said that, as a consequence, community competence was not assessed explicitly. Two of the six teacher educators stated that although there were sometimes problems with the community

competence of student teachers, it was not a reason to withhold a teaching certificate. One of them explained this as follows:

> When it comes to the point that I have to withhold a certificate, then I notice that this [community competence] is always one [aspect] that I do not take into account in my judgement. If that judgement is discussed, you look for more evident things.

2.3.3 Attained curriculum

We report on the attained curriculum by clustering the results of the different types of data (interviews with student teachers and electronic portfolios) around the same topics that we used to discuss the implemented curriculum: first, we discuss the activities to stimulate the development of community competence, followed by a discussion of the reflection on and assessment of community competence.

The student teachers gave a slightly different view on the possibilities to collaborate with each other than the teacher educators. The majority of student teachers stated that there were many opportunities to collaborate with their fellow students throughout the four group arrangements. They particularly liked the occasions when they exchanged experiences and felt their problems were recognised by other student teachers. A student teacher formulated this as follows: "It is nice to hear that it is the same for the other (students), that others also have the same problems. We all have the same issues and it is nice to talk about these".

However, the student teachers also had critical remarks on the collaborative activities in the curriculum. For example, three of the six student teachers who reported on the subject matter groups, explained that it was not common to collaborate in these group. Much depended on the teacher educator of that specific group. Additionally, four student teachers reporting on the reflection groups explained that although the idea of exchanging experiences was useful, the way in which they had to do it was less than optimal. Their main problem concerned the methods they had to use to talk to each other. Without a teacher educator being present during the meetings, it was difficult to stick to these methods and to talk about their experiences on a higher level. A student teacher described it as follows:

> It is no better than the conversation I have with my fellow students in the pub. I do not think it is a disaster, but it should be stricter. It is just going wrong in the implementation phase. I think that during the meetings there has to be someone around to ask questions. Now it is left a bit to personal choice. We did it once with X [teacher educator]; then it went great.

Finally, four student teachers reported they collaborated in the research groups, although this was not compulsory. They chose to collaborate for pragmatic reasons, such as the fun of collaborating with friends or a lack of inspiration in choosing a topic.

As we now know how collaboration was perceived by student teachers in the four types of groups, we will turn to how they perceived the *reflection* which they were required to undertake. It seems that there are no official guidelines concerning reflection activities. Six student teachers reported only individual reflection activities and one student teacher mentioned having to reflect within a group at the institute on what they did together and what they found difficult in this collaboration.

These different perspectives on reflection between students are also visible when we consider the content of their portfolios. In the 46 portfolios we investigated, 41 student teachers mentioned instances in which they encountered colleagues in collaborative contexts. These reports, however, remained on a very descriptive level: for example, "I have got involved with other teachers and attended the new teachers' drinks party on 31 October and eagerly engaged with other members of staff". Only 24 portfolios included reflection on collaboration with colleagues. Collaboration with fellow student teachers hardly appeared in these portfolios, and if it was included it was briefly and only descriptively.

Concerning the *assessment* of the development of community competence, the student teachers showed the same confusion as the teacher educators, confirming that there was no consensus on how the community competence should be assessed. All seven student teachers that we interviewed about the assessment of community competence found that it was not very transparent. Furthermore, they reported differences between teacher educators and groups in this area. Two student teachers said that the assessment by their teacher educator was quite strict, whereas the other five felt it was quite lax, or did not even know for certain if their teacher educator had ever looked at their portfolios. This is illustrated by a quote from one student teacher about writing a report on his reflection group: "You have to do it, but they do not check it. If you do not do it, you have to deal with it yourself".

2.4 Conclusion and discussion

We investigated the extent to which three postgraduate teacher education institutes in the Netherlands pay attention to and aim at stimulating the development of community competence. This question was approached through three curriculum representations. It appears that in the intended curriculum community competence is found important, but in the implemented and especially the attained curriculum, the development of community competence receives less attention.

Looking at the intended curricula of the teacher education institutes, we found that the development of community competence was considered to be an important topic in the programmes. The study guides revealed that all institutes in some way or other stated the importance of developing community competence by their student teachers. This is in line with the descriptions provided by the teacher educators and heads of department, which show that almost all deemed it important for student teachers to develop community competence. At the same time, community competence was weakly conceptualised within the study guides.

This weak conceptualisation was also apparent in the implemented curriculum, where the importance denoted by teacher educators in the intended curriculum was not systematically reflected in their own descriptions of their actions. Teacher educators reported that they paid attention to community competence in the sense that they organised different collaboration activities. At the same time, only a few teacher educators said they stimulated reflection on the development of community competence. Most teacher educators believed that community competence was adequately developed by taking part in collaborative activities. Additionally, most teacher educators stated that community competence was not given explicit attention within the assessment procedure, and for two teacher educators a certain minimum level of community competence was not necessarily a requirement for receiving the teacher's certificate. This lack of systematic assessment of the development of community competence is probably related to the fact that community competence was weakly conceptualised in the study guides. From observations and examination of the electronic learning environment we found that there were many differences between the teacher educators in how they implemented community competence both face-to-face and in the electronic learning environment. In the meetings, some teacher educators played a very active role in stimulating student teachers to collaborate, whereas others did not. With regard to the electronic learning environment, differences were even greater, as some teacher educators did not use it at all, while others used it very intensively and as a real collaborative tool.

The attained curriculum further complicates the picture. Student teachers said that there were opportunities to collaborate within the programme, especially in the mentor, subject matter, and reflection groups, but there were differences in how much they appreciated this. The opportunities to share experiences were mostly highly valued, but much depended on the presence or absence of the teacher educator. In the portfolios we observed great differences in the amount of attention that student teachers paid to describing their learning processes concerning community competence, and in the depth of reflection on this topic.

Our findings are a more nuanced version of the statement of Beck and Kosnik (2001) that teacher education is still very individualistic. We found that the study guides, teacher educators, and heads of department all underlined the importance of the development of community competence in the intended curriculum, but the conceptualisation of this concept in practice was weak. Concerning the implemented and attained curricula, teacher educators, student teachers and the materials showed that there was no systematic and explicit policy for stimulating the development of community competence of student teachers. A consequence of the above-described practice of teacher education institutes is that student teachers do not systematically learn how they can benefit from collaboration with colleagues and fellow student teachers, and they do not intentionally learn how to reflect on their own community competence. When they begin to work in schools after completing their educational programme, this may prevent them from contributing to, as well as benefiting from, teacher communities. Although the effect of participating in communities on the teaching performance of the teachers or the learning process of the pupils is not straightforward, it is obvious that contemporary teaching practice demands collaborative teachers with sufficient community competence. As this was acknowledged and addressed in the intended curriculum of the three teacher education institutes, it was relevant to study if and how this was conceptualized, operationalised and experienced at the implemented and attained curriculum levels.

This study was conducted in three representative teacher education institutes in the Netherlands. As noted above, in teacher education in the Netherlands, the intended curriculum is defined by the views of the teacher educators and heads of department. We wonder whether the variance in the implementation of educating towards community competence in different curriculum perspectives is smaller in other countries, where the curriculum is defined and supervised by the government (Swennen, Volman, & Van Essen, 2008). It would also be interesting to investigate how student teachers acquire community competence during teacher education, in order to determine at which points this development can be stimulated within the programme. Additionally, with the evolution of teacher education towards professional development schools, another interesting question is whether and how these school-institute partnerships can stimulate the development of community competence and communities in student teachers' daily practice in school.

Given that the concept of communities is frequently used in the educational literature (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Little, 2003; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005), it is interesting to see that teacher education is struggling with the conceptualisation and implementation of community competence. At the same time, it appears from the findings of our study of the intended curriculum that the development of community competence is deemed an important component of the teacher education curriculum. We believe that there are

currently opportunities within teacher education programmes to stimulate the development of community competence more explicitly that are left unexploited. A possibility for optimising the level of attention given to community competence can be found in an explicit design focusing on learning to collaborate and acquiring community competence. We believe that all types of groups discussed in this paper can be fruitful environments for this, but especially the mentor and reflection groups, as these have the inherent goal of learning to collaborate. In all groups the electronic learning environment can be used much more for collaboration. The design should include guidelines for teacher educators, not only for using collaborative activities, but also for stimulating reflection on these activities. These reflective activities can be performed both in groups and individually in the portfolio. For both of these activities, student teachers should be given tools to help them in reflecting on their community competence. Teacher educators can then use these reflections in their assessment of student teachers' community competence. Only when aims concerning the development of community competence at the intended curriculum level are operationalised, assessed, and experienced at the implemented and attained levels, can a teacher education programme be considered to pay sufficient attention to those key factors of teacher competence.