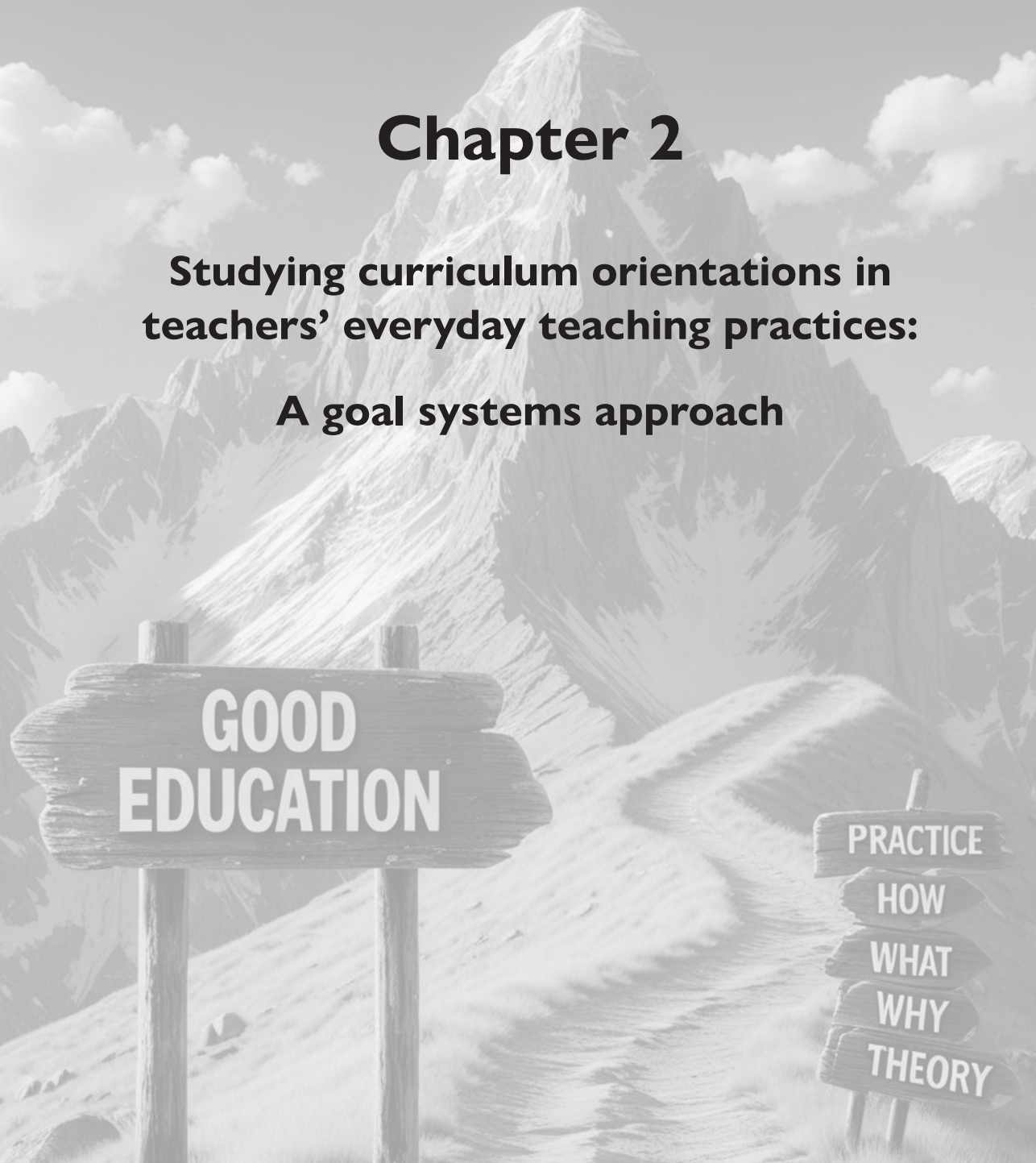
Teaching, curriculum and purposes of education: connecting theory and practice

Zweeris, K.

Chapter 2

Studying curriculum orientations in teachers' everyday teaching practices:

A goal systems approach



This chapter was published in revised form as:
Zweeris, K., Tigelaar, E. H., & Janssen, F. J. J. M. (2023). Studying curriculum orientations in teachers' everyday teaching practices: A goal systems approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 122, 103969. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2022.103969

Abstract

Education has recently been criticised for focusing too narrowly on student development in terms of cognitive performance as measured by standardised tests. As a result, teachers are increasingly expected to contribute to student development in ways that transcend the acquisition of knowledge and skills. To support teachers in this process it is important to gain insight into the goals that underlie their teaching practices. In this explorative study, the goal system laddering method was used with six teachers to gain insight into their teaching activities and their underlying goals. The findings illustrate how teachers' teaching activities and the goals underlying these activities can be interpreted in relation to curriculum orientations.

2.1 Introduction

There have been many debates in recent years about what purposes education ought to serve. Educational policies and measures of accountability have been criticised for focusing on a narrow conception of educational quality (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Biesta, 2012, 2015; Cockerill, 2015; Nussbaum, 2010; Reeves, 2018; Verger & Curran, 2014). Alongside these policies and accountability measures, education has been criticised for considering student development mainly in terms of cognitive performance as measured by standardised tests. However, considerable efforts have been made in the past decade to shift the educational discourse about purposes of education towards wider perspectives. For example, Cockerill (2015) and Nussbaum (2010) have argued that many education systems view student development from a utilitarian perspective (i.e., society's future economic gains), thus neglecting the role of education in promoting other forms of development, such as critical (global) citizenship, practical reasoning and cultivated and developed sympathy. Likewise, Biesta (2012, 2015, 2018) has criticised the one-sided focus on the qualification function of education: the transmission of knowledge, skills and dispositions required for the next step in life. Biesta, among others, argues that education should also focus on students' socialisation (i.e., initiation into the norms and values of social groups) and subjectification (i.e., developing an understanding of the liberties they will enjoy as adults and learning how to act responsibly with those liberties). Moreover, in Central Europe and Scandinavia the renewed interest in the concept of *Bildung* in the past decades can be seen as a movement that reflects the need for a broader understanding of educational aims (Sjöström, 2011; Sjöström & Eilks, 2020; Varkoy, 2013). At the same time, reforms initiated by the National Research Council in the United States have aimed to promote interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies (NRC, 2012a) and integrate disciplinary practices and core concepts and ideas (NRC, 2012b), while others focus on individual and societal wellbeing (OECD, 2018).

As a result of these arguments, and similar ones put forward by other scholars, teachers today are increasingly expected to contribute to their

students' development in ways that transcend the mere acquisition of knowledge and skills (OECD, 2019). This may require them to introduce new approaches to teaching and it is generally accepted that the support given to teachers should start with thorough reflection on their personal professional teaching context and should be congruent with this (Bremner, 2019; Janssen et al., 2013; Malderez & Wedell, 2007). To support teachers in this process, it is important to gain insight into the—often tacit—general educational purposes and dispositions that underlie their everyday teaching practices (Cheung & Wong, 2002; Männikkö & Husu, 2020). The development of curriculum and teaching practices by teachers is complex and should be supported by a general theoretical framework (Taba, 1962, p. 413).

It is possible that this framework could be provided by "curriculum orientations". Considerable research on the general purposes of education has been conducted in the past, and views on these purposes have been clustered around four different curriculum orientations (Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Kliebard, 2004; Schiro, 2013), representing four schools of thought about educational purposes and their implications for teaching, students and learning, for example. The curriculum orientations are: 1) Social Efficiency, 2) Scholar Academic, 3) Learner Centered and 4) Social Reconstruction. Teachers' views on these curriculum orientations have mainly been studied using questionnaires (Cheung & Wong, 2003; Jenkins, 2009). Two criticisms need to be considered here. First, Jackson (1992) criticised the curriculum orientations framework because it could promote ideal-typical considerations of educational purposes, while actual teaching contexts often reflect a complex interplay between characteristics of multiple orientations. Second, the use of questionnaires could be considered an inadequate method of inquiry. Although questionnaires may provide insight into teachers' curriculum orientations, research has shown that the reported orientations alone do not elucidate their actual teaching practices (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Consequently, research should explore methods that connect actual teaching practices to teachers' goals.

Taking these arguments and criticisms into account, teachers' everyday teaching practices formed the starting point for inquiry in this study. First,

teachers were asked to describe what they do in a representative class and what goals they aimed to achieve through these activities. Then they were repeatedly asked why they believed these goals were important. This method, the goal system laddering method (Janssen et al., 2013), was used to explore the goals underlying teachers' everyday teaching practices and how these goals and practices are related to multiple curriculum orientations. The theoretical framework of curriculum orientations and the goal system laddering method are described in more detail in the following sections. The Method section then gives information about the participants, the use of the goal system laddering method and how the data was analysed. The results are presented in the Findings section. Finally, in the Discussion section conclusions are drawn from the data, followed by an in-depth reflection on the implications for future research and teacher support.

This study has two main aims. The first is to explore whether the laddering method can be used to provide deeper insights into teachers' goals regarding student development in relation to their teaching activities. The second is to investigate whether the goals that teachers describe provide deeper insights into beliefs about general purposes of education. To study the latter, curriculum orientations are used as a lens for analysis.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Curriculum orientations

Discussions about what purposes education ought to serve can be traced back many centuries. Plato, for example, reflected on this issue in relation to the needs of society and the development of a multiplicity of human talents (Noddings, 2016, p. 2). During the nineteenth century many stakeholders disagreed on the purposes education should serve (Kliebard, 2004; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014; Schiro, 2013). Since the 1970s, several curriculum theorists have classified the differing views on purposes of education into four

curriculum orientations[2] (Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Kliebard, 2004; McNeil, 1977; Schiro, 2013; Zeichner, 1993). As noted in the introduction, many scholars have criticised contemporary education for having a narrow focus on "good education". As a result, teachers are increasingly expected to contribute to their students' development beyond mere course content knowledge and skills (OECD, 2019). To explore whether actual teaching practices reflect this narrow focus on "good education" and to gain insight into the starting point for supporting teachers, a framework for the general purposes of education is required. Although the work on curriculum orientations of all the authors mentioned above would be representative, in this chapter we discuss and use Schiro's (2013) elaboration of curriculum orientations because it is the most recent and most extensive treatment of this framework.

Social Efficiency orientation

The reasoning of the Social Efficiency orientation[3] is that education mainly serves a functional purpose in relation to the needs of society[4] (Farahani & Maleki, 2014; Schiro, 2013). Educational curricula should be organised to transmit the knowledge and skills necessary for functioning constructively in society. Curriculum development revolves around determining society's needs and deciding what knowledge and skills are (or are not) of value to cater for those needs. The knowledge and skills deemed necessary are then translated into "terminal objectives of education" (Schiro, 2013, p. 71). Learning objectives are therefore primarily described as desired behaviours, and knowledge as the ability to do something. In addition, evaluation is

2 Instead of "curriculum orientations", theorists have also used the terms "curriculum conceptions" or "curriculum ideologies".

3 Terms used by other scholars to describe this curriculum orientation include: technology and cognitive processes (Eisner, 1974); technological (McNeil, 1977); social efficiency (Kliebard, 2004; Zeichner, 1996), social behaviourist (Schubert, 1996).

4 A simplified explanation of this orientation is that a curriculum should be developed around the needs of "a client". For example, if a company needs an employee with a particular set of knowledge and skills, a curriculum should be developed to teach the individual the required set of knowledge and skills. At the macro level, society is the client and a curriculum should transmit the knowledge and skills required to function constructively in society.

based on concepts such as accountability and predetermined standards. These characteristics reflect Biesta's (2012, 2015) and Nussbaum's (2010) criticism of education for focusing too narrowly on the qualification function of education: the transmission of knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for the next step in life.

An important feature of this orientation is its dynamic nature. If society's needs develop over time, so too do the knowledge and skills necessary to function in it constructively. Since its conception early in the twentieth century, the aims and nature of this orientation have shifted alongside the changes in society and educational discourse. Traditionally the Social Efficiency orientation viewed learning from a behaviouristic perspective (i.e., the result of learning is a change in behaviour) and rejected the classification of education on the basis of academic disciplines (Schiro, 2013). However, this orientation changed during the twentieth century. The core assumption remained that education serves the needs of society, but the assumptions about learning shifted towards cognitive psychology. Moreover, instead of rejecting the academic disciplines, this orientation "became an academically oriented curriculum development system and its major client became the academic disciplines" (Schiro, 2013, p. 82).

In contemporary educational discourse and policy, the Social Efficiency orientation is best reflected in the shift towards efficiency, effectiveness and improving students' performance. During the 1980s and 1990s decentralisation in education policy meant that schools became more autonomous in how content should be taught. At the same time, however, as most governments retained responsibility for quality assurance of education, schools were also confronted with nationally imposed terminal objectives. Furthermore, the "21st century skills movement" can be interpreted as an extension of the Social Efficiency orientation; they are the skills considered necessary to function constructively. This movement also reflects the adoption of cognitive psychology's assumptions about learning, since the 21st century skills that students must develop to function effectively in both education and society include metacognitive skills.

The Scholar Academic orientation

The core assumption underlying the Scholar Academic orientation is that curriculum, and therefore education, should be developed to transmit the knowledge that has been culturally and historically developed within society and the academic disciplines (Eisner, 1974; Manley-Delacruz, 1990; Schiro, 2013). The academic disciplines are hierarchically structured communities. Academics are the inquirers after the truth and developers of knowledge, teachers the transmitters of the developed knowledge and students its recipients (Schiro, 2013). Through education, students are initiated in the ways of thinking and knowing—also described as intellectual capacities—of each specific discipline. According to Scholar Academics, the development of the intellect through the academic disciplines is important for two reasons:

> *"Initiation into the disciplines of knowledge, our vehicle for becoming fully human, is the worthwhile activity for the curriculum of general education. It provides the base upon which the person as a person can develop to realise his full stature as a free mind and as a citizen."* (Whitefield, 1971, as cited in Schiro, 2013, pp. 19-20).

Learner Centered orientation

Advocates of this orientation believe education should focus on the needs, concerns and interests of the individual (Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014; Schiro, 2013). Unlike the Scholar Academic orientation, the starting point of education is the individual and their own unique combination of physical, intellectual, social and emotional characteristics (Schiro, 2013). Instead of initiation into an academic discipline, the intended outcome of education is growth of the individual, which is assumed to be achieved mainly through experience. Consequently, knowledge development and society's needs are secondary concerns. The other orientations all require predetermined educational goals and outcomes; they are based on reflection on the forms of development regarded as valuable by adults, and on organising education accordingly. Advocates of the Learner Centered orientation, on the other hand, believe that curriculum development should be adapted to life's developmental

stages and how individuals think about and interact with the world during those life stages (Schiro, 2013). An assumption underlying this orientation is that people's development through these life stages should not be rushed. From this perspective, education should be organised *"to enrich people's growth within a developmental stage"* (Schiro, 2013, p. 117).

Social Reconstruction orientation

Social Reconstructionists view education as a means to improve a society that is confronted with many problems, such as racism, poverty, climate change, illiteracy and political corruption (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014; Schiro, 2013, p. 151). The development of the curriculum should be based on extensive study of how these social, economic and environmental issues can be resolved (i.e., based on a vision of an improved society). Students should be taught how to critically reflect on their own lives, and the lives of the people around them, in relation to these issues, and they should be equipped with the knowledge, skills and motivation to resolve them. The development of the individual is subordinate to the need to tackle the problems facing society. Consequently, Social Reconstructionists are willing to intentionally socialise individuals and to accept "the biased values that underlie all socialization and educational processes" (Schiro, 2013, p. 172).

Criticisms of the curriculum orientations framework

Despite their relevance, curriculum orientations are scarcely represented in contemporary debates about educational purposes. This may be partly the result of Jackson's (1992) criticisms of earlier elaborations of curriculum orientations. Jackson's first critique related to the methods of inquiry. In the past, teachers' curriculum orientation preferences had been studied using questionnaires. He criticised this because questionnaires do not reflect a teacher's behaviours in the classroom context. Second, Jackson (1992) argued that each curriculum orientation reflects an ideal-typical elaboration of educational purposes and that advocating one specific orientation is undesirable and does not take account of the fact that hybrid use of curriculum orientations takes place within teaching practices. These criticisms are valid to the extent that the previously used methods

Table 2.1

Aims and purposes of education of each curriculum orientation (adapted from Schiro, 2013)

	Social Efficiency	Scholar Academic	Learner Centered	Social Reconstruction
Aims	Prepare students to become constructively functioning members of society	Initiate students into the ways of knowing and thinking of different academic disciplines	Support the development of the individual's unique set of physical, cognitive, social and emotional characteristics	Motivate students and equip them with the knowledge and skills to counteract the issues faced by society
		Develop full stature of the free mind as a citizen	Self-actualisation	Contribute to a better and more just society
Knowledge gives ability…	To do	To understand	To actualise oneself	To interpret, act on and reconstruct society
Teachers' primary role in instruction	To prepare students to perform skills	To advance students in a discipline	To stimulate child growth	To acculturate students into the educators' vision

of inquiry (i.e., surveys and questionnaires) do not do justice to teachers' complex teaching practices, nor do they provide insight into the relation between what teachers aim to achieve and their actual teaching activities. Research should focus on connecting teachers' understanding of their everyday teaching practices and their actual teaching practices to general purposes of education (i.e., curriculum orientations).

Goal systems approach

What a teacher does in the classroom and why is always the result of interactions between personal and contextual factors. Questionnaire research does not give insight into these personally salient and contextually representative factors that shape teachers' activities. Narrative research may offer more possibilities to gain insight into these interactions. However, the problem related to this type of

research is what Little (2006) calls the "winnowing problem": "The need to deal with the potentially unmanageable volume of information that is generated if one takes a narrative approach seriously." Adopting a narrative method of inquiry to ask teachers about their perception of purposes of education raises two issues: the first relates to the manageability of the vast amount of information; the second is that there may be a discrepancy between the teachers' answers and their actual teaching practices. Moreover, since teachers' individual curriculum conceptions in terms of goals are often tacit in nature (cf. Cheung & Wong, 2002), it would not be valid to ask them directly about their teaching practices in relation to goals, content, learning activities and teaching approaches for achieving those goals. The question thus arises of how we can "winnow" appropriately in order to understand important aspects of teachers' conduct.

A goal system approach may offer the solution to this problem. A goal system compactly represents both what people do in a representative situation and why they do what they do. The basic principle of the goal system approach is that most people's actions are goal oriented. Goals can be defined as the outcomes individuals wish to achieve through their actions (Janssen et al., 2013; Matook, 2013), and people also tend to achieve multiple goals simultaneously within a context (Kruglanski et al., 2015). These goals are connected in a means-ends hierarchy, or goal system (Janssen et al., 2013; Kruglanski et al., 2015). Goal systems are a hierarchical visualisation of an individual's goals and means in pursuit of a task (Janssen et al., 2013). At the bottom of the hierarchy are specific activities, which are often chronologically related. These activities contribute to directly related and often concrete goals. These goals then contribute to more abstract goals, and so forth. Moving upwards in the hierarchy, a person's core purposes are reflected. A goal system therefore makes connections between what teachers do and why they do it at multiple levels, from concrete goals to abstract goals. Thus, it offers the possibility of connecting teachers' more abstract educational purposes to their actual teaching practices. In this study we aim to explore the extent to which teachers' curriculum orientations can be mapped in a way that—unlike questionnaires—is connected to their teaching activities. Given that goal systems originate in the interaction between the

teachers' activities and their students in their classes, they represent both personally important and contextually representative factors. A goal system is a compact way to represent what teachers do and why they do it, and can be constructed using the laddering method, which takes relatively little time. This will be described in more detail in the Method section.

In previous educational research the goal system laddering method has been used for various purposes. Wieringa et al. (2013) used this method to gain insight into biology teachers' interpretations and implementation of a curriculum innovation. They found that the participating teachers' core goals strongly influenced how they responded to the proposed innovation. Janssen et al. (2018) used it to support the process of participatory educational design, which required teachers to cooperatively develop goal systems, engage in dialogue about their goals and be inspired to adapt their teaching practices based on what they learned from each other. This study showed that the laddering method helped participating teachers gain a deeper understanding of each other's experiences and goals, and resulted in a mutually productive learning process. While this method has proved valuable for understanding how teachers respond to educational innovations and as a supportive instrument for mutual learning, it has not yet been used in research on how teachers' everyday teaching activities relate to general purposes of education. The research question central to this study is: To what extent can teachers' goal systems be used to infer curriculum orientations?

2.3 Method

2.3.1 General information of participants

This study was conducted with secondary school teachers in the Netherlands engaged in teaching that prepares students for either higher vocational education or university education. Their students' ages ranged between fifteen and eighteen years. Six teachers of different subjects (see Table 2.2) were interviewed between October and November 2018. Their teaching experience ranged from five to forty-two years and, it is worth noting, all of them had spent most of their career

Table 2.2

General information of participants

Participant	Age	School subject	Teaching experience	Years in this school	Duration of interview (min.)
Arthur (m)	58	History	32	31	65
Bill (m)	62	Social Studies	42	42	51
Chris (m)	43	Geography	20	20	48
Diana (f)	32	Philosophy	8	7	71
Eve (f)	62	French	34	28	47
Frank (m)	25	Physics	5	5	35

at this school. The teachers were recruited by email after classroom visits, when we explained the purpose of the study and emphasised that participation was voluntary.

3.2 Laddering interview

The procedure was derived from Janssen et al. (2013). The duration of the interviews, which were recorded, varied from 35 to 71 minutes. The procedure involved four steps. First, teachers were asked to describe a class that was representative of how they normally teach. Each separate moment or activity was paraphrased by the researcher, written down on a post-it note and labelled as a lesson segment. Second, teachers were asked why they believed each of the lesson segments was important. The purpose of this step was to gain insight into the goals in both the lower and upper regions of the hierarchy. The question was repeated after each answer and the sequence ended when teachers could no longer provide an answer or said that answering the question again would not represent their views and would be speculation. Third, teachers were asked to review their goal systems and, if necessary, connect means and goals that had not yet been connected in the interview process. Finally, teachers were asked whether the goal system represented what they, as a teacher, think is important in education.

2.3.3 Analysis

The interviews resulted in two types of data: goal systems and audio recordings of the laddering interviews. The analysis process consisted of three phases. The first phase was data preparation, which involved digitising the goal systems and transcribing the audio recordings. The goal systems formed the primary source for analysis. As described above, the goal systems were built up from the paraphrased lesson segments at the bottom of the goal system and the goals above those segments identified by the teachers. This means that teachers' elaborations during the interviews were more detailed than the visualised goal systems could reflect. To gain a more profound overview of the data, a close reading of all transcripts was therefore conducted and an interim case summary (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 131-132) was developed. The interim case summary consisted of a general description of the theories underlying the analytical framework (i.e., the curriculum orientations as described in the theoretical framework and summarised in Table 2.1), a context description of the school and a case description of each goal system and the associated transcript. This case description first outlined the structure of the representative class, which was reflected in the bottom row of lesson segments of the goal systems, and then presented the consecutive answers to the question "Why is that important to you?", accompanied by quotes to provide more context to the paraphrased goals.

In the second phase of the analysis, we examined the goal systems and case descriptions in the interim case summary to infer the curriculum orientations as outlined in Schiro's (2013) framework. We chose this framework because it is the most recent and most extensive. The views about aims of education, knowledge and teaching adapted from Schiro (2013) and summarised in Table 2.1 provided the indicators for interpreting teachers' goal systems. The aim was to gain insight into the extent to which lesson segments and goals of goal systems reflected characteristics of one or more curriculum orientations. To ensure trustworthiness, the analyses were discussed during several peer debriefing sessions. In the early stages of the analysis process it became clear that the paraphrased individual lesson segments and goals in the lower regions of the goal systems occasionally did not reflect any one curriculum orientation

in particular. In those cases, the lesson segments (i.e., teaching activities described by the teacher) and lower-region goals were interpreted in relation to the highest related goals in the hierarchy; these clusters of goals (i.e., chain of relations between activities in the lowest and highest row of the goal system) and complete goal systems did indeed reflect tendencies towards one or more curriculum orientations. For example, in one laddering interview a philosophy teacher described "personal development" as an intended underlying goal (see Figure 2.2 in the Results section). Individually, this goal does not give a reference to a particular curriculum orientation, because all of them seek some form of personal development. However, this teacher regarded "personal development" as an underlying goal related to the lesson segments "performing research" and "reflection on the content of that class", and additionally as a subgoal of "knowledge about life and self". In the interview, she also mentioned knowledge of her course as a foundation for understanding. Therefore the goals identified by this teacher, and the language used, imply a tendency towards the Scholar Academic orientation.

The final phase of the analysis process consisted of a peer debriefing with six impartial researchers in the authors' research department. The aim of this was to explore whether the impartial researchers would draw similar conclusions to those drawn by the authors during phase two of the analysis process. First, a brief presentation was given, elaborating the theoretical framework and method. In the second part of the session the impartial researchers were given the goal systems of three teachers (philosophy, history and physics) and a printed version of Table 2.1. They were divided into pairs and asked to discuss whether they could interpret the goal systems in relation to characteristics of the curriculum orientations. After this, a plenary discussion was held. Their conclusion was that individual lesson segments and goals lower in the hierarchy did not always provide enough direction to permit claims about their relation to curriculum orientations. When they could not interpret individual blocks within the goal system in relation to a curriculum orientation, they looked at the relations between the lesson segments in the lowest row of the goal system in direct relation to the multiple goals higher in the goal system (i.e., a cluster of goals).

An example that they gave was the goal "tell a story about the content of that day" (see Figure 2.1, which presents the chain of relations between an activity and the goals higher in the hierarchy; see Figure 2.2 in the Findings section for the complete goal system). The lesson segment (i.e., teaching activity) alone did not reflect a specific curriculum orientation but in relation to the overarching goals "embedding the theory", "we cannot understand what we do not know" and finally "critical citizenship and contemplation", the lesson segment was interpreted as representing the Scholar Academic orientation. A final point made by the researcher pairs was also that in some cases the goal systems alone did not provide enough information to permit claims about the underlying curriculum orientation.

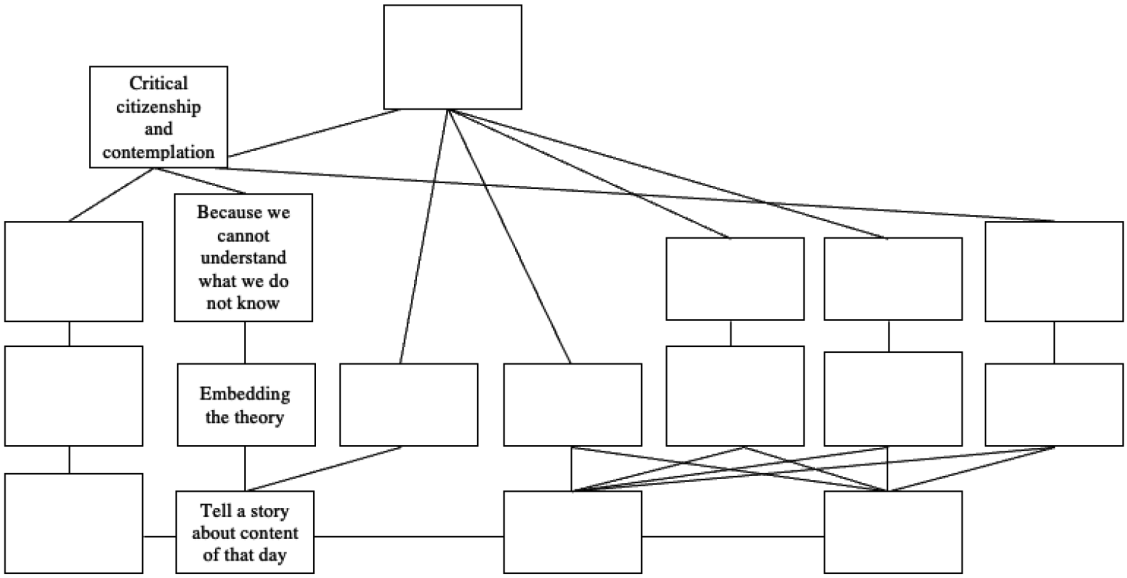


Figure 2.1
Example of a cluster from a philosophy teacher's goal system

2.4 Findings

The analyses provided valuable insights into the topics of interest. First, teachers' intended goals could be related to one or more curriculum orientations. Two of the teachers' goal systems revealed a coherent tendency towards one curriculum orientation. In the remaining teachers' goal systems, we found tendencies towards multiple curriculum orientations in clusters of actions and goals. Second, all teachers articulated goals that surpassed the notion of mere transmission of knowledge and skills. Finally, several teachers referred to the use of topicality as a means for stimulating student development beyond the content of their curriculum subject. General insights from all six teachers' goal systems will be discussed in Section 2.4.1. Two of these will then be discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.2.

2.4.1 Goal systems and curriculum orientations

The insights gained from the goal systems revealed that teachers' goal systems could be interpreted in relation to one or more curriculum orientations (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 provides a summary of how the teachers' goals systems were interpreted in relation to the curriculum orientations. The table shows that nearly all of the teachers' goal systems contained goals related to the Social Efficiency (SE) orientation. These goals were interpreted as such because they were expressed as knowledge and skills that are considered useful for functioning in society. Two teachers expressed goals that could be related to the Scholar Academic orientation. The examples in Table 3 emphasised the ways of knowing and thinking of their respective academic disciplines (history and philosophy) and a focus on understanding, rather than developing and demonstrating a certain skill. Three teachers' goal systems referred to goals related to the Learner Centered orientation. Their goals focused on maximising student growth and wellbeing on the one hand and providing students with experiences and realistic learning situations to enhance their awareness of their ability to grow. One example in the interviews could be interpreted as an expression of the

Table 2.3

Teachers' goals in relation to curriculum orientations

Participant	Social Efficiency	Scholar Academic	Learner Centered	Social Reconstruction
Arthur (m) History	Decency as a skill that is useful later in life. Perform well on tests to prepare students for next steps in life.	Developing the ability of historical reasoning to better understand the functioning of society.	Helping students perform as well as possible in relation to their capabilities.	
Bill (m) Social Studies	Knowledge and skills to prepare students for their near future and environment, after high school. Knowledge transfer of topics related to democratic rule of law. To give students enthusiasm for the judiciary and parliamentary democracy. Create engagement with the news. Use of topicality: to introduce topic.			
Chris (m) Geography	Basic skills to be able to participate in society. Practise skills that are useful for higher education. Work individually, to gain insight into own learning process.		Getting to know students individually to help them progress in life. Use of topicality: Raise awareness of personal wellbeing and focus on growth at own pace.	

Diana (f) Philosophy		Contemplation and critical citizenship.* Knowledge about life and oneself as the most important goal. Personal development.* Embedding philosophical theory to support understanding.		
Eve (f) French	Self-regulatory skills. Focus on language skills: reading, writing, speaking, listening. Use of topicality: discuss French elections to promote awareness and general knowledge of Dutch politics.		Bring students into contact with realistic situations (i.e., the language and culture of French speakers) and create awareness that students are capable of anything, if they set their mind to it.	Use of topicality (Timothy Snyder's book On Tyranny) to promote critical thinking about contemporary politics.
Frank (m) Physics	Self-regulatory skills as useful skills for further education and in society. Preparing students for tests as a preparation for next step in education. Preparing students for functioning in society. Help students learn for themselves how to progress in life. Critical work attitude as a useful skill for life in general and work in particular.			

* Goal that was interpreted in relation to the cluster of goals (i.e., lesson segment in relation to all directly hierarchically related goals.

Social Reconstruction orientation, namely Eve's use of an article about Timothy Snyder's (2017) book *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* to promote critical thinking on contemporary politics, about which she expresses her worries.

2.4.2 Two teachers' goal systems

Two exemplary cases are elaborated below to demonstrate in more detail what information can be derived from the goal systems. First, we discuss Diana's (philosophy) goal system, because it shows a tendency towards one curriculum orientation. Then we explore Arthur's (history) goal system, because it reveals how multiple curriculum orientations can underlie a teacher's teaching practices.

Diana's goal system (philosophy)

Figure 2.2 shows the goal system of Diana, the philosophy teacher. The bottom row gives the teacher's description of a representative class. The segments on the

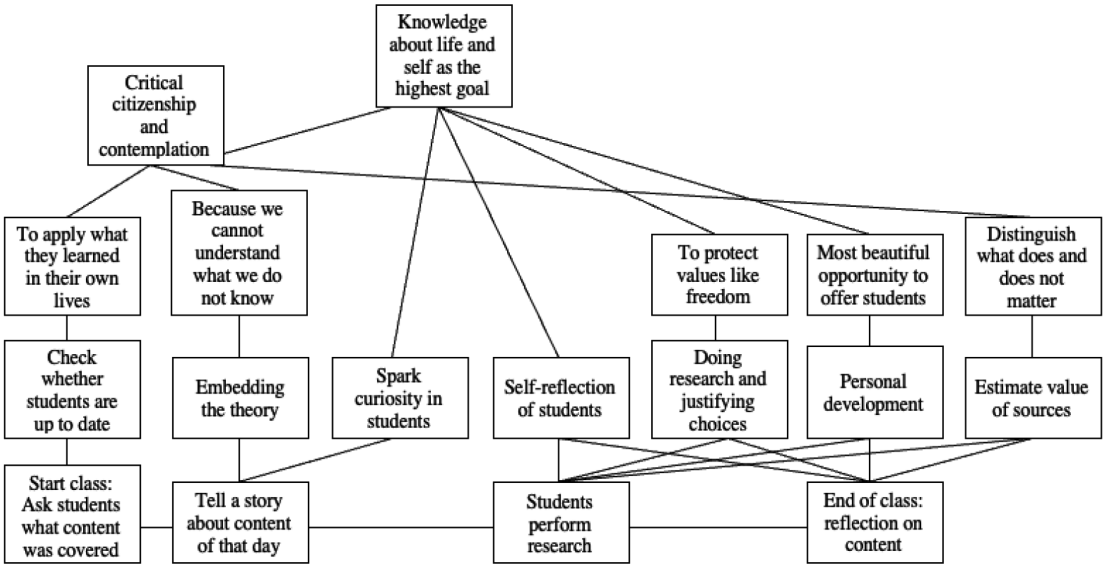


Figure 2.2
Diana's goal system (philosophy)

second row and above are the answers to the recurring question "Why do you think that is important?" This teacher's goal system revealed a tendency towards one curriculum orientation, namely the Scholar Academic. As stated earlier, this orientation centres on the idea that students are initiated into the historically developed ways of knowing and thinking within an academic discipline, and the development of the individual's free mind and as a citizen (Schiro, 2013). The aims "critical citizenship and contemplation"[5] and "knowledge about life and self" reflect this idea. Moreover, each teaching activity (i.e., lesson segment) described in the bottom row leads to these goals, which were further elaborated by Diana:

> *It is important that they can become who they are and that they become critical citizens. Those are my main goals. That they have the space to develop themselves and that they know, are aware of the fact that the circumstances they live in can't be taken for granted. And that you always have to keep working on that in whatever way you can. And I think that if they are critical citizens and can develop themselves, they've reached that goal.*

Diana's goal system was the only one in this study that did not reflect explicit elements of the Social Efficiency orientation. The following quote might indicate her reservations regarding elements of this orientation:

> *It's no coincidence that part of our job description concerns upbringing. (…) I think that if you just teach students to pass their exams and where to find something in their books, you've missed a very important part. We are a society and a society is made up of people. These people are ultimately also all individuals. And before these individuals can achieve anything good together, they do really need to know who they are, what their strengths and weaknesses are.*

To gain insight into the general purposes underlying teaching practices, individual goals can best be interpreted in clusters or complete goal systems. In themselves, goals such as "personal development", "self-reflection", "developing research skills", "being able to justify choices" and "estimating the value of sources" do not automatically reflect a tendency towards one particular curriculum

5 Deep reflective thought.

orientation. To Diana, however, these goals build towards achieving "critical citizenship and contemplation" and "knowledge about life and self". Moreover, her teaching activities focus on conveying the content through a story, after which students conduct their own research, reflect on the insights gained from that research, and are expected to justify those insights. These activities can be interpreted as an initiation into the ways of thinking and knowing in the academic discipline of philosophy.

A final insight that can be drawn from this goal system is that reasoning downwards may reveal a teacher's understanding of a particular theory or general purpose of education. For example, Diana's perception of critical citizenship and contemplation refers to four lower goals, namely: 1) applying what is learned in other settings; 2) developing an understanding of philosophical theories; 3) personal development; and 4) being able to distinguish which sources are and are not valuable. These goals all make contributions to the higher aim of critical citizenship and contemplation emanating from interrelated activities, and they reveal a teacher's understanding of what constitutes the whole or aspects of the educational purpose. Thorough reflection on this purpose is likely to result in a more elaborate understanding of the goals and objectives supporting it. The goal system does, however, provide insight into a teacher's understanding of the aim, and actual or perceived contribution to it.

Arthur's goal system (history)

Figure 2.3 shows the goal system of a history teacher. The bottom row, which includes seven segments, shows the teacher's description of how his classes are usually structured. The hierarchical relations above those lesson segments are the teacher's intended goals that underlie his everyday practices. In contrast to Diana's goal system, Arthur's revealed tendencies towards multiple curriculum orientations. Whereas all the lesson segments in Diana's class ultimately contributed to two major aims, the segments in Arthur's goal system are divided into clusters.

At the beginning of the class Arthur always welcomes his students at the classroom door for two reasons. The first is to offer structure and communicate

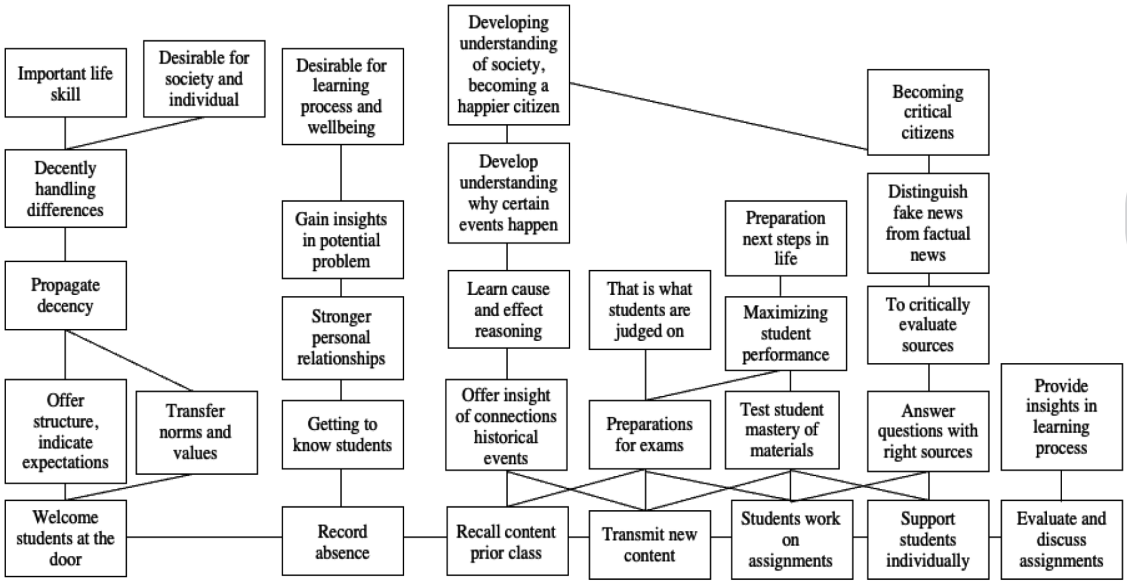


Figure 2.3
Arthur's goal system (history)

his expectations. The second is to transfer norms and values. He believes it is important to convey and demonstrate decency.

> *Well, I believe that, especially at a time where horrible things are being said through all sources of digital media, for example in the Black Pete discussion, or the debate about slavery, in which parties on both sides of the discussion say horrible things to each other, that this is something you must fight against. You want to make clear: "Guys, you can have different opinions, but you can still treat each other decently.*

In explaining why he believes this is important, Arthur states that being able to interact decently with each other is a valuable skill for individuals and desirable for society. This cluster can be interpreted in two ways in relation to curriculum orientations. On the one hand, it can be said that norms, values, decency and being able to respect different opinions are part of a disposition on what is important to constructively function in society. Thus, it represents the Social Efficiency orientation. On the other hand, his motivation stems from a situation

in society that he believes is problematic, and through his actions he hopes to better equip his students to constructively engage in dialogue. This interpretation reflects the Social Reconstruction orientation.

The second segment is recording absence, which is school policy. Nevertheless, Arthur believes it is valuable for two reasons. First, at the beginning of the school year it is to familiarise himself with students' names and create and strengthen their bonds. Second, it can serve as an indicator of potential problems in the students' personal lives. In the interview Arthur said that these insights are important to help him solve those problems or take them into account when teaching and giving assignments. This is important to him, because he values his students' wellbeing and because these issues can interfere with the students' learning processes.

The subsequent lesson segments described by Arthur all relate to the transfer of knowledge. First, he reflects on the previous class. Then he transmits the new course content, followed by students working independently on content-related assignments, during which he is available to assist. The hierarchical relationships above those segments reveal tendencies towards the Social Efficiency and the Scholar Academic orientations. The former, because the teacher states that these segments aim to help students perform to the best of their ability in tests and exams; and it is for this that they are ultimately held accountable if they wish to graduate.

> *Let's be honest, whether you like it or not, the Dutch education system still judges students based on their grades. So, of course, one of your duties is to have as many students perform as well as possible. (…) Now, you can be very idealistic and say that grades don't matter and that it is far more important that your students are happy individuals and critical citizens, and so forth, but yeah…*

Although Arthur is constrained to some extent by the focus on grades, he also aims to achieve goals that are not solely related to passing exams. Through his classes he aims to help students to develop historical reasoning skills, such as cause and effect reasoning and being able to critically evaluate information sources. If his goal system reflected only the Social Efficiency orientation, he would have valued these skills solely for the purpose of passing exams. However,

his reasoning behind the aim of developing these skills with the use of historical knowledge was ultimately to help students to better understand society and to become critical citizens and happy individuals, which reflects the purposes of the Scholar Academic orientation.

2.5 Conclusion and discussion

As a result of contemporary debates about purposes of education, teachers are increasingly expected to contribute to development of their students that transcends the acquisition of instrumental knowledge and skills (Biesta, 2015; Cockerill, 2015). This may require new approaches to teaching, which can be challenging because it might involve changing both teaching practices and goals (Bremner, 2019; Fullan, 2016; Geijsel & Meijers, 2005). It is therefore necessary to reflect carefully on current teaching practices and their underlying goals before promoting changes in those practices and goals. The main aim of this study was to explore the use of the goal systems laddering method and whether teachers' deliberations about the goals underlying their everyday teaching activities could be interpreted in relation to curriculum orientations. The findings show that both the goal system laddering method and the framework of curriculum orientations were valuable for gaining insight into the general purposes (i.e., curriculum orientations) underlying teaching activities. Additionally, the findings demonstrate how goal systems of everyday teaching practices can surface the complex interplay between goals related to different curriculum orientations.

First, the data showed that goals, clusters of goals and complete goal systems can be interpreted in relation to elements of curriculum orientations. Based on the teachers' own practices and in their own words, the goal systems could be used to infer different tendencies regarding the curriculum orientations. Examples of all curriculum orientations were found in the data, although Social Efficiency and Scholar Academic were represented more than Learner Centered and Social Reconstruction goals. Further, the goal systems revealed the complex interplay between teachers' deliberations on their teaching practices. They showed that teachers may tend to use one or more curriculum orientations during one class.

Whereas questionnaires may neglect how teachers' preferences for a curriculum orientation relate to their actual teaching activities, the goal system laddering method brought together the teaching practices and underlying goals and curriculum orientations.

Second, the findings showed that goal systems can also be used to gain insight into teachers' understanding of theories about educational purposes and the language they use to describe the goals underlying these purposes. Noddings (2007) argues that engaging in dialogue about educational purposes is challenging because of the abstract nature of theories surrounding this topic. However, being unable to engage in dialogue about purposes of education does not mean that underlying goals are not an unconscious part of teaching practices. There may be a discrepancy between a practical theory and the language teachers use for such theories. Nevertheless, the goals underlying the general purposes at the top of the hierarchy may reveal some part of a teacher's understanding of what constitutes those general purposes.

In contemporary debates about education policy and practice, many scholars have expressed their concern about the one-sided focus on student development (Biesta, 2010, 2012; Onderwijsraad, 2013, 2016; Nussbaum, 2010). The findings from this study revealed that teachers' goals regarding student development do not necessarily reflect that one-sided focus. Although all goal systems included the transmission of knowledge and skills relating to the course subject, most of them also revealed that teachers were aiming to achieve more. The findings showed that, on the one hand, teachers aimed to achieve multiple goals that transcended the mere acquisition of knowledge and skills through their didactical choices regarding the structure of their classes; on the other hand, the data also provided examples showing that they aimed to achieve a broader range of educational goals through their interactions with their students. For example, they hoped to transfer norms and values to students through these interactions. This aligns with the views of several scholars who suggest that teachers aim to influence student development not only through what they teach, but also through how they act, which is informed by their values and dispositions (Altan & Farber Lane, 2018; Biesta, 2015; Knowles &

Castro, 2018; Reichert et al., 2020; Willemse et al., 2015). Moreover, the use of topical issues to enrich their teaching practices often initiated conversations that transcended curricular course goals. These insights give reasons to assume that classroom contexts reflect a broader understanding of "good education" than is credited to them.

Critical reflection on the findings is necessary, given the complex nature of the topic. First, it is worth noting that most teachers' goal systems showed elements of the Social Efficiency orientation. Education has been widely criticised for focusing too one-sidedly on students' cognitive outcomes on standardised exams and other tests and preparing students for their next steps in life (i.e., Social Efficiency goals). Thus, it could be that goals relating to the Social Efficiency orientation are imposed on all teachers and are therefore a structural aspect of how they are expected to organise their classes. An implication of this view might be that Social Efficiency is a given for all teachers and should not be considered part of the intrinsically valued goals and beliefs of individual teachers. However, we cannot say this with certainty because teachers were not asked whether they felt certain goals were imposed on their teaching practices. In future research it may be valuable to ask teachers about this topic.

It is also interesting that the only goal that could be linked to the Social Reconstruction orientation is Eve's discussion of an article about Snyder's (2017) *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* to promote critical citizenship in relation to contemporary politics, is. Given that this was an example of using topicality, we can also assume that this goal is not a structural aspect of her teaching. There can be several explanations for this insight. First, it could be a coincidence that this small sample yielded very few examples of Social Reconstruction goals. A second explanation could be that in general, Dutch teachers are hesitant about instilling values. Although teaching as a human endeavour is never free of values (Biesta, 2015), Dutch teachers are less inclined to teach their values as the most desirable ones; advocates of the Social Reconstruction orientation are more direct in their expression and transfer of the most desirable values. This may possibly explain why very few examples of this curriculum orientation surfaced in this study.

We asked the teachers in this study to describe a representative class, which gave us a picture of the goals and curriculum orientations underlying their perceived representative classes. A possible limitation here is that these teachers organised classes that diverged from their representative classes and focused on other goals during the current study, therefore we may not have fully captured the goals they were aiming to achieve. However, given that the aim of this study was to explore whether the laddering method could be used to gain insight into the general purposes (i.e., curriculum orientations) underlying a representative class, this limitation does not affect the conclusions drawn in relation to the utility of the laddering method in this context.

A second potential limitation was that the use of the laddering method in this study may not have fully captured the goals underlying teachers' everyday teaching practices. On the one hand, teachers may not express the goals they perceive to be self-evident. On the other hand, although the data revealed examples of interactions resulting from didactical choices, the laddering method does not capture all interactions between a teacher and a student that take place during a class. This is due to the specific line of questioning, which focused on the chronological lesson segments of a representative class. However, the aim of the study was not to provide an exhaustive list of teachers' goals, but rather to explore potential use of the laddering method to gain insight into teachers' goals in relation to curriculum orientations. The laddering method has proven to be a useful tool. In future research it could be used to explore teachers' full repertoires of goals in a way that does justice to their personal and situational aspects.

A third challenge relating to the laddering method in combination with the curriculum orientations arose during the analysis. Individual activities or goals within the goal system did not always show direct relations with curriculum orientations. For this study, we chose to analyse these goals in relation to the cluster of goals (i.e., the chain of relations above and below the goals). In itself, Diana's "personal development" goal could also refer to other curriculum orientations. It could be valuable to ask teachers more about their understanding of the specific goals in future research.

Moreover, this issue also calls for critical reflection on the curriculum orientations as a framework (including how the laddering method might help to further elaborate a teacher's identification of goals, by asking more about individual goals, such as "personal development"). Although the curriculum orientations provide a useful framework to infer general purposes of education, and combining them with goal systems may support teachers' future reflection on general purposes of education, they lack explicit elaborations of more specific theories and frameworks about student development, such as citizenship development (Geboers et al., 2012; Knight-Abowitz & Harnish, 2006), identity development (Schachter & Rich, 2011) and moral development (Walker et al., 2015). It could be valuable to look for possibilities to incorporate such theories of student development within the curriculum orientations framework.

The scope of the current study was limited to exploring the insights that could be gained regarding teachers' educational goals that underlie their teaching practices. The findings showed that the goal system is a useful instrument for eliciting teachers' deliberations about the educational goals underlying their teaching practices. The findings also revealed that the goal systems can be interpreted in relation to curriculum orientations and, therefore, general purposes of education. The method and theoretical framework that we used could provide a valuable foundation for future research into this topic. On the one hand, the method could be used to help teachers reflect more deeply on their educational goals. On the other hand, the method could be applied to help teams of teachers engage in reflective dialogue and potentially enrich their teaching practices. The goal systems developed in this study revealed the different educational goals that teachers were aiming to achieve and how they related to curriculum orientations. Bringing teachers together would allow them to collectively reflect on their perceptions of educational goals and share practices they believed contributed to achieving those goals. A study conducted by Janssen et al. (2018) showed that the laddering method can be used by two or more cooperating teachers to learn about their colleagues' teaching practices and to inspire them to enrich their own teaching practices.

The insights from this study may also be important for policy-makers and

education inspectorates. Contemporary debates and criticisms about education are often aimed at the one-sided focus on helping students to gain qualifications and defining educational quality in terms of measurable learning outcomes. Our findings revealed that teachers' intended goals reflected a wider range of educational goals. It might be assumed that the problem of a one-sided view of good education or educational quality is not actually reflected in school policies or educational practices at the school level. The problem, then, is that current measures of accountability, mostly administered by governments, need to adopt a broader understanding of educational quality. School inspections should include an evaluation of broader educational outcomes—and the contributions made by teachers and other educational practitioners—that are not easily measurable.

Finally, the goal systems give an indication of teachers' tendencies, but the outcome is not fixed. This is an instrument that reflects teachers' more or less intuitive understanding of goals underlying their everyday teaching practices. It reveals their inclinations with respect to curriculum orientation but does not portray them as ideal-typical advocates of any particular orientation. It offers teachers guiding perspectives and a tool for reflection they may have previously lacked, and hence a starting point from which to enrich or adapt their teaching practices. The insights from this study provide a promising insight into the richness of educational purposes underlying teachers' everyday teaching practices. However, given the dynamic nature of society and the demands it places on individuals, schools and education systems, it is crucial that teachers (and other educational professionals) continuously reflect on the purposes they aim to achieve through their teaching practices, and the laddering method provides an instrument to support this process of reflection.