

**Research Institute of Child Development and Education** 



## Improving history education. The value of intervention studies

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#### Improving history education

Through:

- Teacher education / professional development
- Curriculum development
- Educational research intervention studies

#### **Questions:**

- What are the learning goals? In terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes?
- What difficulties do (specific groups of) students face when trying to achieve these goals?
- > What are characteristics of possible solutions?
- Do the solutions work? And why / why not?



#### **Intervention studies**

- Intervention: a concrete activity used to solve a problem (van Aken & Andriessen, 2011).
- Combining design and research (but not 'Design Research', see Bakker, 2018)





#### **Intervention studies**

The aim of intervention studies is to investigate the effects of a didactical intervention on students' learning processes and outcomes.





#### **1. Student learning**

#### What do you want to achieve?

- 1. Learning *outcomes* (e.g. quality historical knowledge, aspects of historical reasoning)
- 2. Learning *processes* (e.g., use of strategies; use of language; quality of interaction)
- 3. Learning experiences (e.g., interest, self-efficacy)

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#### **1. Student learning**

**Related questions:** 

- What is the relation with the curriculum?
- □ What does the learning outcome excactly entail ?
  - o defining learning outcomes etc. from theory or expert behavior
  - COGNITIVE task analysis <a href="https://3starlearningexperiences.wordpress.com/2020/09/01/cognitive-task-analysis-an-overlooked-gem/">https://3starlearningexperiences.wordpress.com/2020/09/01/cognitive-task-analysis-an-overlooked-gem/</a>

 What difficulties do students face in trying to achieve these goals? (content-analysis; think aloud studies)



Figure 1. Dimensions of developing historical expertise.

Dimensions were described for causal reasoning – Stoel et al. (2015).



Content analysis on criteria students use for determining trustworthiness of a source – van der Eem (in preparation)

#### Task 1: The Battle of Stalingrad

You are writing an essay about the Battle of Stalingrad. This battle took place in the Second World War. In 1942-1943, the Germans fought the Russians in the city of Stalingrad. You have found the following source:

In 2003, a Soviet soldier describes the Battle of Stalingrad:

I remember that it was a clear, beautiful morning. That day, the Germans started an enormous airstrike. I saw more than 2000 planes that bombed the city. Forty thousand people died in Stalingrad because of those bombs. "The barbarian attack", we still call those bombings because they were meant to kill our civilians.

**Question:** This source helps us understand how the Battle of Stalingrad was fought.

I agree/I do not agree/Both

Explain your answer:



## 2. Didactical intervention

- What are the essential ingredients of the didactical approach?
  - Relates to:
  - □ goals, perceived problems
  - $\hfill\square$  conclusions to be drawn





# Effective approaches for eliciting historical reasoning (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2018)

- Explicit teaching (e.g., De La Paz, 2005; Nokes, 2007; Reisman, 2012; Stoel et al., 2017)
- Constructive activities (e.g., Prangsma et al., 2008) and use of external representations (e.g., van Drie et al. 2005)
- Interaction (e.g., Havekes, 2015; van Boxtel & van Drie, 2017)

Or: applying approaches from general educational sciences or other subjects than history.





- Research design
  - Experimental or quasi-experimental
  - Pretest post test or post-test only
  - Inclusion of learner variables?



https://nl.freepik.com/vrije-vector/illustratie-vanpuzzel-pictogram 2606569.htm

- Instruments
  - Existing instruments, adapted, self-designed?
  - Reliability?
  - Consistency: instruments, intervention, perceived learning goals?
  - > Focus





https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/eat-tuna-know-fish/



http://newriversidehotel.com/zxenliu722.asp?cid=36&jfen=tuna+fis hing+line&xi=1&xc=22&pr=58.99



## Dilemma 1: Control group – what do you want to compare?

- Business as usual? When working with various schools/teachers: comparable?
- Instruction on X vs No instruction on X
- Role of teaching time:
  - ✤ Control: business as usual: working on writing assignment 3 lessons
  - Experimental: intervention with additional writing instruction 5 lessons
- Ethical aspect: Good teaching for both groups

Intervention A	Intervention A+	
Intervention A	Intervention B	
Intervention A	Intervention A+	No intervention
Intervention A	Intervention B	No intervention



## **Dilemma 2: Implementation**

- How many schools and teachers?
- How to prepare teachers?
- Influence of the teacher on executing lessons
- Same teacher(s) for both conditions? (to eliminate teacher effect?)
- Influence of schoolculture on how students perceive lessons
- Project management



#### **Fidelity check**

The assessment of the degree to which an intervention is implemented as intended (Van Weijen & Koster, in preparation).

Outcome	Fidelity	Conclusions
good	high	intervention effective
good	low	intervention may or may not be effective replication with higher fidelity required
poor	high	intervention not effective
poor	low	intervention effectiveness cannot be assessed replication with higher fidelity required

- Criteria: adherence, quality of delivery, duration/exposure, etc.
- Instruments: interviews, logbook, questionnaires, observations, etc.



## Dilemma 3. Role of historical topic knowledge

- Intervention:
  - Suitability of topic in relation to aims
  - □ Suitability in relation to level students
  - Role of prior knowledge
  - Challenging but not too complex
- Pre- and posttests:
  - □ Same topic: testing effect
  - Different topics: one topic may be more difficult than the other topic
- > Topic knowlegde as mediating variable



#### **Improving history teaching**

Based on intervention study of Stoel, 2017

- 12 teachers
- Analysis of student work -> rubric
- 6 Design principles
  - Analysis of student reasoning
  - □ Explicit learning goals towards causal reasoning
  - Central question
  - Explicit teaching
  - Open and (inter)active activities
  - Different learning paths
- 16 lessons
- Book
- Website: including video's, lessons, etc

https://www.expertisecentrum-geschiedenis.nl/de-feiten-voorbij/intro/



 
Inspect
Name 1
Name 2
Name 3
Name 3

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