

Striking a balance: investigating how situated learning promotes a balance between professional and personal roles for GPs in a demanding and complex healthcare environment

Over the last decades, the role of GPs has expanded significantly due to a complex interplay of factors influencing healthcare, such as socio-economic status, cultural diversity and healthcare access. Advances in medical technology and the needs of an aging population are contributing to this role expansion. The evolving general practice landscape creates a challenge for GP training programs in helping trainees to overcome tensions between professional identities and personal responsibilities. Recognizing this challenge, our project aims to investigate how educators can support future GPs in building and maintaining a balance between professional and personal identities in a demanding and complex healthcare environment.

Our research will primarily focus on situated learning in general practice. We will explore perspectives, experiences and needs of stakeholders in GP training in the formation of a new expanded professional identity. In our project, we use the case study of sustaining continuity of care (CoC), a core value of general practice. The application of CoC in general practice is evolving due to changes in society and GPs' personal and professional roles. By cultivating a GP learning environment that encourages this evolution, we can empower future GPs to integrate their personal and professional identities.

Our project involves end-users: students, GP trainees, GPs and clinical and non-clinical GP educators. Using participatory research, we will collaborate with those affected by the challenges of taking up professional roles within the healthcare system. By incorporating not only socialisation (growing into the profession) but also subjectification (finding space to sound one's unique voice within the profession) into the process of professional formation, our project aims to investigate how individual trainees navigate their personal and professional roles within the GP community of practice. This information will inform the rationale and quality of GP training curricula in aligning with learning needs of future GPs and developments in GP care.

To ensure impact, our project involves collaboration with researchers, educators, and policymakers. By fostering sustainable connections, we can maximise input and impact on research, education, practice, and policy in the field. Aligned with the national research agenda of Dutch GP training institutes, our project addresses areas '3' (the specific professional identity of GPs) and '5' (lifelong learning and its conceptual foundation). We aim to generate new insights for learning and teaching in general practice, which may also benefit other areas of health professions education. Ultimately, our research will improve GP training methods, while also contributing to the international body of knowledge for lifelong learning of GPs.

The project's quality is ensured as it uses sound theoretical designs, experienced researchers, strong inter-institutional collaboration, and expertise from the researchers' national and international networks. The relevance lies in addressing emerging educational approaches in response to societal developments, focusing on incorporating stakeholders' opinions and experiences.

Our research project consists of seven studies that aim to explore the formation of an expanded professional identity among (future) GPs. The project is divided into three interrelated phases. Phase 1 includes the formation of a theoretical framework (conceptualisation), phase 2 includes developing a theoretical model in a naturalistic setting (exploration), and in phase 3 we will bring theory to educational practice in formulating design principles for education and assessment (consolidation).

By conducting this project, guided by an interdisciplinary advisory team, we aim to generate new knowledge, improve GP training practices for lifelong learning and make meaningful contributions to research, education, policy and practice in the field of health care.