

Summary

The *Nieuwenhuis Institute for Educational Research (NI)*, part of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen, integrates research for the departments of Pedagogical and Educational Sciences together with the Teacher Education. The University of Groningen, located in the North of the Netherlands, is an innovative, research driven, and internationally oriented university, with 34,000 students and 7,150 FTE staff. Researchers within the NI explore a wide range of topics in pedagogical and educational sciences working collaboratively across six closely related research units.

The mission of the NI is to conduct high quality, interdisciplinary research in the main fields of pedagogical and educational sciences with scientific and societal impact. Our program covers the general population of children, youth and (young) adults, those who are 'at risk' and specific target groups with intensive and/or specialized support needs. We aim to understand and explain the underlying dynamics of complex problems in pedagogical and educational practices and society, and to help solve these problems by developing, implementing and evaluating interventions. We conduct research from a multi system perspective in which the relation between the (cultural-international) context and individual is seen as interrelated. Our strategy aligns with our research focus and aims for a) high quality staff in all our units, b) substantial collaboration within and between the research units and other (inter)national academic partners and methodological expertise, c) strong involvement of stakeholders and societal partners to make sure that the research questions address their needs and that knowledge can be implemented, and d) a clear and visible position in the scientific and social landscape with demonstrable societal impact, both within our region and beyond.

We look back at the period 2018-2023 with great satisfaction. Previous evaluations rated NI's research as very good to excellent, but recommended improvements, such as a more coherent research

programme, fostering curiosity-driven research, preventing delays of PhD projects and enhancing diversity in staff. Recent developments, for example the additional funding from the SSH Sector plans, have enabled the hiring of new staff to support its objectives. The University of Groningen's strategic plan emphasizes inclusivity, integrity and sustainability, aligning with NI's mission. Our research is of excellent quality, with the NI operating regionally, nationally and internationally on the highest level on many research themes. Our program is focused on both broad (e.g., teaching behavior and effectiveness, mental health and well-being) and specialized (pioneering at the forefront) societal themes (e.g., (in)equality, deaf-blindness, historical pedagogy, LGBTQ+, refugee children, suicide prevention). The public visibility and related social impact of our institute remains very high and prevalent. The NI is clearly part of many collaborations with stakeholders in education and healthcare, other societal partners and many academic partners. Also, the collaborations within the institute and the faculty have increased as was shown by the expertise centers, development related to the University of the North and the SSH themes. Finally, our broad perspective on open science and related developments are worth mentioning.

The viability of the NI is ensured through strategic investments in high-quality staff, sustainable funding from diverse sources, and a clear alignment with societal and academic priorities. By fostering collaboration, both internally and externally, the NI continues to strengthen its position as a leading institute in the field.

The present self-evaluation of the Nieuwenhuis Institute has been written in compliance with the national 'Standard Evaluation Protocol' (SEP 2021-2027). This self-evaluation covers the period 2018–2023 and consists of three parts: Part A, is written under responsibility of the Dean of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences, and has been compiled by the director of research in cooperation with the research units. Part B presents the appendices created for this report (case studies and required tables with quantitative information). Part C is a collection of additional background information.

Case studies

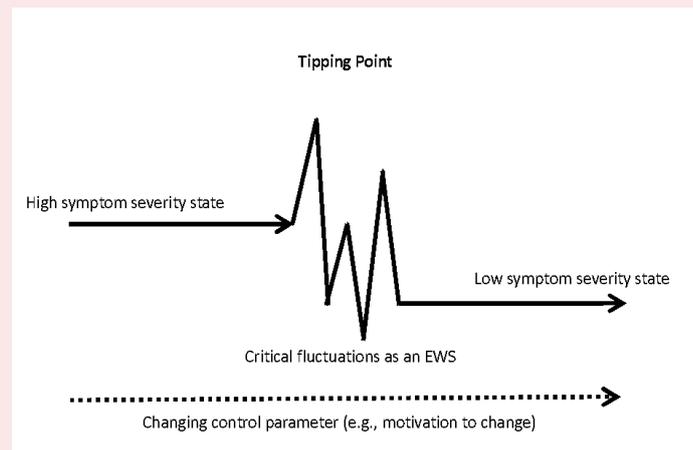
Case study 1: Tipping Points in Treatment Trajectories

The Vidi project 'Tipping Points in Treatment Trajectories' exemplifies our research group's commitment to conducting **fundamental research with substantial practical value**. This interdisciplinary project, led by Prof. Dr. Anna Lichtwarck-Asschoff, combines the fields of inclusive and special needs education, child and family welfare and several youth care institutions, and strives to address a long-standing challenge in psychotherapy: the stagnation in treatment outcomes for young people over the past five decades. Recent evidence shows no incremental improvement in treatment outcomes over these decades, suggesting that the field has reached its limits of effectiveness and that we need a radical shift in how we conceptualize, deliver, and evaluate interventions.

Tipping Points in clinical change

In this project, we apply non-linear dynamic systems principles and techniques to better understand individual change trajectories and to identify general markers that explain why clinical change occurs and predict when it occurs. The assumed linear process of remission and recovery of symptoms has been challenged by numerous studies, showing that individual patterns of change often show sudden and abrupt changes called 'tipping points'.

The research focuses on these tipping points in treatment trajectories and addresses three key objectives: (1) identify and predict clinical tipping points, (2) examine the underlying mechanisms that drive clients towards these tipping points, and (3) test whether clients are more sensitive to intervention efforts at these tipping points.



Real-time data for personalized monitoring

We collect intensive longitudinal and personally-relevant data of clients in clinical care contexts: a residential youth care setting (Pluryn) and a mental health care setting (Molendrift). Data collection is integrated in the therapeutic context to maximize its clinical and personal relevance: data are instantaneously used by and for individual clients and clinicians themselves for their own purposes. To this end, we use a technology-based service for person-specific process monitoring: iamYu (www.iamyu.nl). Supported by a ZonMw investment grant the iamYu application was built in cooperation with youth clients and clinicians.

Towards a general framework for personalized psychopathology and treatment

Knowledge from this project **contributes to the development of an integrative theoretical framework of psychopathology and treatment processes**. Results from this project will also inform practice on how to dynamically personalize interventions and thereby empower clinicians to better target and timely adapt their intervention efforts to the particulars of individual clients embedded in a theory of clinical change. The research will lead to a person-specific research paradigm, with the ultimate goal to benefit those who suffer from mental health problems and the ones treating them. The project focuses on youth, but the trans-theoretical and -diagnostic approach offers the unique opportunity to take personalized care beyond diagnostic categories, treatment models and settings, impacting on theory and clinical change more broadly.

Selected scientific output

1. Olthof, M., Hasselman, F., Oude Maatman, F., Bosman, A. M., & Lichtwarck-Asschoff, A. (2023). Complexity theory of psychopathology. *Journal of Psychopathology and Clinical Science*, 132(3), 314.
2. Olthof, M., Hasselman, F., Aas, B., Lamothe, D., Scholz, S., Daniels-Wredenhagen, N., ... & Lichtwarck-Asschoff, A. (2023). The best of both worlds? General principles of psychopathology in personalized assessment. *Journal of psychopathology and clinical science*, 132(7), 808
3. Cui, J., Lichtwarck-Asschoff, A., Olthof, M., Li, T., & Hasselman, F. (2023). From metaphor to computation: Constructing the potential landscape for multivariate psychological formal models. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 58(4), 743-761.

Selected societal output

- www.iamyu.nl
- Lichtwarck-Asschoff, A., Otten, R., & namens de iamYu-projectgroep. (2023). 'iamYu' toont hoe het écht met jongere gaat: App biedt meer grip op veranderproces. *Kind & Adolescent Praktijk*, 22(1), 39-42.

Case study 2: The Academic Collaborative Centre PIMD: Supporting persons with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities.

The Academic Collaborative Centre PIMD (ACC PIMD) for persons with profound and multiple disabilities is an example of the **seamless integration of scientific research and practical application**, where both domains continuously inform and enhance one another. The ACC PIMD is a network that serves as a focal point for combining experience-based-, practice-based and scientific-based knowledge with the ultimate goal of enhancing the quality of life of persons with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities and their families. Through a collaborative effort between researchers, care providers, and educational institutions (staff of the NI, Hanze University of Applied Sciences, 's Heeren Loo and Koninklijk Visio), this centre bridges the gap between theory and practice. The research projects directly inform the development of assessment procedures and interventions, which are rapidly translated into clinical tools and implemented in practice. This dynamic, interdisciplinary partnership ensures that insights from clinical settings and stakeholders shape the research, while scientific advancements simultaneously refine and optimize care practices. To effectively support individuals with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities, it is essential to develop robust assessment procedures and interventions that adopt a multidisciplinary perspective, addressing the needs of clients, professionals, families, organizations, and policy levels.



Collaboration and infrastructure development

The development and sustainability of the infrastructure of the ACC is financially supported by ZonMw. All four partners invest in this collaborative effort by in kind contributions by staff from their organization working (part time) in the ACC. In the last years, the total number of staff increased substantially from 13 (6.55 FTE) in 2019 to 30 (15.05 FTE) and consists of senior and junior scientists, knowledge brokers, educational specialists, a management assistant and product developer. In the ACC, experiential knowledge by different stakeholders (e.g., relatives, professionals) is structurally embedded in various ways: (1) hiring staff with 'double appointments' (e.g., occupational therapist as PhD student, health care psychologist as knowledge broker, PhD student who is a relative) and presently 67% has such a 'double' role, (2) actively involving stakeholders at the project level by using the 'involvement matrix' a tool for project leaders to collaborate with stakeholders, and (3) installing an advisory board consisting of relatives of persons with multiple disabilities. In this way, practice-based knowledge is used and implementation of developed tools and interventions is facilitated.

Interdisciplinary research and practical impact

The knowledge developed within different projects supports both assessments and interventions, with a focus on underlying mechanisms from an interdisciplinary, contextualized perspective. Focal areas address either the individual or their interaction with the environment (e.g., professionals, social-physical, or organizational contexts). The ACC's research program centres on three strongly interconnected themes: behavior (mental health and well-being), participation, and physical health, all driven by urgent questions from professionals and relatives. Knowledge generated is translated into practical tools, such as easy-to-read factsheets, training programs, instruments, interventions, and webinars, ensuring substantial output and impact.

Examples of innovative tools and interventions

The output and impact is substantial (see www.aw-emb.nl). For example, assessment tools like the 'behavioral appraisal scales'^[1] and checklists to assess pain in daily practice^[2] have been developed and implemented, improving research quality and clinical procedures with solid psychometric properties. Another spin-off is the intervention 'Perspectief' (see *societal output*); an individualized educational programme for persons with PIMD, recognized by the 'Vilans databank for the long-term care', with follow-up implementation funded by ZonMw (k€200). Another example is an online e-learning module to train practitioners in promoting a healthy lifestyle in terms of healthy food-choices and daily exercise for people with multiple disabilities,^[3] now freely available online (see *societal output*).

The ACC also critically evaluates new developments, such as technology use in supporting people with multiple disabilities and addressing labor market challenges (ZonMw grantk€250). Projects that contribute to theoretical development include the OJKO project (see *societal output*), which explores how young children with severe developmental delays grow in various domains, and a recent project on loneliness among informal caregivers of people with chronic conditions (NWO grant k€1,100). This includes parents of children with intensive support needs, focusing on the conceptualization of loneliness, support needs, and intervention development across ecological levels.

Finally, knowledge generated is disseminated and implemented via training facilities by social partners (Expertisecentrum EMB | 's Heeren Loo) and the interprofessional minor 'healthy aging' in which students from different educational settings (MBO, HBO, WO) and backgrounds (special needs education, nursing, physical therapy, social work), are jointly educated in the support of persons with intensive support needs (Healthy Ageing bij een verstandelijke beperking | Hanze).

Selected scientific output

1. Wessels, M. D., Paap, M. C., & van der Putten, A. A. (2022). The content validity of the Behavioural Appraisal Scales in people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities: A Delphi study. *Journal of policy and practice in intellectual disabilities*, 19(1), 86-101.
2. Enninga, A., Waninge, A., Post, W. J., & van Der Putten, A. A. (2023). Reliable assessment of pain behaviour in adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities: The development of an instruction protocol. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 36(3), 653-663.
3. Overwijk, A., Hilgenkamp, T. I., van der Schans, C. P., van der Putten, A. A., & Waninge, A. (2022). Development of a Dutch training/education program for a healthy lifestyle of people with intellectual disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 60(2), 163-177.

Selected societal output

- www.aw-emb.nl
- Programma Perspectief - Voor avontuurlijke zorgprofessionals
- De Krachten Gebundeld - Ondersteunen gezonde leefstijl
- <https://www.ojko.nl/>
- [Training: praktisch aan de slag met het GTI-R - Academische werkplaats EMB](#)

Case study 3: International, regional and local entanglements in education and culture

In a vastly changing world, pedagogy and education cannot be researched without carefully contextualising people's lived experiences in relation to the broader structures that inform them. The research group Education in Culture conducts research on how education is entangled with broader patterns of continuity and change on local, regional, transnational and global scales. Drawing on a range of qualitative empirical approaches, this research takes two distinctive (yet not entirely separate) perspectives: **contextualisation** and **cross-cultural comparison**.

Lived experiences in context

The **contextualisation** of the experiences of (young) people that live at the intersections of culture, race/ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion and national identity, is central to our research. For example, understanding the lived experiences of foster children has been the focus of the NWO funded study *Roots are powerful. Een onderzoek naar de identiteitsontwikkeling bij migrantenpleegkinderen in de adolescentiefase* (Van Bergen & Clementine Degener 2016-2021, NWO lerarenbeurs), and the ZonMw funded study *Toward a healthy psychosocial adjustment of foster children: Practical guidance with ethical dilemmas due to religious differences* (Van Bergen & Bartelink 2019-2022). Together, these projects have yielded significant scientific output,^[1] and an e-toolkit and report for Youth Care Professionals, and diverse consultancies with the Netherlands Youth Institute (NJI), Pleezorg.nl and individual youth agencies. The importance of understanding and contextualising the intersectional experiences of youth with migration backgrounds in education and care has furthermore led to the NWO funded PhD project *Navigating everyday racism: voices, experiences and power dynamics in higher vocational education in the Netherlands* (2022 -Wekker, Bartelink and Westberg). In addition, sexual and gender identity is at the foreground of the PhD project *Preventing suicidality among Dutch Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth through a web-based intervention*, funded by ZonMW (Van Bergen).

Education beyond borders

Cross-cultural comparison offers knowledge and insights critical to understanding how social structures, and therefore education and pedagogy, emerge in relation to broader politics and power relations. Our research from this perspective usually investigates the Dutch case within a wider international context. The research comparing across cultural contexts has first of all dealt with the content of education. John Exalto's work on catechism primers and Dutch educationalists (Kohnstamm and Langeveld) in the Netherlands from a European perspective, and PhD projects such as Pieter van Rees thesis (Rees/van der Ploeg/Parlevliet, 2023) on democratic citizenship education in the Netherlands and the United States (1920-2020), and Anders Nordmo's PhD (Nordmo/Westberg/Roos, 2022-) which is a comparative project on Cold War Politics in Dutch and Norwegian textbooks, are cases in point. An example that indicates the scope of this research is the project on secularism, nation building and education that was reported in the edited book "Secular Schooling in the Long Twentieth Century?".^[3] With four chapters for each country, this book sheds light on the changing role in Christianity in Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands. Exploiting the differences in religious context and institutionalisation, and starkly different developments in tracking of the school system, a more nuanced understanding of the Dutch case is accomplished. Impact is furthermore realised through stimulating cross-cultural comparison in research within and across academic institutions and national contexts. This includes the projects 'Reforms in Education. A European Research Network' (Swedish Research Council, Westberg/ Gingrich/ Buchardt/ Geiss, 2020-2024) and the international Graduate School 'Schooling in perspective: A graduate school in applied history of education (2020 - 2025). The "SHER: School History across European Regions" (Swedish Research Council/Westberg/Gabriele Cappelli, Siena, 2017-2023), resulted in an edited book on European school legislation (2019), where the chapter on the Netherlands was authored by prof. Dekker and prof. Amsing.

Selected scientific output

1. van Bergen, D. D., Saharso, S., Degener, C. J., Bartelink, B., & Vanderfaeillie, J. (2023). Moral Dilemmas in Foster Care Due to Religious Differences Between Birth Parents, Foster Parents, and Foster Children. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 40, 811-822.
2. Dekker, J. J. H., Amsing, H. T. A., & Wichgers, I. J. M. (2019). Education in a Nation divided: The Contribution of School Acts to the Development of Dutch Mass Schooling in the Long Nineteenth Century. In J. Westberg, L. Boser, & I. Brühwiler (Eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling: Education Policy in the Long Nineteenth Century* (pp. 93-118). Palgrave MacMillan.

Other output:

- Bartelink, B., & Knibbe, K. E. (2022). Why the Dutch (Think They) Break Taboos: Challenging Contemporary Presentations of the Role of Religious Actors in Narratives of Sexual Liberation. *New Diversities*, 24(2), 13-28.
- Haafte, L. v. (2021). Management science and nation building: The sociotechnical imaginary behind the making of the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad. *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 58(3), 333-359.

Selected societal output

- [E-toolkit](#)
- [Report](#)
- [Netherlands Youth Institute](#)
- [Pleezorg.nl](#)

Case study 4: The Virtual Reality Kindergarten classroom curriculum

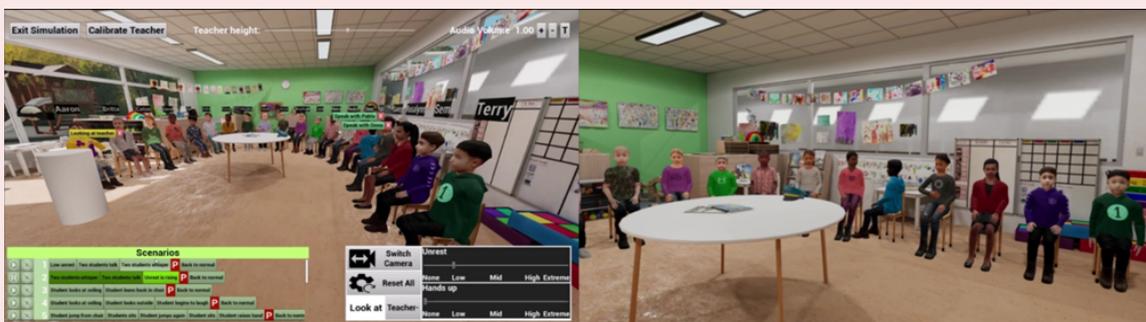
Theories do not reach the kindergarten classroom

Classroom management is essential to create an environment that is conducive to learning. Theories of classroom management, however, are generally validated in upper-elementary and secondary school classrooms, and do not properly account for the dynamic nature of kindergarten classroom settings. Developing and implementing the appropriate classroom management strategies is a skill that requires practice. It is therefore not surprising that pre-service teachers struggle with the selection and implementation of the appropriate strategies to respond to unwanted behaviours in the classroom. Ideally, future teachers are equipped with effective kindergarten-specific classroom management strategies during their pre-service training—preferably during a teaching placement (i.e., internship). However, pre-service teachers often report a lack of knowledge and know-how when facing the classroom in their kindergarten internship. Pre-service teachers experience difficulties applying theoretical principles to the kindergarten classroom, and often report insufficient opportunities for practicing and developing effective classroom management strategies that are specific for kindergarten settings (e.g., raising their voice versus not intervening). It is essential to provide pre-service teachers with more in-training opportunities to develop a variety of kindergarten-specific classroom management strategies, however, it is not ethical to allow pre-service teachers to experiment in real-life classrooms.

A tech solution for a real-life problem

To this end, our interdisciplinary team has developed and evaluated an evidence-informed Virtual Reality (VR) kindergarten curriculum that combines VR-technology with didactics. It offers realistic classroom simulations allowing pre-service teachers to safely experiment with classroom management strategies, immediate eye-tracking supported feedback, and reflective exercises to stimulate pre-service teachers' classroom management skills and self-efficacy. In the development process, we adopted a design-based research approach (e.g., Anderson & Shattuck, 2012) as this allows us to structurally map students' (and teachers') needs, which in turn informs the iterative development, implementation, and evaluation of the intervention, and improves our innovation and education.

Our work is a collaborative effort involving numerous institutions and stakeholders. From the University of Groningen, it involves the Department of Educational Sciences (GION education/research), the Teacher Education Department, and the Centre for Information Technology. The partnership also involves multiple universities of applied sciences: Christelijke Hogeschool Ede, Saxion, and Thomas More Hogeschool. This line of research has been developed thanks to multiple grants, namely: Comenius Teaching Fellow (2020, k€50), call for Proposals Visualization, Geo, and Data Science (2021, RUG/CIT; k€31), Open en Online Onderwijs, pijler Open Leermateriaal Ronde 8 (2022; k€ 218), and the Nederlandse Onderwijspremie (submitted in 2023 and awarded in 2024; k€1,200).



Changing education of pre-service teachers

The curriculum is already implemented in four educational institutions (one research university and three universities of applied sciences; >30 teacher educators), with many other institutions eager to start using the curriculum and VR kindergarten classroom. This allowed us to support (and evaluate) the learning processes of >280 pre-service teachers. Data are collected at all participating institutions to gain insight into the effectiveness of the curriculum while taking into account institution-specific adaptations of the curriculum (i.e., ecologically valid approach). We use a variety of tools and methods, such as questionnaires, observations, self-reflections, and eye-tracking (student level). The eye-tracking integration was specifically developed for our application, and opened up a new methodological approach to the evaluation of the effectiveness of VR.

Both scientific papers ^[1, 2] and professional publications resulting from this project. In addition, new VR modules (for example, for secondary education) and didactical and professionalization materials are continuously updated, developed, evaluated, and shared as open-source resources to stimulate a widespread use of VR across disciplines in higher education.

This project is unique in its purposeful technology integration, a strong focus on didactical embedding, supporting teachers in developing skills, and design-based research: all aimed to improve the quality of learning in educational institutions.

Selected scientific output

1. Mouw, J. M., & Fokkens-Bruinsma, M. (2022). When technology meets educational sciences: Combining virtual reality and microteaching to train pre-service teachers' kindergarten classroom management strategies. In J. Domenech (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Higher Education Advances* (pp. 1043–1050). Universitat Politècnica de València.
2. Mouw, J. M., Fokkens-Bruinsma, M., & Verheij, G.-J. (2020). Using Virtual Reality to promote pre-service teachers' classroom management skills and teacher resilience: A qualitative evaluation. In J. Domenech, P. Merello, E. de la Poza, & R. Peña-Ortiz (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Higher Education Advances* (pp. 325–332). Universitat Politècnica de València.

Selected societal output

- [De klas op orde met virtual reality | Onderwijskennis](#)
- Aleman, A. F., & Mouw, J. M. (2023). Zicht op klassenmanagement met eyetracking in de virtuele kleuterklas: Een richtlijn voor lerarenopleiders. GION Onderwijs/Onderzoek.
- [edusources.nl](#)