



Prof. Inge Placklé

EAPRIL 2024 keynote speaker

Inge Placklé is a teacher educator for General Subjects in Vocational Education at PXL University College and Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She is professor of Teacher Education at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on powerful learning environments in vocational secondary education. Her research focuses on learning environments in vocational education and professionalization of teacher teams and educators.

She was chair of the Association of Teacher Educators in Flanders (VELOV) (2015-2022), co-initiator of the Flemish Training for Teacher Educators and is vice-chair of the Board of Directors of school group ADITE.

Last year she codesigned, together with local teacher educators and Ministry of Education, a professionalization program for educational leaders in secondary education in Suriname.

“Building Bridges: Collaborative Approaches to Powerful learning environments in Vocational Education”

The majority of students in vocational education belong to the most underprivileged section of society in most European countries, and thus, from an equity-minded approach, require the most powerful learning environment (PLE). In contrast, the learning environment at school offers often lower quality learning experiences for students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds compared to the more privileged students. In our research we aim to contribute to equity in education by empowering practitioners to focus collaboratively on learning and teaching in such a way that teacher teams and students — with shared responsibility—can improve effective teaching practices and create powerful learning experiences for every student and, as a consequence, improve student engagement and achievement in vocational education.

As a first step for improvement, we developed a model for PLEs in prevocational and vocational education. We defined PLEs as contexts for learning that create the appropriate conditions to stimulate learners to develop complex and higher order skills, deep conceptual understanding and metacognitive skills, with attention for meaningful authentic and real-life contexts for learners. The models form a step in developing a shared language and understanding about PLEs in VET.

In line with the models, we propose a professional development trajectory where schools, teacher education and workplaces in various disciplines, collaborate within extended teams. Strengthening the ties between schools and workplaces by crossing the boundaries is necessary to fully share the responsibility of the learning of students. We urge for the alignment of several stakeholders’ perspectives during long-term inquiry-based collaborations to co-design powerful, authentic learning environments for their students in VET. The focus on the learning of vocational students connects all participants and strengthens learning at different levels.

The implication of such a collaborative approach asks for intensive partnerships between schools, teacher education institutions, and social-economic stakeholders.