



BACHELOR THESIS

A Process Evaluation of the Positive Educative Programme: Perceptions on Observing Pupils' Well-being and Engagement

V.J. Roorda (S1710877)

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY

Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social sciences (BMS)

First supervisor: T.R. Elfrink MSc

Second supervisor: M.P.J. Sommers - Spijkerman PhD

25-06-2019

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Abstract

Introduction – Keeping track of well-being and engagement is seen as important, since, according to the Positive Educative Programme (PEP), these are the indicators of a child's positive functioning and positively influences of the child's learning achievements. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the experiences of teachers with observing well-being and engagement among their pupils during PEP.

Methods – An interview design was used at a primary elementary school in the Netherlands which was in the first year of PEP. Seven teachers of this school were interviewed in semi-structured interviews to get more information about observing well-being and engagement. The process evaluation is done based on the Nielsen and Randall model (2013), which includes the implementation process, the mental models of the participants of the intervention and the contextual factors.

Results – The results showed that teachers were already observing the children multiple times a day before the introduction of PEP. However, observations according to the PEP methods were not performed by the teachers. Despite this, the teachers act based on the level of the pupil's well-being and engagement and they have learned a lot from the introduction of PEP. The teachers' perceptions to PEP are mostly positive, since it is perceived as a program that fits to the school system. Some teachers also expressed some critics about PEP, since the idea behind it felt a bit idealistic. The context of the school was also mostly stimulating the acceptance of PEP, for example the mentality of the school is to actively approach new developments and PEP had to offer the school something (giving them guidelines for continuation), but also showed some barriers. As other developments going on in the school with a higher priority and the fact that teachers has to change their way of teaching due to the introduction of PEP.

Conclusion – Overall, the teachers perceived that PEP had an positive influence on their own way of observing the children's well-being and engagement. It made the teachers more conscious about the children's well-being and engagement during class. So, while observing the children the teachers are automatically more focused on the indicators of the positive functioning of a child, which made them want to stimulate children's well-being and engagement.

Content

1. Introduction	3
2. Methods	5
2.1 Design.....	5
2.2 Participants	5
2.3 Implementation of PEP	6
2.4 Research instruments.....	6
2.5 Procedure.....	7
2.6 Analyses	7
3. Results	10
3.1 Implementation.....	10
3.1.1 Applying.....	10
3.1.2 How to handle observations / follow-up actions	11
3.1.3 Learned matters	12
3.2 Mental models	13
3.2.1 Perception on well-being and engagement.....	13
3.2.2 Perception on intervention activities	14
3.3.1 Facilitating factors.....	15
3.3.2 Hindering factors.....	17
4. Discussion and conclusion	17
4.1 Key findings	17
4.2 Strengths and limitations	19
4.3 Directions for future research.....	20
4.4 Directions for future practice	21
4.5 Conclusion.....	21
5. References	23
6. Appendix	25
6.1 Observation form.....	25
6.2 Interview scheme (in Dutch)	26

1. Introduction

Positive education is seen as promising for the child's development and learning process (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich & Linkens, 2009), but the teachers' experiences of positive education are still not exactly known. Positive psychology, with its focus on the qualities of a client (Magyar-Moe, 2009), is increasingly applied in school, also referred as *positive education* (Seligman et al., 2009). Positive education is defined as "education for both traditional skills and for happiness" (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 293). The school's first goal is to educate children on academic (traditional) skills, which is seen as a basis for learning a trade or continue studying. Next to that, schools also have a pedagogical function: the need for personal development, citizenship education and learning to be part of the school system (Pels, 2011). Schools mostly practice the pedagogical function by educating pupils on problems that can occur in life, like alcohol and drug programs and anti-bullying programs (Boiler, Walburg, Boerefijn, 2013). To prepare children on a meaningful, pleasant and productive life, it is important to focus on well-being and the strengths of the children as well (Seligman et al., 2009). So, this includes the *happiness* concept of the definition of positive education.

The value of positive education is to get more out of a child by stimulating the strength's and well-being. High well-being does not only decrease the chance to get a depression and increases the chance for experiencing a higher life satisfaction, it also strengthens the academic skills since it has a positive relationship with the pupils' learning outcomes (Howell, 2009; Seligman et al., 2009). Less procrastination and higher grades are linked to a high level of well-being (Howell, 2009). Besides, positive emotions are important for creative and holistic thinking, which differ from the normal focus of schools on analytic and critical thinking (Seligman et al., 2009).

The most optimal way of executing a positive education program, was found out to be a *whole school approach* (De Nobile, London & El Baba, 2015). A whole school approach results in a broader capacity than a single classroom or curriculum focus, by implicating all groups of interest as parents, teachers, pupils and school management (Weare & Nind, 2011). De Nobile, London and El Baba (2015) showed that addressing behaviour problems through a whole school approach is more effective than an isolated classroom approach. Consistently, Goldberg et al. (2018) showed social and emotional skills interventions using a whole school approach yield significant improvements on behavioural adjustment, social and emotional adjustment, and internalising symptoms. A whole school approach was not found to impact the academic outcomes of the pupils (Goldberg et al., 2018).

The Positive Educative Programme (PEP) uses a whole school approach for introducing positive education to primary schools in the Netherlands. The focus of PEP is to enhance the pupils' well-being and engagement, the two process indicators of PEP, since well-being and engagement are seen as the indicators for positive functioning of children (Goldberg et al., 2017). Well-being is seen as feeling emotionally safe, being able to be yourself, show vitality and to enjoy (Goldberg et al., 2017). Engagement is expressed in the intensity of activity, concentration, and having pleasure in exploring. It is seen as the intrinsic interest in finding out how things work (Laevers, 2015). Well-being and engagement can be stimulated by connecting it to the children's talents or let children discover their own talents and let them build on that. This will result in an ongoing circle: Children with a higher level of well-being and engagement will learn better, since it increases the self-confidence, which leads to the increasing of well-being and engagement, which will improve the school climate, which involves a positive influence on the well-being and engagement of the teachers and parents (Laevers & Heylen, as cited in Goldberg et al., 2017). For an overview of the PEP's structure see Figure 1:

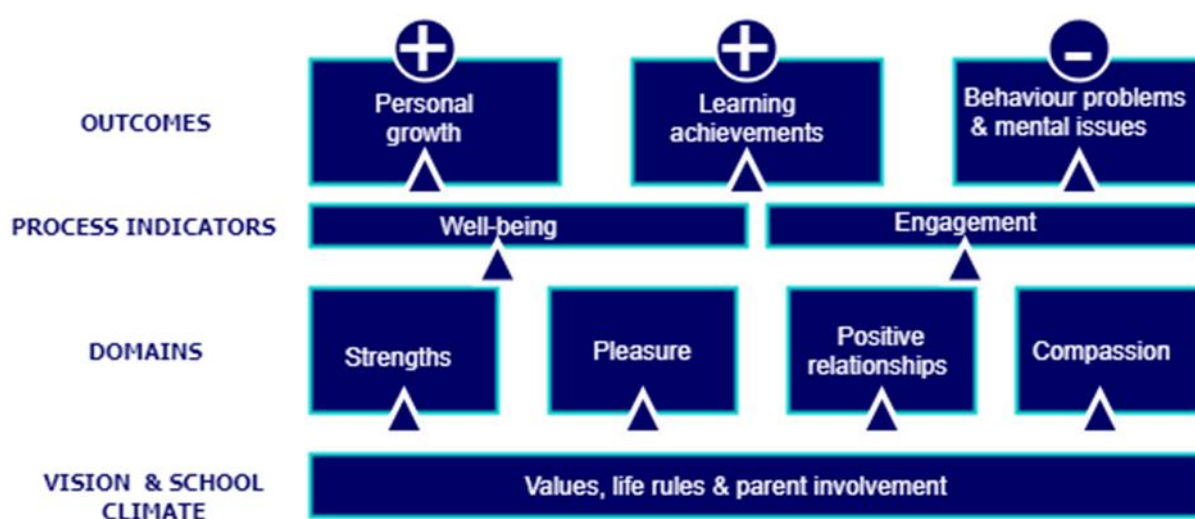


Figure 1: The Whole School Approach of PEP (Goldberg et al., 2017)

The use of PEP is becoming more popular in schools in the Netherlands. The implementation of PEP started in the academic school year of 2014/2015 in two primary elementary schools in the Netherlands. In January 2019, seven more primary schools started with PEP together with eleven special education primary schools, and two schools of intermediate vocational education (In Dutch: MBO) (PEP, n.d.a).

PEP has been evaluated based on the process evaluation of the evidence based model of Nielsen and Randall (2013) to analyse how PEP was implemented and its impact on the pupils of primary schools, which covers promising outcomes in which the pupils' well-being

improved, problem behaviour decreased and teacher got a better insight of the children's talents (Elfrink, Goldberg, Schreurs, Bohlmeijer & Clarke, 2017). The "bottom up" approach was appreciated by the teachers and directors, because it makes the completion of PEP match with the school climate. Nevertheless, it caused more need for practical support for the teachers and the teachers noted that lack of time made it hard to fully implement PEP in the school (Elfrink et al., 2017).

This study focussed on the observations on the pupils made by teachers based on the process indicators of PEP, well-being and engagement. This study evaluated these experiences based on the Nielsen & Randall (2013) framework of process evaluation. This process evaluation model is seen as valuable, since its focus is not only on the implementation of the intervention, but it also takes the potential side effects into account (the contextual situation and the mental models of the participants). This led to the following research aim:

To explore teachers' experience with observing levels of well-being and engagement among their pupils during PEP.

Sub aims included:

1. To study teachers' experiences with the applying the observing method on well-being and engagement.
2. To study the teachers' perceptions and cognitions on observing pupils' well-being and engagement.
3. To identify the stimulating and hindering factors for observing pupils' well-being and engagement.

2. Methods

2.1 Design

An interview design was used to explore the teachers' experiences with observing levels of well-being and engagement among their pupils on a primary school in Enschede, the Netherlands. For this design, ethical approval was obtained by the BMS Ethics Committee of the University of Twente (190279).

2.2 Participants

The interviewees were teachers from a Dutch elementary school which was in the first-year implementation of PEP, started in September 2018. The participants consisted of seven teachers from different age-based classes. The participants taught children between 4 and 12 years old.

The participants could apply if they wanted to participate in the study through a list hanging in the teacher's area. The group exist of two men and five women. Ages ranged between 22 and 44, with a mean of 31 (SD = 6.8). The average teaching experience of the interviewees was 8.86 years of teaching. The mean years of working on this particular school was 6.29 years.

2.3 Implementation of PEP

As described in the introduction, the goal of PEP is to enhance pupil's well-being and engagement. Next to that, the school's way of operating PEP should fit to the school climate. Therefore, it is important to let the school think about their own values, which will be formulated in life rules (Goldberg et al., 2017). This is what makes PEP a bottom-up approach. In the first year of the implementation of PEP the schools will have two workshops, the first one about the process indicators of well-being and engagement, and the second one about the values and life rules. During the first workshop the teachers learn what well-being and engagement are and how they can observe it. For observing the children, the teachers can use a five-point scale on the subject well-being and engagement (see Appendix 6.1). These observations are important, since it gives the teachers an indication when their approach needs to be changed due to scores from three or lower on the scale (Elfrink et al., 2017). The moment that the school is formulating their life rules is during the second workshop under the guidance of professionals. In a later stadium of the implementation, in about one year, the focus will be shifted to the four domains of positive education (strengths, pleasure, positive relationships and compassion). Strengths is about promoting pupils' strengths, so the focus is *not* on prevention of problems and disturbances. Pleasure as domain is developed from the studies about positive emotions. Positive relationships are another domain, since having deep and strong relationships with others is one of the most important aspects of life. The last domain, compassion, is about handing tools to the pupils for cognitive and emotion regulation (Positief Educatief Programma [PEP], n.d.b). Before starting to help the school, an overview has to be made to what extent the school is already paying attention to these domains. From this standpoint there will be worked with matching methods to the schools' (working) attitude (see Figure 1 in the introduction for an overview of the structure). Besides the two workshops in the first year of the implementation, the PEP-team will join once a month the team meetings of the school, also after the first year (PEP, n.d.b). The central idea behind PEP is to strengthen the vision and values of the school (Goldberg et al., 2017).

2.4 Research instruments

To collect information from the teachers about observing well-being and engagement of the pupils during classes, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Questions were based on the

Nielsen and Randall model (2013) which encompasses aspects about (i) the implementation of observing well-being and engagement, (ii) mental models of the teachers about the observing part, and (iii) the schools' context as experienced by the teachers. Questions about the implementation were asked to find out how making observations of well-being and engagement got introduced at the school and how the teachers experienced that. Sample questions about the implementation were, for example: *What is your opinion about the observing well-being and engagement training? What did you learn from it?* Thereafter, questions were asked to find out what the perceptions and appraisals of the interviewees were about making observations of the pupil's well-being and engagement. Sample questions about the mental models were: *How did you experience observing pupils concerning their well-being and engagement? What is the added value? How do you recognise a pupil with a high level of well-being?* Finally, to get a better insight about the contextual situation, questions were asked about the school climate and processes during implementing the intervention, such as: *What do you discuss about the pupils' well-being and engagement with other teachers? How does observing pupils' well-being and engagement fit to this school?* To obtain concrete situations, probes were used next to the open fixed questions of the interview. See appendix 6.2 for the complete interview scheme.

2.5 Procedure

The approached interviewees were aware that the interview was about getting more insight about PEP at their school. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at the school of the interviewees in a private room. All the interviews took place within a two-week period, starting from the 8th of April until the 17th of April 2019. All the interviews were held individually. The interview started with an introduction about the topic of the interview, that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and that the interviewer was interested in their opinions and experiences. They were informed that the interviewer was independent from the PEP program and that the information was processed anonymously. The interviewee and interviewer signed an informed consent after the researcher explained what the rights of the interviewee were. After this procedure, the interview started. In the end of the interview, the interviewee was asked if they still agreed with the informed consent. The average duration of interviews was 29:05 minutes, ranged between 24:10 and 34:15 minutes.

2.6 Analyses

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and anonymised. To analyse the interviews, the coding program Atlas-ti was used. The coding scheme was developed after the interviews were transcribed and was grounded on the three stages/categories of the Nielsen and Randall model (2013), *Implementation*, *Mental models*, and *Context*. The first interview was re-read multiple

times and first were only the parts highlighted that fitted to the categories of the Nielsen and Randall model. Overlapping things from the categories were put together in a fitting label, from there on the codes got created. After four interviews were analysed a draft coding scheme was created. The content of the interviews that came after those four interviews fitted to the draft coding scheme, so no new codes were developed after coding the first four interviews. In the end, only one code (Readiness to change) got deleted, since it overlapped with another code (Perception on the intervention activities) and the difference between them was hard to tell. So, the interviews had to be recoded, but that was only that Readiness to change had to be substituted for Perception on intervention activities. For an overview of the categories and associated codes, see Table 1 on the next page. The codes covered by the category *Context* were based on literature (Nielsen & Randall, 2013). One of the two codes of the category *Mental models* was also derived from the literature (Nielsen & Randall, 2013), while the other code, Perception on well-being and engagement, was existed from the data of the interviews. All the codes of the category *Implementation* were created from the data. Therefore, the coding process was a combination of top-down and bottom-up coding. During the coding process is decided to code situations, not specific words, answers or sentences.

Table 1

Overview of the Code Scheme with coded quotations per participant

Categories	Codes and definitions	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Implementation (113)	Applying <i>Making observations, the actual events that are applied and the intervention activities.</i>	11	11	6	7	5	5	7	52
	How to handle observations/follow-up actions <i>What has been done with the observations, how the follow-up actions looks like.</i>	2	8	4	3	5	5	11	38
	Learned matters <i>What has been learned from the intervention activities.</i>	6	4	3	3	0	4	3	23
Mental models (108)	Perception on well-being and engagement <i>The perception/attitude about well-being and engagement, this includes the experiences with these concepts.</i>	9	8	10	11	8	5	7	58
	Perception on intervention activities <i>The perception/attitude about making observation according to the PEP method, this includes the thoughts.</i>	10	6	8	4	10	5	7	50
Context (42)	Facilitating factors <i>All factors independently of PEP that facilitates applying the intervention activities.</i>	1	4	11	4	4	3	5	32
	Hindering factors <i>All factors independently of PEP that hinders applying the intervention activities.</i>	3	1	1	4	0	1	0	10
Irrelevant (15)		5	1	1	1	0	3	4	15

Note. P = Participant

3. Results

The teachers showed experiences with observing their pupils on three levels: Implementation (113), Mental models (108), and Context (29). Table 2 gives an overview of the coded quotations per all of these categories per participant. As can be seen *Implementation* and *Mental models* were more discussed topics, then *Context*.

Table 2

The amount of coded quotations per category per participant

Categories	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Implementation	19	23	13	13	14	14	21	113
Mental models	19	14	18	15	18	10	14	108
Context	2	6	8	5	3	3	3	29
Irrelevant	5	1	1	1	0	3	4	15
Total	45	44	40	34	30	30	42	265

Note. P = Participant

3.1 Implementation

The *Implementation* section is about the teachers' experiences with the introduction of the observing method on well-being and engagement and what the teachers do in the field of observing pupils on well-being and engagement. This includes the activities they apply, the follow-up actions of the observations they make and what they have learned from observing children's well-being and engagement, the three codes of the category *Implementation*.

3.1.1 Applying

What emerges from the interviews is that observing children is something that the participants were already doing before PEP. It is something they do daily and throughout the day. Therefore, keeping track of the children, also on well-being and engagement, is not seen as something new.

“Well, I’ll guess four or five times a day. At least upon arrival and going home, but you are also observing it every time while the children are working.” (Participant 3)

The way of observing according to PEP is seen as something different than their own way of observing. The ‘PEP observations’ contain performing a scan of all children in the class (two minutes per child), taking notes about these observations while using the observation form (see appendix 6.1). These ‘PEP observations’ are not performed frequently. Moments of awareness of PEP and observing well-being and engagement came after the workshops in the beginning of the implementation of PEP. At the moment, those moments are every time after

a monthly meeting with the PEP team. One teacher mentioned to never perform the ‘PEP observations’, only the one time when it was mandatory during an exercise of PEP.

The participants mentioned there are two different ways to observe well-being and engagement. The first way is during the lessons when the children are working independently. Secondly, the teachers also film the children and make the observations afterwards. Next to that, multiple resources are supporting the teachers in observing children’s well-being and engagement. First of all, the training was seen as a big help. According to one teacher it was very helpful that they made observations during the training and got advice while doing this. Due to PEP, the teachers also observe in teams as they watch the films back together, which is seen as a support. The opinion were divided about using the observation form (see appendix 6.1). Some teachers were seeing it as something useful and practical for observing pupils on well-being and engagement, while others thought the observation form was not very helpful, since it limited observing well-being and engagement.

“I have to say that I experienced a hard time observing in this way, because you are really going to delineate it. I did not always think it was a practical framework. That you have to follow the steps, such as: ‘Okay, he is watching, he is not watching.’ ‘Okay, he is still watching...’ And then sometimes while you were watching the pupil that you thought: ‘No, he is totally not engaged when I follow this.’ But actually you are seeing that a child is continuously discussing with others about the tasks he is doing. So, if you are watching the child with your own personal experience and skills, you will see that the child is engaged with what he is doing.” (Participant 5)

Two participants missed the workshop and observation form about well-being. According to them is only engagement discussed during the implementation of PEP.

What the teachers experienced from applying ‘PEP observations’ is that they see more, since they scan all the children one by one. In addition, it makes them more critical about well-being and engagement of the children.

3.1.2 How to handle observations / follow-up actions

The approach to the children and the follow-up actions are formed by the observations the teachers make. The teachers experience this due to the critical look on children’s well-being and engagement. They come up with suitable follow-up actions to stimulate the children’s well-being and engagement. Most of the follow-up actions the teachers mentioned are connected to observations on the child’s engagement. The most accessible method is to approach the children when they get distracted or are highly engaged. Another follow-up action is to use specific

materials during the lessons, for example materials to help with mathematics or receptive reading. One participant mentioned that the school had troubles with receptive reading and due to the introduction of PEP they came with the idea to increase children's engagement to let them bring their own texts for receptive reading. Besides, most of the participants mentioned that it is the job of the teacher to let the child take a step back when the engagement is getting lower, that is what they experienced with the introduction of 'PEP observations'.

"I am often trying to work with concrete materials to engage the child and then especially for success experience. To show that this pupil can do it." (Participant 3)

Compared to the follow-up actions of engagement, the actions of the teachers' observations on the child's well-being are less concrete. For well-being, one participant mentioned it is important to let the child feel safe at school. Another participant mentioned that for well-being the help of the parents is needed sometimes, since some children are afraid to tell the teacher when they do not like something. Besides, parents are not that much involved in the follow-up actions. All the participants mentioned that they have to discuss some situations with the parents of the children with a low level of engagement or well-being, but they do not discuss their observations explicitly.

Some participants mentioned that those follow-up actions were also done by the teachers without PEP.

3.1.3 Learned matters

The participants mentioned they have learned multiple things from observing the children's well-being and engagement since the introduction of PEP. Firstly, almost all participants mentioned that they have learned to keep an eye on every child in the classroom. PEP made them observe the children on well-being and engagement in a more conscious way. By scanning every child during an observation, a better picture of the group as a whole is get and the teachers have a better eye for the unremarkable children. PEP learned the teachers how the children behave in the classroom. Next to that, one participant mentioned that due to PEP he/she saw the facts of neglecting some children who are always working really good, in giving them less attention. Besides, the more conscious way of observing, the teachers also mentioned that they have learned that there were a lot of different opinions about well-being and engagement. Those two terms are seen as person-dependent. Normally, while observing you connect your own knowledge of the child to the observation. Observing together with other teachers and discussing those findings results in new insights. One participant also mentioned that they learned about which moments are effective, concerning well-being and engagement: on what

differences influence well-being and engagement of the pupils, for example the difference of who is teaching at the moment. Lastly, some participants mentioned that they have learned how to get more out of a child. They learned how to get a child engaged and learned to think about the reasons why some children are less engaged by default.

“... that when the engagement is low, that you sometimes think: ‘Oh well, it just does not work with that person.’ Sometimes you have that as a teacher. Due to PEP you are looking differently at this kind of situations, such as: ‘How can I get this pupil at a higher level of engagement?’ That the children are more engaged.” (Participant 1)

3.2 Mental models

Mental models are about the perception and attitudes of the teachers according to PEP. It involves their perception on the concepts well-being and engagement, and on the intervention activities, namely observing children’s well-being and engagement. For this reason Perception on well-being and engagement and Perception on intervention activities are the codes belonging to the category *Mental models*.

3.2.1 Perception on well-being and engagement

Engagement is seen as something that is perceived during the lessons. For example, if the children have their attention, if they take initiative and if the teachers are getting response from the children during class. The teachers mentioned that engagement can be seen during school work, but also within groups. A high level of engagement is perceived in children who work hard and when they are not distracted by other children. Having an active attitude, like showing initiative, and gives supplements to the lesson. A low level of engagement expresses in drop out quickly, focussing on other things than work, constantly looking around, not participating in the lessons, but also in games. The teachers linked low engagement to finding the work difficult and not being good in something. Next to that, teachers experienced a hard time in finding a low engaged child due to the age of the children.

“... but what you notice is that for some children the engagement decreases really fast when something happens in the class, even though they really like the exercise and enjoy it.” (Participant 4)

Well-being is experienced as something that is harder to see than a child’s engagement. According to the participants well-being is how children feel, if they feel safe at school, if they feel good about themselves and thereby can learn. Children with a high level of well-being are children who smile, radiate positive energy, who like to come back to school, hug the teacher when they go home, making jokes and search for contact with other children and the teachers.

It is something that can be seen with the child's body posture, relaxation and the need to share something, but it is also personal. A low level of well-being can also be seen on the child's body posture, for example having hanging shoulders, facial expression, showing deviant behaviour and going to school without pleasure. Children with a low level of well-being are mostly also children who are absent a lot. Overall, all participants mentioned that they have a class full of children with a high level of well-being.

The participants noticed a connection between well-being and engagement.

"I think that when well-being is optimal, the engagement also will be bigger. And that this also works the other way around, because if they are really engaged, it goes way easier, which is good for the self-confidence." (Participant 4)

The participants see well-being and engagement as conditions for getting the best results out of the child. For this reason, the teachers think well-being and engagement are really important for children to have. They mentioned that they were already focussing on both. Besides, well-being and engagement are also terms the teachers relate to themselves. It is also important that they are feeling a high level of both, because what you are giving the children is what you get back.

3.2.2 Perception on intervention activities

What emerged from the interventions is that the teachers adjusted the focus on well-being and engagement and keeping track on every child of the 'PEP observations' to their own way of observing.

"In the meantime I am more aware of it. I am not structurally doing it every week, but sometimes I am thinking: 'Well, they are working independently.' Than this is the moment I look specifically at a specific group of children, such as: 'Hey, what are you doing right now? And what can we do with that?' So, it is not an official scan, but the approach is the same as when you would do it officially." (Participant 6)

The participants' perceptions of whether the intervention activity fits to the school is mostly positive. The decision to apply a positive education program was initially an obligation, but the whole team choose for PEP and not another program. The reason for this decision is that PEP works as a bottom-up approach, they do not tell the teachers what to do, but they think along and let the school decide themselves what to do. It is applicable to every school vision.

"That is something I like. Nothing is good, but also nothing is wrong. It is your way of observing a child." (Participant 7)

Most of the perceptions against PEP are positive and seen it as an investment. PEP brings discussion, which is normally a miss in observing, since it brings a lot of new insights. Next to that, the participants also see the observations as something that gives them a better look on the children, which results in responding to what the children can. It encourages them to take the time to look critical, something a teacher is already doing, but this time from a different point of view and with a different goal. PEP pulls you out of your routine. Having a routine as a teacher makes the children easy going, due to PEP you are more aware of engaging the children. Well-being and engagement are seen as important concepts, which shows the concern of the teachers.

Besides of the concern, the participants also stated that observing well-being and engagement is not something that the school encountered for. The participants perceived the introduction of observing well-being and engagement by PEP as a confirmation of how the school is already working. They have the opinion that the school was already developed in this field, also before PEP. Next to all the positive perceptions on PEP, some participants are less pronounced enthusiastic about 'PEP observations' and one participant is showing some critic about the PEP approach to say it is a bit idealistic.

Lastly, the teachers experienced the level of well-being and engagement as time dependent. The engagement of the children is higher just after the group instruction than when the children are already working. So, the teachers perceived that with the 'PEP observations' they are getting a lot of different measurements.

3.3 Context

Context is about the facilitating and hindering factors that is present at the school, which are independently of PEP. These factors were already present. So, facilitating and hindering factors are the codes of the category *Context*.

3.3.1 Facilitating factors

The participants mentioned some *facilitating factors* for making sure that pupils are observed on well-being and engagement. First of all, the school's atmosphere is stimulating to keep track of the children, since it is really open and they share a lot with each other, what was mentioned by all the participants. The school system is to work in 'units'. This means that teachers are working close with one or two other teachers, every unit is a couple. They also teach each other's class, so they know each other's class very well. This is enhanced by the presence of a door between the two classrooms.

“With your close colleague you are sometimes discussing: ‘This pupil stands out. I see this and this, do you also see that?’ ‘No, I do not see that.’ Or they do see it. So, it is possible to brainstorm about it and then you also have your own view and someone else’s others view. Maybe even another one’s view and together you will figure it out. So, that helps.” (Participant 5)

Another part of the school system is that the school does not have rules for the teachers, which results in having nothing really on paper. That is why the school wanted to visualize what they are already doing in the field of observing well-being and engagement. PEP is giving them a framework/guidelines according to most of the participants.

“Precisely because we do not have any rules. We are really observing per child, and then it is important to notice everyone’s well-being and engagement if you want to act appropriately for everyone. I think it is something that has always been here, but now it is more conscious. Before, it was like everyone did it in their own way and now it is more in tune. I think that is the big difference.” (Participant 3)

Besides, the bottom-up idea of PEP is also stimulating the teachers, since they are used to no rules.

“I think that is what makes PEP valuable, because it has way less guidelines. For example with PBS you have coins and that is already irritating me. Than you also have to think how to give coins...” (Participant 5)

The school system has another facilitating factor for the intervention, since the school offers the teachers some flexibility in moments of teaching. Once in the two weeks the teachers are scheduled to do other work outside the classroom. So, there is time to observe the children with the existing school system. Next to that, the school also has supporting staff such as pedagogical employees/teaching assistants and a retired teacher who volunteered at the school. This gives room to the teacher to observe the children one by one. An advanced stage (bovenbouw) teacher also mentioned that he/she has some time during the day, since the children are older and can work independently. The teacher does not know how other teachers experience this.

Next to the working school system, the mentality of the teachers is also stimulating the intervention of observing well-being and engagement. As one participant mentioned is that the team have a joint responsibility. So, they are all concerned when a child is not doing well. Besides, they are open to new things such as new developments and new methods as PEP. The feeling of: ‘We are standing here together’ prevails. Everyone is participating.

“I think this team is good for it. Everyone is really open for new things and are not immediately standing the grounds. It is not that we think: ‘Oh it is so much and oh this is extra.’ No that is not the mentality.” (Participant 4)

3.3.2 Hindering factors

The participants also mentioned some *hindering factors*. Observing children on well-being and engagement according to PEP takes time and asked the teachers to change their way/schedule of teaching, which is not stimulating for the intervention activities. In daily practice it is not very common that a teacher can sit and observe the children one by one. A teacher is always busy.

As mentioned before, working without rules is seen as a stimulating factor to observe the children during PEP, since PEP works via a bottom-up approach and is without obligation. Some participants also mention that words as ‘life rules’ does not sound attractive to the school, because they are not used to work with rules.

Finally, other developments of the school going on are hindering the ‘PEP observations’. Recently, the flexible school hours for pupils (something that the school is applying) got declined. So, this development was asking a lot of the school and had a high priority, which gave them less time to focus on PEP.

4. Discussion and conclusion

PEP is seen as an effective program to introduce *positive education* to schools in the Netherlands (Elfrink et al., 2017). Well-being and engagement, the process indicators of PEP, are important to indicate the positive functioning of children (Goldberg et al., 2017). For this reason, the aim of this study was to explore the teacher’s experience with observation levels of well-being and engagement among their pupils during PEP.

4.1 Key findings

The results of the interviews showed that the observing method of PEP was generally accepted by the teachers. The teachers mentioned to not perform the observations as instructed by PEP, the ‘PEP observations’, which contains scanning every child of the class for two minutes per child and taking notes while using the observation form (see Appendix 6.1). The teachers, however, did observe the children, daily and multiple times a day, but they did it in their own way as how they did it before the introduction of PEP. The main reason behind this was that the teachers ‘forget’ about PEP. Despite this, the teachers learnt multiple things due to PEP which they apply in their own way of observing, namely keeping track of all the children instead of the group, and focus on the child’s well-being and engagement. So, the teachers changed

their own way of observing children because of PEP, the eventual goal of PEP (Goldberg et al., 2017). Another result was that the school context provided a lot of facilitating factors, as for example the mentality of the school team and the flexible work hours of the teachers, but also hindering factors, which ensures that the teachers are not applying the ‘PEP observations’.

Firstly, the barriers of PEP will be elaborated. The moments of awareness of the teachers about PEP were too rarely, only after the workshops or after a PEP meeting. Next to that, there was a lack of awareness about PEP by the teachers, which resulted that they are not performing ‘PEP observations’, since they simply forget about it. Besides, it was perceived that the school already paid attention to what PEP encounters, namely observing and focusing on children’s well-being and engagement. This mental model of the teachers is against the effectiveness of the intervention. An intervention is seen effective if participants experience problems and that it is the intervention that tackles those problems. The participants should also feel the need that those problems should be addressed. This makes participants ready for change (Nytrø, Saksvik, Mikkelsen, Bohle & Quinlan, 2000). Nytrø et al. (2000) also stated that participants should perceive that the problem will be effectively approached by the intervention activities. Some of the teachers did not see PEP as a solution for keeping track of the children’s well-being and engagement, since the approach of PEP felt idealistic and as consisting of loose parts. Besides, during the implementation of PEP on this school, there were also some other developments going on in this school. For example the flexible class schedule got declined by the Dutch government, a process of the school with a higher priority than PEP.

The results nevertheless showed the positive impact of PEP on the teachers way of observing well-being and engagement. The teachers are not completely against PEP, because of the value they see in the process indicators well-being and engagement. They think of well-being and engagement as the conditions to get the best out of a child. The teachers noticed an interaction between the two concepts: when the well-being of a child is high, the engagement is also higher and when the engagement is high, it is easier to learn, which is stimulating the child’s self-confidence. This interaction is comparable with the ongoing cycle of Laevers and Heylen (as cited in Goldberg et al., 2017). The teachers perceive PEP as a program that fits to the school context, since it is an bottom-up approach and that is why you can put your own spin on it. That is also how this school is working without their rules and not in a hierarchical structure. No rules also resulted in no documentation. PEP is seen as a method that ensures the things the school was already doing in the field of well-being and engagement. However, good documentation is very important for the continuation, so new team members can continue on

the good base that is already there. For that reason it needs to be on paper, so it can be checked and looked back.

So, the implementation of PEP in this school got a lot of contradictions in applying the observing method, mental models of the teachers about the observing method and the context factors. On the one hand, the teachers are not observing according to the PEP method, but they also say that it is something they were already doing. That the school was already developed in keeping track of the children in this way. Besides, the teachers have the impression that PEP is too loose, but on the other hand they also mention to need moments of awareness and the trainings to make these conscious observations as how PEP introduced it. The reason behind this is that they really see the importance of children experiencing a high level of well-being and engagement.

What also emerged from the interviews is that the teachers had a part in deciding which intervention/program the school would perform to introduce positive education at the school. Together as a team they decided that PEP should be the program for this school and all the school staff thought the same about that. Having an influence on the intervention program has a positive effect on the intervention's execution, since participation turned out to have a positive relation with achieving the intervention's goals (Lines, 2004). Whereas, having nothing or only partly to say something about the intervention resulted in reacting negative on the intervention and not willing to change (Aust, Rugulies, Finken, & Jensen, 2010; Lines, 2004).

The idea behind focusing on children's well-being and engagement is that teachers are being forced to look at the strengths of children, instead of focusing and preventing the weaknesses of children (Goldberg et al., 2017) The teachers also look for success experience of the children, which would make the pupils highly engaged and would increase the level of well-being. Teachers were doing that by giving children fitting exercises, such as taking a step back when it was too difficult and engagement decreased, and encouraging pupils that they could do more and confirming that the students were doing well. Some teachers did not always have a more positive focus on the child's development, since they were talking about emphasizing if children were not doing well. So, in this case the focus of teachers on well-being and engagement did not led to a more positive approach towards the children.

4.2 Strengths and limitations

This study contained a process evaluation for one primary elementary school in the Netherlands about the implementation of observing well-being and engagement according to PEP. A

strength for this kind of research is that the interviews were held one-by-one by an interviewer who was independent of the PEP team. This counteracts the possible feeling of the participants that they cannot freely answer or express their critics, since the interviewer had nothing to do with the PEP intervention. So, there was less risk of social desirable answers. The interviewer was also someone from outside of the school without having any relationships within the school that could influence the participants' answers. The advantages are that this makes sure that more knowledge will be released, which can be applied specific for this school, but also for the PEP program.

Another strength is that after four interviews the coding scheme was complete, which indicates the achievement of data saturation. This means that after this point no new information got collected from the interviews and also no new codes existed. Data saturation is important, since a study with no data saturation has a negative influence on the validity of the study results (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

A limitation of this study is that the interviews were analysed by only one researcher. When two or more researchers would have done the coding process, there would have been a consensus about when to apply which code and the researchers would have been blind-coded each other for the inter-rater reliability. In this study this process is done by one researcher, which means that all the codes and coded quotations are based on the knowledge and considerations of one researcher.

4.3 Directions for future research

For future research, there can be evaluated if the findings of this study resulted due to the implementation of PEP or not. The results of 'Learned matters' are clearly about something that is learned because of the introduction of observing well-being and engagement according to PEP. From the follow-up actions, it is not clear whether these actions existed due to PEP or due to the handling observations the teachers were already doing in the way they said they did. Next to that, as already seen, the teachers are showing a lot of contradictions in their mental models about the observing method of PEP. To get more insight about the impact of PEP on the teachers way of observing and what they do with the observations, a future research could include a control group. This control group would be interviewed about their way of observing, not about well-being, engagement and PEP, since they are not applying PEP. Questions could be asked about how often they observe, what they observe, what kind of notes they make, where they focus on, how they handle these observations, etc. This would give a more complete view of the impact of the introduction of PEP in observing children's well-being and engagement.

4.4 Directions for future practice

The findings of this study also include some directions for future practice. Firstly for the school, what emerged from the results is that the teachers see the concern of keeping track of children's well-being and engagement, but that their awareness about PEP is not that high. An implication for the school could be to stir up the awareness of PEP by the teachers to make it a more regular thing. Especially, since this is already occurring in the first year of the implementation of PEP, the year that the school is getting the most attention from the PEP team. The team could encourage observing well-being and engagement by making it a fixed discussion point during meetings. They could also make their flexible working hours scheduled outside of the classroom into a moment of observing by watching films of the children back. If this would have been done once a month, then their awareness of well-being and engagement while teaching would also be bigger, since it would become more a habit.

Secondly an implication for the PEP team is to include the concept *well-being* more in the program of PEP. So, for instance treat the topic in the workshops. The findings now showed that the teachers are still expecting something as a training on well-being. However this is not going to happen, since the school already had their workshops belonging to PEP. This is something that should be done for schools where PEP is going to be implemented in the future. The teachers also perceived well-being as something that is harder to see than engagement. This can be seen in the follow-up actions the teachers mentioned, which were not concrete actions. Besides, the teachers mentioned literally to miss some handles for observing well-being and engagement. So, what the PEP team could add to their way of introducing well-being and engagement is some examples of well-being, tips how to observe it and provide them some concrete follow-up actions. They could look at the children together with the school, to show them how they would do it. If this is not possible, because maybe well-being is vaguer than engagement, then the PEP team should clearly communicate this to the school during the workshops.

4.5 Conclusion

To conclude, making observations according to the PEP method is generally seen as an added value to the school by the teachers. The teachers experienced to learn a lot from the implementation of PEP and the corresponding workshops. Despite observing of the children is something the teachers already did and observing according to PEP is something the teachers are not used to, the information from PEP influenced their way of making observations. It made them more conscious about well-being and engagement and about observing all the children.

This can be seen as the most important perception on observing well-being and engagement of the teachers, since the teachers adjusted their way of observing to tracking pupils' well-being and engagement. This means that the PEP intervention succeeds in giving the teachers a base of observing and stimulating the positive function of the child while teaching.

5. References

- Aust, B., Rugulies, R., Finken, A., & Jensen, C. (2010). When workplace interventions lead to negative effects: Learning from failures. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 38, 106–119.
- Bolier, L., Walburg, J.A. and Boerefijn, J. (2013), “Positieve psychologie op school”, in Bohlmeijer, E.T., Bolier, L., Westerhof, G.J. and Walburg, J.A. (Eds), *Handboek Positieve Psychologie*, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, pp. 325-354.
- Elfrink, T. R., Goldberg, J. M., Schreurs, K. M., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Clarke, A. M. (2017). Positive educative programme: A whole school approach to supporting children’s well-being and creating a positive school climate: a pilot study. *Health Education*, 117(2), 215-230.
- Fusch, P.I., Ness, L. R. (2015). Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408-1416.
- Goldberg, J.M., Blomesath-Prenger, M., Clarke, A.M., Elfrink, T.R., Schreurs, K.M.G. & Bohlmeijer, E.T. (2017). *PEP: Positieve Psychologie als heleschoolbenadering op basisscholen*. Retrieved from <https://www.positieve-educatie.nl/onderzoek/>
- Goldberg, J. M., Sklad, M., Elfrink, T. R., Schreurs, K. M., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Clarke, A. M. (2018). Effectiveness of interventions adopting a whole school approach to enhancing social and emotional development: a meta-analysis. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 1-28.
- Howell, A. J. (2009). Flourishing: Achievement-related correlates of students’ well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(1), 1-13.
- Laevers, F. (2015). Making care and education more effective through wellbeing and involvement. An introduction to Experiential Education. *Research Centre for Experiential Education, University of Leuven: Leuven, Belgium*.
- Lines, R. (2004). Influence of participation in strategy change: resistance, organizational commitment and change goal achievement. *Journal of Change Management*, 4, 193–215.
- Magyar-Moe, J.L. (2009). The Intersection of Positive Psychology and the Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy. In: J.L. Magyar-Moe (Ed.), *Therapist’s Guide to*

Positive Psychological Interventions (pp. 15-42). Academic Press. ISBN 9780123745170

Nielsen, K., & Randall, R. (2013). Opening the black box: Presenting a model for evaluating organizational-level interventions. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 22(5), 601-617.

Nobile, J. de, London, T., & El Baba, M. (2015). Whole school behaviour management and perceptions of behaviour problems in Australian primary schools. *Management in Education*, 15(7), 1-8.

Nytrø, K., Saksvik, P. Ø., Mikkelsen, A., Bohle, P., & Quinlan, M. (2000). An appraisal of key factors in the implementation of occupational stress interventions. *Work & Stress*, 14(3), 213-225.

Pels, T. (2011). *De pedagogische functie van het onderwijs*. Utrecht: Verwey-Jonker Instituut.

Positief Educatie Programma. (n.d.a). *Ervaringen*. Retrieved from <https://www.positieve-educatie.nl/ervaringen/>

Positief Educatie Programma. (n.d.b). *Structuur en voorbeeldplanning*. Retrieved from <https://www.positieve-educatie.nl/structuur-en-planning/>

Seligman, M. E., Ernst, R. M., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford review of education*, 35(3), 293-311.

Weare, K. & Nind, M. (2011). Mental health promotion and problem prevention in schools: what does the evidence say? *Health Promotion International*, 26(1), 29-69.

6. Appendix

6.1 Observation form

Engagement – score

1 = rarely attains to actual activity; stares a lot, absent, apathetic; just brief moments of attention; hard to reach; when active the actions are stereotypical, simple and require minimal effort; mental activity is minimal; understands little.

2 = mostly interrupted activity.

3 = mostly attains to activity with progress in the actions; is there with his mind, but misses the engagement signals: often distractible, limited attention span, not really absorbed or touched by the activity.

4 = the pattern mostly consist of engagement.

5 = concentrated and works continuously most of the time; hard to distract; alert; absorbed and fascinated; mentally active on a high level; appeals to his full potential; acts on the edge of his abilities; enjoys exploring.

? = not enough information, very unclear image or not yet determined.

Well-being – score

1 = does not feel good most of the time; lacks enjoyment; often tensed, misses inner peace; lots of signals of negative experiences; little confidence, low self-esteem; relationships with others are negatively loaded; mainly: not feeling happy.

2 = in the pattern mostly consists with discontentment.

3 = a neutral or mixed pattern, signals of not feeling good; having fun is transitory and not intense; relationships with the environment are not optimal, but also not alarming; not happy nor unhappy.

4 = the pattern mostly consists with well-being.

5 = feels optimal most of the time: enjoys at the highest level; appears to be full of vitality; is relaxed and experiences inner peace; is open for his environment and adjusts to it rapidly; is confident and acts in a resilient manner; is happy and content with himself.

? = not enough information, very unclear image or not yet determined.

6.2 Interview scheme (in Dutch)

Inleiding

Ten eerste wil ik u van harte bedanken voor de tijd die u uittrekt voor dit interview.

Ik ben Vonne, derdejaars psychologie student aan de Universiteit Twente. Ik doe onderzoek naar de uitvoering van PEP met de focus op de ervaringen van leerkrachten met het observeren van het welbevinden en de betrokkenheid. Ik sta daarbij los van PEP. Met deze ervaringen hoop ik het PEP-team een goed beeld te kunnen geven over hoe de docenten dit observeren beleven, daarom is het van belang om uit eigen meningen en ervaringen te spreken. Hierbij zijn geen foute antwoorden die gegeven kunnen worden.

Tijdens het interview maak ik graag een opname, zodat ik het interview later kan uitwerken om te analyseren en te vergelijken met de andere interviews. De resultaten van het interview zal ik anoniem in een verslag verwerken, wat inhoudt dat namen, data en plaatsen worden verwijderd, en dat het dus niet mogelijk is om onderzoeksgegevens te koppelen aan personen. In het verslag maak ik graag gebruik van de geanonimiseerde citaten. Het verslag zelf zal door twee onderzoekers van de Universiteit Twente worden beoordeeld. Zij zullen dus inzicht krijgen in uw ervaringen.

U kunt op elk moment stoppen met het interview indien u dat wenst.

Tot slot verwacht ik dat het interview ongeveer een half uur tot driekwartier in beslag zal nemen.

Bent u het eens met de zojuist genoemde procedures?

Wilt u dan het toestemmingsformulier tekenen?

Dan wil ik nu graag beginnen met het interview. Het interview zelf zal uit vier onderdelen bestaan. Het eerste onderdeel zal bestaan uit wat algemene vragen, het volgende onderdeel zal gaan over de invoering van het observeren van welbevinden en betrokkenheid, dan zullen er een aantal vragen gaan over hoe u tegen PEP aankijkt en het laatste onderdeel zal gaan over de sfeer op school.

We beginnen dus met wat algemene vragen.

Algemene vragen
Wat is uw leeftijd?
Hoe lang werkt u al als docent?
Hoe lang bent u al werkzaam op deze school?
Welke klas onderwijst u?

Het tweede onderdeel bestaat uit vragen die gaan over hoe PEP en dan met name het observeren van welbevinden geïntroduceerd werd bij jullie op school.

Vragen over de Implementatie/invoering van PEP op de school
Wat is volgens u welbevinden en betrokkenheid?
Wat zijn de verschillen?
Kunt u deze verschillen zien tijdens het observeren?
Observeert u de kinderen op het gebied van welbevinden en betrokkenheid?
Hoe vaak doet u dat? / Hoe vaak heeft u dat gedaan?
Wat is de reden dat u het vaak of niet vaak observeert?
Wat vindt u van de training over het observeren van welbevinden en betrokkenheid?
In hoeverre was dit helpend/nuttig?
Wat heeft u hiervan geleerd?
Wat heeft u nodig om het welbevinden en de betrokkenheid van de leerlingen te kunnen observeren/beoordelen?
Zijn deze middelen aanwezig op de school?

De volgende vragen gaan voornamelijk over uw ervaringen en bevindingen met PEP en dan specifiek over welbevinden en betrokkenheid. Dus over hoe u tegen PEP aankijkt.

Vragen over de Mentale modellen
Hoe heeft u het observeren van de leerlingen met betrekking tot hun welbevinden en betrokkenheid ervaren?
Was het observeren van kinderen met betrekking tot hun welbevinden en betrokkenheid nieuw voor u?
In hoeverre was u klaar voor deze verandering (het observeren)?
Wat levert het op / Wat is de meerwaarde / het belang?

Waaraan herkent u een kind met hoog welbevinden? Kunt u een situatie als voorbeeld geven waarin u een kind met hoog welbevinden observeerde?
Waaraan herkent u een kind met een hoge betrokkenheid? Kunt u een situatie als voorbeeld geven waarin u een kind met hoge betrokkenheid observeerde?
Waaraan herkent u een kind met een laag welbevinden? Kunt u een situatie als voorbeeld geven waarin u een kind met een laag welbevinden observeerde?
Waaraan herkent u een kind met een lage betrokkenheid? Kunt u een situatie als voorbeeld geven waarin u een kind met een lage betrokkenheid observeerde?
Wat doet u met deze observaties?

Tot slotte heb ik nog een aantal vragen die gaan over de sfeer op school met betrekking op het observeren van PEP.

Vragen over de Context
Wat bespreekt u over betrokkenheid en welbevinden van de leerlingen met andere leerkrachten?
Wat is de instelling van het schoolteam met betrekking tot PEP? En met betrekking tot het observeren van welbevinden en betrokkenheid?
Wordt het observeren van welbevinden en betrokkenheid gestimuleerd?
Wordt er gekeken of nagevraagd of u observeert op welbevinden en betrokkenheid? Indien ja: Hoe vaak? En hoe wordt dat gedaan?
Hoe past het observeren van kinderen op welbevinden en betrokkenheid bij deze school? Of hoe past het niet bij de school?
Wordt er ook een terugkoppeling gedaan naar de ouders van de observaties van welbevinden en betrokkenheid? Hoe wordt dat gedaan? En naar de leerlingen?

Dan is dit het einde van het interview. Heeft u nog vragen voor mij? Bent u het nog steeds een met het formulier dat u vooraf het interview ondertekent heeft?

Dan dank ik u hartelijk voor uw medewerking en tijd!