

Master Thesis

Dropout prevention programme: the effect of the Loopbaanklas on finding a matching career path by helping Graafschap College students switch educational programmes

Hatice Yalvac-Ikde: h.ikde@student.utwente.nl – S2653699

Faculty of Behavioural Management and Social Sciences
Department of Educational Science and Technology,
University of Twente

201200036: Final Project EST

Supervisor: dr. J.W. Luyten: j.w.luyten@utwente.nl

Second supervisor: dr. M.J.M. van Geel: marieke.vangeel@utwente.nl

External supervisor: Dianne Kortschot: d.kortschot@graafschapcollege.nl

September 23, 2022

Word count: 10848

Acknowledgement

After a year of work, energy, and time, I have finalized this thesis in the field of Behavioural Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente. Conducting and writing this study would have been impossible without the support of many people.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and give special thanks to my supervisor dr. Hans Luyten for helping, guiding, and teaching me. You encouraged me to always reflect and improve my work with your feedback. Not only have you broadened my knowledge in educational sciences and research, but you also widened my horizons in my role as a researcher. You taught me that patience is the key to success. That is something that will always remain with me.

I want to thank Graafschap College for the opportunity to collaborate on this project together with the Loopbaanklas. Thanks to their input and time, I have accomplished to finalize this project.

A special thanks goes out to my dearest father, my two sisters, my nephews, and friends for their support and prayers during this challenging journey.

Lastly, and most importantly, I would like to express my sincere and deepest gratitude for the two people that have always stood with, behind and next to me: my mother and my husband. Your prayers, your love, your belief in me, and continuous support is what always gives me strength and motivation to persevere. I am very thankful for both of your existence.

Thank you.

Hatice Ikde

September 23, 2022

Abstract

Dropping out has severe consequences for students, teachers, and society. Therefore, switching to another educational programme is more preferred over dropping out. To prevent dropout, the Dutch vocational school Graafschap College, has initiated a prevention project: the Loopbaanklas (Career Square). The Loopbaanklas helps students switch educational programmes who are at risk of dropping out. This paper investigated whether the Loopbaanklas is effective for students' career path by looking into students' success, satisfaction of educational programme, satisfaction of the Loopbaanklas, Subjective Well-Being (SWB), and job satisfaction. The following research question is addressed: '*What is the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas on Graafschap College's students regarding choosing the right career path?*'. To answer this research question, the students of Graafschap College were approached to participate in a survey. The survey involved questions about qualifications, the educational programme, the Loopbaanklas, SWB, and job/career path. With the collected data, a descriptive analysis was conducted of the results of the survey.

The findings of the study revealed that respondents expressed general satisfaction across the measured variables. The results of this study have contributed to an increased understanding of the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas by filling in the research gap of the effectiveness of the all-inclusive prevention projects at Dutch vocational schools regarding choosing the right career path. As a result, it has been recommended that the Loopbaanklas should continue providing their training. It has also been recommended that certain areas of the Loopbaanklas and job/career path require further examination to enrich the training more. Future research should investigate the possibility of conducting a mixed method study based on grades of graduated students and a follow-up qualitative study with (more) graduated students who participated in the Loopbaanklas.

Keywords: switch educational programme, dropout, prevention project, career path, vocational school

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Introduction

One of the most prominent problems schools face are high dropout rates (Education Week, 2010). The term dropout has different interpretations. According to Rijksoverheid (2021), drop out relates to students who leave school and fail to obtain a basic qualification. To decrease the number of dropouts, schools offer students to switch educational programmes instead. In the studies of Aina (2013) and Heublein (2014), students who switch educational programmes are also termed as dropouts. But Broek et al. (2016) refer to them as 'switchers', which is the term that will also be used in this paper to distinguish the difference between the two interpretations. In other words, switchers are students that drop out of an educational programme, but that does not mean they drop out of the education system entirely.

Each year, many students leave school without a qualification (Dynarski et al., 2008). In the preceding years of 2015, there was a significant decline in the dropout rates amongst Dutch students, but that changed in the years between 2015 and 2019. The dropout rate increased by 2%, indicating that the problem requires attention (Onderwijs in Cijfers, 2020). In 2019-2020, the number of students who dropped out was 22.785 (Rijksoverheid, 2021), with the majority (18.512 students) being from vocational schools (MBO) (Onderwijs in Cijfers, 2020; van der Gaag et al., 2020). From the early 20th century, researchers have tried to discern the causes of dropout (Doll et al., 2013). According to Meijers & Wardekker (2001), one of the reasons for high dropout rates is that students' expectations of the educational programmes do not correspond with the reality of educational programmes. Furthermore, it is not always realistic to expect students from secondary schools to set suitable career aspirations (Meijers & Wardekker, 2001). Consequently, later in their programme, some students realise they have misjudged the match between their skills and the programme requirements. As a result, students switch to another programme (Graafschap College, 2020). Similarly, Rijksoverheid (2021) documented that the main reasons students drop out does not solely lie in the different expectations of the educational programme, but also in the fact that students prefer to earn money than follow an educational programme.

Drop out has been associated with several serious consequences (Wilson & Tanner-Smith, 2013). Drop out is undesirable for students on an individual level because it is seen as a loss of time, loss of energy, and a source of frustration and disappointment (Warps et al., 2010) since they end up without a qualification (Neamtu, 2003). A lack of educational qualifications is often linked to detrimental consequences such as low salary, limited career prospects, poverty, and delinquency (Wilson & Tanner-Smith, 2013).

Furthermore, drop out upsets teachers, who are involved in the challenging process of the students, trying to support and guide their students to the desired position (Warps et al., 2010). Finally, Warps et al. (2010) mention that dropout is a problem for society. As mentioned before, dropouts end up without qualifications, which means there is little prospect of finding a job and earning a living for

these people (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap et al., 2015) since jobs for low-skilled employees dry up (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003). Thereby, a multifaceted societal problem emerges that includes unemployment, financial instability, debts, housing problems, the shame of failing, increased risk of engaging in criminal activities (van der Gaag et al., 2020; Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid, 2009), increased health risks, and lower life expectancies (Dynarski et al., 2008).

To diminish the aforementioned risks, the European Commission (2021) has launched an initiative called 'Pathway to school success' with the purpose to provide youth in Europe good educational outcomes. The European Commission works with European countries on shared issues, such as early school leaving and the integration of migrants and refugees, in education (The European Commission, 2021). One of the objectives of the initiative 'Pathway to school success' is to decrease dropout rates and foster students in achieving basic skills such as reading, writing, Maths and Science. These basic skills are essential 'for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship' (The European Commission, 2018). The European Commission (2021) claims that an individual has educational success when a qualification is obtained in which basic skills are achieved. That means that students in the Netherlands who have completed primary school, obtained a qualification of VMBO, or MBO-1 or higher, have achieved at least the fundamental 1F level, which is the basic level of reading, writing, Maths (Rijksoverheid, 2022), and Science (SLO, 2019) that students should master. In addition to that, the Dutch government has the ambition of increasing the number of primary school students that achieve a higher level than 1F. This level is called the 'streef' (aim) level (1S) and provides more challenge for students that learn fast (Meijerink et al., 2009). Apart from the fundamental 1F level and the 1S level, there is a qualification obligation in the Netherlands. In 1969, a law was proposed, to prevent dropout, which includes a qualification obligation for youth between 16 and 18. A qualification obligation entails successfully obtaining minimal a qualification of HAVO, VWO or level two of the vocational education (Rijksoverheid, 2021). Consequently, this is the definition of success according to the Dutch government.

In order to achieve educational success, students ought to be encouraged to outline their career ambitions and set life goals, which as a result, will decrease the dropout rate (Graafschap College, 2020). This is possible via a prevention project (Graafschap College, 2020). An example of a prevention project, and simultaneously the focus of this paper, is the Loopbaanklas. The Loopbaanklas is a programme that consists of training where professional teachers guide students in their choice of an educational programme and career path by encouraging them to reflect on themselves with questions like 'Who am I?', 'What are my skills?' And 'What do I want?'. It is expected that these crucial questions will raise awareness of their objectives in life and will lead to making a well-thought decision for their educational programme switch (Graafschap College, 2020). The project aims to

assist students in choosing an educational programme and career path. Students are stimulated to reflect on their goals for the future. The Loopbaanklas has aided Graafschap College overcome their dropout challenge. Since Loopbaanklas's founding in 2011, the dropout rate has significantly decreased (Graafschap College, 2020). In 2005-2006, there were 451 dropouts (7.0%) and in 2008-2009, this number increased to 488 dropouts (7.6%) (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2010). However, in 2015-2016, after the Loopbaanklas took action, the dropout rate decreased from 3.7% to 3.4%, which is below the average of the national dropout rate (Graafschap College, 2017). Along with the decreasing dropout rate, the switchers' rate, which includes both students that did and did not participate in the Loopbaanklas, increased. In a study of Slag (2019), it appeared that between 2015 and 2019, the switchers' rate has risen by 213% respectively, meaning that there is approximately a twofold increase in the switchers' rate. Apart from the increasing number of switchers, there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of prevention projects at Dutch vocational schools regarding choosing the right career path (De Baat, 2010; Bokdam et al., 2015; van der Gaag et al., 2020). It is therefore crucial to find out whether the training of the Loopbaanklas helps switchers choose a matching educational programme and a career path.

Consequently, the current study aimed to measure whether the Loopbaanklas is effective for students, thus whether students are successful. More specifically, this study aimed to find out whether the Loopbaanklas is effective in supporting students of Graafschap College to make the right decision for their career path.

Theoretical framework

This section will cover the definitions of the terms dropout and switchers, and highlight the relevant ones. Furthermore, to understand the causes of drop out and switching, students' motives will be discussed. Moreover, to improve the understanding of the Loopbaanklas, an overview of the core elements of prevention projects in general will be provided by reviewing previous studies on prevention projects, ending with an example of a prevention project: the Loopbaanklas. Additionally, to guide this study, an overview of the research questions will be given.

Dropouts and Switchers

There are several definitions of dropout. Moreover, there are also many terms used for dropout in different international research reports (Markussen et al., 2011). Examples of various terms that have been used frequently are 'push-out', 'ease-out', 'fade-out', 'opt-out' and 'early school leaving'. The term dropout will be used in this paper.

Dropout has been linked to diverse situations such as students redoing a year, students leaving education entirely, students failing to complete a level of education or students leaving the institution (Dore & Lüscher, 2011). When it comes to the conceptualisation of dropout, a distinction between a narrow and a wide definition can be made (Milas & Ferić, 2009). The narrow definition entails the

noncompletion of the enrolled programme (Morrow, 1986). In contrast, the wide definition relates to students who are not enrolled in either secondary or elementary school, and the ones that have enrolled have not finished it (Viadero, 2001; Finn, 1989). Put simply, the narrow definition relates to students who drop out from their current educational programme, so they stay within the education system. However, the wider definition is associated with students who never entered compulsory education and those who have entered compulsory education, such as elementary or secondary school, failed to complete it. In addition, according to Neamtu (2003), dropout is defined as students leaving school without obtaining a qualification, despite the school stage not being finished yet. Furthermore, Aina (2013) and Heublein (2014) suggest that dropout relates to students who choose another educational programme, thus dropping out from their current educational programme and switching to another. Finally, Rijksoverheid (2021) state that dropout encompasses students between the ages 12 and 23 who leave school without obtaining a basic qualification. A basic qualification entails obtaining a qualification of either minimal level two of vocational education (MBO) or general upper secondary level (HAVO/VWO) (see Appendix A for further details of the Dutch education structure and ISCED levels). Vocational education in the Netherlands consists of four levels in which each level has its own learning goals, which progress gradually as the levels go up. The vocational schools prepare students for the labour market, career, and good citizenship. The vocational schools offer education to students of a wide age range. The minimum age for students to apply for the vocational school is 16 and there is no maximum age to apply (MBO Raad, 2019). Considering the similar problem of Graafschap College where students leave school without obtaining a basic qualification of either minimal level two of vocational education or general upper secondary level, the definition of Rijksoverheid (2021) will be used in this paper for dropout. For switchers (Broek et al., 2016), the definition of Aina (2013) and Heublein (2014) will be used in this paper; thus, students dropping out from the current educational programme and switch to another.

In order to understand why students switch educational programmes, the motives for switching should be examined (Steens, 2011) (as cited in Román & van Wijk, 2012). She points out that these motives are called push- and pull factors, which are strikingly similar reasons to dropout: the unrealistic or different expectation of the educational programme, the inability to find an internship, high study load, the way the educational programme is presented (organisation or teaching), personal problems, unexpected physical accidents, or illnesses (Steens, 2011) (as cited in Román & van Wijk, 2012). The indication of motives of switchers were developed for the Dutch applied universities (Hoger BeroepsOnderwijs; HBO), but according to Román and van Wijk (2012), it is also applicable to vocational schools.

Push factors include instances where students either must quit the educational programme or are discouraged from staying in the education system because of adverse circumstances at school such as low motivation or failing grades. In this case, it is likely that students dislike the new educational

programme as well and ultimately drop out of the education system (Steens, 2011). Thus, where they are pushed away from education entirely. Similarly, according to Rouse (2019), push factors create situations where consequences lead to dropout. Examples of push factors are high-stakes tests, zero-tolerance policies, lack of extracurricular activities, and discipline policies (Doll et al., 2013; Rumberger, 2015). Another important example that contributes to students' choice of early exit, is related to the labour shortage in the labour market. To overcome the labour shortage, organisations often employ unqualified students as well. The financial benefits that a job offers is appealing to most students and is therefore difficult to resist. Consequently, there is a risk that students leave the education system without obtaining a qualification (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2019; MKB-Nederland, 2020).

Pull factors are related to instances where students have a positive view on education but are not satisfied with their choice of an educational programme. Therefore, switching to another educational programme seems more appealing than dropping out of the education system since their view on education remains positive. In this case, it is less likely that the student drops out of the school system (Román & van Wijk, 2012).

Variables like gender, migration background (Bürer, 2020; Verhoef, 2019; Wilson & Tanner-Smith, 2013), mental health (van der Gaag et al., 2020), student engagement (Reschly, 2020), and spontaneous decisions are also potential predictors of switching (Broek et al., 2016) or dropout (Bachman et al., 1972). In 2016-2017, male students or students with a migration background switched more than female students and students who do not have a migration background (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021; Verhoef, 2019). The study by de Baat et al. (2014) yielded similar results for dropouts, namely that dropout appear noticeably to be more characteristics of male students. De Baat et al. (2014) explain that dropout is seen more amongst male students because of the lack of motivation for school. For instance, on the one hand, less time on academic tasks, such as products that students must produce, has prominently been seen among male students who drop out. On the other hand, what has prominently been seen among female students who drop out is the struggle with social integration, such as having difficulty building and maintaining social relationships or engaging in social activities (Rosário et al., 2014; Tinto, 2010). Additionally, mental health has also been reported to be a typical characteristic of dropouts. Examples are low self-esteem, no interest in self-growth and little desire to commit to accepted social norms (Bachman et al., 1972). Moreover, student engagement, which is associated with variables such as presence and participation in class, the relationship between teacher and students, and students' view on education and a professional career, are linked to the duration and (non)completion of school (Reschly, 2020; Dynarski et al., 2008). Finally, students tend to make impulsive decisions when choosing an educational programme. Consequently, later in their programme, students realise they have misinterpreted the programme's

content and the match between their skills and cognitive ability, which then leads to switching (Graafschap College, 2020; Broek et al., 2016).

Prevention project

Prevention projects are trainings that aim to support students who are at risk for dropout, by providing them the education and guidance they need, to be able to function successfully in society (Peck et al., 1987). According to Peck et al. (1988), the general aim of prevention projects is to decrease the number of students that are at risk for dropout. Since dropouts have diverse characteristics and needs, there is not one correct solution for the dropout problem. However, from previous approaches that have been tested out in the U.S., it appeared that the inclusion of common elements in prevention projects lead to effective and successful projects (Peck et al., 1987). The following elements for successful projects are: 1) projects must be student-centered; 2) projects should start as soon as possible, and stimulate the involvement of families (Traag, 2012); 3) projects should pay close attention to the selection of suitable staff and training for the target group; and 4) projects should focus on overall school climate, which refers to the quality and the atmosphere of a school, that include norms and values that are preserved. It is striking that in most cases, the inclusion of the mentioned elements lead to the reduction of the dropout rate (Peck et al., 1987).

In the Netherlands, various projects have also been designed to decrease the dropout rate. An example of one of the successful projects is the recently started up project 'Kansen voor Jongeren-project' (Opportunities for Youth-project). This project has been applied in different places in the Netherlands. It specifically aims at decreasing the dropout rates (Van der Gaag et al., 2020). Despite the application of the project in different places, all projects include common elements: 1) one-to-one training; 2) independence, autonomy, and make a plan with achievable goals; 3) the expansion of youth networks; 4) to offer trainings and workshops for youth to explore their talents (Heemskerk et al., 2018). The focus of most of the projects are to achieve the following three objectives among students: autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Van der Gaag et al., 2020). Autonomy relates to students' feeling of having a choice and having ownership of their tasks. Moreover, competence entails the sense of being capable of performing tasks. Finally, relatedness means having the feeling of being connected to other people (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The three objectives are seen as the source of promoting intrinsic motivation, focus on future ambitions, and a positive attitude amongst students (i.e. at work or at school). Although the three objectives are common goals across the projects, there is by no means an 'one size fits all' approach (Heemskerk et al., 2018). This means that every project, together with the incorporation of the three objectives, is tailored to the needs of the target group. Despite the fact that the diverse practices make every project different from each other, the results that emerge are identical. Namely, the increasement of the number of youths ending up with at least a basic qualification, meaning that the number of dropouts diminish (Heemskerk et al., 2018).

The Loopbaanklas

To decrease the dropout rate, Loopbaanplein (Career Square), an internal coaching programme of Graafschap College, has initiated a prevention project, Loopbaanklas (Graafschap College, 2020). Loopbaanklas is part of Loopbaanplein that offer extra training to students of level two (basic level, see appendix A), level three (professional training), and level four (middle management training) who need extra help outside regular classes and counselling of the mentor. Loopbaanplein provides a wide range of training that focuses on work, educational programmes, retraining, career, and entrepreneurship for students who have diverse needs. Examples of circumstances that students need help with are health conditions, mental conditions, physical limitations, difficulty with a given course or internship, motivation for education, or the reorientation on an educational programme and career (Graafschap College, 2019). Loopbaanplein is metaphorically seen as a safety net to catch students from falling out of school (institution) or dropping out of the education system (Graafschap College, 2020). From a personal interview with the coordinator of the Loopbaanklas, it could be concluded that the teachers of the Loopbaanklas ascertain that their main goal is to prevent drop out through the promotion of completing school successfully by offering students to switch educational programmes instead. In the perception of Graafschap College, the effectiveness of the training of the Loopbaanklas is strongly related to students' success because they strive to make sure every student of Graafschap College leaves with improved career prospects, preferably with a qualification. Apart from the obligation of obtaining a qualification (Rijksoverheid, 2021), it is believed that qualified students are more successful because their chances of finding a job are higher. As a result, the solid basis of improved career prospects will increase the vitality of students, meaning they are likely to find energy and strength (Walter, 2022).

At the end of the training of the Loopbaanklas, students are expected to achieve basic reflection skills, which include reflecting on questions such as 'Who am I?', 'What are my skills?' And 'What do I want?'. This way, students are stimulated to reflect on their future goals in depth. Not only does the Loopbaanklas guide and train students' cognitive and personal abilities, but they also work on their social relationships by connecting with students to gain their trust. This engagement will make choosing a suitable educational programme easier for students because they receive a lot of advice from the teachers and rely on their guidance. On average, within four weeks, students can decide on an educational programme (Graafschap College 2020).

When students are registered for the Loopbaanklas, there are multiple steps that are followed through. The information in which these steps are explained, is concluded from a personal interview with the coordinator of the Loopbaanklas, which was afterwards also reported and communicated through email (appendix B).

The training is administered throughout the entire year. One hundred sixty students per year are registered for the training. Either students themselves, parents (if students are under the age of 18)

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or mentors can register students for the Loopbaanklas. First, an appointment with the mentor will be planned where students and parents have a conversation about previous educational programmes, home situations or medication. The right questions and conversations help students reflect thoroughly, and lead to the right decision most of the time, which students are content and certain about. But that is not always the case for every student. In that case, one of the three teachers of Loopbaanklas will have an intake interview with students, parents, and the mentor. Within two weeks, students are allowed to start the classes of Loopbaanklas. Usually, there are a maximum of 15 students in the first phase group. Students will be tested on the Big Five personality traits (Fiske, 1949) in the first two weeks by a Remedial educationalist. The results can indicate what direction students are apt to. During this period, in groups, students work on oral and written exercises which focus on getting to know themselves and their abilities. Due to the pandemic restrictions, the exercises were mainly individually done. Teachers became conscious of the effectiveness of individual exercises because students are more visible and easily observable than they are in groups. This way, teachers can signal specific needs more easily and cater for them effectively.

In week three, students work on what matches their abilities in different working methods such as pair exercises, group exercises, games, drama exercises and learning how to learn exercises. An example of one of the activities is that students have a conversation in pairs about their future. Loopbaanklas recognises there is an information gap (Graafschap College, 2020). This can encourage students to have a dialogue in which information is exchanged. This exercise can either motivate or inspire students' ideas for the future. In the same week, three different mentors of the Technical, Health and Economy department will inform students about the different educational programmes by giving them a tour within their sector. Students will also be encouraged to register for an open day in the different sectors. Based on this orientation, students are expected to choose an educational programme. Once decided, the teachers of Loopbaanklas will support students and help them plan their studies until the summer break.

With classes of Loopbaanklas, students are stimulated to take the time and reflect upon these crucial topics. It is expected that students take the exercises of Loopbaanklas seriously and put effort into engaging in the activities. The Loopbaanklas thinks that the comprehensive training strategy will positively affect students' success and decrease the dropout rate because students at vocational schools seldom reflect on their future goals or career (Graafschap College, 2020).

Success

As the term success is of great importance in this study, and since the European Commission and the Dutch government defined success in the introduction, it is also crucial to explore how Graafschap College, thus also the Loopbaanklas, defines success. Since the Loopbaanklas incorporates the objectives that Graafschap College sets up, into their training, only Graafschap College will be mentioned throughout the definition in the next section.

Although the definition of success of the Dutch government are obtaining a minimal qualification of HAVO, VWO or level two of the vocational education, the definition of success of Graafschap College is broader and more comprehensive. Graafschap College (2020) believes that success is related to an educational programme that matches students' aspirations, completing vocational education, thus obtaining a qualification, job satisfaction, and happiness. Students are said to have a higher chance to complete school successfully when they choose an educational programme that matches their aspirations. Being qualified in a favoured field is an important determinant of finding a job that students like. Therefore, job satisfaction is reported to be a significant predictor of happiness. Consequently, if students are happy, they are considered successful (Graafschap College, 2020). Graafschap College (2020) believes that an individual is happy when they frequently experience positive emotions and are satisfied with their life in general. Veenhoven (2014) reports a similar definition of happiness. He claims that happiness reflects the degree to which individuals positively judge the quality of their life. Since the term happiness has an ambiguous meaning (Proctor, 2014), the more specific term 'Subjective Well-Being' (SWB) (Diener, 1984) will be used in this paper. Additionally, SWB has often been used interchangeably with happiness (Proctor, 2014). SWB refers to individuals' cognitive and affective evaluation of the quality of their lives (Diener et al., 2002). More specifically, people with high SWB frequently experience Life Satisfaction (LS), which is a global assessment of individuals' feelings and emotions of their life. Additionally, they experience frequent Positive Affect (PA) (i.e. optimism or joy), and less often Negative Affect (NA) (i.e. anger, anxiety or dissatisfaction). SWB is based on personal experience. Therefore, SWB is likely to be judged differently by every individual (Diener et al. 1997).

To sum up, students are deemed successful when their educational programme matches their aspirations, have obtained their vocational education qualification, have a job they are satisfied with, and when students have a high SWB (Graafschap College, 2020).

Research questions

In order to explore whether the Loopbaanklas has a positive effect on the career prospects and the success of students, the following research question will be addressed in the current study: '*What is the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas on Graafschap College's students regarding choosing the right career path?*'. The sub-questions are: 1. To what extent does the Loopbaanklas help students achieve success? 2. To what extent does the Loopbaanklas influence students' decision of choosing an educational programme? 3. To what extent are students satisfied about their life? 4. To what extent are students satisfied about their choice of job/career path?

Method

Research design

In this study, a quantitative research method was used. In order to measure the effectiveness of

the Loopbaanklas, a comparison group of students not taking part in the Loopbaanklas would be appropriate. The control group would consist of students that are similar to the experimental group in terms of school cohorts, both full-time and part-time sector, levels, and study departments. However, considering the limited time for this research, it is not feasible to conduct a comparative study. Therefore, the study only uses a posttest design in the form of a survey. Students' success, educational programme satisfaction, Loopbaanklas satisfaction, SWB, and job/career path satisfaction will be measured through the survey.

The effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas is first measured through students' success. Since Graafschap College (2020) considers their students successful when a qualification is obtained that matches their aspirations, have an occupation students are satisfied with, and when the SWB is higher than average (Graafschap College, 2020), this will be included in the criteria of success. Furthermore, obtaining a qualification in which basic skills are achieved, such as reading, writing, Maths and Science (European Commission, 2021) and obtaining a minimal qualification of HAVO, VWO or level two of the vocational education (Rijksoverheid, 2021) will also be included in the list of criteria of success, because the European Commission and the Dutch government define this as success.

The second measurement for the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas is students' satisfaction and is grouped into four categories: educational programme satisfaction, Loopbaanklas satisfaction, SWB, and job/career satisfaction. When students rate their educational programme high, they are considered satisfied about their educational programme. Furthermore, students are considered satisfied about the Loopbaanklas when they have been able to decide on their educational programme and complete it successfully. Moreover, students have a high SWB when they are happy and satisfied with their lives. Finally, students are satisfied with their job/career when they are happy with their job and career path choices.

Respondents

The sample includes students from a Dutch vocational school Graafschap College located in the Eastern part of the Netherlands. From the 480 students that were invited to take part in this study, 30 students agreed to participate. The aim was to achieve a high response rate as possible. To achieve this, multiple methods have been applied. With a shared agreement with the Loopbaanklas and the supervisor of the University of Twente, the minimum was set to 30 respondents. The reason for this minimum is related to the insufficient motivation of the target group. It has also been agreed that at least 30 respondents is acceptable to conduct a statistical analysis. This minimum has also been supported by several studies, like Mooney and Duval (1993), Isaac and Michael (1995), and Johanson and Brooks (2009). For the survey, a purposeful sample of four cohorts (2018-2021), full-time and part-time sector, of all departments: Economy, Health & Care or Technical, for levels 2, 3 or 4 who have participated and completed the training of the Loopbaanklas, were approached. Thus, every

student was selected and asked to participate. To increase the response rate, a reminder was sent to the students.

Instrumentation

A survey has been used as an instrument to collect data.

Survey

The survey addressed the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas through diverse topics: success, educational programme, the Loopbaanklas, SWB, and job/career path. The survey is based on two existing instruments and the input of the Loopbaanklas. To be more specific, the questions about the educational programme and job/career path are adopted from studiekeuze123 (2021). With a shared agreement with the Loopbaanklas, two additional questions about the Loopbaanklas were added. For the SWB questions, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) have been used. In concurrence with the Loopbaanklas, SWB was presumed to be a complex and unfamiliar term for students; therefore, the term happiness was used instead. To achieve matching questions to this study, the adopted questions of the survey were adjusted to the context of this study.

The survey consists of 23 questions (appendix D), starting with two general questions about students' gender and obtained qualifications. With the latter question the variable success was measured. The following three questions are about the satisfaction of educational programme, which includes five-point Likert scale items. This section measured the educational programme satisfaction. The following five questions focus on the satisfaction of the Loopbaanklas and measured the Loopbaanklas satisfaction. These questions also include five-point Likert scale items. Subsequently, the six following questions measured the SWB of students. This section includes several 5 five-point and seven-point Likert scale items. Next, only students with a job continued filling in the survey because the final part collected data about job/career path satisfaction. In this section, the type of the questions vary from a five-point Likert scale to a fill in question. Finally, students could add additional comments at the end of each section.

Students rated the questions between 1 and 5 for the five-point Likert scale items and between 1 and 7 points for the seven-point Likert scale items, on how much they are satisfied or agreed with the statement. Thus, 1 represents fully disagree or fully dissatisfied, 3 means neutral, and 5 represents fully agree or fully satisfied. Similarly, for the seven-point Likert scale, 1 represents strongly disagree, 4 means neutral, and 7 represents strongly agree. Lower scores, (lower than 3 for the five- point Likert scale, and lower than 4 for the seven-point Likert scale) indicate less success and less satisfaction. Higher scores, (higher than 3 for the five- point Likert scale, and higher than 4 for the seven-point Likert scale) indicate greater levels of success and satisfaction. The questions were administered via a digital survey.

Procedure

The coordinator of the Loopbaanklas, the manager of the Loopbaanklas, and the supervisor of the University of Twente were asked to evaluate the clarity of the formulations of the survey questions. Then, the survey questions of *studiekeuze123*, which were initially in Dutch, were translated to English for this paper. Furthermore, the survey questions of Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) which were initially in English, were translated to Dutch for participants. All questions were combined into one survey in each separate language and can be found in appendix C (Dutch version) and D (English version). Given that this research concerns students, who are human participants, the research was submitted to the Ethics Committee. The ethics department of the BMS of the University of Twente has approved this research.

Subsequently, the researcher sent an email to the Loopbaanklas in which they were asked for permission to approach their students. With the consent of the manager of the Loopbaanklas, students were invited by email, which was written in Dutch (appendix E, English version is in appendix F) to fill out the digital survey. Moreover, since there were no students under 16, no parent consent was needed. Instead, students themselves were asked to participate. Additionally, the participants were informed about the confidentiality of their answers and their right to withdraw from the research study. Student's privacy were protected at all costs, and thus no names were published. Since the response rate via email was minimal (8 responses out of 480), a follow-up request to participate in the survey was sent via WhatsApp. Via WhatsApp, 26 students more responded to the survey from which four students responded not wanting to participate. Thus, 30 students in total completed the survey.

Data analysis***Statistical analysis***

Statistical analysis was conducted to examine whether the Loopbaanklas affects students' career decisions and helps them achieve success. Five variables were measured: success, educational programme satisfaction, Loopbaanklas satisfaction, SWB, and job/career path satisfaction. The rubric in appendix G portrays when a student is considered successful and satisfied. First, the ordinal scales were coded to points in Excel. Thus, for the five-point Likert scales, fully disagree or fully dissatisfied were assigned a 1, and fully agree or fully satisfied were assigned a 5. For the seven-point Likert scale, strongly disagree was assigned a 1, and strongly agree was assigned a 7. With the points, the mean, mode, standard deviation, minimum and maximum were calculated, and pie charts and bar graphs were created. This method has provided an insight into the perception of students regarding the Loopbaanklas. It has also provided objective results, and thus to a great extent, the personal bias has been reduced.

Cronbach's alpha has been utilised to ensure the reliability of the Likert scale items of the following variables: educational programme, Loopbaanklas, SWB, job/career. Table 1 displays the

Cronbach’s Alpha value for each variable. The Cronbach’s Alpha for each variable is at least .83, except for job/career path. This variable has a value of .64. Daud et al. (2018) report that Cronbach’s alpha value between .60 - .80 is considered acceptable and .80- 1.0 is considered very good. This means that the set of items of all variables are sufficiently related, and thus reliable.

Table 1

Cronbach’s Alpha Values

Variable	Value	Items
1. Educational programme	.85	3
2. Loopbaanklas	.88	5
3. SWB	.90	7
4. Job/career path	.64	5

Results

This section will provide the results of the survey. It commences with a general overview of the results of the variables, followed by a detailed elaboration of the results per research question.

Descriptives of study variables

The main aim of this study was to find out *what the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas is on Graafschap College’s students regarding choosing the right career path*. The following descriptive statistical findings are based on students’ responses to the survey. As shown in table 2, across the sample, greater satisfaction was reported for the educational programme ($M=3.59, SD=.83$) and lesser satisfaction was reported for the Loopbaanklas ($M=3.07, SD=1.10$). As for SWB, students reported to be generally satisfied ($M=4.97, SD=1.64$) and students appear to be neutral to satisfied for job/career path ($M=3.17, SD=.95$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics per category (n=30)

<i>Statement per category</i>	Mean	St.dev	Min	Max
<u>Educational programme</u>				
How satisfied are you with your course programme in general?	3.52	1.09	1	5
Acquiring skills for professional practice	3.58	.62	2	4
The link to professional practice <> For example, internships, guest speakers, assignments for external organisations	3.68	.70	2	5
<i>Total</i>	3.59	.83		
<u>Loopbaanklas</u>				
How satisfied are you with the training of the Loopbaanklas in general?	3.39	1.12	1	5
Without the Loopbaanklas I could not have reflected on my goals in life.	2.84	1.07	1	5
Without the Loopbaanklas I could not have practiced my social skills.	3.10	1.04	1	5
Without the Loopbaanklas I could not have reflected on my self-knowledge and cognitive skills.	2.81	1.05	1	5
Without the Loopbaanklas I would not have been able to choose a suitable educational programme.	3.19	1.19	1	5
<i>Total</i>	3.07	1.10		
<u>SWB</u>				
In most ways my life is close to my ideal	4.73	1.53	2	7
I am satisfied with my life.	5.07	1.51	2	7
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	4.77	1.91	1	7
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	4.37	1.73	1	7
The conditions of my life are excellent	5.0	1.49	2	7
<i>Total</i>	4.79	1.64		
<u>Job/Career</u>				
It was easy to find a job after obtaining my diploma	2.79	1.18	1	5
I like my job very much	3.63	.76	2	5
I would not want to work anywhere else	3.05	1.03	1	5
I was obliged to develop a number of skills to get my current job	3.37	.76	2	4
My current job required job experience to get hired	3.0	.82	2	4
<i>Total</i>	3.17	.95		

Success

The first research question relates to the extent to which the Loopbaanklas helps students achieve success. Therefore, the results of qualifications, a matching educational programme, a satisfactory job, and SWB levels were examined.

Figure 1 shows the results of the obtained qualifications. The results demonstrate that the mode, which is 50.0%, have obtained a VMBO-t qualification. After the VMBO-t qualification, the MBO level 4 qualification has been obtained the most. It is striking that there are no students who obtained a lwoo or MBO level 2 qualification. This could mean that the enrolled students in the Loopbaanklas did not obtain a lwoo or MBO level 2 qualification. Another interpretation is that the students of the Loopbaanklas who did obtain a lwoo or MBO level 2 qualification did not want to participate in this study. Additionally, figure 2 visualizes that 70.0% ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.09$) of the respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the educational programme in general, meaning that a large majority is satisfied with their chosen programme. As for the remaining variables, the scores are reasonably high for a matching educational programme with the help of the Loopbaanklas ($M=3.19$, $SD=1.19$), the mean of SWB ($M=4.79$, $SD=1.64$), and the mean of job satisfaction ($M=3.17$, $SD=.95$). It is interesting to note that the means do not vary much from each other. The means are around 3-4, which is reasonably a high score, meaning students seem to have similar and positive opinions on the diverse variables.

Figure 1

Results of the survey; general information

Which type of qualifications have you obtained?

30 responses

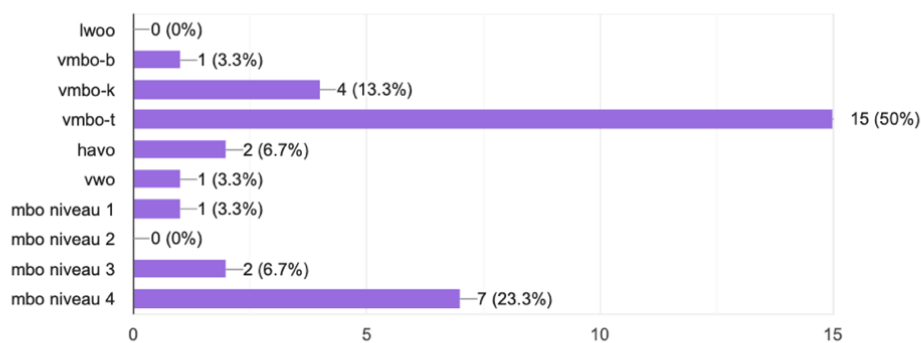
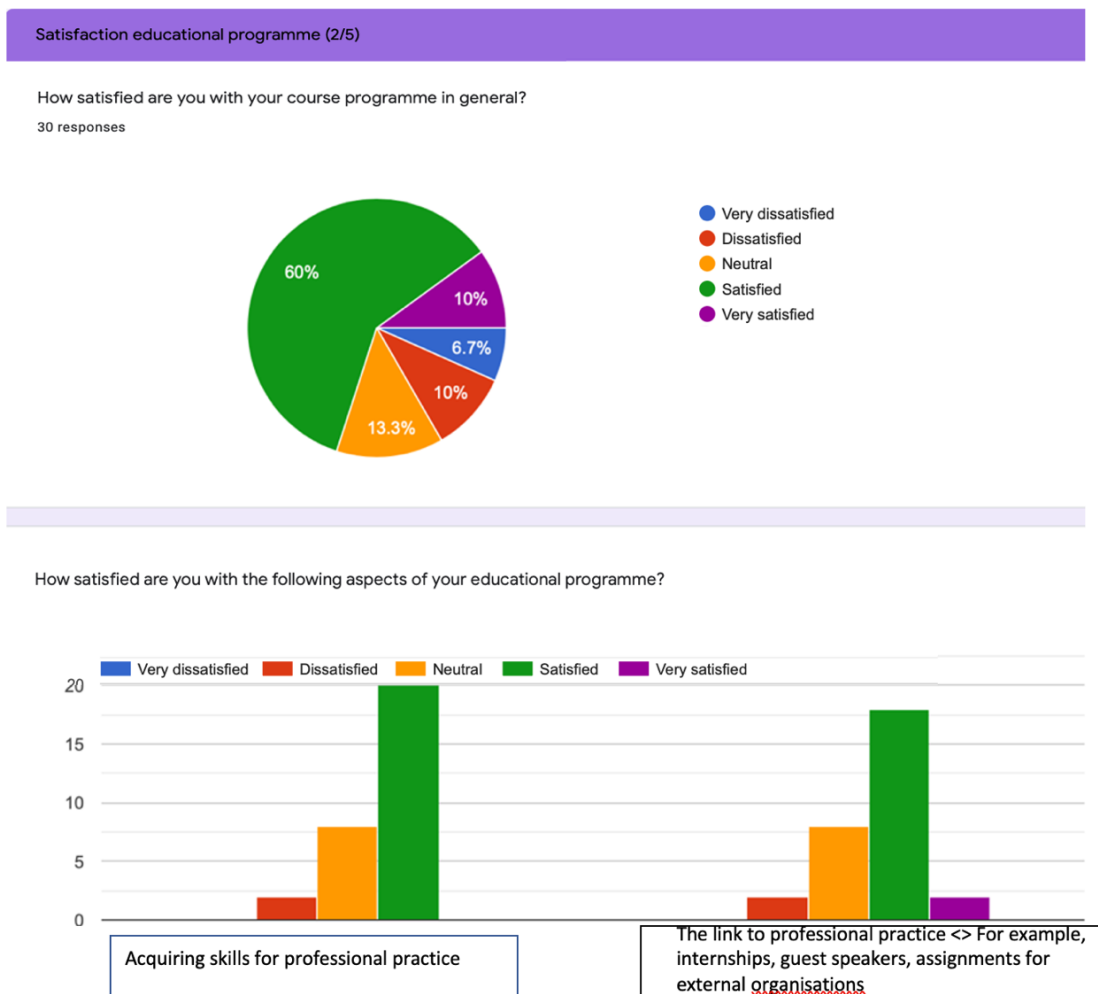


Figure 2

Results of the survey; satisfaction educational programme



Loopbaanklas

The second research question addresses the extent to which the Loopbaanklas influence students' decision of choosing an educational programme. The results provided in figure 3 show the frequencies of the satisfaction of the Loopbaanklas. The results demonstrate that the opinions vary both in general satisfaction of the Loopbaanklas and in the different questions about the Loopbaanklas.

It is striking that for the first statement in the second part of this section, the distribution of the graph is right-skewed meaning that a large group of students could not have reflected on their goals in life without the Loopbaanklas, whereas in the general satisfaction about the Loopbaanklas, the majority reported that they are satisfied or very satisfied. The following results also seem to be different from each other, because in the following statement, the distribution is slightly skewed towards disagree, meaning that a large group of students disagree with that they could not have reflected on their self-knowledge and cognitive skills without the Loopbaanklas. For the next statement, however, the bars seem to be tending towards the neutral and agree side. Finally, there is a change in the final chart. The results of the last statement visualize that the distribution in the chart is left-skewed, meaning that for most students, the Loopbaanklas was meaningful during their decision

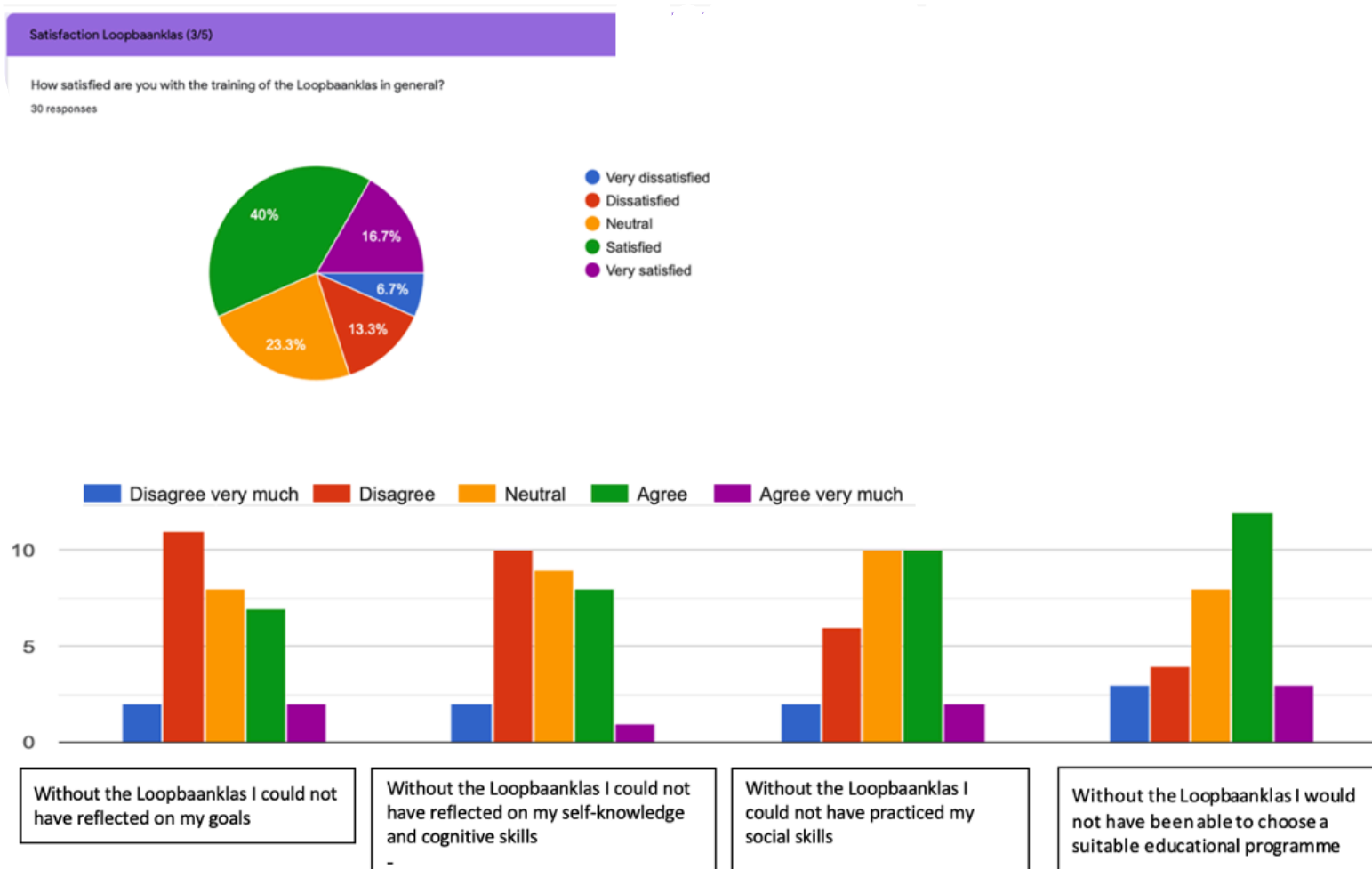
of an educational programme.

The results of the last four questions in this section seem to have a pattern. It appears that students reported more ‘disagree’ for their individual skills, but more agree for school matters. To be more specific, the questions relating to students’ individual skills like reflecting, are mostly rated as not needing the Loopbaanklas, whereas the final statement where a school matter is mentioned, i.e. the educational programme, is well rated. This pattern is also recognisable in the educational programme section. The professional practice, mentioned in the educational programme section, which is also a school matter, is well rated as well.

Moreover, it is striking that students I (appendix H) who are dissatisfied about the Loopbaanklas (between points 1-2), are satisfied about their educational programme (between points 3-4), about their job (between points 3-4), and agree with the statements related to SWB (between points 6-7), which means they are satisfied about their life.

Figure 3

Results of the survey; satisfaction Loopbaanklas



SWB

The third research question relates to the extent to which students are satisfied about their life. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the term SWB will be used for this variable. Figure 4 portrays the frequencies of the levels of SWB. The mode is 4. More than half of students have selected this response. One third, have voted for 3, and the smallest group voted for 5. It is interesting to note that none of the students reported a 1 or 2. The findings suggest that most of the responses are in agreement with the corresponding statements. Given that the first question in this section is a five-point Likert scale item, and the remaining items in this section are seven-point Likert items, the mean and the standard deviation of the first question are calculated and reported separately. The mean and the standard deviation of the first question in this section is found in table 3, and the means and the standard deviations of the second part of this section is found in table 2. Table 3 shows that the mean of the SWB level in general is 3.80, which is reasonably high, and the standard deviation is .66. For the next statements, most charts visualise that the distributions are left-skewed, meaning that most students are satisfied with their lives. Furthermore, it is remarkable that in most questions, none of the students reported 'strongly disagree' with the statements. Like most charts, the distribution of the first statement is also skewed to the agree side, which means that most students' (13 students) agreed with the statement 'In most ways my life is close to my ideal'. Similarly, the next statement is less extreme, but still slightly skewed to the agree side. This means that students agree with the statement 'The conditions of my life are excellent'. In addition, in the following two statements, the majority of the students reported to be satisfied with their life and that they have gotten the important things they want in life. As for the final statement 'if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing', it is evident that the answers vary the most for this statement, meaning that the answers are almost evenly spread. There is not an extreme or noticeable answer to this question.

Individual response patterns. Appendix H provides a comparison table of individual responses to the questions. It was expected that students with low SWB levels, would also have low scores for the remaining variables and not have a job. Or vice versa, where students with high SWB levels, would also have reasonably high scores for the other variables. However, the results showed that this pattern is not always the case. The first noticeable individual result is student II. This student seems to have reported low scores, and simultaneously one of the fewest that reported a 1, for SWB (between points 1-4), meaning this student is not very satisfied about life. This student also does not have a job. However, Despite the low scores for SWB and not having a job, it is striking that this student is, on average, quite satisfied about the educational programme.

Furthermore, it is remarkable that student III reported reasonably high scores for SWB, also reported high scores for the Loopbaanklas and educational programme but does not have a job. There are nine more students who reported high scores for SWB, but do not have a job. In general, these

results reveal that students who reported high scores for SWB, do not have a job. But the students who do have a job, have also reported high scores for SWB.

Figure 4

Results of the survey; SWB

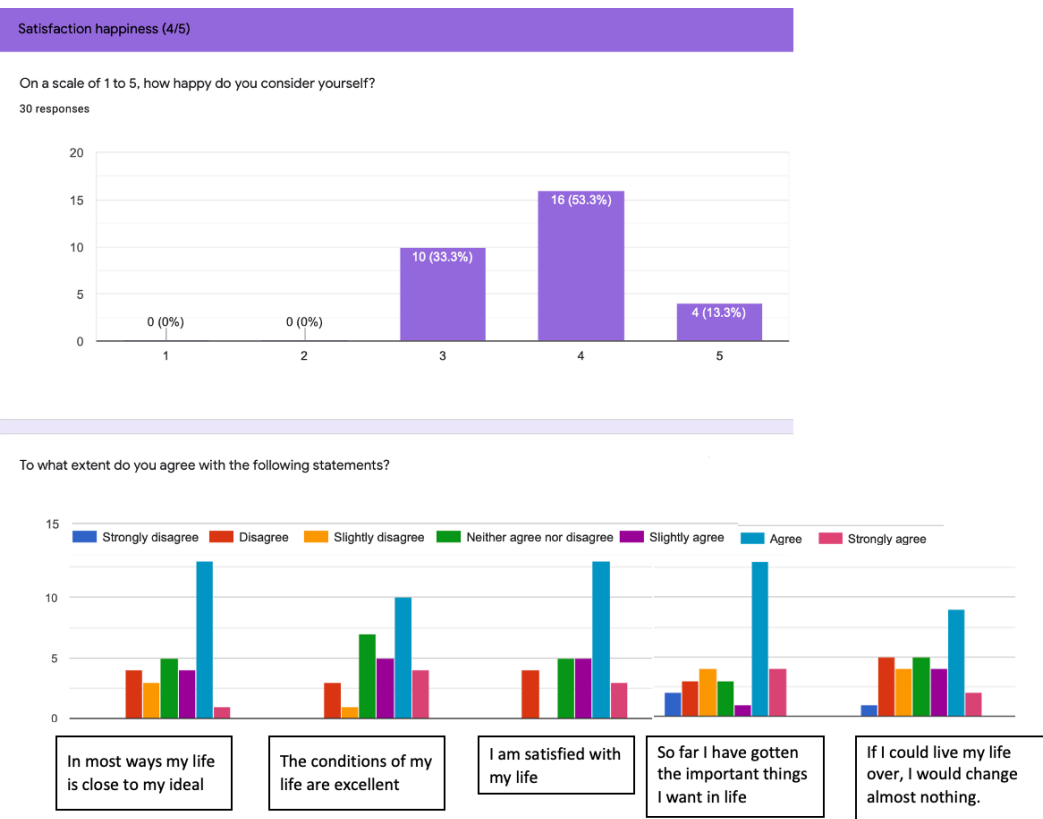


Table 3

Mean and standard deviation of the SWB level in general

<i>SWB level in general</i>	Mean	St.dev
	3.8	.66

Job/career path

The fourth research question addressed in this study was aimed at how students rated their job/career path satisfaction. Figure 5 shows that more than half of the respondents do have a job. The following questions were only asked to students who reported to have a job. The second statement seems to be rated most positively in this section, which means that the majority reported that they like their job. Additionally, only the answers of the final statement are evenly spread.

Moreover, the variables job/career satisfaction and the Loopbaanklas seem to be connected to each other. For example, in the section of the Loopbaanklas, the majority of students reported that they

would not be able to choose a suitable educational programme without the Loopbaanklas. This is related to the question where the majority of the students reported that they like their job, because most students end up working in the field they graduated for. In other words, when students are able to choose a suitable educational programme that they like with the help of the Loopbaanklas, they end up being satisfied with their choice of job as well, because they obtained a diploma of the field they work in.

That being said, students reported in the educational programme section to be satisfied about the professional practice but reported in this section that they were obliged to develop a number of skills to get their current job. The skills for professional practice are similar to the skills of the jobs, thus these results seem to be contradicting each other.

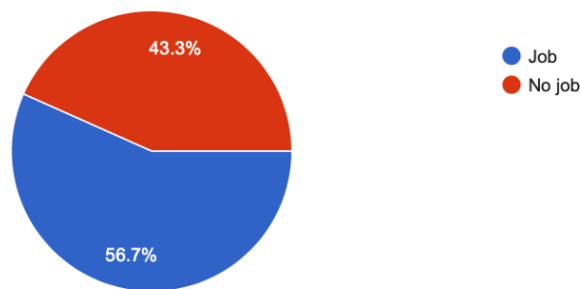
Finally, appendix H provides a comparison table of the following variables: Loopbaanklas, Educational programme, SWB, and Job/career. It is remarkable that the two students (students IV and V) who have reported the lowest scores (point 2) for SWB also reported not to have a job. On the one hand, student IV, seems also dissatisfied about the educational programme (between points 1-2). On the other hand, for student V, who also reported the lowest score for SWB, it appears that the scores for the Loopbaanklas are around the 3-5 points, meaning that this student is satisfied about the Loopbaanklas and neutral for educational programme (between points 2-3).

Figure 5

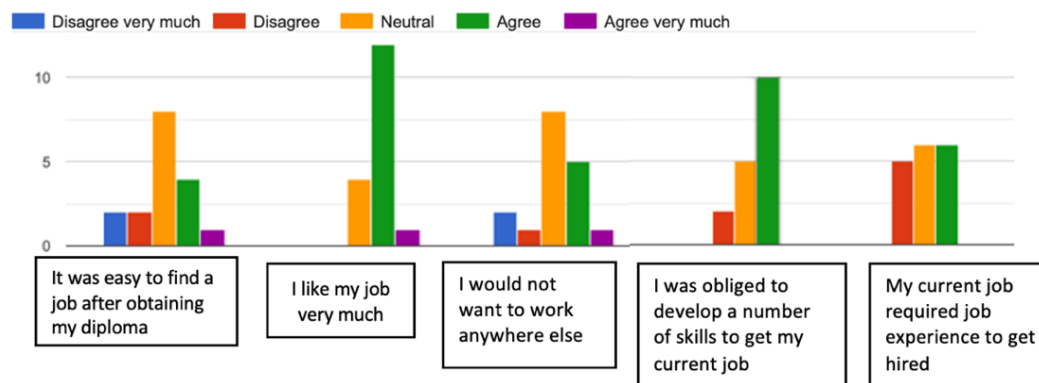
Results of the survey; job/career satisfaction

Choose 'job' if you have a job. Choose 'no job' if you do not have a job.

30 responses



To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



Conclusion

The present study aimed to measure the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas on students of Graafschap College regarding choosing the right career path through a survey. This section will provide the results of the survey per research question. Furthermore, the limitations of this study in combination with the suggestions for future research will be highlighted. Moreover, the implications for theory and practice will be discussed as well as the final remarks and recommendations.

Discussion

In this section, the results will be interpreted, as well as answering the research questions. It concludes with a summarizing conclusion.

Success

The first research question addressed the extent to which the Loopbaanklas helps students achieve success. The findings from the results showed that all students have obtained a qualification of VMBO-b or higher. This means that all students have completed minimal primary school in the preceding years. In other words, they obtained a basic qualification, which entails possessing basic Science, Maths, reading, and writing skills (Rijksoverheid, 2021; SLO, 2019). This proves that all respondents have success, because according to the European Commission (2021), an individual gains educational success when a qualification is obtained in which basic skills are achieved.

However, according to Rijksoverheid (2021), success encompasses obtaining minimally a qualification of HAVO, VWO or level two of the vocational education. Since there are students that did complete secondary school but have a qualification lower than HAVO, or students that have not completed their vocational education yet, only 40% of the students are considered successful.

Moreover, considering that Graafschap College’s criteria for success entails a matching educational programme, obtaining a vocational education qualification, a satisfactory job, and having a

high SWB level, not all students have success. The majority of the respondents are satisfied about their educational programme in general, and the averages are high for a matching educational programme with the help of the Loopbaanklas, job satisfaction, SWB. But there are students that have not obtained their vocational education qualification yet, because they are still doing their programme. This is also an explanation to why students indicated not having a job. For this reason alone, they do not meet all criteria of success and thus are not considered successful. Based on these findings, the averages of educational programme satisfaction, satisfactory job, and SWB are sufficient to conclude that students are successful. However, since more than half of the students have not finished their programme yet, the criteria of qualifications have not been met, and therefore it cannot be concluded that students are completely successful. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that students are successful in certain areas and not yet in others.

Loopbaanklas

The second research question concerns the extent to which the Loopbaanklas influences students' decision of choosing an educational programme. Based on the results, it could be concluded that the Loopbaanklas does not always influence students. For example, students seem to not need the Loopbaanklas for their individual skills, like reflecting on goals or cognitive skills. Students do, however, find the Loopbaanklas effective for school matters, like choosing a suitable educational programme. This pattern is also recognisable in the educational programme section where students reported that they are satisfied about acquiring skills and the link to professional practice, which is a school matter. Thus, school matters that Loopbaanklas deals with, is effective for students, but ineffective for individual matters. This could also explain the varied opinions of the general satisfaction of the Loopbaanklas.

SWB

The third research question examined the extent to which students are satisfied about their life. Life satisfaction was measured through the SWB level. All bar charts are positively skewed, meaning that in general, students seem to consider themselves happy and satisfied about their life. Not one student reported a 1 or 2 for the general satisfaction. They have a high level of SWB. Interestingly, it was also identified that having a job or having no job does not influence students' SWB.

Job/career path

The final research question focused on the extent students are satisfied about their choice of job/career path. It was reported that more than half of the students have a job. The reason why not every student reported to have a job is linked to the fact that some students are still doing their programme, and therefore are not graduated and thus do not have a job or have not searched for a job yet. The findings suggest that students with a job, were generally satisfied with their current job/career

path. The results also indicate that, to find a job, students had to develop a number of skills and have experience. This is linked to the statement of 'it was not easy to find a job after obtaining their diploma'. This could mean either that there are no jobs or that the jobs require skills or experience to hire.

From the analysis of the results, a contradiction was identified. Students reported in the section of educational programme to be satisfied about acquiring skills for professional practice and the link to professional practice but reported in the job/career path section that they were obliged to develop a number of skills to get their current job, which is referring to the professional practice. The skills that students acquire for professional practice are similar to the skills for the current job, because eventually students prepare themselves with the skills learnt during their educational programme, for their job. The answer to the research question, therefore, could be answered in two ways. Even though the results indicate that students are neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied, the mean is above average. Thus, the mean could explain that students are satisfied, but since the answers vary, it could be said that for certain statements the results remain inconclusive.

Conclusion

To sum up, based on the findings it can be concluded that students are successful in certain areas and not (yet) others. Furthermore, educational programme and SWB have the highest means and the Loopbaanklas and job/career path have the lowest means. On the one hand, that the Loopbaanklas has added great value to students' career path and their success, such as finding a matching educational programme. On the other hand, the Loopbaanklas has also potential improvements that can be made to enrich the training even more, such as reflecting on goals, self-knowledge, cognitive skills and aspects of job/career path. Because it appears that students do not necessarily need the help of the Loopbaanklas for individual matters like reflecting on goals. This is also evident from the mean of the Loopbaanklas, which was rated the lowest out of all variables. However, it did appear that students do need the help of the Loopbaanklas for school matters, like choosing an educational programme. This pattern is also to be found in the section of educational programme. In this section, the statements about professional practice, which is a school matter, are also well rated. In other words, students find the Loopbaanklas effective for school matters, but less effective for individual matters. Despite these findings, the mean of the Loopbaanklas is above 3, which means that students value the trainings of the Loopbaanklas. This applies to job/career path as well. Despite the fact that most students like their job very much, the answers for the other questions vary, and therefore, the conclusion for job/career path remains inconclusive. But since the mean is above 3, it is sufficient to conclude that, in general, students are satisfied.

As for SWB, a large group of students reported high levels of happiness. Moreover, from the analyses of the answers of individuals, it was identified that the answers vary. However, the most striking result was that the students who reported high scores for SWB, do not have a job, and the

students who have a job, also reported to have high scores for SWB. In other words, having a job or not does not influence the SWB of students.

All in all, the five variables that were measured through the survey, are overall positively rated and the means are above 3, and therefore it could be concluded that students of Graafschap College find the trainings of the Loopbaanklas beneficial regarding choosing the right career path.

Limitations and future research

Although this study has contributions, there are also some limitations that need to be mentioned. First, this study was limited by the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas. There are ample factors that determine the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas, but in this study, apart from the obtained qualifications, the survey was exclusively based on only one component, namely students' satisfaction. Moreover, satisfaction is a subjective assessment (Veenhoven, 2007). Self-report methods, such as satisfaction, have the danger of containing bias (Diener & Ryan, 2009). Pavot and diener (1993a) explain that various factors, for example respondent's moods or surroundings, could affect the responses. Therefore, the satisfaction assessment is also considered a limitation (Powell et al., 2004). It is, however, a good starting point for a follow-up future research. To increase the credibility of the evaluation, triangulation can be applied. For instance, the evaluation could be based on objective measurements, such as grades and graduation rates of students that enrolled in the training of the Loopbaanklas. A multivariate correlation analysis can be conducted in which students' grades and graduation can be analysed. The Loopbaanklas could assist in gathering their student's information.

Investigating students' grades and graduation has been considered, however it was concluded that the survey on its own was sufficient to answer the research questions of the current study. An experimental research design with a comparison group of students that do not take part in the Loopbaanklas has also been considered for this study. However, conducting such a study was beyond the scope, considering the limited time for this study. Looking into these data, however, could provide useful information for future research.

Second, to achieve a high response rate, all students of all cohorts that attended the training of the Loopbaanklas were approached. That means that there were students that have not completed their educational programme yet, because the programme is still ongoing. For this reason alone, they were not considered successful (Rijksoverheid, 2021), even though they do have a job and have a high satisfaction rate overall. Therefore, further research could be based solely on students who completed their educational programme. This way, the results will portray a more representative/valid view.

The third limitation is the low response rate, regardless of the inclusion of all students of all cohorts. Out of 480 students, 30 students completed the survey, which is 6.25%. Babbie (2001) claims that a response rate of 50.0% is acceptable and adequate to conduct statistical analysis. Since this study's response rate is much lower than 50.0%, there is a possibility that the results are biased. More

specifically, the results could be non-response biased, meaning that the characteristics of non-responders are different from the responders (Sedgwick, 2014). The low response rate has been recognized by the survey literature as an indication of potential biased results (Lessler & Kalsbeek, 1992) because insufficient responses can lead to individual non-response errors, meaning that there is a probability of non-representativeness of the population (Umbach, 2005). In other words, the opinion of the 30 students that participated in this study, might not represent the opinion of all students that attended the Loopbaanklas, and therefore the conclusions that are drawn based on these results, might not be entirely correct. To reduce error, Umbach (2005) recommends increasing the response rate as high as possible. Further research could therefore focus on increasing the response rate by paying attention to the incentives. For example, based on the study of Goyder (1987), Willimack et al. (1995), and Umbach (2005), it was concluded that monetary and non-monetary (e.g., gifts) are effective in increasing the response rate. The use of monetary and non-monetary was not applicable, because this study has not been funded. Future studies that are funded could apply this method to increase the response rate. Moreover, Dillman (2000) recommends approaching participants multiple times, using five contacts. This entails contacting participants via a 'brief prenotice letter, questionnaire mailing, a thank you postcard, a replacement questionnaire, and final contact by telephone' (p.150). The five contacts have not been applied in this study due to the target group. Based on previous evaluations, the Loopbaanklas claimed that students utilize email and WhatsApp more frequently, and therefore it was decided to stick to email and WhatsApp only.

Finally, the last limitation of this study could be the research design. This study has limited its design to quantitative research. The survey questions were close-ended, thus either multiple choice questions or Likert scales. This means that the questions are open for interpretation. There is a possibility that the close-ended questions have contributed to the inconclusive results of success and job satisfaction. A qualitative survey would have given the participants the opportunity to explain the reasons for their answers. However, considering that none of the respondents volunteered to participate in a follow-up study and the limited time for this study, conducting a qualitative survey was not feasible. Therefore, future research could conduct a (follow-up) survey where voluntary participants are given the opportunity to elaborate their answers. Besides providing students the opportunity to give elaborated answers in the survey, future research could also conduct interviews or focus groups. The interviews could include elaborative and build-up questions to shed light on more information in depth. The researcher will have the chance to untangle any unclarity. However, a follow-up interview has not been conducted because after the distribution of the survey, this study received many replies from students, parents, and mentors via email and WhatsApp demanding not to be approached again. The implication was that there is little prospect of collecting voluntary participants for a follow-up interview considering the large number of rejections to participate in the

survey in the first place. Furthermore, this implication has been confirmed by the survey, because none of the participants volunteered to participate in a follow-up interview.

Implications for theory and practice

This study adds to the extant literature and practice in different ways. First, notwithstanding the available literature about the causes of the dropout rates (Doll et al., 2013), the effectiveness of prevention projects at vocational schools regarding choosing the right career path has rarely been examined in the Netherlands (De Baat, 2010; Bokdam et al., 2015; van der Gaag et al., 2020). Still, there is ample evidence of the effectiveness of prevention projects abroad (Hammond et al., 2007; ICF International, 2008; Klima et al., 2009; Lehr et al., 2003). These reports conclude that, overall, the prevention projects in the U.S. are effective in decreasing the dropout rate. Wilson and Tanner-Smith (2013) emphasize that it was most effective when the projects were well implemented and suitable for the target group. Thus, these projects include topics students struggle with. For example, students that are registered for the vocational training were provided a programme which involved topics like internships and orientation on work and career. Nevertheless, most research (Van der Gaag et al., 2020) and reviews (Wilson & Tanner-Smith, 2013) on prevention projects are not all-inclusive. Instead, they have a narrow focus, meaning that the focus is on a specific problem area which makes the conclusions of these prevention projects inconclusive (Wilson & Tanner-Smith, 2013). This study, however, focuses on the evaluation of the training of the Loopbaanklas which deals with more issues, such as students' motivation, professional practice for the labour market, problems at home, and mental health. The evaluation of the more inclusive training of the Loopbaanklas is therefore a valuable addition to the literature. To be more specific, this study contributes to an increased understanding of the effectiveness of the more comprehensive dropout prevention projects at Dutch vocational schools regarding choosing the right career path.

Furthermore, this study also has practical relevance. First, despite the varying results in some sections of the survey, the findings of this study revealed that in general, the training is effective for students and therefore provides a rationale for why a prevention project at Graafschap College is useful. Students reported relatively high scores in the survey, which means that students are satisfied and find the project useful. This is particularly valuable information for the Loopbaanklas because the results confirmed that the training is efficacious, and thus that their aim has been achieved. Moreover, the evaluation of the Loopbaanklas also confirmed that the Loopbaanklas has strengths, but also possible improvements to be made there where it is needed, such as reflecting on goals, self-knowledge, cognitive skills, to enrich the training even more. Additionally, given the high rates of the survey, the Loopbaanklas could serve as an example to other vocational schools that want to initiate a prevention project. The complete and solid basis of this prevention project could motivate schools to start a prevention project. The structure and aim of the project could be adjusted to any context.

Finally, this study's design and aim could serve as an example to other future studies on prevention projects.

Final remarks and recommendation

The current study has provided an increased understanding of the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas on students' choice of career path. The findings of this study revealed that the Loopbaanklas should continue providing their training because overall, it is positively affecting students in different ways. First, students seem to be the most satisfied about their educational programme and SWB, and the least satisfied about the Loopbaanklas and job/career path. In particular, the findings of the current study identified that certain areas of the Loopbaanklas, especially individual skills such as reflecting on goals, self-knowledge, cognitive skills and aspects of job/career path, that might require more attention, in order to increase the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas. Students' opinions about the content of the training, are recommended to include. Second, students are successful in certain areas and not yet in others due to a potential dependant aspect: students' ongoing educational programme. The possibility exists that students therefore do not have a job or are not looking for one (yet). For these reasons alone, these students are not considered successful. This view might not be completely valid. Therefore, future research may endeavour to conduct a mixed method study based on grades of only graduated students, and a follow-up qualitative study with (more) graduated students who participated in the Loopbaanklas to elaborate their answers, to find out whether this finding can be supported.

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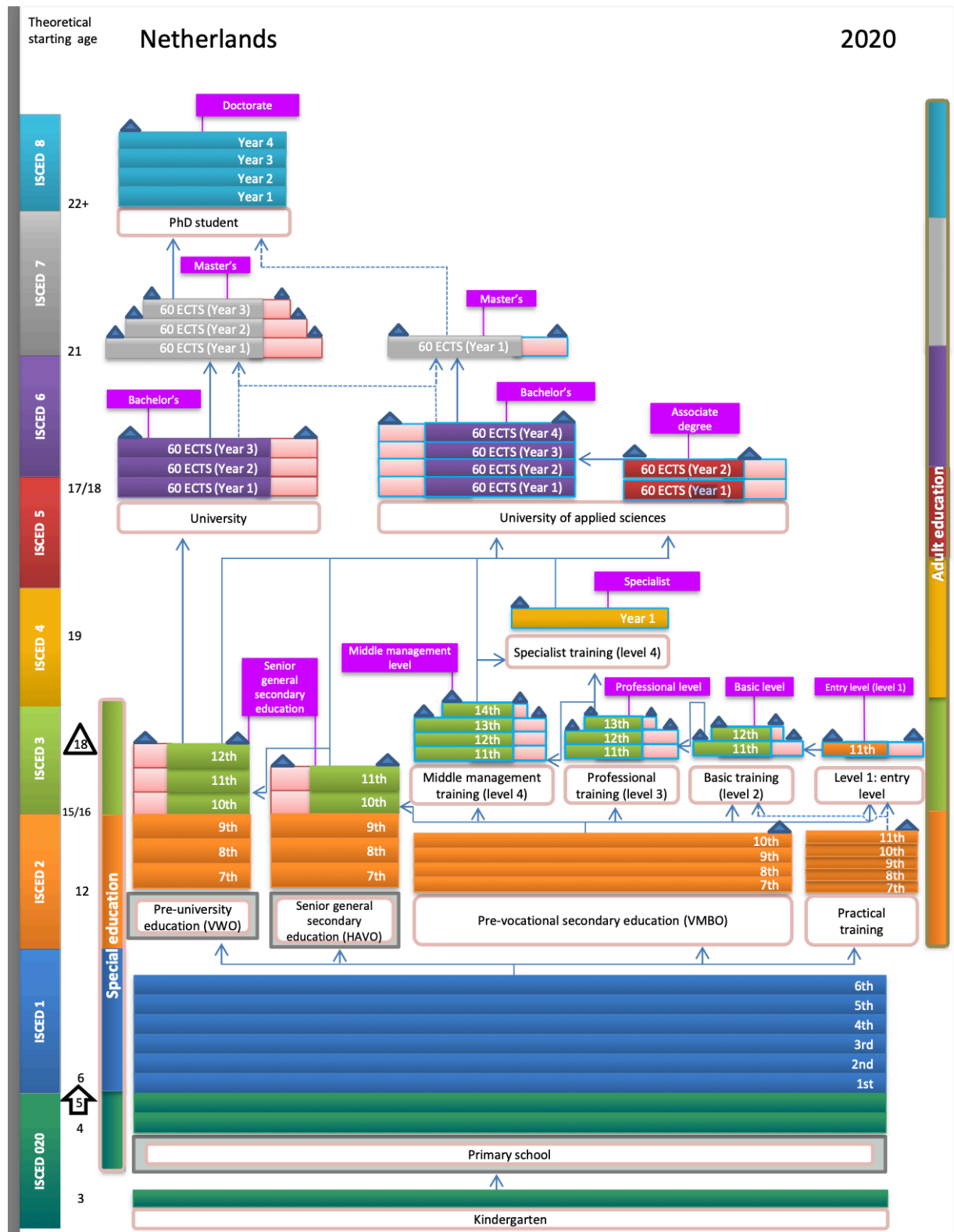
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Appendix A The structure of the Dutch education system



Key

-  Starting/ending age of compulsory education
-  Recognized exit point of the education system
-  Typical student flow
-  Transfer from a programme to another
-  Programme designed for part-time attendance
-  Vocational/Professional orientation
(according to national definition at the tertiary level)
-  Single structure education (integrated ISCED levels)
-  May be provided within one school structure
-  Transfer at crossing lines is not possible
-  **Diploma** Name of diploma, degree or certificate
- ECTS** European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
- 2020** Reference year (school year 2019/2020 in the northern hemisphere)

* **Theoretical starting ages** refer to the ages as established by law and regulation for the entry to a programme, actual starting ages may vary depending on the programme.

Appendix B

Mail coordinator Loopbaanklas



Dank je wel Haticel!

Ik ga er met mijn team naar kijken en eventuele aanvullingen en opmerkingen aan je doorgeven!

Hieronder nog de informatie die wij aan studenten geven die aangemeld worden bij de Loopbaanklas:

De werkwijze in de Loopbaanklas is als volgt:

1. *Je wordt aangemeld door je Loopbaandecaan*
2. *Je hebt een gesprek samen met je ouders en/of trajectbegeleider met een docent van de Loopbaanklas.*
3. *Binnen 2 weken na dit eerste gesprek kun je starten in de Loopbaanklas.*
4. *Je start samen met maximaal 15 andere studenten in de fase 1 groep.*
5. *Je krijgt in de eerste week 2 testen. Deze worden individueel met je besproken door Emily, orthopedagoge.*
6. *Je doet in je groep schriftelijke en mondelinge opdrachten.*
7. *De eerste weken leer je vooral jezelf beter kennen en je kwaliteiten.*
8. *Vanaf week 3 ga je je vooral oriënteren op je mogelijkheden: wat past er bij jou en je kwaliteiten?*
9. *Veel informatie kun je vinden over alle MBO opleidingen op www.kiesmbo.nl en www.roc.nl*

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www.roc.nl

10. *Decanen komen naar de loopbaanklas toe om informatie te geven over de opleidingen van hun sector. Ook geven ze rondleidingen op hun sector.*
11. *Je kunt je inschrijven voor meeloopdagen op www.intergrip.nl*
12. *De docenten van de Loopbaanklas helpen je ook bij het regelen van meeloopdagen bij opleidingen en in de beroepspraktijk.*
13. *Wanneer je een keus hebt gemaakt voor een nieuwe opleiding word je geholpen bij de aanmelding en het invullen van het doorstroomdossier.*
14. *Samen met jou wordt gekeken naar de invulling van je schooltijd tot aan de zomervakantie.*


Appendix C

Survey used to collect quantitative data in Dutch

Tevredenheidsonderzoek
Vragenlijst Loopbaanklas

Will je meedoen aan dit onderzoek?

Ja
 Nee

Graafschap  College

Algemene vragen (1/5)

Wat is jouw geslacht?

Vrouw
 Man

Welke diploma(s) heb je hiervoor behaald?

iwoo
 vmbo-b
 vmbo-k
 vmbo-t
 havo
 vwo
 mbo niveau 1
 mbo niveau 2
 mbo niveau 3
 mbo niveau 4

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Tevredenheid opleiding (2/5)

In hoeverre ben jij tevreden over je opleiding in het algemeen?

Zeer ontevreden
 Ontevreden
 Neutraal
 Tevreden
 Zeer tevreden

In hoeverre ben je tevreden over de volgende aspecten van je opleiding?

	Zeer ontevreden	Ontevreden	Neutraal	Tevreden	Zeer tevreden
Het opdoen van vaardigheden voor de beroepspraktijk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het contact met de beroepspraktijk <-> Bijvoorbeeld stages, gastspreekers, opdrachten voor externen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Tevredenheid LoopbaanKlas (3/5)

In hoeverre ben je tevreden over de begeleiding van de LoopbaanKlas in het algemeen?

Zeer ontevreden
 Ontevreden
 Neutraal
 Tevreden
 Zeer tevreden

In hoeverre ben je het eens over de volgende stellingen?

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Neutraal	Eens	Zeer mee eens
Zonder de LoopbaanKlas had ik niet kunnen reflecteren op mijn doelen in het leven.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zonder de LoopbaanKlas had ik niet kunnen reflecteren op mijn zelfkennis en cognitieve vaardigheden.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zonder de LoopbaanKlas had ik mijn sociale vaardigheden niet kunnen oefenen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zonder de LoopbaanKlas had ik geen geschikte opleiding kunnen kiezen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Wil jij je opleiding nog iets meegeven over de LoopbaanKlas? Je opmerkingen worden doorgegeven aan jouw instelling.

Your answer

Tevredenheid gelukkigheid (1/5)

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5, hoe gelukkig beschouw je jezelf?

1 2 3 4 5

Helemaal niet gelukkig Heel erg gelukkig

In hoeverre ben je het eens over de volgende stellingen?

	Zeer mee oneens	Niet mee eens	Beetje mee oneens	Neutraal	Beetje mee eens	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
In de meeste opzichten is mijn leven bijna ideaal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De omstandigheden in mijn leven zijn uitstekend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik ben tevreden over mijn leven	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tot nu toe heb ik de belangrijke dingen gekregen die ik wil in het leven	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Als ik mijn leven kon overdoen, zou ik bijna niets veranderen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Kies 'Baan' als je wel een baan hebt. Kies 'Geen baan' als je geen baan hebt.

Baan

Geen baan

Tot zover de onderwerpen waarover wij jouw mening wilden weten. Wil je zelf iets kuif dat nog niet aan bod is gekomen? Je opmerkingen worden doorgegeven aan jouw instelling.

Your answer _____

Zou je willen bijdragen aan dit onderzoek door mee te doen aan een vervolg interview over de LoopbaanKlas? Jouw mening is belangrijk! Hiermee draag je bij aan waardevolle informatie voor de LoopbaanKlas en help je instellingen hun onderwijs te verbeteren. Als je antwoord 'ja' is (thank you!), noteer hieronder jouw emailadres.

Your answer _____

Bedankt voor jouw feedback over je opleiding en de LoopbaanKlas!

Tevredenheid baan (5/5)

Wat is jouw baan?

Your answer

In hoeverre ben je het eens over de volgende stellingen? *

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
Het was makkelijk om een baan te vinden na het behalen van mijn diploma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vind mijn baan erg leuk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zou niet ergens anders willen werken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb een aantal vaardigheden moeten ontwikkelen om mijn huidige baan te krijgen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mijn huidige baan eiste werkervaring om aangenomen te worden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Tot zover de onderwerpen waarover wij jouw mening wilden weten. Wil jij zelf iets kwijt over je baan dat nog niet aan bod is gekomen?
Je opmerkingen worden doorgegeven aan jouw instelling.

Your answer

Je bent klaar met de vragenlijst. Bedankt voor jouw feedback over je baan!

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Appendix D

Survey used to collect quantitative data in English

Satisfaction study
Survey Loopbaanklas

h.ikde@student.utwente.nl (not shared) [Switch account](#)

Would you like to participate in this study?

Yes

No

Graafschap College

General questions (1/5)

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Which type of qualifications have you obtained?

lwoo

vmbo-b

vmbo-k

vmbo-t

havo

vwo

mbo level 1

mbo level 2

mbo level 3

mbo level 4

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Satisfaction educational programme (2/5)

How satisfied are you with your course programme in general?

Very dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied
 Neutral
 Satisfied
 Very satisfied

How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your educational programme?

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Acquiring skills for professional practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The link to professional practice ↔ For example, internships, guest speakers, assignments for external organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Satisfaction Loopbaanklas (3/5)

How satisfied are you with the training of the Loopbaanklas in general?

Very dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied
 Neutral
 Satisfied
 Very satisfied

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Disagree very much	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree very much
Without the Loopbaanklas I could not have reflected on my goals in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Without the Loopbaanklas I could not have reflected on my self-knowledge and cognitive skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Without the Loopbaanklas I could not have practiced my social skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Without the Loopbaanklas I would not have been able to choose a suitable educational programme.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to give your institution further feedback about the Loopbaanklas? Your comments will be passed on to your institution.

Your answer _____

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Satisfaction happiness (4/5)

On a scale of 1 to 5, how happy do you consider yourself?

1 2 3 4 5

Not happy at all Very happy

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In most ways my life is close to my ideal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The conditions of my life are excellent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Choose 'job' if you have a job. Choose 'no job' if you do not have a job.

Job

No job

This concludes the topics we wanted your opinion on. Do you want to say something that has not yet been mentioned? Your comments will be passed on to your institution.

Your answer _____

Would you like to contribute to this study by participating in a follow-up interview about the LoopbaanKlas? Your opinion counts! Your input helps the LoopbaanKlas and your institution improve education. If your answer is 'yes' (thank you!), write down your email address.

Your answer _____

Thank you for your feedback about your educational programme and the LoopbaanKlas!

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Satisfaction job (5/5)

What is your occupation?

Your answer _____

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? *

	Disagree very much	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree very much
It was easy to find a job after obtaining my diploma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like my job very much	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would not want to work anywhere else	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was obliged to develop a number of skills to get my current job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My current job required job experience to get hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This concludes the topics we wanted your opinion on. Do you want to say something about your job that has not yet been mentioned?
Your comments will be passed on to your institution.

Your answer _____

You have finished the survey. Thank you for your feedback about your job!

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Appendix E

Invitation survey in Dutch

Beste student,

Mijn naam is Hatice Ikde en ik ben een master student aan de universiteit van Twente. Ik doe een onderzoek naar de effectiviteit van de Loopbaanklas die studenten helpt om de juiste studiekeuze te maken op jouw school; Graafschap College!

De meningen van studenten die **meedoen** of **meegedaan** hebben met de Loopbaanklas zijn van belang voor mijn onderzoek. Als deelnemer aan de Loopbaanklas, vraag ik of jij wilt meedoen aan de tevredenheidsenquête. De vragen van de enquête zijn gericht op jouw mening over de volgende onderwerpen:

- Jouw opleiding
- De Loopbaanklas
- Jouw gelukigheid
- Jouw baan (als je een baan hebt)

Jouw waardevolle antwoorden zullen gebruikt worden voor mijn onderzoek. Hiermee help je instellingen hun onderwijs te verbeteren. Ook help je mij met mijn onderzoek. Het is volledig **anoniem!**

Bij dezen nodig ik jou uit om deze digitale enquête in te vullen. Het zal ongeveer 5-7 minuten duren. Via de onderstaande link kun je eerst aangeven of je wel of niet mee wilt doen. Als je **wel** mee wilt doen, kun je de enquête invullen en inleveren via:
<https://forms.gle/65fYUfy8aSiuRxKA>

Zorg ervoor dat je de enquête **vóór donderdag 31 april 2022** ingevuld hebt. Mocht je tijdens het invullen van de enquête willen stoppen vanwege ongemak, dan mag dat. Sluit het venster van de enquête dan af.

Mocht je benieuwd zijn naar de resultaten van dit onderzoek, dan kun je mij een mail sturen!

Hartelijk dank,

Hatice Ikde

Appendix F

Invitation survey in in English

Dear student,

My name is Hatice Ikde and I am a Master student at the University of Twente. I am conducting a study on the effectiveness of the Loopbaanklas that help students make the right choice of educational programme at your school; Graafschap College!

The opinion of students that participate or **have** participated the Loopbaanklas are important for this study. As a student of the Loopbaanklas, I am inviting you to fill out the satisfaction survey. participate in this study. The questions of the survey are about your opinion on the following topics:

- Your educational programme
- The Loopbaanklas
- Your happiness
- Your job (if you have a job)

Your valuable responses will be used for my study. Your responses will help institutions improve education. You will also help me with my study. It is completely **anonymous!**

I am inviting you to fill out the digital survey. It will take about 5-7 minutes. Via the link below you can indicate whether you want to participate or not. If you **do** want to participate in this study, you can fill out and submit the survey via: <https://forms.gle/65fyUjfy8aSiuRxKA>

Please make sure your fill out the survey **before Thursday 31 April 2022**. If you feel uneasy during the survey, you may stop. You can close the tab of the survey.

If you are interested in the results of this study, send me an email!

Kind regards,

Hatice Ikde

Appendix G

Success and satisfaction rubric

<i>Effectiveness of Loopbaanklas</i>	<i>Success</i>	<i>Educational programme</i>	<i>Loopbaanklas</i>	<i>SWB</i>	<i>Job/career</i>
<i>Obtain qualification with basic skills (reading, writing, Maths & Science)</i>	x				
<i>Minimal qualification of HAVO, VWO, level 2 Vocational</i>	x				
<i>Educational programme that matches aspiration, qualification, satisfied occupation, high SWB</i>	x				
<i>Satisfied about educational programme</i>		x			
<i>Able to decide on educational programme that matches the aspiration & completion with the help of Loopbaanklas</i>		x	x		
<i>Satisfied with job and career path</i>					x
<i>Happy and satisfied about life</i>				x	

