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Workshop: Active and autonomous learning and teachers' professional development in secondary education

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The project Active and Autonomous Learning is a partnership between three schools for secondary education in the Nijmegen region and the Graduate School of Education/ILS at the University of Nijmegen. The participants in this partnership share an interest in the development of instruction that is based on constructivist principles of self-regulated learning. Related to recent innovations in the upper levels of Dutch secondary education, the focus of the project is on the development of methods for active and autonomous learning in diverging school subjects. Starting in 2000, study groups in which secondary school teachers and teacher educators for specific school subjects cooperate develop student tasks and exercises aimed at the development of skills for self-regulation by students and their thinking skills. In these study groups the learning processes and learning results of students are explored, and these research results are fed back to and discussed by the teachers and teacher educators by means of peer-coaching and intervision. The research methods in this project are based on development research and action research. The aims of the project are:

- to develop methods for active and autonomous learning,
- to promote teachers' and teacher educators' professional development,
- to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of active and autonomous learning by students and teachers.

The aim of the workshop is to share the results of the project with scholars and practitioners in related projects. The central question in this workshop is how the project promotes the professional development of teachers and teacher educators. It is expected that a critical discussion on the conceptual framework, methods and results of the project will contribute to improved insights of workshop participants as well as project members in the benefits and problems of this approach to teachers' and teacher educators' professional development. Moreover, opportunities will be explored to start an international network for exchange of experiences and research results and further collaboration in this specific field of teachers' professional development and educational change.

In the first part of the workshop (10 minutes) the framework and methods of the project will be outlined. In the subsequent two parts (30 minutes each) the participants will be invited to engage in two activities. In the study group Dutch a student task for the development of writing skills was developed and tested in which the writing task was regulated by students themselves. The awareness of the writing process by these students was emphasized. The students were interviewed by the teacher educator, and the results of these interviews were discussed in the study group. The focus in the workshop will be on the presentation of interview fragments and the discussion with the participants of what these interview fragments might contribute to teacher learning. The study group geography largely builds on the results of collaboration with the Thinking Skills Research Centre at the University of Newcastle. Problem solving tasks for students were adapted to and applied in Dutch classroom contexts. In this part of the workshop a Thinking Through Geography task will be presented. By practicing parts of the problem solving task in the workshop and by debriefing the results some critical aspects for the development of students' thinking skills and for teacher learning will be detected. In the last part of the workshop (20 minutes) some implications for the framework and the methods of the project of the study groups Dutch and geography will be discussed.