Computational Thinking Skills in Dutch Secondary Education

Some CT aspects can be recognized in current CS teaching practice. How can we ensure systematic teaching of CT in the CS curriculum?

We shall study the following issues:

1. What is an operational definition of Computational Thinking, tailored to the specific situation and needs of secondary education in the Netherlands?
2. How can students’ CT problem solving skills be assessed?
3. What is a suitable pedagogical approach to teach students and stimulate their learning of CT problem solving skills?

Computational thinking - a new concept

“Computational thinking is the thought processes involved in formulating problems and their solutions so that the solutions are represented in a form that can be effectively carried out by an information processing agent.”

“A typical CS assignment in secondary education

Make a model / simulation / program for:

Traffic lights for a busy traffic crossing

Elevator in an apartment building

Some CT aspects can be recognized in current CS teaching practice.

We started with CSTA/ISTE characterization of the nine essential CT aspects (in the left column of the table). Using the CSTA examples of learning experiences and samples of existing teaching materials, we iteratively constructed a refinement of the CT characterization (the right column of the table).

The first phase of the research is focused on CT aspects in the existing teaching practice. We ask:

i. Which aspects of CT can be recognized in Dutch CS teaching materials, curriculum specifications and policy documents?

ii. How can the CT pedagogical content knowledge of CS teachers in Dutch secondary education be characterized?

With this draft definition we shall establish CS teachers’ PCK on CT through structured interviews (CoRe).

Result of the first phase: final operational definition of CT tailored to the needs of CS course in Dutch secondary education.

An instrument to assess students’ CT will be developed in the second phase.

A pedagogical approach will be developed in the third phase.

The effects of the curriculum intervention will be assessed in the fourth phase.