

PhD Research topics | Education Chair Group | 2026-27

A. Themes under joint Supervision of three members of the chair group

1.

Chair	Foundations of Education
Supervisors	Prof. dr. Doret de Ruyter Second and third supervisors are dependent on the particular topic the PhD student wants to address
Field of Research	Education for Flourishing and Social Justice
Description (max 150 words)	<p>Increasingly, the purpose of education is described as the educators' intent to assist the new generation to be able to flourish as adults. Equally, we see an increase in attention to social justice in educational research. Human flourishing and social justice are often researched separately, but there are important questions to be asked when they are both pursued as aims of education.</p> <p>Firstly, various conceptions of 'flourishing' abound in academic and professional literature. If teachers pursue the flourishing of their pupils, what do they actually aim for and how do they do it?</p> <p>Secondly, aiming for one's own flourishing (or one's family or community) could be detrimental to the flourishing of others. Thus, there could be a tension between both aims of education. However, it could also be argued that one only flourishes if one is just and aims for a just society. What should educators teach?</p>
Examples of research questions (max 100 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is aiming for human flourishing compatible with aiming for equal opportunities for all pupils? - Does it make sense to aim for human flourishing when pupils grow up in circumstances of adversity? - Should educators teach adhering to the principle of justice as a necessary characteristic of a flourishing person? - Is the conceptualisation of human flourishing worldview dependent and if so, what does that mean for education?
Research Theme	Health and well-being Justice and inclusion
Place for	1 external PhD student
Contact and information	d.deruyter@uvh.nl

2.

Chair	Foundations of Education
Supervisors	Dr. Neha Miglani, Dr. Pieter van Rees Prof. dr. Caroline Suransky or prof. dr. Doret de Ruyter
Field of Research	Educational Technology (EdTech) for Humanistic Endeavour
Description (max 150 words)	Technological advances in the last few decades have changed the landscape of formal and informal education. From educational media (radio, TV, smart boards) to personalized devices, from MOOCs for public education to tailored, self-paced adaptive learning, and now, the increasing platformization and use of artificial, generative intelligence, educational technology (EdTech) continues to intensify, especially post covid-19. Critiques of EdTech have ranged from increasing commercialization and strengthening of the big-tech companies to quantification of education, (mis)use of student bodies for data, and a dilution of citizenship and democratic values. On the other hand, communities, educational institutions, youth, and teachers have also found newer ways of connecting, sharing, and organizing for socio-political change through EdTech. This project engages with EdTech's intersection with various humanistic dimensions – socio-political, historical, moral philosophical and planetary justice. We invite conceptual and/or empirical projects that investigate EdTech's imaginaries, affordances and/or limitations.
Examples of research questions (max 100 words)	Research questions can include (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What possibilities of flourishing/ well-being, care, and inclusion are imagined and created via EdTech? - What social imaginaries are assumed in the development and adoption of EdTech? - How do discourses and materialities of EdTech interact with the various aims of education, for instance, civic, moral, relational? - How does (specific projects or policies on) EdTech interact with democratic citizenship? - What, if at all, are the affordances of EdTech (for instance, social media) on the moral and civic development of youth?
Research theme	Democracy and citizenship Health and well-being Professional ethics
Place for	1 external PhD student
Contact and information	n.miglani@uvh.nl ; p.vanrees@uvh.nl

B. Themes based on expertise of individual university lecturers

1.

Chair	Foundations of Education
Supervisors	Dr. Neha Miglani and prof. dr. Doret de Ruyter
Field of Research	Pedagogies of Well-being
Description (max 150 words)	<p>The last two decades have seen an explosion of references to well-being in public discourses and policy. Framed by a sense of crisis, well-being in contemporary cultures, is not an incidental or assumed outcome of education or life anymore. It is not a retrospective reflection of life lived a certain way. Instead, it is actively pursued and practiced daily on specific dimensions and has become an intentional act of teaching-learning. Being well has become a 'skill' to be acquired. Everyday aspirations of well-being are being taken up as projects of lifelong learning in formal or informal educational settings. Grappling with the 'educational' nature of well-being practices, this project is interested in the discursive and material forms it takes and aims for theoretical and/ or empirical inquiries within educational institutions or outside them (e.g., prisons, yoga studios, meditation centers or other spaces).</p>
Examples of research questions (max 100 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What meanings do people assign to being well?- How do we learn to be well and teach it to others in various contexts?- What historical or contemporary discourse animate our understanding of being well?- How do globally circulating ideas of well-being take inform local practices and shape policy (conceived broadly)?
Research theme	Health and well-being
Place for	1 external PhD student
Contact and information	n.miglani@uvh.nl

2.

Chair	Foundations of Education
Supervisors	Dr. Wouter Sanderse and Prof. dr. Doret de Ruyter
Field of Research	Role modelling in schools
Description (max 150 words)	Moral education refers to more or less intentional efforts to enable (young) people to live a good life, individually and with others. Most approaches to moral education recognise that role modelling is an important method to promote young people's moral development, also in schools. It is fundamental, in the sense that if teachers do not model the behaviour they expect from children, other methods are not likely to be effective. Moreover, when asked how young people morally develop in schools, role modelling is mentioned most by teachers. However, it remains a mystery how role modelling works, when it is justified, and what effects may be expected from it.
Examples of research questions (max 100 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is (un)intentional role modelling by teachers in a pluralistic society desirable? - How do teachers model capacities such as moral perception, reasoning, motivation and action in the classroom - Do students recognise their teachers' (un)intentional efforts and what is the effect? - How can (preservice) teachers be stimulated to develop their function as moral exemplars?
Research theme	Professional ethics and integrity
Place for	1 external PhD student
Contact and information	w.sanderse@uvh.nl

3.

Chair	Foundations of Education
Supervisors	Dr. Wouter Sanderse & Prof. dr. Doret de Ruyter
Field of Research	Educating Professional Practical Wisdom
Description (max 150 words)	<p>Increasingly, higher education is described as aiming to equip future practitioners with something more than academic knowledge and skills. But what is this 'more' exactly? One suggestion is that students should also develop the capacity to act wisely in complex, value-laden situations. In philosophy, this capacity is known as the intellectual virtue of 'practical wisdom'.</p> <p>The notion of practical wisdom is 'hot' in academia, but also in professional practices. Philosophers try to define it and investigate e.g. why it would be desirable to have. Psychologists are interested in understanding how practical wisdom develop, and in order to answer this, they operationalise and measure. Educationalists try to find out how practical wisdom can be educated, in children and young people, and in future professionals too.</p> <p>All the recent attention given to professional wisdom has yielded many insights, but it has also generated new questions.</p>
Examples of research questions (max 100 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does practical wisdom relate to increasing demands for standardization and accountability in professional practices? - Is practical wisdom understood differently in a variety of professional domains (e.g. law, medicine and teaching), and if so, what causes this? - How does practical wisdom emerge in daily educational or professional practices? - How can universities enable students to develop professional practical wisdom, e.g. during internships?
Research theme	Professional ethics and integrity
Place for	1 external PhD student
Contact and information	w.sanderse@uvh.nl

4.

Chair	Foundations of Education
Supervisors	Dr. Wouter Sanderse & Prof. dr. Doret de Ruyter
Field of Research	Moral distress in teaching
Description (max 150 words)	<p>Across many educational systems, teachers increasingly experience being pulled in directions that conflict with their professional and moral commitments. They know what the right thing would be to do for a pupil, a class, or the school at large, but they feel unable to act accordingly because of institutional or societal pressures.</p> <p>Moral distress can arise from acute incidents, such as being compelled to follow disciplinary practices one perceives as harmful, but it can also take on enduring forms when teachers repeatedly confront situations in which they cannot enact their pedagogical values. Over time, this may lead to a diminished sense of moral purpose, disengagement from pupils, or withdrawal from the profession.</p> <p>The concept is long studied in nursing and healthcare ethics but is now gradually being taken up in educational research and leads to new questions.</p>
Examples of research questions (max 100 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do teachers make sense of situations in which they perceive their moral agency to be compromised? - What are the conceptual relationships between moral distress, moral agency and integrity? - How do beginning teachers learn to navigate moral conflicts and what support structures foster resilience without denying moral complexity?
Research theme	Professional ethics and integrity
Place for	1 external PhD student
Contact and information	w.sanderse@uvh.nl

5.

Chair	Foundations of Education
Supervisors	Dr. Pieter van Rees & Prof. dr. Doret de Ruyter or prof.dr. Caroline Suransky
Field of Research	Citizenship education and (in)equality
Description (max 150 words)	<p>Over the last twenty years, citizenship education has received growing attention in educational science, policy and practice. This ‘citizenship offensive in educational policy’ (Van Rees 2021) assumes that democratic citizenship is a matter of individual competences that can be improved measurably through education (Dijkstra, Ten Dam & Waslander 2019). Several critics claim that competence-based citizenship education fails to address the educational, ideological, cultural, political and social contexts in which citizenship education functions (Biesta 2011; De Jong 2021; Van der Ploeg 2019; Van Rees 2023).</p> <p>How could democratic citizenship education be more responsive to these diverse contexts to reach its stated aims of promoting freedom, equality and solidarity and the quality of democracy? For marginalized groups democratic citizenship is not primarily a matter of their own individual competences, but rather of social and political (mis-)recognition.</p> <p>I welcome projects on the diverse forms of (in)equality in citizenship education.</p>
Examples of research questions (max 100 words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How should citizenship education relate to social realities of exclusion, dominance and inequality? This could be specified at different levels: educational theory, policy, curriculum, teaching practices. - How does educating for democratic equality (dys)function in a tracked educational system? - How do we ensure the equality of different political, religious and pedagogical forms of citizenship education (in light of the freedom of education)? - What could we learn from bottom-up emancipatory forms of citizenship education (historical and current) to address structural issues of civic inequality through education?
Research theme	Democracy and citizenship Justice and inclusion
Place for	1 external PhD student
Contact and information	p.vanrees@uvh.nl