

Teaching on purpose

How co-design promotes purpose development in secondary education

*Master thesis report - Strategic Product Design
Bauke Spoon
July 2025*

Title

Teaching for Purpose
How co-design promotes purpose development in
secondary education

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In Collaboration

This project was conducted in collaboration with
Ruth Frans' PhD research on purpose development
in adolescents and carried out at Wolfert Tweetalig in
Rotterdam.

Period

February 2025 – July 2025

Design & Writing

All content, visualisations and designs were created
by the author unless stated otherwise.

Preface

Imagine this: it's 2005, I'm on holiday in France with my parents, brothers and sister. We're sitting around a crackling fire, a starry sky stretching above us. I look up and feel incredibly small. Then I hear a deep, calm sigh from my dad's side, followed by the question: "Wat is de zin van het leven?"

I remember thinking — what a huge question! I was only eight years old. How could I possibly answer that? I didn't know. What am I even doing here? Is there a plan for my life? Where am I heading?

That question has stayed with me ever since. But especially during this project, it returned more often than usual. From the very first week (February 2025), it lingered in my mind. I knew it had to become part of this journey.

Now, I've come to see that it's not about finding the answer. Life is about experiencing, reflecting, and asking yourself: What can I learn from this? What might I want to do differently next time? And funnily enough, that's exactly where this project has led me.

Where I initially set out to design a concrete tool for schools and adolescents to support purpose development, I discovered that the true impact lies in the experience itself and the reflection on it. So I invite you to read this report with that mindset:

We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience.
— following Dewey (1933)

This report presents the final outcome of my graduation project, to which I've devoted my heart and soul over the past 20 weeks. Working on real and meaningful challenges has always energised me. Combining that with education and youth — themes close to my heart — made this project especially motivating and fulfilling.

Throughout this project, I've had the privilege of working closely with Ruth Frans, my mentor from Wolfert Tweetalig. I was honoured to contribute to her PhD research and was given both the freedom and the structure to navigate a rich — and sometimes chaotic — design process. I truly couldn't have asked for a better guide. Thank you, Ruth.

I'm also grateful to my supervisors Milene and Mathieu. Your honest feedback and steady support — especially in moments when I felt lost — gave me the courage to trust the process. The space you offered for creativity and reframing challenged me to grow beyond my comfort zone, which ultimately led me to where I am now.

And of course, a special thank you to:

Mom and Dad — for your endless support, time, and care; for always picking up the phone; for opening your house when I needed a warm and safe space to work and focus.

Tijn, Maik, Q, and Con — for your understanding, support, and patience throughout.

Maaïke — for being my number one cheerleader.

Pepijn — for being the quiet and peace in my chaos.

Enjoy reading,

Bauke

Executive summary

Goal

This graduation project explores how design can support the development of purpose in adolescents by enabling teachers in secondary education to take on a more active, reflective role. The aim of this project was to develop a design intervention that promotes purpose development among adolescents in secondary education.

Approach

Through a combination of theory, field research, and co-creation, the project uncovered how purpose develops and how schools currently (fail to) support it. Literature showed that purpose is not a fixed endpoint but a process of identity formation, future thinking, and contribution. Interviews with students revealed a desire for more personal connection, to have room to explore, and to connect learning to real life. Teachers, in turn, expressed motivation but also a lack of time and knowledge to address purpose in their teaching practice.

To respond to this gap, a series of co-design sessions were held with teachers at Wolfert Tweetalig. These sessions created a safe and creative space for teachers to explore their own perspectives on teaching for purpose, and to reflect on how they might support that process in students. What began as a method to design interventions became an intervention in itself. The sessions revealed that when teachers are given time, trust, and a creative space, a powerful mindset shift can occur — one that redefines their role, their language, and their perspective on education.

Results

This insight became the new design challenge: how to make this mindset shift last and grow over time, especially when the original facilitator/designer steps away. Through literature on change, learning and innovation, five principles for long-term

impact were formulated: embed in culture, grow from the core, anchor in rituals, make it concrete, and design for adaptation.

To bring these principles to life, two key artefacts were developed. The first is a roadmap that outlines a phased journey toward 2028 — when purpose development becomes a natural, shared part of school culture. The second is a supporting magazine for this roadmap, designed as a narrative and visual tool to inspire, remind, and invite others into this process. Both artefacts are grounded in co-created and theory insights and are designed not to control, but to continue the mindset that emerged during the sessions.

Conclusion

This project shows that supporting purpose in adolescents can begin with enabling purpose focused thinking in teachers. It offers a hopeful, practical, and relational approach to educational change — one that prioritises reflection over instruction, dialogue over delivery, and culture over curriculum.

Glossary

CITO test	A national standardized test taken at the end of primary school in the Netherlands, used to help determine a suitable level of secondary education.
VWO	A six-year secondary education track that prepares students for research universities (WO).
HAVO	A five-year secondary education track that prepares students for universities of applied sciences (HBO).
VMBO	A four-year secondary education track that prepares students for senior vocational education (MBO).
Profile selection	The moment in lower secondary education when students choose a subject cluster (e.g., Science & Health, Economics & Society) for upper secondary education.
Purpose development	The process in which individuals develop a sense of meaning, direction, and intention to contribute beyond themselves.
Graduation rate (Slagingspercentage)	The percentage of students who successfully complete their final year and graduate from secondary education.
Promotion rate (Doorstroom percentage)	The percentage of students who progress to the next school year without delay.
Upper secondary education (de bovenbouw)	The final years of secondary education in the Netherlands, where students specialize based on their chosen profile.
Grade retention (Blijven zitten)	The act of repeating a school year due to insufficient academic performance.
Track demotion (afstromen)	Switching to a lower level of secondary education due to academic underperformance.

Reading Guide

This report follows a design-oriented and reflective structure, built around the big question: *How can we support purpose development in adolescents on secondary education?* Each chapter builds upon the previous, gradually moving from understanding the context to designing for long-term impact. Below is an overview of the report's structure and how to navigate it.

CH1, CH2

What is the project about?

These chapters introduce the societal and educational context, collaboration with Ruth Frans' PhD research, the project aim and outline the chosen research approach.

CH1: In what context did this project start? What is the aim for this project?
CH2: How did I approach this project? Which methods were used?

CH3, CH4

What is happening right now?

These chapters introduce the societal and educational context, collaboration with Ruth Frans' PhD research, the project aim and outline the chosen research approach.

CH3: What is purpose and how does it develop? What is the current focus of the Dutch education system? How do those two differ and/or align?
CH4: What is the current experience of students and teachers at Wolfert Tweetalig?

CH5, CH6

What needs to happen?

This part outlines what conditions are needed to foster purpose development. It reframes the initial ambition, zooms in on the co-design process, and identifies success factors that led to mindset change among teachers.

CH5: What needs to happen to foster purpose development?
CH6: What are the requirements for supporting purpose development?

CH7, CH8

How can we do that again?

This section focuses on designing for continuity. It presents strategies for sustaining the mindset shift and introduces artefacts that help others replicate or scale the approach.

CH7: How can we ensure this mindset shift continues and grows?
CH8: How can this be translated into artefacts and supporting materials?

CH9, CH10

What is next?

The final chapters bring it all together. They summarise the project's conclusions, provide recommendations for future steps.

CH9: What are the key conclusions and final recommendations?
CH10: What broader reflections and limitations emerge?

Throughout this report, you will encounter three different voices:

- *Research tone* is used in theoretical analysis and structured findings, in line with academic standards – what you're used to.
- For *transitional or design-driven explanations* I will use the "I"-form, reflecting my role as a designer-researcher within the process.

"Personal reflections are written in the "I"-form as well and presented in a more narrative tone. These moments are visually distinguished with a different font, colour and frame."

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What is the project about?

This part explores where the project started and how its foundation was laid.

In the first part of this report, I introduce the broader context and importance of this project. I describe the collaboration with Ruth Frans' PhD research for Healthy Start and Erasmus University Rotterdam and I explain how this project fits into that bigger picture.

This section also includes my research approach and methodology: how I tried to balance theory, co-design and reflection in one iterative journey. It lays the groundwork for everything that follows after.

CH1: Introduction

- *In what context did this project start?*
- *What is the aim for this project?*

CH2: Design Approach & Methodology

- *How did I approach this project?*
- *Which methods were used in this project?*

1 Introduction

1.1 Societal and educational context

Adolescents today are growing up in an increasingly complex world, marked by rapid societal changes, digital overload, academic pressure, and a growing number of existential concerns such as climate change and inequality. Research shows that a sense of purpose— a stable and meaningful intention that contributes beyond the self—is positively linked to physical and mental well-being, resilience, and prosocial behaviour (Damon, 2003; Malin et al., 2017).

Despite its importance, the active process of developing one's purpose does not happen automatically. It is a process which takes time, effort and reflection. Research shows a unique window of opportunity during adolescence for this development, because they are in a critical period for identity formation, self-reflection, and value exploration (Erikson (1968); Loevinger (1976)). This opens opportunities for educational environments to play a more active role in guiding and supporting young people in this developmental task.

1.2 Project context: Collaboration with Ruth Frans

This graduation project is part of a broader ongoing PhD research by Ruth Frans at Erasmus University Rotterdam and Healthy Start. Her work investigates the development of purpose in adolescents and explores how secondary schools can support this process. The PhD project takes both a design-driven and research-based approach to understand how purpose development can be guided

through structured school experiences.

This graduation project builds directly on Ruth's earlier work, including:

- A comprehensive literature review on purpose development,
- The use of semi-structured interviews with adolescents and teachers, and
- An ongoing collaboration with a secondary school – het Wolfert Tweetalig Rotterdam.

The qualitative interview data collected by Ruth serves as the starting point for this graduation research. With her permission, this project uses this data to extract key insights, identify design opportunities, and inform the direction of the intervention. In return, this project aims to contribute to her research by prototyping an intervention in the school context.

This collaborative structure ensures both academic depth and practical relevance, aligning the goals of a graduation project with the continuity of a multi-year research track.

1.3 Design opportunity

While schools are one of the few consistent environments in which all adolescents have to be present, they are often not intentionally designed to support the development of purpose. Current educational systems are mostly focused on outcomes like grades and qualifying for the next year, leaving

less room for exploration, reflection, or creative visioning. Teachers may feel unequipped or overworked to facilitate such conversations, and students rarely encounter tools or activities that help them reflect on what matters to them personally.

This graduation project investigates how design can bridge that gap: *How can a design-driven approach be used to promote and foster purpose development in secondary education?* It explores how co-design with teachers and students can lead to interventions that create an environment where purpose development is central and promoted.

1.4 Project aim

The aim of this project is to develop a design intervention that stimulates purpose development among adolescents in secondary education, see Appendix A.1 and A.2 for initial project brief and planning. The final outcome is co-created with teachers and students through co-design methods, based on both theory and experiences from practice.

The main objectives are:

- 1) To understand what purpose is and how it develops.
- 2) To understand how adolescents currently experience and develop purpose in secondary education.
- 3) To identify opportunities within the school context to support this development.
- 4) To co-design an intervention that enables that promotes purpose development.

1.5 Research questions

This led to the following main research question: *How can co-design with teachers in secondary education support adolescents in the development of purpose?*

This main research question is divided into the following sub-questions.

- 1) What is purpose and how does it develop? CH 3: Theoretical Framework
- 2) What is the current experience of students and teachers? CH 4: Analysis
- 3) What needs to happen to foster purpose development? CH 5 & 6: The process & design requirements.
- 4) How can we ensure this mindset shift continue and grows? CH 7: Design for Longevity
- 5) How can this be translated to artefact? CH 8: The supporting Artefacts

1.6 Scope

This project focuses on students aged 12–18 in the Dutch secondary school Wolfert Tweetalig, Rotterdam. The design intervention is scoped as a low-threshold activity or set of tools that can be implemented by teachers within a limited time frame. It does not aim to redesign the entire educational system but rather to explore how small, intentional design interventions can influence students' sense of purpose development.

2 Design approach & methodology

This project builds on a combination of design and research approaches that together supported a process of exploring, understanding, and facilitating purpose development in secondary education. Rather than focusing on a single design framework, this chapter outlines the used guiding approaches and their outcomes.

reframing — using design both as a tool and as an outcome for new understanding and information. In this project, RtD offered the flexibility to explore the complexity of purpose development by co-designing, while simultaneously created understanding and the possibility for reframing and reflectionm, figure 2.1.

2.1 Approaches

2.1.1 Research trough Design

The project followed a Research through Design (RtD) approach (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2014), in which knowledge is generated through designing, making, and reflecting. Instead of testing a predefined hypothesis, RtD allows for iterative cycles of research, designing, and

As my project begin to take shape, it became clear the output of the co-design sessions was the biggest input for the next steps in the process. By analysing and reflecting, the deeper layers became visible, creating a deeper understanding of the context and needs, and on how a final solution could look like. This led to a continuous alternation between research and design, instead of stricter phases.

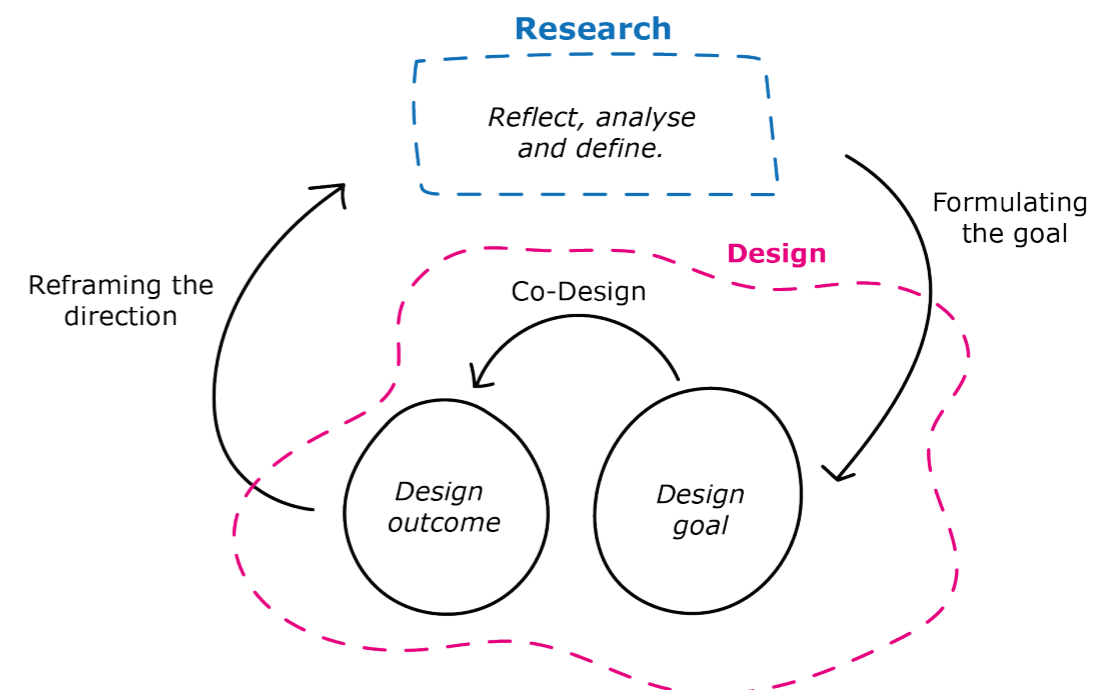


Figure 2.1: My Research through Design (RtD) approach

2.1.2 Participatory mindset

In line with RtD, a participatory design mindset was adopted throughout the project. As a designer, I did not approach this topic as an expert on purpose development in secondary education, but as a facilitator who enables others to share, reflect, and co-create. Inspired by Stappers' (2012) view of participatory designers:

"They see people as the true experts in domains of experience such as living, learning, working, etc. Design researchers who have a participatory mindset value people as co-creators in the design process and are happy to include people in the design process to the point of sharing control with them." Stappers, (p. 18).

This mindset guided me through the whole process and created a final outcome where both the stakeholders' voices were heard but also created a sense of ownership. In the co-sessions they all got the same design goals, but throughout they choose their own paths and directions. They could make the topic their own, while inspiring each other and me. It was about their journey and paths, not the one I created for them. The participants were the guiders in direction.

2.1.3 The Double Diamond

While RtD provided the philosophical backbone of the project, the Double Diamond framework (Design Council, 2005) helped structure its phases.

The familiar design process of diverging and converging supported the transitions between research, design and finalisation. Rather than applying it rigidly, the Double Diamond was used as a flexible guideline and adapted to a more suitable version: a triple diamond.

Besides this, it was not only present in my overall process, but also within each co-design session where diverging and converging was needed.

This resulted in an adaptation where multiple phases of exploration and definition occurred throughout the project: from early research to understand purpose and the context, to ideating in the co-design sessions to see how purpose development could be fostered, to refining interventions and artefacts for the final deliverable. This layered interpretation of the Double Diamond allowed for a more dynamic and responsive design process, figure 2.2.

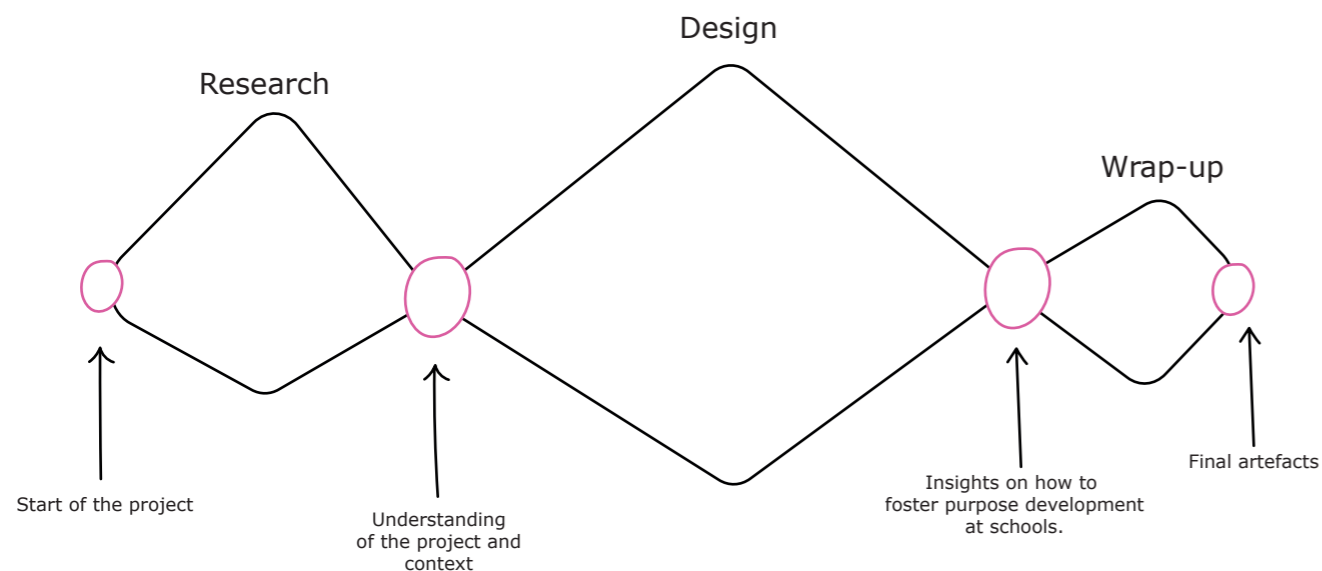


Figure 2.2: My Triple Diamond Approach

2.1.4 Together

This all led to the conclusion that by combining a Research through Design approach with principles from the Double Diamond, while keeping a continuous participatory mindset, I was able to approach this project and discover how to foster purpose development on secondary education. It made it possible that knowledge was generated through the alternation between theory and practice, by reflecting on and understanding the design outcomes. This gave direction and information for the next steps in the process.

By doing this, there was space and opportunity for multiple understanding and reframe cycles, where patterns in user behaviour and their opinions, in the form of qualitative data, was generated. This could then be analysed and translated to new research data and (reframed) directions, figure 2.3.

I take on the role of a facilitator and translator between theory, the voice of adolescents & educators, and design methods. Rather than positioning me as an expert in purpose development, the focus lies on enabling connecting, discovering and understanding all stakeholders and their needs in order to create the best outcome possible.

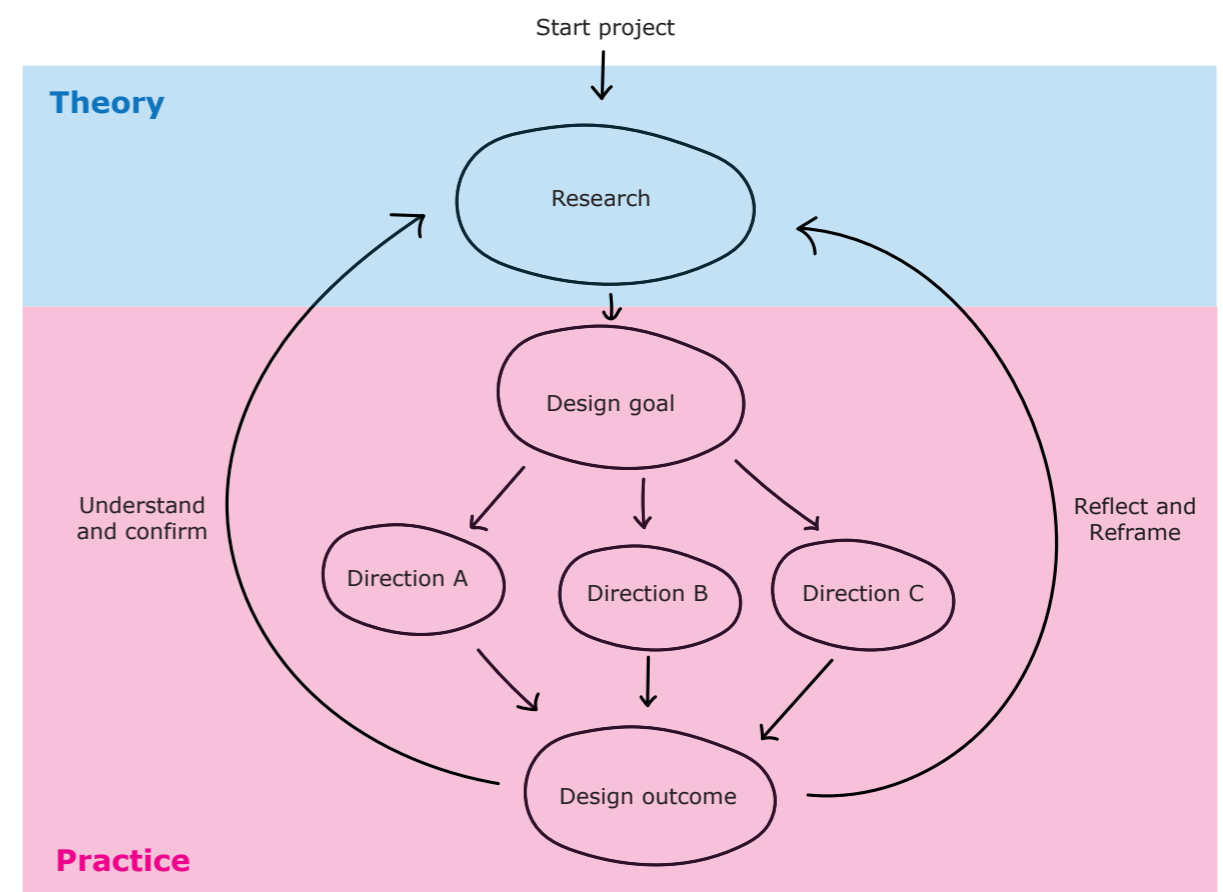


Figure 2.3: The whole process

2.2 Methods overview

Throughout the project, a range of methods was applied to support exploration, reasoning, and reflection. These methods were not fixed at the start but emerged and evolved based on the needs of each phase. An overview of the key methods is provided below table 2.1. Their application and outcomes are discussed in later chapters.

Table 2.1: Used methods

Method	Phase of use	Goal
Literature review	Early research (CH3)	Build theoretical foundation on purpose, education and adolescence
Interview analysis	Context phase (CH4)	Understand experiences of students and teachers at Wolfert Tweetalig
Context mapping	Early analysis	Frame systemic conditions and discover design opportunities
Co-design sessions	Design phase (CH5–6)	Engage teachers as co-creators in shaping interventions and direction
Generative tools	During sessions	Stimulate creative expression and reflection
Theme clustering	Post interviews and co-design sessions	Identify patterns and inform design direction
Reflective practice	Throughout project	Capture ongoing learning and interpretation
Systems thinking	Reframing phase (CH7)	Locate leverage points for systemic change
Change models	Design for longevity (CH8)	Support sustainable mindset shifts
Learning models	Artefact design (CH8–9)	Illustrate evolution of purpose development mindset over time
Roadmapping	CH8	Structure the long-term plan for implementation
Artefact design	Final phase	Translate findings into tools for continuation

This part outlined the approaches and the methodological foundation of the project. The following chapters explore the theoretical framing of purpose development (Chapter 3) and the current experiences of students and teachers in context (Chapter 4).

What is happening right now?

This part dives into theory and context: what do we already know about purpose development? And how does the current context look like?

Here, I zoom out to explore the theory behind purpose. What is it, how does it develop, and why is adolescence such a crucial period? Alongside this, I analyse the current reality in secondary schools and the Wolfert Tweetalig.

Through interviews, literature, and personal stories, I begin to uncover the gap between what adolescents need — and what schools currently provide. These insights form the foundation for the design phase that follows.

CH3: Theoretical Framework

- *What is purpose and how does it develop?*
- *What is the current focus Dutch education system?*
- *How do these two differ and/or align?*

CH4: Analysis

- *How does the current context at the Wolfert Tweetalig look like?*
- *What is the current experience of students and teachers at the Wolfert Tweetalig?*

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Understanding purpose

3.1.1 What is purpose?

When viewed through the lens of a holistic psychological approach, life is perceived as a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. However, to progress toward becoming the person you want to be, it is essential not only to identify your desired destination but also to understand the steps needed to reach it. Living without this direction is like to be on a ship drifting at sea, its compass and steering wheel is broken. Purpose provides both you and your life with direction, while your achievements are created from the actions you take to bridge the gap between who you are now and who you are striving to become (Vilhauer, 2020). It's not about reaching a final destination, but about how you get there.

While many researchers have defined purpose, a widely accepted and comprehensive definition by Damon et al. (2003) describes purpose as:

"A stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is both meaningful to the self and of intended consequence to the world beyond the self."

This definition of purpose, Damon (2003) argues it can be divided into three main pillars:

1. Purpose is a long-term goal and is more stable and meaningful than everyday objectives like arriving on time for a movie or finding a parking spot.
2. Unlike meaning, which doesn't always have a clear direction, purpose is always focused on achieving something specific that one can actively work toward.
3. It is part of a person's search for meaning but also extends beyond the self, involving a desire to make a difference in the world.

So, in other words, purpose is about having a long term beyond the self-goal and actively working and setting steps towards this goal, figure 3.1.

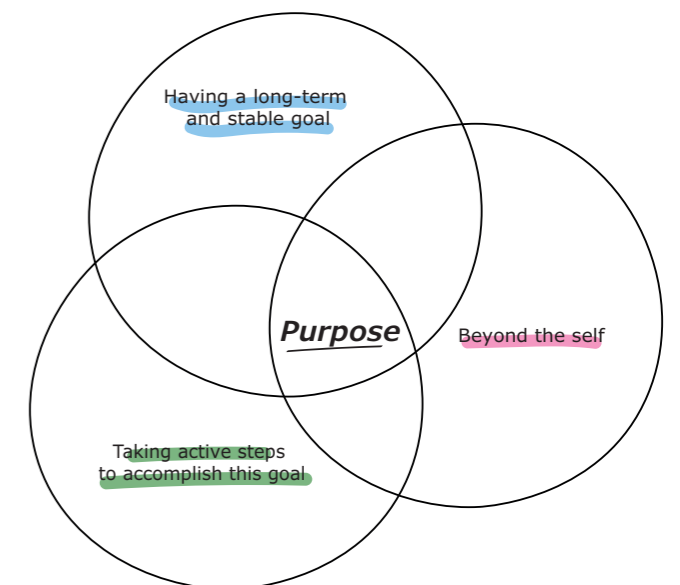


Figure 3.1: Pillars of purpose

3.1.2 Why is purpose relevant?

Research suggests that lacking direction or purpose in life can leave individuals feeling lost or aimless, leading to a sense of “drift” (Damon, 1995). This lack of purpose may contribute to personal challenges such as depression, addiction, and various mental illnesses. On a social level, it can result in destructive behaviour, decreased productivity, and difficulty maintaining stable relationships (Damon, 1995).

On the other hand, research indicates that adults who lead purposeful lives tend to live longer, enjoy better overall health, recover more quickly from illness, experience greater happiness, and manage stress more effectively. For adolescents, the benefits extend to improved relationships, a stronger sense of personal control, deeper learning, and better stress management (Wehner, 2022). It also has been linked to positive outcomes such as prosocial behaviour, moral commitment, academic achievement, and higher self-esteem (Damon et al., 2003, p. 120).

Furthermore, Erikson (1968) pointed to purpose as an effective means of helping to resolve a young person’s identity “crisis.” Which makes them more resilient and capable of dealing with difficult situations and discovering who they are and who they want to become.

Based on these findings, purpose can be considered an essential element for leading a healthier and more fulfilling life, with additional benefits when developed during adolescence.

3.1.3 The development of purpose

Even if purpose is an often-used term, the definition and its development is often misunderstood. Coleman (2017) suggests there are three main misconceptions.

Starting with that many people believe that purpose is something one suddenly finds. However, Coleman (2017) suggests that purpose is not something passively discovered but actively built over time. This process requires effort, reflection, and adaptation as individuals navigate their experiences and goals.

Another suggested misconception is that purpose is singular. Many assume that there is only one true purpose for each person. However, individuals often grow purpose from multiple areas simultaneously, such as career, school, relationships and hobbies. This multidimensionality allows for a richer, more dynamic sense of fulfilment and development.

The final misconception is that purpose is stable over time. Just as people evolve, so do their sources of purpose. Life transitions, new experiences, and shifts in personal values contribute to the ongoing development but also change of purpose. Rather than being a static goal, purpose is fluid, requiring continual reflection and adaptation.

So, instead of asking, “How do you find your purpose?” Coleman (2017) suggests a more constructive approach: focusing on how to infuse everyday actions with purpose. This shift in perspective allows for greater flexibility and acceptance of the evolving nature of purpose. By seeking meaning in multiple aspects of life and remaining open to change, individuals can create a deeper and more resilient sense of purpose over time.

Within the context of this graduation project, understanding how to develop purpose is essential for its success. Coleman’s suggestion—to integrate the search for purpose into everyday actions—

shows potential in integrating purpose development on secondary educations as adolescents are there for multiple years, 5 days a week.

To bring this to life, I spoke with two individuals — Ruben and Maaiké — who both described themselves as living purposefully. What stood out in both conversations was not a clear answer to what their purpose was, but rather how they relate to it. For them, purpose wasn’t a destination — it was a direction. Their stories aligned perfectly with Coleman’s claims: purpose had emerged through choices, reflection, trial and error, and time. Neither of them claimed to have “found” it. They simply kept moving, paying attention to what felt meaningful. Read their personal story on page 30 and 31.

3.1.4 Adolescents

Adolescence is a crucial period for identity formation, as noted by identity theorists such as Erikson (1968) and Loevinger (1976). It is during this stage of life that individuals first begin discovering their own identity and beliefs. Young people seek a broader, coherent explanation for their life path (Fuligni, 2019, p. 4). The need for a bigger meaning and having the need to contribute plays big role. This need for meaning extends beyond personal identity to include to society. This aligns well with the pillar of purpose, which is the need to contribute to something bigger than themselves. Research suggests that while the feeling to help others is present throughout life, adolescence is a particularly significant phase for developing a sense of contribution due to increasing maturity and an expanding social world, (Fuligni, 2019, p. 3). They are at an age where they start to form their own perspectives and values, where social connections and engagement with

peers and likewise people play a big role. This growing engagement with their communities further underlines the need for opportunities to contribute, benefiting both the individual and society at large (Fuligni, 2019, p. 4). During this phase, goals related to education, career, and family begin to take shape as well (Massey et al., 2008, cited in Malin et al., 2014, p. 187).

This all together suggests that promoting and guiding purpose development in this period in life, shows an unique window of opportunity that is not yet been fully embraced (Malin et al., 2014, p. 187).

As said before, the inability to find meaningful commitments during adolescence can have long-term consequences. Furthermore, the expression of purpose in adolescents differs from that in adults. Inhelder and Piaget (1958) observed that young people show their goals in more ambitious ways and have a ability to learn faster and repeat it, much like a child showing a newly learned skill (Damon et al., 2003, p. 124).

Next to this, neuroscientific research supports these psychological findings. During adolescence, significant transformations occur in neural networks, including increased sensitivity and responsiveness in regions associated with reward due to hormonal changes and increased dopamine levels (Fuligni, 2019, p. 6). These neural developments contribute to cognitive skills, social awareness, and motivation, all of which promote the need to contributions to others (Fuligni, 2019, p. 6). This suggests that biological changes reinforce the drive for engagement, purpose, and

contribution during this critical period.

3.1.5 Purpose and schools

Given the importance of purpose in adolescent development, schools can – and should – play a crucial role in its development. Adolescents spend multiple years attending school five days a week, meaning that teachers have a consistent presence in their lives. Schools provide structured environments where students can explore life goals, develop their identities, and contribute meaningfully to their communities (Fuligni, 2019, p. 7).

Especially secondary schools can be rich settings for fostering a sense of purpose. Studies show that student motivation is greater in school environments where they have opportunities to participate in decision-making regarding coursework, classroom practices, and school policies (Eccles & Roeser, 2009, cited in Fuligni, 2019, p. 9). Yet, in many traditional school systems, learning is mainly driven by extrinsic motivators such as grades, exams, peer pressure, college admission standards, and parental expectations (Smith, 2018, p. 13). While these factors can drive achievement, they do not necessarily cultivate intrinsic motivation or a deeper sense of purpose.

This is something I experienced myself. Although I had a relatively happy and smooth time in high school, the focus was always on getting the right grades and moving on to the next year. There were a few small moments—mainly in the final three years—where we were given some freedom to choose our own project topics. Looking back, these could have been great opportunities to explore what truly sparked my interest. But instead, I played it safe. I chose topics I knew would secure me a good grade, rather than ones that might help me discover what really excited me.

3.2 Understanding the system

To understand the context in which the intended purpose development takes place, it is essential to examine the Dutch school system. This section outlines the system’s structure and its limitations and facing challenges regarding to purpose development.

3.2.1 Dutch education

The Dutch education system offers students various academic and professional pathways. Figure 3.2 shows a simplified overview of the Dutch system. Education is mandatory for children from the age of five until they turn 16. When not obtained a diploma at a minimum level of senior secondary vocational education (MBO level 2), higher general secondary education (HAVO), or pre-university education (VWO), this age exceeds to 18, (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2025).

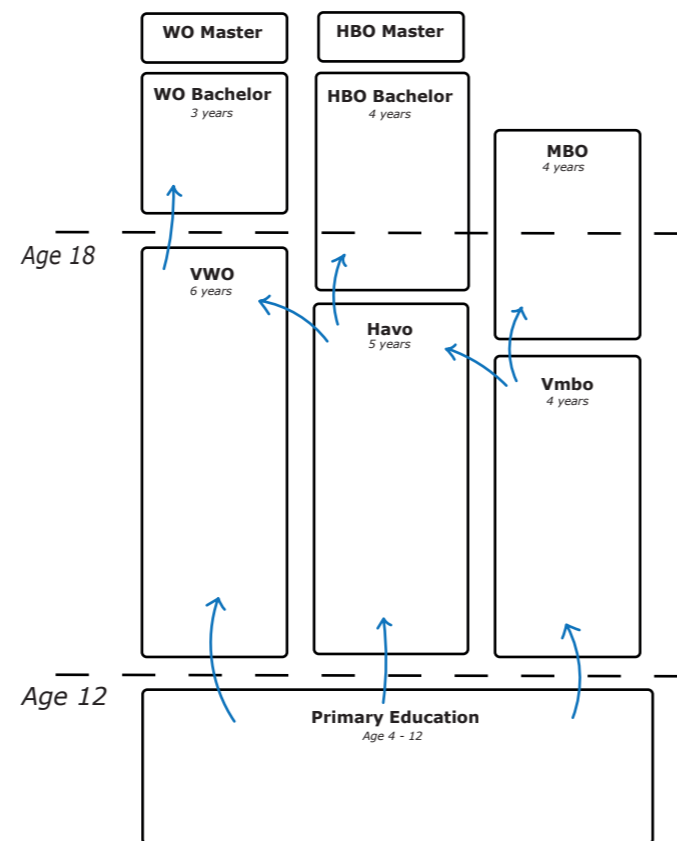


Figure 3.2: Dutch Education System

Following primary education (ages 4-12), students transition into secondary education, which is divided into three main tracks:

- Pre-university education (VWO): A six-year program that prepares students for university-level education (WO). It is further divided into two variants:
 - o Atheneum, which follows a general academic curriculum.
 - o Gymnasium, which includes classical languages such as Latin and/or Ancient Greek.
- Higher general secondary education (HAVO): A five-year program that prepares students for higher professional education (HBO). Upon completion, students may transition to VWO 5 if they wish to pursue university education.
- Pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO): A four-year program designed to prepare students for senior secondary vocational education. VMBO consists of different learning pathways, varying from more theoretical to more practical education. After completion, students may transition to HAVO if the wish to pursue in higher professional education.

For this study, the focus is on secondary educations (ages 12-18) across levels VWO & HAVO as these are the students that are easily accessible on the Wolfert Tweetalig.

3.2.2 Early segregation and tracking

Despite being ranked among the best in Europe (World Population Review, 2025), the Dutch education system faces significant critiques, particularly regarding its segregation of secondary education and early tracking policies by focussing on external factors like grades and standardized assessments.

After primary school, 10/11-year-old children receive a school recommendation (schooladvies) based on standardized achievement tests, like Leerling Volg Systeem & CITO, and teacher assessments. This assessment implies which school level the students are most suited for. Research suggests that this early tracking and Early segregation can reinforce inequalities rather than reduce them, negatively impacting the educational opportunities (Korthals & Dronkers, 2016; Van de Werfhorst & Mijs, 2010).

Another key concern is the systems, and its tests—are heavy reliance on external factors—grades, standardized tests, and skill assessments—when determining educational pathways. The study from Korthals & Dronkers (2016) suggest that students seldom consider intrinsic motivation or personal interests when choosing their educational track, it’s based on grades and assessments.

When I was 12, one thing dominated my final year of primary school: the CITO test. In my mind, it determined everything – especially whether I was “smart enough” to join my siblings at Het Erasmiaans Gymnasium. Only top scores were accepted.

That one week of testing carried enormous weight. I still remember the stress, the sleepless nights. Then came the result: I made it. But with the pressure gone, something shifted. For the first time, I could ask myself: What do I want?

That's when I discovered a school offering Technasium – with a program called O&O (Onderzoek & Ontwerpen). It combined two things I loved: the more technical subjects, and being creative through drawing and creatung. It felt like a better fit. So I chose that instead.

Did school help me make that decision? No. I was lucky – my parents encouraged and guided me, to trust my intuition. But that kind of guidance shouldn't depend on luck.

3.2.3 Grade and graduation focus

Upon entering secondary education in the Netherlands, students are generally divided into one of three mentioned educational tracks: VWO, Havo, or Vmbo. While the specific structure may vary slightly between schools, these tracks often function as silos within the school system – teachers are sometimes even only teaching at one of those levels. Progress within a track or school is primarily determined by academic performance—students are expected to achieve the necessary grades to advance to the next year (overgaan). Failure to do so results in either repeating (blijven zitten) the year or being transferred to a lower track (afzakken).

The overarching goal for keeping this structure is clear: maintain a high graduation rate (slagingspercentage) in the final year of secondary education for each track—vmbo 4, havo 5, or vwo 6. These quantitative indicators are closely monitored by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (Onderwijsinspectie), which evaluates schools based on metrics including: the doorstroompercentage (the percentage of students progressing through their secondary education track without delays), the afstroompercentage (the percentage of students moving

to a lower track), and the final slagingspercentage (graduation rate). In essence, school performance is assessed almost entirely through output-focused indicators – not quality of teaching or students' satisfaction.

While researching Dutch secondary education, I came across *Scholen op de Kaart* - (figures 3.3, 3.4 3.5) – a national platform where schools introduce themselves to new students and parents. The first tab is purely factual: location, student count, public or private.

The second tab centres on academic structure – mostly profilechoice options. Then come the performance metrics on tab 3: how well do students match their primary school advice? Graduation rates? Repeaters? These numbers dominate.

Only after that, a glimpse of student experience: Do they feel safe? Are there enough computers? But even here, little is said about personal growth – how students develop as individuals, or how schools help them find direction.

For someone immersed in the topic of purpose development, that absence is very loud. Why is all the focus on performance and grades? Why is personal and social development not placed next to – or even woven into – academic results?

3.3 Mismatch

There is a fundamental mismatch between the principles of purpose development and the structure of the Dutch educational system. While purpose development emphasizes intrinsic motivation, personal meaning, and an open-ended developmental process, the Dutch system is primarily driven by extrinsic incentives such as grades, assessments, and measurable outcomes. This logic is inherently at odds with the personal and process-oriented nature of purpose development.

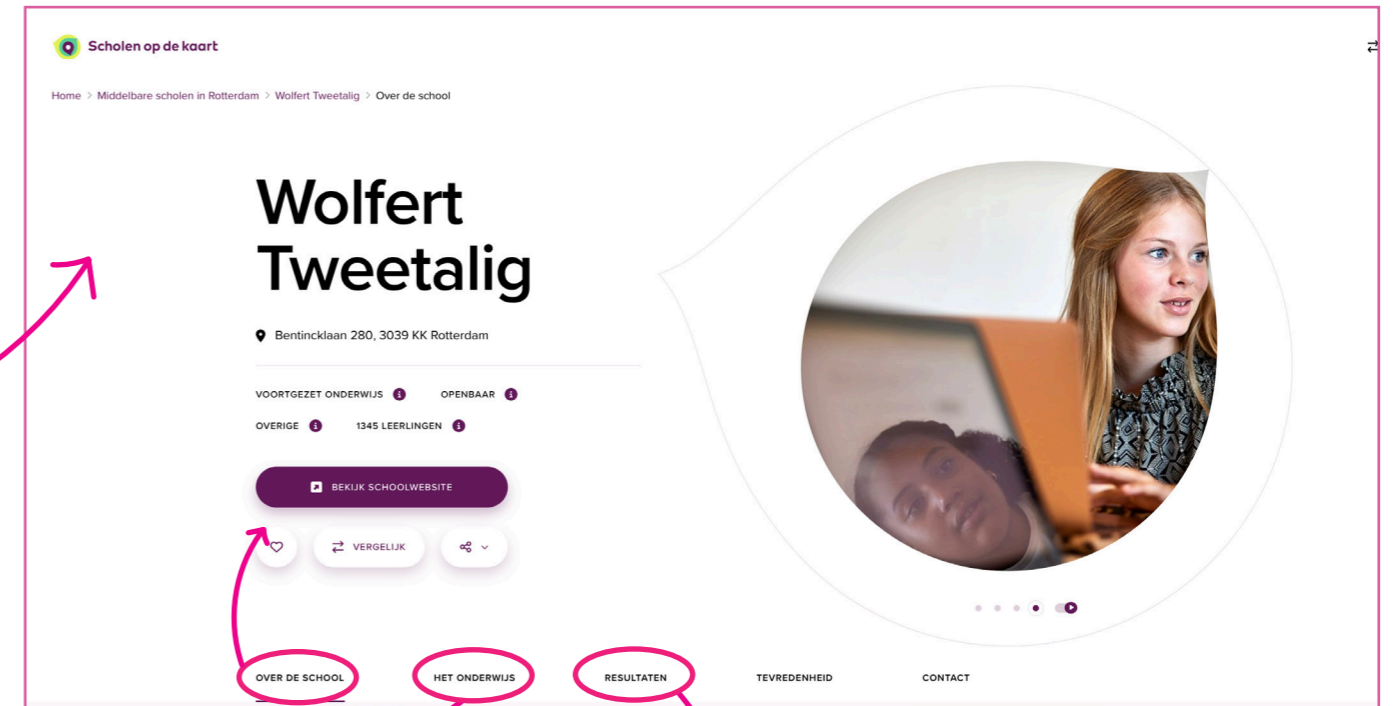


Figure 3.3: Scholen op kaart - tab 1

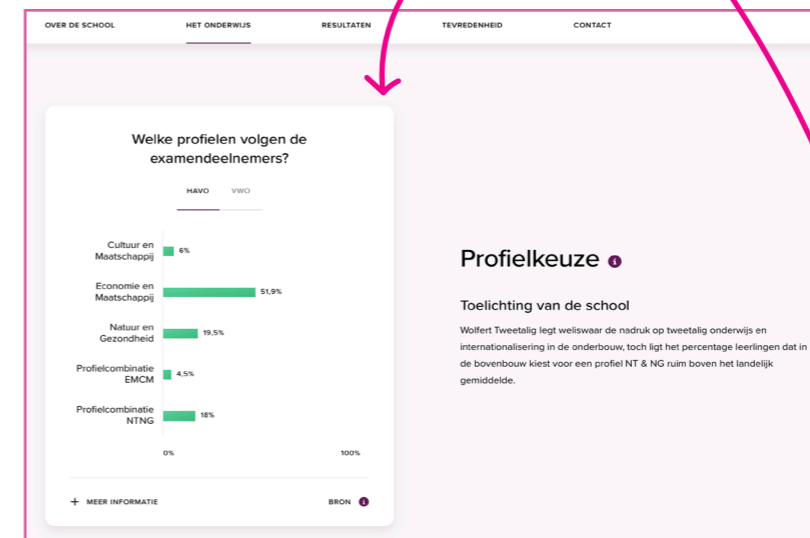


Figure 3.4: Scholen op kaart - tab 2

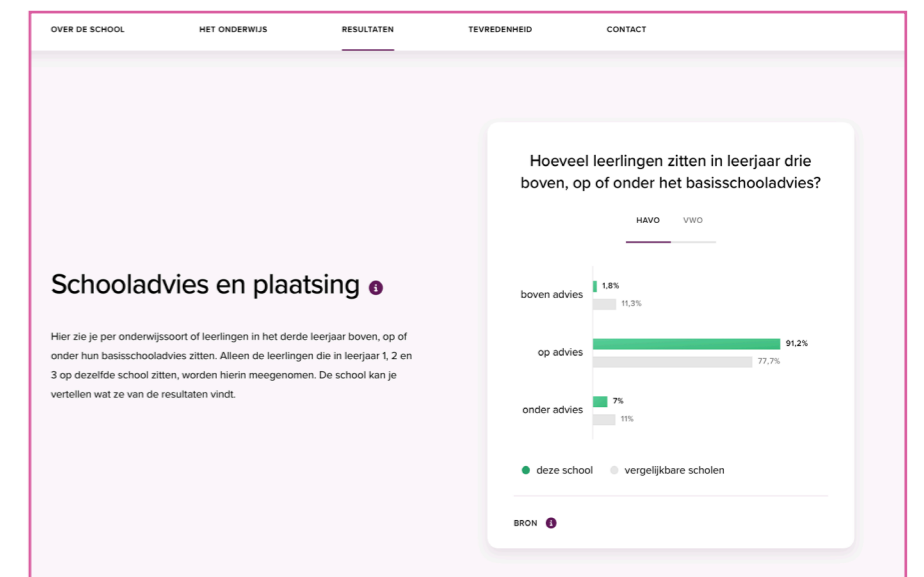


Figure 3.5: Scholen op kaart - tab 3

Maaïke

Maaïke (29) lives in Rotterdam and lives her life according to one clear principle: love. Whether she's teaching yoga, guiding a Reiki session, or posing in front of the camera as a model – everything she does is aimed at making the world around her more beautiful and gentler.

"My purpose is to spread love. As long as I stay true to myself in that, everything I do feels meaningful."

But this clarity didn't come easily. Maaïke's journey began in a world where everything revolved around performance. She pursued a dual education in dance and law, dreaming of the stage and the courtroom – places where she believed she could make an impact. But reality turned out differently.

"In the dance world, you work to be perfect in someone else's eyes. And in law, it's not about justice, but about winning and bending the rules. It felt like I was losing myself."

Eventually, her body spoke louder than her mind. Burnouts, panic attacks, an eating disorder – everything in her system was calling for a halt. From that low point, the rebuilding began. Small acts of self-care led her to a new beginning: yoga classes for fellow dancers, Reiki treatments for friends, conversations about energy and healing. What started as a search for recovery grew into a calling.

Today, Maaïke lives according to what she calls her "inner compass." She is an entrepreneur with three pillars: yoga, energy therapy, and modelling. Especially in the modelling world, staying true to your values isn't always easy – but she does it. She only takes on assignments that align with her mission – projects with a social or ecological message, or simply those that feel right. "Even in modelling, you can radiate love. You just have to do it consciously."

For Maaïke, purpose is not something you 'find,' but something you continually recognize within yourself. Its form may change, but the essence remains.

"In a few years, I might be doing something completely different. But as long as I make the world a little more loving, I'm on the right track."

And that love is tangible – in the silence after a yoga class, in a client's smile, in her belief that every drop counts.

"If just one person feels better because of my work, that affects their family, their job, their environment. That's how love spreads naturally."

Ruben

Ruben (25) radiates a calm determination. At first glance, he's a young professional in the tech sector – team leader at a cybersecurity company in Amsterdam – and in his spare time, he trains for an Ironman. But in conversation, it quickly becomes clear: behind his ambition lies a deeper drive.

"I feel privileged," he says, "and that's exactly why I want to give something back."

His life revolves around growth. Not as an empty buzzword, but as a fundamental mindset. *"I feel my best when I'm developing – physically, mentally, professionally. When I'm working toward something."*

This focus on growth stems from his upbringing: he grew up as the youngest of three brothers in a loving but competitive family. His brothers excelled in music and sports – Ruben found his own way through social skills, academic achievements, and infectious enthusiasm. *"I wanted to prove myself, but always in my own way."*

Faith also played a role. Raised in a Christian household, he learned early on about values like justice, responsibility, and service. Although he no longer considers himself religious, the underlying principles – and the awareness of being connected to others – still guide him. His awareness of privilege deepened when, as a child, he travelled to South Africa with his parents. *"There you see how different the world can look. It opened my eyes – not to feel guilty, but to take my opportunities seriously. If you're given so much, you have to do something good with it."*

Still, Ruben doesn't believe in one fixed 'purpose.' *"For me, it takes different shapes that evolve with life. What I'm doing now, I see as a stepping stone. I want to build resources and knowledge – so I can create larger-scale impact in the future."*

He dreams of setting up initiatives to support those with fewer opportunities: foundations, adoption, educational projects – the exact form is still open, but the direction is clear. In the meantime, he's already making a difference, in small ways. Among friends, he's the one who leads by example: an ultra-marathon, an Ironman – not for status, but to show what's possible. "I push boundaries, partly to invite others to challenge their own limits."

Where his purpose will ultimately manifest? He's not sure – and he sees that as a strength. *"As long as I stay true to my compass, my values, and keep growing, I'll end up where I'm meant to be."*

Chapter 3: Key Take-aways

In this chapter I looked at the following questions:

What is purpose and how does it develop?

What is the current focus Dutch education system?

How do these two differ and/or align?

These can be answered by the following take-aways:

- Purpose is an intrinsic long-term goal that extends beyond the self and is pursued through acting.
 - Purpose plays a crucial role in both personal well-being and societal contribution.
 - Research shows that purpose is not something individuals simply “find,” but rather something they build over time through reflection and engagement.
 - Adolescence is a key phase in this development. It is a time when young people explore identity, meaning, and contribution.
 - For purpose development to flourish, it is best to be embedded in everyday life and can be gained from all aspect of life like personal, social, professional — This shows potential in making it part of everyday practices at schools where all these elements are present,
- not treated as a separate program or occasional activity.
 - Schools and teachers, as central environments in their daily lives, are ideally positioned to support this purpose development journey.
 - The Dutch school system is seen as one of the best yet also receives critiques.
 - It contains early segregation (around age 11) based on grades and test results.
 - Also during the rest of secondary education, the focus lies external drivers like performing and grading.
 - A focus on purpose development and the Dutch school system are currently not aligned and do not fuse together.

4 Analysis

This chapter first presents an analysis of the school context where we look at a day from both the perspective of the student & teacher at the Wolfert Tweetalig. Second, the chapter analyses secondary interviews with students and teachers conducted by Ruth Frans. The goal is to understand the current experience on purpose development of students and teachers. This to identify and understand recurring themes and design opportunities that could potentially support purpose development in secondary educations.

4.1 Daily experiences

This section explores the everyday context of teachers and students within the school environment. The analysis builds on informal conversations and observations conducted by me on The Wolfert Tweetalig, as well as information provided by Ruth Frans regarding classroom routines and school dynamics and personal experiences.

4.1.1 Teachers’ perspectives

Teachers play a central role in shaping students’ learning experiences, but they face systemic challenges that impact their ability to connect meaningfully with all individuals.

Workload & student volume

A full-time teacher teaches a maximum 28 lessons per week, often working with up to 12 different classes. With an average class size of 25 students, this results in around 300 unique student interactions weekly. See Figure 4.1 for a visual overview.

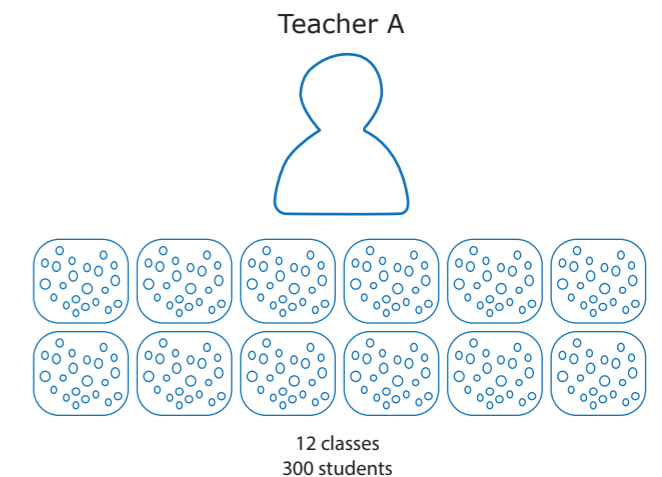


Figure 4.1: Student volume per teacher

Long-Term Student Interaction

Teachers may teach the same students across multiple school years, which can strengthen relationships but also create persistent assumptions about a student’s character or performance that may no longer be accurate.

Administrative & Extracurricular Duties

Beyond teaching, teachers juggle grading, lesson planning, and administrative tasks. They also often contribute to extracurricular programs such as drama or debate clubs, which adds to their workload but also adds value on relationships with students.

4.1.2 Students’ perspectives

Students navigate through a constantly shifting environment throughout their school day. Not one of their days or weeks are the same, there is a constant shift in schedules, class dynamics and off course lesson content.

Daily Structure

Students rotate between classrooms and teachers for each subject. Some classes are taught as double periods (“blokuren”), while others are single periods, spread across the day. A school day can include

up to 10 separate lessons. Figure 4.2 shows a school day with six different subjects, including two double periods.

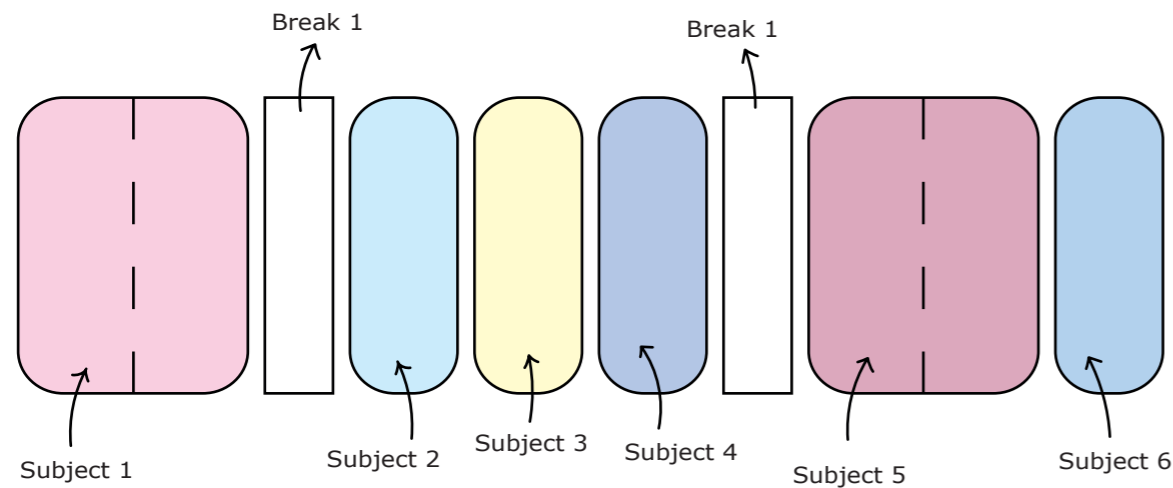


Figure 4.2: Student volume per teacher

Class dynamics

Class composition often changes per subject, especially in the final years of secondary education – also known as the “bovenbouw”. These shifts affect group dynamics and social structures in class.

Teacher Relationships

Relationships with teachers vary depending on subject matter, teaching style, and the student’s personal interest. A teacher’s ability to inspire depends heavily on perceived relevance and connection.

These two observations are presented in figure 4.3, where the same group of students is represented in two different subjects and classrooms. They both have a different composition seating and a different teacher. The dynamics and relationships between teacher and students and fellow students are completely different, even though the students are the same in both rooms.

In a typical school day, students move quickly from one experience to the next. The day might start with a math lesson, followed by a deep dive into the meaning

behind a literary text in English. Later, they might find themselves in a science lab, only to end up in a history classroom exploring events from the past. Each of these moments offers potential—new knowledge, new skills, or even a spark of intrinsic motivation.

Too often, these experiences remain isolated. They pass by without leaving a lasting impression. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of time and space to reflect and explore on what was learned, how it connects to oneself, and why it matters to them.

When I was in high school, every classroom had its own vibe—almost like entering a different little world each hour. In each class, we all had our usual spot, not assigned, it just formed naturally. In some classes, I’d always sit in the front, ready to engage with the subject and teachers. In others, I’d quietly settle in the back, counting the minutes until the bell rang. Each room had a different teacher, a different rhythm, the energy would somehow shift. And sometimes, just by moving to a different classroom, this whole dynamic changed – as if the walls themselves shaped how we behaved and felt even though we were still exactly the same people as 10 minutes before.

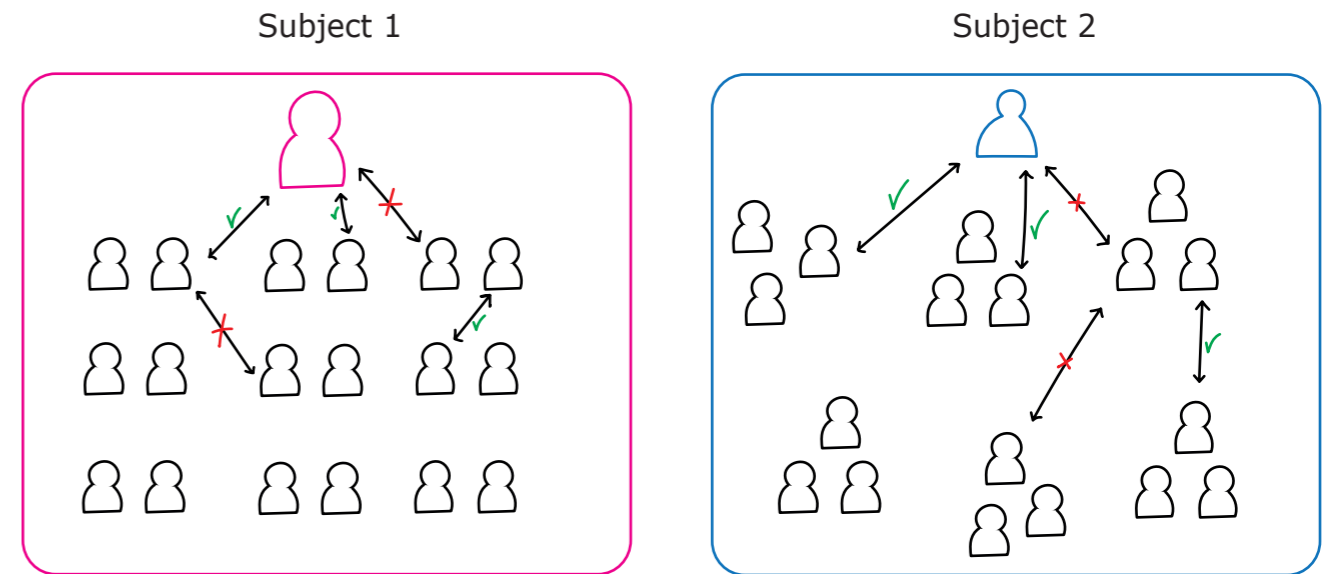


Figure 4.3: Changing class dynamics

It’s hard to blame students for not reflecting on or seeing value in their learning. The structure of a typical school day doesn’t exactly invite it. Even the most motivated learners are constantly switching contexts—moving from one subject, space, and mindset to another.

Performance measures

Academic success is primarily measured through grades and standardized tests, which often overlook students’ personal development and intrinsic motivation. After 3 years, a “profielkeuze” has to be made, where students get the opportunity to choose between different directions: nature & technology, nature & health, economic & social studies or culture & social studies, or a combination. This choice is focussed personal interest, but mainly on getting the right grades for a certain profile. In order to choose N&T or N&H, you needed at least an 8 in math, physics and science. So even if you were feeling a little fire for these courses, but the grades didn’t come with these results, you couldn’t feed this fire.

When it came time to choose my profile, the decision felt straightforward: Nature & Health, Nature & Technology. The beta-subjects came easily to me—especially math, which I enjoyed. But there was also a part of me that lit up during philosophy and geomatics. Unfortunately, they didn’t seem made for me. Because of my dyslexia, I struggled with the heavy reading and complex texts, often ending up with grades that didn’t reflect my effort

So, I made the safe choice—the one that promised good grades and a relatively smooth final exam year. And to be fair, I don’t regret it. That choice eventually brought me to TU Delft and opened doors that allowed me to grow and explore my own path. But still, the reason behind that decision—that quiet compromise between passion and practicality—sometimes lingers.

4.1.3 Together

This context shows that both students and teachers operate within a highly structured environment with limited space for change or input. While teachers carry high workloads and many students, students are dealing with constant change in environment and interactions, together with achieving the desired results.

To further explore their perspectives, the next section analyses interviews with teachers and students, offering insights into their experiences and perceptions of purpose development.

4.2 Interview analysis

This section analyses qualitative interviews conducted by Ruth Frans with students (n=9) and teachers (n=4) at Wolfert Tweetalig. The analysis followed a two-step process:

- 1. Thematic synthesis:** Relevant themes were selected and clustered. This process included finding relevant quotes, clustering quotes, and reframing findings into user needs and tensions, Appendix B.1.
- 2. Translation to design opportunities:** Through affinity mapping and abstraction, underlying emotional drivers and experiential patterns were extracted. These were then translated into design directions and preliminary principles for supporting purpose development, Appendix B.2.

4.2.1 Understanding the teacher

4.2.1.1 Findings

Teachers express frustration with the limitations of the current school structure. They recognize the diversity of their students' needs but feel unable to address them effectively due to time constraints and high student volume. One-on-one interaction is rare, and most teaching remains lecture-based, especially for abstract or theoretical subjects.

This finding aligns with the earlier context analysis: managing approximately 300 students makes personal connection challenging. Although many teachers are aware of this limitation, they often fall back on standardized approaches because they are efficient and expected.

"I find it really difficult to make personal contact [with all students] ... We have grown so much [in student volume] over the past years." Teacher A

"I teach in class {Klassikaal} – I know there are all individuals in the class, but I teach in class, there is simply no time to discuss and guide them all individually." Teacher B

Another major issue concerns the lack of collaboration and communication between teachers. Information about mutual students or classes is rarely shared informally, figure 4.4. Even scheduled meetings for discussing the students' progress – which happen only once or twice a year – tend to focus only on students who are underperforming or at risk of repeating a year. Positive feedback or recognition of student growth rarely enters these conversations. As a result, some students complete six years of secondary education without ever being mentioned in a meeting.

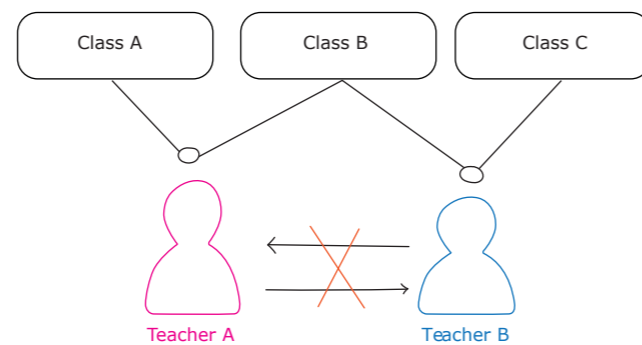


Figure 4.4: Lack of communication

"If a student behaves and passes their classes, they can go through six years of school without ever being discussed." Teacher C

"We never really talk about students and what they need. It's just the wild west, no one sees you... and you just have to survive." Teacher B

4.2.1.2 My perspective on the interviews

For me, this reveals a structural issue: teachers view their students as individual responsibilities, rather than a shared concern across the teaching team, figure 4.5. This siloed mentality makes collective support difficult and non-present.

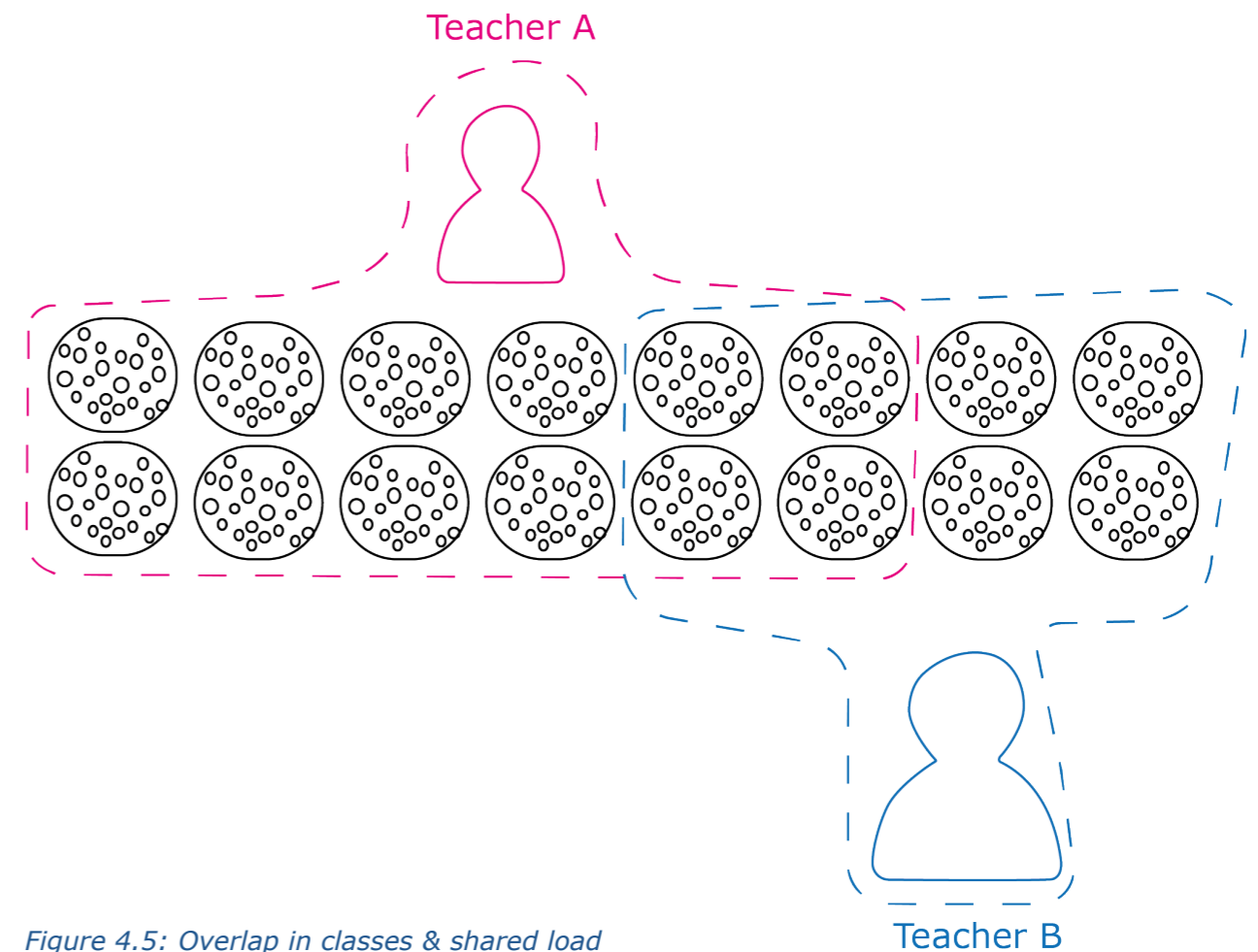


Figure 4.5: Overlap in classes & shared load

4.2.2 Understanding the students

Another critical insight is that most teachers define their role through the lens of content delivery. When asked open-ended questions about their teaching style or goals, they rarely mention the student's personal development. Their answers focus on what material they teach and how, rather than why or for whom.

The student interviews reveal a wide range perspectives of but also show similarities in needs and levels of self-awareness. Clear patterns emerge around how students perceive purpose and how they experience school as a place for purpose development.

However, a noticeable shift happens when the topic of purpose is introduced by the researcher Ruth Frans. Teachers become more reflective and engaged. Their tone and attitude changes and the conversations are not about the school anymore; it's about the students. "School should be about the children – and right now it's not." Teacher B This response and change in attitude highlights conflict with what they're showing in daily practice: while purpose development resonates deeply with teachers, it is absent from their daily practice and the classroom culture and teaching style.

4.2.2.1 General findings

In the first part of the interviews, the understanding of purpose was discussed, as their experiences with purpose and their sense of personal direction in life.

First of all, most students are familiar with the concept of purpose, but they struggle to define it by themselves – without prompts or examples. When guided, they can articulate personal goals and describe how they undertake steps toward them. This suggests that the sense purpose is present, but in order to start the awareness it needs guidance. The right questions need to be asked so they can discover this themselves.

"Someone who really sets those goals ... Where he himself benefits from something that others can use as well." Student A

"Something that impacts the lives of others, just that you do something for other people, that helps them." Student C

"I never really thought about this, but I think it is super important." Student B

Secondly, while students often claim they "don't know what they want yet," the stories in the interviews reveal otherwise. Interests, talents, and personal dreams emerge—sometimes small—through hobbies, plans, or emotional reactions to certain topics. This shows many students possess a sense of direction without fully recognizing it themselves.

"I really want to become a surgeon later to help people and also to save people's lives" Student B

"Well, a little, but not very much ... but definitely something with children." Student C

4.2.2.2 Need for purpose development

When asked whether school currently supports the development of their sense of purpose, some students express doubt. Most say there is little room or support for exploring their identity, interests, or long-term goals. Some, however express school could be a place for if the right conditions are present.

Students articulate they feel overwhelmed by daily obligations and a fast-paced school rhythm that leaves little space for personal exploration. Assignments are often rigid, and the learning path is rarely flexible, or student driven. There are many tests in a week, making it hard to learn more than the knowledge that's needed for these tests. Besides this,

teachers don't look at tests that other teachers schedule, which can lead to busy weeks with little space to explore.

"I just don't have the time for that, for example. Look, of course it would be very nice to go and intern at a school. But you see, that's just not possible, because then I have to go to school myself." Student C

When there is room for personal input, the students show interest and motivation. Being graded or assessed is not the problem, it's about the lack of input from the students themselves.

"Once I could do a test in a form of a dance, and I never studied so hard for that exam!" Student D

Besides this, many students experience a disconnection between what they learn and how it applies to their world. They express a desire learning based on current events, and assignments that feel meaningful in their own lives. School, in their view, often focuses too much on grades or finishing a curriculum.

"[Talked about entrepreneurship and economics] ... and that maybe you really do something with what you learn and apply it on a real case." Student A

Teachers play a central role in whether students feel seen and supported. Students describe teachers as potential mentors and role models—but only if a real connection exists. Many feel their teachers don't know them beyond the classroom, which makes it hard to ask for help, explore new ideas, or feel inspired. For that reason, some also think that school is only a place for academic goals – as teachers can't support in their personal things in life.

"How can they support me, if they don't know me?" Student F

"I think school can help you with academic goals... I just don't think the school can necessarily help you with [personal goals], unless you have a very good relationship with a teacher." Student G

"A book was recommended by my teacher, which felt very nice" Student D

4.2.2.3 Key Themes

The findings in the student' interviews are translated to three key themes that define what students need to develop purpose within school. These themes are interconnected and reflect a broader desire for a more personal, meaningful, and flexible learning environment.

- *Personal connection*
Students emphasize the importance of having teachers who see them as more than just a grade. When students feel understood and see that teachers are interested in them – outside their educational performance, they see this as a motivator and a need to develop purpose in schools.

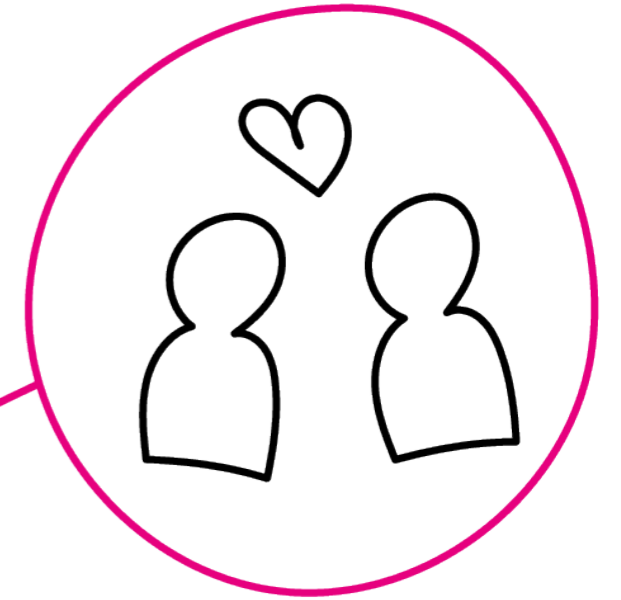
This connection doesn't require grand gestures—it often starts with small things: remembering a student's interest, recommending a book or asking about their sports events. These personal small interactions are seen as a big by the students.

- *Connection to the real world*
Students want to understand why they are learning something. They often feel that school content is abstract or disconnected from life beyond exams and good grades. Real-world relevance gives them an understanding why what they learn is of value for their personal lives and development. It's important it's connected to their lives – not for the teachers' lives.

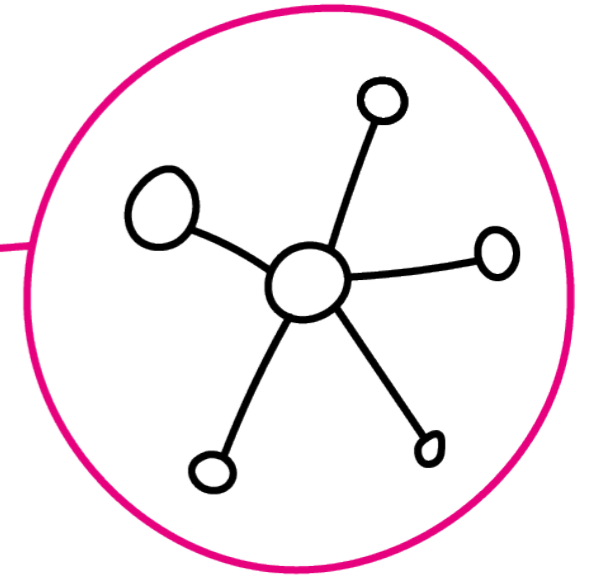
- *Space to explore*
Students express a strong desire for freedom to explore their interests, make their own choices, and approach learning in creative ways. The current structure of school often feels too rigid, leaving little room for experimentation or self-directed learning.



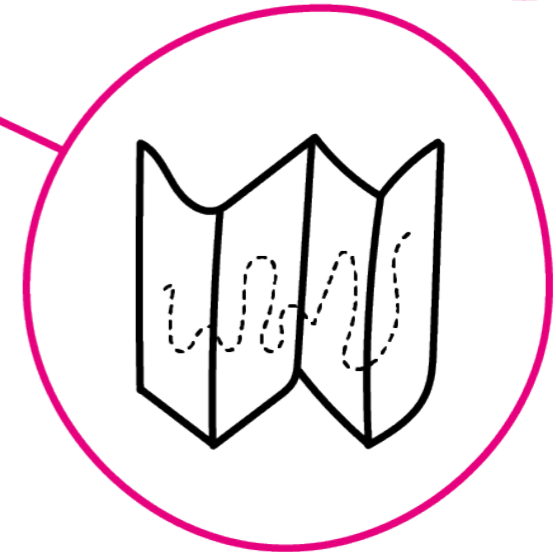
Personal Connection



Connection to the real world



Space to explore



Chapter 4: Key Take-aways

This chapter covered the following research question:

*How does the current context at the Wolfert Tweetalig look like?
What is the current experience of students and teachers at the Wolfert Tweetalig?*

- Teachers and students operate within a highly structured system that leaves little space for this reflection, connection and changes.
- Teachers can be responsible for up to 300 students per week.
- Due to this, building personal relationships between teachers and students can be seen as a challenge.
- Students experience constant changes in social dynamics, class groups, and environments throughout the day.
- The current structure of the school system, driven by grades and standardized assessments, emphasizes a focus on performance over personal growth and development.
- Both teachers and students are constrained by this rigid yet socially dynamic system, making it difficult to prioritize purpose-related education or actions.
- Students express a desire for support from school and teachers in discovering who they are and what they care about.
- Teachers recognize the importance of connecting with students but feel blocked by time pressure and lack of collaboration between teachers and colleagues.
- Teachers rarely discuss students in positive terms during staff meetings.
- Students want their education to be more relevant, personal, and flexible.
- This is translated into three core needs from students for purpose development in school:
 - Personal connection – Feeling seen and supported by teachers.
 - Connection to the real world – Understanding why what they learn matters in their world.
 - Space to explore – Having room for personal interpretation of project and subjects.

What needs to happen?

This part marks a shift — from understanding the problem to acting and creating.

After analysing the system and its limitations, the sub research question became: *What is needed to foster purpose development in schools?* Through co-design sessions with teachers, it became clear that the process itself was the intervention. Rather than delivering a tool, the sessions enabled reflection, ownership, and mindset change.

This part of the report explains this process & reflects on its shift — going from a fixed artefact to creating and sustaining a new mindset — and outlines the success factors that allowed the mindset change to happen.

The following part explores this transition and answers that research question through two chapters:

CH5: The power of the process
CH6: The design principles

Together, they show what needs to happen to enable purpose development — and how design can support that shift.

5 The power of the process

Following the analysis of the educational system and the experiences of students and teachers (Chapter 3 & 4), three co-design sessions with teachers were hosted.

These sessions were set up as a tool to generate ideas for supporting purpose development. But it soon became clear that the sessions itself showed unforeseen results and became the intervention itself. This chapter outlines this process and its results. It walks through how the sessions were set up, what they delivered — both in terms of intended outcomes and deeper, unforeseen findings.

5.1 How did we get here?

I facilitated three co-design sessions with teachers at Wolfert Tweetalig Rotterdam. The sessions were designed to be participatory, creative, and open-ended — providing space for teachers to reflect on their own practice, connect with

one another, and explore what purpose development could mean in their daily work.

Each session was carefully planned, building on insights from the previous one — they influenced each other in both direction and goal.

Yet, each session also revealed a deeper outcome, which led to the insight of the co-sessions being the intervention that's needed. Therefore, each session is presented in the following way:

- Outcome on intended goal – The direct result or insights aligned with the session's stated goal at the beginning of the session.
- Deeper Outcome – The underlying effect or unexpected value that surfaced through reflection afterwards

Table 5.1 shows a brief overview of the hosted co-design sessions.

Table 5.1: Overview Sessions

	Participants	Goal	Duration
Session 1	4 teachers	Familiarise & explore purpose development	2h
Session 2	6 teachers	Create & discuss potential interventions	2h
Session 3	4 teachers	Reflect & proflect on sessions and topic	2h

5.2 Co-design session 1: Starting the conversation

5.2.1 The session set-up

Session set-up

The objective of the first co-design session was to introduce the concept of purpose development and examine how it resonates within the everyday realities of teachers. Drawing on insights from student interviews (Chapter 4), the session centred around three key themes—personal connection, space to explore, and relation to their world. These themes were presented to stimulate reflection and open discussion, encouraging teachers to think beyond systemic constraints and explore new possibilities within their practice.

To foster this mindset, the session began by inviting teachers to share their views on potential barriers. This served a dual purpose: first, to acknowledge their experiences and perspectives, and second, to create cognitive and emotional space for constructive, future-oriented thinking.

To prepare for the session, participants received a short sensitising booklet, figure 5.1, and a video introduction to the topic of purpose development (Wehner, 2022). During the session itself, a presentation set the stage, followed by open dialogue and a hands-on ideation exercise using a custom-designed canvas. Materials can be found in Appendix C.

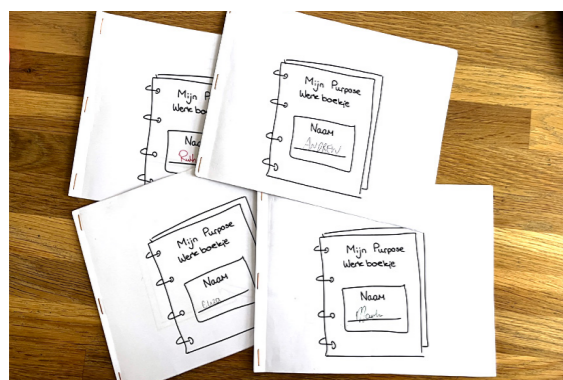


Figure 5.1: Sensitising Booklets

Participants

Four teachers joined the sessions (n=4). They were all new to the topic of teaching for purpose and were all teaching different subjects at school (Drama, science, physics, history)

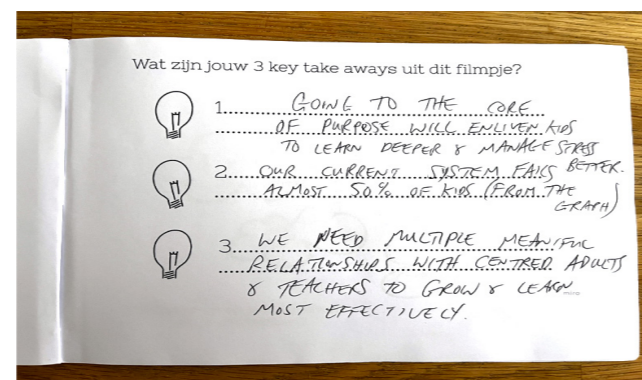
5.2.2 The outcomes

The outcome based on the initial goal

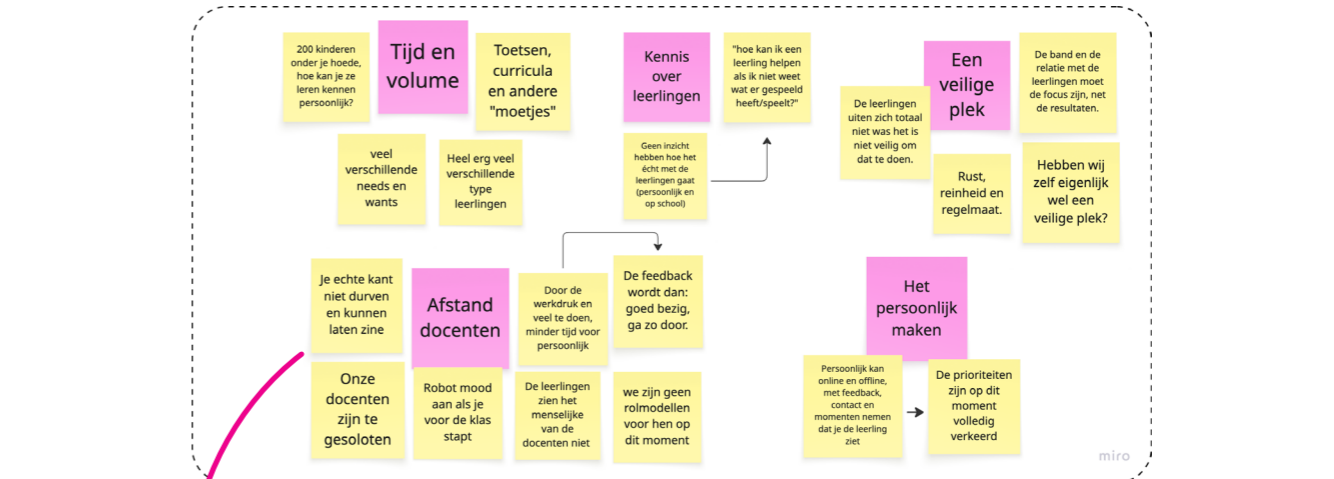
The session successfully created ideas and creative possibilities. Teachers connected with the student perspectives and offered valuable input on how purpose could become more visible in classrooms. There was an understanding of purpose, and the topic resonated with the teachers.

There was clear engagement and understanding with the student themes of personal connection, exploration, and real-world relevance, and the first design directions were mapped, figure 5.2. The boxes, figure 5.3 page 58, show some more ideas in detail. See appendix D for all the materials and initial analysis.

However, the session highlighted challenges. There was much input and different perspectives from the teachers, that converging toward one concrete intervention proved to be difficult. Teachers all have their own styles and methods in teaching. It showed that "one size fits all" was going to be a hard to establish.

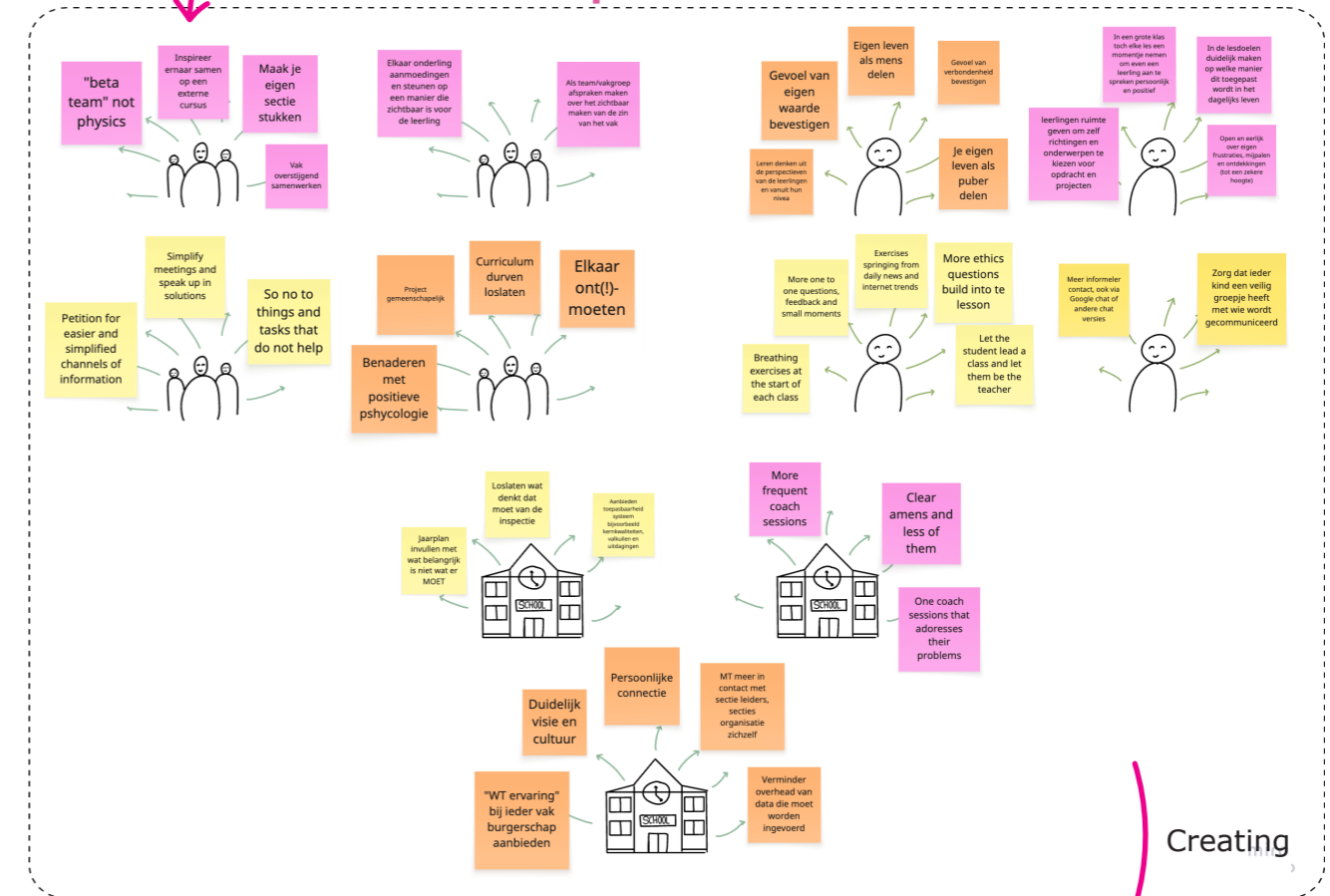


The obstacles



Unlocking

The possibilities



Creating

The ideas



Figure 5.2: Outcomes & clusters

Me as an individual teacher

Using easy communication tools

Theme: Personal Connection

Adolescents live in a world where online communication is bigger than ever. Email can be seen as a big and formal step for students to contact their teachers. Using a chat function (eg. Google Chat or even a teaching Instagram account*) makes it very easy and accessible for students to contact teachers outside school hours and feel their teachers are there to help.

* This was done by one of the teachers before and showed easy and low threshold communication

Me as an individual teacher

Open space for project direction

Theme: Relation to real world

Let the students choose their own directions and themes for projects and essays. Let them explore something that's connected to their belief system or interests, or show them how a topic is related to their belief system.

This is also an opportunity to connect to current affairs (Social Studies) or new discoveries (Science-related).

The deeper outcome: Being seen, heard and inspired

While the session was structured to collect inspiration for concrete solutions, what appeared was something more emotional and personal and not tangible: there was a sense of recognition and a new of energy. For many teachers, this was the first time in a very long time that they were invited to speak openly about students, in a positive way, not based on performance or results. They could talk about their roles as teachers and how they could have impacted their students development. On how you can guide them to become who they want to be.

"It finally feels like someone is listening—and we are not talking about grades or policy, but about what truly matters and that's our students." – Teacher A

The energy was open and optimistic, which contrasted with the attitude from the interview analysis in chapter 4 – where everything was "hard" and "impossible", mainly due to time-constraints.

It became clear that teachers are full of ideas – but rarely given the time or space to share and reflect. This emotional response would become a recurring theme in the sessions that followed.

"Students—and we as teachers—often only show our real selves when we feel safe. That's the root of it: safety, both in school and the classroom." – Teacher B

We as a team of teachers

Easy-to-use and repeatable templates

Theme: Personal connection

By making it easy to share what and how teachers communicate about our students, it gives them:

1. A better understanding of their students because of the other teachers perspectives.
2. Teamwork and shared understanding and workload among teachers.
3. More time for real and deeper connection when you know more about the students.

The whole school system

Less to the school, more to each other

Theme: General in purpose development

A lot has to be done for the school and its inspection: Magister, Catwise, homework checks, etc.

This leads to extra work that is not connected to either the students or fellow teachers.

Make these lines shorter and more direct between teachers and teachers, and between students and teachers.

The take-aways session 1

- Teachers resonate with the idea of purpose development but were not aware until the topic was introduced.
- This session revealed that mindset shifts begin with awareness of the topic and sharing thoughts.
- Creating space for open, personal conversation generated more energy and positive thinking than previous, classic teacher meetings had.
- It suggested a powerful insight: before we design for teachers, we must design with them – and that means creating these moments itself.
- The emotional response – feeling heard and inspired – turned out to be just as important as the practical designed interventions they created.
- There are many ideas and direction, a one size fits all solution will be hard to establish.

Figure 5.3: Different outcomes on different levels and themes

5.3 Co-design session 2: Designing the wild garden

5.3.1 The session itself

Session set-up

The second session built directly on the momentum and reflections from Session 1. While the first session had revealed a wide variety of ideas and approaches, it also showed that designing a single solution would be difficult. Instead, the second session was aimed at deepening the conversation and using a metaphorical lens to explore the complexity of teaching, learning, and purpose development.

Together with Ruth Frans, I developed the “wild garden” metaphor as a creative prompt, figure 5.4 & 5.5. Teachers were invited to visualise their classroom, school, or teaching environment as a garden, see Appendix E for the full metaphor and discription.

The session began with a short recap of Session 1 and an introduction to the metaphor, followed by three design activities based on this visual framework. Materials can be found in Appendix F.

Participants

Six teachers joined the sessions (n=6). Four joined the previous session and were aware of the topic purpose development and the effect on adolescences. The two new participants were also familiar with the topic as they were one of the interviewee participants from Ruth Frans. They were teaching different subjects (Drama 2x, science, physics, history, English)

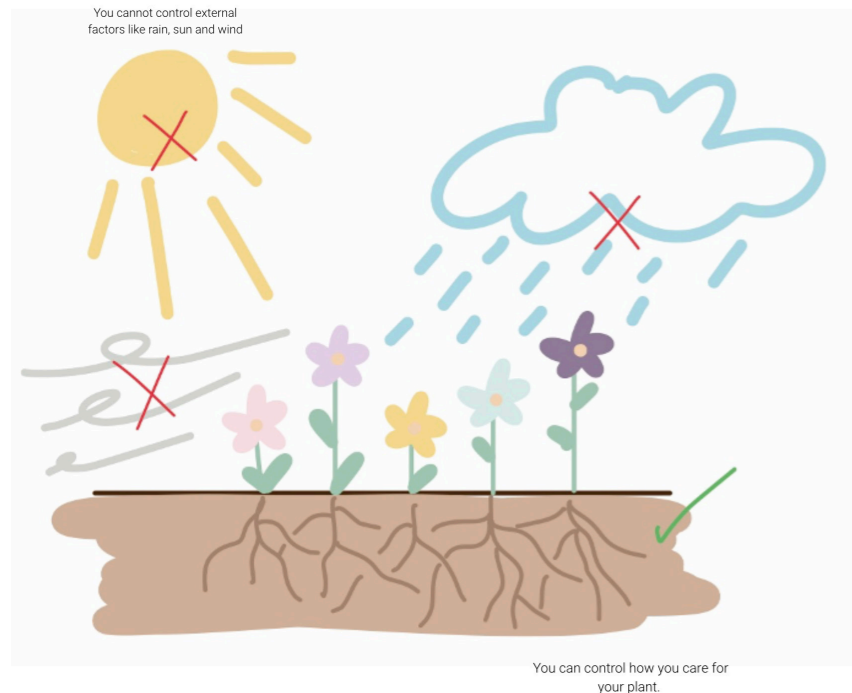


Figure 5.4: First brain sketch on wild garden



Figure 5.5: Chat GPT Ai visualisation on wild garden

5.3.2 The outcomes

The outcome based on the set goal

Teachers created rich visual metaphors of their teaching environments — describing their classrooms in different term and forms, figure 5.6, 5.7, 5.8. These metaphors made the complex dynamics in schools more discussable and very different perspectives were created. The participants generated small-scale intervention ideas that could “nurture” their garden: from adjusting classroom rituals and creating space for these desires.

Also frustrations arose on how the current system is not aligned with what the students need. The garden metaphor allowed teachers to express both frustration and hope on topics that at first seem negative.

“At the beginning, we all get seed packets [fresh students from elementary schools] and apparently they’re all supposed to become carrots—but some don’t want to

become a carrot. Too bad for them, that’s just how it is right now... We need to do different” – Teacher C

Insects in my garden may create unrest and seem unwanted, but they’re necessary and needed for everyone.” – Teacher F

In the next activity – design solutions for your own garden. During this activity, the teachers came up with new ideas they were eager to try in the upcoming phase. All showed very different approached from storytelling to create connection, figure 5.10, to more concrete examples and ideas, figure 5.9. See more materials and analysis in appendix G.

Two teachers also used this opportunity to mention that they already had been experimenting with new approaches & ideas after the first session. This emerged and came from intrinsic motivation and interest and was not asked of them after the first session.

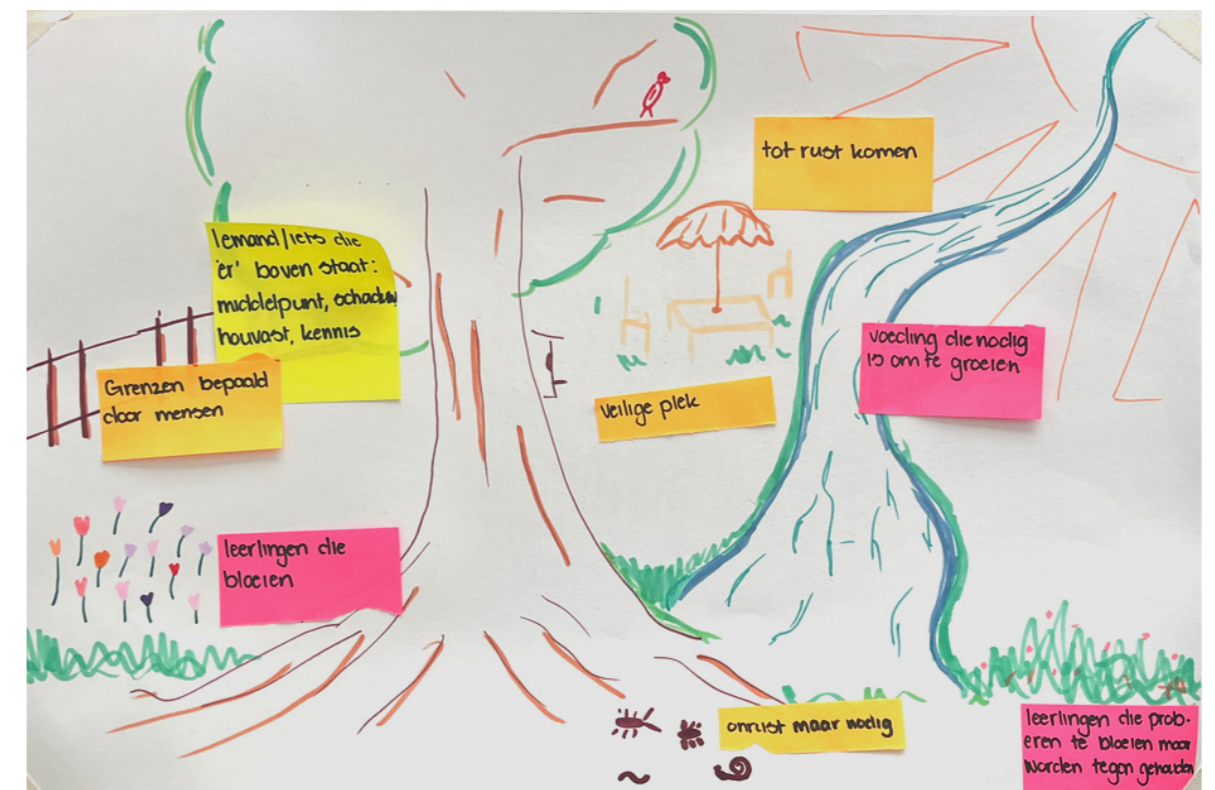


Figure 5.6: Example wild garden with chances and hindlers

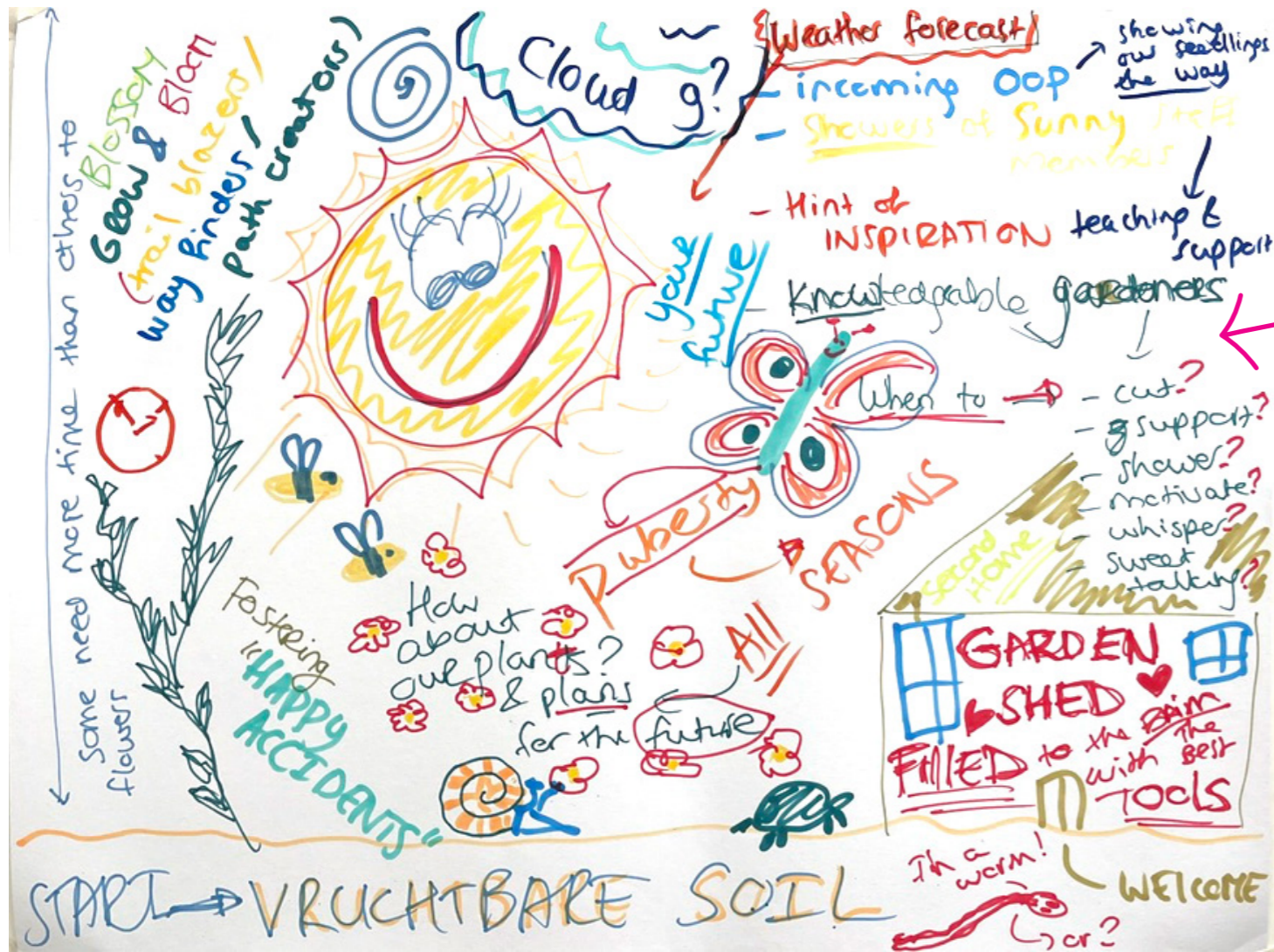


Figure 5.7: Example wild garden - extreme chaos

Perspective 1

It's chaos, it's messy and sometimes hard to grasp and regulate. Just like puberty and the brains of the students. Teachers are there to guide and regulate but also to let them be.

All students have their own timelines, paths and directions; they blossom in their own time.

Teachers are the gardeners to transfer information, inspire and protect.

Perspective 2

Teachers are the ones that create peace and structure in the schools and in the classroom; without there will be chaos. Clarity is what students need.

Within the garden there are options for different students: changing set-up tables, different elements in the class.

There are walls but also open windows to look outside and connect to the real world to link learning to reality.

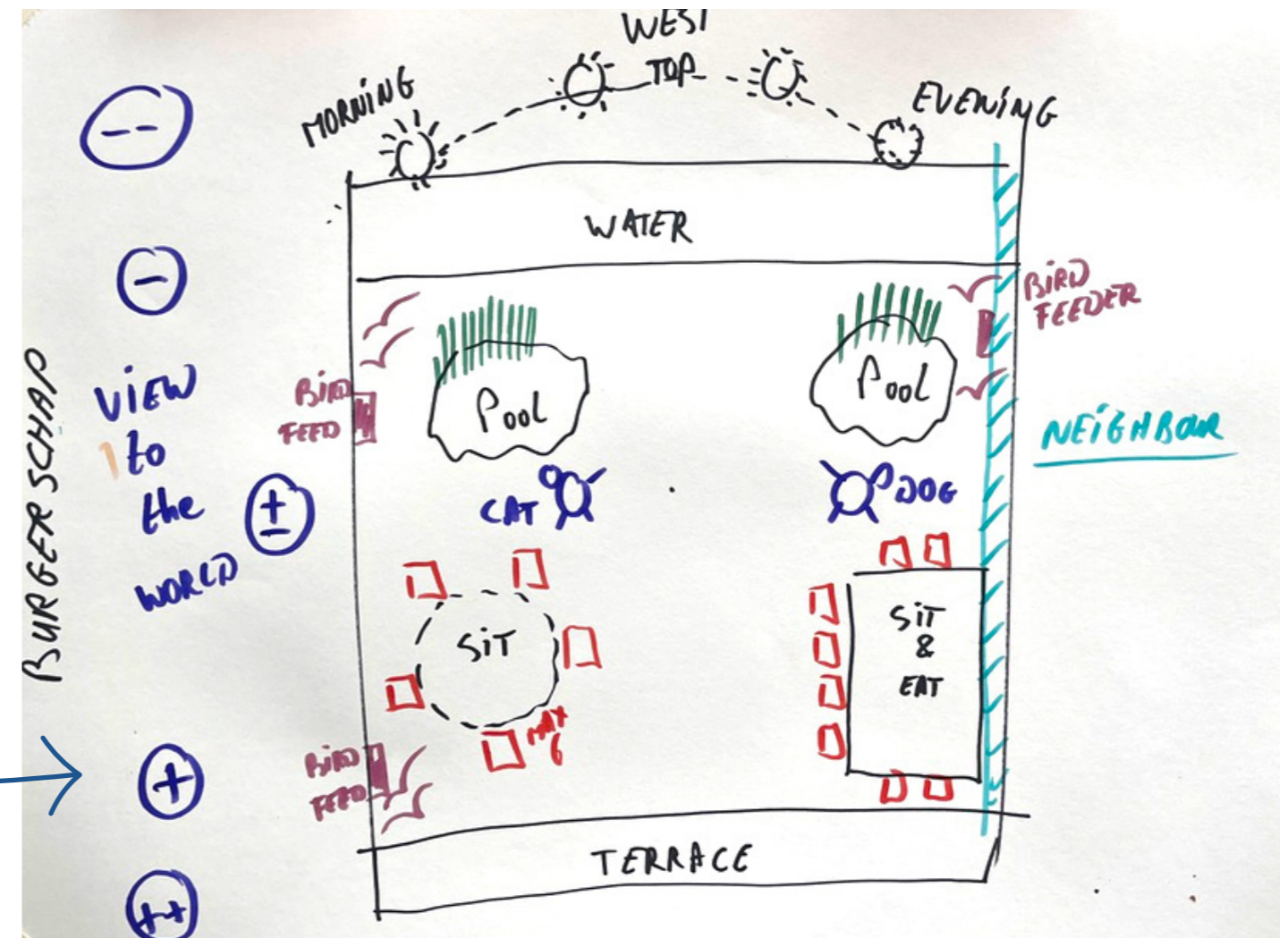


Figure 5.8: Example wild garden - neat and order

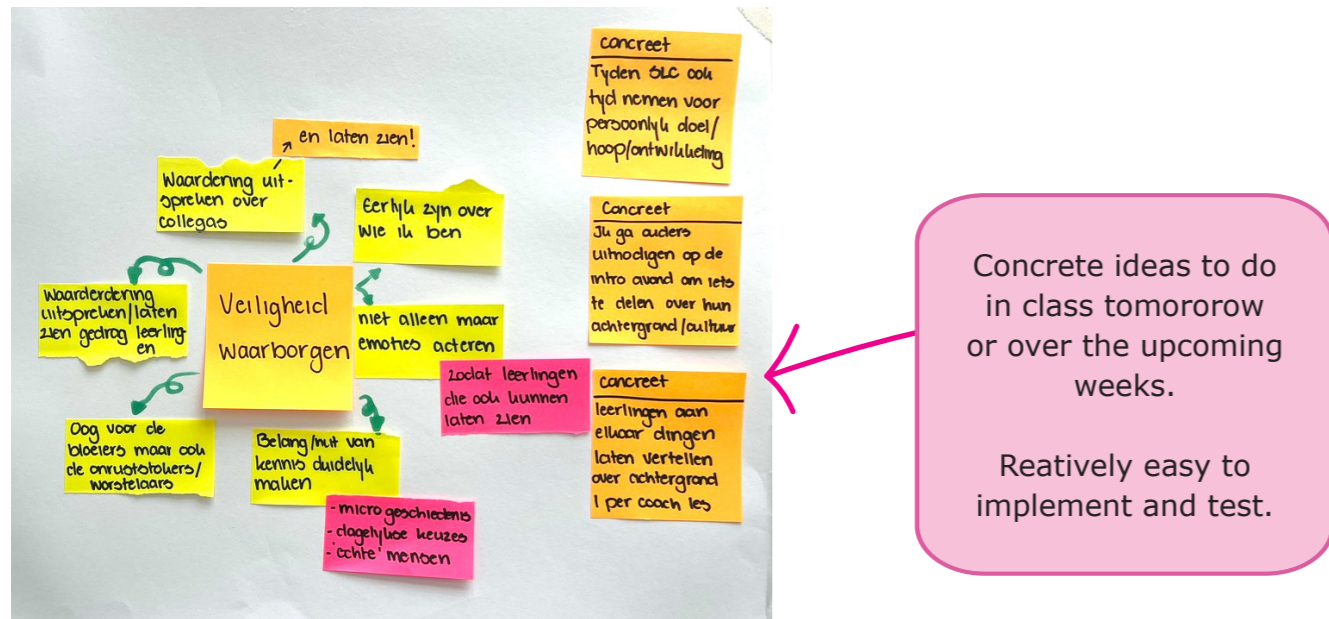


Figure 5.9: Example concrete interventions and ideas

More of a mental and philosophy perspective and intervention.

The participants perspective on how to connect to their students in the best way.

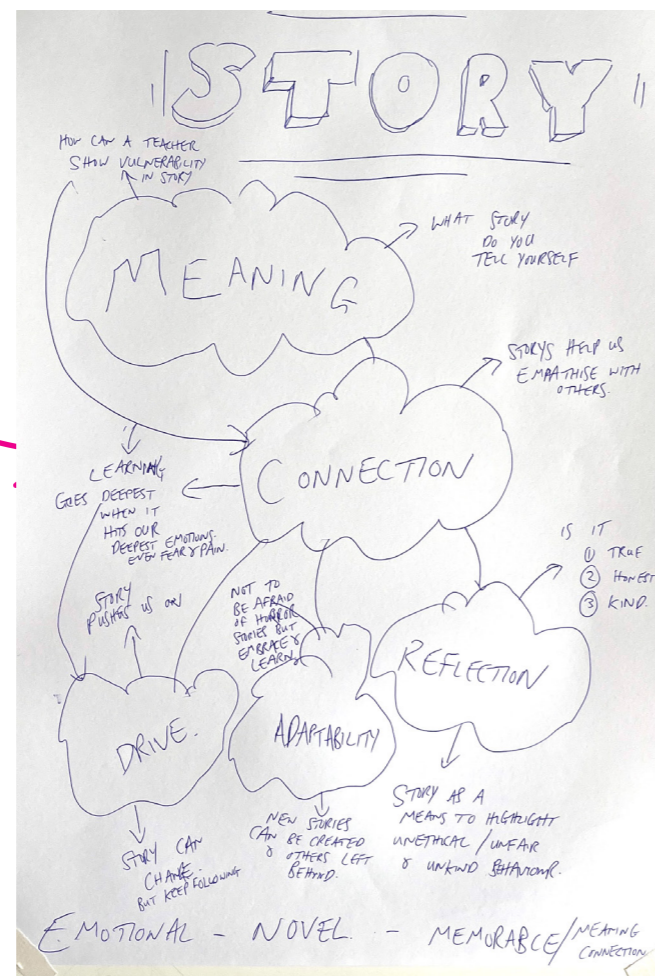


Figure 5.10: Example Philosophy change as intervention

The deeper outcome

The metaphor didn't just help generate ideas—it deepened the conversation. Teachers recognised elements in their gardens that reflected their own needs and their student's needs – it was not about designed interventions, but it was about the conversation that arose around it.

At the end of the session, something unexpected happened. Although the formal session had ended, four teachers stayed behind and reflected – unprompted – for 45 more minutes. They shared stories, listened to each

other, and reflected on the sessions so far. This unprepared moment became one of the most meaningful parts of the entire process, as it revealed deep intrinsic motivation, see appendix H for clustering.

This sense of community, mutual recognition, and shared ambition marked a turning point. What began as an exploratory exercise was now becoming a shared vision and mission – a group of teachers developing a shared language and attitude towards purpose development.

"We're all very good at what we do – but we're on our islands and we can learn so much from each other." Teacher E

"The stories you tell really touch me and I would have never heard them without these sessions." Teacher A

"I really enjoy these sessions – it's the highlight of my week." Teacher B

"We're in a stuck place—and we really need to break out of it." – Teacher E

"Purpose development already lives here—it happened after the first session! It resonates with us." – Teacher D

"We need concrete examples—there must be a bridge between words and practices." – Teacher F

The take-aways session 2

- The use of a creative tool like the use of a metaphor unlocked emotional, creative, and systemic thinking.
- It became clear the sessions had an impact beyond just finding solutions.
- Teachers expressed frustrations but by looking at these with a purpose-centred mindset, it resulted in new possibilities with enthusiasm.
- Ownership started to grow – purpose development was no longer an abstract theme, but a shared mission of both the individual and this group of teachers.
- The session sparked personal identification and commitment to the topic of purpose development.

5.4 Co-design session 3: What do you need to continue?

5.4.1 The session itself

Session set-up

After the momentum built in the first two sessions, the third and final co-design session focused on reflection and continuation. This session aimed to look both backward — revisiting what had sparked energy and insight — and forward: how can this mindset be sustained and grown beyond this project?

To support the reflection, teachers received a booklet in advance with prompts to revisit their learnings, emotions, and ideas from the earlier sessions, figure 5.11. All material in Appendix I. During the session, these reflections were shared, and the conversation turned toward what would be needed to carry this work forward.

Participants

Two teachers present in person (N=2, F=1, M=1). With the subjects: Science & History. Two teachers contributed via email or joined virtually due to final exam period of the secondary educations (N=2, F=1, M=1). No new teachers joined this session.

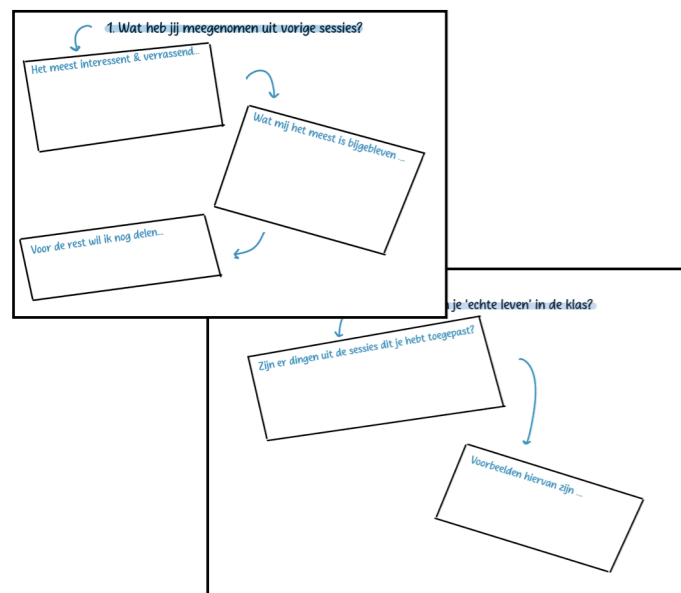


Figure 5.11: Example pages reflective booklet

5.4.2 Outcomes

The outcome based on the set goal Through reflection, teachers shared what had stayed with them from the earlier sessions and what they would need to continue. Ideas emerged with the main goal in sharing examples with colleagues and embedding purpose-oriented thinking into existing practices.

"It [purpose focus thinking] happens here because we talk about it very consciously here." – Teacher A

"It all started when I understood what purpose means for young people – both mental and physical." – Teacher A

"It [sessions and materials] was the very simple inviting and accessible activities that worked." – Teacher D

"The sessions allowed us to think in a new way – be creative and drawing for example- that was amazing." – Teacher A

"I would have never spoke to you [point to other teacher] outside these sessions – how weird is that? Because we agree on many things." – Teacher B

"Our vision comes together here – it's more than just transferring knowledge; it's about creating meaning." Teacher A

"This gives meaning to my teaching again." Teacher C

"For me, the core is: Your core value is your purpose for why you stand in front of the class."

Deeper outcome: A need for structure

Teachers showed strong intrinsic motivation to continue and be part of this movement. Despite full schedules and end-of-year pressures, they wanted to build on what had started. A "core group" was proposed to lead future initiatives. Some teachers expressed willingness to commit personal time.

" Ruth, it's the idea that we're going to continue with this group or another expansion, right?" – Teacher A

"I'd gladly invest my free time if it helps create more of this next year." – Teacher B

"We would've never had this conversation without these sessions." – Teacher A

"I wish this for all teachers to learn and experience this." – Teacher C

"It [the core-group] must become a compass for new people, not a roadmap to follow." Teacher B

"In the sessions I didn't hear once "There's no time, the students don't want to, it's not for a grade" – we have to allow that positivity - we do that as inspired and motivated teachers - we have to pass on the flame to others." Teacher B

"We also have intrinsic motivation for this – I'm there online today while I'm actually sick at home." Teacher A

"It's all about "Ont-moeten"" Teacher C
These quotes illustrate that something had changed. The teachers were no longer just interested in the topic; they were acting and encouraging their peers to do the same. Teachers began to see themselves as leaders of this change — willing to invest time, take ownership, and support others in the journey. There was an attitude to think in possibilities, not in limitations.

"We do have to think of ways to translate it into good things for the classroom." Teacher B

"Let's just lead by example and show what this could mean." Teacher A

The take-aways session 3

- For teachers, the understanding of purpose development starts with awareness and information on purpose development.
- Easy and understandable materials are necessary to be creative.
- Physical time and space where creativity is embraced – like the arts and design room from the co-design sessions – result is a different attitude than just another teacher room for a meeting.
- Teachers expressed strong motivation to continue and scale up the work — even in their own time.
- A shift from individual participation to collective ownership became visible.
- Teachers were no longer just reflecting — they were ready to lead by example for the new group.
- The need emerged for a system to support and grow this mindset sustainably.

5.5 Reframed perspective

By bringing together the key insights from the three co-design sessions, a new focus and direction became clear. It was no longer about delivering a final intervention, but about uncovering and supporting the conditions in which mindset change could occur.

So instead of asking:

"What intervention can I design that supports purpose development in schools?"

The more accurate question became:

"What are the necessary conditions and success factors for creating a purpose development mindset in schools to overcome the systemic barriers identified in previous chapters?"

This led to a shift from the initial focus to a reframed perspective, table 5.2. So, rather than just generating interventions, figure 5.12, the sessions created ecosystem for reflection, creativity, and mutual inspiration, figure 5.13. Teachers shared personal stories, frustrations about the system, and rediscovered the deeper 'why' behind their profession and translated this into in their daily classrooms.

These sessions offered something that is often missing in their day-to-day routines: time to pause, be heard, and imagine new possibilities together – with purpose development as the central lens & focus.

The next question is, what we're the success factors from the sessions and how to sustain and scale this energy? The next chapter will cover these questions.

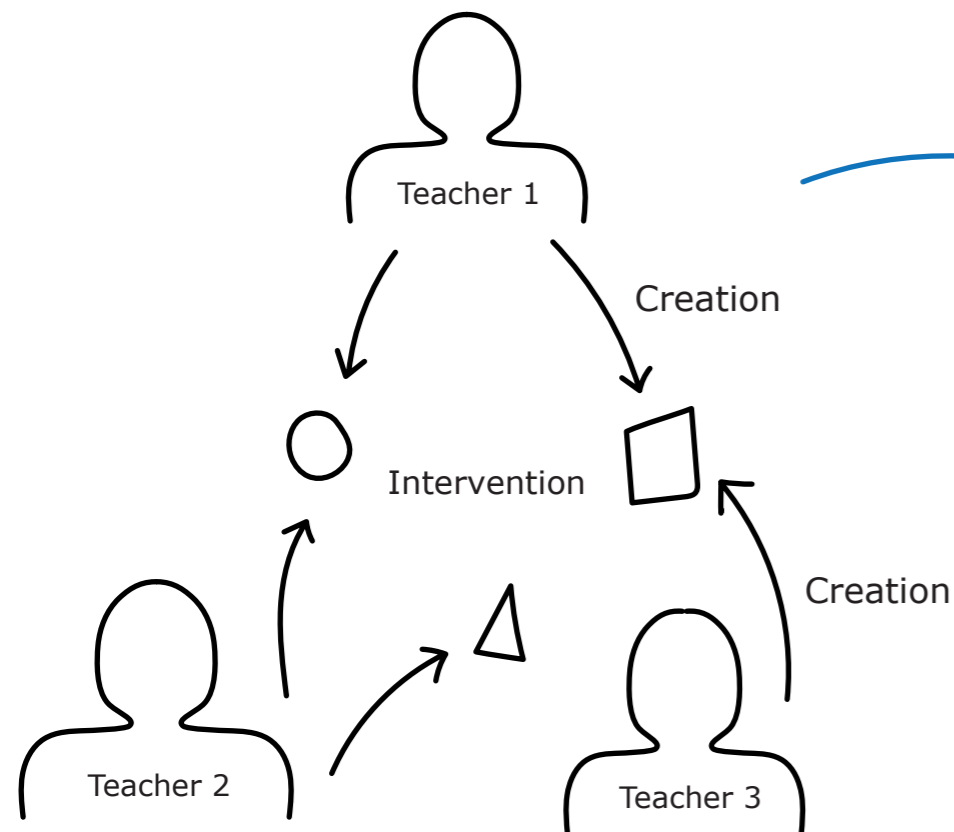


Figure 5.12: The initial focus

Table 5.2: Focus shift

Initial Focus	Reframed perspective
Designing a tool or artefact	Facilitating a mindset shift
Delivering a fixed intervention	Enabling an ongoing reflective practice
Supporting teachers through a product	Empowering teachers through co-design
Focus on implementation	Focus on transformation
Outcome-driven	Process-driven

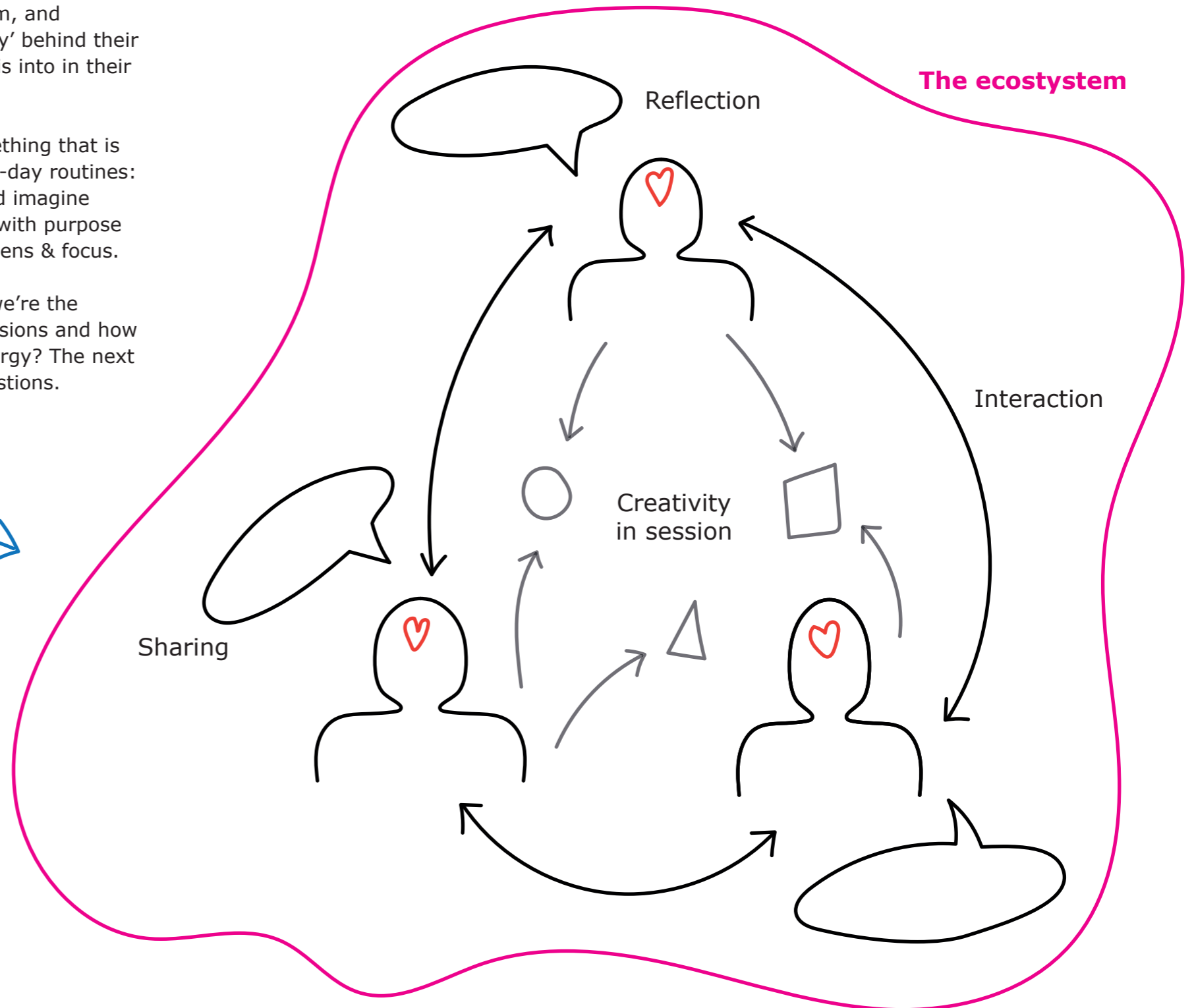


Figure 5.13: Reframed perspective

6 Success factors into requirements

This chapter brings together the practical insights from the co-design sessions (Chapter 5), the theoretical foundations (Chapters 3 and 4), and the broader patterns that emerged throughout the process. From this synthesis, a set of seven key design requirements has been formulated. Each represents a condition that enabled the observed mindset shift during the co-sessions — and should be considered when designing for purpose development in school context.

These factors did not only result from predefined theory, but also from lived experience. They surfaced organically through conversations, reflections, and shared moments — and they now form the foundation for designing ways to repeat this process elsewhere.

Table 6.1 shows an overview of these the created requirements.

Figure 6.1: Requirements

Design Requirement	Why?	How?
1. Space for human connection	Purpose development mindset grows through relationships and reflection	Low-pressure setting, take the time and create a safe, creative setting
2. Accessible and inviting materials	Creativity invites engagement and self-expression in a new way	Visual tools and materials, creative conversation starters like metaphors, and open formats
3. Ownership and shared leadership	Change sticks when people feel responsible for it and connected to it.	Teachers set goals and direction, initiated actions by teachers, shared examples
4. Purpose as a lens, not an end goal	Purpose is not fixed or rigid, it's personal and not a curriculum item	Integration into existing routines and reflections, examples on what's possible
5. Link to existing practice	Integrating into existing routines is more effective than adding new ones	Teachers reconnected purpose to their daily work
6. Social context and shared values	Culture can spread through trust and support	Informal sharing moments and collective energy and motivation
7. Student voice as a spark	Real needs from students bring relevance, urgency and emotional impact for teachers	Student perspectives shared, discussed and reflected on

6.1 Requirements in detail

Requirement 1: Space for human connection

Purpose development is personal. As discussed in Chapter 3, adolescents — and adults — grow this through connection, recognition, and shared meaning (Fuligni, 2019; Damon, 2003). This is also what the students mentioned as one of the key themes in order to make school a place for purpose development. The same held true for teachers in the co-design sessions: the mindset shift emerged not from instruction, but from being heard and valued and creating time for real connection in a real physical space.

What worked:

- Sessions were hosted in a creative, relaxed space — separate from routine meetings creating space for connection.
- The absence of formal agendas and disconnection from performances, created room for vulnerability and personal stories.
- Allowing the voice of the students to be heard, created a shared understanding of what was needed.

Requirement 2: Accessible and inviting materials

Creative formats helped unlock reflection and systems thinking in a low-pressure way. As seen in Chapter 3, purpose is not given and suddenly present — it is shaped through self-expression, experimentation, and storytelling (Coleman, 2017). It's interesting to see that this was also present in the sessions itself, creating room for own experimentation and interpretation.

What worked:

- Drawing, metaphors, and visual thinking replaced rigid structures.
- Tools were intuitive and non-digital — making them approachable.
- Reflection booklets allowed for both structure and personal freedom.

Requirement 3: Ownership and shared leadership

A purpose development mindset cannot be implemented top-down. It thrives when people feel they are part of the process. Teachers in this project were not consulted — they were invited to co-create, lead, and evolve the process — it has to come from an internal motivator.

What worked:

- Teachers set their own intentions and shared concrete practices.
- Between sessions, some initiated experiments independently.
- The tone shifted from “what could I do?” to “how can we help others join?”

Requirement 4: Purpose as a lens, not a lesson

The co-design sessions reframed purpose not as a curriculum item, but as a mindset. Teachers began to see how purpose thinking could be part of how they already teach — not an add-on, but a deepening of their current practices.

What worked:

- Purpose was integrated into their own subject content.
- Teachers recognised value in reframing everyday actions through a purpose lens.
- The focus moved from thinking in limitations to thinking in possibilities.

Requirement 5: Link to existing practice

To make purpose development understandable, it must connect to what teachers already do. Small adaptations to routines, language, and reflection moments can create inspirational moments— without needing large-scale changes.

What worked:

- Teachers applied purpose thinking to how they teach.
- Familiar routines were enriched, not replaced.
- Purpose became part of the way things are done, not an extra task.

Requirement 6: Shared values and beliefs

The beliefs and motivation grows when shared values become visible and contagious. Purpose development thrives in social ecosystems, not just in isolation. Learning from and inspiring each other— played a vital role.

What worked:

- Teachers shared insights informally.
- A sense of “we” emerged organically.
- The mindset began to spread through successes.

Requirement 7: Student voice as a spark

The perspective of students, explored in chapter 4, was the starting point of the first co-design session — and became a powerful starting point for teachers to see the need and relevance for purpose development. It showed the teachers why purpose development matters and how it connected to real students, in real time.

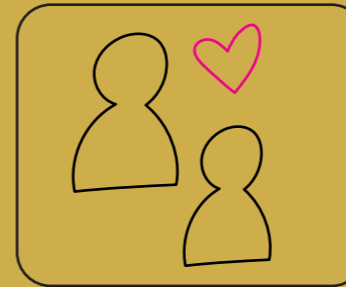
What worked:

- Quotes and insights from student interviews were shared at the start of the co-design session.
- Making it about the students in a positive and inspiring way.

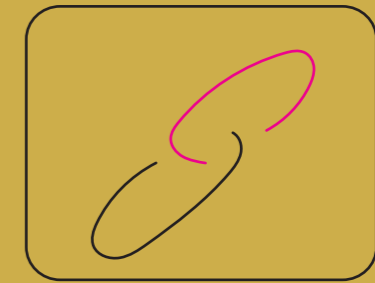
Chapter 6: Key Take-aways

In order to answer the question: *What is needed to foster purpose development in schools? I developed a set of seven key design requirements. Together represents a condition that enables the observed mindset shift during the co-sessions that allows purpose centered education.*

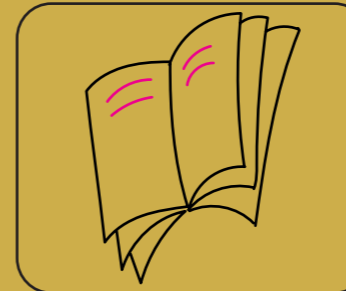
- Space for human connection



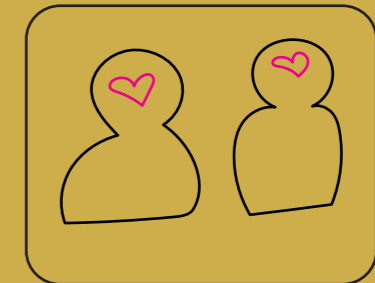
- Linking materials to real practice



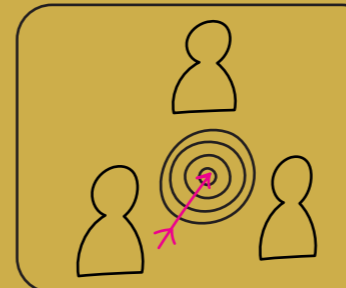
- Easy and accessible materials



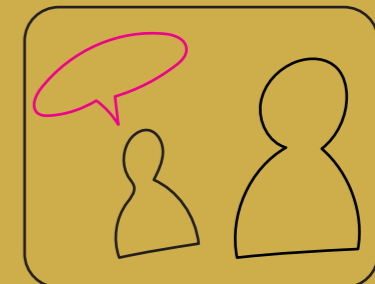
- Creating shared values and beliefs



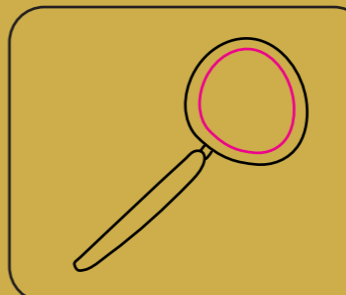
- Shared vision and goals



- Student Voice as a Spark



- Purpose development is a lens, not an add-on



How do we do that again?

This part focuses on sustaining the shift that emerged— and helping others continue the work.

Mindset change is powerful, but fragile. In this section, I explore how to preserve and scale the energy and success factors in order to create the same effect in a bigger group.

Through literature and model research, road mapping and the design of supporting magazine, I investigate how to keep the momentum going and how this change needs to be managed.

CH8: Design for longevity

- *How can we ensure this mindset shift continues and grows?*

CH9: The supporting materials

- *How can this be translated into artefacts?*

7 Designing for longevity, keep the wheel turning.

Where Chapter 6 was about what worked, Chapter 7 is about how to make it work again—and again. The mindset shift observed during the co-design sessions was promising, but fragile. How can we ensure that the energy, reflection, and ownership continue to grow and spread? How can schools continue this development when the designer/facilitator is no longer present? This chapter brings together theory and models to explore how mindset change can become embedded.

7.1 The challenge in mindset shifts

Unlike structural changes, mindset change operates on a high level. According to Donella Meadows (1999), the most powerful way to create change in a complex system is a shift on those high levels, but it's harder to reach – figure 7.1.

Besides this, change on this level it's not always visible, it's harder to grasp, and it

doesn't follow a straight path. Teachers who engaged in the sessions started to speak differently, reflect differently, and act differently – but not because they were told to. This happened because they felt a connection to something meaningful - it was an internal change.

This kind of change is fragile. Without attention, energy, and follow-up, the shift can fade back into old routines. What was once felt as urgent or inspiring can become "just a project we did once." That's why continuation and repetition matters. The mindset that emerged needs space to grow by keeping the conversation going.

Capturing this change does not have to be fast or happen overnight. Changing the way you or a group of people think or how a system approaches situations, takes time and effort. In order to make sure this change can be embedded and accepted in daily practices, it requires understanding the conditions that allow this and design for this.

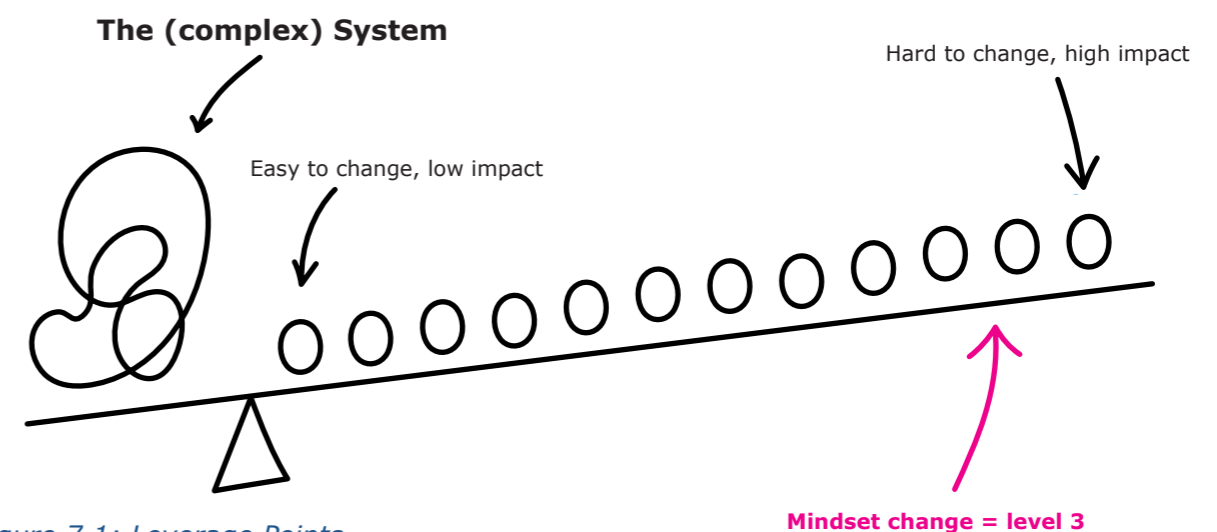


Figure 7.1: Leverage Points

What is the project about?

What is happening right now?

What needs to happen?

How do we do that again?

What is next?

7.2 Supporting models for longevity.

To understand how the mindset shift observed in this project can be sustained and scaled, I turned to several theoretical models that offer insight into how change unfolds — and how it can be supported over time. These models do not provide ready-made solutions, but they offer valuable perspectives that help frame the challenge of long-term impact.

Together, they address key themes such as ownership, repetition, and cultural embedding but also me stepping away

as the facilitator. After reviewing a wider set of frameworks (eg. Csíkszentmihályi - Flow Theory), I selected four that aligned most mostly with the insights from my project. They are summarized below and elaborated in the sections that follow, table 7.1.

As said, these models are not the perfect fits; this becomes visible when you look at the potential pitfall from each model. Still, they provide useful structures and perspectives to design for continuation. In the next pages, I explain how each model applies to this project.

Figure 7.1: Used models

Model	Main Focus	Usefulness in Project	Potential Pitfall
Lewin's Change Model	Stages of transformation	Clarifies need for refreezing after mindset shift	Assumes top-down change
Learning Arches (Kaospilot)	Growth through repetition and feedback	Emphasizes the value of small, iterative steps	Change can stall without reinforcement
Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers)	Spread of new ideas in social systems	Highlights the importance of early adopters as catalysts	Assumes linear progression
Maslow's Learning Stages	From unawareness to embedded behaviour	Useful for mapping teachers' developmental journey	Each person progresses at their own pace

Kurt Lewin's Change Model

Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze

About the model

Kurt Lewin's classic Change Management model (1951) breaks change into three stages, figure 7.2:

- Unfreeze: creating awareness that change is needed. It's about preparing the ground for change.
- Change: introducing new behaviours, ideas, or practices. It's not an end on itself; it creates motivations to change but does not control the outcome or direction.
- Refreeze: Capturing the outcomes and embedding those new elements into a stable state, so they continue.

The model is valued for its clarity and emphasis on group dynamics in transformation processes (Burnes, 2004). However, it is often criticised for assuming stable systems and assuming top-down control. Despite these limitations, its core concepts remain useful in understanding how to initiate, guide, and stabilise change.

In this project

This model can be applied to this project in different ways.

Firstly the unfreeze and change can already be seen in the co-design sessions in this project. The teachers stepped out of routine and gained knowledge and awareness about the topic purpose development. Creating awareness and spreading information is key for this unfreeze state.

Secondly, the mindset shift began in the "change" phase through shared language and emotional resonance in the second session. The refreeze on the other hand is in process and has yet not occurred at a big scale and the effect of capturing is still unsure. This model highlights why a follow-up structure after the sessions is necessary.

Besides this, these stages needs to be done again at a bigger scale with more teachers over the next years. The cycle reoccurred every time new teachers join this way of thinking or are introduced to it. This can slowly lead to change in a bigger group.

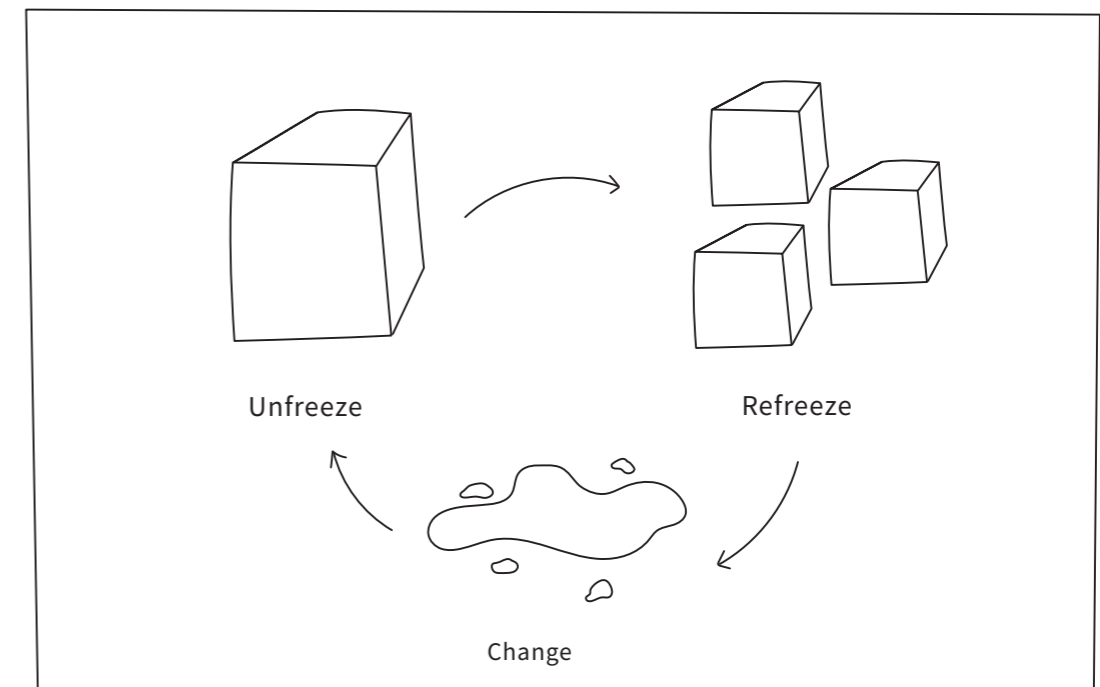


Figure 7.2: Change Model Lewin

The Learning Arches

Growth through repetition, feedback, and struggle

About the model

The learning arches theory (Kavanagh, 2021) proposes that a learner's efficiency in a task improves over time the more the learner performs the task. Learning is a continuous process, and with each interaction, individuals gain new insights and improve their performance. In order to reach the desired state, it's important to divide it in small steps and make sure each step "lands". In education, it's used to explain why development requires time, not one-off interventions (Eraut, 2004), figure 7.3.

In this project

The energy and reflection seen in the sessions could easily plateau without support of "set it" and "land it". It could also fade away if the learning curves are too big. Teachers began to experiment with ideas between sessions — a sign of learning in progress. However, without reinforcement (landing and repetition), that learning could stall. This shows the need for continued engagement over time and the right tools for landing to sustain mindset development.

The Diffusion of Innovation

The adaption of new ideas and practices

About the model

Everett Rogers' (1962) Diffusion of Innovations theory explains how innovations spread through social systems over time, figure 7.4. The model identifies different adopter categories:

- Innovators are the first to adopt a new idea. They are risk-takers, comfortable with uncertainty, and often act on intrinsic motivation to explore and experiment.
- Early adopters follow closely behind. They are often respected opinion leaders within their community and play a key role in testing and validating new ideas. Their behaviour influences the wider group.

- The early majority is more cautious. They wait until an idea has been proven, seeking user-friendly and reliable applications.
- The late majority is sceptical and adopts mainly due to peer pressure or social norms. They require strong examples and peer validation.

In this project

In this project

The teachers involved in the co-design sessions functioned as early adopters. They were willing to explore a new way of thinking and share their reflections. For broader impact, these early adopters must now become ambassadors who model and promote the mindset, enabling the next wave of adoption through informal influence and practical examples.

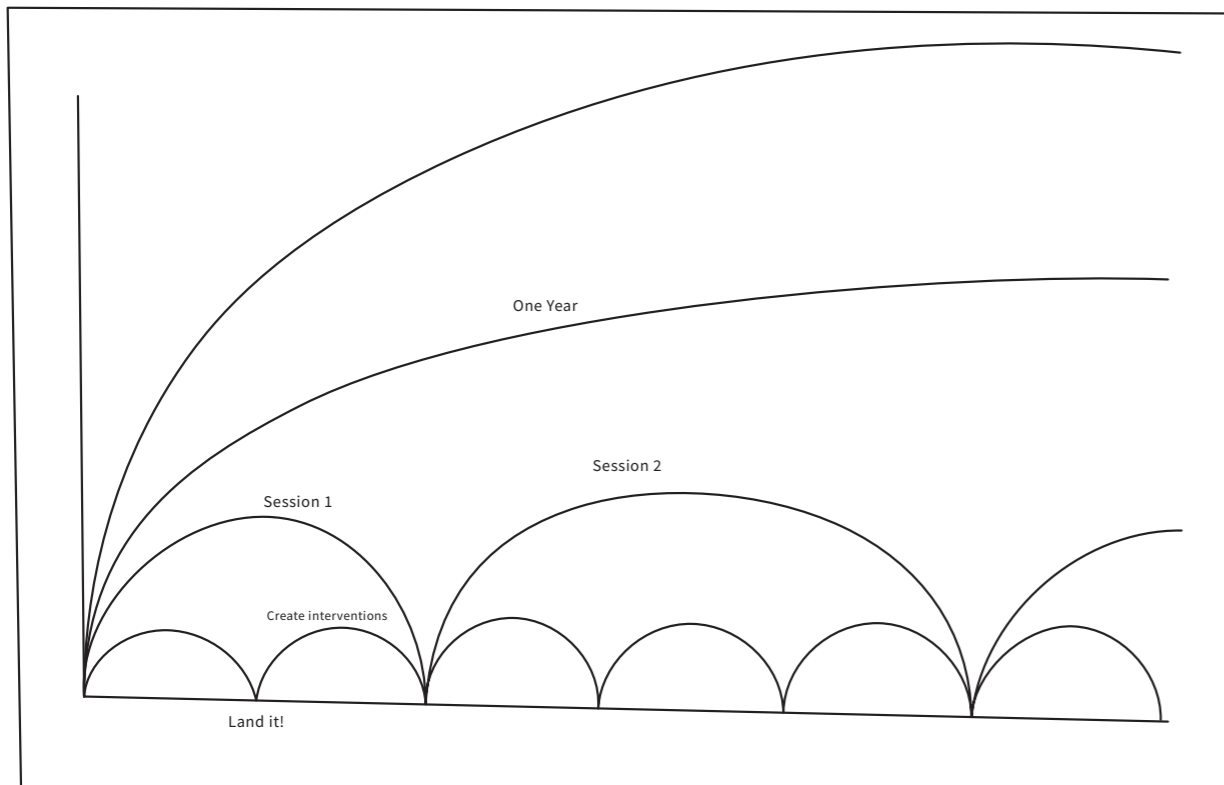


Figure 7.3: Learning Arches

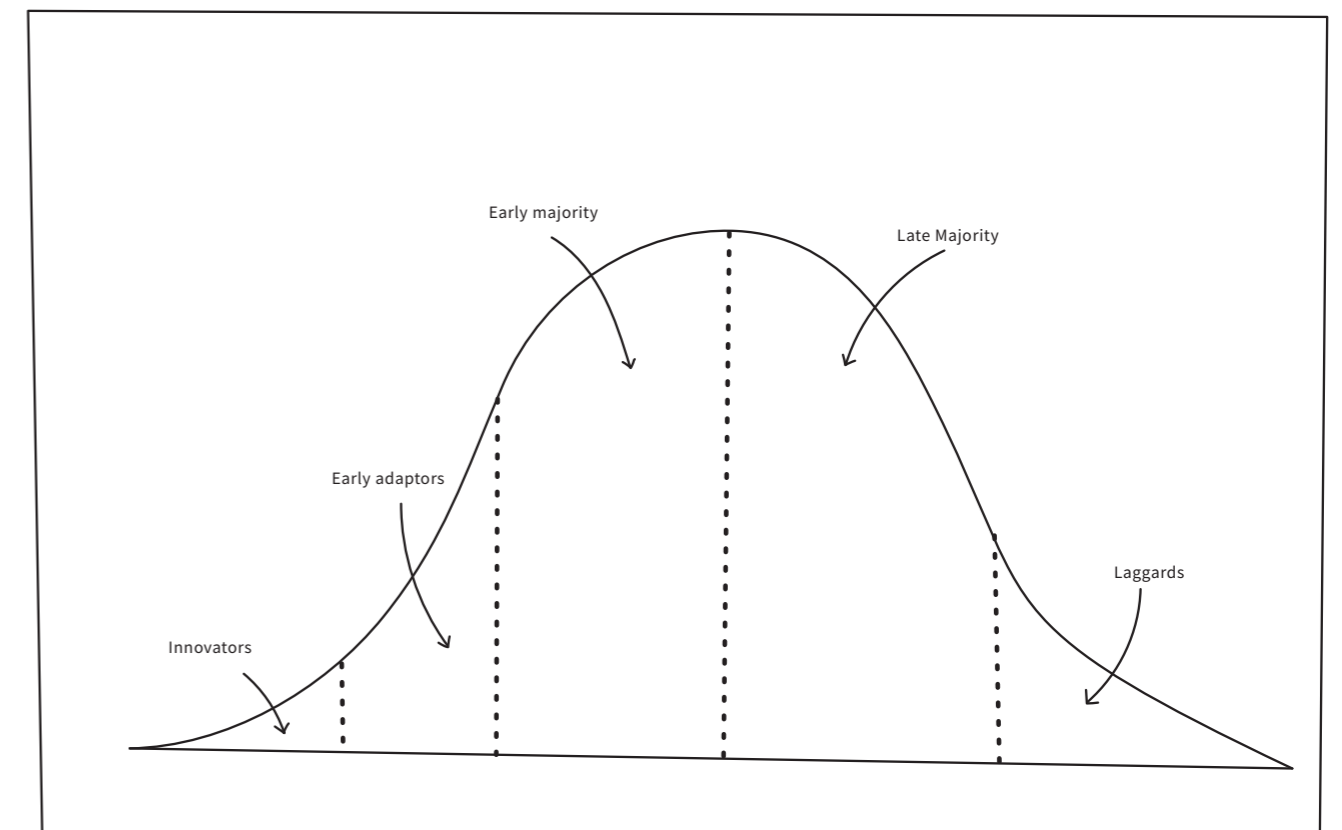


Figure 7.4: Diffusion of Innovation model

Maslow's Four learning stage

From unaware to embedded behaviour

About the model

Maslow's four learning stages (1954) describe how individuals move through phases of awareness and skill development, figure 7.5:

1. Unconscious Incompetence – You don't know what you don't know.
2. Conscious Incompetence – You realise there's something missing or lacking.
3. Conscious Competence – You start to develop the skill, but it requires effort.
4. Unconscious Competence – The new skill or mindset becomes natural and automatic.

The model highlights that learning starts with awareness — and that true integration takes time and repetition before it becomes part of your way of thinking. It shows that confidence can shrink before feeling competence. All have their own process and timelines.

In this project

Teachers began the sessions unaware of their lack of familiarity with purpose development and its possibilities at school (unconscious incompetence). As the topic became clearer, many experienced a gap between current practice and new possibilities (conscious incompetence). With tools and dialogue, they began experimenting and integrating ideas (conscious competence). The long-term goal is to reach unconscious competence—where purpose becomes a natural part of how they teach. All participants and newly joining teachers will go through these stages at different times and paces, these timelines have to be respected in order to create success.

7.3 Principles for long-term impact

Based on the insights from the co-design sessions and the theoretical models discussed, I found five design principles that support the continuation and deepening of the mindset shift. These principles do not offer fixed solutions but instead function as guiding values that can inform future decisions, artefacts, and processes.

They are intended to help schools — and the individuals within them — create the conditions in which purpose development can flourish long after the initial intervention. Together, they reflect a shift from temporary change to cultural embedding.

Principle 1: Embed in culture, Not calendar

Change that lives on a calendar—like a theme week—rarely transforms how people think. For purpose development to take root, it must become part of how a school talks, teaches, and reflects.

- Linked to: Meadows (Mindshift shift), Lewin (Unfreeze)

Principle 2: Grow from the core

Systemic change rarely starts everywhere at once. Instead, it grows from an aware committed group of early adopters who model new behaviours and inspire others informally. In this project, the core group of teachers plays a big role in planting and nurturing this change.

- Linked to: Rogers (early adopters) and Maslow's learning stages (becoming aware)

Principle 3: Anchor in routines and rituals

New mindsets become sustainable when they are tied to everyday actions. Simple, recurring moments — such as reflection rounds, weekly questions, or shared language — help translate abstract ideas into real practice.

- Linked to: Lewin (refreezing), Kaospilot (learn Arches), Marlow's (learning stages)

Principle 4: Make it visible and concrete

When change remains abstract, it fades. Visuals, artefacts, and storytelling make new mindsets concrete and communicable. They also serve as reminders and conversation starters within teams.

- Linked to: Lewin (Change), Rogers (early laggards), Marlow's (learning stages)

Principle 5: Design for transfer and adaptation

Each teacher, classroom, and school are different. For a mindset to spread, it must be adaptable — not standardized. The ability to remix and personalize tools and approaches is essential to longevity.

- Linked to: Rogers (trialability), Kaospilot (learning by doing).

These principles do not form a checklist but rather a compass. They reflect both what worked during this graduation project and what research suggests is needed for sustainable change. They guide the development of the supporting artefacts described in Chapter 9 and offer a lens through which schools can assess their own journey toward embedding purpose development.

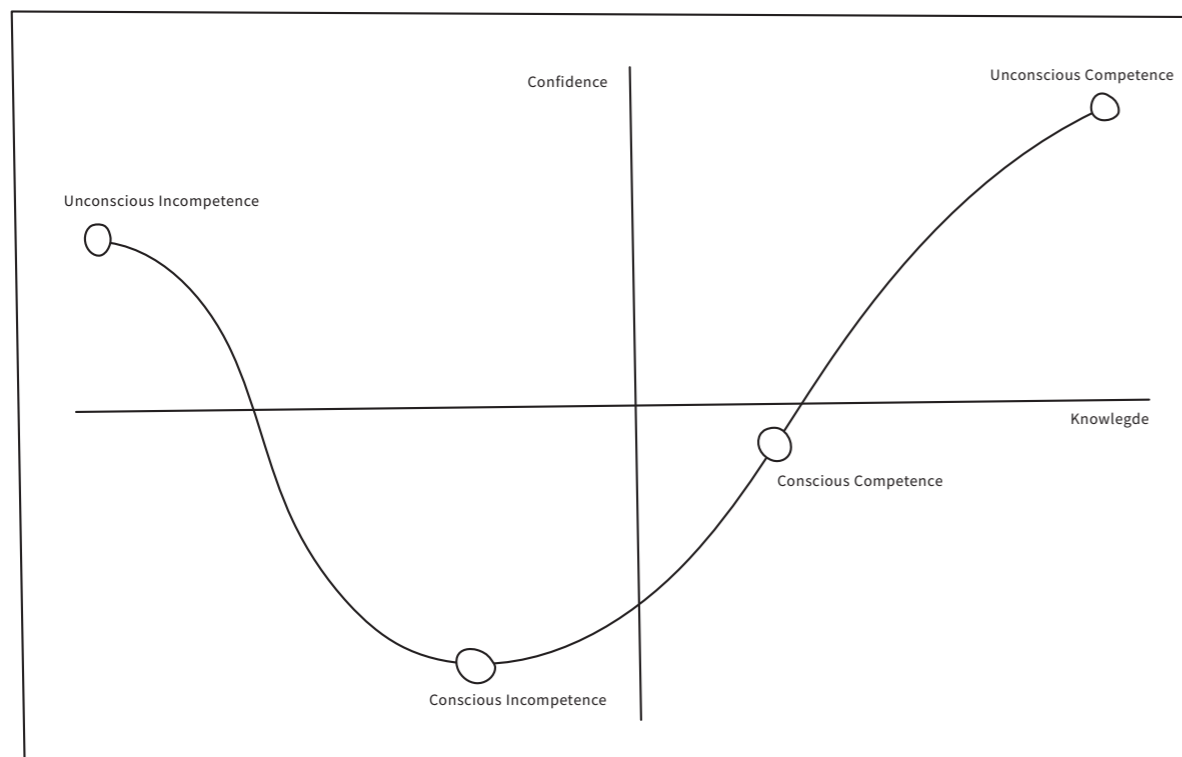


Figure 7.5: Maslow's learning stages

Chapter 7: Key Take-aways

- Mindset shift ≠ one-time intervention: Lasting impact is not achieved through a single tool but through creating the right conditions for sustained reflection and intrinsic motivation among teachers.
 - Five design principles for long-term impact were defined:
 - Embed in culture: Purpose development should become part of daily educational culture, not an extra task.
 - Grow from the core: Start with a core group of intrinsically motivated teachers who lead by example.
 - Anchor in rituals: Make purpose a recurring part of existing meetings, classes or reflection moments.
 - Make it concrete: Translate abstract values into visible artefacts and shared stories to inspire and remind.
 - Design for adaptation: Ensure tools and approaches are flexible enough to evolve over time and across contexts.
 - From outcome to process thinking: The focus shifts from delivering a final solution to enabling a continuous reflective practice.
 - Teachers as change agents: Empowering teachers to lead by example and grow a movement from within, instead of relying on external facilitation.
- To ensure the mindset shift continues and grows, it must be embedded in the school culture through intrinsic motivation, peer-led ownership, and integration into daily rituals. By creating flexible structures that promote reflection and by empowering teachers to lead this process, the mindset shift can become self-sustaining.

8 The supporting artefacts

To support the continuation of the mindset shift described in Chapter 7, I developed two key artefacts:

- A strategic that breaks down long-term change into actionable steps.
 - A supporting magazine that captures the spirit of the intervention and invites others into the process.

These artefacts are not standalone designs. They are the outcome of:

- **Early research and interviews (Chapters 3 & 4)**, where students and teachers shared what purpose means to them and what hinders or enables its development.
- **The co-design sessions (Chapter 5)**, where teachers engaged with the topic of purpose and began to shift

their thinking and where I reflected on the deeper meaning of what happened in the sessions and identified underlying needs and conditions.

- **Synthesized insights (Chapter 6)**, where patterns, needs, and barriers were made explicit, resulted in the requirements.
- **Theory and models (Chapter 7)**, which helped frame these findings within a broader understanding of change and longevity, resulted in the principles.

Together, these layers formed the design for the roadmap, which is supported by the magazine. Each artefact is a response to real, situated insights — aiming to offer continuity, ownership, and direction to the ongoing development of purpose-oriented education, table 8.1

Table 8.1: Layers for outcomes

Phase	Chapter	Focus	Outcome
Early research & interviews	Chapters 3 & 4	What 'purpose' means to students and teachers; what hinders or enables its development	Insights into meaning and influencing factors
Co-design sessions	Chapter 5	How teachers engaged with purpose; reflections on shifts in thinking and underlying needs/conditions	Emerging perspectives & needs
Synthesized insights	Chapter 6	Making patterns, needs, and barriers explicit	Design requirements
Theory and models	Chapter 7	Framing findings within broader theories of change and sustainability	Guiding principles

8.1 The roadmap

8.1.1 Why a roadmap?

This roadmap, following the principles of Design Roadmapping (Lievens et al., 2020), gives a structured and inclusive overview of what the future for this project could mean over time.

The roadmap allows small steps to come to a desired stage; it gives guidance on how to manage this desired step towards the future visions. It's important to see this roadmap as a continuous process and not a final end destination. It shows how the desired stage can be created and build towards to. The roadmap can be used as an inspiration tool and a compass, yet there is still room for own creativity and own interpretation of the content in each horizon.

8.1.2 The future vision

The roadmap looks ahead to 2028, aligning with the timeline of Ruth's PhD research. This future vision was co-developed with her and grounded in the insights derived from the co-design sessions.

By 2028, supporting adolescents in their purpose development is a natural part of teaching at Wolfert Tweetalig. All teachers share a common mindset yet bring their own personal styles to help students reflect, grow, and navigate their individual journeys. Purpose development is not treated as an extra task but embedded in the school culture—shaping both how and why teachers teach.

Why this vision?

- **Time frame**
The year 2028 aligns with the span of Ruth's PhD and provides a realistic yet ambitious timeframe for systemic change.
- **Student-centred foundation**
Purpose development is rooted in the needs and experiences of adolescents (Chapter 3). It supports students in reflecting, making sense of their identity, and connecting learning to their future selves.
- **Embedded in culture, not curriculum**
Purpose is not a module or lesson plan. It is visible in daily moments, conversations, and teacher-student relationships (Chapter 6). It's a lens you can't unsee.
- **A shared mindset, personalised in practice**
While all teachers share a common lens on purpose, they express it in their own style. This prevents rigid implementation and supports ownership — a direct response to teachers' feedback during co-design.
- **School-wide alignment**
The vision goes beyond individual classrooms. School leadership, peer learning, and onboarding structures support the mindset — helping new teachers enter a culture where purpose is already "in the air."

By connecting the roadmap to this vision, the artefact does more than give structure. It keeps the goal in view, and encourages everyone involved to shape their own path toward that goal — collectively, but never identically.

8.1.3 The supporting horizons

To make the 2028 vision reachable, the roadmap breaks it down into three horizons. Each horizon builds on the previous one — moving from inspiration to integration, and finally, to normalization. This structure was directly informed by teachers' needs (Chapter 5), session analysis (Chapter 6), and theoretical insights on how change unfolds over time (Chapter 8).

Horizon 1: Initiate and inspire – year 2025/2026

Focus: Awareness, small wins, and use the intrinsic motivation

The first year is about starting small but creating and capturing successes to inspire. During the co-design sessions, teachers emphasized how even small conversations about purpose had a big effect on how they viewed their role (Chapter 5). This phase builds on that energy — not through top-down change, but by supporting the existing core group to continue experimenting and sparking curiosity in others, figure 8.1.

In this phase, purpose development is introduced informally and personally.

There are no fixed programs or curricula; instead, small interventions and personal stories help initiate reflection. The supporting magazine, chapter 8.2, builds and supports these goals. This magazine is specifically designed to be approachable, visual, and non-digital — in response to teachers' preferences from the co-design sessions.

Key dynamics:

- Teachers lead by example, sharing what they're trying and testing in their own classrooms.
- New teachers are invited into the conversation openly, not forced into a program.
- Student voices — which inspired this project from the start (Chapter 3) — continue to be used to make the topic relatable and relevant. New students' perspectives can also add new insights and inspiration.

By focusing on testing, sharing and finding out what works and what does not, this phase creates fertile ground for growth. It aligns with Lewin's Unfreeze phase and Rogers' idea of activating early adopters.

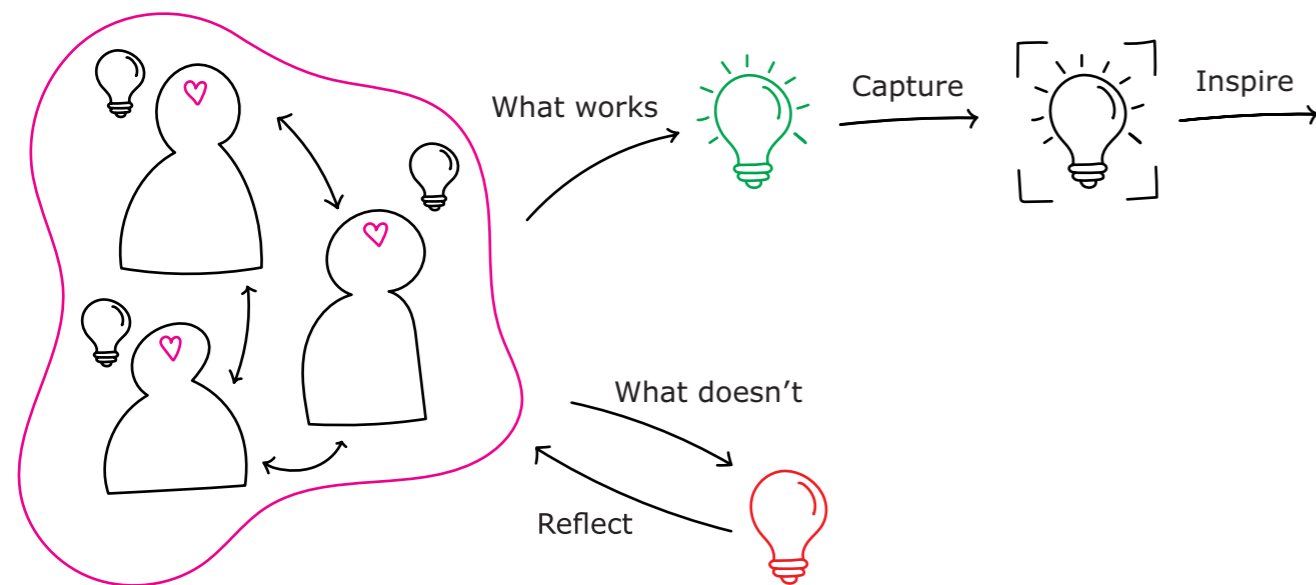


Figure 8.1: Creating and capturing successes

Horizon 2: Expand and embed – 2026/2027

Focus: Growing participation and daily integration

As the conversation grows, the goal is to get more teachers become curious about this topic and want to try something themselves, figure 8.2. But this is also where questions emerge: What does this look like in my subject? How do I start? How do I learn from others?

To support this, the second phase introduces more structure — without rigidity. These new inspired teachers may begin their own small experiments and interventions, which can again be supported by materials developed in the magazine. The original core group from horizon shifts into a supporting and guiding role — not as trainers, but as co-design partners and peer coaches. Good examples and successes, that could even be strengthened by the student's voice and experiences, can lead to an easier adaptability of mindset from the new teachers joining.

What matters most in this phase is not speed, but depth. Teachers reflect on their efforts, share stories with one another, and begin to see the impact of their actions. This aligns with the Learning Arches and Maslow's idea of progressing toward conscious competence.

Key enablers in this phase:

- Time for experimentation and reflection and inspiration
- Psychological safety to test and adjust
- Recognition and visibility of small successes supported by students' experiences and opinions.

In this way, purpose development becomes increasingly visible in daily routines — not as a mandate, but as something that makes sense to those involved.

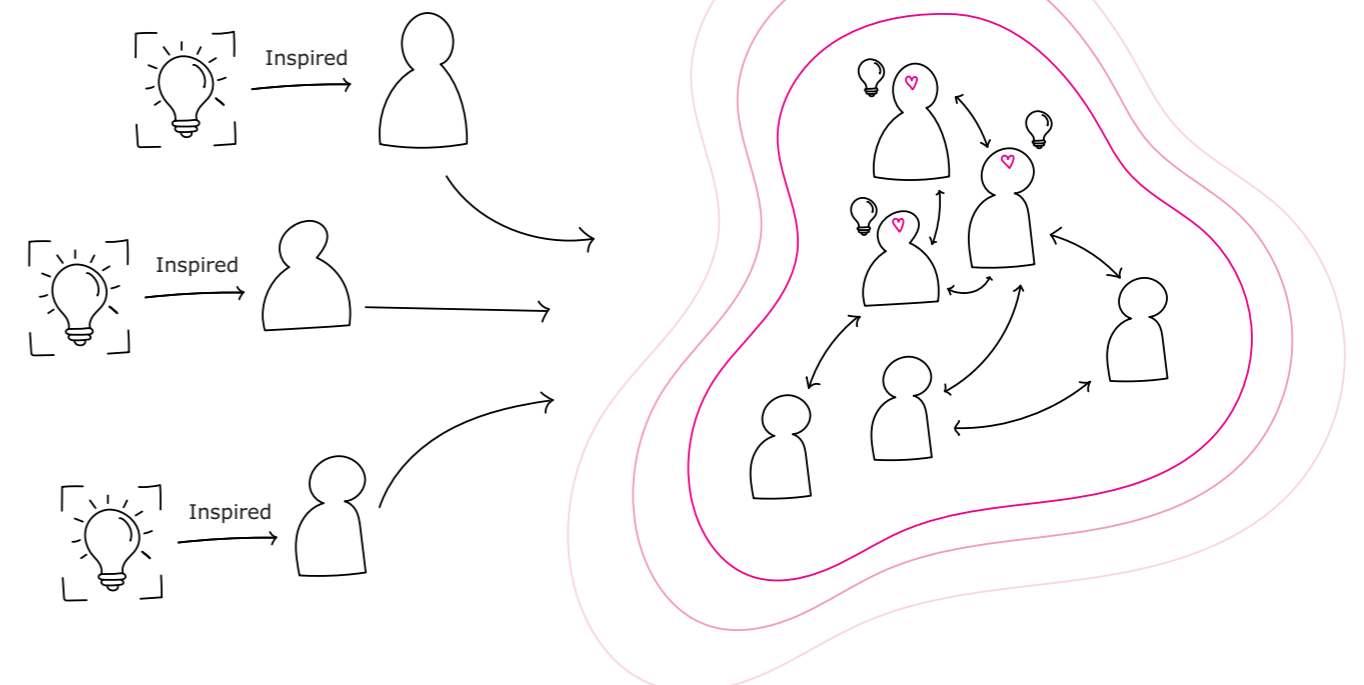


Figure 8.2: Growing participation and integration

Horizon 3: Sustain and normalize – 2027/2028

Focus: Cultural shift and systemic support

By the third year, what began as a series of conversations and experiments has started to shift the culture. Purpose development is no longer a topic for “some teachers” — it becomes part of how the school talks, teaches, and grows, figure 8.3.

In this phase, the focus expands to systemic support. School leadership plays a stronger role in enabling continuity: onboarding new teachers, aligning initiatives, and maintaining the space for ongoing dialogue. Purpose-related tools and rituals (such as team reflections, student involvement, or dedicated planning time) help ensure that what was once “new” becomes part of the norm.

This phase reflects Lewin’s Refreeze and builds on distributed leadership and cultural embedding as key drivers of

sustained transformation.

What enables success here:

- Structures for reflection and feedback that persist beyond individuals
- A shared language that connects different initiatives across the school
- Flexibility to evolve, without losing the core values

This is not the end of the process — but the point at which purpose development has become something the school owns, shapes, and continues to evolve together. There will be a continuous alternation between horizon 2 and 3 where teachers and students experiment, see what works and embed in daily practices, figure 8.4.

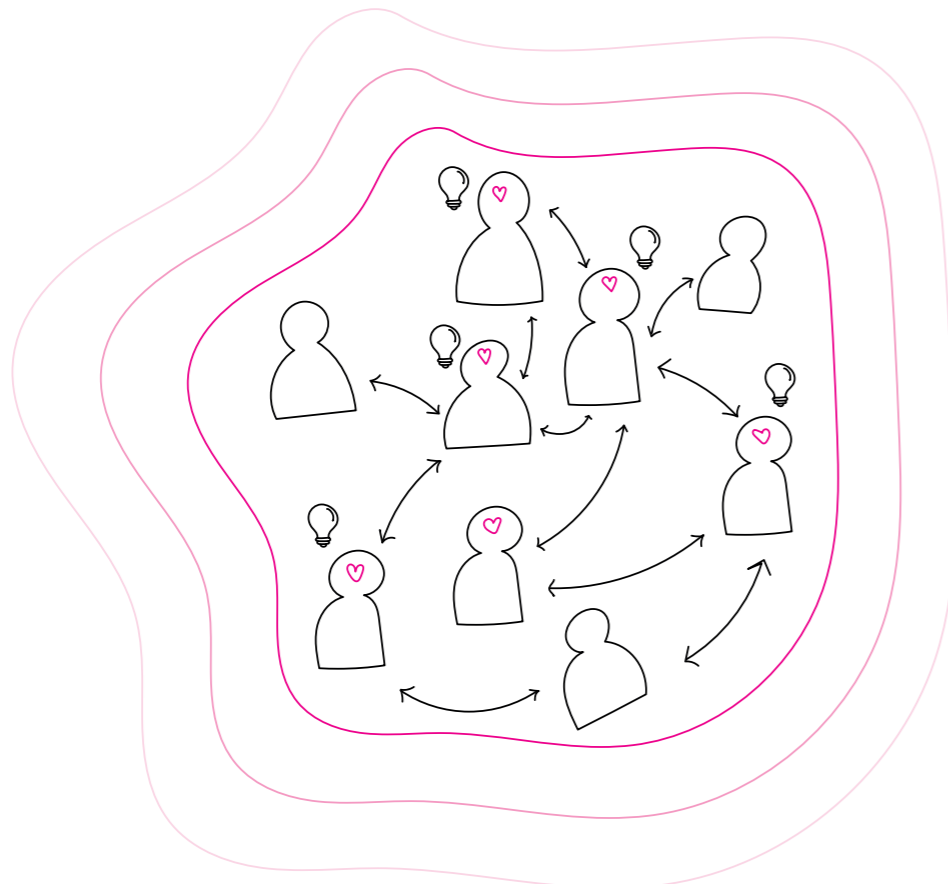


Figure 8.3: Sustaining and growing mindset

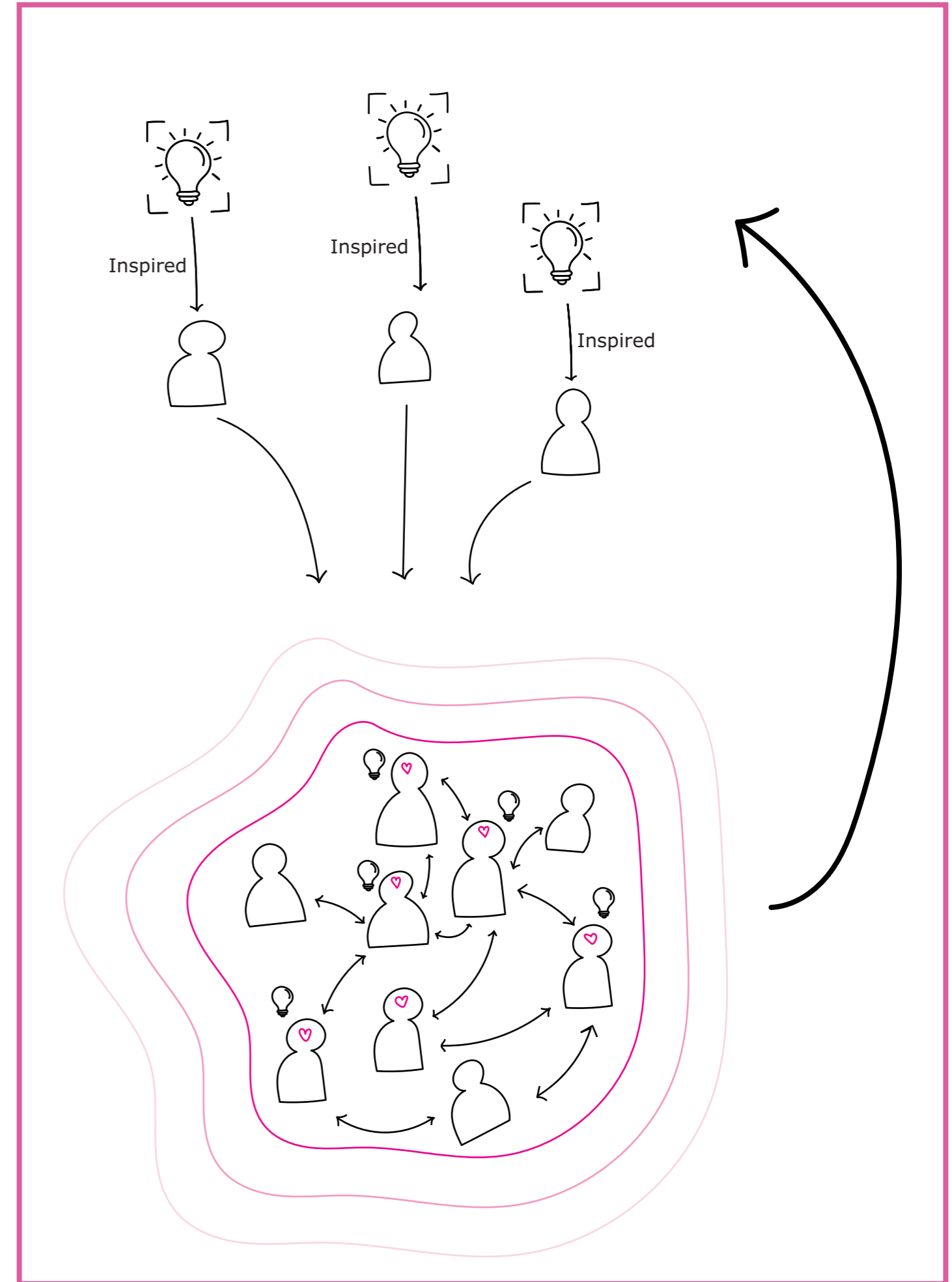


Figure 8.4: Cycle Horizon 2 and Horizon 3

8.2 Magazines in detail

8.2.1 The magazine

As part of the final solution and as supporting tool for the roadmap, a magazine was designed, figure 8.5 and 8.6. The full magazine can be found in Appendix J. This magazine was designed as a strategic, describing artefact with its main purpose is to carry forward the mindset that emerged during the co-design process, and to invite others. It's functions as a recap for the teachers that joined the sessions but also for new teachers who were not directly involved — to join the conversation in an accessible and inspiring way.

The idea for this magazine arose directly from the roadmap presented before and two sources:

- **Co-design insights (Chapter 5 and 6):** Teachers responded most strongly to easy to understand, informal, visual, and reflective formats.
- **Theoretical models (Chapter 8):** Longevity requires visibility, repetition, and a sense of ownership. This small tangible artefact help “anchor” abstract ideas into daily reality (e.g., Lewin’s Change–Refreeze, Rogers’ visibility in diffusion, and Maslow’s conscious competence). It shows what happened the last 5 months is seen and captured.

As a result, the magazine became more than a summary — it became a tool for continuation.

8.2.2 Why a magazine?

Teachers mentioned that current educational materials are too formal or get lost in digital spaces. They are not inspiring and inviting. What worked best during the sessions were:

- Print-based materials they could flip through casually.
- Story-based materials that made concepts feel personal and real.
- Creative formats that sparked conversation.

This magazine responds to those needs. It was designed with the same principles that made the co-design sessions work:

- Low-threshold entry: something you can engage with in short moments because it’s easy to understand.
- Narrative-driven: using real voices and stories from students and teachers
- Visual and non-digital: physical materials that stay visible and start conversations.

Instead of being instructive, the magazine is inviting. It does not prescribe behaviour but evokes reflection — mirroring the mindset-change that showed in this project.

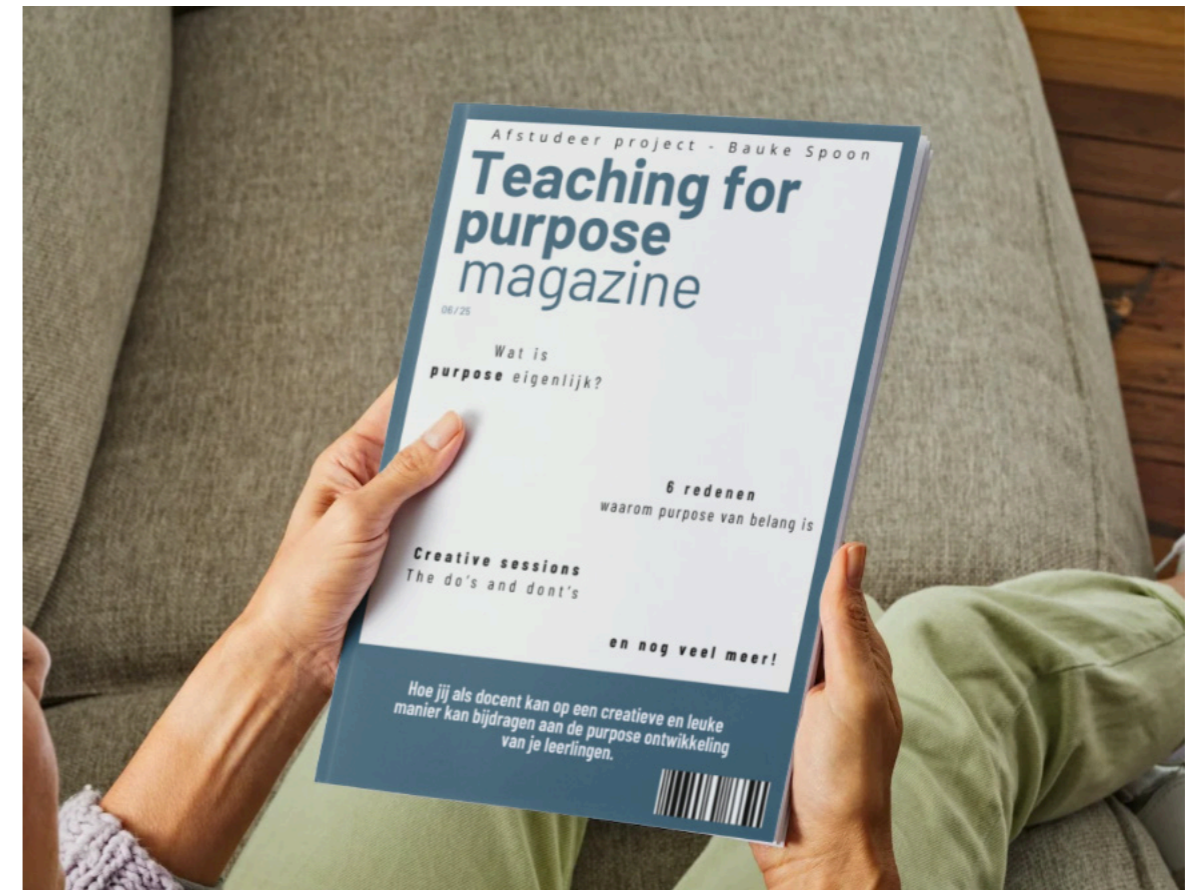


Figure 8.5: Mock-up magazine front page



Figure 8.6: Mock-up magazine must-haves page

8.2.3 How the content was built

Every element of the magazine is based on findings from this graduation project. Its structure follows the same logic as the overall design process — moving from insight to co-creation, to tools for ongoing development.

Understanding purpose

Based on the theoretical grounding in Chapters 3 and 4 and insights from the third co-design session; this section introduces the concept of purpose development for adolescents in an accessible way. It reframes common misconceptions, figure 8.7 left page, and explains why adolescence is such a shaping stage for this theme. Teachers are invited to reflect on how their role connects to students' self-development.

Voices from the students

This section presents quotes and insights from the early research phase, making the topic real and relevant, figure 8.7 right page. Based on Chapter 3's interviews, it captures what students say they need to feel purposeful — and what gets in the way. These voices provide powerful, eye-opening anchors for teachers.

Co-creation in action

Documenting the sessions (Chapter 5), this part shows what happened when teachers started engaging with purpose development themselves. It includes session highlights, quotes, and reflections — showcasing what conditions helped spark insight and ownership. It also helps normalise the idea that change starts small and from within.

Tools for teachers

To empower others to take initiative, this section includes "The "perfect recipe" for a co-creation session" & "9 Must-haves", figure 8.8, and common pitfalls" These are based in the co-sessions during the project and reflect both teacher needs in the session and the theoretical principles from Chapter 8 (e.g., repetition, ownership, flexibility)

Playful reflection

Informed by Horizon 1's emphasis on awareness and light engagement, the final section includes playful prompts like a purpose quiz or word search. These are not superficial — they offer entry points into deeper reflection, especially for teachers who are new to the topic.



Figure 8.7: Two articles in magazine



Figure 8.8: The 9 Must-haves for a creative session

8.2.4 Not and end but a beginning

While the magazine marks an end of this graduation project, it is explicitly designed as a beginning — a starting point for continued reflection, dialogue, and experimentation.

It can serve many purposes, such as:

- An onboarding tool for new teachers
- A conversation starter during team meetings or development days
- A reminder for participants who were part of the sessions
- A visible artefact that keeps the topic alive in staff rooms and classrooms

More than anything, the magazine embodies the core message of this project: change doesn't start with a program — it starts with people, stories, and shared meaning.

By capturing that meaning in a format that is tangible, flexible, and recognisable, the magazine keeps the mindset alive — and makes it transferable.

8.3 Final Recommendations

This chapter presented two artefacts — the roadmap and the magazine — that are not only outputs, but carriers. They emerged from a layered process of co-design, reflection, and synthesis of theory, and are meant to support continued development beyond this project. To support implementation and continuation, I created final general recommendations.

- Start with conversation, not a curriculum change. Purpose develops through relational dynamics, not lesson plans. Create space for informal reflection in team meetings, mentoring, or class dialogue.
- Work outside the system when needed. Use low-pressure moments — away from grading or targets — to reconnect with values and experiment freely.
- Grow through a core group. A motivated team of teachers and students can act as cultural anchors and inspire others through their example.
- Make purpose development and its effect visible and tangible. Use story-based, visual materials (like the magazine) to keep abstract ideas alive in daily routines.

Chapter 8: Key Take-aways

The mindset is translated into artefacts by creating narrative, visual, and strategic tools that support reflection, inspiration, and ownership. These artefacts (roadmap and magazine) help anchor the shift in daily practice and act as tangible reminders of a shared purpose.

- Two key artefacts were developed to support and translate the mindset into daily educational practice:
 - A strategic roadmap outlining a phased approach toward 2028, focusing on growing and embedding purpose development school-wide. It acts as a compass rather than a step-by-step plan.
 - A supporting magazine designed as a narrative tool to inspire others, share real teacher stories, and invite reflection. It visualises progress and sparks conversation.
- Artefacts are not prescriptive: Both tools are designed to be invitational rather than directive — they encourage ownership, storytelling, and flexible adaptation to different contexts.
- Function over form: The value lies in how they are used — in team meetings, onboarding of new teachers, or as part of curriculum reflection — rather than the artefact itself.
- Making the mindset visible: Artefacts act as carriers of culture, reminding educators of their shared purpose and keeping the conversation alive when initial enthusiasm fades.

What now?

This part brings everything together and looks ahead.

In the final part of this report, I step back and reflect on the journey — both in terms of the project outcomes and my own development. What did this project achieve? What still needs to happen?

You'll find a formal conclusion, practical recommendations, and a personal reflection on what I've learned — as a researcher, a designer, and as a person.

9 Conclusion

This graduation project aimed to explore how purpose development in adolescents can be supported through design interventions in secondary education, with the main question:

How can a co-design intervention in secondary education support adolescents in the development of purpose?

The project was guided by five sub-questions; each linked to a specific phase in the process. This section concludes the key findings for each question which led to the final outcomes.

RQ1 — What is purpose and how does it develop?

Answered in Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

Purpose is defined as a long-term, meaningful direction in life that connects self-reflection, contribution, and identity. It is not a fixed goal, but a process of exploration that unfolds over time — especially during adolescence, a phase marked by identity formation.

The literature shows that purpose development relies on three key processes:

- Personal direction (Who am I and what do I want?)
- Future related (Where am I going?)
- Connection to others (Why does it matter for me and others?)

Purpose cannot be taught directly but can be enabled through supportive environments, relationships, and opportunities for meaning making.

RQ2 — What is the current experience of students and teachers?

Addressed in Chapter 4: Analysis

Interviews with students revealed a clear desire for more personal meaning in education. Many students feel school is primarily focused on performance, not identity or motivation. They lack structured moments for own interpretation and feel unseen in terms of who they are and want to become.

Teachers expressed a parallel gap. While they care about students' development, they often lack the time, space, and awareness to engage with purpose as a topic. They feel stuck between curriculum pressure and the desire to support students more holistically.

This gap — between intent and reality — became the starting point for this project.

RQ3 — What needs to happen to foster purpose development?

Explored in Chapters 5 and 6: Co-design and recruitments

Co-design sessions with teachers created the right conditions for purpose development to emerge emotional safety, shared reflection, and creative exploration. Teachers began to shift their mindset, not through instruction but through experience. They described feeling reconnected to their motivation and started seeing their role in a new light.

From this, seven design requirements were formulated:

1. Space for Human Connection
2. Accessible and Inviting Materials
3. Ownership and Shared Leadership
4. Purpose as a Lens, not a Lesson
5. Link to Existing Practice
6. Shared Values and Social Context
7. Student Voice as a Spark

These requirements became the foundation for the final design direction.

RQ4 — How can we ensure this mindset shift continues and grows?

Addressed in Chapter 8: Design for longevity

Theory and model research showed that mindset change is fragile — it requires repetition, anchoring, and cultural support to become sustainable. Using models such as Lewin's Change Theory, the Learning Arches, and Diffusion of Innovation, five guiding principles for long-term impact were formulated:

1. Embed in culture, not calendar
2. Grow from the core
3. Anchor in routines and rituals
4. Make it visible and concrete
5. Design for transfer and adaptation

These principles informed the structure and tone of the final artefacts.

RQ5 — How can this be translated into artefacts?

Realised in Chapter 9: The supporting artefacts

The mindset shift was translated into the following artefacts:

- A roadmap, offering a phased pathway towards 2028, with milestones aligned to school dynamics and teacher needs.
 - A supporting magazine, designed as a narrative and visual tool that keeps the conversation alive and invites new teachers into the process.

Both artefacts were developed through an iterative process and grounded in co-created insights and theory. They are not meant to control behaviour, but to carry forward the desired mindset that emerged during the sessions.

10 Discussion

10.1 Discussion on outcomes

While this project presents a hopeful and practice-based approach to enabling purpose development in schools, it is important to reflect critically on its scope, limitations, and broader relevance. This chapter discusses several key themes that emerged throughout the process and considers what they mean for future applications of this work — in both design and education.

10.2 The power and limits of mindset change

The project demonstrated that a shift in mindset among teachers is possible — and that co-design can be a powerful enabler of this transformation. However, mindset change is fragile, especially when it remains isolated within a small group. The core challenge is scaling this transformation without losing its authenticity and real nature. If purpose development becomes a policy or checklist, it risks becoming the very opposite of what it is meant to be: meaningful, personal, and reflective.

This creates a tension between organic growth and institutional embedding, which future implementations will need to navigate carefully.

10.3 Intrinsic motivator teachers

Another critical point lies in the notion of participation. Teachers participated in the co-design sessions with openness and enthusiasm but most of all intrinsic motivation. The true change occurred

when they began to take ownership of the ideas and translate them into their own context because of the personal resonance with the topic.

The long-term success depends on how new teachers transfer from being part of this mindset to truly integrating and owning it. This is not something that can be forced or pre-designed, it needs to come from the teachers itself and experiencing the effects on their students.

10.4 The Role of the designer

Throughout this project, my role altered between problem-solver, facilitator and connector. I did not deliver a solution, but instead created space for reflection, storytelling, and shared meaning. This felt meaningful and impactful — but also revealed a deeper question: What happens when the designer/facilitator leaves?

This is especially relevant in a contexts like education, where co-design and design thinking is normally not present and change mainly depends on leadership and top-down management. This underlines the importance of designing not just solution, but requirements and principles for continuity.

This project suggests that designers working in education must move beyond one-off interventions and consider how to embed design capacity within the system itself.

10.5 Limitations

In the context of this project and its outcomes, several limitations should be acknowledged:

Context-specificity

The project was embedded in one school (Wolfert Tweekalig) and in collaboration with a specific group of motivated teachers and the PHD from Ruth Frans. While depth was prioritised over breadth, this limits direct transferability to other contexts and re-doing this process with the same results.

Selective participation and unmeasured student outcomes

While the co-design sessions revealed promising shifts in teacher mindset, it is worth noting that participants were self-selected and possibly more open to reflective practice than the average teacher. This raises questions about how the intervention would be received in less motivated or more constrained settings.

Additionally, the project did not directly assess its impact on students — the ultimate beneficiaries of the purpose development mindset. While the artefacts aim to create better conditions for students over time, this connection remains indirect and untested within the scope of this project. Future iterations should consider involving students more systematically and measuring outcomes related to their experience.

Researcher involvement

As both designer and facilitator, I was deeply involved in the sessions. This created strong trust — but may also have

influenced the outcomes. The true test will be how the mindset and materials evolve when used independently of the designer.

Time constraints

Mindset change on purpose development and its effects on students unfolds over years, not months. This project offered a meaningful start, but long-term impact remains to be seen — and will require further commitment from the school community.

Personal reflection

When I started this project, I thought I was going to design something concrete — a tool or a ready to use method. How that would look, and whether it was even possible, lingered in the back of my mind. Along the way, I discovered that the most meaningful outcomes don't always take the form of classic deliverables. As a strategic design student, I was familiar with iterative processes and reframing the initial question, but this project asked more of my "trust the process" mindset than any other I've done so far.

What makes me smile as I am writing this reflection, is realising that this required mindset turned out to be the very core of the project. The results were shaped within the process itself. With the right support, creativity, and openness, something powerful emerged — even through moments of doubt, frustration, and big emotions (including a few tears). But each time, I stayed close to the people I was designing with, and did not give up.

This reminds me of another side quest I completed next to my master graduation: Finishing my first ever marathon in April 2025. When people asked me how the day was, I replied the same to all: "het was 10 keer sterven, maar 11 keer opstaan. But the reward is a feeling I cannot describe." And that's exactly how this master project felt as well.

Next to this, facilitating this process again showed me how powerful it is to work with people instead of for them. The moments of recognition between teachers, the willingness to share doubts, and the motivation to continue — even when I stepped back in the future of this particular— gave me more satisfaction than any polished prototype ever could. It gives me the feeling that this project can have an impact and might make a real impact, like I wanted in the beginning.

But this project made me hungry for education and working with adolescents. That's why, in august 2025, I will continue

my academic path, and I will become a Physics teachers for secondary school to see how what I learned can be done in real. I want to work with youth and have a real impact. I'd maybe this all together, for me that's what this project really was: an exercise in staying open for anything. Open to change, to reflection, to the messiness of what life has to offer. I'm proud of the result, but even more of the path I took to get here. I think, it made me a better designer, and a more developed person (still in progress of course ;))

And looking back to the question my dad asked me when I was a little girl: What is the meaning of life? That's simpler now, it's not about the final destination, it's about the journey and the things and people you meet along the way.

Thank you for reading.

Bauke

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