



Citizenship Education for MBO Students: Fostering Belonging and Understanding of Politics

The current form of our democracy is not inclusive. Therefore, local governments try to enable political participation (Slingerland et al., 2020). Political participatory forms do not seem to have a great impact on policy, despite positive intentions (Edens & Klabbers, 2019). Youth is often not involved in political participation and policy-making, 6 out of 10 youngsters between 18 and 25 feel politically powerless. These numbers are even higher for MBO students Binnema et al., 2007). Citizenship education shows promises to increase the political participation of youth over time (Slijkhuis, 2021). Citizenship education in the Netherlands is currently in need of improvement as well as Dutch students' citizenship skills (Onderwijsinspectie, 2022).

This graduation project has researched citizenship education and the political participation of students. The project aims to increase political participation by youngsters through the means of citizenship education. Extended qualitative research, using the Design Thinking Method (Chasanidou et al., 2015) and Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), helped to create an in-depth understanding of the context. The empathic approach of the project highlighted the complexity of the problem. The main insights showed that the development of youths' citizenship skills happens in a complex system. Learning these skills happens all around, in multiple contexts, in direct and indirect ways. Developing citizenship skills does not simply happen in citizenship classes.

The in-depth data was translated into a system map. The map visualizes and clarifies the complexity of the context researched. An online version of the map allows for easy communication of the insights in a structured and visual way. The system map communicates several aspects. First of all, the map consists of two main aspects: situational contexts, that students encounter and two feelings that shape a political attitude. The feeling of understanding and the feeling of belonging influence the extent to which students feel intrinsically motivated to participate politically. The situational contexts and their corresponding factors influence the

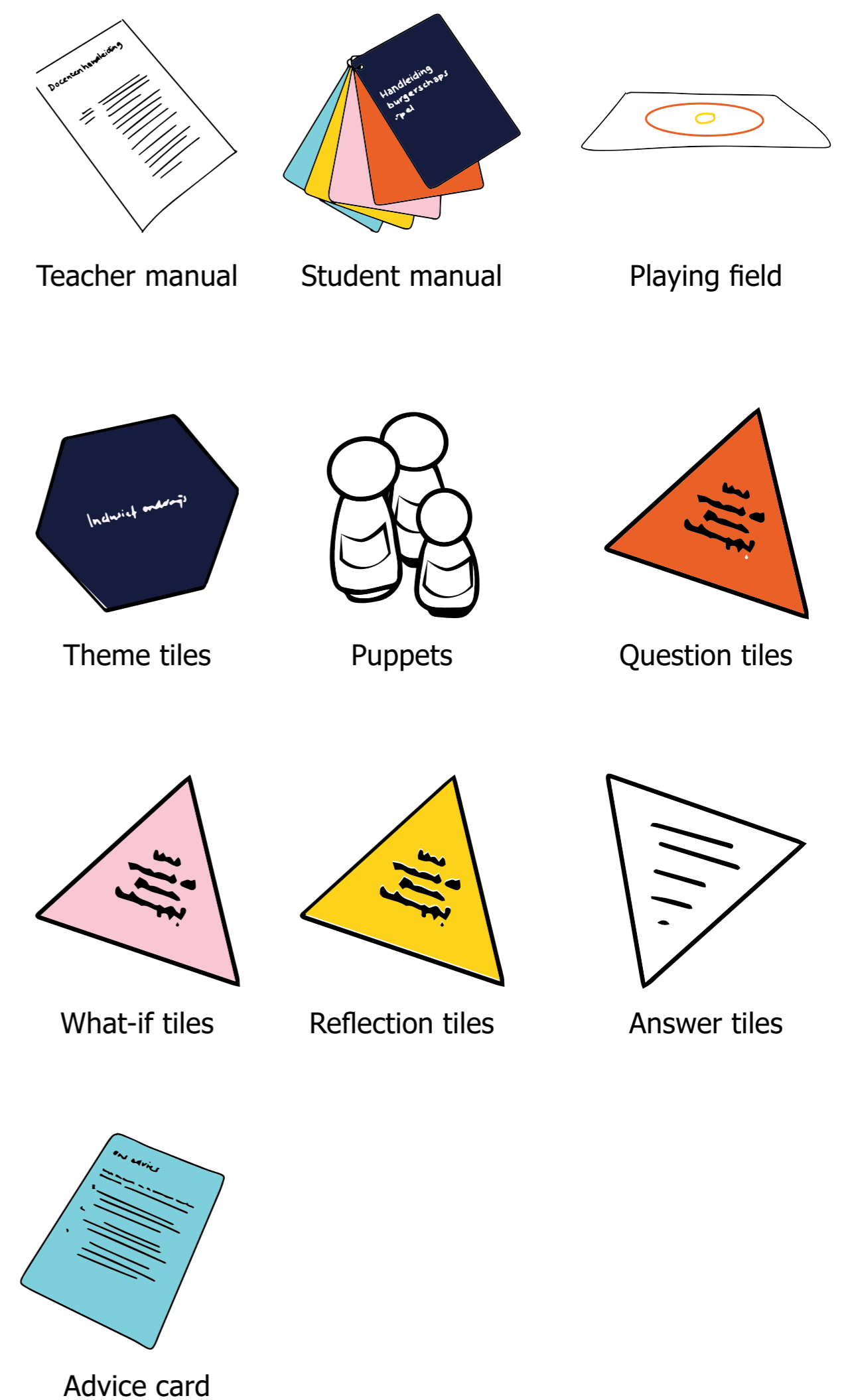
fulfillment of these two feelings.

The design phase is supported by the map for thorough understanding. The map facilitates understanding during the design phase. The design goal is to strengthen the understanding of the relation between MBO students' daily lives and the municipality, by facilitating a moment to see this relation, while performing an activity in class. With a desired effect in mind, to make sure students feel competent to be part of politics and be of influence.

Various ideas were generated in ideation activities involving multiple stakeholders. Three design directions were considered and narrowed down to the final design direction. A citizenship program in class. This design direction was tested iteratively in six user tests. Resulting in the final design: 'de Meester Burger', a citizenship program that strengthens the understanding of MBO students' daily lives and the municipality. de Meester Burger is a tool to be used in class. Students work in small groups on municipal themes of choice. The steps of the tool guide students through an exploratory process enabling them to explore their own opinions by facilitating a tangible conversation. Students discover, share, and discuss various insights concerning the chosen theme. The tool supports a what-do-you-think and learning-by-doing approach, delivering advice to the municipality based on insights and ideas generated throughout the steps. Overall de Meester Burger aims to create a meaningful learning experience in class increasing students feeling of understanding and belonging towards the municipality.

However, more extensive research is needed to test and improve the impact of de Meester Burger. Design recommendations suggest for example testing while including the municipality actively, involving other themes, and testing the concept with more MBO students from various levels and professions. Also testing over a longer period is recommended to be able to measure and prove the promises of the tool.

The materials of de Meester Burger:



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Design for Interaction

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