Paper

From honors education to regular education: learning from the content of innovations

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Abstract
At the introduction of honors programs in Dutch higher education, stakeholders assumed that honors education could stimulate innovation in regular education. Whether this assumption holds was researched in the 'Transfer of honors education to regular education' project. This article focuses on the question of whether teachers' experiences with honors education stimulated innovations in regular education and about structural characteristics in relation to the content, teaching formats, and pedagogics of the innovations. Interviews were conducted with teachers from four universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands. The results show that teachers in regular education found honors programs to provide them an opportunity to work with content, teaching formats, and pedagogics that they were unfamiliar with. Through these teachers, the honors approach inspired innovation in regular programs. Strikingly, these innovations contain to some degree all 14 structural characteristics of honors education distinguished in this study. The findings indicate the great innovative potential of honors education for regular education.

Keywords: honors program; transfer of innovation; higher education; structural honors characteristics

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1. Introduction: learning from innovations
At the introduction of honors programs in Dutch higher education, one of the thoughts behind that introduction was that it could stimulate innovation in regular education. Honors education, it was expected, would not only provide an additional development opportunity

for the participating students but also give an impulse to the process of quality enhancement of regular education and thus be useful for all students.

Honors programs refer to specially developed programs for students who can and want to do more than the regular program offers them (Van Eijl, Pilot & Wolfensberger, 2010). The regular program is often one which is mostly disciplinary. Often, honors programs are mainly extra-curricular and earn students a separate degree or certificate upon completion. Typical characteristics include more open, complex, and authentic assignments, more multi/interdisciplinary collaboration (within various domains and between institutions), more room for self-direction and creativity of the student, and more attention to community-building, personal development, and critical reflection (Coppoolse, Eijl & Pilot, 2013). In this style of honors education, the instructor primarily has a coaching and inspirational role in the student's study and work. Honors programs, by their very nature, are not uniform or static. A study (Allen, Belfi, Velden, et al. 2015) of honors programs at four research universities and four universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands that participated in the Sirius program (a stimulus by the Dutch government) revealed a wide variety of honors programs in the Netherlands. The study of Allen et al. (2015) also shows that students participating in honors programs are generally motivated, engaged, active, and ambitious students with a need for deepening or broadening their education. A self-assessment in which students participated showed that honors students from universities of applied sciences experience a relatively strong development of their leadership competencies. They also have a higher intrinsic study motivation than their fellow students who did not follow an honors program. Honors students from research universities experience a relatively strong development of their research and presentation skills, ambition, and perseverance compared to regular students but a lesser development of their creativity. On tests for generic cognitive skills – quantitative reasoning and critical thinking – honors students achieve higher levels than students who do not participate in an honors program. Focus group discussions revealed that honors programs can help ensure that students who do not feel sufficiently challenged or in need of other types of education do not drop out of their regular education prematurely. Furthermore, there is community-building among honors students.

In another study (Kolster, 2020), it became clear that honors programs act as testing grounds for educational innovation. The study of Kolster also shows that spin-off from honors programs takes place in the form of entire (or parts of) programs or innovations in pedagogics that carry over into regular education. The teachers of honors programs often act as ambassadors for educational innovation. A condition, however, is that these teachers remain active in both honors and regular programs. That study also showed that effects at UAS's (Universities of Applied Sciences) are mostly observed in working with multidisciplinary issues and the teacher in a coaching role.

In previous research (Eijl & Pilot, 2019; Wolfensberger, Eijl & Pilot,, 2012), it also became clear that good examples of honors education sometimes inspire regular education and lead to changes there. This prompted the research described in this article. The research focuses on the question of the content of the innovations: which structural characteristics of honors education are important in the transfer of honors experiences of teachers to innovations in regular programs? The question of the course of innovation processes will be discussed in a

subsequent article. The results of the research described here are intended for teachers, administrators, and researchers so that they can gain more insight into the content of this type of innovation.

In our current study, faculty members from four universities of applied sciences were interviewed who had experience with innovating their regular education based on experiences in their honors education. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with them in 2019 and 2020, which yielded 11 cases of innovation where honors experiences were an inspiration. Based on an analysis of the completed interviews, results are summarized and illustrated with quotes from the interviews. A number of conclusions are drawn. This study was produced at the request of the honors network of universities of applied sciences (UAS's) in the Netherlands.

2. Theoretical framework

A previous study (Van Eijl & Pilot, 2019) focused on the collection and analysis of good examples of honors education. The idea behind this was that these examples are important in the innovation of education because "a good example is good to follow." The analysis revealed that six of the 19 examples had been inspiring for innovation in both other honors courses and in regular education. In this regard, the context of a good example is important because a good example usually cannot be copied and used successfully without adaptation to that context. However, the educational design of the good example or elements of it can be inspiring to others. To draw lessons from peer experiences or insights, teachers must "translate" a good example to their own local situation (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2009). The present study is concerned with how teachers use experiences gained in successful honors education to work on innovations in regular education. The theoretical framework is intended to systematically question, describe, and interpret the innovations studied (the "cases") and their results.

2.1 Structural Characteristics of honors education

The focus in this part of the study is on the structural characteristics of honors education, such as content, teaching formats, pedagogics, open assignments, complexity, multidisciplinary issues, etc. In this way, it can be examined which of these characteristics can be found in regular education innovated under the influence of honors education. These structural characteristics are derived from descriptions of honors programs. The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) (2014) in the United States used a list of "Basic Characteristics of a fully developed Honors Program," but the emphasis is on organizational characteristics in that list. In the interviews with honors students from Dutch honors programs in universities of applied sciences (Lappia, et al., 2014), the structural characteristics of the Dutch honors program emerge, as also in the Lappia-van Es (2015) research on practice-based honors programs, the research of Weerheijm and Miltenburg (2017) on powerful learning environments, and the book *Hoogvliegers(High Flyers)* (Coppoolse, Eijl & Pilot, 2013). Those common structural characteristics were reformulated and grouped by the authors below in the categories educational design, goals and content, assessment, and admission (see Table 1).

Table 1: Common structural characteristics of honors education

Educational design:
1. Open assignments: assignments without an already known or "easy to fix" solution
2. Complex issues: need multiple perspectives or have multiple stakeholders
3. Issues from external partners: real-life professional partners with real-life professional issues
4. Teamwork: working together as a group (social) and working together in emerging different knowledge and disciplines
5. Community-building: to become a bonded group
6. Formation of contact network: using or finding external professionals to gain knowledge to be able to work on the issue at hand
7. Peer feedback: being able to give and receive feedback in good harmony with peers
8. Multi/interdisciplinary cooperation (within domain and between domains): acknowledge that and act upon the idea that "complex issues" require more than one discipline to solve them
9. Forms of education with more freedom for the student: using a non-prescriptive way of teaching and coaching, using an autonomy-supportive teaching style

Goals and content:
10. Other objectives: aiming for context-specific and -dependent knowledge and skills
11. New course content: content specifically determined by context and circumstances
12. More focus on certain skills (e.g., communication, presentation, collaboration) and attitudes: mostly non-disciplinary skills but connected to direct professional performance

Assessment:
13. Other forms of assessment: finding ways to assess all different aspects of the professional performance
14. Higher/different assessment requirements: "assessing" as a way of stimulating learning and developing in the broadest possible way

Admission:
15. Regulated admission: admission based on interest in the content of the issue, the context, or the complexity of the issue offered and study progress

3. Research questions, research methods, and cases

3.1 Research questions

The research question in this study is: What structural characteristics of honors education inspired educational innovations in the regular program?

3.2 Research method and data collection

As the method of this explorative research project, cross-case analysis was chosen (Creswell, 2007). A selection was made of cases of educational innovation in regular education in which honors education was an inspiration. This selection took place through members of the Dutch (HBO) honors network of universities of applied sciences (UAS's) because they were well informed about honors programs and educational innovations within their universities and about who was involved in this form of educational innovation. All members of the network were asked if they knew examples of innovations in the regular program(s) which were inspired by experiences in the honors program(s) and that the teacher(s) involved was

willing to participate in this research. This included 16 universities of applied sciences that are involved in honors programs.

A total of 11 cases were submitted from four universities of applied sciences. These four universities taught in 2020 33.9 % of all students in this type of universities in the Netherlands. Other universities did not submit cases because they had insufficient data available about this type of innovation project or had no honors programs (usually smaller UAS's). The total number of innovative cases in UAS's has not been the subject of research in this study. Fourteen teachers involved in the 11 cases agreed to participate in the study and were subsequently interviewed by the researchers (the first two authors). A questionnaire for semi-open interviews was used. That questionnaire was based on the main components of the theoretical framework. Semi-open interviews were chosen to give the interviewees plenty of room to contribute their own experiences and opinions in the widely varying cases. All interviewees checked the transcribed and summarized text of the (audio-recorded) interview and completed it if necessary (member check). Data were categorized by the first two authors until agreement between them was reached. The scores on the questions about the honors characteristics were clustered. In addition, documents on the educational innovation in question were also analyzed. The scores were added up and included in Table 3. The data were categorized with codes for each of the characteristics. The characteristics in Table 1 were used to code the interview and documentation data. Matching quotes were taken from the interviews for illustration. Finally, conclusions were drawn by the rule that higher scores equal higher spin-off effects from the results.

3.3 Eleven cases
The interviews with teachers yielded 11 cases of regular education that had changed in part because of experiences with honors education. The 11 cases are listed in Table 2 with a brief indication of the educational institution, content, and context of the educational innovation.

4. Results
The results of this study are intended to inspire teachers and policymakers so that they can see what the content of these innovations can be. To this end, the various results include quotes from the interviews that are illustrative of those results.

4.1 Characteristics of honors education that inspired innovations in the regular program
The interview data were analyzed in terms of, among other things, honors characteristics and their coherence working through into new or redesigned regular education. The extent to which honors structural characteristics were used in the regular program is not the same for all cases. Overall, many structural characteristics of honors education were adopted in the studied cases, especially the characteristics "open, complex assignments from external partners" (nos. 1, 2, and 3), the characteristics "teamwork," "community-building," "peer feedback," and "multi/interdisciplinary cooperation" (nos. 4, 5, 7, and 8), and more focus on certain skills (no. 12). No. 15 "regulated admission" was not scored because this typical honors characteristic does not apply to regular education. Table 3 below shows a cumulative score of the 11 cases. A distinction was made between adoption of the structural characteristic (++), partial adoption (+),and no adoption unclear adoption, or still under development (0).

Table 2: Overview of the cases studied

Case	Description
1. Minor+ Silicon Venturing Rotterdam (Rotterdam UAS)	With student projects at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital (ASZ). Size: 30 EC's. (EC = European Credit Transfer System). The minor is open to all fourth-year students of UAS Rotterdam and other universities of applied sciences.
2. Minor+ Promising Care (Kansrijke Zorg) (Rotterdam UAS).	Midwifery program (30 ECs) of the Institute for Healthcare (IVG) is open to students from all programs. Students learned and used a narrative approach, had to guide the community meetings more themselves, and steered their work projects themselves.
3. Bachelor program Sport Marketing and Management (Rotterdam UAS)	Bachelor program in which students are in the lead and are stimulated in their curiosity about the content. They had to organize more themselves, do workshops from external organizations, and had to meet stricter requirements by the assessments.
4. Bachelor program Community "Creative Management & Sales" (Rotterdam UAS)	Bachelor program the Community "Creative Management & Sales" with more open and complex issues, more teamwork, and more community building.
5. Master's module Social Innovation Physical Therapy Musculoskeletal Therapy (Saxion UAS)	Part of the three-year master's program (part-time MSc) Musculoskeletal Therapy for physical therapists where students work on self-invented and self-directed projects in social innovation.
6. Minor Law in Practice for non-lawyers, module: law in practice II (Saxion UAS)	Module "Law in practice II": an interdisciplinary group of third and fourth year students from different disciplines. Focus on skills such as collaboration, entrepreneurial skills, and personal development (getting to know oneself).
7. Course ("lab") Innovation and Entrepreneurship International Resource Management course third year (Saxion UAS)	(5 EC, 140 hours in 10 weeks) in the third year of their program. This course is part of a larger whole consisting of five "labs" in the third year. There is more emphasis on skills and personal development.
8. Graduation program Human Resource Management (HRM) and International HRM program (Saxion UAS)	Multidisciplinary work of the students and freedom to graduate with innovative professional products.
9. New design Curriculum Bachelor Built Environment (Hanze UAS)	Bachelor Built Environment (BE) was revised several years ago. The experiences with the honors program were used for the revision. BE originated from a combination of the programs Civil Engineering, Construction, and Spatial Development.
10. Innovative curriculum line in Bachelor Law (Hanze UAS)	Curriculum line (5 EC) in Bachelor (UAS) Law and Social Legal Services. Some elements/assignments of the honors program are included in the regular program.
11. Innovative course Journalism with Fact Checking (UAS Utrecht)	The experiences in the honors program with education in Fact Checking (5 EC) have been used in introducing this subject in the regular Bachelor program Journalism.

Table 3: Structural characteristics (Ch.) of honors education adopted in innovation regular education in the 11 cases studied.

Common structural characteristics of honors education	++ (adopted)	+ (partially adopted)	0 (not adopted or unclear adoption)
Educational design:			
1. Open assignments	10	1	0
2. Complex issues	8	3	0
3. Issues from external partners	9	2	0
4. Teamwork	10	1	0
5. Community-building	6	4	1
6. Formation of contact network	3	5	3
7. Peer feedback	9		2
8. Multi/interdisciplinary cooperation (within domain and between domains)	5	2	4
9. Forms of education with more freedom for the student	3	7	1
Goals and content:			
10. Other objectives	10	0	1
11. New course content	10	0	1
12. More focus on certain skills (e.g., communication, presentation, collaboration) and attitudes	10	1	0
Assessment:			
13. Other forms of assessment	10	0	1
14. Higher/different assessment requirements	8	1	2
Admission:			
15. Regulated admission	0	0	11

How the honors structural characteristics took shape in the cases is very different. In some educational programs, students start working on issues of external partners; in other educational programs, they also work on their own questions. Students have to get used to the new approach in the beginning. Striking in that process of getting used to it are the special starting assignments that students are sometimes given so that they immediately start working actively, rather than passively following a lecture first. There are also just-in-time parts of programs that are instructional in nature on a need-to-know basis (Pilot & Bulte, 2006). The following quotes illustrate some of the honors structural characteristics.

4.2 "Translating" urgency from the professional field into the classroom (Ch. 3 Ext. partners)
Developments in practice can be so urgent that education must respond quickly. An example comes from Case 11 (Journalism with fact-checking), where the topic of fact-checking became very important in journalism in a short period of time. As illustrated by the quote below, experiences in the honors programs made it possible to quickly innovate the regular program in response to developments in the professional field.

"There was an urgency from the journalism profession and society. In professional practice and due to changes in the media landscape, there was a lot of misinformation, disinformation and 'fake news.' This was suddenly a hot topic that we as journalism education had to 'do something' about. Based on the experience gained in the honors program, we have introduced fact-checking into the regular program using the developed educational content, forms of work, tools, and teaching methods of the honors program's WTFact project."

4.3 Challenge for the student (Ch 3: External partners; 4: Teamwork; 9: more freedom)

Regarding the forms of instruction used, the Case 6 (Law in practice for non-lawyers) teacher challenges her students and expects that students take responsibility for their learning and take initiative for organizing relevant events and products:

"By the way the lessons are offered and you are challenged to learn to think, we try to match your personal motivation. For us, this means that you experience the feeling that you believe: 'I can do it,' 'I have direction,' and 'I matter.' With the class we take on challenges in which there is room for you to learn together with and from each other and in which the choice of working forms during the lessons in this minor simulates learning with the field. I have a facilitating, coaching role in this and that means that you will literally get out from behind your tables in the lessons. You will also have to organize relevant events and come up with and implement appropriate creative work forms."

4.4 Multidisciplinary work (Ch 2: Complex issues; 3: External partners; 8: Multidisciplinarity)

The content of the cases also covers a wide range of topics, some of which are explicitly intended for a multidisciplinary group of students, such as "Promising Care" (Case 2, Promising Care/Kansrijke zorg), "Law in Practice for Non-Lawyers" (Case 6, Law in practice for non-lawyers), "Human Resource Management" (Case 8, Graduation program HRM), "Built Environment" (Case 9, Bachelor Built Environment) and "Silicon Venturing Rotterdam" (Case 1, Silicon Venturing Rotterdam). Below is an example of the multidisciplinary nature in a graduate program (Case 8, Graduation program HRM), explained by the teacher interviewed. In this example, students learned to work in an innovative way, not with a disciplinary project but with complex multidisciplinary issues from external partners. They worked in multidisciplinary groups with both honors and regular students.

"The immediate reason to think about educational innovation came from the complex, multidisciplinary issues from companies. Honors students were allowed to graduate on these in multidisciplinary groups and were given the freedom to graduate with innovative professional products. Non-honors students got sucked into this and it grew. We found this a much more interesting way of working than the traditional one. Because non-honors students were taken in tow by honors students, it also worked out quite well. Also successful was the cooperation between the thesis supervisors who sometimes had experience with honors education and sometimes did not. They nudged each other."

4.5 Treating students in an honors manner (Ch. 9: More freedom for the student)

In the cases, it became clear that teachers treat their regular students more in an honors manner by empowering them and connecting to their perceptions and accepting them. This is illustrated in an excerpt from an interview with the Law teacher from Case 6 (Law in practice for non-lawyers):

"From the first lesson, I treat the students in the honors way. That's how I take them with me. At the start of the module, I see students sitting back and waiting. Subsequently, I see more and more students taking the lead, both with regard to content and forms of work within classes. My role as a teacher is to empower students by connecting to their perceptions and seeing and accepting them. That is always the very first and most important step that I take to implement educational innovation. I really believe in that. That also means that I think it is incredibly important to design a very good educational plan, in which the student is in fact lovingly encouraged to step over the edge and in that way allow his or her talents to blossom optimally. That's where I like to guide students."

4.6 Students more at the helm (Ch. 9: Forms of education with more freedom for the student)
In the cases are many examples of the promotion of an active role of the students in their learning process facilitated by more freedom. The following quote (Case 2, Promising Care/Kansrijke zorg) is an example. In this example, the teacher stimulates the students by suggesting a more active role in the meetings. Students took the responsibility for starting the community meetings and became in that way a more open contact with each other.

"After a week, one student said that they didn't actually know each other well and that that was an obstacle to a more open contact. The teacher suggested that from now on they open the community meetings themselves. Each time there were two students who went about opening the community meeting in all kinds of ways they had thought up themselves. That was a tipping point in the group; after that there was more openness."

4.7 Promoting attitude development (Ch. 12: More focus on certain skills and attitudes)
Promoting an inquisitive attitude was mentioned a couple of times in the interviews. The teacher of Case 6 (Law in practice for non-lawyers) promoted an inquisitive attitude in combination with the writing and presentation of a good-quality article:

"What you need is a curious, inquisitive and open attitude in which you become proficient in the various 21st century skills as listed in the 'rubric' for the experiential meeting. In addition, you will need to make use of your curious, inquisitive attitude by taking a well and solidly grounded (written and oral) position based on relevant facts, legal rules, case law, and clear and credible argumentation when you go to write the article for the Law Shop."

4.8 'Innovation oriented' competency becomes important for regular education
In the UAS Rotterdam, research was carried out to an innovation-oriented competency. In this research, five competencies for "Learning to Innovate" (Veltman-Van Vugt, 2018) were formulated and used in the honors programs of that university. In Case 1 (Silicon Venturing Rotterdam), these competencies were also used in the regular program. These are explained in the study guide for this case as 1) innovation-oriented, 2) demand-oriented, 3) multidisciplinary-oriented, 4) interactive learning capacity, and 5) knowledge creation. This example shows how a powerful innovation, the five competencies for learning to innovate, in the honors programs of this university transfers to a minor+ of the regular program, and it became in that way a more open form of education (Characteristic 9).

4.9 More attention to skill development (Ch. 12: More focus on certain skills and attitudes)
In 10 out of 11 cases, the focus on skills development (Ch. 12) was notable. For example, the following was said about it:
- Learning to cooperate intensively, also with students from other programs (Case 1).

- Communication through stories (narrative approach) and students received presentation training (Case 2).
- From the beginning, "social skills'" are important (Case 3).
- Personal development of the student is important (Case 4).
- Systems thinking in action and leadership through process facilitation (Case 5).
- 21st century skills for the 21st century lawyer (Case 6).
- There is an increased focus on skills such as collaboration, entrepreneurial skills, personal development (getting to know oneself), ICT literacy, 'tech-savvy', critical thinking and investigative skills (Case 7).
- Dealing with sometimes conflicting feedback from different angles from practitioners (Case 1 and Case 8).
- More attention to attitude, critical approach, collaboration, and 21st century skills (Case 9).
- Greater focus on, for example, communication, presentation and collaboration skills, and attitude development (case 10).

In the examples a diversity of skills is mentioned: collaborative skills for working met students from other programs, social skills in dealing with conflicting feedback, entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking skills or the wide range of 21st century skills, communication skills, and so on. Depending on the course or program involved, certain skills are emphasized.

4.10 Different method of assessment (Ch. 13: Other forms of assessment)
In the innovations, students are often given more freedom, which also gives more diversity in their results. The methods of assessment had to be adapted to this change. In the next example, a portfolio is mentioned but also the possibility for students to propose a well-argued evaluation of it.

"Students make a portfolio and there is a rubric to assess it (Case 7, Innovation and entrepreneurship). The fact that it is with a rubric is not new. But the fact that students are allowed to complete it themselves about their own performance and provide the evidence for it, is new. The form is also completely free. Originality and individuality play a greater role in assessment."

4.11 Gradual structured use of the honors characteristics in the study program
Different structural honors characteristics are mentioned in te following example. Throughout the bachelor curriculum, more of these characteristics are introduced, such as more issues from external partners, teamwork, and community-building, while also the importance of personal development of the students is emphasized.

"In the new program (Case 4, Bachelor Community Creative Management & Sales) there are more open and complex issues. Real, complex practical problems always take center stage. However, there is a gradual build-up of these throughout the curriculum. More issues from external partners are addressed, there is more teamwork and more community building. The term training has even been replaced by the term community. Above all, the personal development of the student has become more important."

4.12 Coherent groups of honors characteristics have impact on regular education
The cases almost never involve the impact of only one honors characteristic. It is usually a group of coherent characteristics of honors education that have an effect on regular

education. For example, large open-ended assignments are often complex and require teamwork to arrive at a solution. When issues from external partners are involved, a multidisciplinary approach is often required. This approach in turn has consequences for the objectives, the flexibility of course content, and assessment. In promoting student cooperation (characteristic 4), community-building (characteristic 6) also plays a role, as in Case 7 (Innovation and entrepreneurship):

"There is a focus on community-building: students work in groups of five, discuss learning objectives and help each other achieve learning goals. Students can develop their own sessions outside the walls of the university: this makes them think, is inspiring and innovative."

4.13 Characteristics used in different levels of the program
Striking is that the innovations based on honors experiences are not limited to one type of educational unit but are very varied in their application in regular education (see Table 2). The cases include three four-year undergraduate programs, three minor programs (or parts thereof), a master's module, three (parts of) undergraduate courses, and a graduate program. Most cases have existed for a number of years. In all cases, students receive credits because the education is not extra-curricular but regular education. Therefore, for honors students taking this regular education, additional assessment criteria sometimes apply in connection with their honors certification. It is notable that two cases (8 and 10) are originally honors education that have been opened to all regular students with modifications. Also, entire undergraduate programs were designed in a new way (cases 3, 4, and 9) in which experiences of teachers with honors characteristics played an important role.

4.14 Development of vision of education
The adoption of honors characteristics and their correlation show a development of teachers' underlying vision of teaching, which is actually inspired by experiences with or questions from professional practices. The shift within teaching is from an emphasis on structured knowledge transfer to more room for student self-direction, self-discovery, experiential learning, development, application, and evaluation. A shift in objectives, as in some cases, to the competence profile :Learning to innovate" (Veltman-Van Vugt, 2018) emphasizes this shift in vision.

5. Conclusions
This explorative research of the 11 cases provided new insights into the content of innovations in regular higher education based on expertise and inspiration from honors programs. This provides indications for teachers in other honors programs for innovation activities to use their honors experiences in regular higher education programs. Further research is however required into the development of these innovation processes and the factors that can lead to their success.

Starting from the original question, "What structural characteristics of honors education inspired educational innovations in the regular program?" the following conclusion has been drawn for the 11 cases studied: We can overall conclude that the analysis of the 11 cases studied reveals a great innovative potential of honors programs for regular programs. Experiences with honors education appear to inspire teachers to innovate content, form,

and pedagogics in regular education. And that both at the level of a module or course but also at the level of a minor, graduation track, or even an entire bachelor program. And all in many fields of study. Experiences of teachers with honors education who also teach in the regular program turns out to be a stimulating factor for educational innovation.

In the innovation of a regular program inspired by the experiences with an honors program, the following characteristics are of great importance: (1) Open, complex assignments often with an external partner, (2) collaboration in teams, with peer feedback and community formation and (3) attention to (communication) skills. These characteristics are often a group of related characteristics of honors education that carry over into regular education, rather than the carry-over of just one feature. For example, large open-ended assignments are often complex and require teamwork to reach a solution. When issues from external partners are involved, a multidisciplinary approach is usually required. In adopting the honors characteristics in their context, a development can be seen in teachers' vision of education. This shifts from an emphasis on structured knowledge transfer to more room for student self-direction, self-discovery and development, and experiential learning. These innovations may involve large-scale changes of four-year bachelor programs but also small-scale changes involving minors, a graduate program, courses, modules (both bachelor and master), and innovations within a course. And that is in a multitude of subject areas.

6. Discussion

6.1 The interview questions
The 11 main questions were answered in the interviews or afterwards in writing by practically all teachers. Not all sub-questions were answered by all teachers, often due to lack of time. This means that the answers to some sub-questions are not from all 11 cases but sometimes from fewer cases.

6.2 The honors structural characteristics
The honors structural characteristics distinguished here were quite recognizable to the faculty members interviewed. They could well indicate which ones had been used to a greater or lesser extent in the innovation of regular education. The characteristics mentioned by the teacher(s) were always innovative in his or her context. Or, as Otto et al. (2018) quote a teacher in their research, ''Maybe this is not so new for someone else, but in my teaching it is.'' Not all structural characteristics are illustrated with quotes. The use of some characteristics in innovation has implications automatically for other characteristics. An emphasis on skill development for instance may result in changes in objectives, contact, and (higher) assessment requirements

6.3 The content of the innovations
Much remains to be said about the specific content of the innovations. None of the innovations studied is the same. Each innovation is unique. This is evident in the quotes from the interviews, all of which refer to aspects of the innovations. For some more detailed examples of what these types of innovations can look like, see Otto et al. (2018) and Eijl at al. (2019).

6.4 Policy about honors and innovation within an institution
The four universities whose cases were studied are active in honor programs and innovation of education. It should be further investigated whether there is a relationship between innovations inspired by honors programs and an institution's policy on educational innovation. This is important to maximize the innovation potential of this mode of educational innovation. For example, Kolster (2020) found several effects relevant to an institution's policy in his study with five cases on the impact of excellence education at an institution. At the organizational level, one notable effect was the creation of new collaborative structures, especially among teachers involved in excellence education. Frequently heard external effects were further increased reputation and visibility of the institution by offering excellence education.

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