

# Teaching Statement

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Both my research foci and my extensive experience with teaching at different levels of university education have informed and shaped my teaching skills and philosophy. First and foremost, to me, education is not about one-sided knowledge transfers from lecturers to students. Instead, it is a process of mutual exchange; lecturers share their expertise in specific areas, and students contribute with their own thoughts and insights, preferably in the reversed order (i.e., in a flipped classroom setting). Hence, in class, students should feel safe and even encouraged to speak up. I often pose questions to stimulate critical thinking and discussion. As a lecturer, I am there to guide discussions that will unfold. I hereby establish links to theory and to topical, practical examples that appeal to students' perceptions of *the real world*.

For valuable and challenging contact hours, it is important to get rid of content that students can easily prepare in advance, for example because it is well-explained in any of the available course materials. If not, various digital tools may be a solution. Partly forced by the recent pandemic, I have already been experimenting with recording full lectures and knowledge clips. They have proven to be very helpful, so I will increasingly incorporate more of them in my future courses. Students can watch (short) video lectures containing the basic knowledge beforehand – at their own pace and as many times as they want – leaving much more room for on-campus discussion and other forms of interactive and/or practical educational activities. This makes students feel it is really worth it to attend offline classes.

Furthermore, I advocate evidence- or research-based teaching, meaning that the most current knowledge in the field should be included in the course materials. As such, students at the undergraduate level get familiar with academic research and standards, and students at the graduate level continue focusing their critical lens towards scientific research. It is also a means to share the knowledge, excitement and intrigue about my own fields of interest, as I can integrate my latest research insights into the course program. Although successful entrepreneurship is best achieved through learning by doing – or rather, learning by reflection on doing (i.e., experiential learning, including learning from failure, see e.g. Kolb (1984)) – decisions and actions must be based on the latest evidence to boost one's probability of success. Although successful student entrepreneurs typically have a harder time completing their studies (nominally), some good examples show that students can both graduate and continue working on their promising startup.

Guest lectures by people from the field are always evaluated by students as a very positive element. They share their firsthand knowledge and professional experience, which makes it easier for students to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Involving quite many business coaches and mentors, who can also act as *real* investors attending student startups' pitches at the end of the course, is also a common element in my entrepreneurship courses. In general, I strongly believe that university education nowadays should focus on (further) developing modern or so-called 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (like analytical thinking, creativity, and innovation), rather than preparing students for lifelong jobs. This has

even become more pressing with the recent rise of generative AI tools. As such, our alumni can move more easily between different roles on today's dynamic labor market.

Following the renowned self-determination theory (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2004), which essentially states that intrinsic motivation can be fostered by (1) autonomy, (2) competence, and (3) relatedness support, I aim to combine challenging assignments with freedom of choice and involvement. Assignments become increasingly stimulating and thought-provoking, both between and within my courses. Also, I always try to maximize student autonomy and responsibility with only a few (yet necessary) rules set in advance. After all, *real* entrepreneurial experience can only be obtained when resembling *the real world* as much as possible. When providing feedback, I constantly realize that students are in the middle of a learning process, and that I am there to help them reach one or more learning objectives. I consider giving feedback partly as a means to increase students' feelings of competence; I first highlight things that went well, before I move on to specific steps that should be undertaken to make further progress.

I once let a large group of students fill out a so-called Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI). For comparison purposes, I also completed the questionnaire myself. The outcomes are presented in a two-dimensional figure that reflects how I tend to interact with my students. The two dimensions represent *proximity* (ranging from *opposition* to *cooperation*) and *influence* (ranging from *submission* to *dominance*). Apparently, my self-image almost fully coincides with how my students perceived me; the typology of interpersonal styles that fits me best is *authoritative*, i.e., a typology more towards the *cooperation* and *dominance* sides of the spectra. Moreover, my profile comes close to what a representative group of Dutch students once indicated to be the "best teacher".

The classroom environment of someone "authoritative" is characterized as well-structured, pleasant, and task-oriented. Authoritative teachers are described as passionate and open to students' needs. I very much feel that these qualifications indeed apply to who I am, and to who I would like to be as a teacher. I always make sure that I am very well-prepared, and I also expect this from my students. I like students that comply with the rules and procedures, but tend to ignore minor disruptions. I rather spend my time on intrinsically motivated students to help them reach the learning goals. I enjoy bringing across my enthusiasm for the course topics, and hope to exceed students' expectations that they had beforehand. My personal motivation stems from personal and genuine expressions of gratitude from students, a little less from (positive) results from the official course evaluation. Seeing student teams that continue building their startup with increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy once my course has ended, is what truly inspires me.

## References

- Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (2004). *Handbook of Self-Determination Research*. Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.