

Master's Thesis

Educational care farms as an approach to tackle chronic school absenteeism

A practice-based research towards a thorough description of educational care programs in the Netherlands

By

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Abstract

Background: Approximately 5,000 children in the Netherlands meet the definition of chronic school absenteeism. This can be a wicked problem. A solution for chronic school absenteeism could be found in alternative education, which attempts to make the educational system more attuned to the needs of both primary and secondary school pupils. An example of alternative education is an educational care farm. The first experiences with educational care farms are promising as pupils recover their ties with the educational system, develop an eagerness to learn, and the majority return to regular education. Thus far, knowledge about the educational care arrangements is mostly tacit. In addition, it remains unknown what distinguishes educational care farms from other forms of education. This calls for practice-based research to thoroughly describe the services offered by educational care farms (i.e., educational care arrangements).

Aim: This research aimed to thoroughly describe educational care arrangements at three educational care farms in the Netherlands using a multi-method approach.

Methodological approach: The research was fivefold, consisting of (1) data-analysis of a questionnaire to describe the background of pupils that attend educational care farms, (2) semi-structured interviews with care farmers, teachers, and social workers about their philosophy, approach, and the context (e.g., the setting of the care farm, collaborations, and financial structures), (3) participant observations to systematically document the content of educational care arrangements in practice, (4) a member check to explore the credibility of the results, and (5) a literature review to compare educational care arrangements with other types of alternative education.

Results: The target group consists of primary and secondary education children. Educational care farms offer these children a temporary place where education and care are intertwined. Their approach is heterogeneous, but several overarching elements can be discerned. These include, for example, a structured design, customization throughout the trajectory, and the alternation of traditional ways of learning with experiential learning. There are primarily differences to be found in the daily program, composition of the teams, and funding. Most of the known characteristics of alternative education also apply to educational care farms.

Conclusion: The educational care arrangements are a contract in which answers are given to the so-called “5W-1H” (i.e., who, what, where, when, why, and how) questions. Based on this, an action plan is drawn up, linking actions to goals. The target group consists of children with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. The approach of the educational care farms can be captured by a couple of overarching elements that are interrelated. However, the thorough description of educational care arrangements is an ever-developing entity and not a fixed product.

Keywords: suitable education, chronic school absenteeism, alternative education, educational care farms, educational care arrangements, effect ladder, program theory, and experiential learning.

Preface and Acknowledgments

In front of you lies the thesis “Educational care farms as an approach to tackle chronic school absenteeism: A practice-based research towards a thorough description of educational care programs in the Netherlands”. From September 2021 to March 2022, I had the opportunity to be part of the project “Everyone on board by education on the farm”. I investigated three educational care farms in the Netherlands. This thesis was written as part of my master's program in Communication, Health and Life Sciences at Wageningen University & Research.

It was quite an eventful half-year, in which I learned a lot both content-wise and personally. Educational care farms were a new phenomenon for me, which sparked my curiosity. I became familiar with two methods during my research: participant observations and member checking. This was very interesting, but also challenging at times. Because how do you undertake something like this? And when is it right or wrong? I found out that there are no conclusive answers. Besides gaining content related knowledge, I have also pushed my personal boundaries. I rented a car for the first time and stayed overnight at one of the educational care farms. All in all, I look back on an instructive time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who contributed to the final result. Starting with my supervisor Lenneke Vaandrager. I am very grateful for your involvement, constructive feedback, and encouraging words – thank you. I would also like to thank Jan Hassink who fulfilled both the role of supervisor and commissioner. Your flexibility and enthusiasm are much appreciated.

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To you, the reader of this thesis: enjoy your reading!

Annemieke Potze

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1. Introduction

In the Netherlands, all children between the ages of 5 and 16 are subject to compulsory education (Rijksoverheid, d.u.). The Compulsory Education Act requires that children be enrolled in a school and go to this school regularly. Benefits of regular attendance include acquiring critical lifelong skills such as problem-solving, social competencies, and working with others (Daraganova et al., 2014; Jacobsen et al., 2016).

The aim is for children to attend a regular school as much as possible which is in line with the Act on Appropriate Education (Rijksoverheid, 2019). Schools must ensure that a child who needs additional guidance and support always receives an appropriate place (i.e., 'the Duty of Care'). There are roughly three possibilities for a proper place: the child's school, another regular school, or special education.

Nevertheless, between 15,000 and 20,000¹ children are at home because they cannot acquire suitable education (Boomsma, 2020; Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2020; Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 2021a; Slob & Blokhuis, 2020). This violates the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates, among other things, that every child has a right to education (United Nations Human Rights, 1989). In 2016, a so-called '*Thuiszitterspact*' was drawn up by the Ministries of Education and Health to reduce the number of children at home by 2020 (Rijksoverheid, 2016). Nonetheless, this number is not decreasing. In addition, various evaluations have shown that the Act on Appropriate Education is less effective in practice than was initially expected (Ledoux & Waslander, 2020; Slob, 2019).

1.1 Chronic School Absenteeism: Definition, Causes, and Consequences

When a pupil is absent for 15 days or more during an academic year, this is called chronic absenteeism, which includes both excused and unexcused absenteeism (Jacobsen et al., 2016; Stempel et al., 2017). The latter is also known as truancy. Historically, schools have adopted a 'blame the victim' approach by reproaching individual pupils (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). This view gradually shifted as more scholars investigated this topic. According to De Witte et al. (2013), chronic absenteeism is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon with various causes and consequences. This point is corroborated by Allen et al. (2018), who stated that:

Chronic absenteeism is driven by overlapping medical, individual, family, and social factors, including chronic illness, mental health conditions, bullying, perceived lack of safety, health problems, or needs of other family members, inconsistent parenting, poor school climate, economic disadvantage, and unreliable transportation. (p. 738)

Children who drop out often do so at significant transitions (Houten et al., 2019). Examples are the transition from junior to senior grades (i.e., '*onder- en bovenbouw*'), from primary to secondary education, and from regular to special education. It is worth noting that boys usually represent the vast majority of pupils that drop out (Houten et al., 2019; Krijnen et al., 2021). The odds of chronic absenteeism are higher for children with poorer health, internalizing behaviors, large families, and a lower socioeconomic status (Gottfried & Gee, 2017). Research by Ingrado (2010) showed that - in order from high to low - psychiatric problems, behavioral problems, waiting for care, bureaucracy, and problems in the home situation are the most common causes of chronic absenteeism. In most cases, several problems coincide (Gottfried & Gee, 2017; Krijnen et al., 2021).

¹ This figure includes both pupils that are subject to compulsory education (around 5,000) and those that are exempted from it (Slob & Blokhuis, 2020). No distinction is made between primary and secondary education.

Chronic absenteeism has implications for children, parents, schools, and society (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Boomsma, 2020; CRESPI, 2018; Gottfried, 2014; Rocque et al., 2016). In the short term, chronically absent children are at significant risk of developing a learning disadvantage (e.g., reduced math and reading skills), losing contact with peers, a decline in well-being and health, and having a sense of not belonging (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2014). In addition, dropping out has substantial financial consequences for both parents and society. The costs range from 50,000 to 90,000 euros per child per year (Boomsma, 2020). Examples of expenses are therapy and learning supplies. In the long run, chronic school absenteeism has been linked to increased rates of high school dropout, adverse health outcomes, future unemployment, poverty in adulthood, and an increased probability of ending up in juvenile and criminal justice systems (CRESPI, 2018; Gottfried & Gee, 2017; Rocque et al., 2016). In addition, children with more absences early on are more likely to struggle with behavioral challenges (e.g., social disengagement and alienation). Eventually, they are more likely to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs (Gottfried & Gee, 2017).

1.2 A Wicked Problem

Chronic absenteeism among children can be considered a wicked problem (Childs & Lofton, 2021; Houten et al., 2019), which has been defined as “*complex social phenomena that are difficult to solve*” (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Children are more often diagnosed with behavioral problems to give an impression of the complexity and context. The group size in regular education is getting bigger as fewer children attend special education. This, naturally, results in teachers having less time for both pupils with and without care needs. In addition, pupils’ performance and excellence are becoming more and more critical, and the focus is mostly on intellectual capacities, leaving little room for those that benefit from a more hands-on teaching method (Toekomst van ons onderwijs, 2020). What adds to the complexity of chronic absenteeism, is that there are no silver bullets. Staying in or returning to school is not ideal for each child. In some cases, an exemption from compulsory school attendance is possible (Rijksoverheid, 2021). This applies, for example, to pupils with physical or mental disabilities and to those that are ‘unteachable’. Granting an exemption, however, is not a durable solution as these children get stuck at home. By acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of chronic absenteeism it can, naturally, no longer be dealt with as an isolated educational issue or a problem caused by individual pupils (Childs & Lofton, 2021).

1.3 Alternative Education

A solution for chronic school absenteeism could be alternative education (Reimer & Pangrazio, 2020), which attempts to make the educational system more attuned to primary and secondary school pupils (Houten et al., 2019; Ingrado, 2018). The rationale is that a school environment is often counterproductive and needs customization (Veen & Pijpker, 2020). The programs under the term ‘alternative education’ are diverse but there are some similarities (Reimer & Pangrazio, 2020). These similarities include low pupil-to-teacher ratios, working with flexible hours, individualized study, caring teachers, and positive discipline procedures (Glassett, 2012; Reimer & Pangrazio, 2020; Zolkoski et al., 2015). The main goal of alternative education is either dropout prevention or recovery (Glassett, 2012). An example of alternative education is an educational care farm (Ingrado, 2018), which will be the focus of this research.

1.4 Educational Care Farms: Definition, Characteristics, and Current Situation

An educational care farm is defined as “*outdoor learning interventions providing education and care in a non-school setting to reintegrate youngsters into the regular school system*” (Veen et al., 2021). There are approximately fifty educational care farms in the Netherlands (Veen & Pijpker, 2020). The main characteristics of these farms are that the pupils receive education in relatively small groups and the

focus is on hands-on learning. In addition, working with animals is one of their key features. The educational care arrangements differ per educational care farm; think of the number of pupils, the intensity, day program, evaluations, and the number of qualified teachers. The aim is for the pupils to return to regular education which usually happens step-by-step. The educational care arrangement starts with a familiarization phase, after which school skills are addressed, and in the last step, the transition to school is critical.

It is essential to keep in mind that educational care farms are, in principle, not considered to be an official educational location and, therefore, their services are strictly not allowed (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2021; Van der Aa et al., 2015). Individual arrangements, however, are permitted.

The first experiences with educational care farms are promising as pupils recover their ties with the educational system, develop an eagerness to learn, and the majority return to regular education (Veen & Pijpker, 2020). However, it remains difficult to pinpoint the core elements of educational care arrangements and to determine what contributes to the success of different types of pupils because of the great diversity among arrangements (Veen & Pijpker, 2020). This is the starting point for the project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm' (NWO, 2021).

Box 1.1 Project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'

Wageningen University & Research, Radboud University, Praktikon, and the Kohnstamm Institute are working on the project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm' (Hassink, 2021)². The overarching aim is to find out how educational care farms contribute to (a) the prevention of chronic absenteeism among both primary and secondary school pupils, and (b) their prospects. The project team will systematically describe the type of pupils, educational care arrangements, and the effective elements of ten educational care farms in the Netherlands, where didactic expertise is present and cooperation with educational partners is self-evident. The project started on September 1, 2021, and runs until February 28, 2023. Parents and teachers will be asked to fill in several questionnaires to measure (a) the socio-emotional functioning, (b) cognitive development, and (c) the parenting load (i.e., 'opvoedlast'). At each educational care farm, two pupils will be followed intensively. Per care farm, the first two registered pupils are included. In addition, interviews with pupils and parents take place. Furthermore, several focus groups will be organized with the teachers and care coordinators of the respective educational care farms to discuss the pupils' progress. There are four measuring points, being at the start (T1), after two months (T2), after six months (T3), and after 10 months (T4).

Box 1.2 Desired Output: Program Theory

The project team aims to establish a program theory for educational care arrangements by applying the CIMO logic (Hassink, 2021). This logic comprises the following elements:

- **Context:** the starting situation of each pupil, the environment of the educational care farm, and the cooperation between primary schools and the educational care farm;
- **Intervention:** educational care arrangements;
- **Mechanism:** core elements of the educational care arrangements that lead to an outcome for pupils;
- **Outcome:** the development of pupils on a social-emotional and cognitive level. In addition, attention will be paid to the parenting load and the return to regular or special education.

² This information is based on the subsidy application of the project proposal 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'. The document is not publicly accessible.

1.5 Scope Master's Thesis

Within the aforementioned project³, my master's thesis took place. A brief outline of the situation is given before presenting the problem statement, objective, and research questions. Ideally, every child would receive customized education in a suitable place. In reality, this is not all that simple. The number of chronically absent pupils remains high despite the efforts of the *'Thuiszitterspact'*. This has consequences in both the short (e.g., learning disadvantages) and long term (e.g., adverse health outcomes). Previous research indicates that educational care farms may be a solution for (some of) these pupils (Veen & Pijpker, 2020). However, this research was explorative, leaving the question of what exactly works for which pupil unanswered. In addition, it remains unknown what distinguishes educational care farms from other forms of education. Customization seems to be one of their most vital features, but there must be more key characteristics. It is plausible that differences are to be found considering their individualized approach. These knowledge gaps hinder a clear representation of the sector (Veen & Pijpker, 2020).

1.5.1 Effect Ladder

For interventions, such as educational care arrangements, that are hardly specified, substantiated, or proven effective, the so-called 'effect ladder' comes in handy (Yperen et al., 2017a). This ladder describes steps to move towards an evidence-based intervention gradually. The effect ladder consists of five stages and is shown in [appendix A](#). Per stage, Yperen et al. (2017a) have formulated preconditions. At the moment, educational care arrangements seem to be in a pre-stage as the intervention comprises mostly tacit knowledge. Before looking at the mechanisms of educational care arrangements, a thorough description of the intervention is needed. This description should include at least the following elements (Yperen et al., 2017b):

- Name of the intervention;
- Purpose of the intervention;
- Target group of the intervention;
- Description of approach and implementation;
- Context and organizational conditions for implementation;
- Operating organizations;
- Similarities with other interventions;
- And references.

These elements are, therefore, an essential part of this research. Note that the effect ladder is not a hierarchical model that regards a randomized controlled trial (RCT) as the highest good (Yperen et al., 2017a). Instead, the effect ladder is meant to be a developmental model in which no stage is prioritized over the other. This approach is different from the well-known hierarchy of evidence in which RCTs are projected at the top of the pyramid.

1.5.2 Problem Statement

There is a lack of a clear and systematic description of educational care arrangements offered by educational care farms in the Netherlands. Most existing knowledge considers the actual setting as the intervention, not the interventions in the alternative setting. Thus far, knowledge about the educational care arrangements is mostly tacit and relies predominantly on assumptions that impede this intervention from becoming an evidence-based practice. This is detrimental as the educational care arrangements might reduce or even prevent adverse ramifications for these vulnerable children.

³ For clarity's sake, from this point onward, the project will be referred to as 'project' followed by its title and my master's thesis will be referred to as 'research'.

1.5.3 Objective and Relevance

Although educational care arrangements are not deemed an evidence-based practice at the moment, this does not imply that they are not effective, but rather that we still know too little about such arrangements. Therefore, my research aims to thoroughly describe educational care arrangements at several educational care farms in the Netherlands to contribute to developing a (preliminary) program theory. The underlying notion here is to collect practice-based evidence. In a later stage of the project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm', the description can be applied to search for mechanisms and corresponding effects of educational care arrangements.

Besides its scientific relevance, this research is also of social importance. The number of chronically absent pupils is self-explanatory. As mentioned before, 15,000 to 20,000 pupils are stuck at home. Approximately 5,000 of them meet the definition of chronic school absenteeism. Schools tend to be hesitant to provide a place for pupils who require support. Educational care farms might be a solution but are not recognized as educational institutions. This research helps create an understanding of what educational care farms have to offer. In addition, it can serve as a comparison for other educational institutions (i.e., lessons to be learned).

1.5.4 Research Questions

With this information in mind, the following primary and sub-research questions were drafted:

What do educational care arrangements offered by educational care farms in the Netherlands look like?

- What are the characteristics of pupils that attend an educational care farm?
- How are educational care arrangements designed by the educational care farms and what are the corresponding rationales?
- What do educational care arrangements look like in practice?
- To what extent do educational care arrangements differ from other types of alternative education?

1.6 Study Design

A multi-method design has been applied using qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research questions. The research is fivefold consisting of (1) data-analysis of the so-called SDI questionnaire to describe the background of pupils that attend educational care farms, (2) semi-structured interviews with care farmers, teachers, and social workers about their philosophy, approach, and the context (e.g., the setting of the care farm, collaborations, and financial structures), (3) participant observations to systematically document the content of educational care arrangements in practice, (4) a member check to explore the credibility of the results, and (5) a literature review to compare educational care arrangements with other types of alternative education. For this purpose, three educational care farms have been selected from those participating in the project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'. This and more information is to be found in the [subsequent chapter](#) on methods. Considering the inductive nature of this research, there is no theoretical framework (Baarda, 2018; Chong & Yeo, 2015).

2. Methods

A multi-method design has been applied using qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research questions.. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, the research is fivefold, consisting of (1) data analysis of the SDI questionnaire, (2) semi-structured interviews, (3) participant observations, (4) member checking, and (5) a literature review. This research can be considered to be multi-method because it uses five complementary methodologies (Anguera et al., 2018), driven by an overall research goal: to thoroughly describe educational care arrangements according to the specifications of the effect ladder of Yperen et al. (2017a; 2017b).

Although both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used, qualitative methods are more suitable for obtaining comprehensive information about personal experiences (Baarda, 2014). In the following sections, the different methods are explained one by one, followed by a description of qualitative data analysis, an overview of the methods, and ethical considerations.

Note, that three aspects were explicitly excluded from this research. Firstly, the pupils' experiences as I do not have a pedagogical background. Secondly, this research was not concerned with measuring effects because of this study's relatively short time frame. Thirdly, the schools and parents were not directly included in this research because the focus was on the educational care arrangements. However, the collaboration with these two parties has been discussed during the semi-structured interviews.

2.1 Research Population and Sample

Ten educational care farms participate in the 'Everyone on Board by Education on the Farm' project. The project team selected these educational care farms because of their didactic expertise and because cooperation with educational partners is self-evident (Hassink, 2021). Of these educational care farms, three have been selected for my research based on practical considerations; think of the feasibility of the research within the available time frame and the accessibility of the farms by public transport. This led to the following educational care farms⁴: "Oostwijk", "AAI Centrum de Klimop", and "Pedagogisch Centrum D'n Hoef". More information about these educational care farms is found in the [results section](#).

2.2 Data Analysis of Questionnaire

At T1, parents were asked by the project team to fill in several questionnaires in which background information about the pupils was gathered. The so-called 'SDI questionnaire' is essential to describe the characteristics of the pupils that attend an educational care farm (i.e., '*Scoringsschema Demografische Informatie*'). This standardized questionnaire identifies demographic characteristics (Praktikon, 2006)⁵. The project team has modified the questions to ensure that they are appropriate for the target group (R. de Meyer, personal communication, October 6, 2021). The questionnaire is to be found in [appendix B](#).

The adjusted questionnaire comprises questions on the pupils' gender, age, country of origin, living situation, number of brothers and sisters, number of attended schools, history of youth services, and whether there are judicial measures in place. In addition, questions are asked about the involvement

⁴ All educational care farms have given, either verbal or in writing, their consent for referring to the names of the farms in this report (Member check, personal communication, February 7, 2022).

⁵ This information is based on a manual of Praktikon. The document is not publicly accessible.

of both the mother and father, their educational background, socioeconomic status, profession, country of origin, and the relation between the parents.

The questionnaire was automatically sent to all parents of children participating in the study. Praktikon deals with the processing and storage of the collected data. To answer the first sub-question, I have received an anonymized SPSS file from Praktikon (R. de Meyer, personal communication, January 11, 2022). This file contains all responses from September 2021 to and including the Christmas break. All completed lists were included in the analysis to mitigate the possibility of individuals being identified. In IBM SPSS Statistics, descriptive statistics were used to obtain summary statistics of the different variables (Baarda, 2014). Graphs were created in Excel because it has more features regarding the layout.

Box 2.1 Introduction to Praktikon and BergOp

As mentioned in the introduction, Praktikon is part of the project team in the project ‘Everyone on Board by Education on the Farm’. It is an independent Dutch organisation for research and development in (youth) care, municipalities, and education (Praktikon, 2020). They are experienced in the field of research, monitoring, training, and questionnaire development. In the project, they are involved in the processing and storage of the collected data of several questionnaires. For this purpose, their software programme ‘BergOp’ is used (Praktikon, 2018).

2.3 Semi-structured Interviews

To get a general understanding of the educational care arrangements and the underlying rationale, semi-structured interviews have been conducted. The choice for semi-structured interviews was made because of the possibility to ask follow-up questions (Baarda, 2014). The interview questions were based on the Orthopaedic Methodology Model Bruininks (2016, as cited in Nederlands Jeugdinstuut, 2021b), which systematically describes the steps to be undertaken to draft an educational care arrangement. The model is depicted in [appendix C](#). The steps are turned into questions related to care farmers’ and teachers’ philosophy, approach, target group, collaborations, and financial structures. The interview guide is found in [appendix D](#). All interviewees received the questions in advance so they knew what to expect.

In total, six interviews have been conducted. In most cases, these were the people I had direct contact with to arrange the participant observations. In the other cases, the interviewees were approached by the contact person of that specific educational care farm. The interviews lasted on average 70 minutes. Permission has been asked to record the interviews, resulting in five hours of audio material. By recording most of the interviews, I could focus on asking questions instead of taking notes. All recordings are safely stored at the OneDrive of Wageningen University & Research. The interviews were conducted in Dutch. Most of the interviews took place at the educational care farms. See table 1 for an overview.

| Interview | Function of interviewee(s) | Recording | Setting |
|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Director | Yes | Care farm |
| 2 | Care farmer/teacher and teacher | Yes | Care farm |
| 3 | Care coordinator | No | MS Teams |
| 4 | Director | Yes | Care farm |
| 5 | Teacher | No | Care farm |
| 6 | Social worker | Yes | Care farm |

Table 1: Overview of conducted interviews

As the table above shows, two interviews were not recorded. One interview took place online after a multidisciplinary consultation (i.e., 'MDO'). The conversation flowed naturally into an interview and it felt inappropriate to ask for a recording. The second interview without a recording took place in the living room at one of the educational care farms. Again, it felt inappropriate to ask for a recording because other staff members were crossing the room and some children dropped in and out.

After finishing an interview, the records were manually transcribed in a verbatim manner. While doing so, words such as 'uh', 'yes', and pauses have been omitted as it distracts from the content. If interviewees referred to specific persons, their names have been replaced by their functions. In addition, small talk before and after the interview has been left out. In the cases without a recording, logically, transcribing was not an option. Instead, I wrote a summary using my notes. For clarity's sake, these summaries will also be referred to as transcripts. Once the transcripts were finished, the interviewees have received the document by email - allowing them to check, modify, and/or delete fragments. No amendments have been requested. Afterward, the transcripts have been coded in Atlas.ti. Potential quotations were already marked to substantiate the results section during the coding process.

Box 2.2 Coding procedures

Coding involves – in a nutshell – attaching keywords or descriptive labels to the responses of interviewees, after which connections can be made and finally conclusions drawn (Baarda, 2018). The overarching goal is to reduce large amounts of information to a concise summary (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). Given the inductive and qualitative nature of the interviews, the coding process involved the following phases: (1) open, (2) axial, and (3) selective coding (Baarda, 2018). The process begins with reading the transcripts multiple times so that the researcher becomes familiar with the data. After reading, it is recommended to segment the transcripts to delineate the different topics, which allows the researcher to code more accurately. After segmentation, open coding begins, where labels are attached to pieces of text. During this phase, using the “5W-1H” (i.e., who, what, where, when, why, and how) questions are considered to be a pragmatic approach to create codes (Williams & Moser, 2019). In the second phase, the codes are compared and categorized (Baarda, 2018). In the third, and final phase, patterns are established by looking for connections between the data and the main categories. The codes are reflected upon between and during each phase (e.g., condensing, merging, removing redundant codes, and eliminating double negations). In reality, coding is not a linear process (Baarda, 2018; Williams & Moser, 2019). The researcher goes back and forth between the different phases. It is also possible to code a few interviews in the beginning and then conduct some more. In this way, data collection and processing happen simultaneously. In this research, the coding process stopped when the addition of new codes or categories did no longer contribute to answering the main and sub-research questions.

2.4 Participant Observations

Participant observations were carried out to document the content of educational care arrangements in practice systematically. At each educational care farm, four working days have been observed from the perspective of the teachers and/or social workers. The period has been chosen to get a comprehensive impression of their day-to-day activities, and, again, the feasibility of the research within the available timeframe was considered. The method - participant observation - has been selected because there is still relatively little known about educational care arrangements in practice. In addition, it is likely that actors (i.e., pupils, teachers, and other staff members at the educational care farm) would describe their behavior differently in the case of self-reporting (Baarda, 2014; Skovdal & Cornish, 2015).

Box 2.3 Introduction to participant observations: a theoretical background

Participant observation, which falls under the umbrella of ethnographic research, is a method of collecting data in a natural setting (Bernard & Gravlee, 2014; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). The researcher (i.e., observant) actively takes part in the day-to-day activities of a group to learn about both the explicit and tacit aspects of their routines (Baarda, 2014; Bernard & Gravlee, 2014; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). The explicit elements are the things that people can explain themselves as they are aware of, whereas the tacit aspects usually happen outside our awareness. The method is strategic as it combines several techniques: observing, participating, and (informal) interviewing. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) described participant observation as *“taking part in [...] activities, ‘hanging out’, and conversing, while consciously observing, and ultimately recording what is being observed”* (p. 4). The observations are being recorded in so-called field notes. To put in the words of Bernard and Gravlee (2014) *“If you didn’t write it down, then it didn’t happen”*. When relying on memory, details get lost. Arguments in favor of applying participant observations include that it enhances the quality of data obtained in fieldwork by triangulation, the quality of the interpretation of the data, and it can lead to new research questions and hypotheses (Bernard & Gravlee, 2014; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). The biggest drawback is that the researcher cannot take an objective stance (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). This is because the researcher is inevitably biased by personal characteristics, training, experiences, and theoretical orientations (Bernard & Gravlee, 2014; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).

The observations were structured, direct, participatory, and undisguised. This is because it was determined in advance what will be observed, I was present on site, I participated in the activities as much as possible, and my presence was announced in advance. An observation form has been drawn up in collaboration with another researcher. This form is presented in [appendix E](#). An advantage of using structured observations is that the data is more accessible to process than in the case of unstructured observations (Baarda, 2014). In addition, the likelihood of subjective distortion is more minor. The field notes (i.e., completed observation forms) were treated as transcripts. They have been digitized and then coded in Atlas.ti following the same procedures described above (see box 2.2). After the first few observations, the field notes were already analyzed to develop categories by looking for themes and patterns (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). These findings can, in turn, be applied to the subsequent observations.

Per educational care farm, the first day of participant observation was scheduled as an orientation. This was to get acquainted with both the environment and the pupils (and vice versa). In addition, agreements were made for the remaining days of participant observation and interviews were planned. When visiting the educational care farms, all Corona regulations were respected.

A possible risk in this research was that the actors could behave differently because they were aware of my presence (Baarda, 2014; Bernard & Gravlee, 2014), also known as the Hawthorne effect. This effect fades over time. That is one of the reasons why orientation days were planned. In addition, the observations were conducted during several working days. ‘Going native’ is another possible pitfall of participant observations (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). This is when the observer becomes part of the group under investigation and forgets about the research. However, the duration of the observations within this research was too short.

2.5 Member Checking

To explore the credibility of the results, the interviewees were invited to an online gathering during which the preliminary findings were presented. During and after the presentation, the participants were given the opportunity to respond. Questions such as ‘Does this match your experience?’ and ‘Do

you want to add or change anything?’ were asked to get the discussion going. See [appendix F](#) for the set-up of the meeting.

This method is also known as member checking, which focuses on the co-constructed nature of knowledge (Baarda, 2014; Birt et al., 2016). It aims to reduce researcher bias by actively involving actors in checking and confirming results. In addition, it allows for adding insights to the interpretation of the collected data.

In total, seven people were invited to the gathering. These include two members per educational care farm and one member of the project team ‘Everyone on board by education on the farm’. The meeting took place via MS Teams and was held in Dutch for practical reasons. There were five participants in total. At least one invitee per educational care farm attended the gathering. All participants have agreed to the session being recorded. The meeting lasted about 80 minutes. Afterward, the minutes and PowerPoint slides were shared with all invitees, including those that could not attend, allowing them to respond. Both absentees responded via email and had no additions. The minutes can be found in [appendix G](#).

A key feature of member checking is the triangulation of knowledge (Baarda, 2018; Birt et al., 2016), enhancing understanding educational care arrangements. A dilemma could be deciding who has the final say when participants disagree with the interpretation of the collected data. However, no disagreements arose during the gathering.

2.6 Literature Review

The fifth, and final, method concerned a literature review on other types of alternative education. The aim was to compare the thorough description of educational care arrangements with similar interventions that fall under the umbrella of alternative education. The last requirement of a detailed description according to the effect ladder of Yperen et al. has been fulfilled (2017b), being: listing the commonalities with similar interventions.

The rationale is that many interventions can be classified into a group of similar interventions (so-called ‘treatment families’), often characterized by similarities in methodology and the techniques employed (Chorpita et al., 2011, as cited in Yperen et al., 2017b). The listing of cross-links helps establish a common knowledge base regarding the interventions’ application, effectiveness, and limitations. This also helps in understanding what is distinctive about educational care farms.

To this end, several search engines were used, such as Scopus and Google Scholar. The search terms were limited to abstracts and/or titles and included: ‘Alternative education’, ‘Alternative education programs’, ‘At-risk students’, ‘Pupils’, ‘Youth’, ‘Chronic school absenteeism’, ‘Systematic review’, and ‘Meta-analyses’. Extra articles were found by looking into recommended articles by the search engines and by browsing through reference lists of included articles.

2.7 Qualitative Data Analysis: a Grounded Theory Approach

As mentioned in the introduction, this research is inductive - meaning that this research started with a broad exploration (e.g., semi-structured interviews), moving towards specific observations (e.g., participant observations), and finally, more general statements (e.g., member checking). This process is the equivalent of a grounded theory approach (Baarda, 2018; Chong & Yeo, 2015), and typically includes three phases of coding, being: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (see box 2.2 as well). For this purpose, data collection and analysis happened simultaneously. The overarching aim was to obtain a thorough description of educational care arrangements. This description, however, is

an ever-developing entity and not a fixed product, which is typical for theories resulting from a grounded theory approach.

2.8 Overview of the Methods and Methodological Triangulation

To recapitulate the research questions, they are listed below. The subsequent table shows which method is linked to which research question(s).

1. What are the characteristics of pupils that attend an educational care farm?
2. How are educational care arrangements designed by educational care farms and what are the corresponding rationales?
3. What do educational care arrangements look like in practice?
4. To what extent do educational care arrangements differ from other types of alternative education?

| Method | Research question |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Data-analysis questionnaire | 1 |
| • Semi-structured interviews | 2 |
| • Participant observations | 3 |
| • Member check | 2 – 3 |
| • Literature review | 4 |

Table 2: Overview of Methods

Taken together, these methods helped in answering the main research question, which is:

What do educational care arrangements offered by educational care farms in the Netherlands look like?

No method was privileged over the other. Instead, they complemented each other. As mentioned in the paragraphs about participant participation and member checking, this research applies methodological triangulation (Noble & Heale, 2019). Several methods were used to enhance the understanding of educational care arrangements (Birt et al., 2016). This is also the case when interviewing different people with different functions (Baarda, 2014), such as care farmers, social workers, and teachers. Participant observation also employs triangulation by observing, participating, and informal interviewing (Bernard & Gravlee, 2014; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Triangulation increases the credibility and validity of the results (Noble & Heale, 2019).

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Given that this research involved (vulnerable) children, it was crucial to reflect on the question of what doing good repeatedly is and, especially, what it is not. Several ethical principles help here (Rutjes & Jurrius, 2013). These are the principles of respect for autonomy, advantage, and disadvantage. The directions are discussed one by one below. This part concludes with the ethical approval by the Social Sciences Ethics Committee of Wageningen University & Research.

2.9.1 Respect for Autonomy

First, there must be respect for autonomy (Rutjes & Jurrius, 2013). This means that participants, including staff and pupils, must give their voluntary consent based on sufficient information. Parents (or caretakers) have been asked to fill in an informed consent form on behalf of their children which was drawn up by the project team of 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'. They have also created an informed consent form for the staff. Those forms do not mention participant observations,

so I have drafted an additional document for both care farmers and teachers as they were subject to the observations. This form is to be found in [appendix H](#). In addition, all pupils have been asked for their active consent during the days that I was present at the educational care farms. The table below presents an overview of how informed consent was obtained.

| Method | Informed consent |
|-------------------------------|---|
| • Data-analysis questionnaire | Forms of project team |
| • Semi-structured interviews | Additional form for staff |
| • Participant observations | Additional form for staff and active verbal consent of pupils |
| • Member check | Verbal consent |
| • Literature review | Not applicable |

Table 3: Overview Informed Consent

2.9.2 Advantage

Secondly, participants should benefit from participating in the research (Rutjes & Jurrius, 2013). Possible benefits for the staff included having the chance to express their perspective, adding insights, and learning about the approaches of other educational care farms. There are some benefits for the pupils, even though they are not the focus of this research. Their benefits included the chance to express their perspective, helping other children by adding new insights, and learning about doing research, other children's perspectives, and the research topic.

2.9.3 Disadvantage

Thirdly, and lastly, participants should not suffer any harm because of taking part in this research (Rutjes & Jurrius, 2013). The risk of injury for staff was negligible because they were mainly asked to share their work methods. Children, however, could feel inferior, guilty, or angry when sharing sensitive information. In addition, their relationships could have been strained if parents refused to participate when they would like to. These risks were diminished by being aware of this before, during, and after the study. As mentioned above, informed consent forms were provided to the children's parents before the research. During the research, I repeatedly asked the pupils for their active consent. Possible signs that children do not feel at ease include nervousness, silences, watching the door, not making eye contact, passivity, a less cooperative attitude, and signs of boredom (Rutjes & Jurrius, 2013). There are also verbal cues, such as repeatedly answering a question with 'I don't know'. To make sure that pupils were at ease, questions were, for example, introduced with 'Would you like to tell me more about ...' or 'Do you mind if I join you?'.

2.9.4 Ethical Approval

The research proposal of the project team was approved by the Social Sciences Ethics Committee of Wageningen University & Research on September 23, 2021. This approval extends to my research - given that it is part of the project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'. Therefore, no separate application has been submitted to the Ethics Committee.

3. Results

This chapter follows the structure of the sub-questions. That is to say that first the results of the questionnaire are presented to describe the characteristics of the children. This is followed by an introduction of the three selected educational-care farms. After which their similarities and differences are discussed in terms of their philosophy, approach, target group, collaborations, and financial structures. In addition, the procedures for enrolment up to and including outflow are also elaborated upon. Later on, the day-to-day businesses are described per educational care farm to illustrate the arrangements in practice. This is, subsequently, summarized in terms of critical elements. The chapter concludes with the literature review to make the comparison with alternative education.

3.1 SDI Questionnaire

In September 2021 - December 2021, 17 pupils were enrolled at the participating 10 educational care farms. Below, a brief outline is given of their socio-demographic information to give an impression of the characteristics of the participants. An overview of the analysis is to be found in [appendix I](#).

3.1.1 Socio-demographic information of enrolled pupils

The average age of the pupils is 9.2 years. Boys represent most of the cohort as 14 boys were enrolled versus 3 girls. Most of the enrolled pupils are in the primary school age category (4 - 12 years). They are all born in the Netherlands and live in a family setting. Most children have at least one brother or sister.

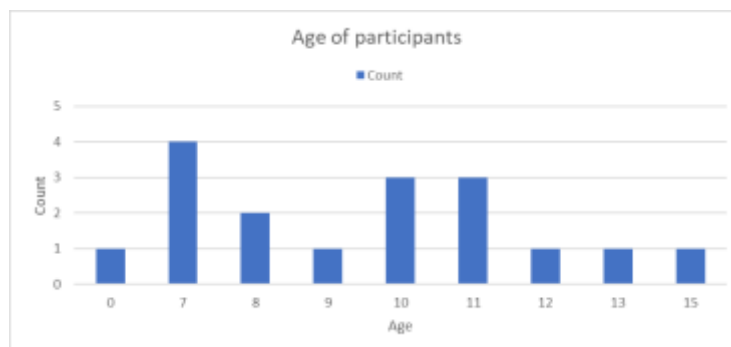


Figure 1: Age of participants (N = 16)

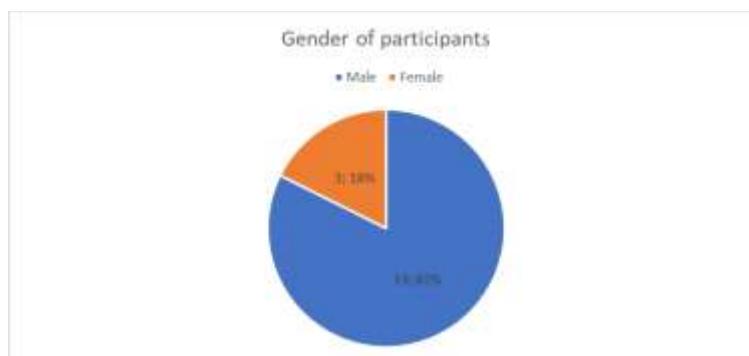


Figure 2: Gender of participants (N = 17)

12 of the 17 children originate from special (primary) education, the majority having attended at least two different schools. No one came from regular secondary education. Approximately 50% of the children have been retained at least once. Most children transferred relatively early to an educational care farm, namely around grade 3 or 4. There are few participants from the highest and lowest classes

(grade 8 and 1 respectively). Approximately half of the children have been at home for a while before going to an educational care farm, of which 7 out of 8 meet the definition of chronic school absenteeism (≥ 15 days).

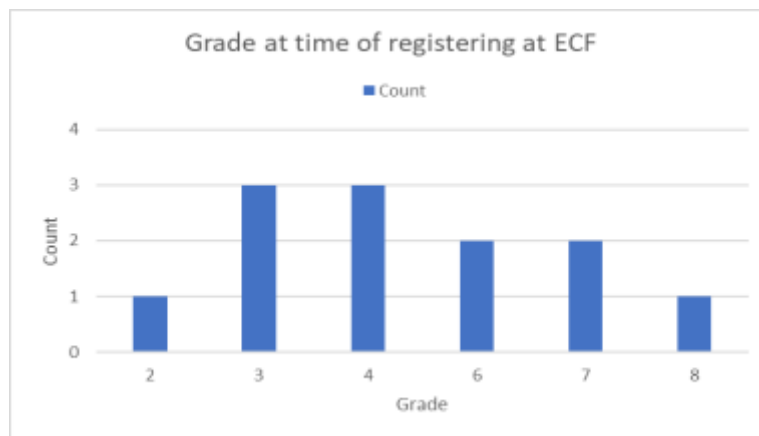


Figure 3: Grade at time of registering at ECF (N = 12)

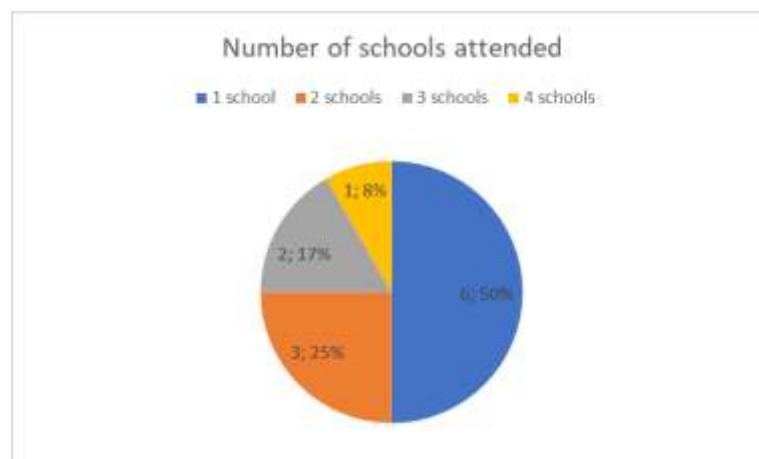


Figure 4: Number of schools attended (N = 12)

Of the 17 children, 9 receive some form of youth care. The most common form of youth care in this group is counselling along with their parents or the entire family. Of these 9 children, 5 receive more than one form of youth care. More than half of the 17 children have received youth assistance in the past. There is no judicial measure in most cases (14 out of 17). The children were placed under supervision and/or guardianship in the remaining three cases.

3.1.2 Socio-demographic information of the parents

For all children, a mother or caretaker is present in the family. In 15 cases, this concerns the birth mother. In the other two cases, it involves a foster mother. All are born in the Netherlands. Most mothers or caretakers completed secondary and/or tertiary education. 10 of the 17 mothers are employed.

For all children, as was the case with a mother or caretaker, a father or caretaker is present in the family. In 13 cases this is the biological father. In the remaining cases, it concerns a stepfather or foster father. Most of the fathers are of Dutch origin. For many fathers, the highest completed education is secondary and/or tertiary education. 15 fathers are employed, of which about half the jobs can be classified as physical work. Most couples are married and/or living together.



Figure 5: Current or former occupation of mother (N = 15)



Figure 6: Current or former occupation of father (N = 15)

3.1.3 Reason for enrolling

The final question of the questionnaire goes as follows: 'Could you briefly state the main reason for enrolling at the care farm?'. In the responses, it emerged several times that it was a proposal from the school. Other reasons included relaxation, working on self-confidence, bridging the gap to the next place, and development. The latter consists of development in two areas: school skills and personal development. All responses are to be found in [appendix I](#). During the member check, those present indicated that they recognized these reasons.

From this point onward, the focus will be on the three selected educational care farms (i.e., *Oostwijk*, *AAI Centrum de Klimop*, and *Pedagogisch Centrum D'n Hoef*). They are introduced one by one below. After the brief introduction, their philosophy, approach, target group, collaborations, and financial structures are discussed. While doing so, both similarities and differences are highlighted.

3.2 Introduction of the three selected educational care farms



Picture 1-3: *Oostwijk*, *AAI Centrum de Klimop*, and *Pedagogisch Centrum D'n Hoef* (from left to right)⁶

⁶ The photos were taken with the permission of the interviewees.

3.2.1 Oostwijk

Oostwijk was founded in 2018 in cooperation with *Stichting Landzijde, Ronduit Onderwijs* and the associated partnership (i.e., ‘*samenwerkingsverband*’). This small-scale educational care farm is located in Zuidermeer (North-Holland). The primary activities of the farm are rearing sheep and horses. In addition, they offer daycare on Sunday once every fortnight.

The educational care farm offers education four days a week to pupils who have dropped out (or are at risk of doing so) of primary education. The educational program is part of Landzijde’s *Buiten Gewoon Leren* program. The guiding principle of this program is that the children return to a form of regular or special education.

Box 3.1 Stichting Landzijde and Buiten Gewoon Leren

Landzijde is the overarching organization in North-Holland of the care farms affiliated with this foundation (Stichting Landzijde, d.u.). They are responsible for the quality of care. The organization stands for the development of care farming. *Buiten Gewoon Leren* is an initiative of *Stichting Landzijde* and is aimed at children who are (at risk of being) chronically absent (Care coordinator, personal communication, November 25, 2021). According to Landzijde, the farm is a suitable environment for these children because of the physical space, the contact with the animals, learning by doing, and the practical methods. The educational care farms offer a temporary place for these children and the goal is that they eventually return to education. There are currently four farms affiliated with this initiative, including *Oostwijk*. Landzijde has drawn up a few selection criteria that the participating care farms must meet. An example is having an agricultural branch next to education, so that education is not the only source of income. In addition, there must be room for a classroom and there must be a homely atmosphere. There is no educational model underlying the approach. Education is based on an individual developmental perspective (i.e., *ontwikkelingsperspectief*).

The picture below shows the guiding principles of *Oostwijk*. One example is that they offer education suitable for and tailored to the individual. Associated keywords are attention, learning, development, and trust.



Picture 4: Key Values of Oostwijk

There are two teachers who are both employed by *Ronduit Onderwijs* for the educational part of the care farm. The care farmer is both farmer and teacher. The second teacher is detached from special primary education. Together, the teachers divide the four working days. The partner of the care farmer is involved in the administrative side of the educational care farm. Thus far, there have been no interns. The maximum number of pupils is four. The age of the current group of children varies between 6 and 12. The children originate from different primary schools that are part of *Ronduit Onderwijs* and, in principle, visit *Oostwijk* four days a week. The number of days deviates mainly during the familiarisation phase. Notably, primarily boys are enrolled at this educational care farm.

3.2.2 AAI Centrum de Klimop

AAI Centre de Klimop (i.e., *De Klimop*) was founded in 2004 in response to a request from educational authorities for chronically absent children from both primary and secondary education. It is a care farm in Etten-Leur (Brabant) and is located at an equestrian dairy farm. They are affiliated with *Stichting Samenwerkende Zorgboeren Zuid (SZZ)* and are, therefore, recognized as a provider of high-quality care. The core business of *De Klimop* is caring for children who are chronically absent from either primary or secondary education. In addition, they offer care for children who visit the care farm one hour a week in the form of individual counseling and/or daycare. Since 2016, *De Klimop* has specialized in internalizing problems. It is important to emphasize that *De Klimop* is a care farm that, in some cases, offers educational support in cooperation with educational partners. At *Oostwijk*, by contrast, education is a given for all children.



Picture 5-7: *De Klimop*

Horses and dogs are an essential part of the support process to, among other things, develop competencies. This is also reflected in the first part of the name of the care farm, AAI, which stands for 'Animal Assisted Interventions'. In addition, experiential learning is central, which is well displayed on their website by the following quote of Confucius:

"Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I will remember. Let me experience, and I will understand."

As will become apparent from the following two excerpts of an interview, experiential learning is not limited to actual education at *De Klimop*. It is also part of learning (social) skills.

"But that [experiential learning] also applies, for example, to a child who is having a hard time with multiplication tables and then learns them while riding on a horse. '1 times 2 is 2'. All of a sudden, they master it. They have felt it, experienced it, and then they remember it." (C1F2)⁷

⁷ An overview of the quotes in Dutch is given in [appendix J](#).

“For example, if we want to teach a child to guide a horse, we first put a halter on the children. Then I let them act like horses and they will experience how it feels to be pulled by your head, then they won't do it anymore.” (C1F2)

De Klimop owns four horses and is also allowed to ‘borrow’ horses from the equestrian dairy farm for activities. About 60 children visit this care farm per week. This includes both high-complex (i.e., chronically absent children) and low-complex care (i.e., individual counseling and/or daycare). On an average working day, eight children present at the farm. There is no fixed number of days that the children visit *De Klimop*; the number of hours per week varies from one hour to a couple of (half) days.

The director has a background in education and employs 16 people, 14 of whom are care workers with a pedagogical background and the other two employees are part of the facility staff. One of the care workers is a teacher as well. In addition, there are always several interns who work together with the care workers. Most groups consist of 2-3 pupils with one care worker and one intern.

3.2.3 Pedagogisch Centrum D'n Hoef

Pedagogisch Centrum D'n Hoef (i.e., D'n Hoef) was founded in 2003. This large-scale educational care farm is located in Lierop (Brabant) and is also affiliated with *Stichting Samenwerkende Zorgboeren Zuid (SZZ)*. *D'n Hoef* started as a practice for equitherapy for people who experience physical, emotional, cognitive, and social challenges. Equitherapy includes both interacting with horses on the ground and therapeutic horseback riding activities. Driven by the desire to involve the environment of the clients more, the other forms of *D'n Hoef* arose, which include home support, specialized after-school care, daycare, and care education. The care farm is mainly a place for clients aged 4 - 18 years with behavioral problems and gaps in executive functions. The underlying principle is 'one child, one team' which entails a multidisciplinary approach in which the different disciplines are brought together at *D'n Hoef*.

There are currently 112 clients, of which about a fourth is education-related. In general, the target group visits *D'n Hoef* about three half-days per week. The care farm is run by a couple, of which one is responsible for the pedagogical-educational part and the personnel policy, the other for the finances, transport, and maintenance. There are 18 employees in total, consisting of 12 social workers, one psychologist, one behavioral scientist, and lastly, four people that are part of the office management (including, for example, an animal caretaker).

Animals are at the heart of the approach at *D'n Hoef* - ranging from horses, dogs, cats, and rabbits to ducks, alpacas, chickens, and donkeys. The animals can be of help in making children task-oriented by taking care of the animals but are also part of relaxation and developing school-related skills (e.g., reading and calculating). The latter is similar to experiential learning at *De Klimop*.



Picture 8-10: *D'n Hoef*

3.3 Similarities and differences between the approaches

The three selected educational care farms were briefly introduced in the previous paragraph. Below, their philosophy, approach, target group, collaborations, and financial structures are discussed. This also includes the procedures for enrolment up to and including outflow. While doing so, as mentioned before, both similarities and differences are highlighted. Later on, the day-to-day businesses are described per educational care farm to illustrate the arrangements in practice.

3.3.1 The setting, philosophy, and target group

The three educational care farms are located in different settings. Whereas education is a secondary function of *Oostwijk* (since rearing sheep and horses form the core of their business), there is no active husbandry at *D'n Hoef*. In the latter case, education takes place in a farm setting. *De Klimop* can be considered an intermediate form since education takes place at an equestrian dairy farm. However, the equestrian dairy farm and the educational care farm are two separate businesses. In other words, education can take place as part of a farm (i.e., *Oostwijk*), at a farm (i.e., *De Klimop*), or in a farm setting (i.e., *D'n Hoef*). Therefore, there may not always be someone who fulfills the role of care farmer. The titles vary from care farmer/teacher to owner/director. All interviewed care farmers/directors have a background in primary education. When talking with the interviewees about why a farm is a suitable place for the children, answers related to the physical space, the contact with the animals, learning by doing, and the practical methods.

The educational care farms were founded on the strong belief that there is neither enough time nor space in traditional education for children with care needs. In addition, all interviewees stated that it is vital that these children receive education and, ideally, return to school. An interviewee, for example, said the following:

“We want to be there for every child that cannot go to school because of internalizing problems. We believe they should go to school because a large part of your development happens there and not here [at the educational care farm]. We try to provide normalcy for the children but they have to go to school, no matter what.” (C1F2)

The vision and/or philosophy of the educational care farms were not explicitly discussed with all interviewees. But during the interviews, it became evident that they want to do everything within their power to meet the children’s needs, as the following quotation shows:

“[...] our view is, of course, that animals have an added value throughout the process. But our vision is also low barriers, quick communication, and focusing on the children’s needs – asking yourself what does this child need and, therefore, also being willing to think outside the box. If it does not work within the given parameters, how can we move beyond them to get what the child needs?” (C1F2)

In addition, all interviewees mentioned the importance of involving the system of the children, which indicates that they look broader than just what happens at the educational care farm. It also demonstrates that the interviewees are being realistic about the reach of their approach. For example, one teacher mentioned the following:

“You can try all sorts of things, but if it has no hearing or continuation at home, then you’re fighting a losing battle.” (C1F1)

The three educational care farms host different target groups. The children originate from both regular and special education. Whereas one location welcomes mainly boys (i.e., *Oostwijk*), other educational

care farms have a 50-50 ratio of boys and girls (i.e., *De Klimop and D'n Hoef*). In all cases, the group is diverse and there are significant level differences. Two of the three educational care farms focus on primary and secondary education children, while the other concentrates explicitly on primary school-age children.

In principle, all children must remain enrolled at their school of origin. By doing so, the school of origin stays involved. They are, for example, responsible for providing educational materials. An interviewee stated the following:

"We need the involvement of the school of origin to provide education properly. Even if it is just for supplying the material. [...] But if we do not receive the teaching materials, we cannot do anything. And the school of origin has an obligation to take care of the children in light of the duty of care." (C1F2)

This quotation illustrates that taking care of the children is not the sole responsibility of the educational care farm. In addition, all interviewees indicated that an exemption from compulsory education is neither necessary nor desirable. It is, however, not always ideal to work with the materials from the school of origin as the following excerpt of an interview shows:

"And then it [source of educational materials] depends on whether they can still stand to work with the materials of their previous school. For some children that is too stressful. In such cases, the children receive materials from us which are also common school methods. [...] We just offer them an alternative. [...] Once the prospective school has been determined, we switch towards the materials of that school." (C1F3)

This example also indicates the possible troubled history with the school of origin. At base, the educational care farms focus on children that are chronically absent – aiming to return to education. However, this is not the guiding principle in all cases. Other forms include:

- Preventing chronic school absenteeism;
- Preventing a particular education placement;
- Bridging the gap to a treatment place;
- Or obtaining a diploma at the educational care farm.

A subset of the children attends the educational care farm full-time, whereas others still attend their school of origin part-time. A third group is already gradually starting at their new school. The following section elaborates on the target group.

3.3.2 Taking a closer look at the target group

Notably, several interviewees mentioned that the children are attending an educational care farm because society demands a behavioral change from these children. One said the following when talking about their target group:

"They are all children with serious behavioral problems, gaps in executive functions, and they are all here because society demands a change in their behavior. Otherwise they cannot participate in society - at the level of a child, of course." (C1F3)

Based on preliminary research, it was to be expected that boys represent the vast majority at educational care farms. This was, however, not the case at all three educational care farms. When talking about this with the interviewees, it was mentioned a couple of times that the determining factor here is to what extent society is 'bothered' by the behavior. Boys are, generally, more likely to show externalizing behavior (e.g., aggression) which is often noticed at an earlier stage than

internalizing behavior (e.g., anxiety). This might indicate that the actual number of children that would benefit from a combination of education and care is much higher than currently known.

The majority of the children have endured negative experience upon negative experience, which has caused both their self-esteem and self-confidence to decline. In most cases, the children have attended several different schools and received all sorts of assistance before attending an educational care farm. It is, therefore, not surprising that the majority of the children have little faith in others. In almost all cases there are complex, and again diverse, problems. In addition, the issues are often disguised. One of the interviewees aptly indicated:

“One could, so to speak, take over the entire DSM [when looking at the diagnoses].” (C1F1)

Examples include ADHD, autism, Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), selective mutism, traumatic experiences (e.g., domestic violence, abuse, and bullying), depression, insecurity, anxiety disorders, suicidality, and intellectual giftedness. Two of the three educational care farms have explicitly specialized in internalizing behavior to ensure the safety of the children, the animals, and themselves (i.e., *Oostwijk and De Klimop*). The latter group – consisting of staff members – is discussed below.

3.3.3 Overview of manpower per educational care farm

As described in paragraph 3.2, the teams of the three educational care farms differ in size and expertise. The table below provides an overview.

| | Oostwijk | De Klimop | D’n Hoef |
|--|--|--|--|
| Educational care farm runned by ... | A couple, one of which is both care farmer and teacher | Director with background in teaching and equine assisted therapy | A couple, one of which has background in teaching and equine assisted therapy |
| Number of employees | 1 teacher | 16, of which 14 care workers (one of which is teacher as well) | 18, of which 14 are care-related (12 social workers, 1 psychologist, and 1 behavioral scientist) |
| Guidance/teaching given by ... | Teacher | Teacher, social worker and/or intern | Social worker and/or intern |
| Volunteers | No | Yes (Facility staff) | Yes (Drivers) |

Table 4: Overview of manpower per educational care farm

Two things stand out when looking at the people involved in providing guidance/teaching. The first is that at only one educational care farm the care farmer (i.e., owner) is directly involved with the provision of education. In the other two cases, the directors are more involved from backstage. They monitor, for example, the progress of school-related skills per individual. Another difference can be found when looking at whether interns are present at the educational care farms. At two out of three, this is the case.

So far, the setting, philosophy, target group, and composition of the teams have been discussed – leaving the more procedural part untouched. The following paragraph explains the general procedures for enrolment up to and including outflow to address the fundamental approach of the educational care farms, including the funding.

3.3.4 General procedures for enrolment up to and including outflow

The registrations proceed via various channels. This could be through the associated partnership, the municipality, the school attendance officer, the school of origin, or youth care (i.e., *Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin*). Then the parents and children are invited for a tour. At *Oostwijk*, they receive the so-called 'TOP-dossier' from the partnership beforehand, in which a global insight is given about the child. If the teachers think *Oostwijk* is a suitable place, then the parents will be invited for a tour. As mentioned before, *Oostwijk* is, for example, not a right place for children with externalizing problems because of the small-scale setting and the presence of animals. This exclusion criterion is also part of the policy of *De Klimop*. In some cases, a trial morning is arranged to determine whether they can offer the necessary support. If not, the assignment can, for example, be returned to the municipality. This is, however, not the case at *D'n Hoef*. *D'n Hoef* has registered at the municipality for developmental services, which entails that they cannot deny any children with a developmental request.

Once everyone agrees and is convinced about the educational care farm (including the child), an intake interview takes place in which practical matters are discussed. These include the starting date, transportation, the number of days/hours per week, and the financing. In addition, the first goals are set. A first goal is often that the child feels at ease at the farm. Another example is that *D'n Hoef* has five basic rules, being: taking good care of yourself, another person, the animals, the environment, and the materials. Learning these rules is often the first goal.

The funding usually consists of two parts: education and care. The partnerships administer the educational part. The municipality provides the money for care. Education and care must remain separate; educational money may not be spent on care and vice versa. The complicating factor is that education and care are difficult to differentiate in the setting of an educational care farm. In addition, regions operate differently. *De Klimop* can, for example, declare per hour in the case of an indication, while they work with result-based financing with (educational) care arrangements. The latter means that the second part of the financing only comes when the individual goals of a child are achieved. The financial side seems to proceed seamlessly at *Oostwijk*, while this is not the case at *De Klimop* and *D'n Hoef*. A possible explanation is that *Oostwijk* is an initiative of Landzijde, which acts as an intermediary, and the teachers are employed by an educational organization, whereas the educational care farms in Brabant were established independently. In those two cases, the budget for education is difficult to obtain. The care end is being arranged by *Stichting Samenwerkende Zorgboeren Zuid*, as they are the contracted party.

There are differences in how the agreements are documented. To this point, educational care arrangements were expected to be the only form but practice shows otherwise. To avoid confusion, an overview is shown below. This overview was created with the input of the participants from the member check.

| | Oostwijk | De Klimop | D'n Hoef |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Applications mainly via | Partnership | Municipality | Municipality |
| Agreements documented in | Educational care arrangement | Care arrangement | Indication |
| Working document | Developmental perspective | Care plan | Care plan |
| Focus of approach | Education | Care | Care education or day care |

Table 5: Overview procedures per educational care farm

Working documents are written to link actions to each goal when the (educational) care arrangement or indication is complete. At that point, the child can start at the educational care farm which, again, happens in various ways. At *Oostwijk*, the child flows into the existing group. At *De Klimop*, on the other hand, the premise is that each child starts with individual guidance. After some time, it is determined whether it is possible to make the transition to a group. At *D'n Hoef* the child can start either with day care or with care education. The majority of the children eventually progress from daycare to care education. In some cases, children start with individual guidance and then move on to either daycare or care education. Especially in the case of children that have been chronically absent, their level needs to be determined. This could be done through activities involving, for example, mathematics or by taking tests. An example:

"We always start with the basic subjects, so linguistics, math, reading, and writing. [...] We start with taking tests if the children are 'testable'. Otherwise we just start somewhere and look where they left off at the previous school, and then we start there. [...] The fact that they find it scary to perform on a test, that is something we will be working on next." (C1F3)

Every few months, a multidisciplinary meeting takes place with all those involved in relation to the child. Gradually, the education is built up and corresponding goals are set. Think for example of dealing with delayed attention. The children remain enrolled at the school of origin. Usually, children visit the educational care farm for over a year and then gradually return to education. In most cases, a supervisor accompanies the child to the next place until they are confident enough to do so on their own.

Determining that a child is ready for the next step remains relatively intangible. At *Oostwijk*, for example, it is time for a staged outflow when children meet a specific profile. This profile includes, among other things, work attitude, independence, and self-confidence. An interviewee of *D'n Hoef* explained that children indicate they want to learn more at some point. From that point on, a targeted effort is made towards transferring to education which includes shifting to learning materials from the desired new school.

Most children proceed to some form of special education. It is also possible that children transfer to another facility, where, for example, there is expertise in intellectual giftedness. They hardly ever go back to the school of origin because of a troubled history. During the interviews, the risk of backsliding was also discussed (i.e., returning to the educational care farm after transferring to a new school). At two of the three educational care farms, this is, thus far, not the case. When it happens at the third educational care farm, it is usually the case when parents were reluctant to switch to special education in the first place.

To summarize, the general enrolment procedures up to and including outflow are pretty similar among the three educational care farms. The trajectory starts at the moment of registration. A date is set to get to know each other and the location to determine whether the educational care farm can offer the necessary support. To this end, in some cases, a trial morning is arranged. Once everyone agrees, an intake interview takes place to decide upon practicalities. When the (educational) care arrangement or indication is complete, working documents are set and the child can start at the educational care farm. The progress is evaluated through multidisciplinary meetings. In general, the children return to education after one year. There are, amongst other things, differences to be found in exclusion criteria, funding, and outflow. Several bottlenecks are at play that is related to the general procedures. These are presented in the next paragraph.

3.3.5 Bottlenecks

The interviewees mentioned four overarching bottlenecks. These concern (1) the collaboration with the school of origin, (2) finding a suitable subsequent place, (3) two separate funding flows (i.e., education and care), and (4) being a gray area for inspection. These bottlenecks are explained one by one below.

Starting with the collaboration with the school of origin. In theory, the school of origin remains involved in light of the duty of care, but this is not always the case in practice. The involvement varies per school. During the member check, the participants indicated that the duration of the trajectory also plays a role. In general, the longer a child goes to an educational care farm, the less contact. In an ideal situation, according to the participants of the member check, the school remains involved until the outflow to a follow-up place. They provide school materials, draw up a joint plan of action, and discuss the progress regularly.

Secondly, it is difficult to find a suitable follow-up place. The biggest issue here is the group size, which is often too large. It is more difficult to find a right place for elementary school students than for high school students. According to the participants of the member check, there are broadly four requirements that a follow-up place must meet to be appropriate. These are (1) personalized educational programs, (2) step-by-step learning, (3) small groups, and (4) a similar target group. There are many related bottlenecks that hinder the process of finding a follow-up place. For example, there are few places for children with internalizing behaviors. There is a lack of sites that offer on-the-job learning, and a history of treatments poses a barrier to enrolment.

The segregated funding of education and care represents the third bottleneck, especially for two of the three educational care farms. As described earlier, education and care are difficult to separate. However, the system is set up so that educational money cannot be spent on care and vice versa. In particular, funding for education is often an obstacle. This varies, however, per municipality and partnership. In some cases, the funding is arranged quickly, while in other cases it takes much longer or is not granted.

Fourthly, and lastly, educational-care farms tend to be a gray area for inspection. As mentioned in section 1.4, educational care farms are, in principle, not recognized as official educational locations. As a result, they do not have a so-called 'BRIN number'. This has an impeding effect, for example, on the arrangement of transportation and the use of a pupil monitoring system. However, one interviewee explained that having such a number is not desirable for the children because the educational care farms would no longer be allowed to provide care; the primary focus of locations with a BRIN number must be education. Resulting in an impasse.

This concludes the more procedural part of educational care farms. The following three paragraphs outline the day-to-day practices per location to look into the execution of the aforementioned agreements. After this description, an overview follows in which both similarities and differences are presented.

3.4 Day-to-day practices per educational care farm



Picture 11 - 12: Oostwijk and D'n Hoef

3.4.1 Day-to-day business at Oostwijk

The education takes place in a building next to the residential house of the care farmer. There is one large room that serves as a classroom. At a central point, two schedules show the structure of the day. One with pictograms and the other with drawn clocks. The day starts at 08:20 AM and ends around 2:00 PM. The morning usually begins with some tasks on the farm and/or a board game. After that, the planning of that day is discussed. Around 08:45 AM it is time to start with the school subjects. During the day, work (e.g., school subjects) is alternated with relaxation (e.g., board games) and the children go outside regularly.

When talking about the planning, the previous day is evaluated. This is done deliberately so that the day does not end on a high note. Rewards are attached to the evaluations. The children can earn a coin for group goals, such as being nice to each other. The coins are used to save for a goal, such as baking pancakes. In addition, individual goals are discussed, such as completing school work. For the personal goals, they can earn stickers which are collected on a sheet of paper. When the paper is full, they may opt to skip an activity and do something else instead such as reading a book. There is no pupil monitoring system. The teachers write a report at the end of the day which is considered to be internal communication. Parents do not have access to these reports but the information is discussed during multidisciplinary meetings. During such meetings, at least the following parties are present: the parent(s), the teachers of Oostwijk, a representative of the associated partnership, and a care coordinator of Landzijde. In some cases, there is also a family coach or other counselor present.

As far as education is concerned, lessons using textbooks are alternated with online lessons that Landzijde develops. Oostwijk mainly works with educational material from special education because these methods are suitable for the target group. The methods from special education are often more conveniently arranged than the teaching materials from the children's school of origin. There is one book per subject covering both explanations and assignments. Since one of the teachers also works at a special education school, the materials can quickly be brought to Oostwijk. As mentioned above, no fixed educational model is used. In most cases, the children work independently, and the teacher shifts between the tables. Oostwijk is seen as a school setting and the entire day is devoted to education.

The children all receive individual guidance and work on their school subjects individually. Each day a time is set aside for a joint activity. An example of this is a lesson regarding measuring, where the children had to measure all kinds of things outside and then record them in the correct units. In this way, they practically learn math skills. The underlying idea is that the children learn to receive instruction in groups and must work together. Below, is an excerpt from the observations.

We went outside to measure a few things: the paddock, the driveway, the picnic table, and a stable. It first started with guessing how many meters something would be, then we proceeded

to measure it by taking one-meter steps. The numbers were recorded by [teacher's name]. Then we went on to measure it with a tape measure. The answers were compared and recorded in different units. From meters to centimeters, decimeters, and also kilometers.

This example also shows that Oostwijk utilizes the farm setting as part of the educational programme. By doing so, the children learn essential skills in a playful manner.

It is remarkable that all activities are related to education, often without the children realizing it. Through board games, for example, mathematical skills are practiced in a fun way. The board games also help in learning social skills such as working together with peers but also learning how to deal with both winning and losing. Another example of an activity is baking, in which the same type of skills are trained. Baking requires, amongst other things, preparation (e.g., gathering supplies and time-management), collaboration (e.g., dividing the tasks and helping each other), and motor skills (e.g., cutting ingredients). But the children also need to read a recipe and draw on their math skills to divide the portions fairly. This indicates that Oostwijk has a goal-oriented approach and that the entire day is, either directly or indirectly, devoted to education.

3.4.2 Day-to-day business at AAI Centrum de Klimop

The daily activities of De Klimop take place in and around the main building (next to the residence of the owners of the equestrian dairy farm). There are several rooms, with the living room/kitchen being the central point. The day starts from the living room around 08:45/09:00 AM, where all staff and children gather. During an average day there are several groups of 2-3 children present as well as some individuals for one-on-one guidance sessions. Apart from the breaks, the days do not have a fixed programme. It is therefore tricky to present a general daily routine. To give an impression, some (adapted) fragments from my notes of the observations are shown below. At the end of the day, the supervisors report in the program 'ONS'. Parents can view these reports via the program 'Carenzorgt'.

During one of the mornings, I was invited to join a group consisting of two high school students (a boy and a girl), a supervisor, and an intern. They started the day with schoolwork. Both partially go to the care farm and partially to a high school. Their school of origin supplies the teaching material.

I was greeted kindly and somewhat curiously by the group. [...] The girl had already began working on her math homework so that she could get it over with as soon as possible. The boy preferred to start with a board game and afterwards work on his schoolwork. That was fine. He chose Jenga and the intern and I were invited to partake. The atmosphere was friendly and both the boy and the girl were chatting.

After two rounds of the game and with some encouragement from the intern ("Is it time for schoolwork now?"), he decided to put the game aside and turn his laptop on. This proceeded with some difficulty and I noticed that it made him nervous. But under the guidance of the supervisor, it went well and he also began with a mathematics lesson. He had only forgotten to bring the right books, so he could not compare the page numbers of the planning with the online version. The supervisor suggested that he could browse through the online environment a bit, so that he might recognize where he had ended up last time. The girl explained that she preferred to work from books for that reason, while the boy prefers lessons on the laptop ("As long as it cooperates").

In the meantime, the girl was helped a little with the larger-than and smaller-than signs, because she indicated that she kept getting them mixed up. The intern knew a trick for this and the girl understood it immediately. After finishing the page, it turned out that she had also forgotten her books, so she could not continue with school work. The supervisor asked her

"Okay, and now? She did want to play a game and that was fine. It became a game of chess with the supervisor. Since I cannot play chess, I could not join in this time, but the girl explained some of the rules in between. She showed an instruction page with all the pieces.

The boy occasionally asked for help. For example, he would say 'Huh, I do not understand how I should know this' and then the supervisor would take a look with him. [...] The girl took a book out of her bag and went to see how many pages she still had to read. That turned out to be over 100 and she wondered if she would get it finished in time. It was an English book and I suspect it was for the reading list. She explained that she reads about 40 pages a day. When I asked if she was going to read some pages at home as well, she mentioned that she cannot really focus at home because of a loud sibling. [...] After the coffee break, this group split up and received individual guidance.

This excerpt illustrates the individualized approach of De Klimop. Both students have been working on school subjects - each in their preferred way. Where one needs some time to settle, the other starts immediately. The supervisor and intern encourage the students' independence by asking questions and allowing them to make choices. The planning is flexible, yet doing nothing is not an option.

After the break on the same morning as the excerpt above, I was at liberty to join another group, consisting of two younger children (again, a boy and a girl) of primary school age and a supervisor. These children attend De Klimop almost every day. They were going to play a board game designed to practice social-emotional skills.

The four of us went upstairs to play the game 'Kikkerbecool'. It is similar to a game of goose. You have to come up with an appropriate response to a social situation. Some examples:

- *You notice that someone is being excluded from a game in the schoolyard. Demonstrate how you respond to this.*
- *A boy attends ballet. Do you think that is silly?*
- *Your friend tells you that her parents are getting a divorce. How do you respond?*
- *You are visiting your grandfather and your phone goes off. What do you do?*
- *Do you ever pretend to be tougher than you really are? When was the last time you did that? And why?*
- *You are on a crowded bus and there is no more room. An elderly lady enters the bus. What do you do?*

The other players may assess your answer/reaction. If it is an appropriate response, you get a coin. You can win by collecting the most coins or by arriving at the end point first. In any case, the children's opinions were asked after each card.

A number of things happened during the game. At the start of the game, the supervisor suggested that the boy would try to indicate when he was disappointed instead of walking away. He agreed to do so. However, after rolling the dice to determine who was allowed to start, he was disappointed because he was not the one with the highest number and walked away. He lay down on the couch that was in the corner of the room. The supervisor left him alone for a moment and then sat with him for a while and tried to get him back to the table, but then left him to it.

The girl initially did not want to participate and was playing with a skippy ball. After the boy dropped out, she wanted to participate. She was able to think of a good reaction to most of the cards, but not to all of them. In addition, she grabbed several coins at every turn. When the supervisor pointed out that you only get a coin when you answer correctly and when it is your turn, she did not really react. She seemed to be absorbed in her own thoughts and made a flower of the

coins. A number of cards brought up memories, which made her feel sad. She had often been excluded from games in the schoolyard in the past, for example, because she did not have Pokémon cards. The little boy who had walked out offered that he could bring some cards for her. The supervisor complimented him and suggested that he would first discuss this with his parents. He still did not want to join the game, but seemed interested and occasionally came up with an answer.

The intention of this board game is similar to the boardgames of Oostwijk as skills are practiced in a playful manner. This game is specifically designed to address social skills but meanwhile, it also involves counting, reading, listening, substantiating an opinion, and working together. Through the questions, the supervisor also gains more insight into the children their past.

On another occasion, I was invited to join an equestrian activity. This time the group consisted of one girl, a supervisor, and two interns. The girl attends a secondary school and mainly visits De Klimop for relaxation and practicing social skills.

After the break, it was time for an activity with a horse. It was actually a collaborative activity, but due to the absence of the other group members, the two interns and I became her teammates. The girl was allowed to choose a horse. [...] The supervisor put down two pillars. The assignment was to walk the horse through them and the girl was allowed to employ us as advisors. The girl was not too sure how to pull this off and decided to ask the interns for help.

After a while we decided to approach the horse and draw his attention. The intern told the girl that the horse has a floating side and a steering side. By steering with both arms, the horse walked along. When the task was accomplished twice, more cones were placed, but this time in one line. The idea was to make the horse come to a halt at every cone. After some hesitation, the task succeeded. Compliments followed, because this was quite exciting for her and especially with so many spectators.

I would guess that all in all we spent half an hour to three quarters of an hour. The horse was brought to its stable and then the supervisor marked on a whiteboard how strenuous this activity was for the horse. This involves scoring on both physical and psychological effort. In this way they keep track whether a horse still needs to move. The assignments turned out to be a bit of both as the horse reflects the emotions of the girl.

Ik denk dat we al met al een half uur tot drie kwartier bezig waren. Het paard werd teruggezet en vervolgens op een whiteboard aangegeven hoe inspannend dit was voor het paard. Daarbij wordt gescoord op zowel fysieke als psychologische inspanning. Zo houden ze bij wat de stand is en welk paard nog moet bewegen of juist niet. De opdrachten bleken een beetje van beide te zijn. Het paard spiegelt namelijk de emoties.

This activity is an example of an animal assisted intervention (AAI). In addition to collaborating, the assignment involves planning, asking for help, and stepping out of your comfort zone. Another aspect is caring for animals by gently leading the horse and considering the impact of this assignment on the horse.

The three fragments together confirm that care and education are interrelated. While working on school subjects, the supervisors make sure that the students are in the correct mode by, for example, starting with a board game. The second example – of ‘Kikkerbecool’ – shows that, even in a short period, multiple occasions arise in which both education and care happen simultaneously. The third, and final, example illustrates that care also involves making sure that children feel at ease with a given task, while also stretching personal boundaries and practicing skills.



Picture 13-15: De Klimop

3.4.3 Day-to-day business at Pedagogisch Centrum D'n Hoef

Most of D'n Hoef's services occur from the main building, which consists of several larger rooms and some offices. During the week, two groups are present: the educational-care group and participants in daycare. The primary focus of this research is the first group but I will also include some insights from the second group. This is because they work on education as well and most of the children progress to the educational-care group. On a weekday, different target groups are present on-site, consisting of the educational-care group, daycare participants, and clients who receive individual guidance.

Care education is provided in a group of up to four children by a social worker and an intern. The group consists of (possible) chronically absent children whose ages and educational levels vary widely. Care education takes place in one of the classrooms with two smaller rooms in the back – allowing the children to have some privacy when needed. The educational-care group follows a set schedule, that is as follows:

- 09:30 AM: welcome + discussing the planning
- 09:45 AM: education
- 10:45 AM: break
- 11:00 AM: education
- 11:55 AM: elective
- 12:05 PM: evaluation + a chore
- 12:30 PM: homeward

It is noticeable that these children primarily spend much time indoors. The planning of the daycare participants has a similar structure. They have, however, one educational block instead of two. At 09:45 AM they start with taking care of the animals. For both groups, the time is the determining factor for the day. Some children use timers so that they can switch to the next activity or subject in time.

During the educational periods, each person works on school subjects. These are mainly the basic subjects such as reading, linguistics, and writing for primary school children. The educational material can come from the school of origin or D'n Hoef. The approach to education varies per target group. Where daycare participants learn how to be stationary and concentrate, the educational-care group aims to return to education gradually. On average, more guidance is present among the daycare participants because they need more support and supervision. The ages and school levels also vary among this group.

The guiding principle for the personnel is the zone of proximal development⁸. When the children participate in a group, they are meant to be as relaxed as possible. During individual guidance, on the other hand, the children are invited to push their limits and deal with irritation, among other things.

During the time slot of the elective, children can choose what they want to do. This could, for example, be a board game, reading, or drawing. When talking with an interviewee about the underlying idea, she stated:

“Then they may choose what they are going to do [during the elective]. That is also part of being responsible for yourself. As long as they do something, because otherwise I decide for them. Why would I do so? When they sit here and stare at each other, then they get bored easily and unpleasant behavior emerges – risking that they end the day negatively. I aim for them to leave D’n Hoef in a good mood so to that they experience it is a success.” (C2F3)

There is a one-to-one evaluation with each child at the end of the morning and this is reported in ONS, which can be viewed by parents via Carenzorgt. The reports consist of the reflections of the children and the observations of the supervisors. After the evaluation every child is given a chore, such as sweeping or cleaning tables. At 12:30 PM, the children go homeward.

Notably, the set-up of the day is similar to that of Oostwijk. At D’n Hoef, however, there are more individual agreements which partly stems from the greater number of children. For example, some spend half of the morning in a group and further receive personal guidance. Other individuals from the educational-care group can perform a small task outside (e.g., collecting eggs) before starting with their schoolwork, while others begin immediately. The rationale for the latter is that children start their day with a calm state of mind.

3.5 Overview of critical similarities and differences

The table below provides an overview of essential similarities and differences between the educational care farms. Some aspects have deliberately been left out. This applies, for example, to the characteristics of the children, funding, and type of activities. These examples are so diverse that their content cannot be captured in the table.

| | Oostwijk | De Klimop | D’n Hoef |
|---|--|--|---|
| Setting | Active farm: Rearing sheep and horses | Active farm: Equestrian dairy farm | Farm location |
| Educational care farm is runned by ... | A couple, one of which is both care farmer and teacher | Director with background in teaching and equine assisted therapy | Two directors, one of which with background in teaching and equine assisted therapy |
| Offer therapy | No | Yes | Yes |
| Number of employees | 1 teacher | 16, of which 14 care workers (one of which is teacher as well) | 18, of which 14 are care-related |

⁸ The zone of proximal development refers to the space between what a learner can do without assistance and what a learner can do with adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Roth & Radford, 2010).

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| | | | (12 social workers, 1 psychologist, and 1 behavioral scientist) |
| Volunteers | No | Yes (Facility staff) | Yes (Drivers) |
| Target group education | Children from primary school | Children from both primary and secondary education | Children from both primary and secondary education |
| Several target groups present at the same time | No | Yes | Yes |
| Start and end time | 08:20 - 14:00 (4 days per week) | Individualized, but generally 08:45/09:00 - 12:00/14:00 (5 days per week) | 09:30 - 12:30 (5 days per week) |
| Number of enrolled children | 4: All education-related | 60: 16 education-related enrolments | 112: About 25 are education-related |
| Group size | 4 | 2-3 | 4-5 |
| Daily program | Fixed set-up with individual agreements | Individualized, only fixed time slots for breaks | Fixed set-up per group with individual agreements |
| Time spend on education | 5,5 hours per day | Varies per individual | Educational care group: two hours per half day Day care: one hour per half day |
| Teaching/guidance given by ... | Teacher | Teacher, social worker and/or intern | Social worker and/or intern |
| Learning material | Online modules of Landzijde in combination with either books from school of origin or materials from special education | Books from school of origin | Either books from school of origin or materials of D'n Hoef |
| Experiential learning | Not explicitly | Yes | Yes |
| AAIs | Not explicitly | Yes | Yes |
| Evaluations | Yes, on a daily basis | Yes, either after an activity or at the end of the day | Yes, on a daily basis |
| Rewards | Yes, both individually and collectively | No | No |

Table 6: Overview of critical similarities and differences

3.6 Overarching Elements

When looking at what is distinctive about these educational care farms, several overarching elements can be identified (see table 7 for an overview). Starting with the structured design at both the strategic and operational levels. At the strategic level, the (educational) care arrangements or indications are drawn up per individual, in which agreements are made. These agreements give general answers to the questions: who, what, when, where, why, in what way, and with what resources. The progress is discussed periodically, during which the plan can be adjusted. The Plan - Do - Check - Act cycle is evident here. The educational care farms also provide structure on an operational level. There is a fixed structure to each day with variations in the activities. The employees are often present on set days. The planning is discussed daily either verbally or in writing, so the children know where they stand. The underlying idea is expectation management. To illustrate:

“By now they know what is expected of them. They are accustomed to so much already, because you are offering it [daily set-up] the same way every time.” (C1F1)

The educational care farm is a temporary place, and the trajectory often lasts one year. The education is built up gradually and generally follows the following outline: care - education and care - care in education - education. The pace depends on the child. Where some need a few weeks to settle in, others feel comfortable almost immediately. An example:

“He [a child] arrived here, he got out of the cab and he stood like this in the middle of the path [huddled]. He said nothing, did nothing, he felt extremely miserable which I can imagine very well. At 10:00 AM we went outside. The dogs went outside as well and they ran towards him. The first smile was for the dog, that was the breaking point. Then his hand went like this ... [petting the dog]. Then you have an opening.” (C1F1)

A first goal is often to make the children feel comfortable and safe. Then education is gradually built up by continuously seeking ways to get the children to learn. This is related to the next element: customization. To illustrate:

“He refused to read and then I would say 'Oh, Okiedokie [horse] would love it if you read to him' and he would sit on a stool and read to the horse. Or practice the mathematical tables with a horse. You know, things like that. [...] In this way you are looking per child to see what suits them, what can we do for them, what can we help them with, and how can we best do that with something that is available here on the farm.” (C1F1)

This excerpt also shows that individual interests are considered. Where one child can work independently from books, another needs guidance. Yet another prefers to work with a computer. Because of the small groups, there is both time and space for this. Customization is applied throughout the program. The alternation between work and relaxation applies to all children, which is related to the alternation between traditional ways of learning (e.g., with the help of books) and experiential learning. As mentioned before, experiential learning allows children to learn school-related skills playfully. Two examples:

“[Name of employee] takes him [child] outside and says 'Can you measure how big that piece is, because I need wire' and then he has to go and measure it.” (C1F3)

“For instance, we had a measuring lesson. How tall does a pony have to be to be a horse? We first looked that up as a group and we went outside to measure to ponies. How tall are they? Is it really a pony or is it a horse after all? That way, you can always use something from outside in your lessons.” (C1F1)

Both excerpts also show that the setting of educational care farms offers a rich learning environment. The animals are central to both education and relaxation at all educational care farms. School-related skills consist of both mastering school subjects and being able to function within a group. As such, individual supervision is gradually phased out so that the children get used to being surrounded by other children. This is important for moving on to a follow-up place. Another example is that the children learn to deal with delayed attention. Education is thus broader than school subjects; on the educational care farms, they actively work on self-reliance, independence, and autonomy. To illustrate:

“Merely going outside, putting on your coat, putting on your boots, returning, having to wash your hands. There is one child here who has no idea how to do all of that, because it has always been done for him. Meanwhile, he is managing quite well on his own. He gets a little bit further every time.” (C1F1)

“Doing it yourself, that stems from the Montessori way of teaching - ‘teach me to do it myself’.” (C1F3)

Therefore, it is not surprising that activities do not focus solely on school subjects. Skills such as leadership, cooperation, planning, and motor skills are also taught. These skills, in turn, are beneficial to the school subjects.

In addition, it is notable that the educational care farms highly value the autonomy of the children. For example, they do not only talk about the children but also with the children. They have a say in the daily planning, bearing in mind their age. The older children are expected to take more initiative, whereas the younger children have a say in the order of activities. In addition, the children know why they are going to an educational care farm. One interviewee articulated this as follows:

“And they all know that they are not here for their sweaty feet.” (C1F1)

The children receive a combination of education and care, which is difficult to separate. Often the care request of the child is the underlying reason for dropping out of school. One interviewee said:

“Often the child's care needs are the root cause of chronic school absenteeism. In this sense, the child's care needs are fundamental. What is the reason that you cannot go to school? What do you need to make sure that you can go back to school? [...] But if you look at this, sometimes you are busy with care and at the same time you are busy with cognitive things. It is almost impossible to distinguish between the two. If the child's request for help was purely didactic, then the school could have dealt with it themselves. But the point is, that is often not the case with those who drop out of school. They rarely drop out because of a purely didactic question.” (C1F2)

Care also includes the pedagogical aspect of educational care farms. This mainly relates to how to interact with other people. Below are two separate excerpts from my field notes.

The two children were invited to take turns to tell about their weekend [...] In their enthusiasm they sometimes spoke at the same time, which the supervisor tried to steer in the right direction by saying, for example, ‘I am inquisitive about [child's name] his weekend, but that does not work very well if you say something at the same time. Let's listen to him first and then you can tell your story’.

The girl was playing with a corn cob, causing all the chunks to fall on the ground. A supervisor talked to her about this. “[Child's name] I think you are dropping the corn on the

ground and I think that is a little silly, don't you?". The supervisor suggested picking up the corn and putting it in a container for another employee's rabbit.

It is noteworthy that the employees indicate what behavior they see and what they would like to see differently in all cases. Possible solutions are given. These fragments also show that they do not only talk about the children but also with them.

Throughout the week there is frequent contact with the parents of the children. This contact can be about practical matters (e.g., expected time of arrival), but also informal matters (e.g., a picture of an activity). One interviewee said:

"The lines of communication are very short with the parents. If something has happened in the morning or at night that we might have to deal with, we want to hear about it. And vice versa, if something happened here during the day, we will also inform the parents. But occasionally, we share photos of activities to make sure they also receive positive news. Parents often have a very unpleasant time behind them, so it is also nice for them to receive messages when things are going well." (C1F1)

Successes are celebrated, such as the transition from individual counseling to a group, but the educational care farms do not shy away from negative experiences. One interviewee explained:

"But even a negative experience is an experience you can learn from. It does not always have to be a success [...] The more learning moments, the better. That is why it is written on the window: 'I have learned so much from my mistakes, I think I will just make a few more'. [...] The idea of making mistakes, because you learn from them. That is why we are not going to call it mistakes anymore, because that is associated with red marks and a failing grade. But if you can associate mistakes with 'Hey, I will learn something from this' then the fear of failure is reduced." (C1F2)

Both positive and negative experiences can serve as examples for other children. In addition, positive experiences, in particular, can be motivating. If one person makes the transition to a follow-up place, it can be the reason that another wants to try as well.

As introduced at the beginning of this paragraph, the table below provides an overview of the overarching elements. The elements are interrelated. Having a goal-oriented approach, for example, requires a structured design, which both link to the temporary enrollment at an educational care farm. In addition, seeking ways to get the children to learn invites for taking the individual interests into account, alternating work with relaxation, the involvement of animals, and utilizing the rich learning environment. Working towards increasing self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance goes hand in hand with valuing the child's autonomy.

| |
|---|
| Have a structured design |
| Apply customization |
| Offer a temporary place |
| Education is built incrementally |
| Have a goal-oriented approach |
| Continuously seeking ways to get the children to learn |
| Individual interests are considered |
| Form small-scale groups |
| Alternate work with relaxation |
| Alternate traditional ways of learning with experiential learning |

| |
|---|
| Utilize the rich learning environment |
| Animals are central to their approach |
| Work towards increasing self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance |
| Define education beyond traditional school subjects |
| Value the autonomy of the child |
| Combine education and care |
| Have a pedagogical role |
| Have contact with the parents frequently |
| Do not shy away from negative experiences |

Table 7: Overview overarching elements

3.7 Literature review

With the input of the previous paragraphs, almost all preconditions for the first stage of the effect ladder of Yperen et al. (2017a; 2017b) can be met. These are the following: name of the intervention, purpose of the intervention, target group of the intervention, description of approach and implementation, context and organizational conditions for implementation, and operating organizations. The final precondition, on the other hand, has not been met yet. This concerns the similarities with other interventions. As mentioned in the introduction, educational care farms are one of the many examples of alternative education. In the broadest sense, alternative education covers all educational activities that fall outside the traditional school system (Sliwka, 2008).

Below, the most common characteristics of alternative education are introduced and compared with the three educational care farms. As stated in the method section, the listing of cross-links helps in establishing a common knowledge base regarding the application, effectiveness, and limitations of the interventions. This also helps in understanding what is distinctive about educational care farms. A definition is given before looking into the commonalities, and the target group is elaborated upon. In addition, the most studied interventions and outcome indicators are presented. This paragraph, and thereby the results section, ends with the characteristics of alternative education and an overview of the commonalities between alternative education and educational care farms.

3.7.1 Definition

There is no commonly agreed description or definition of alternative education (Kumm et al., 2020). In most cases, the term is used to describe programs serving vulnerable children who no longer participate in mainstream schools (Aron, 2006). The National Center for Education Statistics (2017, as cited in Kumm et al., 2020) defined alternative education as *“any public elementary or secondary school that (a) addresses the needs of students who typically cannot be met in a regular school, (b) provides non-traditional education, (c) serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or (d) falls outside the categories of regular education, special education, or vocational education”*. To the best of my knowledge, the latter is the most comprehensive definition.

Ballard and Bender (2021) distinguish between three broad types of alternative education settings based on their approach. These categories cover settings that focus on (1) academic needs, (2) disciplinary needs, and (3) therapeutic needs. However, it is rather difficult to differentiate between these categories as most alternative education settings offer multiple services simultaneously.

3.7.2 Target group

Alternative education settings are designed to serve children across age groups, ranging from prekindergarten to 21 years who greatly benefit from intensive support (Ballard & Bender, 2021;

Kumm et al., 2020). Generally, alternative education programs educate students with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. The average age of children attending alternative education programs is 15 (Foley & Pang, 2006). The participants are disproportionately students of color, male, and from low-income backgrounds (Aspiranti et al., 2021; Ballard & Bender, 2021; Foley & Pang, 2006). This is not surprising as these participants often face numerous structural inequities contributing to school failure.

In most cases, interventions in traditional schools did not have the desired effect, leading to a recommendation to sign up for an alternative setting. This recommendation can stem from (1) an individualized education program team decision, (2) family, mental health expert, or other referral, (3) expulsion from general education setting, or (4) a legal decision (Ballard & Bender, 2021; Kumm et al., 2020).

3.7.3 Most commonly studied interventions

Most of the literature on alternative education setting discusses the actual setting as the behavioral intervention, not the interventions offered in that specific setting (Aspiranti et al., 2021). But when taking a closer look, some scholars do report the actual interventions being implemented (Aspiranti et al., 2021; Ballard & Bender, 2021). For example, Ballard and Bender (2021) conducted a systematic review on alternative education and reported a few of the most commonly mentioned interventions. These include:

- The Good Behavior Game or other group contingencies which reward students for displaying positive behaviors as a group;
- Check-in / check-out that connects individual students with a mentor at school;
- Substance abuse groups that focus on the prevention and cessation of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco;
- And school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports that support student behavior by applying a three-tiered approach (i.e., universal, targeted, and individualized).

3.7.4 Outcome indicators

Only a few studies examine student outcomes and program effectiveness of alternative education (Aron, 2006). To determine whether a program is successful, the four domains of youth development can be of help. These domains are (1) educational achievement and cognitive development, (2) health and safety, (3) social and emotional well-being, and (4) self-sufficiency. Examples of indicators within these domains include basic skills (e.g., linguistics, reading, writing, and mathematics), oral and interpersonal communication skills, and academic self-concept. Outcomes can be measured by school records, direct behavior observations, student self-reports, teacher reports of student outcomes via a rating scale, and parent reports (Aspiranti et al., 2021; Ballard & Bender, 2021).

3.7.5 Characteristics of alternative education

There is no definitive typology that summarizes the core elements of alternative education (Aron, 2006). Some scholars, however, have given it a shot (Aron, 2006; Flower et al., 2011, as cited in Kumm et al., 2020; McGee & Lin, 2017; Sliwka, 2008). Sliwka (2008), for example, describes five aspects that are central in the culture of learning in alternative forms of education. These aspects can be captured as (1) the conception of the learner, (2) the learning environment, (3) the role of teachers, (4) curricula and the content of learning, and (5) the function and culture of assessment. The different typologies have been combined into a new table as there is substantial overlap. This renewed version is to be found in both [appendix K](#) and the subsequent paragraph in which the characteristics of alternative education are scored per educational care farm. The scores are then interpreted.

3.7.6 Commonalities between alternative education and educational care farms

| | Oostwijk | De Klimop | D'n Hoef |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|
| REDUCED CLASS SIZE | | | |
| Low student to teacher ratio (2-4) | X | X | X |
| Individual attention (2-4) | X | X | X |
| POSITIVE CLASS CLIMATE | | | |
| Clear expectations (2, 4) | X | X | X |
| Flexible and personalized learning plans (1, 2) | X | X | X |
| Predictable structures, rules, and procedures (2 - 4) | X | X | X |
| Foster self-responsibility and self-determination (4) | X | X | X |
| Reward systems to promote attendance and academic achievement (2 - 4) | X | - | - |
| THE CONCEPTION OF THE LEARNER | | | |
| Self-directed learning (1) | - | X | X |
| Repetition of activities (1) | X | X | X |
| Fostering an intrinsic motivation to learn (1) | X | X | X |
| THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT | | | |
| Non-traditional set-up of classrooms: the learner is put center stage instead of the teacher (1) | X | X | - |
| Facilitate individual as well as collaborative learning (1) | X | X | X |
| Special attention to the aesthetic side of learning environments (1, 2) | X | X | X |
| Clean and well-maintained buildings (2) | X | X | X |
| THE ROLE OF TEACHERS | | | |
| The role of the teacher ranges from being a coach on the side to a provider, organizer, and manager of customized learning in experiential learning environments (1) | X | X | X |
| Abandoned the one teacher per classroom tradition (1) | - | X | X |
| Providing the possibility to learn from natural consequences (1) | X | X | X |
| Engaging and creative instruction (2) | X | X | X |
| Differentiate instruction (2, 4) | X | X | X |
| Relevant learning and applicable to life outside of school (2) | X | X | X |
| Social skills instruction (3, 4) | X | X | X |

| OTHER FACTORS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| School-based mentor (2 - 4) | - | - | - |
| All stakeholders are involved in the different aspects of the program (2, 4) | X | X | X |
| Respect parents as equal partners (4) | X | X | X |
| Stable and diverse funding (2) | X | - | - |
| Provide instructors with ongoing professional development activities (e.g., teacher input, collaboration with colleagues, and opportunities to learn from teaching practices in other settings) (2) | X | X | X |

Table 8: Commonalities between alternative education programs and educational care farms

(1) Sliwka (2008)

(2) Aron (2006)

(3) Flower et al. (2011, as cited in Kumm et al., 2020)

(4) McGee and Lin (2017)

3.7.7 Interpretation of the commonalities

It is noteworthy that most of the characteristics apply to the three educational care farms. The table confirms that educational care farms are an excellent example of alternative education. In addition, it illustrates some minor differences between the educational care farms that have been identified before employing the interviews, participant observations, and member check. Examples include rewards and funding. Table 8 also highlights two new topics. These are the non-traditional setup of classrooms and a school-based mentor. To begin with the non-traditional set-up of classrooms. The three educational care farms can be positioned on a scale, where the set-up of *D'n Hoef* looks most like a traditional classroom as the staff members are situated in front of the group and all tables are facing the same direction. The rooms at *De Klimop*, by contrast, look nothing like a traditional classroom. The spaces are arranged like living rooms. *Oostwijk* falls in between as it combines elements of conventional classrooms (e.g., assigned tables to work on school subjects) with the design of a living room. Secondly, and lastly, there is no school-based mentor involved at the three educational care farms. Two of the three educational care farms (i.e., *De Klimop* and *D'n Hoef*) do, however, appoint case managers. This is not the case at *Oostwijk* as there are only two teachers involved who share this task. All team members can be considered mentors at the educational care farms as the children can ask any of them for help.

3.7.8 Critical considerations

In addition to the characteristics of alternative education, the literature also raises some critical considerations (Aron, 2006; Aspiranti et al., 2021; Ballard & Bender, 2021). The first problem being raised is that there is no working definition of alternative education (Aron, 2006). In addition, it is not known how many children can be served by the existing programs. Because of this, the gaps in the system remain unknown (e.g., how significant these gaps are, in what communities, and for what types of youth). Furthermore, it prevents policymakers from looking into the underlying questions about the quality of the traditional school system, policy considerations, and funding strategies.

Secondly, by targeting a particular group such as students that are chronically absent, programs may be setting themselves up for failure if the students encompass too much diversity (Aron, 2006). No single school or program can be expected to handle such a wide variety of educational and other needs.

Thirdly, intervention and outcome research in alternative education schools is still relatively sparse, and there are few resources available on the efficacy and generalizability of the interventions (Ballard & Bender, 2021). Aspiranti et al. (2021) stated that:

Due to inconsistent data collection, the mobility of students in alternative school placements, heterogeneity of programs and policies, and limited research on this population, the effectiveness of alternative school settings on improving student outcomes remains unclear. (p. 2275)

Fourthly, most studies related to alternative education focus on externalizing behaviors (Ballard and Bender, 2021). Because of this, there is a risk of under-identifying indicators of internal distress (e.g., self-harm or suicidal ideation). In practice, the target group often deals with both inter- and externalizing behavior.

Fifthly, and lastly, there seems to be the default to measure adverse, undesirable outcomes (e.g., disruptive behavior) instead of positive, desirable outcomes (e.g., emotional strengths) (Ballard & Bender, 2021). This might encourage stigmatization and may result in overlooking students' strengths.

On a final note, the types of alternative education that emerged during the literature review appear to focus primarily on learning within a school environment for secondary school students. Distinctive about educational care farms are the setting, combination of education and care, and the explicit involvement of animals. The literature did not address the extent to which the characteristics differ from traditional education. It is likely that the critical considerations also apply to educational-care farms.

3.8 Preliminary program theory

Based on the results, a preliminary program theory has been established using the CIMO logic that can serve as a hypothesis during follow-up research (see Figure 7). The visual representation of the theory is not a comprehensive depiction and is based on a small sample size. There are some additional critical remarks to be made. One might wonder whether the CIMO logic can be used a basis for the theory. The scope of the components is indistinct and arrows can go in any direction. In the case of context, the question is whether it refers to the initial situation (i.e., chronic school absenteeism) or to the setting of the intervention. In addition, the context can also be part of both the intervention and mechanisms. Not all educational care farms apply specific interventions. The descriptions focus primarily on the farm setting, rather than the interventions that take place within it. Mechanisms are explicitly discussed in [section 3.6](#) on the overarching elements. The outcome measures of education-care farms are beyond the scope of this study, but have been implicitly addressed. Hence, the outcomes have not been made bold in the figure below. For the primary outcome measures, inspiration was drawn from alternative education. For the secondary outcome measure, it remains to be seen when the return to school is a success. This requires longitudinal research.

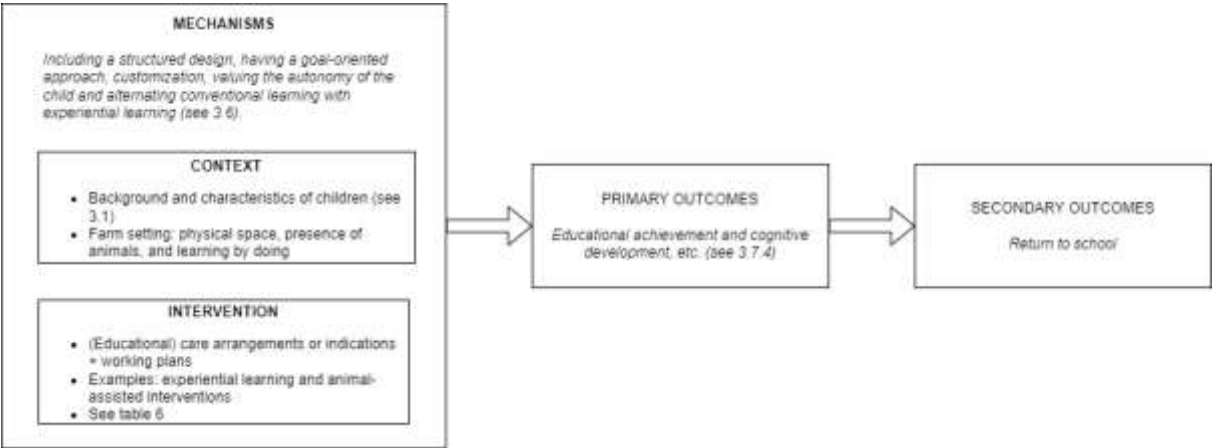


Figure 7: Preliminary program theory

4. Discussion

This research aimed to describe educational care arrangements in detail at several educational care farms in the Netherlands. This chapter starts with an overview of the main findings. Subsequently, the practical implications are discussed and the usability of both the effect ladder and the Grounded Theory Approach are reflected upon. In addition, several methodological considerations are presented. This chapter concludes with recommendations for follow-up research and two socio-ethical matters.

4.1 Main findings

In theory, the target group of educational care farms consists of primary and secondary education children that meet the definition of chronic school absenteeism. In practice, the target group is more wide-ranging – consisting of children that experience social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. It was remarkable that children transferred to an educational care farm relatively young. This is confirmed by research by Allen et al. (2018) and Comly et al. (2020). Dropping out at an early age is detrimental (Allen et al., 2018). Especially the early grades are a critical period of engagement with education where full attention is linked to academic and social success. It was expected that prevention of chronic school absenteeism would therefore focus explicitly on young children, but this does not appear to be the case (Allen et al., 2018; Comly et al., 2020). In general, existing prevention strategies fall into the following categories: individual, family, or school and community interventions (Robinson et al., 2017).

The purpose of the educational care farms is that the children, over time, return to regular or special education. Educational care farms offer these children a temporary place where education and care are intertwined. Their approach is heterogeneous but several overarching elements can be discerned. These include, for example, a structured design, customization throughout the trajectory, and the alternation of traditional ways of learning with experiential learning. When comparing the three selected educational care farms, there are primarily differences in the daily program, the composition of the teams, and the funding. The children frequently gradually move on to a form of special education. Most of the known characteristics of alternative education also apply to educational care farms.

There is relatively little research at hand to compare the results with. There is, however, one article that is important to mention here. This concerns the study by Veen and colleagues (2021) which prompted the project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'. They underpin the diversity among the programs offered by educational care farms in the Netherlands. The scholars have identified six similarities among nine educational care farms. These are (1) phases, (2) small groups, (3) tailored education and care, (4) a focus on executive functions and socio-emotional development, (5) learning in practice, and (6) teachers and care professionals. The first and final categories call for some more explanation. The first category – phases – refers to the natural flow of the trajectory at an educational care farm. It starts with a familiarization phase, after which school skills are addressed, and in the last phase, the transition to school is critical. The final category – teachers and care professionals – refers to the staff that is present on the educational care farms.

4.2 Practical implications

In addition to the collected data, this research yielded a method to describe what educational care farms do and the corresponding rationale. This method primarily consists of the interview guide and

observation form that have been applied to the three selected educational care farms. In this research, these methods have provided many and rich data. This approach can also be used for other educational care farms and allows for comparison. In the longer term, this contributes to the search for working elements.

In addition, a preliminary program theory has been formulated as a secondary output. This research mainly collected data that is relevant for the context and intervention part of the CIMO logic (see [paragraph 1.4](#) as well). The last two components (i.e., mechanisms and outcome) require longitudinal research. This preliminary program theory can be tested and added to during the project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'.

4.3 Practice-based versus evidence-based approach

As mentioned in the introduction, there is no chapter devoted to a theoretical framework because of the inductive nature of this research. It was, however, guided by the effect ladder and the Grounded Theory Approach. A few things are to be said about the usability and applicability of both the model and approach. Starting with the usability of the effect ladder. On the one hand, it provided structure, but on the other hand, it can also be restrictive because of its static nature. The amount and especially variety of data was difficult to categorize as part of the ladder requirements. In addition, it is not clear when a need has been met as there are no further specifications. Considering the inductive nature of this research, the provided direction did, however, outweigh the ambiguities.

Secondly, the Grounded Theory Approach was, on reflection, not the best fit for the research questions. The research does not provide a theory, but input for an in-depth description of the services offered by educational care farms. Given the inductive nature of this research, the methods, nonetheless, inherently exhibit characteristics of a Grounded Theory Approach. In addition, establishing a theory about, for example, the effective intervention elements is not possible without a thorough description of the program. This research, therefore, provides the foundation and invites for follow-up research.

4.4 Methodological considerations

This research has both limitations and strengths that should be considered when interpreting the results. Starting with the fact that no pilot interview has been conducted. But the draft interview guide has been sent to a couple of members of the project team. They were asked to review the list for clarity, appropriateness of items, and to provide suggestions for improvement. Based upon this feedback, several changes in wording and order of items were made. However, the content remained the same.

Most of the interviews were conducted at the care farms. This did not always prove convenient in practice, as there were frequent interruptions due to staff or children dropping in. Therefore, making an audio recording was not always possible. But on the other hand, the care farm is a familiar place to the interviewees, which provides a relaxed and informal atmosphere. This enhanced the quality of the interview. Moreover, I could also ask the interviewees questions during the observation days or by e-mail afterward. In addition, I interviewed two people per educational care farm, which allowed the questions to be divided to some extent.

An observation schedule was drawn up for the sake of participant observations. In practice, it turned out that filling in the schedule while observing was not sensible as it created too much distance between the observer and the group. The schedule was useful afterward because it gave structure to

the notes and served as a checklist. It made me notice, for example, that certain subjects had not yet been discussed and I could pay explicit attention to that during the next observation day.

In addition, the observations remain a snapshot. I tried to prevent this by visiting the care farms on different days and during different weeks, but it was nonetheless inevitable. For example, two of the three care farms are known for their animal assisted interventions. However, I did not witness these in practice much, if at all. One possible explanation is that I visited the care farms during the winter. On the other hand, I noticed that after about two days at each care farm, I already had a pretty good impression of the daily routine.

There are several things to be said about the literature review. It was not the intention to conduct a systematic literature review, as that could be considered a study in itself. The information that has been gathered is primarily focused on the United States. It remains to be seen to what extent this can be compared to the Netherlands. In addition, it was difficult to find examples of alternative forms of education. The characteristics described in [paragraph 3.3.6](#) appear to be mainly forms of special education.

A strength of this research was my position as a researcher. Since I had little to no prior knowledge, I could conduct the research relatively unprejudiced. This resulted in having and taking considerable freedom in asking lots of questions to those involved in the educational care farms which all contributed to the collection and interpretation of the data. In addition, this report has been written transparently, allowing other researchers to apply the same or similar approaches when investigating educational care farms.

Lastly, as mentioned in the [methods section](#), this research applied methodological triangulation which is one of the major strengths of this research. The combination of five methods (i.e., questionnaire, interviews, participant observations, member checking, and literature review) was used to enhance the understanding of educational care arrangements. This contributed to the credibility and validity of the results.

4.5 Recommendations for follow-up research

This research provides several leads for follow-up research. Since the research is part of a lengthier project, the recommendations focus on the project team of 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'. A distinction is made between short-term and long-term recommendations. Finally, some recommendations are also given for students who will also be writing their thesis or completing their internship within this project.

4.5.1 Short-term recommendations

Starting with working on a foundation of a common language. Some crucial terms are interpreted differently by different stakeholders. This results in confusion. Some crucial terms are educational care farm, '*thuiszitter*' (i.e., a student that is chronically absent), education, and care. To begin with the term educational care farm. The care farms offer education to varying degrees; where one location has only education-related enrolments, at another it is about a quarter of the total number of clients. This raises questions such as "When can you call yourself an educational care farm?" or "What is distinctive?". In addition, the term '*thuiszitter*' does not do justice to most of the enrolled children. It is wise to explicitly delineate the target group of the project. In addition, both education and care are interpreted differently by the educational care farms. Please be aware of this. A potential method to identify the diversity is to get the participating education-care farms together. This has the co-benefit of exchanging knowledge.

Secondly, it is wise to include municipalities, schools, and partnerships in the project. It is relevant to find out which steps have been taken before enrolling at an educational care farm and what was the decisive factor. This can be discussed in the interviews with parents, but that may give a one-sided view. To keep the research manageable, the project team can focus on the two selected children per participating educational care farm. By involving other stakeholders, solutions to the perceived bottlenecks can also be sought (see [section 3.3.5](#)).

Thirdly, it remains relatively intangible how it is determined that a child is ready to return to education. This is connected to an inexhaustive overview of the outcome indicators, about which literature is also inconclusive. It is wise to ask this explicitly for each educational care farm. Inspiration can be drawn from outcome indicators of other forms of alternative education. By being able to pinpoint the criteria, it also becomes clear what might be lacking in the approach of traditional education.

4.5.2 Long-term recommendations

There are also several recommendations for the longer term. These may be less urgent but are no less important. First, it is recommended that the project team compares educational care farms with traditional education. It is conceivable that the effective elements of educational care farms can contribute to the prevention of chronic school absenteeism by intertwining those elements throughout the traditional school system.

Secondly, it is relevant to examine the impact of Corona. Children may have ended up at home earlier, where the transition to special education would have been possible otherwise. In addition, it could have led to more or fewer enrolments at educational care farms than usual – possibly resulting in a distorted representation of the sector. It is essential to consider Corona as a potential confounder.

Thirdly, it is helpful to conduct (literature) research on alternative forms of education in the Netherlands. The information is currently scattered and relatively hard to obtain. Educational care farms do not operate in isolation and it would be a pity to reinvent the wheel. Examples of alternatives could be found in trauma-informed education and experiential learning. This helps in revealing the root causes. Which children cannot obtain a suitable place within the traditional school system? What lies at the root of this? What are their needs? And what do the initiatives have to offer?

4.5.3 Recommendations for master's students or interns

Lastly, there are several recommendations for those who are also completing their thesis or internship within the project 'Everyone on board by education on the farm'. Starting with figuring out the basis of specific educational care farms: is there an (educational) care arrangement or indication? This matters for the focus of the setting and can prevent confusion. When the students visit educational care farms, it is essential to think carefully about the word 'observations'. This has a negative connotation and creates unnecessary tension. Finally, organizing a member check is highly recommended. The educational care farms are eager to share and receive knowledge.

4.6 Socio-ethical matters

While writing this report, several socio-ethical matters came to mind that are, in principle, beyond the scope of this research. They are, however, fundamental and therefore presented in this section. The first is that there seems to be a general tendency to describe the children that attend educational care farms by applying all sorts of labels. This is practical when trying to provide an overview, but it does not do justice to the target group and has a stigmatizing effect. In addition, it may appear as blaming the victim. One might wonder whether this is desirable.

Secondly, and lastly, the fact that society demands a change of the children with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges is inconsistent with the trend of inclusive education. Unicef (d.u.) defines inclusive education as follows: "*Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools*". In the current way, children need to adapt to fit within traditional methods of education instead of education being attuned for the child. By setting up a system of educational care farms, there is a risk that the root problem will be overlooked or even neglected. One might wonder if we should not turn this around by looking into the principles of the educational system.

5. Conclusion

This research investigated what educational care arrangements of educational care farms in the Netherlands look like. It was expected that the educational care arrangements could be considered to be the intervention. In practice, however, it turned out that this is not the case. The educational care arrangements are a contract in which answers are given to the so-called “5W-1H” (i.e., who, what, where, when, why, and how) questions. Based on this, an action plan is drawn up, linking actions to goals. The target group consists of children with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. The approach of the educational care farms can be captured by a couple of overarching elements that are interrelated, including a structured design, customization throughout the trajectory, and the alternation of traditional ways of learning with experiential learning. The thorough description of educational care arrangements is, however, an ever-developing entity and not a fixed product. Follow-up research should give further direction towards the program theory.

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Appendix A: Effect Ladder

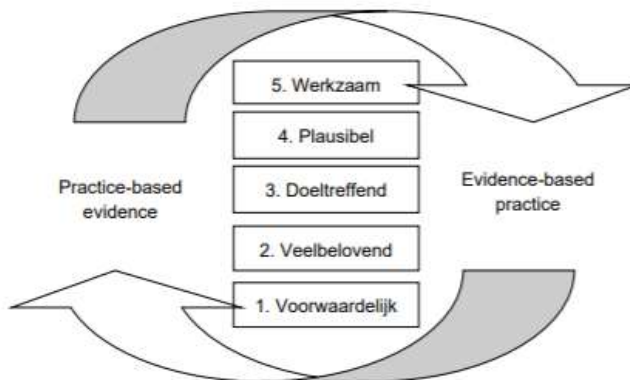


Figure 8: Visual depiction of the Effect Ladder (Yperen et al., 2017a)

| Bewijskracht effectiviteit | Omschrijving | Soorten onderzoek ter ondersteuning rgoi | Ontwikkelingsniveau interventie |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 5. Sterke empirische aanwijzingen | Als 1 tot en met 4, maar nu is het zeer aannemelijk dat de uitkomsten door de interventie zijn veroorzaakt. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Quasi-)experimenteel onderzoek en herhaalde casestudy's (N=1) met follow-up • (Quasi-)experimenteel en herhaald N=1-onderzoek zonder follow-up | 5. Werkzaam |
| 4. Goede empirische aanwijzingen | Als 1 tot en met 3, maar nu is het enigszins aannemelijk dat de uitkomsten veroorzaakt zijn door de interventie en de elementen waaruit deze interventie bestaat. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veranderingstheoretisch onderzoek • Dose-response-onderzoek • Normgerelateerd onderzoek, kwaliteitstoetsend onderzoek en benchmarkstudies | 4. Plausibel |
| 3. Eerste empirische aanwijzingen | Als 1 en 2, maar nu toont onderzoek aan dat de doelen zijn bereikt, cliënten tevreden zijn, problemen zijn afgenomen, vaardigheden versterkt, participatie verbeterd. | <p><i>Uitkomstenmonitoring:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veranderingsonderzoek • Doelrealisatieonderzoek • Cliënttevredenheidsonderzoek • Onderzoek naar uitval | 3. Doeltreffend |
| 2. Theoretische aanwijzingen | Als 1, maar nu is er ook een geloofwaardige interventietheorie over hoe en waarom de interventie de beoogde uitkomsten bereikt. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meta-analyse • Literatuurstudie • Focusgroepen • Grounded theory/Intervention Mapping | 2. Veelbelovend |
| 1. Descriptieve aanwijzingen, nog geen bewijskracht | De kernelementen van een interventie (doelgroep, aanpak, uitkomsten) en de personele, organisatorische en materiële context en randvoorwaarden zijn duidelijk en begrijpelijk omschreven. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beschrijvend onderzoek • Documentanalyse • Interviews • Delphi-panels | 1. Voorwaardelijk |

Figure 9: Effect Ladder (Yperen et al., 2017a)

Appendix B: SDI questionnaire

SOCIAAL-DEMOGRAFISCHE INFORMATIE ONDERWIJSZORGBOERDERIJ

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Voornaam kind | |
| Invuldatum | (dag) (maand) (jaar) |

Met deze lijst vragen we u voor het onderzoek naar het onderwijs op de zorgboerderij naar achtergrondinformatie over uw kind en uw gezin. Sommige zaken heeft u misschien al op het aanmeldformulier van de zorgboerderij aangegeven. Maar voor het onderzoek is het prettig als alles op één formulier staat. We verzoeken u bij onderstaande vragen het antwoord aan te kruisen dat van toepassing is en/ of op de stippellijnen een antwoord in te vullen. Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking!

INFORMATIE AANGEMELD KIND

1. Geboortedatum: (dag) (maand) (jaar)
2. Geslacht
 - Jongen
 - Meisje
3. Geboorteland
 - Nederland
 - Ander land, namelijk:
4. Aantal broers en zussen: broers zussen
5. Leefsituatie op dit moment
 - In een gezinssituatie
 - In een tehuis/ residentieel
 - Anders, namelijk:
6. Schoolgeschiedenis
 - 6a. Wat voor soort school bezocht het kind voorafgaand aan de onderwijszorgboerderij? Geef aan of het basisonderwijs of speciaal (basis)onderwijs betrof, sinds welke datum het kind naar deze school ging en in welke groep het bij aanmelding bij de zorgboerderij zat.
 - Basisonderwijs, sinds (dag) (maand) (jaar) in groep
 - Speciaal (basis)onderwijs, sinds (dag) (maand) (jaar) in groep
 - 6b. Hoeveel scholen bezocht het kind vóór deze school?
 - Geen andere scholen voor huidige school
 - Aantal scholen
 - 6c. Is het kind wel eens blijven zitten op school?
 - Nee
 - Ja, aantal keer:
 - 6d. Is er ook sprake geweest van een periode dat het kind niet op school zat ("thuiszitten")?
 - Nee
 - Ja, in de volgende periode(n):
 - Van (dag) (maand) (jaar) t/m (dag) (maand) (jaar)
 - Van (dag) (maand) (jaar) t/m (dag) (maand) (jaar)

7. Hulpverleningsgeschiedenis

7a. Ontvangt het kind op dit moment (van aanmelding) een vorm van een jeugdhulp?

Nee

Ja

Zo ja, kruis hieronder de ontvangen vorm van hulp aan (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk):

Individueel of in een groepje op school of locatie zorginstelling

Samen met ouders/ gezin op locatie zorginstelling of thuis

Dagbehandeling

Pleegzorg

Residentieel/ tehuis

Gesloten jeugdzorg

Anders, namelijk:

7b. Heeft het kind eerder jeugdhulp ontvangen?

Nee

Ja

Zo ja, kruis hieronder de ontvangen vorm van hulp aan (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk):

Individueel of in een groepje op school of bij een zorginstelling

Samen met ouders/ gezin op locatie zorginstelling of thuis

Dagbehandeling

Pleegzorg

Residentieel/ tehuis

Gesloten jeugdzorg

Anders, namelijk:

8. Is er sprake van een justitiële maatregel?

Geen maatregel

O.t.s. (Ondertoezichtstelling)

V.o.t.s. (Voorlopige o.t.s.)

Voogdij

Voorlopige voogdij

Anders, namelijk:

INFORMATIE OUDERS

9. Aanwezigheid verzorgende moeder in het gezin

(Degene die in het gezin de moederrol voor het aangemelde kind vervult)

Niet aanwezig

Biologische moeder

Stiefmoeder

Adoptief moeder

Pleegmoeder

Anders, namelijk:

10. Opleiding verzorgende moeder

(Kruis de hoogst genoten opleiding aan, met of zonder diploma)

Basisonderwijs of Speciaal (basis)onderwijs

LBO, VMBO, MAVO

HAVO, VWO, MBO

HBO, Universiteit

Anders, namelijk:

11. Sociaaleconomische status verzorgende moeder

- Werkzaam
- Studerend
- Huisvrouw
- Gepensioneerd
- Werkloos/werkzoekend
- Arbeidsongeschikt
- Anders, namelijk:

12. Huidig of laatst uitgeoefende beroep verzorgende moeder:

13. Geboorteland biologische moeder

(N.B. Dit kan een andere persoon zijn dan de bij vraag 9 genoemde moeder)

- Nederland
- Anders, namelijk:

14. Aanwezigheid verzorgende vader in het gezin

(Degene die in het gezin de vaderrol voor het aangemelde kind vervult)

- Niet aanwezig
- Biologische vader
- Stiefvader
- Adoptief vader
- Pleegvader
- Anders, namelijk:

15. Opleiding verzorgende vader

(Kruis de hoogst genoten opleiding aan, met of zonder diploma)

- Basisonderwijs of Speciaal basisonderwijs
- LBO, VMBO, MAVO
- HAVO, VWO, MBO
- HBO, Universiteit
- Anders, namelijk:

16. Sociaaleconomische status verzorgende vader

- Werkzaam
- Studerend
- Huisman
- Gepensioneerd
- Werkloos/werkzoekend
- Arbeidsongeschikt
- Anders, namelijk:

17. Huidige of laatst uitgeoefende beroep verzorgende vader:

18. Geboorteland biologische vader

(N.B. Dit kan een andere persoon zijn dan de bij vraag 14 genoemde vader)

- Nederland
- Anders, namelijk:

19. Relatie verzorgende moeder met verzorgende vader

(Deze vraag beantwoorden voor de bij vraag 9 en 14 genoemde moeder- en vaderfiguur)

Geen relatie, alleenstaande moeder of vader

Gehuwd of samenwonend

Co-ouderschap niet samenwonend

Anders, namelijk:

REDEN VAN AANMELDING

20. Kunt u hieronder kort de belangrijkste reden van aanmelding bij zorgboerderij aangeven?

Appendix C: Orthopaedic Methodology Model Bruininks

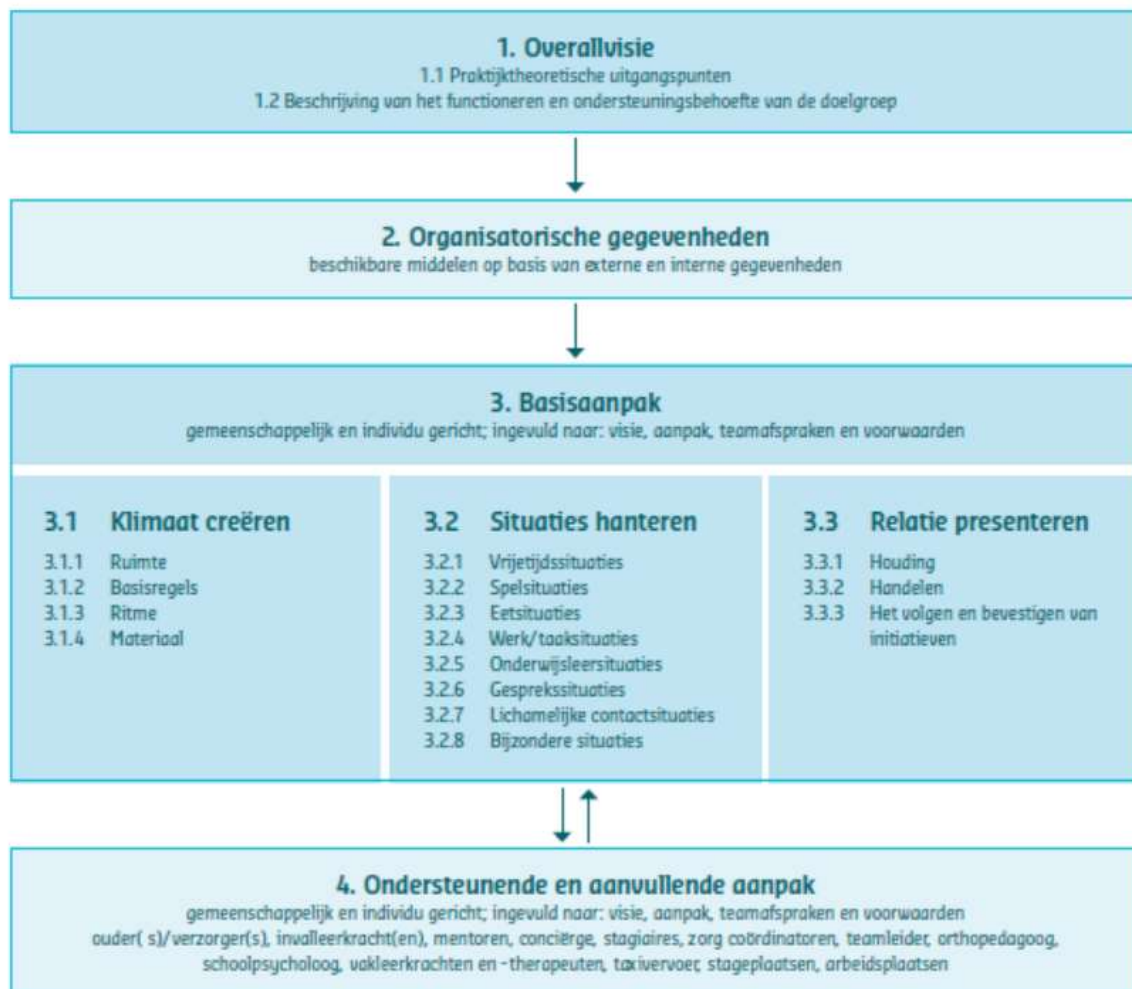


Figure 10: Orthopaedic Methodology Model Bruininks (2016, as cited in Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 2021b)

Appendix D: Interview Guide

The interview guide is presented below and consists of the four steps of the Bruininks Model (2016, as cited in Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 2021b). I added a fifth category for any remaining questions and to ensure that the interview does not end abruptly.

| |
|--|
| 1. Overallvisie |
| 1.1 Praktijktheoretische gegevens |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kunt u kort vertellen wie u bent en wat u doet? <p><i>Wie runt de boerderij? Type boerderij? Wanneer gestart?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welke doelgroep(en) ontvangt u op de zorgboerderij?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Welke leeftijdscategorie?- Wat is hun opleidingsachtergrond (speciaal en/of regulier)?- Wat is de verhouding tussen jongens en meisjes? <p><i>Focus ligt vanaf hier nadrukkelijk op de kinderen die onderwijs-zorg ontvangen.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoeveel leerlingen ontvangen jullie op wekelijkse basis?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Staan zij nog ingeschreven bij een school?- Hanteren jullie een minimum en/of maximum voor de groepsgrootte?• Vanuit welke visie runt u de onderwijs-zorgboerderij? <p><i>Denk aan de filosofie, ambities, aanleiding en kernwaarden.</i></p> |
| 1.2 Beschrijving van het functioneren en ondersteuningsbehoefte van de doelgroep |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kunt u de achtergrond van deze leerlingen omschrijven? <p><i>Denk aan type leerlingen en problematieken.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoeveel dagen of dagdelen zijn zij per week aanwezig?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Verschilt dit per leerling? Zo ja, waarom?• Ontvangen jullie zowel kinderen die leerplichtig zijn als kinderen die vrijgesteld zijn van de leerplicht? Zo ja, wat is de verhouding? |
| 2. Organisatorische gegevens |
| <p><i>Beschikbare middelen op basis van externe en interne gegevens</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoeveel mensen heeft u in dienst?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wat is hun functie?- En hun opleidingsachtergrond?- Hoeveel medewerkers zijn er gemiddeld per dag aanwezig?• Werken jullie met stagiaires? En vrijwilligers? Zo ja, waar worden zij voor ingezet?• Wie verzorgt het onderwijs?• Welke wet- en regelgeving is op uw onderwijs-zorgboerderij van toepassing?• De onderwijs-zorgboerderij wordt niet als een officiële onderwijsinstelling erkend. Heeft dat gevolgen voor jullie? |
| 3. Basisaanpak |
| <p><i>Gemeenschappelijk en individu gericht; ingevuld naar: visie, aanpak, teamafspraken en voorwaarden</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hoe zou u de term 'onderwijs-zorgarrangement' definiëren?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wat verstaat u onder zorg? En wat onder onderwijs? |

| |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoe ziet het onderwijs eruit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waar is het op gericht? <i>Denk aan rekenen, taal of sociaal-emotionele ontwikkeling.</i> - Maken jullie gebruik van een onderwijsmodel? Zo ja, welke? - Hoeveel tijd wordt er per dag gereserveerd voor onderwijs (ofwel schoolse vaardigheden)? - Waar vindt het onderwijs plaats? - Met welke middelen? - Waar komt het onderwijsmateriaal vandaan? - Heeft u een pedagogische/onderwijskundige visie voor de leerlingen? Zo ja, welke? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoe ziet de zorg eruit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waar is het op gericht? - Maken jullie gebruik van een achterliggend (theoretisch) model? - Wat is de verhouding tussen het geboden onderwijs en de zorg? - Wordt er bij de financiering onderscheid gemaakt tussen onderwijs en zorg? Zo ja, knelt dit? - Heeft u een zorgvisie voor de leerlingen? Zo ja, welke? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoe ziet een gemiddelde dag er voor een leerling uit op uw zorgboerderij? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aan welke activiteiten moet ik denken? - Verhouding collectief - individueel? - Wat is de verdeling tussen het aantal medewerkers en kinderen? - In welke mate sluiten jullie aan bij de interesses van het kind? - Zijn er regels waar de kinderen zich aan moeten houden? <i>Denk hierbij aan zowel geschreven als ongeschreven regels.</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ik zag op jullie website dat dieren centraal staan op de zorgboerderij. Wat is het achterliggende idee? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wanneer komt een leerling in beeld? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wie zijn daarbij betrokken? - Wat zijn de stappen tussen de signalering en de aanmelding? - Hoeveel tijd zit er tussen de aanmelding en de start op de boerderij? En wat gebeurt er in die periode? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoe komt het onderwijs-zorgarrangement tot stand? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wie zijn daarbij betrokken? - Wie meldt het kind aan? - Zijn er selectiecriteria / eisen aan de voorkant? - Wat is de insteek van het arrangement? (ofwel doelen) - In welke mate is de aanpak flexibel? - Is maatwerk mogelijk? Zo ja, hoe ziet dat eruit? Kunt u voorbeelden geven? - Op basis waarvan worden keuzes gemaakt? En wie heeft daarbij het laatste woord? - Wat is het eindproduct? - Ligt de focus meer op de onderwijs- of de zorgkant? - Zijn de kinderen op de hoogte van de inhoud van het onderwijs-zorgarrangement? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoe wordt het onderwijs-zorgarrangement gefinancierd? |

| |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wat zijn de ervaringen met dat proces? - Verloopt de financiering soepel? Of zijn er knelpunten? Zo ja, welke? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoe lang duurt een traject op de zorgboerderij? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Houden jullie de voortgang van de leerlingen in de gaten? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maken jullie daarvoor gebruik van een monitoringssysteem? - Zo ja, wie heeft toegang tot het systeem? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wanneer is het arrangement een succes? Hoe meet of weet u dat? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wat ziet u als de werkzame elementen? En hoe worden deze elementen ingezet? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zijn er belemmeringen of knelpunten bij de uitvoering van onderwijs-zorgarrangementen? Zo ja, welke? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heeft dit consequenties voor het programma? - Hoe gaat u daarmee om? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zijn er verschillende fasen te onderscheiden binnen de onderwijs-zorgarrangementen? Zo ja, wat houden deze fasen in? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wat zijn de stappen als een kind instroomt? - En wanneer het kind uitstroomt? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoe wordt bepaald of en wanneer een leerling uitstroomt naar een vervolgplek? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welke partijen zijn daarbij betrokken? - Waar komen de leerlingen terecht? - Is er sprake van (warme) overdracht? Zo ja, hoe? - Is er weleens sprake van terugval? Zo ja, waar ligt dat dan aan? |
| <p>4. Ondersteunende en aanvullende aanpak</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In welke mate zijn de taken binnen uw zorgboerderij afgebakend? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wie is verantwoordelijk voor de overdracht bij instroom? En uitstroom? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wie is verantwoordelijk voor de kwaliteit van het geboden programma? Wordt dit gemonitord? Zo ja, hoe? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Met welke partijen werkt uw zorgboerderij samen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hoe ziet deze samenwerking eruit? - Loopt u hierbij tegen knelpunten aan? Zo ja, welke? |
| <p><i>Denk aan onderwijs, ouders, gemeente, samenwerkingsverbanden en andere (onderwijs) zorgboerderijen. Probeer uit te vragen in welke fase van het onderwijs-zorgarrangement de samenwerking van toepassing is.</i></p> |
| <p>5. Overig (richting het einde van het interview)</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wat is de kracht van uw onderwijs-zorgboerderij? Waar blijkt dat uit? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wat ziet u als grootste knelpunt voor de verdere ontwikkeling van onderwijs-zorgboerderijen? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uit vooronderzoek kwam naar voren dat er een gebrek is aan (h)erkenning van de sector. Herkent u dit? En heeft u daar een verklaring voor? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zijn er nog onderwerpen die wij niet besproken hebben tijdens dit interview, maar die u wel graag wilt benoemen? |

Appendix E: Observation Form

| Omgeving | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gebouwen en ruimtes | Groene omgeving | Dieren |
| | | |
| Actoren | | |
| Leerlingen | Onderwijs- en zorgpersoneel | Andere zorgvragers |
| | | |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | |
| Organisatie | | |
| Structuren | Regels en procedures | Inspraak |
| | | |
| Samenwerkingen | | |
| Ouders/verzorgers | School van herkomst | Samenwerkingsverband |
| | | |

| Gemeente | Lokale community | Andere |
|----------|------------------|--------|
| | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Begin- en eindtijd | | | Actoren | | | |
| Plaats | | | | | | |
| Leer-middelen | | | | | | |
| Activiteit | Initiator: | <input type="checkbox"/> Individueel | <input type="checkbox"/> Gezamenlijk | <input type="checkbox"/> Zelfstandig | <input type="checkbox"/> Begeleid door: | Leerkacht- leerlingratio: |
| | <i>Gedrag leerkracht, zorgmedewerker, boer, etc.</i> | | | <i>Gedrag leerling(en)</i> | | |
| | <i>Let ook op gevraagd gedrag</i> | | | <i>Let ook op uitgevoerd gedrag</i> | | |

Appendix F: Set-up Member Check

| Onderdeel | Schatting benodigde tijd |
|--|--------------------------|
| Inloop | 10 min |
| Welkom | 5-10 min |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doel: delen eerste bevindingen• Zorgboerderijen introduceren• Agenda | |
| Korte samenvatting onderzoek | 5 min |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aanleiding + opzet• Uitvoering | |
| SDI-vragenlijst | 5 min |
| Vragen | 5 min |
| Overeenkomsten en verschillen zorgboerderijen | 15 min |
| Knelpunten | 5 min |
| Afsluiting | 5 min |

Appendix G: Minutes Member Check

Algemeen

Aanwezig: [namen]
Afwezig: [namen]
Duur: Circa 75 minuten
Locatie: MS Teams

Opzet van de presentatie

- Voorstelronde
- Samenvatting van het onderzoek
- SDI-vragenlijst
- Overeenkomsten en verschillen
- Knelpunten

Slide 12 (resultaten SDI-vragenlijst)

Meer jongens dan meisjes?

- Oostwijk: voornamelijk jongens en allemaal basisschoolleerlingen
- Klimop: meer meiden en voornamelijk van de middelbare school
- D'n Hoef: meer jongens en gemiddeld 9 à10 jaar

Slide 13 (reden van aanmelding)

Komen genoemde redenen overeen met jullie beeld van de kinderen die sinds september zijn ingestroomd?

- Ja, deze punten vormen de kern

Slide 18 (onderwijs-zorgarrangementen)

| | Aanmelding via | Afspraken vastgelegd in | Werkdocument | Focus |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| D'n Hoef | Gemeente | Indicatie | Zorgplan | Onderwijs-zorg of dagbesteding |
| Oostwijk | Samenwerkingsverband | Onderwijs-zorgarrangement | Ontwikkelingsperspectief | Onderwijs |
| De Klimop | Gemeente | Zorgarrangement | Zorgplan | Zorg |

- Kern van onderwijs-zorgarrangementen: uren voor zorg en onderwijs + financiering
- Beginsituatie maakt uit: onderscheid tussen thuiszitters en dreigende thuiszitters
- Knelpunten die naar voren kwamen:
 - Verwerkingstijd aanvraag wijziging indicatie

- Financiering onderwijs bij een zorgarrangement
- Indicaties, onderwijs-zorgarrangementen en zorgarrangementen zijn geen synoniemen van elkaar
- Onderwijs-zorgarrangement is een mooie term, maar moet wel consistent toegepast worden

Slide 20 (knelpunten)

Ideale situatie bij samenwerking met school van herkomst?

- School betrokken tot en met uitstroom naar een vervoloplek
- Aanleveren van materialen
- Gezamenlijk opstellen van een plan en regelmatig voortgang bespreken

Opmerking: het maakt uit hoe lang een kind naar een onderwijs-zorgboerderij gaat. Des te langer, des te minder contact/samenwerking.

Vereisten voor een passende vervoloplek?

- Onderwijsaanbod op maat
- Stapsgewijs opbouwen
- Kleine groepen
- Vergelijkbare doelgroep

Andere genoemde knelpunten:

- Gebrek aan leer-werktrajecten
- Een passende plek vinden voor basisschoolleerlingen is lastiger dan VO
- Minder plekken voor kinderen met internaliserend gedrag
- Verleden met behandelingen vormt belemmering bij het vinden van een school

Slide 22 (afronding)

Mag ik de namen van de onderwijs-zorgboerderijen in het verslag gebruiken?

Geen bezwaar vanuit aanwezigen, vraag ook voorleggen aan afwezigen

Appendix H: Informed Consent Form

Beste lezer,

Dit document dient ter aanvulling op de eerder verstrekte informatie door Jan Hassink en Jan Willem Veerman over het onderzoeksproject “Iedereen binnenboord door de groene leeromgeving”. Binnen dit project vindt mijn afstudeeropdracht plaats voor de master Communication, Health and Life Sciences bij Wageningen Universiteit. Het doel van mijn onderzoek is om onderwijs-zorgarrangementen, die aangeboden worden door onderwijs-zorgboerderijen, grondig te beschrijven. Om dit mogelijk te maken, wil ik graag twee methoden toevoegen aan het bestaande project. Dit zijn (1) interviews met zowel zorgboeren als leerkrachten en (2) observaties. Beide methoden worden hieronder kort toegelicht.

Door het afnemen van interviews krijg ik een algemene indruk van de onderwijs-zorgarrangementen. Om meer specifiek te zijn: ik ben benieuwd naar de filosofie van de zorgboerderij, de aanpak, de doelgroep, het ontwerpen van een arrangement, de concrete activiteiten, samenwerkingen en de financieringsvormen. Het is mogelijk om de interviewvragen van tevoren te ontvangen. Ik schat in dat het interview ongeveer één uur duurt.

Ten tweede wil ik graag een aantal dagen meelopen op uw zorgboerderij en gedurende die dagen noteren wat er zoal gebeurt. Het is goed om te weten dat ik hierbij niet zal letten op individuele leerlingen. De observaties zijn gericht op de activiteiten en gaan daardoor meer over de grote lijnen van een dag op uw zorgboerderij. Het doel hiervan is het vergelijken van de theorie met de praktijk.

In een later stadium zal ik de resultaten aan u voorleggen, zodat u de gelegenheid krijgt om te reageren. Aan het einde van mijn afstudeeropdracht schrijf ik een verslag. De verzamelde informatie wordt beveiligd opgeslagen op de server van Wageningen Universiteit. Hierbij wordt uw privacy en die van de leerlingen gewaarborgd.

Zoals vermeld in de informatiebrief van Jan Hassink en Jan Willem Veerman zijn er geen risico's verbonden aan het onderzoek. Sommige vragen kunnen daarentegen wel persoonlijk van aard zijn. Het is daarom goed om te weten dat een antwoord niet goed of fout kan zijn, u geen antwoord hoeft te geven en op elk moment kan stoppen met het onderzoek zonder in te gaan op de redenen daarvoor. Door het terugkoppelen van mijn resultaten, krijgt u ook de mogelijkheid om gegeven antwoorden aan te passen of terug te trekken.

In de bijlage vindt u een toestemmingsformulier. Deelname is uiteraard geheel vrijwillig. Ik hoop van harte dat u mee wilt doen! In het geval van vragen en/of opmerkingen, kunt u mij bereiken via het volgende e-mailadres: annemieke.potze@wur.nl.

Met vriendelijke groet,

Annemieke Potze
[Telefoonnummer]

Toestemmingsformulier⁹

Door het ondertekenen van dit formulier gaat u akkoord met deelname aan interviews en observaties, die in bovenstaande brief zijn geïntroduceerd en toegelicht. Dit gebeurt in het kader van het onderzoeksproject “Iedereen binnenboord door de inzet van de groene leeromgeving”.

- Ik heb de informatiebrief gelezen. Ook kon ik vragen stellen. Mijn vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord en ik had voldoende tijd om te beslissen of ik meedoe.
- Ik geef toestemming voor het anoniem verzamelen, bewaren en gebruiken van mijn gegevens voor de beantwoording van de onderzoeksvraag in dit onderzoek.
- Ik wil meedoen aan dit onderzoek en weet dat mijn gegevens geheel anoniem verwerkt worden.
- Ik weet dat meedoen vrijwillig is en dat ik kan stoppen tijdens het onderzoek.

Naam deelnemer:

Handtekening:

Datum: ___ / ___ / ___

Ik, Annemieke Potze, verklaar dat ik deze deelnemer volledig heb geïnformeerd over het genoemde onderzoek.

Als er tijdens het onderzoek informatie bekend wordt die de toestemming van de deelnemer zou kunnen beïnvloeden, dan breng ik diegene daarvan tijdig op de hoogte.

Naam onderzoeker:

Handtekening:

Datum: ___ / ___ / ___

⁹ Dit formulier is opgesteld aan de hand van het ‘Standaard EUR Informed Consent Formulier’ (Domingus & Nariman, 2017).

Appendix I: Overview Output SDI Questionnaire

| SDI questionnaire (N = 17) | | |
|---|---------|---|
| Variable | Valid N | Output |
| Age | 16 | Mean = 9,2 (SD = 3,3; range = 7 – 15) |
| Gender | 17 | Male = 14; female = 3 |
| Country of birth | 17 | Netherlands = 17; other = 0 |
| Number of brothers | 11 | Mean = 2 (SD = 1,1; range = 0 – 3) |
| Number of sisters | 11 | Mean = 2 (SD = 0,98; range = 0 – 3) |
| Living situation | 17 | Family setting = 17; other = 0 |
| Types of schools attended before educational care farm (ECF) | 17 | Primary education = 5; special (primary) education = 12 |
| As of which date the child has attended the aforementioned school | 13 | Jan 2012, Jan 2016, Aug 2016, Oct 2017, Sep 2018, Oct 2018, Jan 2019, Aug 2019, Sep 2019, Aug 2020, Sep 2020, Nov 2020, Jan 2021 |
| Which grade at moment of registering at ECF | 12 | Mean = 4,75; median = 4; mode = 3 (smallest is shown because multiple modes exist) |
| Number of schools attended prior to current school | 12 | None = 4; other = 12 From high to low numbers: 1 (6); 2 (3); 3 (2); 4 (1) |
| Doublings | 16 | Yes = 9; no = 7 |
| Number of doublings | 8 | 1 doubling = 8 |
| Have been (chronically) absent | 17 | Yes = 10; no = 7 |
| Duration of (chronic) absenteeism | 8 | Less than one month; 3 months; 6 months; 7 months; 10 months; 12 months; 17 months; 60 months |
| Receives youth assistance at the moment of registering at ECF | 17 | Yes = 9; no = 8 |
| Types of youth assistance | 9 | Ambulatory family counselling = 6; ambulatory individual counselling = 2; part-time foster care = 2; child and youth psychiatry = 1 |
| Received youth assistance in the past | 17 | Yes = 10; no = 7 |
| Types of youth assistance in the past | 10 | Ambulatory individual counselling = 6; ambulatory family counselling = 3; child and youth psychiatry = 2; day |

| | | |
|--|----|--|
| | | care = 1; part-time foster care = 1 |
| Judicial measure | 17 | No = 14; Supervision youth protection officer = 2; guardianship = 1 |
| Presence of a mother in the family | 17 | Birth mother = 15; foster mother = 2 |
| Highest education attained by mother | 17 | Primary education or special (primary) education = 1; <i>Lbo, vmbo, mavo</i> = 6; <i>Havo, vwo, mbo</i> = 8; <i>Hbo</i> , university = 2 |
| Socio-economic status of mother | 16 | Employed = 10; homemaker = 4; incapacitated = 2 |
| Current or former occupation of mother | 15 | Care-related function = 5; administrative employee = 3; self-employed = 2; sales assistant = 1; interior designer = 1; optician = 1; veterinary assistant = 1; gardener = 1 |
| Country of birth biological mother | 17 | Netherlands = 17; other = 0 |
| Presence of a father in the family | 16 | Biological father = 13; stepfather = 2; foster father = 1 |
| Highest education attained by father | 16 | Primary education or special (primary) education = 1; <i>Lbo, vmbo, mavo</i> = 7; <i>Havo, vwo, mbo</i> = 5; <i>Hbo</i> , university = 3 |
| Socio-economic status father | 16 | Employed = 15; incapacitated = 1 |
| Current or former occupation of father | 15 | Self-employed = 3; plasterer = 2; sales employee = 2; steelworker = 1; primary school teacher = 1; councillor = 1; carpenter = 1; warehouse employee = 1; sports industry = 1; painter = 1; truck driver = 1 |
| Country of birth biological father | 13 | Netherlands = 12; Turkey = 1 |
| Relation of mother and father | 14 | Married or living together = 10; single parent = 2; divorced = 2 |
| Reason for registering at ECF | 16 | See table below |

| |
|---|
| <p>"[Name participant] did not want to go to school, to the point that she became depressed. This caused her to drop out, and it was difficult to get help/care going because of the waiting list. School came up with the solution of a care farm (which luckily works out well)."</p> |
| <p>"For the educational development of [name participant]."</p> |
| <p>"At school, they thought this was a good idea."</p> |
| <p>"We hope that he will get more peace of mind through the care farm. So that he can express his feelings better. And that his own confidence will increase and that he will no longer be afraid of doing things wrong. That we all learn to understand how he sees the world and how we can help him with that."</p> |
| <p>"[Name participant] has a short attention span and concentration and needs a lot of guidance during school work"</p> |
| <p>"Helping [name participant] to relax so that he can start developing again"</p> |
| <p>"Learning deficits, especially with regard to language. Becoming more confident. Going to school happily and learning again."</p> |
| <p>"Exploring which form of education is appropriate, how can our son learn and develop again?"</p> |
| <p>"[Name participant] should be able to ground and take care of himself and learn to deal with himself (emotions, etc.) and be relieved of the pressure of school."</p> |
| <p>"Due to behavioural problems, commitments made at the previous school were not honoured by the organisation. Care farm is the last resort. Unhappy child, was not heard or understood."</p> |
| <p>"As an interim solution until there is a place at [name treatment centre]."</p> |
| <p>"Because of the combination of autism and severe dyslexia, the pupil repeatedly got stuck in education. There was talk of possibly changing schools again (this would be the 4th school). In addition, he is an outdoor child, animals come first and he wants to become a farmer/worker/horse owner. We wanted to prevent him from staying at home and we wanted suitable education!"</p> |
| <p>"Got stuck at school."</p> |
| <p>"Providing peace of mind between difficult school days."</p> |
| <p>"[Name participant] was not comfortable in school and was angry all the time, with accompanying rage and aggression."</p> |
| <p>"We hope that [name participant] will grow even more in her self-esteem and will eventually be able to return to school."</p> |

Appendix J: Overview Quotations

| Quotation | In Dutch |
|-----------|--|
| 1 | Maar dat geldt dus bijvoorbeeld ook voor een kind die de tafels niet kent en dan op de paarden op het ritme van de stappen $1 \times 2 = 2$. In één keer kunnen ze het. Ze hebben het gevoeld, ervaren en dan onthouden ze het. |
| 2 | Als je kinderen ... bijvoorbeeld als wij een kind willen leren een paard te leiden, dan zetten we hen eerst een halstertje op. Dan laat ik kinderen paard spelen en voelen ze hoe het voelt om aan je hoofd getrokken te worden, dan doen ze dat niet meer. |
| 3 | Omdat wij er willen zijn voor elk kind dat vanwege internaliserende problematiek niet meer naar school kan en wij vinden dat ze gewoon wel naar school moeten gaan. Omdat een groot deel van je vorming toch op school gebeurt en ook niet hier. We proberen wel te normaliseren voor de kinderen, maar ze moeten gewoon naar school, punt. |
| 4 | Ja, onze visie is natuurlijk ook dat dieren meerwaarde hebben in dit hele proces. Maar onze visie is ook laagdrempelig, korte lijntjes en hulpvraag centraal, wat heeft dit kind nodig en daarvoor ook buiten de box willen denken. Als het niet lukt binnen de gebaande kaders, hoe kunnen we daarbuiten treden om toch voor elkaar te krijgen wat het kind nodig heeft? |
| 5 | Je kan van alles proberen, maar als het thuis geen gehoor of voortzetting heeft, dan is het dweilen met de kraan open en houdt het op. |
| 6 | Ja, want willen wij dat onderwijs goed kunnen vormgeven, dan hebben we daar die school voor nodig. Alleen al voor het aanleveren van het materiaal. Natuurlijk doen wij daar ook van alles aan - de hele tijd. Maar als wij de leermiddelen niet hebben, dan kunnen we niks. Die school houdt natuurlijk een zorgplicht en één van de dingen is het aanleveren van alle leermaterialen die er nodig zijn om dat onderwijs zo goed mogelijk te kunnen geven. |
| 7 | En dan hangt het er nog een beetje vanaf of ze er nog tegen kunnen om met de materialen van de school te werken, want voor sommige kinderen is dat zo stresserend dat ze materialen van ons krijgen, dat zijn ook gewoon gangbare schoolmethodes. [...] dan bieden wij ze gewoon een alternatief aan. [...] als dan school weer in beeld komt, dan gaan wij met de materialen van de nieuwe school werken. |
| 8 | Het zijn allemaal kinderen met ernstige gedragsproblemen, hiaten in executieve functies en zitten allemaal hier omdat de maatschappij een gedragsverandering van ze vraagt, omdat ze anders niet in de maatschappij verder kunnen - op niveau van een kind. |
| 9 | Je kan zo de hele DSM overnemen. |
| 10 | Wij gaan altijd uit van de basisvakken, dus taal, rekenen, lezen, begrijpend lezen en schrijven het liefst. [...] we nemen eerst toetsen af als ze toetsbaar zijn, anders beginnen we gewoon ergens en kijken we waar ze bij de laatste school zijn gebleven en dan beginnen we daar. [...] Dat die het eng vindt om te presteren op een toets, ja, dat is iets waar we vervolgens aan gaan werken. |
| 11 | Dan mogen ze van mij kiezen wat ze gaan doen. Dat is ook een stukje verantwoordelijkheid. Als ze maar iets doen, want anders maak ik de keuze voor ze. Waarom doe ik dat? Wanneer ze hier zitten en ze zitten voor zich uit te staren, dan beginnen ze zich gauw te vervelen en dan komt er natuurlijk ook weer vervelend gedrag naar voren, waardoor je dan de kans hebt dat ze de dag negatief afsluiten. Ik wil eigenlijk altijd dat ze D'n Hoef positief verlaten, dat ze het als een succesmoment zien. |

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| 12 | Ze weten inmiddels ook wat er van hen verwacht wordt. Ze zijn al zoveel gewend, omdat je het elke keer op dezelfde manier aanbiedt. |
| 13 | Hij kwam hier, stapte hij uit de taxi en stond hij zo midden op het pad [in elkaar gedoken]. Hij zei niets, deed niets, hij voelde zich doodongelukkig wat ik mij heel goed kan voorstellen. Om 10:00 zijn wij naar buiten gegaan, honden naar buiten en die vlogen op hem af. De eerste glimlach was voor de hond, dat brak de spanning. Toen ging het handje zo ... [aaien over de bol]. Dan heb je een opening. |
| 14 | Hij wilde niet lezen en dan zei ik 'Oh, Okiedokie [paard] wil zo graag voorgelezen worden' en dan ging hij op een krukje zitten en het paard voorlezen. Of de tafels oefenen met een paard. [...] Zo ben je wel per kind aan het kijken van wat past er nu bij jou, wat kunnen we voor jou betekenen, waar kunnen we jou mee helpen en hoe kunnen we dat dan het beste doen met iets dat hier op de boerderij is. |
| 15 | Naam medewerker] neemt hem mee naar buiten en zegt 'Kan jij even meten hoe groot dat stuk is, want ik heb draad nodig' en dan moet hij dat gaan meten. |
| 16 | We hadden bijvoorbeeld een meetles en zijn we eerst naar buiten gegaan. Hoe hoog moet een pony zijn om een paard te kunnen zijn? Dat hebben we dan eerst opgezocht met z'n allen en dan gaan we nu naar buiten om de pony's te meten. Hoe groot zijn ze? Is het wel echt een pony of is het toch een paard? Zo kun je je lessen steeds met iets van buiten ... |
| 17 | Alleen al naar buiten gaan, je jas aantrekken, je laarzen aantrekken, terugkomen, je handen moeten wassen. Er is hier één en die heeft geen idee hoe dat allemaal moet, omdat dat allemaal voor hem wordt gedaan. Inmiddels lukt het hem aardig zelf. Hij komt elke keer een stapje verder. |
| 18 | Het zelf doen, dat komt ook van het Montessori onderwijs van 'Leer mij het zelf te doen'. |
| 19 | En ze weten wel dat ze hier allemaal niet voor hun zweetvoeten zitten. |
| 20 | Vaak is de zorgvraag van het kind de achterliggende reden van het uitvallen op school. In die zin is de zorgverlening voor het kind heel erg belangrijk. Wat ligt eraan ten grondslag dat je niet naar school kan? Wat heb jij nodig om te zorgen dat jij wél weer naar school kan? [...] Maar als je dan hiernaar kijkt, soms ben je met zorg bezig en toch tegelijkertijd met cognitieve dingen bezig. Het kan alle kanten op. Het is bijna niet los van elkaar te halen. Natuurlijk heb je bij onderwijs ook een stukje didactiek, dat is echt puur onderwijskundig, maar als de hulpvraag van het kind puur didactisch zou zijn, dan kan de school het wel zelf oplossen. Maar het punt is, dat is het vaak niet bij die schooluitvallers. Die vallen zelden uit om een puur didactische vraag. |
| 21 | Nee, de lijntjes zijn heel kort met de ouders. Als er 's morgens of 's nachts iets is voorgevallen waar wij mee te maken kunnen krijgen, dan willen wij dat graag horen. En andersom ook als hier overdag iets gebeurt is, dan appen we dat ook naar de ouders. Maar soms ook even een leuk bericht over een activiteit of foto's. Ouders hebben vaak best wel een hele vervelende tijd achter de rug, dus het is ook fijn voor hen als ze berichten krijgen als het goed gaat. Of een foto buiten, even positief bericht. |
| 22 | Maar ook een negatieve ervaring is een ervaring waarvan je kunt leren. Het hoeft niet altijd een succes te zijn [...] Hoe meer leermomenten, hoe beter. Daarom staat het ook op het raam: 'Ik heb zoveel geleerd van mijn fouten, ik denk dat ik er nog maar een paar ga maken'. [...] Dat idee hè, van maak ook fouten, want daar leer je van. Daarom gaan we het ook geen fouten meer noemen, want dat wordt geassocieerd met rode streepjes en een onvoldoende. Maar als je fouten kan associëren met 'Hè hier leer ik iets van' dan wordt die faalangst minder. |

Appendix K: Characteristics of Alternative Education Programs

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| REDUCED CLASS SIZE |
| Low student to teacher ratio (2-4) |
| Individual attention (2-4) |
| POSITIVE CLASS CLIMATE |
| Clear expectations (2, 4) |
| Flexible and personalized learning plans (1, 2) |
| Predictable structures, rules, and procedures (2 - 4) |
| Foster self-responsibility and self-determination (4) |
| Reward systems to promote attendance and academic achievement (2 - 4) |
| THE CONCEPTION OF THE LEARNER |
| Self-directed learning (1) |
| Repetition of activities (1) |
| Fostering an intrinsic motivation to learn (1) |
| THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT |
| Non-traditional set-up of classrooms: the learner is put centre stage instead of the teacher (1) |
| Facilitate individual as well as collaborative learning (1) |
| Special attention to the aesthetic side of learning environments (1, 2) |
| Clean and well-maintained buildings (2) |
| THE ROLE OF TEACHERS |
| The role of the teacher ranges from being a coach on the side to a provider, organiser, and manager of customised learning in experiential learning environments (1) |
| Abandoned the one teacher per classroom tradition (1) |
| Providing the possibility to learn from natural consequences (1) |
| Engaging and creative instruction (2) |
| Differentiate instruction (2, 4) |
| Relevant learning and applicable to life outside of school (2) |
| Social skills instruction (3, 4) |
| OTHER FACTORS |
| School-based mentor (2 - 4) |
| All stakeholders are involved in the different aspects of the program (2, 4) |
| Respect parents as equal partners (4) |
| Stable and diverse funding (2) |
| Provide instructors with ongoing professional development activities (e.g., teacher input, collaboration with colleagues, and opportunities to learn from teaching practices in other settings) (2) |

(5) *Sliwka (2008)*

(6) *Aron (2006)*

(7) *Flower et al. (2011, as cited in Kumm et al., 2020)*

(8) *McGee and Lin (2017)*