Coupling a Bachelor’s course assignment to PhD research: Added value to both research and education

How can research benefit from 100+ BSc students practicing with interviewing? And how can linking a course assignment to current PhD research add value to education? These initial questions led to a cooperation between the course ‘Eating, Customs & Health’ and the PhD project ‘Resistance against transitioning towards more plant-based consumption: A socio-cultural approach’. In light of the protein transition, the presence of a vegetarian in a meat-eating household (and vice versa), will likely increase. How do differences in animal- and plant-based eating styles within households affect shared food practices and commensality? BSc students of the course ‘Eating, Customs & Health’ worked on this question in the context of Wageningen students and their homes. The lecturing team, complemented with the PhD candidate, developed an interview guide together with the students enrolled in the course. In this way, data collected through interviewing would be comparable. As part of their group assignment, students recruited respondents, conducted interviews, and reported on the results in a short paper. The transcripts of the interviews are currently used to write a scientific publication, together with a BSc student who followed the course. The project not only gave BSc students a sense of what qualitative research entails, but being a contributing factor to a ‘real’ research project also added value to their work. Moreover, it gave students the opportunity to be involved in co-authoring a publication. On the research side, the project provided the opportunity to gather data through 100+ interviews in a relatively short time-span.