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ACCEPT PLURALISM

The Netherlands: Challenging Diversity in Education and School Life

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The Netherlands: Challenging Diversity in Education and School Life

INGE VERSTEEGT

MARCEL MAUSSEN

**WP3: National Case Studies of Challenges to
Tolerance in School Life**

**D3.1 Final Country Reports on Concepts and
Practices of Tolerance Addressing Cultural Diversity
in Schools**

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Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe**
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Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)

ACCEPT PLURALISM is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

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The Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) unites all social science research of the UvA. Its programme group Challenges to Democratic Representation (Political Sciences) investigates the consequences of these developments for democratic governance. The empirical research focuses particularly on political parties, civil society (most notably, social movements and pressure and interest groups), mass media, citizens and their interests, opinions, feelings and preferences and political ideas.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	08
Introduction.....	12
<i>Education in the Netherlands.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Religious, cultural and ethnic diversity in the Dutch education system</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Present day public and political debates in the Netherlands.....</i>	<i>16</i>
1. 1. Methods and Data.....	18
1.1 Research problem and questions for the two case studies.....	18
1.2 Respondent selection and approach.....	18
1.3 Transcription and analysis	18
2. Case Study 1: Christian-Orthodox and Islamic schools.....	20
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 Reformed and Islamic schools in the Netherlands.....	20
2.3 Public debate on the freedom of education and religious schools.....	21
2.4 Views of principals of Reformed and Islamic schools:	
2.4.1 Stereotypes, prejudices and freedom of education.....	25
2.4.2 Associational freedoms: practices and justifications.....	29
2.6 Conclusions of Case Study 1.....	32
3. 3. Case Study 2: Citizenship Education and tolerance	34
3.1 Introduction.....	34
3.1.1 Paradox of Dutch citizenship education.....	34
3.1.2 General account of the introduction of CE.....	34
3.1.3 Case study: Overcoming racism through CE. The success of ‘Respect2All’	35
3.2 Citizenship education in the Netherlands.....	35
3.2.1 Ideas and approaches to citizenship education in the Netherlands.....	35
3.2.2 Policy makers and the intended curriculum.....	37
3.2.3 Schools, teachers and practice of the curriculum.....	37
3.2.4 Possibilities for (in)tolerance in Citizenship Education.....	39
3.3 Respect2All: the success of an anti-racist program.....	39
3.3.1 Introduction.....	39
3.3.2 The ICA peertraining program.....	40
3.3.3 Respect2All and teacher's experiences.....	41
3.4 Conclusions of Case Study 2.....	44
Concluding Remarks.....	46
References	50
Appendix:	
Case Study 1 Questionnaire	
Case Study 2 Questionnaire	
List of participants	

Executive summary

Introduction

Education in the Netherlands has been an important site of debate about the accommodation of religious minorities, cultural diversity and tolerance. Two key principles characterize the Dutch education system. First, there is the freedom of education, including the rights of groups of individuals to create and operate primary and secondary schools, within certain limits, and the freedom of parents to choose a school for their children. Second, there is “statutory equality” of governmental or public (*openbaar*) and non-governmental or denominational (*bijzondere*) schools and both are funded by the government according to identical and equivalent criteria. Of all primary schools about 68% is non-governmental and of all secondary schools this percentage is 70%.

In 2009 8.1 % of all pupils in primary education were “non-Western-allochtonous”, meaning that they are born abroad or that at least one of their parents is born abroad. In 2009 14.8 % of all pupils in secondary education were non-Western allochtonous. Furthermore, vocational schools and schools in some urban neighborhoods may have much higher percentages.

In the Dutch public debate with respect to education and tolerance for (religious) diversity, there is the idea that the school should fulfill a major role in socialization of “new citizens”. One line of argument is that religious schools, and especially orthodox Christian and Islamic schools, will have a poor record in “teaching tolerance”. Another line of argument makes a plea for more involvement of the government in developing, promoting and implementing the teaching of “good citizenship”. The two case studies clarify the different positions in this debate and investigate their implications for the boundaries of tolerance.

In this report, the findings of two Dutch case studies about tolerance in education are presented. In one case study, the boundaries of tolerance for orthodox-Christian (Reformed) schools and Islamic schools are explored. A second case study analyzes the implementation of Citizenship Education in The Netherlands. Both studies show that the debate on boundaries for tolerance and intolerance is influenced by the debate on Dutch identity. Practical and legal constraints, specifically those connected with the educational system determine where these boundaries effectively lie.

Data and methods

This report is based on desk research as well as fieldwork. In terms of desk research we have collected and analyzed statistical data, policy documents, statements by government officials, media and relevant scholarly literature.

The selected respondents for Case Study 1 were school principals of a Reformed or Islamic school (or school association). Of the seven selected principals of Reformed schools, two agreed to be interviewed. Of five selected principals of Islamic schools, four agreed.

For Case Study 2, we interviewed two expert respondents and three teachers about the implementation of Citizenship Education. One expert is working for the SLO (the Dutch Foundation for Curriculum Development), the other for the School Inspectorate. Two teachers we interviewed worked at a school that had attained quite some media attention for its apparent success in Citizenship Education. As a comparison to this school, a teacher from another school was interviewed who had taken their class to the Parliament on an excursion, and whose school had some similar characteristics.

In June 2011 we organized a public event and discussion group to present our preliminary findings and exchange ideas with experts, practitioners, politicians and scholars. The transcripts of this meeting were used as additional data.

The interview guide and a list of interviewees can be found in the appendix of this report.

Case Study 1: Tolerance for Religious Orthodox schools

In the first case study, we explored tolerance for orthodox religious schools. Reformed schools and Islamic schools in the Netherlands are under scrutiny and are often subject to political and media debate. Leading question in this case study was: How does tolerance and intolerance for Islamic and Reformed schools manifest itself in the Dutch debate about Freedom of Education in general, and in the opinions of practitioners of such schools in particular?

Reformed schools account for 3.4% of primary and 2.0% of secondary schools. Islamic schools are even less common, of all Dutch primary schools 0.5% are Islamic and 0.3% of secondary

schools is. Although there is little political support in the Netherlands to drastically reduce the freedom of education and do away with a dual system in which governmental and non-governmental schools are equally funded, the schools that have been discussed in this case study are under scrutiny. According to politicians of the Socialist Party (SP) more Orthodox religious schools and their discriminatory selection of pupils and staff are beyond what a liberal democratic state can “tolerate”. According to the Freedom Party (PVV) Islamic schools are also intolerable. Other political parties of the Left (PvdA, GroenLinks) and liberal parties (VVD and D66) are willing to tolerate these religious schools, but around issues such as non-discrimination of gay teachers or selection of pupils, they articulate a discourse of “liberal intolerance”. Christian political parties (such as CDA, CU and SGP) more fully support associational freedoms of schools.

From the interviews it has become clear that Reformed and Islamic schools in the Netherlands feel the public debate about them is too much influenced by stereotypes and misconceptions. They believe at present there are still enough constitutional guarantees that protect their educational freedom, but principals often made reference to a lack of political support and of indirect forms of resistance or rejection by the surrounding society. Principals of these two types of schools articulate slightly different discourses on tolerance and recognition. Principals of Islamic schools primarily expressed a need for recognition as “normal schools” and for them to be positively accepted as genuinely Dutch. For directors of Reformed schools tolerance was an important frame of reference, because to them it meant the right to exist as a minority in a secularizing society. Principals of Reformed schools stressed there should be room for opinions and life convictions that strongly deviate from the “liberal norm” and that orthodox religious communities are entitled to have schools based on their own views.

Two main conclusions can be derived from the interviews with respect to the ways Islamic and Reformed schools make use of their associational freedoms. First, the identity of the school, the interpretation of associational freedoms and the school’s policy is negotiated between school management (principal and teachers), school board and parents. Contextual factors influencing these negotiations are: the need for the school to have sufficient pupils, the image of the school, the interpretation of educational goals, the media debate, and the criteria set by the Ministry of education as well as the scrutiny exercised by the Inspectorate of Education.

Second, it seems that Reformed schools are stricter in the sense that their religious identity informs the schools’ policy with regard to admission of pupils, selection of staff, curriculum and handling of diversity (dress codes etc.). The Islamic schools have predominantly non-Muslim teachers and management, and there are no special text books for Islamic schools on general subjects (history, biology etc.). In a sense it is thus misleading to speak of Islamic schools as orthodox religious schools. The main reasons why they are so fiercely criticized are, first, that they are seen culturally more different than Christian schools and as “un-Dutch”, second, because of organizational weakness and recurrent problems with incompetent and corrupt boards and management, and, third, their relatively poor educational performance and the fact that these schools have almost one hundred percent allochthonous pupils.

Case Study 2: Citizenship education and tolerance

The second case study analyzes the implementation of Citizenship Education and explores which ideals are expressed in Dutch Citizenship Education intentions and implementations, and how these ideals on policy and practical level relate to intolerance, tolerance and acceptance? In 2006, Citizenship Education (2006) became compulsory in the Netherlands, due to an ongoing debate on integration and identity, and due to European developments. Because of the Dutch Freedom of Education, the precise interpretation of what citizenship education should encompass, is left to the schools. What is required is that schools develop a plan for Citizenship education and that they see to it that the plan is executed. The Government provides only general guidelines, stating that it should increase social coherence and “the willingness and the ability to be a part of the community and to contribute to it actively”. In policy documents and educational research, three dominant positions are taken with regards to the aims of citizenship education and its corresponding outlook on tolerance

1. The community-oriented, adapting citizen. In this perspective, norms and values are created within a group, community or society. The internalization

of these norms is the core objective of citizenship education. Discipline and social awareness are core values.

2. The individualist, autonomous citizen. The objective for citizenship education in this perspective is to create autonomous citizens who have developed an independent attitude and an individual identity, through cognitive development.

Discipline and autonomy are core values.

3. The critical-democratic, socially oriented citizen. Citizenship education must teach children critical reflection on society's structures, and stimulate the development of attitudes which will increase emancipation and equal rights.

Autonomy and social awareness are core values.

Throughout the research, it became apparent that while political debate centred on the first interpretation of CE, educational policy makers tend to choose the second or third approach. The approach that schools refer to in their final implementation may consequently be inspired by all three of these approaches.

On the practical side, CE gets little priority. There is no money or time available, it has no book or method, and most of it is left to the schools. Schools develop incoherent, patch-work curricula that suffice for Inspectorate checks and then leave it to the individual teacher. The Inspectorate's checks are sporadic and only focus on paper work, not on practices or results. The individual teacher may thus approach Citizenship from his or her own ideological perspective, awareness and creativity.

In an intervention project called Respect2all, a group of twenty students was taken to Auschwitz, Poland, to learn about processes of stigmatization and exclusion. Through a model called the Pyramid of Hate, students were informed that stigmatization ultimately may lead to genocide. Students learned to critically reflect on their negative attitudes and prejudice towards Muslims. The students were trained to teach their peers this insight as well. After the training, stigmatizing comments on Muslims by their peers were now consciously related to the Holocaust as a first step in the wrong direction. Combined with the leaving of a hardliner-group of neo Nazis, the whole school population's norm changed from intolerant and prejudiced to almost fully agreeing with non-discrimination.

NGOs who create programs, such as Respect2All, often work from a Critical-Democratic perspective and are opposing the Identity-Adaptive ideals which are expressed in governmental policy for CE. Thus, while the government may envision CE to increase integration of ill-adapted Muslim youth into "Dutch norms and values", school programs may instead try to reduce the negative stereotype regarding Islam and reduce prejudice among the "white" youth. Researchers and experts involved with implementation are actively bending the policy in this direction. The freedom of education thus creates opportunities to teach tolerance, because it allows for deviation from the dominant political ideology.

Conclusions

From our two case studies we conclude that conflicting ideas about Dutch identity, tolerance for (religious) diversity and autonomy determine the national debate about education. Yet, we also notice how the alarming tone of the political debate can be out of tune with the pragmatics of the classroom and the buffering effect of educational implementations.

The first case study shows how stereotypes and stigmatization of Reformed and Islamic schools lead to a perceived lack of tolerance in neighbourhoods and local politics. These schools experience apparently deliberate obstructions to their accommodation, as well as threats from local communities which are related to the negative stereotype associated with the schools. Segregation and fundamentalism are the two main objections to the existence of these schools. A complex dilemma of tolerance can be discerned in the debate about the possibilities for schools to refuse teachers of a homosexual orientation.

In our second case study, we discerned three perspectives of citizenship: Identity-adaptive, Individual-Autonomy and Critical-Democratic. Whereas governmental policy seems to be shaped from the first perspective, educational professionals actively bend the policy towards the third. Teachers and practitioners working in education may adhere to all these values and perspectives to some extent, and shift perspectives according to the specific dilemma they are dealing with.

The lack of direction from the government as well as from schools, leaves room for many interpretations of citizenship education and many possibilities to address dilemmas of intolerance. The largest obstacle seems to be the lack of time and money to implement extra-curricular activities and exchange programs.

Policy recommendations

1. Address discrimination and stigmatization

On the one hand, it is legitimate that Reformed schools and Islamic schools, like all educational institutions, encounter public scrutiny and that practices of discrimination are condemned. On the other hand, religious groups and schools may face discrimination, stigmatization or even violence from the larger society. Both problems need to be addressed and carefully balanced when tolerance is our main concern.

2. Protect institutional rights

A sensible balancing of the liberal principals of non-discrimination and of collective freedoms and associational freedoms is necessary in order to uphold a truly pluralistic society in which there remains room for more Orthodox religious groups.

3. Focus more on autochtonous students

In general, the lower educated, male, autochtonous students have the most negative attitudes towards diversity and the lowest percentage agree with non-discrimination laws (Netjes et al 2011). The shift from intolerant views towards intolerant behaviour in these students must be carefully monitored and addressed timely.

4. Teach for complexity

In teaching tolerance, students must be made aware of its complexity and inherent debate. Ensuring that students are able to learn this complexity may require specific didactics, such as debate and deliberation. Just like the education of tolerance (Vogt 1997: 218) also human rights education should “teach for complexity”. This includes, besides providing knowledge about human rights basic principles and different kinds of human rights, teaching students about the tensions between these rights, and about dilemmas at the practical level.

5. Provide funding and information

Even though the declared ambitions of citizenship are high the actual amount of money and opportunities does not match them. In order to enable teachers and schools to implement the Citizenship Education of their choice, they should receive funding to implement programs, and be provided with information about the possibilities, programs and methods on offer.

6. Minimal tolerance as educational aim

The freedom of education protects the autonomy of schools to give shape to their citizenship education programs. National guidelines and educational goals should therefore remain minimal but precise. Minimal forms of decent behavior in schools (fighting bullying, active discrimination, racism) should be paramount, in order to avoid an ineffective implementation of broader, contradictory educational goals.

Keywords

Education; religion; tolerance; integration; orthodox; Islam; Reformed; Protestant-Christian; citizenship education; civic education; extremism

Introduction

Education in the Netherlands

The Dutch education system is organized around three levels of education: primary education for pupils between the age of 4 and 12, which includes regular and special schools for children with learning or other disabilities. Secondary education is for children between the age of 12 to 16/18 (depending on the school type) and includes tracks for vocational training (VMBO) and pre-university training (HAVO, VWO). Tertiary education includes both vocational training, universities of applied sciences (HBO) and universities.

Since 1848 the Dutch constitution guarantees educational freedom, including the right to establish schools and to determine their religious or pedagogical orientation (Karsten 2006). The constitution of 1917 established the principle of equal funding of all schools, which was elaborated in the 1920 Primary School Act. The basic structure of the Dutch education system is now defined by article 23 of the Dutch constitution (Vermeulen 2004).

Box 1: Article 23 Education

- (1) Education shall be the constant concern of the Government.
- (2) All persons shall be free to provide education, without prejudice to the authorities' right of supervision and, with regard to forms of education designated by law, its right to examine the competence and moral integrity of teachers, to be regulated by Act of Parliament.
- (3) Education provided by public authorities shall be regulated by Act of Parliament, paying due respect to everyone's religion or belief.
- (4) The authorities shall ensure that primary education is provided in a sufficient number of public-authority schools in every municipality. Deviations from this provision may be permitted under rules to be established by Act of Parliament on condition that there is opportunity to receive the said form of education.
- (5) The standards required of schools financed either in part or in full from public funds shall be regulated by Act of Parliament, with due regard, in the case of private schools¹, to the freedom to provide education according to religious or other belief.
- (6) The requirements for primary education shall be such that the standards both of private schools fully financed from public funds and of public-authority schools are fully guaranteed. The relevant provisions shall respect in particular the freedom of private schools to choose their teaching aids and to appoint teachers as they see fit.
- (7) Private primary schools that satisfy the conditions laid down by Act of Parliament shall be financed from public funds according to the same standards as public-authority schools. The conditions under which private secondary education and pre-university education shall receive contributions from public funds shall be laid down by Act of Parliament.
- (8) The Government shall submit annual reports on the state of education to the Parliament.

Two key principles are underlying the Dutch educational system. First, there is the freedom of education, including the rights of groups of individuals to create and operate primary and secondary schools, within certain limits, and the freedom of parents to choose a school for their children (Vermeulen 2004: 31). Second, there is "statutory equality" of governmental or public (*openbaar*) and non-governmental or denominational (*bijzonder*) schools (OECD 2005: 15) and both are funded according to identical and equivalent criteria (Vermeulen 2004: 34). Of all primary schools about 68% is non-governmental and of all secondary schools this percentage is 70%.

Governmental schools (*openbare scholen*) are governed by the municipal council or by a public legal entity, whereas non-governmental schools (*bijzondere scholen*) are governed by the association that founded them. Governmental schools are open to all children regardless of religion or outlook, are subject to public law, and provide education based on guidelines by governmental institutions. Teachers employed by these schools are civil servants and they cannot be selected on the

¹ The Dutch text says "*bijzondere scholen*", which can be more accurately translated as non-governmental, denominational schools, see below.

basis of denominational criteria. Governmental schools are free, however, to choose a specific pedagogical approach (Vermeulen 2004: 34). Non-governmental, denominational schools (*bijzondere scholen*) are subject to the same general education regulations and quality standards and they are state funded. If a group of parents wants to found a new school it has to make a request to the local authority, which once approved will be submitted for approval to the Minister (Rath et al. 2001: 72-73). A number of conditions have to be met, including that the school will have a minimum of pupils in attendance (going from 200 to more than 300 depending on the city/location) and that there is no similar school within three kilometers of the proposed area (*idem*). These schools are governed by the board of the association that set them up, base their teaching on religious and ideological beliefs or on specific pedagogical principles. They can refuse to admit pupils whose parents do not subscribe to the mission on which the school's teaching is based (OECD 2005: 16). These schools should employ certified teachers, but they are allowed to select teachers on the basis of their religious and philosophical views. Besides religious schools, non-governmental schools include, for example, schools based on distinctive pedagogical principles, such as Montessori, Jenaplan or Dalton. In the Catholic, Protestant and Islamic school sector national umbrella organizations exist, which do not replace the autonomous school boards but function as lobbies (Dijkstra et al. 2004: 68).

All schools have to respect qualitative standards set by the Ministry of Education, including for example the subjects to be studied, the attainment targets of examination syllabuses, the content of national examinations, the number of teaching periods per year, the qualifications that teachers are required to have, etcetera (OECD 2005: 17). This is different for religious non-governmental education, because in religious schools, everything concerned with expression of the school's religious identity is decided by the school board. This includes the method and curriculum for religious education, the rituals which are performed at a school such as a daily prayer, and the choice for celebrating or not celebrating Christmas, Easter or Eid al Fitr.

The Inspectorate of Education (*Onderwijsinspectie*) acts under the authority of the Ministry of Education and supervises primary and secondary public and denominational schools. The Education Council (*Onderwijsraad*) is the main advisory body of the Minister of Education.

Over the past years there has been a lot of discussion about the decreasing quality of education in the Netherlands and especially about the ineffectiveness of the many large scale reforms carried through over the past decades. In February 2008 a Parliamentary Commission (*Dijsselbloem Commissie*), published a report about educational reforms in the 1990s. The commission concluded that the government had paid too little attention to its core task, namely seeing to the quality of education, and had mingled too much with the precise educational methods and approaches used inside the classroom.

Religious, cultural and ethnic diversity in the Dutch education system

The vast majority of Dutch schools is still organized on the basis of a religious identity and 57% of the primary schools are Christian (Dijkstra and Miedema 2003: 21). Partly as a result of secularization, the majority of Catholic and Protestant schools do not have a strongly distinctive character anymore (Vermeulen 2004: 35-36). Post-war migration has resulted in the establishment of Islamic and Hindu schools. Other religious developments have also left their imprint on the panorama of religious schools, illustrated for example, by the rise of Evangelical schools.

Schools in 2009	Total 7,517 primary schools	Total 657 secondary schools
Public	32.1 %	29.6%
Roman Catholic	29.9%	24%
Protestant-Christian	3.4%	19.1%
General denominational (Montessori, Jenaplan, Steiner)	7.3%	14.4%
Reformed	3.4%	2.0%

Evangelical	0.1%	0.6%
Muslim	0.5%	0.3%
Hindu	0.1%	--
Collaborative school (i.e Protestant/Catholic)	0.8%	9.4%
Jewish	--	0.2%

The motivations of parents to choose a religious school, which in most of the cases will be a Christian school, vary and often the choice is not motivated exclusively or primarily by religious reasons. Parents select these schools because they generally have good educational performance, a good atmosphere, a good connection with secondary education and a good reputation in teaching social skills (Dijkstra and Miedema 2003). Socio-economic characteristics of parents also matter in this process of selection of schools, because parents with a lower level of education are over-represented in public schools (Versteeg 2010: 57).²

Whereas the accommodation of religious pluralism thus is an essential feature of the Dutch education system, this cannot be said with regard to the accommodation of ethnic diversity. There are no (official) ethnic schools in the Netherlands.³ All schools are obliged to teach in Dutch. Only in Friesland schools can teach both in Dutch and in Frisian (OECD 2005: 12).⁴ However, “ethnic segregation” is a major aspect of Dutch schools nowadays, and there is a clear concentration of “allochtonous” pupils in some schools, and sometimes schools may even have a majority of pupils of a specific ethnic group (e.g. Turks or Moroccans).

In 2009 8,1 % of all pupils in primary education were “non-Western-allochtonous”, meaning that they are born abroad or that at least one of their parents is born abroad. This number is slightly decreasing, mostly because children born of parents who themselves were born in the Netherlands - the “third generation” – do no longer count as “allochtonous”. There are also 0,6 % children that are “Western-allochtonous”.⁵ However, the percentage of allochtonous pupils in primary education is over 50% in the major Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) and in these cities some schools have up to 80% allochtonous pupils. In 2009 14.8 % of all pupils in secondary education were non-Western allochtonous and 6.4 % were Western allochtonous. Furthermore, some vocational schools have much higher percentages.

There is also room for the expression and recognition of ethno-cultural and religious diversity within the context of all schools (governmental and non-governmental). This includes, firstly, attention for religion in the curriculum, not only in the form of “teaching about religion” but also in the form of religious instructions. The Primary Education Act of 1985 imposes “a duty on the competent authorities to help arrange religious instruction in accordance with the wishes of parents for their children” (Rath et al. 2001: 65). Governmental authorities do not bear any responsibility for the content of such instruction. Whereas this type of religious instruction in governmental schools exists for Christian children it is virtually absent for Muslim children. At various occasions there has been a

² This picture looks dramatically different in the case of Islamic schools, however, because they tend to have a lower score on these socio-economic and educational performance variables.

³ When an elite school opened in Rotterdam in 2006 that catered almost exclusively to Turkish students this led to critical reactions. See “Controverse rond nieuwe ‘Turkse’ eliteschool” in *NRC-Handelsblad* January 27 2007.

⁴ The suggestion that Islamic school teach children in the “language of their country of origin” (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007: 18) is mistaken.

⁵ We do not elaborate here further on the rationale behind Dutch statistics on ethnicity (see Maussen and Bogers 2011). See www.samos.nl for these statistics.

debate on whether or not public schools should teach religion.⁶ Secondly, there is the issue of teaching about the cultural background of immigrants. Programs to teach immigrant languages and culture in schools have been ended.⁷ Emphasis has shifted away from Dutch schools stimulating teaching of immigrant cultures, to the school as an instrument for integration. Nonetheless, ethno-cultural diversity still plays a role in the curriculum as something to be “learned about”, even though the precise way this should be handled has changed in the context of ever stricter integration policies and the focus on citizenship education (*burgerschapsvorming*) (see below). There is also more attention for the way in which education can play a role in teaching about cultural and religious diversity and how the school can function as an institute that fosters respect and tolerance (Versteeg 2010: 67ff.) (see below).

Immigration has not only resulted in attempts to cope with cultural and ethno-religious pluralism, it is also increasingly, and perhaps more urgently, related to social inequality and socio-economic segregation in Dutch society. Ethnic and social segregation in schools is now a general phenomenon in the Netherlands (Dijkstra et al. 2004: 82). In public and academic discourse the distinction between schools with a high concentration of immigrant children and those with a majority of autochthonous, Dutch pupils is commonly phrased as the distinction between “black” and “white” schools (e.g. Vedder 2006). Schools with a proportion of 50% enrollment of children from an immigrant background are considered black schools. In 2004 about 8 percent of all primary schools was “black”, but in the four largest cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague; this percentage was over 50%.

An important factor in the development of segregated schools is the so-called “white flight”; autochthonous parents avoid sending their children to schools that have a too high percentage of allochthonous children. They fear that “black schools” provide education of lesser quality, that the overall performance of pupils and mastery of the Dutch language will be lower (resulting in negative peer effects, Dronkers 2007: 19-23), that these schools have a bad reputation, and that there will be a “mismatch between home and school” (Karsten et al. 2003: 471). Ethnic concentration is strengthened by the academic selectivity of the school system. Immigrant students are generally academically less competent at the completion of primary education and, by consequence, they are “overrepresented in the lowest-level programs of junior vocational high schools and underrepresented in the pre-university schools” (Vedder 2006: 41). Most allochthonous children attend junior (age 12-16) vocational high schools (VMBO).

In general terms the number of “white” schools is higher in the sector of non-governmental education: 30% versus 18% in public schools. Yet, there is also variation as to the level of ethnic segregation between different types of denominational schools: 95% of the schools based on an Anthroposophic philosophy is considered “white” and the same goes for 87% of the reformed schools and 87% of non-religious denominational (Montessori, Dalton etc.). Of Protestant-Christian schools 41% are classified as “white” and of the Roman Catholic schools 29%.

Over the past decades policy measures have been developed to tackle ethnic and socio-economic segregation in education. Several municipalities have developed policies aiming to spread allochthonous and autochthonous (or more generally advantaged and disadvantaged) pupils more evenly across schools. However, the possibilities for developing these kinds of “spreading policies” are limited. Because of the freedom of education, most municipal policies rely on the voluntary collaboration of both school boards and parents. These Dutch experiences seem to confirm the picture

⁶ In 2008 a Moroccan-Dutch city-district alderman in Amsterdam, Ahmed Marcouch, a prominent member of the Social Democrat Party (PvdA) suggested that it would be better if Islamic religious instruction was taught in public schools. See “Geen enkele belemmering voor islamles” in *Trouw*, 27 June 2008.

⁷ In the era of guest workers policy (roughly from 1974-1981) mother tongue language and culture-classes were provided in Dutch schools for the children of immigrant workers, motivated by the idea that they should be enabled to learn about their country of origin and should be equipped for successful re-integration upon the day of return. In the period of multicultural Ethnic Minorities Policies (1983-1989) this was replaced by education in the mother tongue, first as *Onderwijs in Eigen Taal en Cultuur* (until 1995) and later as *Onderwijs in Allochtone Levende Talen* (OALT) (from 1998-2004). In practical terms this meant there were optional, extra classes in Turkish or Arabic that were taught in Dutch schools, but outside the regular curriculum and school hours.

that attempts to fight social segregation and “class flight” are massively resisted and that there are few opportunities to enforce desegregation of schools (Bader 2007: 272).

Schools receive additional money when they have a certain percentage of disadvantaged students. Until recently a school would receive 1,9 factor contribution for pupils with (non-Western) immigrant parents, which could be used for example for remedial teaching and special attention for learning Dutch. This policy has recently been modified and a new “weight-regulation” [*gewichtenregeling*] will calculate additional funding based upon a variety of indicators of disadvantage, including notably the level of education of parents and whether or not they are of immigrant background. In addition, more and more emphasis is given to the need for immigrant children to learn Dutch at an early age. The so-called “pre-school” (*voorschool*) for children aged 2 to 4 intends to provide opportunities for these children to learn Dutch more easily and adequately.

Present day public and political debates in the Netherlands

Against the background of the ongoing discussion about integration and the challenges posed by religious and ethnic diversity three mayor themes emerge in Dutch public debate with respect to the domain of education.

Firstly, there is a mayor debate that starts off from the idea that the Dutch education system contributes to ideological and cultural “segregation”, because it allows (or even encourages) that children of a different religious or cultural backgrounds receive education separately, in parallel primary and secondary schools. Another argument is that given the strong secularization trend in the Netherlands⁸, a school system that is still strongly shaped by religion has become anachronistic (Dijkstra et al. 2001: 2). In addition, the value-systems and basic beliefs of religious newcomers, especially Islam, are seen as strongly deviating from mainstream cultural norms, which makes it even more regrettable that children can be educated in this type of religious schools. Some people argue that societal cohesion and “integration” require that all children in the Netherlands attend schools together, without distinctions of religion or ideological background.

Secondly, there is another set of critical voices that question the legitimacy of the education system by focusing on the issue of segregation and social inequality. They argue that in the existing system children from advantaged, Dutch families intentionally go to the same schools, and the same goes for disadvantaged, allochtonous children who go to the same schools mostly unintentionally. School segregation is a result of residential and geographical segregation, but, so the argument goes, in the Netherlands non-governmental schools can more easily control the influx of pupils. They can for example refuse disadvantaged students by arguing that they do not share the religious identity of the school. In this way the “profiling” of religious schools does contribute to the emergence of “black” and “white” schools, alongside demographic factors, housing segregation and the choice-behaviour of parents (Karsten et al. 2002, Versteeg 2010).⁹

Thirdly, there is the idea that, especially in a multicultural society, the school should fulfill a major role in socialization of “new citizens”. It should socialize “newcomers” (read: immigrant children), teach liberal values with respect to issues such as secularism, gender equality and equality of sexual orientation. The government should more strictly see to it that schools effectively contribute to the forming of “democratic citizens”. One expert summarized the debate about the education system in relation to “immigrant integration” as a plea to use the school as an instrument for integration: “which can (1) teach children of different ethnic, religious, social, and cultural backgrounds to live peacefully together and to respect each other; (2) instill in them the basic values of democracy and the rule of law; (3) create equal opportunities for all. This argument proposes moving the Dutch system in the direction of the French system of the *école laïque* (public school) or the American system of common (public) schooling” (Karsten 2006: 29). One line of argument is that religious schools, and especially

⁸ In 2007 42 percent of the Dutch reported no religious affiliation and 71 reported that they hardly ever or never attend worship services (Monsma and Soper 2009: 53).

⁹ One should add that non-governmental schools with a particular educational approach are more successful in selecting pupils from advantaged families, because they demand higher fees of parents and because their often freer teaching methods (Montessori, Jenaplan) seem attractive to higher-educated parents (Dijkstra 2004: 82; Vedder 2006: 39).

Orthodox and Islamic schools, will have a poor record in “teaching tolerance”.¹⁰ Another line of argument makes a plea for more involvement of the government in developing, promoting and implementing the teaching of “good citizenship”. Others are more skeptical and argue that given the freedom of education in the Netherlands there is reluctance to see the state act as a “moral educator” (Vermeulen 2004: 49).

Against the background of these current developments and diversity challenges we have decided to focus our case studies around two major debates in the Netherlands. On the one hand, there is the debate on how the education system as a whole should cope with religious diversity, especially with regard to those religious schools that (are perceived to) exist on the boundaries of what is tolerable in a liberal society. These are Reformed schools and Islamic schools. The debates focus both on the *existence* of these schools and on the nature and boundaries of their *associational autonomy*. Even though issues related to interactions in the school context and presentation of self will inevitably play a role in these debates, our focus is on the way this is a debate about some essential features of the Dutch education system as a whole. On the other hand, there is a wide debate on how the school should fulfill a role in socializing new citizens, and notably in educating pupils in such a way that they are equipped to live in an ethnically, culturally and religiously plural society. This issue primarily concerns the curriculum and different approaches to teaching tolerance (Vogt 1997) and democratic citizenship (Bader 2007).

¹⁰ Whether this is actually the case is another matter (see Bader 2007: 269-272). See also the case studies in this report.

1. Methods and Data

1.1. Research problem and questions for the two case studies

This report draws on desk research and fieldwork. We have collected statistical data, policy documents, statements by government officials, media and examined the relevant scholarly literature. Our first Case Study focuses on the debate on the limits of toleration for orthodox religious schools. The research question in this case study is: How does tolerance and intolerance for Islamic and Reformed schools manifest itself in the Dutch debate about Freedom of Education in general, and in the opinions of practitioners of such schools in particular?

The second Case study explores whether tolerance as pedagogical aim is included in the Dutch approach to Citizenship Education. Our research aims to compare the intended to the implemented curriculum, by focusing on one example of good practice. The following research question is explored: Which ideals are expressed in Dutch Citizenship Education intentions and implementations, and how do these ideals on policy and practical level relate to intolerance, tolerance and acceptance?

In order to address a large scope of Dutch education, the first Case Study mainly describes primary education, and the second Case Study mainly addresses secondary education.

1.2 Respondent selection and approach

The selected respondents for Case Study 1 had to be school principal of a Reformed or Islamic school (or school association). They were selected through internet search as well as through contacts with the organization for Islamic schools, ISBO.

For Case Study 2, we selected several experts in Citizenship Education and some teachers. As a selection criterion for experts we looked for people who had published official documents on the policy and implementation. We aimed at comparing two types of schools: those that wish to influence behavioural and attitude change, and those which address cognitive development in political and democratic knowledge. For the first type, we searched for a school which had participated in a project to decrease stereotypes and stigmatization. From the selected material we found several possible projects. We chose a school that had attained quite some media attention for its apparent success. They previously had a large population of extreme right-wing students, but after taking some of the students to Auschwitz in Poland to receive special training, the attitude of the students had changed. As a comparison to this school, another school type was selected. Through internet search we found several schools which had taken their class to the Parliament on an excursion.

The interview guide and a list of interviewees can be found in the appendix of this report. In June 2011 we organized a public event and discussion group to present our preliminary findings and exchange ideas with experts, practitioners, politicians and scholars. The transcripts of this meeting were used as additional data.

1.3 Transcription and analysis

After the interviews were conducted (all Case Study 1 interviews and the Case Study 2 interviews with teachers took place in the school facility; expert interviews for Case Study 2 took place in a public space) they were fully transcribed. Initial analysis took place in the transcription phase of the interviews. More extensive labeling occurred when the theoretical framework had become more evident. In Case Study 1, several key issues have been selected for citation, largely those relating to associational freedom. In Case Study 2 analysis, different ideals and practical difficulties connected with citizenship education could be discerned. In the analysis and presentation of the findings we have generally be concerned to faithfully report positions and to reconstruct argumentations in relation to different discourses on citizenship, pluralism and tolerance.

2. Case Study 1: Christian-Orthodox and Islamic schools

2.1 Introduction

Freedom of education and the equal recognition of non-governmental religious schools are commonly seen as foundational to the Dutch approach to cultural and religious pluralism. However, over the past decade there is a widespread debate on whether or not Orthodox religious schools should still be tolerated.

In this case study we analyze the ongoing debate on the room for religious schools in the Netherlands, focusing on Reformed schools and Islamic schools. We argue that there is both a debate about the very right to exist of this type of government funded religious schools and on the scope of associational freedoms of these schools. By asking school directors about their school policies and practices and by allowing them to clarify the way they justify these, we hope to shed light on an important debate in the Netherlands about the value and outer limits of tolerance.

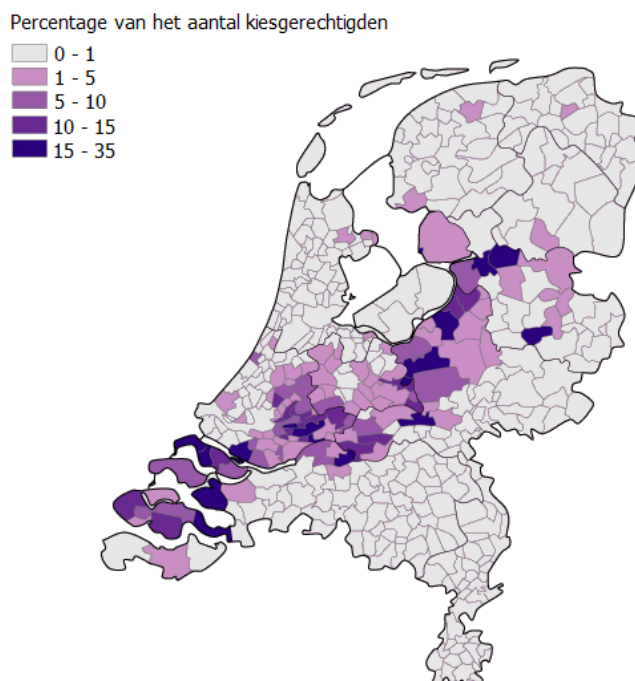
2.2 Reformed and Islamic schools in the Netherlands

Reformed Schools

Dutch-Reformed schools are associated with orthodox Protestant communities that mainly live on the diagonal line from the South West province of Zeeland to the North East part of the country (see picture). This area is referred to as the “Bible belt”, similar to the one in the United States. Their population size is estimated around 460,000 (Bernts et al. 2006: 91).

The Dutch “Bible Belt”

Map shows the vote percentage for the Reformed Political Party
(Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij, SGP)



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2006

Theologically, the Reformed are Calvinists with a dogmatic but highly personalized belief. The Dutch Reformed do not exclude modern life entirely, but they deviate from mainstream Dutch society in a number of ways. They typically object to cinema, popular music and the use of television, and, to some extent, internet. Sundays are intended for resting at home and for Church attendance twice a day. Dancing, card playing or gambling, vaccinations and insurances are all considered problematic.

Other rules relate to purity, sexuality and gender roles. Women must wear a hat in Church service, but they do not sit separately from men. They cannot have leading positions in Church or politics. Women are also expected to grow their hair long and wear skirts or dresses, whereas men are expected to keep their hair short. Birth control, as well as sexual conduct outside of heterosexual marriage, is considered unacceptable. As a result, large families are common among the Dutch Reformed and their population is relatively young.

The number of Reformed schools in the Netherlands gradually grew since 1920. Currently, there are over 200 schools for primary and seven schools for secondary education, as well as two schools for tertiary education (Oevermans 2011). They represent 3.4 % (primary) and 2.0 % (secondary) of the total number of schools.¹¹

Islamic schools

Only a minority (10%) of the total population of children of Muslim backgrounds visit Islamic schools.¹² There are 44 Islamic primary schools and 2 schools for secondary education. According to surveys among Muslim parents, there would potentially be a need for 100 more Islamic schools.¹³ Islamic schools now exist for about 25 years in the Netherlands. Unlike the Reformed schools, the Islamic schools do not adhere to one single type of religious orthodoxy and the majority of teachers in these schools are native Dutch, non-Muslims (75%).

Ever since plans were made to found Islamic schools they have often been regarded as undesirable and potentially dangerous (Rath et al. 2001; Shadid 2003). In reaction to public concerns about educational performance, mismanagement and possible “anti-integration tendencies” the Inspectorate of Education has in the past decade conducted three large scale investigations into Islamic schools (see Maussen 2006: 46-47).: “The most important conclusion was that the Inspectorate did not find anything that should lead to suspicion or alarm” (Driessen and Merry 2006: 213).¹⁴

Still, Islamic schools remain under close scrutiny, both from media and politics and from the Inspectorate of Education, the latter being primarily concerned about the quality of education in some schools. Islamic schools have nearly 100% immigrant population with a concentration of pupils with parents from non-Western, and usually uneducated backgrounds. There are also organizational and financial issues related to unprofessional board members (Driessen 2008). Compared with schools with similar classroom populations from non-Western backgrounds, the Islamic schools are doing slightly better. Yet, compared to the average Dutch school, Islamic schools generally lag behind in school achievements.¹⁵

2.3 Public debate on the freedom of education and religious schools

The dual system, Islam and the freedom of education

In 2002 the Minister of Big Cities and Integration Policy, Roger van Boxtel (Liberal Democrats, D66) suggested in an interview that article 23 on the freedom of education could be rescinded. He believed there should only be public schools that would provide good education. In a secular society religious schools were no longer appropriate and he added: “If you want to you can teach about religion in Bible school or in Koranic schools”.¹⁶ At the time this statement led to a row and representatives of all political parties, including D66 but with the exception of the Socialist Party (SP), said they supported the dual system and freedom of education. In the same year the most important advisory body on

¹¹ Source: www.stamos.nl

¹² The reason immigrant parents have wanted to establish Islamic schools was because of discontent with the school system, in which little attention was given to Islam. Another reason was the unsatisfactory school results of many of their children, which some parents blamed on the un-disciplinary, autonomy-centered style of education in the Netherlands (Driessen 2008). Furthermore, some parents felt their children were being discriminated against or otherwise not judged fairly.

¹³ See “Nog zeker 100 islamitische scholen nodig” in *Telegraaf* March 20 2006.

¹⁴ Some Islamic schools have continued to be in the news in a negative way, notably the As Siddieq school in Amsterdam. Former teachers spoke of a climate that was “anti-Jewish, anti-Western and hostile to women” (in Maussen 2006: 87).

¹⁵ See “Islamschool minder vaak zwak” in *Trouw* March 24 2011.

¹⁶ See “Van Boxtel: geen bijzonder onderwijs” in *Reformatorisch Dagblad* April 8 2002.

education, the Education Council (*Onderwijsraad*) concluded in a report on the significance of article 23 that there was virtually no political support to actually do away with the dual system (2002: 94).

However, in more recent years there are some prominent politicians who defend an ending of the dual system. Jasper van Dijk, an MP of the Socialist Party (SP), has said that he ideally would be in favor of “a French style system” in which “there would be no room for non-governmental (*bijzondere*) schools. According to this MP schools that are financed with “taxpayers’ money” should not discriminate on the basis of religion. In his view Islamic schools and Orthodox Christian schools can perhaps be “tolerated” as private schools, but they should not be positively recognized within the educational system and they should not receive public funding.¹⁷ Other politicians have demanded that the dual system be maintained, but that Islam be excluded from this constitutional freedom. In November 2003 Ayaan Hirsi Ali, former MP of the Liberal Party (VVD), drafted a parliamentary motion that would (indirectly) limit the possibility to found Islamic schools by suggesting that religious schools could only be set up if they were not mono-ethnic and if the native tongue of the majority of pupils was Dutch.¹⁸ No follow up was given to this proposal (Vermeulen 2004: 41). More recently, Geert Wilders (PVV) has declared that “there can be Jewish and Christian schools in the Netherlands, but no Islamic schools” because Islam is a dangerous “ideology”.¹⁹ The political program of the Freedom Party (PVV) for the 2010 national elections mentioned that the party intends to close Islamic schools.²⁰

There continues to be very little political support for these more drastic ideas about abolishing the dual system or excluding Islam from educational freedom. The Education Council, which is preparing a new advice on the future of article 23, has repeatedly stressed that: “Given liberal-constitutional principles of our system it should remain possible for religious minorities (that as a matter of fact have to counter majoritarian trends of secularism and individualism) to opt in their education for a strong orthodox profile, and to select teachers and pupils in view thereof” (Onderwijsraad 2010: 22).

Most of the time, then, the public debate is not about abolishing or maintaining the dual system, but on defining the scope (*reikwijdte*) of the freedom of education, especially with regard to religious schools. An important aspect of the debate concerns the ways associational freedoms of schools should be balanced with other constitutional principles (such as non-discrimination) or worthwhile collective goals (such as good education or social cohesion).²¹ Islamic and Reformed schools are at the centre of this debate. To clarify four different aspects of the associational freedoms of religious schools can be distinguished: the freedom to admit pupils, the freedom to select staff,

¹⁷ Idem. Van Dijk made a similar observation during the focus group discussion, Amsterdam June 27 2011.

¹⁸ Ayaan Hirsi Ali has been important in popularizing a critical view of Islamic schools. In her autobiography *Infidel* she writes: “The Dutch government urgently needed to stop funding Quran-based schools, I thought. Muslim schools reject the values of universal human rights. All humans are not equal in a Muslim school. Moreover, there can be no freedom of expression or conscience. These schools fail to develop creativity – art, drama, music – and they suppress the critical faculties that can lead children to question their beliefs. They neglect subjects that conflict with Islamic teachings, such as evolution and sexuality. They teach by rote, not question, and they instill subservience in girls. They also fail to socialize children to the wider community.” (2007: 279-80).

¹⁹ See *HP/De Tijd* May 1 2007.

²⁰ Election program PVV 2010-2015, page 29.

²¹ The debate on the existence and functioning of religious schools in the Netherlands is illustrative of the many tensions and trade-offs in thinking about educational systems in democratic and pluralistic societies. Veit Bader (2007: 266-267) has distinguished between four such tensions: (1) the tension between freedoms of parents and proto-freedoms of children, (2) the tension between educational freedoms of schools and liberal non-discrimination (e.g. of teachers or pupils), (3) the tension between educational freedoms and educational opportunities for all, and (4) the tensions between educational freedoms and more demanding requirements of democratic citizenship and democratic virtues. Besides these various tensions there is also a variety of actors who have a legitimate interest and are concerned about decisions that are taken by the boards of religious schools. The interests and concerns of parents, citizens, governmental authorities, teachers, schools and the respective associations of public and communal providers of education all need to be taken into account (Bader 2007: 268-269).

decisions with regard to curriculum, teaching methods and pedagogy and, finally, the way diversity is handled within the school context.²²

In the first place, religious schools have the right to select and admit pupils based on the school's religious identity. Schools can demand that pupils and their parents support the mission of the school. At present there is a political debate ongoing about a proposal to introduce a so-called "duty to accept" (*acceptatieplicht*) on non-governmental schools.²³ Whereas at present schools may demand that parents subscribe (*onderschrijven*) to the foundations of the school, in the future the school may only demand that parents agree to "respect" (*respecteren*) the foundations of the school. Whereas in the former situation a school could justify not accepting a pupil by arguing that by their behavior or statements parents demonstrated they did not (truly) subscribe to the foundation of the school (e.g. by being member of another church, or by being divorced), in the new situation parents would only have to agree to respect the foundations, for example by agreeing to follow the rules set by the school. One of the motives behind this proposal was to strengthen the freedom of parents to have their child accepted in a particular school. Another motive is to prevent that denominational schools make strategic use of their admission rules to refuse weaker pupils. Some religious schools with good educational performance are said to refuse pupils with an immigrant background in order to remain "white" schools.²⁴

In the second place, there is the freedom to select and recruit personnel. Religious affiliation can be a reason for selecting (or refusing to select) a specific teacher. Other selection criteria, which are severely contested in public debate, are related to gender norms or sexual orientation. Some religious schools do not want to hire teachers that are divorced or who are homosexual and some schools demand that teachers are not explicit about their homosexuality. An important legal-political debate in this respect is on the so-called "the sole grounds construction" (*enkele feit constructie*), a special provision in the Equal Treatment Act (*Algemene wet gelijke behandeling*, AWGB) of 1994.²⁵ This provision says that it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of "the sole grounds" of gender, sexual orientation or civil status, but that religious organizations and religious schools may nevertheless refuse to employ people if they have "additional reasons" justifying why the lifestyle of a person prevents him or her to subscribe to the identity of the school.

Thirdly, there is the freedom of religious schools to shape their own curriculum and to select teaching aids in accordance with religious principles. Schools have to follow general guidelines (e.g. minimum number of lessons or hours), meet specific educational standards and examination guidelines, and they are not allowed to practice indoctrination that serves commercial, political, or religious agendas (Vedder 2006: 45). Yet, religious schools can make choices, with regard to teaching evolution theory or teaching about sexuality or gender norms. Reformed schools usually have special text books for history, biology or literature, and at present their own teaching method for music.²⁶ Associational freedoms with respect to curriculum may become an issue when governments (or civil society associations) want schools to teach certain messages that religious schools object to. One issue in this regard are programs to enhance tolerance of homosexuals and teaching material related to

²² The aspects of associational freedoms of non-governmental, denominational schools we distinguish roughly overlap with those of Vermeulen (2004: 42-51) who focuses on: "recruitment of personnel", "admission of pupils", "content and quality of education or pedagogical autonomy" and "organization".

²³ This is an initiative bill by the MP's Hamer (PvdA), Van Dijk (SP), Dibi (GroenLinks), Van der Ham (D66) and Kraneveldt-van der Veen (PvdA).

²⁴ See more extensively Onderwijsraad 2010: 11-15.

²⁵ AWGB article 2, section c reads "the freedom of an educational establishment founded on religious or ideological principles to impose requirements on the occupancy of a post which, in view of the institution's purpose, are necessary for it to live up to its founding principles; such requirements may not lead to discrimination on the sole grounds of political opinion, race, sex, nationality, heterosexual or homosexual orientation or civil status."

²⁶ See "Eigen methoden" (Own Methods) on <http://www.golv-info.nl/methoden.html> downloaded on July 27 2011.

sexual identity that are being developed with support of the Ministry of Education and that some religious schools may refused to use.

A fourth aspect of associational freedoms of schools entails the freedom to govern diversity in the school context by setting particular rules. These are often related to dress codes (for women). For example, some Christian schools do not allow girls to wear the headscarf because it is seen as an infraction on the religious identity of the school.²⁷ Reformed schools may oblige female teachers and pupils to wear skirts. Some Islamic schools may oblige female teachers or pupils to wear the headscarf. Other forms of regulation include the composition of classes (for example gender segregation) or whether Islamic prayer is allowed in the school building. This freedom also entails the right to set specific rules for other types of activities, such as swimming lessons, outings and school camps, or festivities organized by the school.

Because there is little support to do away with the dual system, most of public and political debate focuses on the ways religious schools make use of their associational freedoms. Especially those schools with a strong religious identity (Reformed schools) or schools whose religious identity deviates from mainstream culture (Islamic schools) are being challenged in this regard. These schools are accused of using their associational freedoms (especially those related to selection of pupils, recruitment of staff and governance of diversity within the school), in such a way that they violate crucial liberal-democratic norms, especially with regard to equal treatment and non-discrimination.

A widely debated court-case in this respect was related to a teacher of a Reformed school, who was no longer allowed to teach at his school after he told the school principal in the year 2009 that he was in a homosexual relationship (Oomen et al. 2009). Despite the fact that the teacher did not press charges against the school and came to a personal agreement about the situation, there was an appeal at the Commission for Equal Treatment, which was initiated by the COC, the Dutch organisation for homosexual emancipation.²⁸ The outcome of this case is yet unknown, but it does not stand on its own.²⁹ The Council of Europe and the European Commission have argued that the Netherlands have not adequately implemented European guidelines regarding the protection of rights of homosexual employees within religious schools into national laws (Oomen et al 2009: 26). In the context of increasing political pressure some Reformed schools are trying to redefine their practice in this regard, something which also became clear in our interviews (see below). The Union for Reformed Education, (*VGS, Vereniging voor Gereformeerde Schoolonderwijs*), which represents the majority of Reformed schools, wrote a document on homosexuality in 2008. They suggested that homosexuals should not be banned from Reformed schools (there should be “a place for staff or students with a homosexual orientation”) and said that schools should help pupils and staff who are “struggling” with homosexual feelings “through the mercy of Lord fight against all sinful desires” and with Gods help choose for a life without homosexual praxis and relationships (Oomen et al 2009: 66). Other spokesmen of the Reformed communities have said that Gay teachers cannot work at Reformed schools because “the behaviour and choices of teachers should not violate what they communicate to the youth”.³⁰ More recently the Minister of Education, Van Bijsterveld, said the Reformed schools no longer obliged teacher to sign a document saying they would subscribe to Biblical principles with regard to marriage”.³¹

²⁷ A recent case in this respect involved the Don Bosco College, a catholic secondary school in Volendam that refused a pupil because she was wearing a headscarf.

²⁸ *Nederlands Dagblad* May 15, 2009 “School schorst docent om homorelatie” *COC* May 21 2009 “CGB-oordeel homokwestie Emst zaak van algemeen belang”

²⁹ A similar debate involved the earlier mentioned Islamic primary school As Siddieq in Amsterdam when the new head of the school announced in an interview that the school would not hire a gay teacher and that pupils were taught that homosexuality was not allowed in Islam. See response to question of three members of parliament of the VVD (liberal), Tweede Kamer June 16 2010.

³⁰ See for example an article by two policy makers affiliated with the VGS in *Trouw* entitled “Homosexuality is irreconcilable with the identity of the Reformed school”, November 12 2010.

³¹ See “Refoschool werkt niet langer met verklaring tegen homoseksualiteit” in *Reformatisch Dagblad* April 13 2011.

The second part of this chapter explores what Reformed Schools and Islamic school do in practice. Why are these forms of associational freedom important to them and how to they argue about their existence, about their positions and practices in the light of conceptions of tolerance?

2.4 Views of principals of Reformed and Islamic schools

2.4.1 Stereotypes, prejudices and freedom of education

In April 2011 the employers organization of Protestant Christian schools observed that the “societal and political climate is less and less tolerant with respect to diversity and pluralism in morals, culture, life conviction (*levensovertuiging*) and religion”.³² In our interviews we often heard that principals of Reformed and Islamic schools felt they were operating in a climate of decreasing tolerance for their communities and institutions. With respect to Reformed schools one often comes across the image that these schools are “deliberately isolating themselves from society”.³³ The suggestion that the Reformed were trying to segregate from mainstream society was challenged: “we are not in an isolated position, but we refuse to do certain things”. In this context the importance of having denominational schools was to be able to develop the own identity and then “make contacts with our environment coming from our own position”.³⁴ Principals spoke of the prejudices the schools encountered. Some people believe “we all walk around in black suits and wear black socks”.³⁵ Sometimes children of the school were being harassed or yelled at when they were identified as (Orthodox) Christians, for example on the bicycle or in the train.³⁶

In the interviews with Islamic school principals we repeatedly heard that they were confronted with prejudice, negative images and stereotypes based on ignorance and misconceptions about these schools. An important theme is the idea that these schools are not really Dutch. A principal told about a group of teachers in training that visited the schools, asking questions such as “Do you have any chairs in the school? Do you speak Dutch in the school?”³⁷ One of the principals half-jokily told about the ways he would ridicule stereotypes in his conversations with local politicians, showing them around in the school so they could see “we do not keep camels in the school court!”³⁸ Another principal felt she constantly had to “defend her choice” as a non-Muslim to work at the Islamic school. Repeatedly she would have to engage in debates like “I don’t understand why you want to work there. (...) The children live in the Netherlands and they should go to Dutch school.”³⁹ The difference in religion is strongly connected to foreignness and by consequence Islamic schools are seen as non-Dutch by definition. Principals of Islamic schools express the feeling they have to defend themselves all the time: “we have a constitutional right to exist but we have to justify ourselves constantly”.⁴⁰ Sometimes this hostility is being linked to the fact that Muslims are not accepted by Dutch society, but at other times principals observed how stereotypes were being actively produced by the media. An example was a journalist who wanted to take two pictures “one of a typical Islamic class and one of a Dutch class”.⁴¹ We also observed that a discourse of “stereotype debunking” was very common amongst the school directors of Islamic schools. In the following fragment a school principal, asked to describe her school, manages to address seven common stereotypes about Islamic schools in three minutes. The debunked stereotypes are marked in italic.

I: In general, how would you describe the school of which you are a principal?

³² Reaction of Besturenraad April 7 2011. Available on www.vrijheidvanonderwijs.nl . Downloaded July 27 2011.

³³ See “SP haalt fors uit naar refoschool” in *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, September 3 2009.

³⁴ interview 2, p.33.

³⁵ interview 2, p.6

³⁶ interview 1. p.25.

³⁷ interview 3, p.22

³⁸ Interview 5, p.8

³⁹ interview 4, p.11

⁴⁰ interview 3, p.18

⁴¹ Interview 3, p.15

R: Well we are a Muslim primary school of which the board, er.. has always been a bit at distance. (1: *No influence from incompetent or fundamentalist board members*)

I: Hm-hm.

R: That is different at some other primary schools.

I: Yes.

R: En, the school exists since 1993, which is quite some time.

I: yes.

R: And those who founded the school have started from the viewpoint of school where they could go with their children but connected to the (name city) community. 2. *No isolationist position*)

I: Yes.

R: So, the football tournament of which I just told you, we participate in that.

I: Yes.

R: Er, just as well as other activities, so we are a Muslim primary school, but we don't differ so much from the other schools besides our identity and foundations. (3. *No extreme deviation from the average*)

I: Yes, yes. What kind of pupils do you get?

R: Mainly Moroccan backgrounds.

I: Yes.

R: And a small portion of Turkish, and lately, fortunately, we see an increase of other nationalities, Somali, Uganda, we also have children of Egyptian father and Dutch mother.

I: Yes.

R: And Dutch mother, Iraqi father, so that. Yes.

I: Yes.

R: We see that fortunately, we see a bit more diversity emerge (4. *Positive outlook on diversity, no discrimination*).

Other stereotypes this school principal addressed were: the mothers of the school children are increasingly employed (5. *no anti-modernity*), the school is harbouring more children from the neighbourhood (6. *no segregation*) and children increasingly end up on higher levels of secondary education (7. *no inferior education*).

Finally, we asked principals about the coping strategies they developed to address a climate of hostility and prejudice. Directors of both schools are aware that incidents (such as school children misbehaving) may have repercussions and will immediately be linked to the identity of the school. One of the Reformed principals observed that small forms of annoyance (“when students cycle off the school campus and they ignore the traffic rules”) are being blamed on the community of believers and “if we misbehave a little it will invoke a lot of annoyance”.⁴² A principal of an Islamic school mentioned a similar coping strategy. When a child misbehaved on a school trip the school director pointed to the image of the school: “this is not the image we want to present, we want to present the image that we are just an ordinary primary school, with normal children and that nothing weird is going on with us”.⁴³ In order to challenge the image that Reformed schools are weird and isolationist, these schools often invite people and participate in inter-school events. However, it appears that Reformed school principals more explicitly defend the right to exist and to be different, and use toleration as a frame of reference, whereas the Muslim schools we visited mainly strive to be accepted as “normal primary schools”. We need to underline that this may well be a part of the strategy of the management, and perhaps not always shared by the board members or some parents who may favor a more isolationist or strict interpretation of Islamic rules (see below).

Given the general climate of hostility and intolerance that principals referred to we asked them whether they feared that their continued existence was at risk and what kind of forms of opposition they encountered. Generally speaking directors believed that the law and the stance taken by the

⁴² Interview 1, p.7

⁴³ Interview 4, p.8

national government still offered sufficient protection. However, one Reformed principal observed that the intolerance for Islam was being extended towards Reformed schools: “if it is about tolerance from the outside towards us, I think it has decreased ... And this has a strong connection to the fact that we (...) are put in one category with the Muslims.”⁴⁴ He continued to explain that because of the link with Islam, religious Orthodoxy was more and more seen in a negative way as being linked to violence and terrorism. He considered himself to be “a Reformed Fundamentalist” but felt he was not allowed to say this any longer.⁴⁵ Another director observed that he had the feeling the school encountered resistance from local actors, for example when a neighbourhood committee mobilized against a new building.⁴⁶ At a more general level directors did perceive threats to the continued existence of Reformed schools. On the one hand, they referred to the negative view of religion and religious Orthodoxy among some politicians of liberal and Left parties⁴⁷, on the other hand, to more structural trends threatening the freedom of education and exceptional position of Reformed schools, for example the ideas that in a region all schools should collaborate or the decreasing support for government financing of bussing of children. In this context, so one principal observed, it remained to be seen whether the Reformed pillar could be continued or “whether all these forms of collaboration that we have built up among Reformed organizations will have to be demolished, and we will be obliged to merge in general (i.e. non-denominational, IV/MM) organizational platforms.”⁴⁸

Among directors of Islamic schools the discussion about their right to continue to exist was being related to them not being accepted as “normal Dutch schools” and the almost continuous anti-Islam rhetoric in public debate. Islamic principals more often mentioned that the schools had been subject to vandalism, neighbourhood bullying and hateful anonymous phone-calls. Especially after incidents such as 9/11 and the murder of Van Gogh in 2004 Islamic schools and mosques were targets of vandalism and hateful graffiti in the Netherlands.⁴⁹ One of our interviewees also mentioned that the windows of the school had been smashed repeatedly and one night the school bus had been set to fire. Another aspect of a more general climate of hostility was the fact that Islamic schools feel they are under extreme scrutiny, especially with respect to their educational performance. One director observed that it had been quite a challenge to have been subject to inspections by the Inspectorate of Education. School boards have to talk to Inspection about three times a year, school-plans are scrutinized and there are regular visits to the schools that this director described as “viewing operations” (*inkijkoperaties*) in which the inspection was not only interested in the educational performance but also in “other things”, for example contacts with mosques or interest organizations.⁵⁰ This director felt that sometimes the bar was being put too high for Islamic schools, which as a matter of fact have a great number of disadvantaged pupils struggling with language deficiencies. Another director had the impression that Islamic schools were being judged more strictly than others, for example with respect to their financial administration. Another director pointed to the more positive side: it had allowed the school management to “get things on track again”.⁵¹

In view of the declining societal and political support for both types of schools we were interested in learning about the ways school principals discursively framed their right to exist, their more positive characteristics and how these ideas were embedded in discourses on tolerance and recognition. The principals of Reformed schools said that the existence of religious schools allowed a

⁴⁴ interview 1 p.26

⁴⁵ Idem

⁴⁶ Interview 2, p.13

⁴⁷ A common denominator in the interviews was to refer to the Purple Coalition Government, a coalition of Liberal parties (VVD and D66) and the Social-Democrat party (PvdA) which was in power between 1994 and 2002. This was the first government without Christian Democrats since WW II.

⁴⁸ Interview 1, p.27

⁴⁹ See EUMC “Anti-Islamic reactions in the EU after the terrorist acts against the USA. The Netherlands” (2002). After the assassination of Theo van Gogh in 2004 a small bomb exploded at the entrance of a Muslim primary school in Eindhoven and in December of that year a Muslim primary school was burned down in Uden. The attackers, right-wing youth, had painted symbols of “white power” on the building and made reference to the murder of Van Gogh (Maussen 2006).

⁵⁰ Interview 6, pp.13-14.

⁵¹ Interview 5, p.13

“unity between church, school and family resulting in a harmonious education of children.”⁵² They also underlined that the dual system and the right of parents to choose a school led to a dynamic of supply and demand. For Reformed schools this means they not only try to be attractive in terms of educational performance, but also that they seek to maintain their distinctive profile to be attractive for parents with a Pietistic Calvinist background and not to become seen as a more general Christian school. The “identity plan” (*identiteitsplan*) of the school thereby plays a role in defining the precise foundations and rules in dialogue with school board, school management, churches and parents. Once defined the identity plan becomes something parents have to agree to accept when they enroll their children in a Reformed school.

Islamic school principals argued that Islamic schools have an important “cushioning function”. One director said “at this school children will grow up in a protected environment”. But the school also tried to prepare them for secondary school where they will meet more people who “look different” and “who have a different religion”.⁵³ She also said that the added value of Islamic schools is that children can “feel safe there” and that children that leave this school tend to be self-confident because “they have had the opportunity to express themselves and to be as they want to be”.⁵⁴ Pupils also tended to be judged more fairly, this director said, whereas in schools that are predominantly “white” teachers will “from the outset have lower expectations of an allochtonous child”. This kind of cushioning function was thus seen as all the more important given the general hostility vis-à-vis Islam and the negative views of the abilities of immigrant children.

When asked about tolerance we discovered interesting differences between the directors of Reformed schools and those of Islamic schools. It was clear that for Reformed principals “tolerance” and “toleration” are important concepts to phrase the ways they want to engage with differences. Tolerance should not mean “relativism” or a shallow form of “respect” so that anyone can do as he or she likes. If this is what is meant by tolerance Reformed principals speak of “an excess of tolerance in the Netherlands”.⁵⁵ Directors made it clear that as Reformed they had strong opinions on certain issues, such as euthanasia and homosexuality. They want to be able, to judge it as morally wrong, to say this and to have the freedom not to want certain things. In the school context this entails the right to teach that these things are wrong and not to accommodate them within the school. According to these directors what it means to be tolerant is not to act upon these judgments and feelings and not to give active expression of rejection to members of other groups. One principal gave the example of meeting a gay couple at a wedding. He said that from a Biblical point of view they were morally wrong and he could not “appreciate” what they were doing, but being tolerant or respectful meant that he would not “approach them to tell them that what they were doing was wrong”.⁵⁶ Another aspect of tolerance that Reformed principals mentioned was some willingness to engage with others and to be in contact. For example, the school would pay a visit to a mosque, even though some of the more Orthodox parents objected to this. According to one of the principals some parents would more actively express disapproval and reject certain practices, but the school policy was to teach that having strong opinions and judgments should never lead to active rejection or violence, and that one should always be willing to learn about other religions. Such an approach is also appropriate, so he said, because younger generations know that as Reformed they are now also “a minority”.⁵⁷

Whereas tolerance and toleration, in their more strict definitions (see WP2) are important for Reformed principals, directors of Islamic schools associated the term “tolerance” with the more general idea of not being violent or “refraining from being judgmental about others”.⁵⁸ A principal of an Islamic school associated tolerance with a kind of “openness” to others.⁵⁹ We could not really

⁵² Interview 1, p.24.

⁵³ Interview 4, p.10

⁵⁴ Interview 4, p.22

⁵⁵ Interview 2, p.13

⁵⁶ Interview 1, p.11

⁵⁷ Interview 1, p.24

⁵⁸ Interview 5, p.23

⁵⁹ interview 4, p.12

detect a clearly articulated idea about tolerance (as opposed to recognition and respect) in the discourses of the directors of Islamic schools that we interviewed. Generally it appeared that Islamic schools are more after recognition and acceptance as part of Dutch society.

2.4.2 Associational freedoms: practices and justifications

As we have said there are major concerns in public debate about the ways Reformed and Islamic schools use their associational freedoms. In the media and political debate the tone is often set by a small number of controversial legal cases. In this context our goal was to explore more concretely how these associational freedoms play a role in the school and what possible differences there are between Reformed and Islamic schools.

Admission of pupils

An important associational freedom of religious schools is the right not to admit certain children. A principal of a Reformed school explained why the school doesn't have any Muslim pupils for example: "the crucial difference between Muslims and Christians is of course the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I will not ignore that or change that because of a number of Muslim children that I should respect ... So, that won't work. And so in reality, those Muslim parents, they simply don't enrol their children here".⁶⁰ The Reformed schools are directly concerned with the political debate on the "duty to accept" (*acceptatieplicht*), because it would mean they would have to accept children if parents say they "respect" the identity of the school, whilst they may have different religious views and may not follow the strict rules of Reformed religion in their personal life.

Interestingly we discovered that an important motive for Reformed schools to maintain the freedom to refuse pupils was a fear of a growing influence of evangelicals. Parents and children with an evangelical interpretation of Protestantism tend to divert from the strict rules of the Reformed and there is a fear that they will undermine the Reformed community "from within".⁶¹ The need to uphold the orthodox norms in the school may also arise when a child's family is less strict. A Reformed principal gave an interesting example: "I was in class one day, and after Bible reading a child told the teacher that his family had been to the beach two days before...but that was on a Sunday! (...) Well it doesn't immediately lead to issues, like, 'your way of life is different from what we strive for, so let's address this'. Because the teacher will try, if this occurs, to stress in the group, as a counter- example, what we believe, let's say, the Sunday with its church attendance. (...) And we are confronted with what this kid says, if we don't deal with it, some will think we don't because we find this normal".⁶² The role of the teacher hence was to point out that Sunday is meant for Church attendance, because if the remark is left unattended, it might send out the wrong signal to the other children. The role of the school is to be clear about what kind of behaviour is intolerable for Orthodox Christians, but still a strategy of explaining and dialogue is pursued and children are not simply "expelled from the school" for this reason.

For Islamic schools the issue of refusing certain students does hardly arise. Most directors we interviewed emphasized that all pupils are welcome.⁶³ When asked about whether the school would refuse students on the basis of religion, one of the Islamic principals said that pupils "should not be refused on the basis of religion". At this school a catholic child would be admitted, but, so the principal added, it should "abide with the rules of the school."⁶⁴ However, it became clear that the issue of refusing pupils because they do not respect the identity of the school remained basically hypothetical for these schools. There were interesting exceptions though. One Islamic school has been able to improve its performance in such a way that it is doing better than other governmental schools in the areas with similar numbers of allochtonous children. This school may be confronted with non-Muslim parents wanting to enrol their children there. Another school principal mentioned the example

⁶⁰ interview 1.

⁶¹ There is an increase of Evangelical schools in the Netherlands (Stamos, 2010)

⁶² Interview 1

⁶³ interview 4, p.8.

⁶⁴ interview 4, p.20.

of Salafi parents who wanted the school to be stricter in its religious teachings and dress rules. The school would not accept that these parents would take their children out of the religious classes and suggested that they could better look for another school.⁶⁵

Selection of staff

When it comes to religious schools using their associational freedoms with regard to the recruitment and selection of staff (mainly teachers) two main issues arise: staff members having a different religion (or for Reformed schools belonging to another religious denomination) and issues related to gender or sexual norms (for example being gay, being divorced, living together unmarried). From our interviews the impression arose that the rules in Islamic schools were less strict than those in Reformed schools.⁶⁶

Teachers at Reformed schools must be a member of one of the Orthodox Protestant churches, and usually they are member of the same ultra-Orthodox churches. However, sometimes teachers who are already working at the school may change their perspective on religion somewhat, for example because they become evangelicals. This is regarded as problematic, because, as one school principal explained, there is a fear that the teacher may communicate his changed views on religion to the pupils and then “the school could be used as some sort of institute for evangelization”. Teachers should not actively talk about their alternative religious views: “there can be all sorts of minor differences but when there is a difference of opinion on such a major issue, then you will find this more or less played out across the heads of children, and that is not right.”⁶⁷ Actually, it seems that the fear of a growing influence of Evangelicals motivates Reformed schools to use their associational freedoms to try and refuse non-Reformed staff and pupils. According to this principal a general obligation of schools to accept pupils and staff risked to undermine the identity of the school. Another issue would be whether staff should abide to strict prescription in their private life (rules within the school context are discussed below). For example, one Reformed principal mentioned that a female school teacher might not be dressed in skirts in their leisure time. During the school camp this might become an issue, because it was ambiguous whether the teacher was there in a private or professional capacity. Another issue was that personnel in a Reformed school should not live together unmarried or be divorced.⁶⁸ At Reformed schools the most sensitive issue with regard to the freedom to select staff were related to homosexuality. One principal explained that he believed that schools were justified in discriminating against homosexuals when selecting teachers, as long as they would follow the right procedure. In his view, the issue did not arise so often, but the media always created a hype and therefore schools had to choose their words in an extremely careful manner. When speaking of a case of another Reformed school that had fired a teacher because of his homosexual lifestyle he observed that the school board had been “acting very decently”, but the media and the Minister had “created a situation”.⁶⁹

As we mentioned before the issue of recruitment policy of Islamic schools looks rather different. Islamic schools have problems to find enough certified teachers, and many Islamic schools have a majority of non-Muslim teachers. As one principal observed, he had difficulty in finding a replacement and one of the candidates had said “I don’t like the identity of this school”.⁷⁰ The staff in Islamic schools can have another religion, or no religion, but they are asked not “to express this”, meaning they should not (actively) try to communicate their own views to the pupils. Actually only a minority of the teachers in Islamic schools is Muslim and in this particular school only 9 out of 28 of the staff members had a Muslim background. When asked whether the school would tolerate that a staff member was homosexual, one of the principals gave a more ambiguous answer. During the application procedure the rules of the schools would be mentioned and candidates should understand

⁶⁵ Interview 5, p.27

⁶⁶ We must stress that this is but an impression based on our interviews. It does not necessarily mean this correct for all Islamic or Reformed schools.

⁶⁷ Interview 1, p.7

⁶⁸ Interview 1, p.18-19

⁶⁹ Interview 1, p.6

⁷⁰ Interview 3, p.10

this meant they could not “propagate” that they were gay.⁷¹ This school seemed to follow a kind of “don’t ask don’t tell” policy, but again the issue was essentially a hypothetical one, because the case had not presented itself yet.

Curriculum

In religious schools decisions on the curriculum will be decided, on the one hand, by concerns about educational goals and obligations and, on the other hand, by concerns related to the religious identity of the school.

From our interviews the image arose that for Reformed schools two main issues arise with regard to decisions on the curriculum, namely teaching about sexuality and teachings about evolution. One principal of a Reformed school mentioned the teaching of evolution theory as a domain in which associational autonomy increasingly was threatened and he spoke of it as one of the things some people want to “force upon us”. According to him “evolution is in fact a belief as well ... because of a lot of things are not clear and not proven”.⁷² Generally speaking it seems that Reformed schools have no great difficulty in deciding on their policies with regard to curriculum, also because they make use of specifically designed curricula. For sensitive subjects, such as biology or religion, these teaching methods are already adapted to the main concerns of Orthodox Calvinists, and special methods are also available in subjects such as music, history or literature. These schools thereby make sure they attain educational goals set by the Ministry of Education but via the choice of specific textbooks and methods they give different accents, for example with regard to the kind of books that are discussed in Dutch literature classes or the emphasis given to particular aspects of Dutch history. Throughout the curriculum of Reformed school a lot of attention is paid to religion.

Islamic schools, on the other hand, make use of more generally used methods and only have special textbooks for religious instruction. One school principal mentioned sexual education as a “sensitive issue”. Teachers would teach about sexuality and procreation in the biology lessons using a general textbook; “we just follow the method, what is in there we simply must present, one way or the other”.⁷³ During religious classes these issues would also be discussed and more emphasis was put on Islamic norms with regard to sexuality. Decisions on issues related to curriculum and activities are negotiated between school boards, school management and parents, within the constraints set by the Ministry of Education. It appeared that at Islamic schools the school-management (director and teacher), who are often non-Muslims, believe that considerations concerning educational goals should take priority. The boundaries on what can be tolerated are shifting and it appears that the school management often defends a more liberal course than some of the school board members or parents would like. One director spoke of a shift in the school’s policy upon his arrival as manager. The more conservative members of the school board had been removed and the new policy was that the focus should no longer be to focus on everything that should, for religious reasons, potentially be seen as forbidden (*haram*) but on what should be allowed (*halal*).⁷⁴ An example was music lessons that used to be forbidden but were now allowed. Music was also being used in other classes, for example in teaching language. According to this director the more conservative parents simply had to accept this. Another example was dancing. To avoid further discussion the school management had called this activity “rhythmic moving”. According to the principal, who was a Muslim himself of native Dutch (autochthonous) background, the school policy reflected a more liberal approach in which worthwhile goals, such as having contact with children of another school (the dancing or “rhythmic moving” was related to an activity with another school) and preparing children for society, should take priority over religious dogma. This director also explicitly argued that the school wanted to be attractive for the large group of “middle of the road Muslims who are not extremists”. When confronted with conservative parents who wanted to take their children out of religious instruction lessons because they deemed these “too liberal”, this director said they were “free to look for another school”. A group of Pakistani parents had effectively tried to convince the school to implement a more strict policy, but

⁷¹ Interview 6, p.35

⁷² Interview 2

⁷³ Interview 4

⁷⁴ interview 5, p.14

eventually some parents chose to migrate to the United Kingdom and enroll their children in a more strict Islamic school in Birmingham.⁷⁵ Another director gave the example of school swimming. Even though the school had initially gender-segregated swimming lessons for children between 4 and 7, but this could not be maintained because the budget costs and there could only be swimming once every two weeks. One parent objected and took his daughter out of the swimming lessons.⁷⁶ Still another example was crafts because of the tension between religiously motivated objections to figurative art and the educational value of learning children to make “three dimensional puppets”. The school had chosen a pragmatic solution, meaning “we just do it and then when we are finished we will make a ball of clay again ... we will not display it or anything”.

Handling of diversity

Under this heading we discuss the ways these school deal with issues such as language, dress and behaviour in the school context and how they define what is (in)tolerable. In media the more extreme case are often mentioned, for example when rules with regard to dress become a motive to refuse pupils, as was the case in the earlier mentioned example of the headscarf in a Catholic school. From the interviews it became clear that for Reformed schools rules with regard to dress and specific language (cursing) are seen as important in view of the identity of the school. These schools have a dress code for female teachers and pupils. As one principal explained: “At all our schools the female teachers are dressed in skirts when they are at work in the classroom” even though when they are in their leisure time they “may dress differently”.⁷⁷ Another principal mentioned that there are also ongoing discussions within the Reformed community about appropriate dress and he laughingly explained they were having a debate on whether a “legging is a pair of trousers or not” and whether it should be allowed.⁷⁸

For Islamic schools the dress codes were described by most principals as “very basic”. One principal spoke of schools banning “shameful clothing” (*schaamteverwekkende kledij*) and “tattoos and piercings in the face”.⁷⁹ Another principal explained that some practices were not allowed such as a “naked belly” or “t-shirts without sleeves” and that female staff was expected not to dress in a way showing a “cleavage”.⁸⁰ Of course, this kind of rules also exists in other Dutch schools. Another school principal explained that non-Muslim female staff was not obliged to wear a headscarf. Another rule was that during prayer girls must wear a headscarf and be properly covered. Yet this principal observed that dress codes were primarily seen as something parents should discuss with their children.

2.5 Conclusions

Although there is little political support in the Netherlands to drastically reduce the freedom of education and do away with a dual system in which governmental and non-governmental schools are equally funded, the schools that have been discussed in this case study are under scrutiny. According to politicians of the Socialist Party (SP) more Orthodox religious schools and their discriminatory selection of pupils and staff are beyond what a liberal democratic state can “tolerate”. According to the Freedom Party (PVV) Islamic school are also intolerable. Other political parties of the Left (PvdA, GroenLinks) and liberal parties (VVD and D66) are willing to tolerate these religious schools, but around issues such as non-discrimination of gay teachers or selection of pupils, they articulate a discourse of “liberal intolerance”. This means they consistently tend to give priority to non-negotiable liberal values (notably of non-discrimination and individual rights) over collective and associational freedoms of religious and faith-based institutions. Finally, Christian parties (CDA, CU and SGP) in a more principled manner favor “tolerance” of this type of religious schools and argue that these schools are worthy of public recognition, as they should be positively accommodated in a plural society.

⁷⁵ Interview 5: p.26-27

⁷⁶ Interview 4, p.16-19

⁷⁷ Interview 1, p.5

⁷⁸ Interview 1, p.10

⁷⁹ Interview 5, p.17

⁸⁰ Interview 4, p.14

From our interviews it has become clear that Reformed and Islamic schools in the Netherlands feel the public debate about them is too much influenced by stereotypes and misconceptions. They believe at present there are still enough constitutional guarantees that protect their educational freedom, but principals often made reference to a lack of political support and of indirect forms of resistance or rejection by the surrounding society. Interestingly we found that principals of these two types of schools articulate slightly different discourses on tolerance and recognition. Principals of Islamic schools primarily expressed a need to be accepted as “normal schools” and for them to be positively recognised as genuinely Dutch. For directors of Reformed schools tolerance was an important frame of reference, because to them it meant the right to exist as a minority in a secularizing society. Principals of Reformed schools stressed there should be room for opinions and life convictions that strongly deviate from the “liberal norm” and that orthodox religious communities are entitled to have schools based on their own views.

Two main conclusions can be derived from our interviews with respect to the ways Islamic and Reformed schools make use of their associational freedoms. First, the identity of the school, the interpretation of associational freedoms and the school’s policy is negotiated between school management (principal and teachers), school board and parents. Sometimes parents want the school to be stricter in implementing religious dogma, and at other times parents are unwilling to accept religiously motivated rules imposed by the school. Important contextual factors influencing these negotiations are: the need for the school to have sufficient pupils, the image of the school, the interpretation of educational goals, the media debate, and the criteria set by the Ministry of education as well as the scrutiny exercised by the Inspectorate of Education. Second, from our interviews it seems that Reformed schools are stricter in the sense that their religious identity informs the schools’ policy with regard to admission of pupils, selection of staff, curriculum and handling of diversity (dress codes etc.). Islamic schools are less strict. Aside from the choices made by school management with regard to the school’s policy, there are also more structural reasons why Islamic schools are less strict than Reformed schools. They have predominantly non-Muslim teachers and management, there are no special text books for Islamic schools on general subjects (history, biology etc.) and, overall, there is less support in Dutch society for a strict application of Islamic religious rules in the school context. In a sense it is misleading to speak of Islamic schools as orthodox religious schools. The main reasons why they are so fiercely criticized are, first, that they are seen culturally more different than Christian schools and as “un-Dutch”, second, because of organizational weakness and recurrent problems with incompetent and corrupt boards and management, and, third, their relatively poor educational performance and the fact that these schools have almost one hundred percent allochthonous pupils.

3. Case Study 2: Citizenship Education and tolerance

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. Paradox of Dutch citizenship education

Both on an international and national level, there is a growing sense of urgency to teach children ‘citizenship’ or ‘civic education’ (see also the September 2011 volume of *Ethnicities*). The school can in this respect be regarded as a main institution to teach tolerance (Bader 2007; Vogt 1997). However, there are many conflicting aims associated with citizenship education (Veugelers 2010; Netjes et al 2011; Maslowski et al 2010; Nieuwelink 2008). Citizenship Education may, among many other objectives, include teaching tolerance as an educational aim. Several ways in which Citizenship Education can contribute to developing tolerant attitudes in students are known, such as through learning about democracy and human rights, but also critically addressing prejudice (see also Vogt 1997).

Despite the recent implementation of Citizenship Education in the Netherlands, developments seem to have stagnated. Ever since Citizenship Education became part of the official requirements, the knowledge, attitudes and skills associated with citizenship seem to have decreased among Dutch students. In international comparison, Dutch students have slightly less democratic attitudes and are less willing to agree with equal rights for migrants (45.8%) than their European counterparts (50%) (Maslowski et al. 2010). Especially autochthonous Dutch students perform poorly compared to students of migrant parents (Netjes et al 2011: 50-51).

In order to clarify this paradox, in the following case study, we investigate which ideals are inspiring Dutch policy and implementation for Citizenship Education, and how these ideals relate to tolerance and acceptance as educational aims. The lack of practical guidelines from the government is assessed in its effect on increasing tolerance through education, as well as the tension between ‘education for democratic citizenship’ and ‘education for tolerance’. We therefore aim to further examine which ideals have influenced the educational policy and implementation regarding to Citizenship Education.

3.1.2. General account of the introduction of Citizenship Education (CE)

The call for Citizenship Education (CE) in the Netherlands was a result of two simultaneous developments: the first was the gradual implementation of CE in curricula throughout Europe as a result of EU agreements (Eurydice 2005), the second was the growing national concern with integration and national identity, in particular the shift from a multiculturalist paradigm to an assimilationist one (Vasta 2006).

As the debate on integration and national identity continued, an official Advice from the Educational Council (*Onderwijsraad*) suggested that the creation of some type of CE should be pursued, followed by similar suggestions from the WRR (Scientific Council for Government Policy). In June 2005, the Parliament passed a law to include obligatory CE. Although the cross-curricular CE is legally required, it does not have a distinct method or book, nor hours prescribed for it in the weekly schedule. A document was created by SLO (National Foundation for Curriculum Development) to help schools choose their way of implementing CE. Tolerance was mentioned as one of the necessary aims of CE (Bron 2006: 34-38). Three domains were proposed which constitute active citizenship and social participation: democracy, participation and identity.

The introduction of CE occurred at a time when policies for identity and cultural diversity were changing. In 2003 the subject ‘Culture and language of origin’ for migrant children was abolished (Hendriks and Scheerens 2009). Another development involved Intercultural education, which had been introduced in 1985 (Hanson 2002). The status of this cross-curricular subject is now unclear. Intercultural Education has either become replaced by or incorporated by the obligatory CE (NICI/Bakker: 2010). Whereas Intercultural Education was aiming at appreciating cultural diversity, CE - although acknowledging the plurality of Dutch society - aims at social coherence and willingness

to participate in *the community* (note the singular). However, some schools still teach Intercultural Education.⁸¹

The obligatory status of CE coincided also with increased investigations into the much scrutinized Islamic schools (see Case study 1 in this report). “One of the government’s motives in introducing a legal obligation for citizenship education was to hold schools more accountable in the way they promote social cohesion and democratic values” (Bron and Thijs 2011: 124). Thus, Citizenship Education became a means to control schools, besides educating children. An Islamic school in Amsterdam, As Siddieq, was partly cut from its funding in 2009 due to an apparent lack in CE. This was later refuted by the Council of State and funding was restored.⁸²

Yet, the integrationist discourse and the focus on Dutch national identity is one of many ideals which inspire CE. In fact, the exact requirements or goals remain unclear, due to disagreements about its necessary aims between politicians, school representative organizations, social scientists and education-supporting NGOs. In this study, we explore CE and its possible effects on acceptance, tolerance and intolerance - taking into account this variety of views.

3.1.3 Case study: Overcoming racism through CE. The success of ‘Respect2All’

After literature research and interviews with experts, it was clear that many schools do not have a structured approach to CE. One school stood out as an exception, an example of “good practice”. While struggling with a growing population of right-extremist youth, it approached an external partner to execute a project on the school called “Respect2all”. According to those involved the project resulted in decreased racism and stigmatization among the students, to the extent that the school received an award for its tolerant and respectful climate.

In our empirical research, we examine which experiences and ideals about CE were expressed by teachers involved with the project, and we compare their ideals to that of a teacher whose school had similar problems of intolerant views in the student population, but chose a different approach. Taken together this sheds light on different ideas about teaching tolerance in Dutch schools.

3.2 Citizenship education in the Netherlands

3.2.1 Ideas and approaches to citizenship education in the NL

Dutch law prescribes an obligation of all schools to develop “active citizenship and social integration” since 2006, but how this should be done is not specified. One reason for the unspecified program is the freedom of schools to decide on curriculum (see introduction). Another is that there is no consensus amongst politicians, educational experts and school organizations about the aim of citizenship education (Veugelers 2010) and whether there is a need for governmental prescriptions of its content (Peschar et al 2010: 323).

Ideals for Citizenship Education are related to different views on the nature of citizenship. Several typologies of citizenship are possible. A typology of citizenship which can be directly connected to the views of politicians and practitioners on citizenship education is one developed by Veugelers (2006) (Nieuwelink 2008). It is roughly based on Durkheim’s principles of moral behaviour: discipline, attachment to the group and autonomy (Veugelers 2007: 106) and offers a threefold distinction of citizenship ideals:

1. The community-oriented, adapting citizen. In this perspective, norms and values are created within a group, community or society. The internalisation of these norms is the core objective of citizenship education. Discipline and social awareness are core values.
2. The individualist, autonomous citizen. The objective for citizenship

⁸¹ Expert interview 2

⁸² “Korten islamitische school As Siddieq mocht niet” in *De Volkskrant*, March 30 2010.

education in this perspective is to create autonomous citizens who have developed an independent attitude and an individual identity, through cognitive development.

Discipline and autonomy are core values.

3. The critical-democratic, socially oriented citizen. Citizenship education must teach children critical reflection on society's structures, and stimulate the development of attitudes which will increase emancipation and equal rights.

Autonomy and social awareness are core values.

The different perspectives are of various interest for the actors in citizenship education. The documents from the Ministry of Education for example in which the Law is explained, are framed to assume that CE must be adaptive and community-oriented. We refer to this style of framing as Identity-Adaptive. The words “active citizenship” and “social integration” are regarded by the Minister as

“the willingness and the ability to be a part of the community and to contribute to it actively” (MOCW: 2005)

Social integration is defined as:

“part-taking of citizens into society, by means of social participation, taking part in society and its institutions and familiarity with and involvement in expressions of Dutch culture” (MOCW: 2005).

The Minister added she wishes to increase social cohesion as well as give “the Dutch culture” a central position (SLO/ Bron: 2006). In this example the 'identity' which is important is that of “the Dutch culture”. The choice of words suggests that there is only one culture in the Netherlands.

Denominational school stakeholders frame their statements in a slightly different, but also community-oriented approach. In their view, there are several communities with several norms and values; the view tends towards pillarization (*verzuiling*). A lector from a Reformed institution for Higher Education, states that

“it is important that the motivation for things such as democracy, tolerance, justice, decency and such are drawn from one's own personal life stance” (Vos 2006)

In this view, the state should not wish to install moral values, as (religious) communities can provide these better. This relates to the views of the Dutch politician, statesman and theologian Kuyper (1837-1920) who argued in favor of “sovereignty in one's own circle” (see also Vermeulen 2004: 48).

The second perspective is associated with conservative, liberal, or libertarian views, but also social scientists may favor this view. Pedagogue Van der Ploeg expresses his views on citizenship education, with autonomy and individualism as its core objective, and its tension with orthodox-religious schools in the following way:

“The democracy must guarantee that principles as freedom, equality and tolerance do not become self-destructive, and therefore cannot heed too much to life views and life practices which express illiberty, inequality and intolerance [...] To condition children in such a way that they are no longer able or willing to participate in society, and thus retreat, is the same as exclusion, and therefore unacceptable.” (Van der Ploeg, 1999)

The third approach is being expressed by many social scientists who are involved with education. Veugelers, who provided the threefold distinction, explicitly states he believes the third approach is the one which should be implemented in citizenship education. He also stresses that this educational aim is in tension with the dominant (political) discourse on citizenship education:

“[...] (T)he public and political discourse is full of worry about the moral, political and social development of many youngsters [...]. Integration instead of emancipation is the dominant discourse [...]. We favor a critical-democratic kind of citizenship.” (Veugelers 2007: 116)

Students should therefore learn to “position themselves with respect to important ideological, social and cultural traditions”, and “acquire an understanding of the development of norms and be able to try out the development of norms in the school and in out-of-school learning activities” (Veugelers 2007: 117).

In the following paragraph, we explore whether these values can be found in the intended, implemented, and attained curriculum, and how they relate to tolerance. Different visions about CE are likely to be connected with different views on what tolerance is, and how students may acquire this attitude.

3.2.2 Policy makers and the intended curriculum

In 2006, the SLO (National Foundation for Curriculum Development) was commissioned to explore the implementation of CE. The SLO created a panel of educational experts, scientists and school representatives from different denominations and school types, to further reflect on possibilities for implementation. Their findings and recommendations were presented in the SLO-document “A foundation for citizenship. An exploration of content for foundational education” (*Een basis voor burgerschap*) (SLO/Bron: 2006). In this document, the key objectives of Dutch CE were explored. CE could, for example, be incorporated in the existing curricula of Study of Society, History, Geography, Dutch Language and Religious Education. The implementation was “left to the schools” (Bron and Thijs: 2011).

The Inspectorate created a frame of reference for their control, called “*Toezichtkader*”, in which the requirements were specified that they would judge schools by. The main target of inspection is whether or not “the school has a vision on CE and integration, and has a plan-wise approach to implement this in the curriculum” (Dijkstra et al: 2010: 32).

The SLO document offers a separate chapter with recommendations from their expert panel. It reflects the difference of opinions by several stake-holders of education roughly across the lines of Veugelers. The fact that the government has not created detailed prescriptions for a citizenship education is considered positive, but there are also some remarks which can be summarized as follows (Bron 2006: 54):

- researchers: there is a lack in the development of critical attitudes and independent views regarding society
- representatives of school organizations felt that the schools should be left completely in control over their choice of citizenship education
- teachers and school principals argued that the time and expenses needed for implementation, especially within the (overburdened) curriculum was not accounted for.

In the remarks and recommendations, researchers typically express their wishes from a Critical-Democratic perspective, whereas school representatives tend to frame their concerns from the Identity-Adaptive perspective. The teachers simply seem to request a workable situation without referring to any moral or ideological perspective. Yet, the position-taking of teachers may be crucial, when moral education is concerned. Precisely because the implementation is “left to the schools” (Bron and Thijs 2011) and the schools themselves often fail to create a coherent approach (Peschar et al 2010: 290) teachers effectively shape the actual curriculum (Veugelers et al. 2008). Therefore, we will now take a closer look at the implementation of CE and possible attitudes of teachers towards acceptance, tolerance, and intolerance.

3.2.3 Schools, teachers and practice of the curriculum

A survey amongst secondary school teachers revealed that 55% percent of the teachers of courses which would cater for CE were not involved with CE. Of these teachers, 45 % understood little to nothing about what the government demanded with regard to CE (Hansma et al 2008). Moreover, students complained of not knowing what they were supposed to learn (SCO Kohnstamm).

The implemented curriculum of CE can be regarded as an unsystematic combination of approaches. (Bron and Thijs: 2010; 127). A statement from the Inspectorate reveals that this situation

makes it hard to judge whether or not the students have been successful in attaining the desired competencies. “A risk is that schools fill their requirements with coincidental, more or less relevant activities which are now being presented as ‘citizenship education’. In such a patchwork-approach schools don’t offer a coherent curriculum and they don’t work towards explicitly established goals” (Inspectorate of Education: 2010; Bron and Thijs: 2010: 109). At the level of implemented curriculum we thus notice that the three perspectives of Veugelers cannot be identified clearly, because schools offer an inconsistent set of programs and lessons. This inconsistency means that several of the perspectives, and perhaps others, influence the implementation simultaneously. The conflicting aims lead to the seeming absence of any perspective.

Vocational schools more often teach from a social adaptive perspective with little room for political reflection, whereas higher education offers more opportunity for debate and critical-democratic learning (Maslowski 2010). Some researchers argue that this division between school types recreates current social class differences in which the higher educated are taught to influence and rule society, and lower educated are taught to be good obedient citizens (Maslowski 2010: 16; Nieuwelink 2008). Thus, the first perspective of Veugelers is more common in vocational schools, and the third is more common in higher education.

Because a lack of cohesion at the school level, values of teachers may be most influential on the practice of citizenship education and teaching tolerance. Teachers may take different values into account and these may have different consequences for (teaching) tolerance (Versteegt 2010).

In our empirical research, the teachers were in general more positive about CE than the experts. One expert, who is associated with the Inspectorate, refused to give his opinion on CE and indicated that it was simply “assigned by the law” and must therefore be executed by schools. The other expert who also works as a school advisor, said that his impression is that not all school inspectors take CE into account when they visit the school. “So when you go into a school, one may say: the Inspectorate has recently said that CE is going well in our school, and the other school says, they didn’t ask about it.”

Both experts wished to remain (professionally) ‘neutral’ on the (negative or positive) influence that the associational freedom of schools, notably Article 23, has on the implementation of CE. Both experts however described problems with the implementation. The problems were outlined as a combination of “lack of expertise, lack of teaching materials, complexity of the subject, overburdened teaching programs⁸³”, as well as “different views about what should be taught, especially between parents and teachers⁸⁴”. The latter problem was by the expert linked to different views about “xenophobia and prejudice”. Teachers too expressed ideological difference across the lines of prejudiced views of parents, versus a Critical-Democratic approach by teachers and schools. If their students used xenophobic language, which the teachers wanted to correct, they felt “as if you can hear the parents speak⁸⁵”.

In general, teachers felt CE should prepare students for living in a multicultural society. One expert said CE must provide experiences in order to change attitudes. Good practice is, according to this expert: “anything where students may have dialogue and debate in the classroom⁸⁶”.

All respondents agreed that teaching tolerance is an intrinsic part of CE. When asked what they feel tolerance is, they answered “recognizing and accepting diversity from a principle of equality⁸⁷”, “openness and willingness to understand⁸⁸”, “respect and refraining from prejudice⁸⁹”, “non-discrimination and understanding⁹⁰”. One teacher was critical of teaching tolerance, as she

⁸³ Expert interview, page 10-11

⁸⁴ Expert interview 4, page 11

⁸⁵ Teacher interview 5

⁸⁶ Expert interview 1, page 8

⁸⁷ Expert interview 1, page 3

⁸⁸ Teacher interview 2, page 9

⁸⁹ Teacher interview 3, page 3

⁹⁰ Expert interview 4, page 8

associated it with justifying bad behaviour, and she instead preferred “combating negative stereotypes and prejudice⁹¹”.

Teachers and also experts express their wish to go *against* popular discourse in Dutch politics. One expert, who has been involved with the Key Document from SLO, states that they have tried to include a more Critical-Democratic approach: “On one hand you have the element of integration and adaptation within the civic domain, but you also have the critical, the democratic. We have tried to put that aspect into it as well, even though the law doesn't mention it so explicitly⁹²”. He also felt that “...the focus on democracy, critical opinion-development, human rights, should be added more and get more emphasis⁹³”. A teacher said: “Especially NOW with this political climate, I feel it is very important that these children learn they should not immediately reject what they don't know⁹⁴”.

3.2.4 Possibilities for (in)tolerance in Citizenship Education

Taking the threefold typology of citizenship from Veugelers as our starting point, the three perspectives may provide different justifications to teach tolerance. From an Identity-adaptive approach, the group norm may be to be tolerant and respectful. The Individual-autonomy approach may look at self-interest and the Golden Rule as a justification for tolerance, as mutual tolerance increases freedom for the individual and creates opportunities for autonomous choices. In the third perspective, that of Critical-Democratic values, tolerance is required to achieve equality and emancipation.

However, the three perspectives also imply different boundaries for tolerance. In the first perspective, Identity-adaptive, the strain on tolerance increases when the ‘social cohesion’ which citizenship education must facilitate, is no longer regarded as referring to plural (cultural, religious, political) identities, but to a singular (national, Dutch) identity. The intolerance associated with deviation from in-group norms, which is common in subcultures, will now apply to all citizens - with the consequence that “if you don't like it, you can leave (the country)”. A second aspect is that tolerance used to be a value linked to Dutch identity. If tolerance itself ceases to be part of *perceived national norms* and national identity, and this perceived normative identity is instead replaced with secular values, orthodox groups are scrutinized for their “lack of integration”. If citizenship education is interpreted as integrating pupils and students into a community of values, whether on the level of the school or the level of the nation, this may reduce tolerance for ‘un-Christian’ or ‘un-Dutch’ values and practices.

The possibility for intolerance in the second perspective (individual-autonomy) lies in its contempt for collective or religiously motivated moral reasoning. If students are requested to become autonomous, liberal thinkers, those students who wish to conform themselves to religious teachings will feel left out. In the third perspective too, the modern bias can prove to undermine tolerance, as it refutes dogmatic thinking and it sees equal treatment as a core moral principle. However, its attention for power structures and its aim for critical thinking may reduce prejudice and thus offer possibilities for increased tolerance, perhaps more so than the other two perspectives (Vogt 1997).

Our research of policy documents and educational recommendations suggests that the Identity-adaptive perspective is mostly expressed in the political debate, and it was found less common in the debate among educational experts. Individual-autonomy and Critical-democratic principles were more prevalent there. This may indicate that there is a discrepancy between the level of policy and that of practice, not only due to the difficulties of implementation, but also because there are different ideologies at work.

⁹¹ Teacher interview 2, page 9

⁹² Expert interview 1, page 3

⁹³ Expert interview, page 5

⁹⁴ Teacher interview, page 3

3.3 Respect2All: the success of an anti-racist program

3.3.1 Introduction

Schools and individual teachers in the Netherlands decide from which perspective they teach CE, and which values are important. In this section, we look more closely at possibilities to increase tolerance through CE. In educational practice, we encountered several concepts of citizenship education and their related interpretations of tolerance. The dominant Identity-Adaptive perspective from a monocultural, nationalistic point of view, seems to be prevalent in politics but less so in educational research and advice. Yet, this view does prevail in denominational school policy, in which the school identity is a means to socialize children. We also expect the Identity-Autonomy and Critical-Democratic perspectives to be used as a frame of reference by teachers and experts. In order to find out more about the ways in which students may learn to be more tolerant, we provide a short overview of empirical research of this topic, mainly based on the findings of sociologist of education Paul W. Vogt (1997).

Vogt states that it is more important to increase tolerance (and eliminate discrimination) as an educational goal, than it is to reduce prejudice. Tolerance he describes as: “putting up with something you fear, do not like, or otherwise have a negative attitude toward; it involves support for the rights and liberties of others and not discriminating against those toward whom you have negative attitudes” (Vogt: 1997: 200; see also the WP2 theoretical report of ACCEPT-Pluralism). According to Vogt, therefore, the opposite of tolerance is not prejudice, but discrimination.

The tendency to discriminate against others, who one dislikes, is common. In-group solidarity can grow quickly and it often coincides with a tendency to discriminate against the out-group. Even though there may sometimes be good reasons to be intolerant (towards violence, for example), there is always an option to tolerate - not discriminate or take action against - the person, group, behaviour or opinion one dislikes. However, the elimination of prejudice also increases the likelihood of tolerance (Vogt 1997: 200)

Among others, cognitive and personality development are means to increase the tendency to tolerate (Vogt: 1997: 204). As religious developmental research shows, the ability to take a relativist position and being able to change perspective (also referred to as “religious plural self”) is associated with tolerant views - regardless whether one is religious or not (Sterkens 2001; Duriez and Hutsebaut 2000; Streib 2001; Versteeg 2010).

The ways in which education, under certain conditions, may improve tolerance, are: increased intergroup contact, personality development, cognitive development and various types of citizenship education (Vogt 1997: 202; Sleeter and Grant 2007). Some conditions will increase the effectiveness of teaching tolerance, such as a school climate in which bullying is addressed and which “[...] encourages open discussion and inquiry”, (Vogt: 1997: 209). It is also important that the teacher makes the value explicit, and also salient by his or her behaviour. This might include praising those students who apply the value and punishing those who act against it (Pluymert 2010: 15).

Tolerance can be taught through the regular curriculum or through intervention programs (Vogt 1997: 105). Schools in the Netherlands may use both to implement CE. We now look more closely into an example of an intervention program aimed at increasing tolerance by reducing stigmatization. We chose this intervention program as our topic of interest, because a school which had implemented it, had received much media attention due to a successful turn from an intolerant to a tolerant and even accepting school climate.

3.3.2 The ICA peer training program

Two lobby groups in the Netherlands created an almost unlikely collaboration in order to reduce discrimination and prejudice through education. Alongside, several school organizations and anti-discrimination foundations joined in. This so-called Intercultural Alliance (ICA) consists of:

- CIDI (Centre for Information and Documentation Israel) which combats anti-semitism
- COC (Centre for Leisure and Culture) which combats homophobia and supports homosexual, bisexual, lesbian, transsexual and transgender people in their emancipation
- Several anti-discrimination organizations
- The ISBO, the school organization for Islamic schools

De Besturenraad, an organization for Protestant-Christian schools

The ICA develops trainings and projects in which several types of Vogt's ways to increase tolerance are being used. One of the projects is a secondary school intervention program which uses peer training to educate an entire classroom or school. This peer training program receives funding from the Ministry of VWS (National Health, Wellbeing and Sports).

In the peer training program, behavioural change is more important than attitude change (De Vlas, 2010). After the intervention, students may still dislike homosexuals, Jews and/or Muslims, but they must become aware of their negative attitudes so they can prevent themselves from acting upon them. The aim of the project is to reduce stigmatization and discrimination by linking this social process to the Nazi concentration camps.

The intervention consists of three phases. In the first phase, a selected group of approximately forty students takes a week trip to Poland. They visit the former Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz. In the proximity of the camp, they are trained to reflect upon processes of stigmatization, social exclusion and discrimination. In the second phase, the students return home and teach their fellow students what they have learned in five days training sessions. The third phase is a symposium on freedom and democracy, organized in association with the National Committee 4th and 5th of May (for the national Second World War commemoration).

The ICA project, alongside other Dutch intervention programs, has shown to be effective in increasing tolerance (De Vlas, 2010) and acceptance. After taking part in the program, students of a Reformed secondary school said that they have learned to:

- recognize intolerant thoughts
- think before acting or talking
- find information about, or approach and talk with a disliked person.

Through the training, students had changed their behaviour, but not necessarily their intolerant thoughts (De Vlas 2010: 53). In some cases, their beliefs had changed somewhat, leading to increased acceptance (ACCEPT II). If intolerance was related to faith, such as in ideas about homosexuality, there had been little increased acceptance, but there was increased minimal tolerance (ACCEPT I). For example, a student recalled when the preacher in her church mentioned "there are no faggots here", she had objected to his choice of words in public and also questioned the absence of homosexual church members (De Vlas 2010: 50).

3.3.3 Respect2All and teacher's experiences

In our description of the teachers' accounts, we also compare two schools. The first school we refer to as 'R2A', which is an abbreviation of Respect2All, the name of the intervention project of ICA which was implemented at the school. Two teachers (interview 2 and 3) are staff members of the R2A secondary school, which received some media attention. Initially, the school was in the news negatively, because of riots and violence between its students and groups of Turkish and Moroccan youth⁹⁵. In a TV program⁹⁶, some students of the schools were interviewed. They adhered to right-wing extremist positions. One of the students showed a neo-nazi outfit, posters of Adolf Hitler in his bedroom and several books on Nazi warfare. He expressed himself as anti-Muslim and his political preference was PVV (although he stated that his exact preference was not represented in the Netherlands). The father of this young boy said he did not approve of his son's political views. The school director expressed his worries about the school climate. Later, the school received media coverage after the Respect2All project resulted in higher scores in anti-discrimination support among the school youth⁹⁷.

The second school is labelled 'CTRL' for 'control'. The school serves as a comparison to the R2A school, as it has some similar features. These are: an open, Christian school identity, and a predominantly white school population of rural background, with intolerant views towards Muslims.

⁹⁵ *De Gelderlander* January 18, 2008: "(Name school) schrikt van radicalisering"

⁹⁶ *Prentime* December 17, 2008

⁹⁷ *De Gelderlander* December 04, 2009 "Fraai eerherstel voor (name school)"
and *Trouw* April 22, 2010: Students learn how to handle diversity"

The chosen policy for citizenship education at ‘CTRL’ is quite different. The teacher indicated with interview 5 is a staff member at the CTRL school.

3.3.3.1 School population and identity

The R2A school describes itself on its website as “wishing to offer youth from the age of 12 - with various life convictions and cultural backgrounds - a general and vocational personality development so they can find their place in society”. The website also states that the school “actively fights discrimination” and it has achieved the official status of ‘One’ school - a school where more than 70% of students and teachers are supportive of article One of the Dutch Constitution which addresses discrimination and equality. With this firm anti-discrimination statement and focus on personality development, the R2A school positions itself between an Identity-Autonomy and Critical-Democratic perspective.

The CTRL school is referring to an Identity-Adaptive approach with traces of Critical-Democratic: they wish to let students become aware of who they are and what they can mean to others. “[CTRL] is a Christian school [...]. Openness and respect for everyone's convictions are central. We approach each other peacefully and fairly. Our education is shaped from a Biblical perspective. We see our school as a community in which there is room for everybody, regardless culture, religion or nationality”.

The Inspectorate online reports of these schools do not mention CE in any way and simply state that both the school R2A and school CTRL have good results which justify a low-profile inspection.

In descriptions from both R2A teachers and the CTRL teacher, their school was described as ‘white’. Teacher 2 (R2A) says that “the problem originates from the fact that we are not a multicultural school [...]. The students can develop these ideas in a certain direction because they do not get corrections from within their peer group. [...]. *[The school, IV/MM]* is not representative for the current society anyway”. The school population's intolerant and prejudiced attitudes are described as having changed thoroughly due to several implemented intervention programs, of which the ICA program may have been crucial. Teacher 3 relates dealing with cultural diversity to CE: “we are a white school and if we don't do anything about it, I feel we don't prepare our students well to the society as it is right now.”

Teacher 5 refers to his school as “open Christian”. There are some “specific problems”, because “you see very little allochtonous *[students, IV/MM]* in the school” and “parents are rather racist”. The reasons for a lack of allochtonous students is “we are a Christian school, it scares hem off” and the fact that “it is forbidden to wear headscarves in this school”. The “intolerance towards foreigners” he considers important issue which he should address in CE, although he also thinks that “its fighting against all odds”.

There is considerable difference in the described severity of the problem with right-wing extremist youth between teachers of R2A and CTRL. Where teachers 2 and 3 of R2A stated the problem was very big and had to be addressed, the teacher 5 of CTRL says there is “quite a lot of intolerance, but not in an extreme way”. It is unclear whether this is related to teacher's perceptions and evaluations, or actual differences between the two schools' populations. The R2A school however did have some problems with fights and riots, whereas similar reports have not been found about the CTRL school. When asked if there are any right-wing extremists in his school, teacher 5 indicates this is not the case. However, he reports very intolerant views of his students towards Muslims. The class was taken to the Parliament. Afterwards, “of course we voted here, but then every time PVV came out *[as the biggest party, IV/MM]* for classes 2, 3 and 4”.

3.3.3.2 The school's experiences with the ICA program

The project of ICA called Respect 2 All was initiated because of the growing right-wing extremists in the R2A school. A teacher of Religious Education and Study of Society was the first one to notice: “When they have very right-wing ideas, and they are not at all open to the multicultural society [...] well in Study of Society and Religious Education, this becomes very apparent in the classroom”[...]. The teacher thus initiated her own project to address these issues, but “it was not solved with a little film and classroom debate”. Soon “my colleagues became startled, they said: “this is so big [...] we need help”. The teacher (2) went through lengths to find a project and appropriate funding to

implement an intervention project aimed at reducing prejudice by awareness. “Students who come along are trained to become peer-trainer, so they can teach what they have learned to their fellow students”⁹⁸.

The developments in the R2A intervention project are told by teacher 2 in a very dramatic narrative. The impact of the project “completely reversed the situation here”, she says. First there were neo-nazi students with a large peer group of students who were attracted to their “coolness”, and intolerant views were part of the group’s identity. “It was ‘cool’ to have a bomber coat, flags, army boots, rolled up trousers, the whole shebang of signals that stated: I don’t tolerate it, and they [...] should all get out”. It was difficult to influence the students’ beliefs: “but Miss, we can discuss this, but this is my opinion, and my dad thinks so too and so does our neighbor and my uncle, I am not changing my view because you have some opinion.” Moreover, living in bad neighborhoods reinforced their negative stereotypes: “you see one Moroccan steal your bike in front of you, and another Moroccan breaks your neighbor’s windows [...] it just gets into your system”.

According to the teacher, “it was necessary that something was done to the terrible stereotypes and prejudice. And what we did was, provide the students with an intensive training of two weeks [...]. As part of the training we took them to Auschwitz to show what happens if you systematically exclude people [...] to such extent that you don’t allow them to live anymore”. Students on the trip became “aware of the process of stigmatization and prejudice”. A girl who wore a bomber coat and who had a neo-nazi boyfriend, was “crying for days, and she said: ‘How could I be so wrong? How could I possibly think like that?’ [...] She really turned 180 degrees.”

As a result, “those students who had come along simply would not tolerate it anymore. The twenty we took with us, they would address these army boots simply!” The peer trainers “...showed films about Auschwitz and how terrible it was what they saw there, and everyone agreed, because what happened to the Jews is terrible.” The peer-educators then linked the Holocaust to stigmatization and prejudice in general: “But did the little Jewish boy do anything wrong? No, no of course not! And then they can slowly make the step towards “and Mohammed, is it his fault that Ishmael smashed your neighbor’s windows? [...] So they can understand that process, that not every Moroccan is a bike-stealer, or a window-smasher.”

As a model of explanation, students introduced the “Pyramid of hatred” versus the “Pyramid of love and peace”. At the bottom of the Pyramid of hatred is placed ‘exclusion’, at the second level there is ‘violence’ and the top level is ‘genocide’. Debates started in the classroom between the neo nazi students and their peer trainers: “You can’t say: we must shoot all the Turks through their heads! Do you realize what you are saying?”

Because the “most severe cases” left the school, and the intervention changed the style of debate in the classroom, “it was suddenly cool to have been there”. Many students had never travelled abroad and “it was very special to make the trip and Auschwitz is really an intriguing place for them.”

Teacher 2 was “shocked with the large amount of influence you have” when you “take [*students, IV*] away from their natural environment and you start drilling them“. She noticed that “you bring them home completely changed”.

Teacher 3 expresses this change with the fact that the school became a ‘One’ school, by signing they agreed with Article One of the Dutch constitution. Of students and teachers, 85% signed this document in the first year. The past year, however “One class didn’t want to sign because it was somehow cool not to participate”, but teachers managed to change some student’s minds, by relating the topic to bullying and whether they wanted protection from that or not.

Contrarily, teacher 5 of the CTRL school tells a different story, in which possibilities for change of his students’ attitudes are scrutinized, due to the complexity of the problem and due to respect for the students’ autonomy. Many of his comments express this: “We tried, but it did not catch on” and “what you notice is that it is very difficult to tackle” or “it is fighting against the odds”. He recalls talking with an expert on the topic of prejudice, and the expert confirmed these views: “it is basically impossible [...] you can barely address it”. Teacher 5 frames the students’ attitudes more in

⁹⁸ Teacher 3, page 2

terms of what they *are* then in how they behave: “they are white, average farmers [...] and what they don’t know, they will not accept”.

Also, he believes the situation is “rather complex” and it is difficult to find a solution. One of the difficulties is that the views students express the opinions they have heard from their parents: “you just hear the parents speak [...] they take it all from home”. He finds some space to “break through that” and “expand their life view” by debates. He thinks that he should not oppose the views of the students too much, because “they are allowed to have their own views [...] are allowed to think for themselves and have any opinion actually”. The only thing he can do is “provide them with knowledge so they have a better foundation for their opinions” and “know there are other parties besides PVV”. However, when he is informed throughout the interview about the R2A project at the other school, he is interested to find out more. He asks for more information, he says he will look into websites and also expresses his enthusiasm: “this sounds nice”, and “this rather helps me”.

3.3.3.3 Practical issues related to implementation of CE

At R2A, both teachers are very committed to changing prejudice and increasing tolerance. But for them, the ICA project was related to CE only afterwards. “I do things which may be categorized as CE but more because of the issues, because we needed it here”, said teacher 2. “As a school you say, okay, what do we do, and how can we assign it, and then we simply put it in that box and you say: we are doing well [*with CE, IV/MM*]”.

At CTRL, the teacher is more blunt. When asked about CE, he says: “We actually don’t do that”. He “wondered why” he “never heard anything about what he should do”. The only thing he heard was that there “is a leaflet about it somewhere, I believe. It was thrown in a box, but...” When asked if the Inspectorate has already checked them for CE, he says he does not know. Yet, the school partakes in several projects which could be “labeled under CE if you like”. He summarizes this and says, “I would say we are inclined not to do it, but when the Inspectorate comes, we do have some story to tell, you understand?” The projects he mentions are: visiting Mosques and Hindu temples, debate, student parliament, student elections, and a European exchange program with three other schools. The reasons why CE at the CTRL-school has not been implemented at a structural level can thus be summarized as: a lack of information and knowledge about CE by the teacher, a lack of urgency expressed from the school leaders and no known Inspectorate checks of the school on this issue.

The continuation of projects such as Respect 2 All is not safeguarded, according to teachers 2 and 3. One problem was that “you only have a limited amount of money and a limited amount of hours to divide, and limited amount of teachers, so somewhere something has to be taken off”. Teacher 2 also added that her teaching hours are currently being cut, due to “a lot of emphasis on language and math”. Moreover, it had been very difficult to find the ICA project. “I had to move heaven and earth to find the place to go to”. She turned to contacts of her previous job at the government and her contact person said, “I believe most of these projects are no longer funded”. Despite the official governmental concern for extremist developments in schools, she had to “search like a maniac for funding”. She feels that there should be easier access to information and funding if schools have a serious problem.

3.4 Conclusion

Despite the Dutch Government’s attempt to install assimilationist values in CE, the experiences from teachers and experts in our research suggest that these values barely influence the actual curriculum and classroom practice. The reasons are both ideological and practical.

Ideologically, the Identity-Adaptive approach which is dominant in the political discourse related to the law for CE is not carried out at the lower levels of implementation. Educational experts involved with creating practical frame-works for schools, as well as NGOs who create programs, often work from a Critical-Democratic perspective and are opposing the Identity-Adaptive ideals. Thus, while the government may envision CE to increase integration of ill-adapted Muslim youth into “Dutch norms and values”, school programs may instead try to reduce the negative stereotype regarding Islam and reduce prejudice among the ‘white’ youth. Researchers and experts involved with implementation are actively bending the policy in this direction.

On the practical side, another reason for the assimilationist approach not setting foot in the classroom is that CE gets little priority. There is no money or time available, it has no book or method, and most of it is left to the schools. Schools develop incoherent, patch-work curricula that suffice for Inspectorate checks and then leave it to the individual teacher. The Inspectorate's checks are sporadic and only focus on paper work, not on practices or results. The individual teacher may thus approach Citizenship from his or her own ideological perspective, awareness and creativity.

Due to teachers' lack of knowledge about the possibilities of CE, and financial and agenda-related constraints, the implementation still is stagnating. However, the framework of CE does provide possibilities to address problems which may occur in the school population, regarding intolerance or lack of accepting diversity. The project Respect2All which we described was carried out as a part of the school's obligation to offer CE. It increased social awareness and reduced prejudice and the tendency to discriminate, among a predominantly lower-class, white school population. The freedom of education thus creates opportunities to teach tolerance, because it allows for deviation from the dominant political ideology.

Concluding Remarks

In this conclusion we first return to the conceptual framework of our project. Tolerance is usually defined as “putting up with something one disagrees with” (Forst 2000). It requires the ability (power) to do something against it, but deciding not to act upon it in order to avoid conflict or other negative outcomes (Vogt 1997). Current research suggests there is a decline of tolerance in Europe. The main target of this growing intolerance are (migrant) communities categorized as Muslims. It is being argued that in European societies “there has been too much leniency, too much accommodation and too little insistence on shared values.” (Dobbernack and Modood 2011: 8). However, as the Dutch case studies demonstrate, the search for shared liberal-secular values makes it more difficult for all orthodox religious groups (Christian ones amongst them) to live their lives and operate their institutions and organizations according to their interpretation of the Scriptures.

Decreasing tolerance for orthodox Christian and Islamic groups

Despite the fact that both Muslim schools and Reformed schools are a very small minority in the Dutch educational system, they continue to draw negative attention in the media and politics. Even though there is little political support to abolish the dual system in which governmental and non-governmental schools are funded equally, there is wider support for the idea that religious schools should be controlled more intensely by creating laws to ensure liberal norms in all schools, for example by compulsory acceptance of all teachers and students who wish to be part of the school - regardless their religious background or sexual orientation.

The principals of Reformed and Islamic schools that we interviewed expressed a concern about existing stereotypes and misconceptions about their schools. On a local level, principals of Islamic schools and to a lesser extent, principals of Reformed schools say they experience indirect forms of obstruction as well as threats. Nevertheless, there are also important differences with respect to the negative views of these schools. Islamic schools are more often perceived as outsiders and they are often not seen as Dutch schools, whereas Reformed schools are associated with the Dutch “in-group”. The Dutch Reformed are seen as a small group which has an established, though exceptional, position in Dutch society. Incidents at Reformed schools are often framed as a result of conservatism and are met with shrugging of shoulders, such as when Reformed school girls were turning to the municipality because they were not allowed to wear trousers on their bicycle ride to school in the freezing cold.⁹⁹ Muslims, by contrast, are perceived as an out-group in terms of ethnicity, nationality *and* religion and are continually scrutinized regarding their level of integration. Islamic schools are called upon to do their best to prepare children for “Dutch society” and in the case of Muslim immigrants orthodoxy is commonly seen as a sign of non-integration.

In the light of these diverging views of both schools we found interesting differences between conceptions of tolerance and recognition among Reformed and Islamic school principals. Principals of Reformed schools wanted their schools to be positively recognized as a part of Dutch society and objected to the image of their schools as “abnormal” or “isolationist”. However, the concept of tolerance also plays an important role for the way the Reformed view their position in Dutch society. Even though the majority may disapprove of the ideas and ways of living of the Reformed, they feel they have a right to exist and not to be discriminated against. To them tolerance means they should have the opportunity to live according to their convictions and rules, also in the domain of education. For Islamic schools this appears to be different. Muslims are not (yet) an established religious minority and are still fighting for the right to be seen as normal and Dutch (i.e. not “foreign”). At Islamic schools the management seems to be primarily concerned with improving the performance of the school, both in terms of teaching and in terms of management.

The debate about Reformed and Islamic schools deals with defining whether some of their practices and regulations are beyond what is tolerable in a liberal-democratic society. The most sensitive issue in this respect is when these schools select pupils or staff in such a way that they violate norms of equal treatment and non-discrimination. Some Reformed schools want to be able to refuse

⁹⁹ “Verplicht koude benen” *NOS Headlines* January 9 2009,.

teachers because of their sexual orientation, because of their civil status (e.g. being divorced) or because of their religion. There is less and less understanding for religious schools discriminating in this way, first, because they are faith-based organizations that employ regular personnel (i.e. teachers) and not core religious organizations (such as churches) that employ religious personnel, second, because they are publicly financed, and, third, because as educational institutions they should exemplify, not violate, key legal norms, such as non-discrimination. More complex is the discussion about whether a religious school can demand that teachers “subscribe” to the religious identity of the school, agree to execute the school’s teaching program (also if it goes against their own views) and refrain from expressing aspects of their own identity or ideas (e.g. with regard to sexuality or religion) and discussing these with the students. The principals of Reformed schools we interviewed often expressed the fear that this imposition of secular-liberal norms runs the risk of reducing the associational freedoms of schools. For them, a school has a fundamental right not to accept certain people and practices in its midst, if they violate norms and values that are in their view constitutive of their religious community. “Tolerance” remains an important trope for these groups because they argue that the fact they deviate strongly from some of the mainstream norms still obliges that majority to tolerate them, even if it is with “gritted teeth” (Bader 2007).

Teaching citizenship and conceptions of tolerance

In the Netherlands the general and increasing insistence on defending “shared values” has been associated strongly with a call for citizenship education. Citizenship education should help install liberal-democratic values in children and teach them about the norms enshrined in the Dutch constitution and in mainstream, so-called liberal-secular society. To analyze different perspective on citizenship and citizenship education we made use of a typology distinguishing between

1. an adaptive approach (that focuses on teaching “the” shared values of a society),
2. an approach emphasizing the development of autonomous citizens (that focuses on teaching independent judgement and autonomy) and
3. a critical democratic approach (that focuses on teaching critical reflection and social awareness).

Building on this typology the case study showed that whereas the “adaptive approach” and the presumed need to teach about Dutch cultural values and Dutch history, was important in putting citizenship education on the political agenda, it was quickly diverted in the policy process. Researchers and experts involved with the implementation actively are bending citizenship education in the direction of trying to increase debate, critical thinking and reducing prejudice, far more than aiming to teach “Dutch norms and values”. The experts we interviewed underlined that in order for citizenship education to be successful in increasing social coherence, schools should not just teach tolerance but they should *practice* tolerance and clearly focus on non-discrimination. They also stressed that the implementation of European curriculum requirements with regard to Human Rights Education as well as Anti-Racist Education must become effective as soon as possible. This most urgently is needed for the lower-class “white” pupils, as international and national research shows a decline in civic competencies and knowledge among this Dutch group in particular.

Another main finding from our study into the implementation of citizenship education in the Netherlands in relation to efforts to teach tolerance, is that citizenship education gets little priority and that there is a lack of money and time available. Schools develop patch-work curricula that suffice for Inspectorate checks and the individual teacher may approach citizenship teaching from his or her own perspective and creativity. On the more positive side, the framework of citizenship education and the obligation to “do something” provides opportunities to address problems that may occur in schools regarding intolerance or a lack of acceptance of diversity. The project Respect2All that we analyzed was an example of good practice and helped to increase awareness and reduce prejudice. Finally, we have observed that the freedom of education and the autonomy of schools to decide on their curriculum hinder a stricter top-down implementation of a curriculum for citizenship education. Educational goals and requirements remain vague also in order to allow schools to decide themselves on what exactly they want to teach.

Embodiment of tolerance in everyday school practice

Our case studies have shown that in order to present everyday forms of embodiment of tolerance in discourses and practices in Dutch schools we need to go beyond the sometimes alarmist tone of public debate. In our interviews, we found school principals who are able to negotiate between educational goals, religious dogma and more pragmatic concerns. In a context of increased public scrutiny religious schools navigate between more strict and more liberal interpretations of religious identity and its relationship with school policy. Examples are discussions between school management, school boards, teachers and parents about the content of religious education, about dress codes, acceptance of homosexual teachers and pupils and teaching about sexuality.

The same can be said of citizenship education. The call in the political debate for more morality, more respect in schools and better integration into Dutch norms is not met with necessary funding or educational demands, and thus seems to be mere lip service. Educational reformers and researchers who criticize the lack of governmental guidelines fail to see how it enables them to implement a different, more critical-democratic type of citizenship education.

In both cases, the Dutch Freedom of Education and notably Article 23 create a considerable amount of autonomy for schools to create and redefine boundaries of tolerance. On a school level, associational autonomy becomes contested when it leads to discriminatory practices. On the level of the classroom, the autonomy of students is taken into account and some teachers doubt to what extent they are allowed to scrutinize the political views of their students, or influence their attitudes.

Key messages for educators and policy makers

We distinguish between policy recommendations addressed at the national audience (including schools) and those more generally applicable to a European audience. The first key messages are intended for educators and policy makers in the Netherlands. The last key message is intended for European policy makers.

1. Address stereotypes and discrimination

A liberal-democratic society should respect the freedom of education and accommodate (orthodox) religious schools. There is a general need to correct the stereotypical image of religious schools, especially when this image is contrasted to an idealized view of the French “*école publique*” or the American “common school”. Yet this does not imply uncritical accommodation. On the one hand, it is legitimate that Reformed schools and Islamic schools, like all educational institutions, encounter public scrutiny and that practices of discrimination are condemned. On the other hand, religious groups and schools may face discrimination, stigmatization or even violence from the larger society. Both problems need to be addressed and carefully balanced when tolerance is our main concern.

2. Protect institutional rights

The value of tolerance is deeply enshrined in Dutch institutional arrangements, especially in the domain of education. Even though there are important worthwhile collective goals at stake in Dutch education, notably in relation to social equality and segregation, the institutional guarantees of pluralism should be upheld. A sensible balancing of the liberal principles of non-discrimination and of collective freedoms and associational freedoms is necessary in order to uphold a truly pluralistic society in which there remains room for more orthodox religious groups.

3. Focus (more) on autochthonous students

In the national political debate, there is a basic assumption that migrant youth, notably Muslims, lack citizenship values and democratic attitudes. Although this may be true on an individual level, generally speaking this is not the case. In general, the lower educated, male, autochthonous students have the most negative attitudes towards diversity and the lowest percentage agree with non-discrimination laws (Netjes et al 2011). The governmental recommendation to schools to create citizenship education in collaboration with parents may not solve this problem, as teachers say these student’s attitudes are strongly influenced by those of their parents. The shift from intolerant views towards intolerant behaviour in these students must be carefully monitored and addressed timely.

4. Teach for complexity

Tolerance is not a simple virtue and there are considerable tensions associated with its boundaries. In teaching tolerance, students must be made aware of this complexity and discuss these tensions. Just like the education of tolerance (Vogt 1997: 218) also human rights education should “teach for complexity”. This includes, besides providing knowledge about human rights basic principles and different kinds of human rights, teaching students about the tensions between these rights, and about dilemmas at the practical level. Ensuring that students are able to learn this complexity may require specific didactics, such as debate and deliberation. For such debates to be successful and cognitively challenging, exchange programs between schools that lack diversity of the student population in their level of education, religion and/or political preferences should be stimulated.

5. Provide funding and minimal educational guidelines

Even though the declared ambitions of citizenship are high, the actual amount of money and opportunities does not match them. Citizenship education has to some extent become a “paper construction” in which schools present what they do in order to be able to give account to the Inspectorate, but without having a consistent and specified approach. On the other hand a project such as Respect2All with its peer-group intervention shows the value of actively “teaching tolerance”. The freedom of education protects the autonomy of schools to give shape to their citizenship education programs. National guidelines and educational goals should therefore remain minimal but precise. Given the value of local initiatives there should be a bundling of a variety of possible projects and approaches, possibly to be found on a website, so that schools need not re-invent what has already been developed and can make use of things that suit their agenda.

At a more general European level our research leads to a more general recommendation:

6. Minimal tolerance as educational aim

Citizenship education programs should not be overloaded with ambitions and goals that, most of the time, are inherently ambiguous and inconsistent. They should not demand too much, because if they do they lose their effectiveness. It is better to define minimal norms that are specific. The aim of learning forms of minimally decent behaviour in schools (fighting bullying, active discrimination, racism) should be paramount, alongside broader cognitive goals such as education in human rights through debate.

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APPENDIX

Interview guide Case Study 1 (translated from Dutch) Reformed and Islamic schools

In the following interview, which will last approximately one hour, I will ask you about the meaning of tolerance for [Reformed/Islamic] education. The interview is taking place in the context of an international comparative research about tolerance. The research, in which 15 countries are compared, is called ACCEPT Pluralism. It focusses on policy and debates on tolerance for religious and cultural diversity. One of the themes within the research is education.

In the Dutch research team we chose in the theme of education to do two short case studies: one about the debate relating to freedom of education for religiously-orthodox schools, and one about the way tolerance is being implemented in citizenship education. You are a respondent for the first case study, into tolerance for religious orthodox education. In these interviews, principals of [Reformed/Islamic] schools are asked about their experiences with tolerance and intolerance from politics and Dutch society, and from within the school itself. Comparable experiences will be asked to teachers of Islamic schools. The questionnaires for both groups of principals are almost identical.

The answers you will provide in this interview, will be treated confidentially. This means that your answers will be anonymised, that the sound recording will be destructed and the court finding will only be used for this research. Do you have any questions, before we start the interview?

I will start with some general questions.

General

1. How would you describe the school or schools of which you are principal? What kind of pupils attend the school (religious background, ethnic, socio-cultural backgrounds). Do pupils travel from far? What type of secondary education do they generally take afterwards?

2. Could you describe your function at the school?

- whom do you supervise, who supervises you?
- directed to external or internal processes/ people
- personal history/ relation to [Reformed/Islamic] education

Tolerance for [Reformed/Islamic] Education

3. Is there enough room for [Reformed/Islamic] education in the Netherlands? If no, why not? If yes, how come?

4. Can you indicate if you experience enough room in the area of:

- Curriculum?
- Admittance policy of teachers?
- Admittance policy of pupils?
- Authority over dress codes and behaviour?

5. From news papers and media can be assumed that the [Reformed/Islamic] education in the Netherlands is under pressure. Has your school had any experience with such pressure from society or politics? Can you give some examples? What was the origin of the problem?

6. If you get into a situation where you must defend your school or [Reformed/Islamic] education in general, what do you say? What are the most commonly expressed objections? How do you address them?

Debate on tolerance within [Reformed/Islamic] education?

7. Do you think promoting tolerance is a part of [Reformed/Islamic] education? Why/ why not? What does tolerance mean to you? What types of behaviour or groups, you feel, are tolerated too little nowadays?

8. Do you think promoting respect and appreciation for diverse groups in society is a part of [Reformed/Islamic] education? Why/ why not? What does respect mean to you? What types of behaviour or groups, you feel, are getting too little respect nowadays?

9. How do children of this school engage with each other? Do you see certain frictions?

10. How do children of this school engage with pupils from other schools? Do you see certain frictions?

11. There are several ways in which tolerance for difference might be promoted in [Reformed/Islamic] education. Can you indicate, when promoting tolerance, to what extent is being referred to

- [Biblical values/Koran or Hadieth]?
- The [Reformed/Islamic]'s own minority position?
- Democracy, human rights and citizenship?

Boundaries to tolerance

12. You wish to shape and safeguard the [Reformed/Islamic] identity of your school. What do you do when pupils or teachers wish to deter from that? Can you give examples? Who or what decides whether the disputed behaviour is against the school's identity? Who decides what should happen? Did the disputed behaviour get tolerated, forbidden, or respected? How is dealt with differences of opinion on such issues?

13. Which things are really not acceptable for you? Which issues are a source of debate between you and others about the boundaries of tolerance?

Acceptatieplicht

14. In 2010 there was a proposed law in which all schools should accept pupils if parents wish to enrol them. Do you have experience with this debate on 'acceptance-obligation?'. Are you in favor or against the proposed acceptance -obligation? Why?

15. One reason that was mentioned to install acceptance-obligation, is improvement of possibilities for contact and decreasing segregation. [Reformed/Islamic] are said to be segregationalist. Contact between children of different backgrounds may reduce negative ideas about each other. Research shows that [Reformed/Islamic] youth express more negative thoughts about other groups in society such as homosexuals. What is your opinion on this topic of segregation? How do you feel about possibilities for contact, reducing prejudice and preventing violence and aggression?

Position in society

17. What do you feel is the value of non-governmental education? What demands should be made of this type of education? Do you agree with the fact that the government is supporting other schools financially? Where is the boundary for you?

18. After 9-11 and after the murder of Theo van Gogh, almost half of the Islamic schools has had experience with threats, hateful graffiti, arsen or other types of violent acts. Have you heard of similar violent acts directed at your school or other schools of [Reformed/Islamic] denomination, or their pupils?

To all respondents: Case Study 1 and Case Study 2

We have talked in this interview about [freedom of education/ citizenship education] in order to find out more about the meaning of tolerance in the Netherlands. With this we mean tolerance for different opinions and behaviours.

19. Do you feel that tolerance in the Netherlands in the past 20 years has increased or decreased, and why? How would you draw the line between what is acceptable and what is not? Is tolerance going too far in some areas? In what cases would you plea for more tolerance and acceptance?

----- Thank you for your participation-----

**Interview guide Case Study 2:
Tolerance and Citizenship Education (translated from Dutch)**

In the following interview, which will last approximately one hour, I will ask you about the meaning of tolerance for citizenship education. The interview is taking place in the context of an international comparative research about tolerance. The research, in which 15 countries are compared, is called ACCEPT Pluralism. It focusses on policy and debates on tolerance for religious and cultural diversity. One of the themes within the research is education.

In the Dutch research team we chose in the theme of education to do two short case studies: one about the debate relating to freedom of education for religiously-orthodox schools, and one about the way tolerance is being implemented in citizenship education. For both studies, small groups of respondents have been approached. You are a respondent for the second case study, about the implementation of Citizenship Education.

The answers you will provide in this interview, will be treated confidentially. This means that your answers will be anonymised, that the sound recording will be destroyed and the findings will only be used for this research. Do you have any questions, before we start the interview?

In the following conversation, I would like to talk with you about Citizenship Education. I will start with some general questions.

General

1. How would you describe your function and work?
2. How is your work related to Citizenship Education (CE)?

General Citizenship Education

I will proceed with general questions about CE. In 2006, CE was introduced as an obligatory part of the curriculum.

3. What do you think of the notion that a school must provide CE? Which values or ideals should a school adhere to when they provide CE?
4. What educational goals do you associate with CE?

Tolerance and CE

7. Do you think promoting tolerance is a part of CE? Why/ why not? What does tolerance mean to you? What types of behaviour or groups, you feel, are tolerated too little nowadays?
8. Do you think promoting respect and appreciation for diverse groups in society is a part of CE? Why/ why not? What does respect mean to you? What types of behaviour or groups, you feel, are getting too little respect nowadays?

Implementation general

Since 2006, several programs have been developed to teach or promote CE. Schools are free to decide how they integrate CE into their education, whether they assign it to certain subjects, or express it in the entire school policy.

9. How do you think about the way in which CE is being implemented in the Netherlands? Would you like it to change, and if yes, how? Why would you like to change it?
10. Do you feel that the current implementation of CE offers students the right competencies to deal with dilemmas or increase tolerance? If no, what should change?

Exclusively for teachers:

Implementation at school

11. What is done with CE at your school? How do you feel about the way CE is implemented at your school?

12. Do you think the current implementation of CE at your school gives students the right competencies to deal with dilemma's or increase tolerance?

13. Which dilemmas did you encounter when implementing CE? Which choices have been made? How do you reflect on that process of decision-making?

Exclusively for experts:

Policy, debate and implementation

14. In the debate around CE there is reference to the combination of cognitive development and moral development. The cognitive approach focuses on politics, history and state, whereas in moral education tolerance, respect and prevention of prejudice is prioritized. Schools may differ in their approach and emphasize one or the other. There are also differences and similarities with other concepts of education such as intercultural education.

15. How would you describe the political context of CE, comparing to, for example, intercultural education?

16. Can you give examples of successful approaches to CE? What do you feel made this approach successful?

17. To what extent is the Freedom of Education, notably Article 23, preventing or allowing a good implementation of CE?

18. Which dilemmas have you encountered in your work, regarding the implementation of CE?

To all respondents: Case Study 1 and Case Study 2

We have talked in this interview about [freedom of education/ citizenship education] in order to find out more about the meaning of tolerance in the Netherlands. With this we mean tolerance for different opinions and behaviours.

19. Do you feel that tolerance in the Netherlands in the past 20 years has increased or decreased, and why? How would you draw the line between what is acceptable and what is not? Is tolerance going too far in some areas? In what cases would you plea for more tolerance and acceptance?

----- Thank you for your participation-----

List of respondents

Case Study 1 (Reformed and Islamic schools)

Interview 1: Principal of several Reformed schools (male, autochthonous)

Interview 2: Principal of Reformed school (male, autochthonous)

Interview 3: Principal of Islamic school (male, Turkish, Muslim)

Interview 4: Principal of Islamic school (female, autochthonous, non-Muslim)

Interview 5: Principal of Islamic school (male, autochthonous, Muslim)

Interview 6: Principal of Islamic school (male, Surinamese, Muslim)

Case Study 2 (Citizenship Education)

Interview 1: Expert from SLO Foundation for Curriculum Research

Interview 2: Teacher at R2A school

Interview 3: Teacher at R2A school

Interview 4: Expert from Inspectorate for Education

Interview 5: Teacher at CTRL school

