The Netherlands: interventions to counteract school segregation and facilitate integration in education

State of the art paper for
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Introduction

The Netherlands has a history of school segregation with a religious-political tint. In line with a general system of 'pillarization' there were separate public, Catholic and Protestant schools, with all schools equally financed by the government. At the same time, there was segregation along socio-economic lines, both between schools and within schools. With the influx of migrants in the last forty years, ethnicity became part of school segregation. However, socio-ethnic educational segregation has only recently become important on the political agenda.

The centre-left cabinet that held office from February 2007 until February 2010 allowed cities to experiment with interventions to prevent and combat segregation and to facilitate dialogue and integration. In the years 2008-2011 twelve cities implemented pilot projects in primary education (for students aged 4 to 12). Most interventions are aimed at student application and acceptance by schools, information and advice for parents, and facilitating parent initiatives to realize mixed schools. A prominent goal in all those interventions is a school population that mirrors the neighbourhood population.

Unfortunately, the number of evaluation studies on Dutch desegregation measures is limited. However, there is an evaluation of the activities in the pilot cities.

Dutch school boards (and schools) are relatively autonomous; local authorities have no power to enforce interventions to combat segregation. The famous 'polder model' of wheeling and dealing is still very much alive in the educational sector. The consent and willingness to cooperate of all actors involved is needed.

The Dutch discourse on school segregation was recently summarized as seeking a balance between freedom of choice and equity. Traditionally, freedom of education was favoured. The voices of equity rose during the 2007-2010 cabinet at the national level and in some instances at the local level that voice was holding on for a longer time. The two cabinets that held office from October 2010 onwards favoured freedom of choice, so the pendulum was swinging back. There are some cities that still implement policies aimed at student application and acceptance by schools; there are even cities that start which such policies (Amsterdam, The Hague en probably Leiden). Almost all of them, however, do no longer label the activities as to prevent segregation; they frame the activities as a means to create transparency for both parents and schools. In other words, the issue is being de-politicised.

We have been asked to answer some specific questions in our state of the art paper for the Thematic Workshop, and that is exactly what I intend to do in the following paragraphs. The paper is focused on primary education and includes all the minority groups in the Netherlands (Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam, Dutch Antilles, and so on).

1. What is the nature and the size of the cultural-ethnic segregation in education in your country?

1.1 The nature

In 2009 and 2010, the OECD reviewed the position of migrants in Dutch education. The research team concluded that Dutch primary school students with an immigrant background perform well in international comparisons. However, some reforms are needed, for example, with respect to the limitation of socio-ethnic school segregation and concentration in education (OECD, 2010).

Socio-ethnic school segregation has only recently been placed on the Dutch policy agenda. Ladd, Fiske, and Ruijs (2009) observed that the commitment to parental choice and school autonomy lead the Dutch to accept a 'new form of segregation – based on levels of disadvantage rather than religion...' (p. 10). But they also conclude that the segregation of disadvantaged pupils has

been a salient issue in The Netherlands for a number of years. Long term trends that help to explain this change are: the influx of low-skilled and poorly educated non-western immigrants; and the secularization of society related to a consumer mind-set in parents' school selection. Socio-ethnic school segregation is partly a result of parents' freedom to choose a school for their children and the freedom of (especially religious) school boards to accept or reject students. According to Karsten, Roeleveld, Ledoux, Felix, and Elshof (2002), parents have different motives to choose a school, such as the distance between home and school, the school's education level, differentiation within classes, religion and identification with the school. Socio-ethnic school segregation is caused not only by 'white flight' and identification with the school; other relevant factors are spatial segregation and school marketing.

1.2 The seize

The socio-ethnic school segregation degree has been identified by Wolfgram (2009), using data from the Dutch system of additional funding from 2006. In 2006 the criteria for additional funding were parents' educational level and ethnic origin – hence socio-ethnic segregation.

Wolfgram (2009) compared the school populations with the neighbourhood populations in the 38 largest cities in The Netherlands. On average, the school population of 63% of the schools in these cities reflects the population of their neighbourhood rather well. 17% is 'too white' in comparison to the neighbourhood and 20% is 'too black'. The four largest cities in The Netherlands (The Hague, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Rotterdam) show a segregation degree of at least 40%. This means that less than 60% of the school population reflects the population of the neighbourhood. Wolfgram (2009) showed that the 'whiter' the residents of a neighbourhood are, the more schools reflect their neighbourhood composition. Therefore, cities with high numbers of immigrant inhabitants show a higher degree of segregation.

Comparing the populations of schools and neighbourhoods is a rather simple and weak criterion for segregation – especially since a blind eye is turned at 'white schools in white neighbourhoods' and 'black schools in black neighbourhoods'.

Ladd, Fiske, and Ruijs (2009) used a more complex criterion. They have investigated the level and trends over time in five measures of segregation aggregated across the four big cities, with the outcomes for each city weighted by the number of primary school pupils each year. Figure 1 show almost 80% of the disadvantaged pupils in these cities attend schools with over 50% of pupils from similar backgrounds; and about 60% of these pupils attend schools with over 70% of pupils like themselves. The isolation index is a measure of the extent to which disadvantaged

immigrant pupils are in schools with other pupils like themselves. The segregation index measures the extent to which schools are unbalanced.
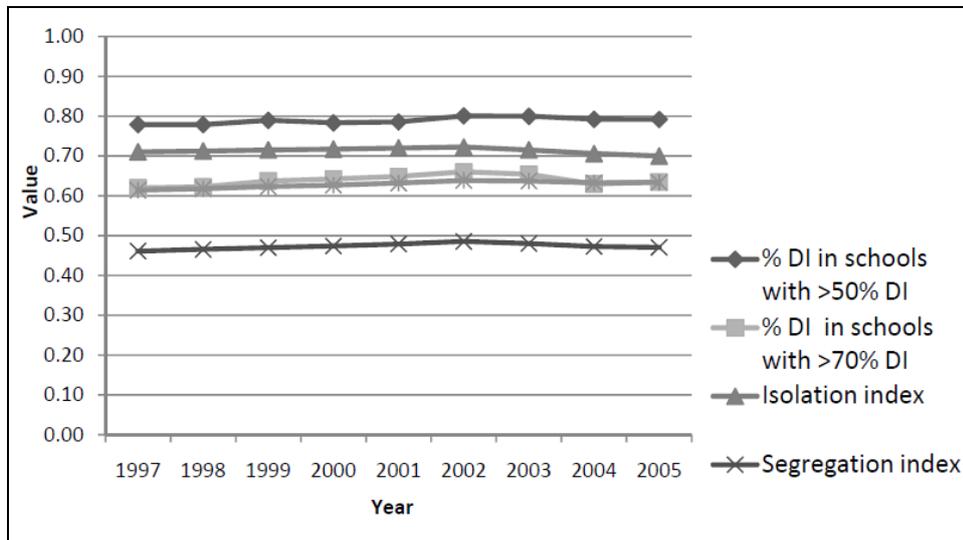

Figure 1: Five measures of segregation of disadvantaged immigrants (DI) vs. all other primary school student aggregated across the four big cities, 1997-2005 (Ladd, Fiske, & Ruijs, 2009)

Figure 1 shows, among other things, the segregation index aggregated for the four big cities. The index is split per city in Figure 2. Segregation is highest in The Hague and lowest in Amsterdam. Solely in Rotterdam the index has consistently been declining.
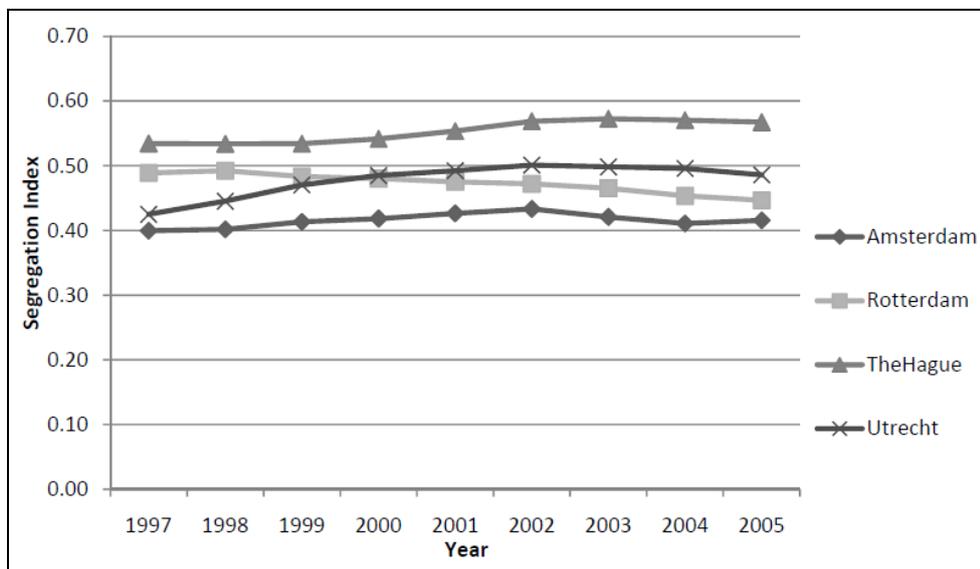

Figure 2: Trends in segregation index of disadvantaged immigrants (DI) vs. all other primary school students, by city, 1997-2005 (Ladd, Fiske, & Ruijs, 2009)

2. Is segregation or desegregation for that matter seen as a problem and/or as a sensitive issue? By educational professionals and/or policymakers (local, regional, national).

In the Netherlands (de)segregation is an issue that divides political parties and school boards. The usual way of dealing with this sensitive issue is to ignore it, because you cannot reach an agreement easily, while agreement is necessary in the Dutch 'polder' context.

2.1 National policymakers

Although the traditional distinction between left wing and right wing politics is blurred and has become inadequate in many policy areas, it is still relevant on the issue of segregation in education. Left wing politicians tend to think of it as a problem, right wing politicians tend to think it is not. In the Netherlands national government is always a coalition of political parties (because no party has a majority). Coalition parties need to come to an agreement and almost always segregation does not end up on the priority list.

The one exception was the 2007-2010 cabinet, a coalition of Christian democrats and social democrats. The coalition agreement stated that primary schools have to use fixed moments of registration as a measure to reduce socio-ethnic school segregation. The minister of education decided to fund a scheme for pilot projects to promote desegregation, and the testing of fixed registration was part of some of the pilots.

A new cabinet quickly returned to the usual attitude of ignoring segregation. Although the pilots were not finished and the process and results were not yet evaluated, the minister of education focused the policy on the quality of education and declared that would 'benefit all children'. By defining the quality of education solely in terms of cognitive learning achievement, she hoped to neutralize the issue of segregation.

Other participants in the discussions used a broader definition of educational quality, however, including effects in the social-emotional domain; for instance, social skills such as being able to cooperate with different partners, solving problems together and learning to live together (as Delors, 1999 puts it). Those participants in de discussions state that mixed schools in general offer a better learning environment (especially for social skills) as compared to segregated schools. Mixed schools offer the best opportunities to develop bridging social capital. This position in the debate on educational quality has gained urgency with the rise of discussions on the concept of 21st century skills (e.g. Trilling and Fadel , 2009), that includes global awareness and local citizenship, learning and innovation skills, life and career skills, and ict skills.

<u>2.2 Local educational actors</u>

The context for the local desegregation activities is characterized by the fact that all actors involved have a lot of freedom to manoeuvre and none of them has enough power to discipline the others. According to Ladd, Fiske, and Ruijs (2009)

> 'no one group, including public officials, has the authority to force other stakeholders – whether they be parents or schools - to behave in a certain way. (…) Thus any efforts to reduce segregation will have to reflect the voluntary commitment of a substantial number of stakeholders for whom private interests in maintaining the status quo may well exceed the public benefit to them of reducing segregation' (p. 32).

Although there is no national policy of interventions against socio-ethnic school segregation, the topic is part of a broader policy initiative. In 2006 the national government introduced a new policy line that prescribed the municipalities and the educational authorities or school boards a Local Education Agenda. Combating segregation and facilitating integration is one of the compulsory issues on that agenda. Municipalities and educational authorities have to make binding agreements on measures against socio-ethnic school segregation. However, only some cities comply with this legislation; approximately half of the largest 31 cities in the Netherlands (all with more than 100,000 inhabitants) have started a serious debate about segregation, and binding agreements are rare (Ledoux, Felix, & Elshof, 2009; Peters, Haest, & Walraven, 2007). In recent years, the number of complying cities decreased and binding agreements are even more exceptional (Ledoux and others, forthcoming).

3. What activities and policy measures are implemented to prevent and combat segregation and to facilitate integration in education? What aims and targets are involved? Who are the actors (government, education, civil society – e.g. parents)?

There are two types of interventions in the Netherlands: those that local government and school boards agree upon, and those that parents start. The latter are bottom-up citizen initiatives; the former are not really top-down, but are based on an agreement on interventions between policy actors as equals (the 'polder model'). In both cases, the schools' commitment is needed for implementation since most Dutch school boards represent various schools and individual ones are granted some autonomy. Without the cooperation of the school principal and his/her teaching staff, it is impossible to take action against segregation. To make things even more

complex, each school has a participation council (representing teachers and parents) and the majority also have a parents' council, and both councils have a different set of rules about rights of approval, advice and initiative. In short, the educational system is a participatory democratic system.

3.1 To combat segregation

At the local level there are three interventions to prevent and to counter socio-ethnic school segregation in the Netherlands: student application and acceptance by schools, information and advice for parents, and facilitating parent initiatives to realize mixed schools.

Another potential intervention would be to enact housing policies to achieve socio-ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. But the fact that one third of the schools fails to reflect the population of the neighbourhood is an indication that much more should be done. If going to school in your own neighbourhood is the starting point, then a mixed neighbourhood is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for mixed schools. You would still need policy measures to combat segregation.

Student application and acceptance by schools

In the Dutch situation of free choice for parents, the well-educated parents tend to get a better deal, because they apply to the school of their choice in a very early stage. Less-educated parents tend to wait until a short time before their child reaches school age.

Fixed moments of registration for all parents in a city creates a level playing field and allow all parents an equal chance to get their child in the school of their preference. That is why the 2007-2010 cabinet agreed on experiments with this policy measure.

Some cities went even further and developed a type of 'controlled choice' system. That was implemented in the cities of Deventer and Nijmegen. So far it is the most far-reaching intervention implemented in the Netherlands. In the USA controlled choice is perceived as an improvement (since as a general rule school districts assign children to schools). In The Netherlands, however, it is perceived as being worse than the legal situation of complete free choice (in theory). In reality, however, popular schools have waiting lists and many parents cannot get their children accepted at the school of their first choice. Unfortunately, there are no data on exactly how many parents get their first choice in the current situation (in other cities then Nijmegen and Deventer). What we do know, however, is that in both Deventer and in Nijmegen the system of controlled choice resulted in more than 95% of the students going to the school of their parents' first choice (Brink, Paulussen & Van Bergen, 2010). We also know

that each parent has now had an equal opportunity to realise his or her preference – so in terms of equality among parents and of equity at the community level the results are positive. The other side of the balance is that the freedom of choice is somewhat restricted. It is important to notice, the system of controlled choice corresponds fully with Dutch law. The main focus of the systems in Deventer and Nijmegen is: inviting parents to bring their kids to school in their own neighbourhood. As a result, you may find mixed schools in mixed neighbourhoods. However, this policy has no effect in homogeneous neighbourhoods and segregation there.

Information and advice for parents

Information for parents on schools is fragmented, e.g. because school boards and schools in most Dutch cities have agreed not to advertise their schools. So parents need to actively search for information, try to assess the quality of schools, visit schools and their websites, find reports of the educational inspectorate on the Internet, etcetera. That is quite a time consuming task that requires capabilities as well as social capital. So it is very helpful when someone facilitates the structuring of all the information. Usually that is the municipality. A website is built, brochures are made with all the neighbourhood schools presented in a similar way, and an information market is organized in which all schools have the opportunity to present themselves. Parents seem to appreciate this. The expectation is that presenting well-structured information will encourage parents to consider more schools than they otherwise would, and to potentially choose a school in their own neighbourhood. So far there is only anecdotal confirmation of this hypothesis.

One way to attract (middle class) parents who probably would not visit (specific) schools in their neighbourhood is for schools that are located in the same area to coordinate dates and times of school visits for new parents. One step further would be a 'merry go round' that allows a group of parents to visit several schools in a given neighbourhood in one morning. Usually the municipality coordinates this event, because they have the addresses of all the parents that are about to choose a school and can send them a personal invitation. The idea originated in Rotterdam, and now many cities have implemented this intervention.

How does it work? The day of the school tour starts with an informal meeting of the parents with a facilitator. The parents introduce themselves and talk about what they think is important to look at when visiting a school. They often get a checklist to fill out during the school visits. Parents say they feel more comfortable visiting these schools in a group. During the ride from

one school to another, the group can exchange views about what they have seen and heard. After the school visits, the group and the facilitator evaluate the morning and discuss school choice. Sometimes the outcome is that some of the parents want to start a parent initiative at one of the schools they visited. That is the intervention we analyse in the next paragraph.

Facilitating parent initiatives

An interesting intervention to counter segregation is a group of high-educated parents that apply to a school in their neighbourhood that indeed performs well but has a majority of disadvantaged students. By applying together they create a critical mass and avoid the risk that their child is one of the very few in a classroom with students from a different background.

In the last 15 years approximately 90 parent initiatives were started in the Netherlands. Some of those were successful in 'mixing' the school population, whereas others had failed and/or faded away. Some are still active, while others had only recently started. All initiatives consist of high-educated ('white') parents mixing a 'black' school. Since a comparable percentage of schools is too white, other types of parent initiatives are possible and necessary as well, in order to desegregate. Impulses to try and do this have been rare, however, and none of them have come to fruition.

Local authorities can facilitate parent initiatives, as the example of the city of Rotterdam might show. Some years ago the alderman responsible for education took an interest in parent initiatives and set a target that a specific number of classrooms in the lower grades should desegregate during his term in office. An information campaign was launched, flyers were distributed in cooperation with schools, a website was created where parents could ask questions and get help to meet other parents in their neighbourhood, and last but not least, educational civil servants went into neighbourhoods to help start initiatives. This was quite effective: in 2006 about half of the new parent initiatives in the Netherlands were in Rotterdam (Peters, Haest, & Walraven, 2007).

This is combatting segregation from the bottom up, one school at a time. Some sceptical observers would rather see changes on a larger scale and at a greater speed, however.

<u>3.2 To facilitate integration</u>

There is a distinction between segregation between schools and within schools; the same distinction is relevant for measures to facilitate integration and dialogue.

Within schools

Desegregation aims at mixed schools; and mixed schools are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for dialogue and integration within schools.

Only a mixed school allows for inter-ethnic contact, inter-cultural learning and grass-root multiculturalism (Muskens & Peters, 2009; Muskens, 2009). According to Allport's 'contact hypotheses' long-lasting contact should result in decreasing ethnic prejudices and should stimulate reciprocal ethnic appreciation (Allport, 1954).

However, desegregation does not lead to integration per se; additional activities are necessary. Here the role of teachers comes in. Denessen, Driessen, and Bakker (2010b) suggest that:

> 'when indeed more positive effects can be identified in classrooms with culturally responsive teachers, education policy may not only be aimed at changing classroom composition, but should also include teacher backgrounds and interventions in order to let all students, low-status and minority students as well as high-status and non-minority students, profit from classroom diversity' (p. 10).

Nevertheless, Verkuyt and Thijs (2002) found that the degree of racism in a classroom decreased when teachers reacted to incidents of racist victimization. Such teacher reactions are among the additional activities that are necessary to develop real integration after desegregation has been realised. Other activities include disclosure of inner feelings and motives, for example like the Challenge Day Program for schools or other sustainable activities that enable deeper contact in a safe context and strong learning environment.

Between schools

The policy measure here is stimulating and facilitating the twinning of schools from socio-economic homogenous neighbourhoods. If the neighbourhood does not allow for mixed schools, at least the students will get acquainted to students with other backgrounds in other ways. So pairs of schools (one 'white' and one 'black') organise exchange activities aimed at dialogue and integration. It turns out that it is very hard to organize activities that are meaningful and sustainable and that comply with all the conditions Allport (1954) and Pettigrew (1998) have formulated for the contact hypothesis.

4. What do we know from empirical research about results of the activities / policies? Is there research that validates the aims and claims of desegregation?

Consequences of choices

We know from empirically tested game theory, that well intended micro choices can lead to unintended macro consequences, e.g. when parents make their individual school choices, they inevitably lead to macro consequences in terms of segregation (Schelling, 1971). That is another reason why the balance between freedom of choice and equity is important.

Parents want the best school for their children, and rightly so. In The Netherlands parents can choose the school they think is best for their child. And most of the time that turns out to be a school dominated by parents 'just like them' (e.g. in terms of socio-economic status, life style and educational style). As a consequence, even in a neighbourhood with mixed housing and a mixed population, there tend to be both 'black' and 'white' schools. Thus, if you do not intervene in a system with freedom of school choice, segregation will continue. Note that this is (generally speaking) an unintended consequence of a process of free choice. For individual parents, school choice is like an assurance game: you avoid taking risks with your precious child. On the other hand, if you think segregation is an unwanted outcome at the level of the community, you need to intervene.

School results

Recently all the research on the effects of school composition on cognitive school results has been reviewed in two studies (Herweijer, 2011; Van Ewijk en Sleegers, 2010). The conclusion of both meta-evaluations was, school composition has hardly any effect on academic school results like language and arithmetic.

What about results in the non-cognitive, social domain? Like learning to cope with differences, learning to cooperate, learning to live together, and in other words learning 21st century skills? The hypothesis that student at mixed schools have better chances to learn those social skills, was confirmed in recent research in the Netherlands (Stark, 2011; for the same conclusion regarding Flanders/Belgium, see Agirdag, 2011; for secondary education Braster and Dronkers, 2013). Both Stark and Agirdag underline the key role of teachers in the process of building interpersonal relationships and intercultural attitudes.

Effects of interventions

Unfortunately, the number of evaluation studies on desegregation measures in the Netherlands is limited. However, there is an evaluation of the activities in the pilot cities (Brink en Van Bergen, 2012). They start out by stating desegregation is a long-term process. So what might be expected when you evaluate pilots after two or four years? Only some smaller changes, in particular in the lower groups of primary education (because that is where the interventions are aiming at).

Student application and acceptance by schools. Three of the pilot cities introduced a system for student application and acceptance. Everywhere the system increased transparency for parents, schools and city government. In the two cities where the system was city-wide, more students went to school in their own neighbourhood. It is unclear, however, whether the system produced more mixed schools in mixed neighbourhoods.

Information and advice for parents. Parents appreciate information about schools (on a website, in flyers) from a 'neutral' source, like the city. School tours or 'merry go rounds' were organised in nine of the pilot cities, in seven a substantial amount of parents participated. The crucial factor seems to be, to get to high-educated parents in mixed neighbourhoods, because they tend to be open to information and visits to schools that were initially not on their list. Besides, it is sort of safer to visit a 'black' school in a group. In one pilot city school tours lead to two parent initiatives.

Parent initiatives. It makes a difference when a city stimulates and facilitates parent initiatives. Five pilot cities tried to do that, with mixed results.

5. What do we know from research about the implementation process of these policies? What are the pitfalls and dilemmas?

Policy implementation analysis is a field of expertise that has developed rapidly since the classic study of Wildavsky & Pressman (1973), with its beautiful title, *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland; or, Why it's Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All.* We should take into account what there is to learn from the state of the art in this field in more general terms (like program integrity, monitoring and evaluation, et cetera).

Here I restrict myself, however, to the specific case of measures in the Netherlands and the evaluation of the pilots of Brink and Van Bergen (2012).

A major dilemma is the fact, that in the Netherlands no single actor has the power to force decisions, because all actors have a high degree of autonomy. In the end, therefor, desegregation depends on the political will of all actors involved. For that reason trying to de-politicise the issue is no sustainable option (e.g. just implementing fixed moments of registration does not address the problem of segregation). The good news is that the Local Educational Agenda offers a legal framework for political action. The opportunities of the framework could be used far more widely. When a city government wants to play an active role, it can stimulate and facilitate school boards and schools as well as parents.

A major pitfall is to think desegregation policies will show spectacular results within a short time. That pitfall adds to the dilemma about the actors and their political will: in politics short term results are most wanted, also in educational politics. The art of implementation in a political context requires that well-chosen photo opportunities are framed as a success, at least as a step in a longer process. And a long process it is. Desegregation is no goal in itself; it is a precondition for integration and dialogue in education. Mixed schools are important for learning to live together and for 21st century skills. Those types of skills are crucial in a time of growing 'super-diversity', a time with a growing number of big cities where everyone is a part of a minority (Vertovec, 2007). Super-diversity requires a new vision on integration. Crul (2013) offers such a vision, he sketches a scenario of empowerment and hope, building on the energy of emancipation of minority groups, and using education as a key to emancipation. That vision is inspirational for desegregation (and the SIRIUS network).

What recommendations can we offer, reflecting on the Dutch case? (Partly based on Brink and Van Bergen, 2012.)

- Create support among the actors and a broader public
- Appoint a coordinator who is an expert and can bring energy to the process
- Monitor facts and figures and use them to frame your successes
- Use facts and figures to choose carefully which interventions to implement where
- Be sensitive to the conditions implementation of every specific intervention requires
- Look for opportunities like a new block of houses in a neighbourhood or the planning of whole new neighbourhood; use the opportunities of the Local Educational Agenda; try to create opportunities

- Convince people that real changes regarding the issue of segregation take time, much time. And also convince everyone that a balance between freedom of school choice and equity is worth fighting for.

6. Can you mention some key publications on the effects of segregation and desegregation policies in your country?

<u>6.1 In English</u>

- Denessen, E., Driessen, G., & Bakker, J. (2010a). *Cognitive and non-cognitive effects of diversity in Dutch elementary schools.* Paper presented at AERA, Denver, USA.
- Denessen, E., Driessen, G., & Bakker, J. (2010b). School and classroom diversity effects on cognitive and non-cognitive student outcomes. *Journal of Education Research*, 4(2), 1-13.
- Ladd, H., Fiske, T., & Ruijs, N. (2009). *Parental choice in the Netherlands: growing concerns about segregation.*
- OECD (2010), *OECD Reviews of Migrant Education: Netherlands 2010.* OECD Publishing.
- Peters, D. & Walraven, G. (2011). The Netherlands: interventions to counteract school segregation. In J. Bakkker, E. Denessen, D. Peters en G. Walraven (Eds.), *International Perspectives on Countering School Segregation* (pp. 131-151). Antwerpen/Apeldoorn: Garant.
- Stark, T.H. (2011). *Integration in Schools: a process perspective on students' interethnic attitudes and interpersonal relationships.* Dissertation University of Groningen.
- Verkuyten, M. (2008). Life Satisfaction Among Ethnic Minorities: The Role of Discrimination and Group Identification. *Social Indicators Research*, 89, 391-404.

<u>6.2 In Dutch</u>

See Peters & Walraven (2011) for an overview until 2011. More recent publications include:

- Bakker, J. (2012). *Cultureel-etnische segregatie in het onderwijs: achtergronden, oorzaken en waarom te bestrijden?* Amsterdam: Kenniscentrum Gemengde Scholen.
- Braster, S. & Dronkers, J. (2013). 'De positieve effecten van etnische verscheidenheid in de klas op schoolprestaties van leerlingen in een multi-etnische metropool.' *Sociologie* (9) 1: 3-29.
- Brink, M. & Van Bergen, C. (2012). *Tegengaan segregatie in het basisonderwijs: monitoring van de OCW-pilots, eindrapport.* Amsterdam: Regioplan.
- Herweijer, L. (2011), *Gemengd Leren.* Den Haag: SCP.
- Ledoux, G. et al. (forthcoming), *Bestrijding van segregatie in het onderwijs in gemeenten. Verkenning van lokaal beleid anno 2013.*

7. Can you mention one or two 'best practices' from your country?

When the local pilots started in 2008, there were some cities that stood out. Nijmegen and Deventer were already working on city-wide policies aiming at student application and acceptance by schools; and Rotterdam was active towards parents, especially with school tours and stimulating parent initiatives. In 2013 one might say The Hague is a 'best practice'.

In the last five years the local government took a leading role, acting as the first among equals in the local educational field (with school boards and schools). Policy officials started with a long-term vision to approach the issue of segregation from different angles. They were looking for opportunities, creating chances to agree on specific measures with school boards, and inviting schools in specific circumstances to participate. The result is, the city has now reached full circle and is probably the only Dutch city actively implementing all types of measures mentioned earlier:

- Informing parents and organising school tours in well-chosen areas (with a socio-economic mixed population), stimulating and facilitating parent initiatives;
- Stimulating and facilitating the twinning of schools from socio-economic homogenous neighbourhoods.
- A policy for a city-wide fixed moment for registration, a policy to create a level playing field for all parents to get their child in schools of their first choice (without mentioning segregation).

Epilogue

In this paper we talked about socio-ethnic school segregation. The deadline for the paper was September 9, 2013. That week two reports confirmed how adequate 'socio-ethnic' really is.

- Ethnicity: on September 12, the Education Council recommended to reinstall ethnicity as a criterion for the educational priority policy, because it still is an important factor. (In 2006 ethnicity was cancelled as a criterion for extra budget for Dutch primary schools.)
- SES: on September 14, RTL News published a report on the test scores from the final year of all Dutch primary schools (the first national overview ever). The report confirmed educational level and wealth of parents are the best predictors for school results – the scores in wealthy neighbourhoods were higher.