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# **Educational policies on migrants and minorities in the Netherlands: success or failure?**

Rally Rijkschroeff\*, Geert ten Dam, Jan Willem Duyvendak,  
Marjan de Gruijter and Trees Pels

*Verwey-Jonker Institute, The Netherlands*

In common with other European countries, the Dutch government has pursued an active educational policy on migrants and minorities focusing on integration. This article presents the results of a study into the objectives and results of this policy between 1970 and 2002. Were the desired objectives achieved or were the outcomes of the educational policy the opposite of what was intended? To what extent did the integration policy in the Netherlands get a chance to take effect or was it abandoned before it had the opportunity to succeed? Firstly, the different assumptions and focal points of the Dutch educational policy regarding migrants and minorities in the past 30 years are discussed. Secondly, the educational position of the various ethnic groups is analysed. To conclude, we give an answer to the question regarding the extent to which the objectives of the educational policy on migrants and minorities were achieved and then go on to discuss the extent to which the integration policy of the central government in the field of education can be evaluated as successful.

## **Introduction**

Like most other west European countries, the Netherlands has over the past few decades rapidly developed into a multi-ethnic society. Changes in population are particularly noticeable in education. First and second generations of migrant pupils from Turkey, Morocco, Surinam, the Antilles and several African countries currently comprise over 50% of the pupil population in secondary education in the large cities in the Netherlands (Dagevos *et al.*, 2003). In a Western context, education is a highly important mobility channel. Odé (2002) has convincingly demonstrated that the educational level is the dominant explanatory variable pertaining to socio-economic as well as cultural integration. Migrants and their offspring in the Netherlands

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\*Corresponding author. Verwey-Jonker Institute, Kromme Nieuwe Gracht 6, 3512 HG Utrecht, The Netherlands. Email: RRijkschroeff@Verwey-Jonker.nl.

generally regard achievement in school and the labour market as major goals in life as well (see Pels & Nijsten, 2003). Bearing in mind the increase in the number of minority pupils within the educational system, this system plays a crucial role when it comes to the socio-economic and cultural integration of minorities in society.

The Dutch government, like some other European governments, has pursued an integration policy that focuses on combating educational disadvantage as well as on maintaining the cultural identities of ethnic minorities (Rijkschroeff *et al.*, 2004a; see also Driessen, 2000). However, the Netherlands stands out for being one of the first European countries to have formulated an ambitious long-term integration policy, starting from the early 1980s (Penninx, 1998). The term 'integration policy' is used here in a neutral sense to refer to the measures taken over the years by the government vis-à-vis circumscribed categories of migrants and minorities residing in the Netherlands. In fact, the heading of 'integration policy' only became fashionable from the 1990s, referring to individuals' participation in mainstream society and institutions. Previously, terms like 'categorical policy' and 'minority policy' were primarily used in the discourse on migrants and minorities (see below).

The integration policy of the Dutch government has recently been subjected to heavy criticism and a heated debate is being conducted within the media and political circles on 'the failure of the integration policy' or even of integration as such. The presumed failure of this policy is mainly blamed on the fact that it has—for some time—been aimed at supporting minorities' cultural identity, in addition to their socio-economic mobility. Where ethnic minorities primarily aspire to dualism of goals, i.e., collective identity development together with adaptation in the public domain and key institutions of Dutch society (Vermeulen & Penninx, 1994; Phalet *et al.*, 2000), the Dutch 'moral majority' and some main political parties increasingly adhere to migrants' assimilation, involving adaptation to 'Dutch standards and values' at the cost of the orientation to one's own group and culture<sup>1</sup> (Duyvendak, 2004; Rijkschroeff *et al.*, 2004a). Cultural pluralism, the maintenance of collective cultural identities, has come to be seen as a threat to the process of sociocultural and structural integration into the host society. Based on a comparison between the situation in Germany and that in the Netherlands, the Dutch sociologist Koopmans contends that the considerable attention in the Netherlands for 'maintaining one's cultural identity' has had a negative effect on migrants' chances of sociocultural and, as a result, socio-economic integration into Dutch society (Koopmans, 2000, 2002).

Sally Tomlinson (2003) posed the question on the effectiveness of the educational policy concerning the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities for the British case, on the basis of papers given at five sessions of the International Sociological Association's (ISA) four-yearly world congresses held from 1986–2002. The premise on which the sessions were based was that the outcomes of educational policies devised with pluralistic and egalitarian intentions were often the opposite of what was intended. According to Tomlinson, most policies were slow to take effect or were abandoned before they had a chance (p. 216). Although by the late 1990s improvements in the educational achievement of all pupils from ethnic minority groups in Britain were being

demonstrated, reviews of the research conducted in 2000 indicated that there was a growing 'black-white gap in school achievements' (p. 222).

In the Dutch debate on 'the multicultural drama',<sup>2</sup> the same doubts regarding the effectiveness of the integration policies led in 2002 to the establishment of a parliamentary committee of inquiry. As requested by this committee (the 'De Blok committee' named after its chairperson), we carried out an extensive study into the objectives and results of the integration policy in the Netherlands between 1970 and 2002 (Rijkschroeff *et al.*, 2004a, 2004b). The considerable time period covered by this study enabled us to put the above-mentioned premise regarding the educational integration policies for migrants and minorities in the Netherlands to the test: to what extent did these policies get a chance to take effect or were they abandoned before having a chance to succeed? In line with Tomlinson's analysis, what was the outcome of these policies the opposite of what was intended or were the desired objectives achieved?

In this article we present the results of our evaluation study into educational integration policies and their outcomes. We first outline the Dutch context, in terms of both the educational system and the influx of minorities since the 1960s. A description then follows of the approach taken in the research on which this article is based. In the following sections we discuss the Dutch government's integration policies as they affected education and the results of those policies in terms of educational outcomes. Finally, we suggest an answer to the question to what extent the objectives of the educational aspects of integration policies have been achieved and we discuss the degree of success of the educational aspects of the government's integration policies.

## **The Dutch context**

### *Educational system*

In the Netherlands full time education is compulsory from the age of 5 until the age of 16. Primary education is the same for all pupils and takes eight years. Dutch children enter secondary education at the age of 12. During the first phase, children aged 12 to 15 are taught a core curriculum of 15 subjects at 4 different levels. The different levels are usually taught in separate schools for pre-vocational education and for general education. There are no longer any schools in the Netherlands where all the different kinds of education are given in the same school. After this, children choose one of three levels of examination. The preparation for this final examination varies from one to three years. Pre-vocational or junior general secondary education takes one extra year, senior general secondary education takes two extra years and pre-university education three extra years. Each level has consequences for admission to vocational and higher education (see Figure 1). Although it is theoretically possible for pupils to transfer to a different level, in practice there is a divide between pre-vocational secondary education on the one hand and general secondary education on the other. In comparison to many other countries, this divide begins early, namely on

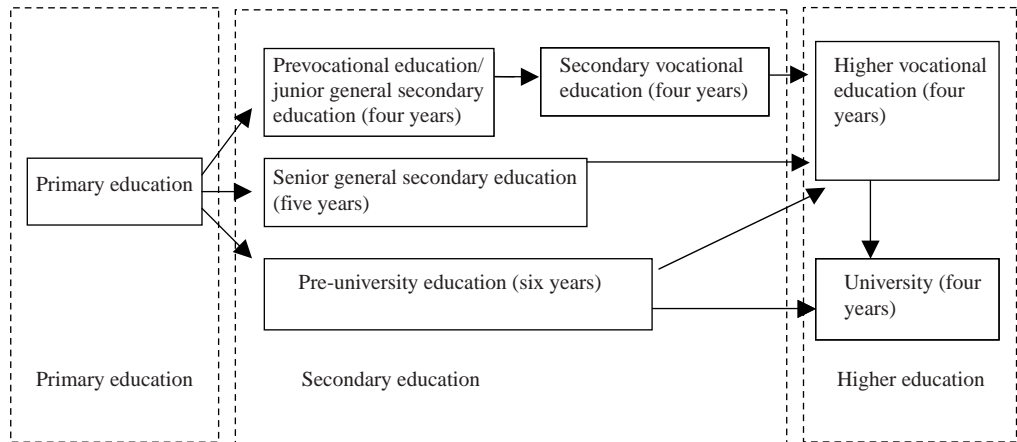


Figure 1. The Dutch educational system: primary, secondary and higher education

leaving primary school at the age of 12. Few opportunities exist for pupils who enter the pre-vocational education track after primary education, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural background, to transfer to the general secondary education tracks.

### Minorities

The multi-ethnic nature of society in the Netherlands has been on the increase ever since the 1970s and minority groups have rapidly increased in size over the past decade. In 2002, 10% of the population originated from non-Western countries. In the cities one third of the population has an ethnic minority background (Dagevos *et al.*, 2003). Two of the four largest minority groups in the Netherlands stem from the former Dutch colonies of Surinam and the Antilles. Both groups are very diverse in terms of their migration history. To give an example, Surinamese pupils may have parents or grandparents who originally came from Surinam but more often than not their ancestors emigrated to Surinam from, for example, Africa, Indonesia, India or China. The other two large minority groups in the Netherlands are immigrant workers and their children from Turkey and Morocco, countries where Islam is the main religion. These people migrated to the Netherlands in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Most of the children from these groups were born in the Netherlands and are therefore second generation .

Most immigrants came for economic reasons. Although the minority groups substantially improved their position on the labour market in the 1990s, their economic position is still not as strong as that of the majority population. For example, in 2002 employment rates were 68% for the majority population as opposed to 56% for the minority population and unemployment levels were 3% and 8% respectively (CBS, 2003). This migrant unemployment percentage is lower than in other European countries (*ibid.*) but is on the high side in comparison with citizens from

the Dutch majority group. The educational level of the first generation immigrants is relatively low, which gives their children a low SES (socio-economic status) score in Dutch statistics. The percentage of parents of school pupils who have only had elementary schooling ranges from 20% (Antilleans and Surinamese) up to 60% and 77% (Turks and Moroccans), compared to 3% among the Dutch majority (Hulsen & Uerz, 2002).

## **Method**

The following research questions were investigated in our evaluation study:

1. What have been the objectives of the educational aspects of Dutch integration policy in the past 30 years?
2. How coherent and consistent have the educational aspects of integration policy been?
3. To what extent have the educational aspects of integration policy been achieved?

A historical study of original sources was conducted to examine the educational policy of the Dutch government on migrants and minorities over the past 30 years (Research Question 1). To this end, we analysed all relevant recommendations, memoranda and Dutch parliamentary debates. We mapped out the *objectives* and the changes in the objectives of integration policy and drew up a list of the *policy measures* connected to these objectives on the basis of the policy documents. Two research approaches were followed in evaluating the educational policy of the Dutch government and the outcomes (Research Question 2). We first comment on the scope and the internal and external *effectiveness* of the policy measures adopted on the basis of the available evaluation. The extent to which the policy objectives have been achieved follows, with reference to *empirical data*. A significant factor in this second line of approach was the various systems that have been established in the Netherlands since the mid 1980s for monitoring the educational position of the four target groups of the educational policy on migrants and minorities of the Dutch government (Surinamese, Antilleans, Turks and Moroccans).<sup>3</sup> The results of this empirical analysis and of the effectiveness studies were subsequently used to *review* the success or failure of the Dutch integration policy and its constituent parts.

## **Objectives of the educational integration policy**

The overall Dutch government integration policy over the past 30 years has shown some consistency but also large shifts in objectives. The highest degree of consistency is visible in the government's endeavours to achieve proportionality (equal opportunities) in the socio-economic position of newly arrived immigrants and their dependants compared with that of citizens from the Dutch majority. Nonetheless, a two-pronged approach developed in the early 1980s as it became clear that migrants were going to stay: alongside integration into a socio-economic sense,

support was also given to the development of cultural identity and group emancipation. However, the latter approach faded from the mid 1980s onwards, although the government never completely distanced itself from it, partly in view of the legal right to organize oneself on the basis of religious identity (the heritage of the Dutch pillar system). Nevertheless, in view of the stubbornness of the socio-economic disadvantage of ethnic minorities, the focus started to move towards individual integration in the mid 1980s. The identity support objective was in decline since the idea was gaining momentum that sociocultural adjustment was a necessary condition for preventing socio-economic inequality persisting for several generations. This new policy oriented on the ‘individual’ was primarily aimed at young people. Resources for Dutch as a second language and preschool education within the family were deployed more systematically. In more detail, three dimensions can be distinguished in the educational policy of the Dutch government on migrants and minorities:

- The socio-economic dimension.
- The emancipatory dimension.
- The sociocultural dimension.

This section reviews each of the dimensions in turn. For each dimension, we investigate the policy objectives over the past 30 years and the shifts that have occurred during that time.

#### *Socio-economic dimension: combating educational disadvantage*

Combating educational disadvantage was one of the objectives of integration policy. The improvement of migrants’ and minorities’ educational position was intended to enhance their socio-economic position. However, varying emphases were applied in the period 1970–2002.

The objective of ‘combating educational disadvantage’ was described as follows in 1974:

Applying appropriate measures within and in relation to education to eliminate or reduce inequalities in educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged situations, so that they have the same educational opportunities as children from favourable situations, no longer only in a formal sense but also in fact. (OC&W, 1974, p. 9)

The policy was oriented to incentive schemes with separate category-based facilities for children of foreign workers:

There are circumstances in which the special nature of the educational problems mean that a general incentive policy is insufficient to eliminate the disadvantage. This is the case in the education of children of foreign workers. (Ibid.)

Ten years later, combating educational disadvantage became part of a combined approach to the social disadvantage of ethnic minorities, particularly in education, the labour market and housing. A combined, systematic approach, as opposed to ad hoc incentive projects, was the characteristic feature of the new policy:



The intention of the educational priority policy is to apply a set of targeted measures to enable individual schools and welfare organizations, or an alliance of schools, to eliminate or reduce the educational disadvantage of pupils resulting from social, economic and cultural circumstances. (OC&W, 1985, p. 1)

The specific attention to foreign workers' children gave way to a general policy for all disadvantaged pupils, including those from ethnic minorities. Schools receive proportionately more facilities for ethnic minority pupils to reflect their greater disadvantage (a so-called weighting factor). The facilities are mainly used to form smaller classes in which the teacher can give more individual attention to pupils and teach Dutch as a second language. Preschool and early school policy is also being developed, with a marked emphasis on family intervention and parent counseling. From the 1980s, the municipalities became responsible for the policy on combating educational disadvantage (decentralization). The objective of the Municipal Educational Disadvantage Policy, as it is called, is formulated as follows:

... to combat educational disadvantage among Dutch national and ethnic minority pupils, to come closer to an optimum development of all talents possessed by pupils and to improve the educational opportunities available to disadvantaged pupils. (OC&W, 1997, p. 3)

The change of emphasis that has occurred from time to time in the past 30 years has not undermined the consistency of the core objective of the policy on eliminating educational disadvantage, which is 'to foster proportional participation in education'. Proportional participation in education means that the position of ethnic minority pupils should be comparable to that of pupils from the majority population with the same background characteristics. In other words, it is concerned with eliminating the educational disadvantage of ethnic minority young people relative to their Dutch counterparts from the majority population in terms of age and gender and of SES characteristics (operationalized as the parents' educational level). Rijkshroeff *et al.* (2004a) observe that the integration policy has mainly attempted to influence the resources (e.g., social capital) of the ethnic minority pupils and at the same time left the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion largely untouched. These mechanisms, such as lower teacher expectations of pupils from an ethnic minority background (Jungbluth, 2003, cf. Oates, 2003; Farkas, 2003) and selection practices on entering secondary education (Crul & Doomernik, 2003), may have had a negative influence on these pupils' opportunities to get ahead.

### *Emancipatory dimension*

Especially with respect to education, the Dutch government has long pursued an active and central emancipation policy (see Ten Dam & Volman, 1995). The objective of the general emancipation policy is to create conditions for a diverse society in which everyone, irrespective of gender or other principles of social stratification including ethnicity, age, marital status, ability and sexual preference, has the opportunity to lead an independent existence, and in which women and men may enjoy equal rights, opportunities, freedoms and social and other responsibilities (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau & Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2002).



### *Sociocultural dimension*

The relevant policy documents also reveal a significant sociocultural dimension to the educational integration policies. In the initial period, these policies, like the policy on disadvantage, were characterized by a 'categorical approach'. The Educational Incentive Policy (OC&W, 1974) focused mainly on 'education in the language and culture of the country of origin'. Every foreign child, the policy stipulated, had a right to receive this education.

This specific education must be provided under the responsibility of the municipal and school administrations, which implies that these administrations must employ foreign teaching assistants. (p. 16)

In the ensuing period, this focus on the language and culture of the country of origin made way for 'acculturation and integration':

Education, through intercultural and other forms of instruction, should promote the acculturation of both minority groups and other members of Dutch society. Acculturation is defined here as a bilateral or multilateral process of learning from, accepting and appreciating each other, and of being open to each other's culture or elements of it. (p. 6)

Also:

Education should prepare and enable the members of minority groups for full participation and functioning in the socio-economic, social and democratic aspects of Dutch society, with the possibility of doing so from their own cultural background. (OC&W, 1981, p. 6)

Alongside the intercultural education oriented to all pupils, education in the pupil's own language and culture was continued in the 1980s with an increasingly clear connection, however, with integration: ethnic minority children were expected to develop a positive self-concept through the attention to their own language and culture, with a view to improving their educational opportunities in Dutch society (cf. Troyna & Williams, 1986).

From the end of the 1980s, educational integration policies swung heavily towards combating disadvantage (see Figure 2). The cultural component disappeared from the policy that targeted ethnic minority pupils, while the language component was given the additional objective of supporting the learning of Dutch. This element of one's 'own language and culture education' was also recently scrapped from the policy agenda. The policy was now completely oriented to promoting the full participation of individual minority children in the Dutch educational system. The notion of 'preserving a group's own language and culture' has disappeared: one's own culture is at most something private and must not stand in the way of integration. The thinking on how sociocultural identity and socio-economic integration interrelate has therefore changed drastically over the past 30 years. At first, a group cherishing its own cultural identity (and learning and using its own language) was seen as having an intrinsic value that justified its inclusion in education. Later the value and appropriateness of this to the curriculum were assessed solely on the possible contribution to improving migrant pupils' educational performance (and thus helping their further

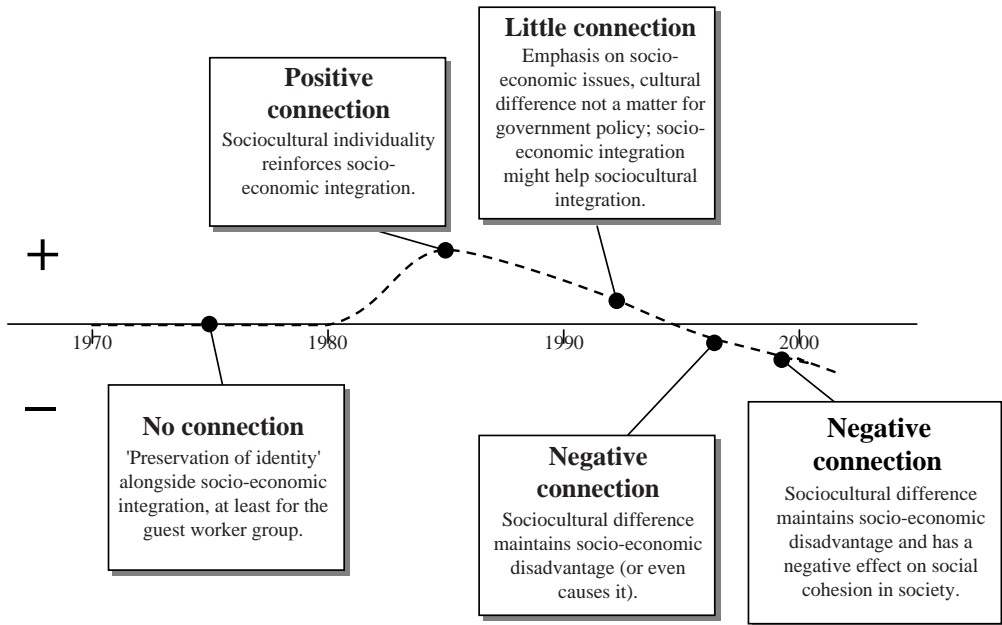


Figure 2. Policy views on the connection between sociocultural position and socio-economic position in the course of time

integration into Dutch society). This point of view has recently become more radicalized. Learning one's own language and 'preserving' one's own identity is now viewed mainly as an obstacle to successful integration. It should therefore come as no surprise that instruction in the mother tongue (Education in one's Own Language and Culture) became marginalized in the curriculum in the course of time, ultimately vanishing altogether.

These shifts imply a total lack of consistency in the sociocultural objective of the education-oriented policy. To summarize, two major changes took place. Firstly, in so far as any room existed for sociocultural differences, the line of reasoning shifted from a fundamental to a pragmatic or utilitarian argumentation: from 'legitimacy' in terms of valuing a group's own language and culture in their own right, to legitimacy in so far as learning one's own language helps in learning Dutch. Secondly, the maintenance of cultural identity was no longer seen as a possible contribution to integration but, on the contrary, as an obstacle. Otherwise, a clear objective has never been formulated in terms of output, not to mention outcome, either in the days of room for learning one's own language and culture in the early 1980s, or in the recent period where little value has been attached to these aspects.

The shifts observed in the sociocultural dimension of Dutch integration policy have also occurred in other countries (cf. Driessen, 2000; Tomlinson, 2003). Assimilationism can be observed in various west European countries. This tendency exists not only in countries that have traditionally emphasized a uniform national identity—such as republican France—but also in relatively 'progressive'

countries such as Denmark and Sweden. Like the Netherlands until recently, these countries embraced some degree of pluralism but we now observe there that the perceived cultural gap between the majority population and migrants from non-Western parts of the world is leading to more demands for the latter to adapt (Duyvendak, 2004). In these countries, this change has resulted in far less positive attention to migrant children's own language and culture. The issue of multicultural citizenship, or rather, how much cultural differentiation are immigrants to be allowed in the public domain, has become a widely debated subject. Right-wing populist parties have played a significant role in promoting the idea that migrant identities are a threat to processes of integration as well as to national identity and that both are incompatible (Van Kersbergen & Krouwel, 2003). Resentment has focused specifically on Muslim minorities, which make up the majority of European migrants, resulting in an increasing Islamophobia. The same holds for the Netherlands: the Islamophobic LPF, even after the murder of its leader Pim Fortuyn, immediately became the second largest political party in the last elections. Nowadays there is a strong tendency to reduce problems related to immigration and integration to issues of cultural or religious difference or worse, fundamentalism, of migrant groups (Favell, 1998).

Our study of original sources shows that there has been no specific emancipation policy for ethnic minority women and girls (Rijkschroeff *et al.*, 2004b; cf. Saharso, 2003; Grant *et al.*, 2004). Only recently have their specific disadvantages on the labour market attracted increasing political attention. There is, however, also an emancipatory dimension to the educational aspects of integration policy: of promoting equal opportunities in education for girls. With respect to the position of migrants and minorities, the focus of education-oriented emancipation policy in the past 30 years has always been on eliminating the educational disadvantage of ethnic minority girls compared to ethnic minority boys (the convergence objective). Almost no shifts have taken place in these objectives during the period studied.

### *Conclusion*

The consistency in the socio-economic and emancipatory dimensions of the educational policy on minorities has been striking over the past few decades. The premise that educational policies were prematurely abandoned (Tomlinson, 2003) does not apply to the Dutch policy as far as these two objectives on the educational integration policy are concerned. On the contrary, the Dutch government invested heavily in making these policies work. Moreover, the Dutch government stipulated explicit outcomes of the policy: achieving proportional participation in education is a clear and verifiable objective. On the other hand, different objectives have been set over the past 30 years for the sociocultural dimension. Even more salient is that the objectives have, over time, undergone an almost complete reversal. Moreover, the Dutch government did not stipulate any explicit outcomes for this area.

## Achieving educational goals

In this section we examine the question regarding the extent to which the objectives set by the Dutch government for the socio-economic and emancipatory dimensions of the educational policy on migrants and minorities have actually been achieved. More specifically, we deal with the 'equal opportunities objective' and the 'convergence objective'.

### *Equal opportunities*

The long-term objective of Dutch integration policy is aimed at *equal opportunities* for members of ethnic minorities with regard to the core institutions of Dutch society. The intention is that members of ethnic minorities, after correcting for any differences in relevant background characteristics, may assume the same position as the Dutch majority. The issue is, therefore, not one of comparing positions directly but of comparing after allowing for relevant background characteristics (Van der Laan & Veenman, 2004, p. 15). The objective of Dutch education-oriented integration policy is to allow members of ethnic minorities to assume the same position in education as the Dutch majority. This section discusses whether the *equal opportunities objective* is being achieved. We consider minorities in primary, secondary and higher education and then examine the educational position of the four large minority groups in the Netherlands.

In *primary education*, ethnic minority pupils start and finish at a disadvantage. Nevertheless, pupils from minority groups are gradually performing better at school. This positive development is mainly visible in arithmetic. There has been a much less marked improvement in language performance. Turkish, Moroccan and Antillean children are still two years behind in the Dutch language at the end of primary education. Surinamese pupils perform better but they too lag behind pupils from the Dutch majority (Dagevos *et al.*, 2003). A similar development manifests itself in *secondary education*: there is modest progress in the mobility to higher school types and learning achievements and there are extensive differences between the various ethnic minority groups (Tesser & Iedema, 2001; Dagevos *et al.*, 2003). For instance, Surinamese and Antillean pupils are almost as likely to attend higher school types as pupils from the Dutch majority, whereas Turkish and Moroccan pupils are more likely to attend lower secondary school types than pupils from the majority population (see also Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (VOCL'99) in SCP, 2002, p. 38). As a consequence, young people from minority groups are not yet entering *higher education* programmes to the same extent as youngsters from the majority population. However, the relatively small but growing group of young people from ethnic minorities who are entering higher education demonstrate that it is possible to overcome the huge obstacles.

The educational position of the pupils who are now in full time education has thus been discussed. Below we examine the educational position of the *entire* population. Van der Laan and Veenman (2004) analysed the educational position of the four large minority groups in 2002 on the basis of the SPVA database (Social Position and Use

of Facilities by Members of Ethnic Minorities). Their analysis reveals that these ethnic minority groups were still lagging behind the Dutch majority group in 2002. However, after correction for differences in relevant SES background characteristics, it appears that an equitable situation existed in 2002 for the Surinamese and the Antilleans/Arubans aged between 15 and 65 years. This means that they achieved the same educational level as the Dutch majority group with the same socio-economic background. This is not the case yet for the other two groups, although there have been some favourable developments in the past 10 years. Furthermore, the second generation of young people generally perform more equitably.

Van der Laan and Veenman (2004) also specifically investigated the second generation of 15 to 30 year-olds. The key question is whether this specific category of young people's early 'intake from below' into Dutch education has helped them to develop in such a way that they have indeed achieved proportionality. The equal opportunities analysis yields a surprising result:

In 2002, the Moroccan second generation of young people actually achieved an educational level far better than might be expected based on their background characteristics. We also see with Surinamese people that the actual educational level is higher than expected and with Turkish people the level is approximately equal to expectation. For Antilleans/Arubans the actual final level is now lower than might be expected based on the background characteristics. (Van der Laan & Veenman, pp. 20–21)

Another surprising fact is that in recent years the gap between disadvantaged ethnic minority pupils and average children from the Dutch majority has narrowed, while the gap between disadvantaged children and average children from the Dutch majority has actually widened. We see steady progress at primary school by all ethnic minority target group pupils in arithmetic and to a lesser extent also in the Dutch language. Ethnic minority children have made great leaps forward in their development, more so than pupils from the Dutch majority. Research shows that Turkish and Moroccan pupils who started in Year 4 (Grade 2) in 1994 and 1996 made much more progress in both language and arithmetic than disadvantaged pupils from the majority population. Nevertheless Turkish, Moroccan and Antillean children are still badly behind in both arithmetic and language. In the last year of primary school (Grade 6) these pupils are at least two years behind in language and a year and a half in arithmetic. The results for pupils from the Dutch majority with less-educated parents have even deteriorated slightly over the years (Meijnen, 2003). Meijnen concludes that:

... it is not the foreign origin that is the most important reason why many ethnic minority children lag behind but their socio-economic background, in this case their parents' education. (2003, p. 14)

### *Convergence objective*

Equal opportunities for men and women are the core of the emancipation policy convergence objective. The convergence has largely been achieved in education. The Netherlands is comparable in this respect with other Western countries (Keeves & Kotte, 1997). The differences in educational attainment between women and men

(the so-called vertical educational inequality) has disappeared and to some extent even been reversed (Ten Dam & Vermunt, 2003, p. 174). In Dutch secondary education, nationwide more girls than boys complete their education and fewer repeat a year or are referred to special education. All in all, girls' school careers proceed more successfully than those of boys. Girls' initial disadvantage in average learning achievements has also now transformed into a slight lead (Bronnemans *et al.*, 2002). Currently, half the students in Dutch higher education are women. In terms of both course results and duration, female students perform better than male students (CBS, 2002). Has the convergence objective of the emancipation policy for migrants and minorities likewise been achieved? We present below the available data for primary education, secondary education and higher education.

In *primary education*, ethnic minority girls have generally caught up considerably with ethnic minority boys. For instance, there is now hardly any difference in the total marks in the assessment of pupils at the end of primary school (the 'National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO) test'). A breakdown according to the different ethnic groups shows the following picture. The marks for Turkish and Antillean girls and boys are almost the same; Surinamese girls perform better than Surinamese boys; Moroccan girls achieve lower marks than Moroccan boys (Dagevos *et al.*, 2003, p. 87). Boys in all ethnic minority groups attain higher marks in arithmetic and environmental studies, while—with the exception of Moroccan girls—girls attain higher marks in languages and information processing. The total marks in the CITO test are reflected in the advice primary schools give on secondary education: between 1994 and 2000, primary schools increasingly advised ethnic minority pupils to move to the higher tracks of secondary education. The same applies to ethnic minority girls. Again with the exception of Moroccan girls, they are recommended to move on to general secondary education even more often than ethnic minority boys (p. 89).

The disadvantaged position of ethnic minority girls in *secondary education* that existed until the mid 1990s has now disappeared. The participation of Turkish girls was the same as boys in 2001–2002; the disadvantaged position of Moroccan and especially Surinamese girls has been converted into a lead (p. 116). Dagevos *et al.* (2003) conclude from these data that the emancipation of ethnic minority girls in secondary education can, in a certain sense, be considered complete: the relationship between ethnic minority girls and boys is now the same as that between girls and boys from the Dutch majority. Furthermore, Surinamese girls no longer lag behind girls from the majority population (2003, p. 117). The relative success of ethnic minority girls can also be seen in the drop-out rates. Whereas in 1998 Turkish and Moroccan young women still dropped out at a rate of between five and seven percentage points higher than the men, in 2002 their drop-out rate had become the same (Turkish women) or even somewhat lower (Moroccan women) (*ibid.*, p. 126).

Finally, looking at *higher education*, we observe that the intake of Surinamese and Antillean women in higher vocational education is between four and five percentage points higher than for the men. This difference is comparable with that between women and men from the majority population. Moroccan women participate



somewhat more in higher vocational education than men, Turkish women somewhat less (p. 134). In university education, the differences between the sexes for ethnic minorities are approximately the same as for the majority population, with Surinamese women having the greatest relative lead.

We conclude that the convergence objective for education has been achieved: ethnic minority women and girls have caught up and sometimes converted their disadvantage into a lead.

### *Conclusion*

The premise in the introduction to this article that ‘the outcomes of educational policies devised with pluralistic and egalitarian intentions were often the opposite of what was intended’ was not confirmed by our study. The outcome of the Dutch educational policies aiming at combating social equality was not the opposite of what was intended. However, the above does not yet answer the question of whether the educational aspects of integration policy have been successful. The relative success that emerges from the data could in fact be attributable to other factors. The policy that has been pursued is one possible cause but the efforts of pupils, their parents and informal network must not be underestimated (see Crul & Doornik, 2003). The conclusion that the results do not contradict the ambitions is nevertheless important in a field where, according to international research, ‘perverse effects’ are commonplace.

### **Discussion**

Over the past 30 years, integration policy in the Netherlands has adopted different assumptions and focal points. In the 1970s, when it was assumed that immigrant workers would only stay temporarily, policies focused on maintaining group identity, in addition to a certain level of integration into mainstream society. From the 1980s onwards, when it became clear that most immigrants would be staying permanently, the government started to develop policies that focused on reducing socio-economic disadvantages. However, the idea of preserving minority culture still applied for a while. The 1990s saw a new policy period. Under the heading of integration policy, the focus changed towards enhancing participation in education and the labour market and a change can be detected from a focus on collective emancipation to one on individuals in a disadvantaged position. ‘Ethnic minority culture’ was seen more and more as something that had an adverse effect on successful individual integration. Over the years, the core of integration policy in the area of education has been the realization of proportional participation in education. Proportional participation means an equal position of ethnic minority pupils and students compared to those from the majority population, bearing in mind constant background characteristics such as age, gender and socio-economic position. However, given this one central goal, differences occur especially with regard to the means of achieving it (cf. Driessen, 2000). Where, in the 1980s, education in mother tongue language and



preserving the culture of minority groups was supposed to contribute to equal school careers, the focus later changed to learning the Dutch language and measures of individual support. This policy shift, which took place in other European countries as well (see Figueroa, 2004), paralleled the increasing tendency to link problems related to immigration and integration to issues of cultural or religious difference or worse, fundamentalism.

Despite these changes in sociocultural policy, taking all the results into consideration, we may observe that achievement of the equal opportunities objective and the convergence objective that were formulated at the time is coming steadily closer. Achieving these objectives in the field of education is crucial for the realization of social equality in general (Odé, 2002; also see Clifton, 1997). The predominantly positive results for education, therefore, acquire additional significance in that educational success appears to be the key to further success in the integration process as aspired to by both the government and minorities themselves. Reducing the inequality of ethnic minority disadvantaged groups offers hope for the future, even though an identical educational level is still no guarantee of equal job opportunities for members of ethnic minorities compared with the Dutch majority. This is mainly the result of discrimination on the labour market. Opportunities for a better job and a higher income are, in turn, important for improving the housing situation and for breaking out of housing segregation (white and black neighbourhoods). Our historical study of original sources (Rijkschroeff *et al.*, 2004a) has shown that housing mobility is mainly a question of socio-economic opportunities. The result of the relative rise of migrants, first in education and subsequently on the labour market, is that no large groups of permanent 'drop-outs', including ethnic minorities, remain behind in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, it is true that the persistently low-income position of ethnic minorities in relation to the Dutch majority is forming a significant obstacle to migration from concentration districts to more favourable neighbourhoods. This demands more progress in eliminating the inequality in education and the labour market.

The question of the extent to which the two stable objectives—equal opportunities and convergence—have been achieved through the integration policies, is difficult to answer in absolute terms. The question about the integration policies' success can never be answered unequivocally. The fact is that some of the successes booked might not be caused by the policy, or it might be impossible to demonstrate the causal relationship. Neither does international comparative research offer a way out, because educational systems and practices diverge too much to allow comparison. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that the Dutch educational integration policies have, in fact, contributed to the educational success of minority pupils. Their relatively early start, long term view and consistency in goals with respect to the socio-economic dimension does, at least, deserve credit.

One important question that remains to be answered is whether the specific cultural integration policy has had a negative effect on the school achievement of the minority pupils, as claimed by scholars such as Koopmans and Tomlinson. According to our sources, there is no evidence to corroborate this assumption—or to

denounce it. Several studies have pointed out that policy measures such as mother tongue instruction ('Education in One's Own Language and Culture') have neither had a positive nor a detrimental effect on the school achievement of minority pupils (Pels, 2004). This leads us to our final conclusion: although the successes achieved by minority pupils cannot be linked linearly to the Dutch integration policies, these policies have contributed to what was intended and certainly not resulted in the opposite.

## Notes

1. This definition is based on Berry's (1997) acculturation framework.
2. 'The multicultural drama' is the title of an article by Paul Scheffer in one of the national newspapers in 2000 which heralded the start of the public debate.
3. These monitor studies are, for example, Toegankelijkheid and Evenredigheid, Statistisch Vademecum, CBS-studies en Sociale Positie en Voorzieningengebruik Allochtonen. (Accessibility and Equitability, Statistical Handbook, Statistics Netherlands studies and Social Position and Use of Facilities by Ethnic Minorities.)

## Notes on contributors

Rally Rijkschroeff is Research Director of the Verwey-Jonker Institute. This Dutch institute carries out policy-strategic and evaluative research into social issues. His research themes focus on social policy, cultural diversity, health and patient movements.

Geert ten Dam is Professor of Education and Rector of the Graduate School of Teaching and Learning of the Universiteit van Amsterdam. Her research interests centre on learning processes, social inequality and citizenship education. Among her recent publications are 'Critical thinking as a citizenship competence: teaching strategies' in *Learning and Instruction* (2004) and 'Inclusiveness and ICT in education: a focus on gender, ethnicity and social class' in the *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* (2005).

Jan Willem Duyvendak, Professor of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam, studied sociology and philosophy in Groningen (the Netherlands) and Paris (France). His work deals with various themes such as multiculturalism, social cohesion, social movements and social policy. He recently published (with Veldboer and Kleinhans) 'The diversified neighbourhood in western Europe and the United States. How do countries deal with the spatial distribution of economic and cultural differences?' in the *Journal of International Migration and Integration* (2002).

Marjan de Gruijter studied Cultural Anthropology and Islam Studies and is a researcher at the Verwey-Jonker Institute. She studies the position of refugee and migrant women and their families in the Netherlands, focusing on the accessibility and use of (health) care and support facilities. A recent publication (with Pels) is 'How is the offspring of the "guestworkers" doing? Developments among Moroccans in the Netherlands' in *Sociologische Gids* (2004).

Trees Pels is head of the research group Multicultural Issues at the Verwey-Jonker Institute. Her field of study is the socialization and development of minority children and the interaction between their families and other socializing institutions. Recent publications include 'Educational strategies of Moroccan mothers in the Netherlands' in *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* (2003) and 'Disengagement and teacher-student interactions in two Dutch multi-ethnic schools' in *Dialogues in and around multicultural schools* (2005).

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