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This article focuses on the enhancement of social competence of students in secondary education. In the literature two perspectives on social competence can be distinguished: an 'educating for adulthood' perspective and an 'educating for citizenship' perspective. From each perspective goals are formulated for what education should be aimed at and what teachers could strive for. By means of a survey, teachers' educational goals regarding the social domain were explored. The results show that teachers unanimously emphasize educational goals from the 'educating for adulthood' perspective. The citizenship goals receive less attention. Irrespective of the perspective, pre-vocational teachers appear less confident than general secondary teachers regarding the attainability of the goals for their students. They intend to contribute to the development of social competence of their students in their own lessons more often. In conclusion, we argue that teaching strategies should be developed that support teachers' contribution to their students' development of social competence, particularly the citizenship elements.

Cet article traite l'apprentissage d'une compétence sociale des élèves dans l'éducation secondaire. La littérature professionnelle distingue deux visions sur la compétence sociale: une vision orientée vers l'âge adulte et l'autre orientée vers la citoyennet. Chacune des ces visions connaît des objectifs spécifiques qui amènent leur propre façon d'enseignement et le rôle de l'enseignant là-dedans. Les objectifs éducatifs des professeurs concernant le domaine social ont été explorés au moyen d'un aperçu. Les résultats prouvent que les professeurs soulignent unanimement les objectifs éducatifs s'orientant vers âge adulte, tandis que les objectifs s'orientant vers la citoyenneté suscitent moins d'attention. Indépendamment de ces deux visions, les professeurs du primaire semblent moins confiants que les professeurs du secondaire quand il s'agit de la faisabilité des objectifs par leurs élèves. Ceux-là sont plus souvent prêts à contribuer au développement de la compétence sociale de leurs élèves pendant leurs propres leçons. En conclusion nous plaidons en faveur du développement de stratégies d'enseignement stimulant les professeurs à contribuer à la compétence sociale de leurs élèves, en particulier en ce qui concerne les aspects de citoyenneté.

Dieser Aufsatz beschäftigt sich mit der Verbesserung der Sozialkompetenz von Schülern im Sekundarbereich. In der Fachliteratur zum Thema Sozialkompetenz lassen sich zwei Perspektiven unterscheiden: Erstens die der ''Erziehung zum Erwachsenen'' und zweitens die der ''Erziehung zum Staatsbürger''. Aus beiden Perspektiven werden für den Ausbildungssektor und für die

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Leherarbeit Ziele formuliert. Mittels einer Umfrage wurde in dieser Studie ermittelt, welche pädagogischen Ziele Lehrer sich im Bereich der sozialen Kompetenz setzen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Lehrer einstimmig pädagogische Ziele aus der Perspektive der ''Erziehung zum Erwachsenen'' betonen. Im Vergleich dazu erhalten Staatsbürgerschaftsziele weniger Aufmerksamkeit. In Bezug auf die erreichbarkeit der Ziele für ihre Schüler zeigen sich Lehrer im berufsvorbereitenden Unterricht, ungeachtet der Perspektive, weniger zuversichtlich als Lehrer im allgemeinbildenden Bereich. Sie haben häufiger die Absicht in ihrem eigenen Unterricht zur Entwicklung der Sozialkompetenz ihrer Schüler beizutragen. Wir schlussfolgern, dass Unterrichtsstrategien zu entwickeln sind, die Lehrern dabei helfen können, zur Entwicklung der Sozialkompetenz ihrer Schüler beizutragen, besonders dort wo es um die Staatsbürgerschaftelemente geht.

Este artículo se centra en la importancia de la competencia social de los alumnos en la educación secundaria. En la literatura se pueden distinguir dos perspectivas acerca de la competencia social: una perspectiva`que se dirige a una educación para la edad adulta' y una perspectiva`que se dirige a una educación para la ciudadanía'. Desde cada perspectiva se han formulado las metas que deben de alcanzar tanto la educación como los profesores. A través de una investigación se exploraron las metas de los profesores respecto al dominio social. Los resultados demuestran que los profesores de forma unánime dan más importancia a las metas educativas desde la perspectiva de 'adulthood'. A las metas acerca de la ciudadanía se presta menos atención. Independientemente de la perspectiva, los profesores prevocacionales parecen tener menos confidencia que los profesores de secundaria que los alumnos alcancen las metas. Más a menudo tienden a contribuir al desarrollo de la competencia social de los alumnos en sus propias clases. Concluyendo, discutimos que se desarrollen las estrategias de aprendizaje que soportan la contribución del profesor al desarrollo de la competencia social del alumno, sobre todo los elementos de ciudadanía.

Introduction

Societies are becoming more and more pluralistic, while at the same time the small relatively safe communities are decreasing due to globalisation and individualization. Under the force of those circumstances teachers feel the need to equip students with competencies that are indispensable for adequate participation in a changing society. Through the loss of traditional contexts, youngsters have to rely on their own social competence to participate in society more than ever before. In the perception of teachers, enhancing the pro-social development of students belongs inextricably to the profession of teaching (Eisenberg, 1992; Kaplan, 1997; Solomon *et al.*, 2001). In secondary education the significance of the social task of education is increasingly acknowledged (Rychen & Salganik, 2003). Growing up in contemporary Western society implies learning to deal with differences, uncertainty and change. In line with these developments, there has been a clear renewed interest in the personal development and well being of students since the 1990s. Education must endeavour to guide students towards adulthood and a position in society (Gallagher *et al.*, 1996; Veugelers & Oser, 2003).

The diversity of issues underlying the importance attached to the pro-social development of students brings with it a whole range of social aims that are strived for in education. There are, for example, extensive programs for life skills (Quicke,

1999) and citizenship education (Kerr, 1999). In the Netherlands, a recent recommendation of the Education Council (Onderwijsraad, 2003) regarding the preparation of students to participate in society, i.e. for citizenship, builds on a long-term discussion about the task of education in enhancing the social competence of students. In 2005, a bill has been passed making citizenship education a compulsory element of primary and secondary education.

The political and educational debate on the role of education regarding the pro-social and moral development of students is mainly focused on the type of goals that should be strived for. Little is known however, about the support of teachers for such goals, or about the extent to which teachers pursue these goals themselves. In this article the focus is on the question: *what are the social competence goals of teachers?* The term 'social competence' is used to denote the intended outcome of guidance and instructional strategies to enhance the pro-social and moral development at student level. We investigate which social goals teachers intend to strive for, when speaking of the importance of contributing to the social competence of their students. On which aspects in particular do they intend to focus?

Theoretical framework

In general, the concept of social competence is used to refer to the totality of knowledge, skills and attitudes which students need to act adequately in a specific social situation. Of course, contributing to the social competence of students is aspired to in *all* the learning processes that occur at school in some way or other; there are no non-social competences. Every development and all learning in school relate, at least ideally, to the functioning and identity development of students in society and are thus social development and social learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It is not this fundamental implication of the notion 'social' that we mean, when speaking of social competence. In fact, we limit the term 'social competence' to the learning outcomes aspired to in what we call the social domain.

In this section we present our theoretical framework, which is based on an extensive review (Ten Dam & Volman, 2003) regarding the concept of social competence. Figure 1 shows the conceptualization of social competence in contemporary society that resulted from the review. We distinguish between an intra-personal, inter personal and societal dimension of social competence, and between the aspects attitude, knowledge, reflection and skills.

Developing into a socially competent adult

The concept social competence itself is rooted in a developmental psychology tradition (Raver & Zigler, 1997; Rose-Krasnor, 1997; Jackson & Bijstra, 2000). Three elements are typical for the 'educating for adulthood' or developmental psychology perspective. Firstly, social competence concerns the interaction between

		Dimensions		
		Intra-personal	Inter personal	Societal
Aspects	Attitude	Self-confidence Self-respect Willingness to take responsibility for one's own action Self-reliance, in the sense of daring to set one's own course	Confidence in other people Respect other people Engagement with other people Willingness to take responsibility for relations with other people Willingness to enter a dialogue with other people	Democratic attitude Valuing equality and equivalence Valuing equity / care Willingness to take responsibility for society/ willingness to participate Willingness to hear other people's voice
	Knowledge	Self-knowledge	Knowledge of social rules and manners	Knowledge of society
	Reflection	Critical insight in (the wishes, abilities, motives) oneself	Critical insight in (the wishes, abilities, motives) of other people Insight in group processes Insight in the influence of one's own acting on other people	Insight in the social structure of society Insight in social processes (in- and exclusion) Insight in the influence of society's social structure on intra- and inter personal functioning Insight in one's own (in)capabilities to act with respect to the social structure of society
	Skills	Regulation skills (regulation of own impulses, emotions, self-control, self-discipline)	Social-communicative skills Being able to change perspectives	Being able to handle cultural differences and differences regarding social position/status Being able to handle social tensions

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for social competence in contemporary society. *Source*: Ten Dam and Volman (2005)

the individual and other people. Children have to be able to maintain relationships with peers. Secondly, the development of social competence is conceptualised in terms of meeting the challenges that diverse developmental stages pose to children, such as learning to play together or being able to enter into intimate, sexual relationships (Allen *et al.*, 1989; Elias & Weissberg, 1994). Therefore, thirdly, social competence is always related to the age or developmental stage of the child. While

growing older, the developmental tasks children encounter become more complex, and the responsive social behaviour of the child is expected to develop accordingly. Social competence is a developmental construct (Englund et al., 2000). In general, social competence is regarded as the outcome of the normal developmental path of children. Hence, particular attention is called for children with psychosocial problems and children 'at risk', and for programmes aimed towards the promotion of (inter) personal effectiveness and the prevention of maladjusted behaviour (Weissberg, 1990; Beelman *et al.*, 1994; Epstein *et al.*, 1997).

From an 'educating for adulthood' perspective a number of dimensions and aspects of social competence are distinguished, together describing the social abilities that are essential for social competent action of youngsters. Firstly, a distinction is made between the intra-personal and the interpersonal dimension of social competence. In addition, a distinction is made between knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The intra-personal dimension comprises the attitudinal aspects of self-confidence and self-respect (Rotheram, 1987). The knowledge aspect refers to self-knowledge. Finally, self-regulation skills are emphasized, i.e. the skills to regulate own impulses and emotions (Mayer & Cobb, 2000; Halberstadt *et al.*, 2001), self-control and self-discipline (Beelman *et al.*, 1994; Schneider *et al.*, 1996).

The interpersonal dimension comprises attitudinal aspects that regard social values, such as respecting other people, and being willing to take responsibility for relations with others. Besides specific attitudes, youngsters have to display knowledge of social rules and manners. The skills aspects can be summarized as social problem- solving skills and social-communicative skills (Beelman *et al.*, 1994; Englund *et al.*, 2000).

Developing into a socially competent citizen

In the last decade increasing attention has been paid to the moral task of education and to citizenship education (Solomon *et al.*, 2001; Schuitema, Ten Dam & Veugelers, in press). Distinguishing features of such an approach are the emphasis on social participation and on the democratic and multicultural character of contemporary society (Kerr, 1999; Rychen & Salganik, 2003). Modern society places specific requirements on its citizens. Adequate participation implies that one is able to flexibly negotiate, manage and act upon the diversity and multiple opportunities society offers (Giddens, 1996). The ultimate goal is that students learn to see themselves as participants in a broad democratic moral community (Duncan, 1997; Solomon *et al.*, 2001). With reference to Dewey (1966), democratic citizenship is considered as a way of life, at the core of which the preparedness and willingness for dialogue, the readiness to raise one's own voice, and the willingness to listen to other people are central. Furthermore, essential in being able to direct one's own life and societal developments is the ability to reflect upon situations and actions taken. Socially competent citizens must be able to add their own, critical contribution in a socially responsible way. Therefore, besides

knowledge, attitudes and skills, reflection is seen as a necessary aspect of social competence (Wardekker, 2001).

From a citizenship perspective, a societal dimension can be added to the intra-personal and interpersonal dimensions described under the 'educating for adulthood' perspective. Furthermore, the citizenship approach adds a reflection aspect to the concept of social competence. The expectation that one can make authentic decisions, design and develop one's own life and identity, and in the same process make a valuable and critical contribution to society, sets specific demands regarding the kind of knowledge of the self, of one's relationships and of one's position in society. This knowledge requires reflection in order to gain insight in the social structure of society, in one's own position, identity, and the possibilities to act, with all of these aspects embedded in their own cultural and historical context. Hence, the aspect of reflection not only regards the societal dimension, but also the intra-personal and interpersonal dimension of social competence (Rychen & Salganik, 2003).

School context

Earlier case study research of projects that were intentionally developed to foster social competence, have led us to expect differences between teachers in general secondary education and teachers in pre-vocational secondary education, concerning their goals on social competence (Ten Dam & Volman, 2003). These cases showed that projects in general secondary education emphasise the meaning of changes in society for students and on the contribution the students themselves could make to this. The learning objective could be characterized as developing a reflexive and changeable identity, and being able to participate in society as a critical citizen. The projects in pre-vocational education, however, appeared mainly geared to improving the chances of students at school and in society by working on aspects of social competence, which pre-vocational students seem to lack, such as self-confidence, and social and communicative skills.

In the present study not only the question of which social goals teachers intend to strive for is investigated, but also the question of how much emphasis teachers put on each of the distinguished perspectives on social competence goals ('educating for adulthood' and 'educating for citizenship'). Moreover a number of background variables are considered in this study. First, the teachers' type of education is looked at: pre-vocational or general secondary education. Also subject domains, gender, and experience as a teacher are taken into account.

The main research question will be explored in more detail by means of the following questions:

1. To what extent do teachers support a developmental psychology ('educating for adulthood') perspective on social competence compared to a citizenship perspective?
2. Which are the most important social competence goals of teachers in secondary education?

3. What are the differences between the social competence goals of different groups of teachers (school type, subject domain, gender, experience)?

Methods

Populations and procedure

A survey questionnaire was sent to 1450 teachers teaching in grade nine (secondary education, age 14–15). The teachers were selected by means of a random, stratified sample. Teachers in both general secondary education (subjects Dutch language, biology, economy) (n=475) and in pre-vocational education (subjects Dutch language and a vocational subject, within the departments 'care and well-being', and technology[1]) (n=975) were approached with a personally addressed letter covering the survey questionnaire. The response was 31%, and the respondents were well distributed according to school type and subject domain.[2] Table 1 shows the frequencies of the 363 respondents according to level, subject domain and gender.

Instruments

The survey questionnaire was developed on the basis of the conceptual framework as presented in section two. For each element in Figure 1, an item was formulated representing a concrete goal which teachers can strive for. A pilot study was carried out to assess the lucidity and appropriateness of the formulations in the questionnaire. In the final version of the questionnaire the items were randomised, appearing as a 39-item list. Below some examples of the survey items are given.

Table 1. Distribution of teachers according to school type, subject domain and gender

		Prevocational secondary education (n=284)	*General secondary education (n=79)*	*Total (n=363)*
Dutch language		90	43	133
Biology or economy		7	30	37
Vocational subject	*care*	55		55
	technology	79		79
More subjects / other domain		33	1	34
Missing		20	5	25
Total		284	79	363
Gender	*Female*	101	26	125
	Male	183	53	232

Intra-personal dimension:

- To have confidence in your own abilities, your own thinking and acting (attitude)
- To have self-knowledge (knowledge)
- To understand what you're good at and what you're not good at, and understand why that is (reflection)
- To show self-discipline, do not give in to emotions and impulses primarily (skill)

Interpersonal dimension:

- Be willing to take responsibility for your relations with other people (attitude)
- To know which conduct is appropriate in a situation, know social rules (knowledge)
- To understand how the things you say and do influence other people (reflection)
- Be able to hold a conversation with various people in diverse situations (skill)

Societal dimension:

- Be willing to strive for justice, be engaged with and stand up for other people (attitude)
- To have knowledge about the structure of society (knowledge)
- To understand how some groups of people are being excluded due to prevailing opinions, practices and habits (reflection)
- Be able to manage differences between people regarding e.g. ethnicity, religion, social status (skill)

Regarding every single item in the survey, the teachers were asked to answer four questions, in this specific order:

(a) Do you think this item is an important *developmental goal* for youngsters? (Goal at all)
(b) Is fostering this item an educational *task of the school*? (Goal for school)
(c) Do you consider this item as an *attainable goal* for your students? (Attainable goal)
(d) Should this item also be addressed within the *subject you teach*? (Own subject goal)

There is a hierarchical order in the questions (a), (b) and (d) in the sense of an increasing engagement with social competence as an educational goal. Question (c), however, is of a different order. It concerns the extent to which teachers consider social competence goals as within reach for their own students, regardless of the importance attached to these goals.

This four-step questioning procedure was devised for the following reasons. By asking about a specific item in a variety of ways we intended to tackle the problem of socially desirable responses. We presumed that the first and the second questions (a) and (b) would not discriminate, due to the assumption that those questions regarding social competence are highly susceptible to socially desirable responses (who does *not* consider social competence an important issue?). With their answers

to questions (a) and (b) the teachers could prove they were not 'against' social competence. We expected that, once teachers had been able to express this, the susceptibility to socially desirable responses to questions (c) and (d) would cease.

Teachers were asked to indicate their opinion regarding a specific item on a 3-point scale, with 1 meaning 'no', 2 'slightly' and 3 'yes'.

The questionnaire also made enquiries into background information: age, gender, experience as a teacher, levels and domains of the curriculum in the teachers' school (general secondary or pre-vocational education; technology or care), and the subject(s) the teacher taught in (Dutch, Biology, Economy, and vocational subject).

Analyses

The skewness and kurtosis of the distributions on the questions (a), (b), (c), and (d) were examined, which proved the assumptions on a desirability bias in question (a) and (b) to be right. Questions (a) and (b) appeared not to differentiate. As a result only the data from questions (c) and (d) was used to answer the research questions.

Scales were composed, which reflect the dimensions and aspects of the concept of social competence (Figure 1), by computing the average sum score of all items within a row and within a column. Cronbach's alpha varied between 0.70 and 0.88 for the question on attainability (c) and between 0.61 and 0.91 for the question on goal for own subject (d).

The first research question (i.e. 'to what extent do teachers support a developmental psychology 'educating for adulthood' perspective on social competence compared to a citizenship perspective?') was answered by computing two variables. The variable 'educating for adulthood' was computed by means of the scales attitude-intra-personal, attitude-interpersonal, knowledge-intra-personal, and knowledge-intra-personal, skills-intra-personal and skills-interpersonal. The variable 'educating for citizenship' was computed by means of the four societal scales and the two remaining reflection scales. Variables were also computed, reflecting the intra-personal, interpersonal, and societal dimensions and the attitudinal, knowledge, reflection and skills aspects.

The second research question (i.e. 'which are the most important social competence goals of teachers in secondary education?') was answered by separating the items that scored highest in the upper quartile of all scores, i.e. being the ten highest scored items.

The third research question (i.e. 'what are the differences between the social competence goals of different groups of teachers?') was answered by analysing differences using multivariate tests. Non-parametric tests for two independent samples were used, the Mann-Whitney test and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov as second opinion. By carrying out a multivariate General Linear Model with post hoc Bonferroni test, differences between school types and domains were investigated.

Results

In this section the research results are presented in three subsections. Each subsection will cover one of the research questions. The kind of comparisons in each subsection is the same, but the level on which the comparisons are performed, differ between the subsections. Hence, each step takes us into deeper detail. As an effect of this method, most data can be represented in the following two tables (see Tables 2a and 2b). These tables will be referred to throughout the sections.

Educating for adulthood versus educating for citizenship

In order to find an answer to the first research question, the extent to which the teachers support the distinguished perspectives was investigated. The analyses show that the investigated group of teachers attaches greater importance to the social competence goals derived from an 'educating for adulthood' perspective, than to those derived from an 'educating for citizenship' perspective (Table 2a).

The difference in importance teachers attach to each of both perspectives is significant for both the attainability-question and the own-subject-question. Moreover, teachers judge the attainability of social competence goals lower than their own intentions to enhance the social competence of students in the context of their own subject. This holds true for the 'educating for adulthood' perspective as well as for the citizenship perspective.

Social competence goals in secondary education

Our second aim was to explore which educational goals regarding social competence are strived for in secondary education. Which items in particular underlie the difference between the perspectives? To suit this purpose a general picture of the specific goals, which teachers say they strive for, is presented.

Regarding social competence as an attainable goal for their students, the ten highest scored items re-translated into the components of social competence they refer to (as in Figure 1) are:

- Self-confidence (2.51) (attitude and intra-personal)
- Willingness to take responsibility for one's own actions (2.47) (attit., intra.)
- Set great store on equality and equivalence (2.43) (attit., soc.)
- Critical insight in one's own wishes (2.42) (ref., intra.)
- Social skills[3] (2.42) (skill, inter.)
- Respect other people (2.42) (attit., inter.)
- Critical insight in one's own possibilities (2.40) (ref., intra.)
- Engagement with other people (2.39) (attit., inter.)
- Willingness to enter a dialogue with other people (2.38) (attit., inter.)
- Communicative skills (2.38) (skill, inter.)

Table 2a. Comparison of mean scores <u>between</u> groups of teachers, on the question on social competence as an objective for own subject and as an attainable objective by dimensions and aspects of social competence

		Means								
		Perspectives		*Dimensions*			*Aspects*			
		Developmental psychological	*Critical citizenship*	*Intra-personal*	*Inter personal*	*Societal*	*Attitudes*	*Knowledge*	*Reflection*	*Skills*
Attainability	*Prevocational teachers (n=284)*	**2,26**	**2,14**	**2,28**	**2,24**	**2,09**	**2,25**	**2,13**	**2,20**	**2,12**
	General education teachers (n=79)	**2,45**	**2,35**	**2,44**	**2,41**	**2,33**	**2,45**	**2,40**	**2,36**	**2 ,32**
Own subject	*Prevocational teachers (n=284)*	**2,61**	**2,39**	**2,62**	**2,57**	**2,30**	**2,52**	**2,42**	**2,48**	**2,48**
	General education teachers (n=79)	**2,45**	**2,26**	**2,43**	**2,40**	**2,22**	**2,40**	**2,29**	**2,31**	**2,33**

Test of between-subject effects
* The difference between the means of the two compared groups of teachers is significant at the ,05 level. Means that are printed in bold differ significantly.

Table 2b. Comparison of mean scores <u>within</u> groups of teachers, between perspectives, dimensions and aspects of social competence on the question on social competence as an objective for own subject and as an attainable objective

		Δ Means									
		Perspectives	*Dimensions*			*Aspects*					
		Develop. psychol. -critical citizen.	*Intra -inter*	*Intra –societ.*	*Inter –societ.*	*Attit. -know*	*Attit -reflec*	*Attit -skill*	*Know -reflec*	*Know -skill*	*Reflec –skill*
Attainability	*Prevocational teachers (n=284)*	**0,12**	**0,04**	**0,19**	**0,15**	**0,12**	0,05	**0,13**	−0,07	0,01	**0,08**
	General education teachers (n=79)	**0,10**	0,03	**0,11**	**0,08**	0,06	**0,09**	**0,13**	0,03	0,08	0,04
Own subject	*Prevocational teachers (n=284)*	**0,22**	**0,05**	**0,32**	**0,27**	**0,10**	0,04	0,05	−0,06	−0,05	0,01
	General education teachers (n=79)	**0,18**	0,02	**0,21**	**0,18**	**0,11**	**0,09**	0,07	−0,02	−0,04	−0,02

Test of within-subject effects
* The difference between the means within each group of teachers is significant at the ,05 level. Means that are printed in bold differ significantly.

Least endorsed is 'being able to manage social tensions' (1.80) (skill, soc.).

The ten items mostly endorsed as goals for their own subject matter are:

- Self-confidence (2.85) (attit., intra.)
- Critical insight in one's own possibilities (2.82) (ref., intra.)
- Willingness to take responsibility for one's own actions (2.81) (attit., intra.)
- Willingness to enter a dialogue with other people (2.80) (attit., inter.)
- Respect other people (2.79) (attit., inter.)
- Social skills (2.76) (skill; inter)
- Knowledge of social rules and manners (2.68) (knowl., inter.)
- Set great store on equality and equivalence (2.66) (attit., soc.)
- Communicative skills (2.61) (skill, inter.)
- Engagement with other people (2.60) (attit., inter.)

Least endorsed is 'democratic attitude' (1.99) (attit., soc.).

The analyses confirm that both the intra-personal and interpersonal dimensions of social competence are scored significantly higher than the societal dimension. Yet, though the interpersonal items outnumber the intra-personal items in the top10, it turns out that the intra-personal items in general are scored significantly higher than the interpersonal items (Table 2a).

Goals regarding the relations between people in particular (interpersonal) appear to feature high in both top 10s. The intra-personal goals appear to be of secondary importance. The societal dimension is especially lowly valued: only one item in both top 10s. The item 'equality and equivalence' proves to be a societal goal teachers assign considerable value to and consider fairly attainable. Furthermore, it is the attitudinal aspect in particular that comes to the fore in the opinions of teachers (see Table 2b).

Social competence goals related to differences between teachers

Teachers differ on several characteristics, varying from the specific educational context they work in to individual characteristics. These differences may be related to the specific social competence goals teachers strive for. In this subsection the focus is on the following context factors: school type (general secondary education versus pre-vocational education), and subject domain (care versus technology). Furthermore, the relation between social competence goals and the gender of the teacher and his or her experience in teaching is taken into account.

Pre-vocational versus general secondary education

Building on the results of the case studies of Ten Dam and Volman (2003) mentioned in section two, it can be expected that the developmental psychology

perspective on social competence will be supported more often in pre-vocational education and a citizenship perspective on social competence more often in general education. Hence the opinions of the teachers in the study at hand are compared to find such differences.

In an absolute comparison, general education teachers indeed score significantly higher than the pre-vocational teachers on both the developmental psychological and the citizenship perspective respectively (see Table 2a). This means that teachers in general secondary education attach greater importance to both the developmental psychology perspective and the citizenship perspective than the pre-vocational secondary teachers do.

As for the relative comparison of the perspectives, it appears that both general secondary education teachers and secondary pre-vocational education teachers regard elements of the developmental psychology perspective as significantly more important than those of the citizenship perspective (see Table 2b).

In short: though the teachers all consider the 'educating for adulthood' perspective more important than the 'educating for citizenship' perspective, teachers in general education, attach significantly more importance to both perspectives for their students than teachers in pre-vocational education do for their students.

It also appears that the two groups of teachers value social competence goals differently, according to attainability and own subject (see Tables 2a and 2b). General education teachers score significantly higher on attainability than on the importance to work on the goals as part of their own subject. For pre-vocational teachers this is the other way round: those teachers score lower on attainability, but assign a significantly higher importance to working on the goals in their own subject. When zooming in on the compounding dimensions and aspects of social competence, the pattern shows likewise. The pre-vocational teachers show a significantly higher intention to work on intra-personal and interpersonal dimensions goals within their own subject than their general education colleagues. It is worth noting that the societal dimension receives less support.

All teachers think attitudes are the most important social competence goals. Prevocational teachers value reflection and skills both second to attitudes. They consider knowledge to be the least importance of the four. General educational teachers, however, do not differentiate between the importance of the other three aspects. These rankings are significant, both for attainability and for work in own subject.

Domains

By breaking up prevocational education into the domains of care and technology, it becomes possible to distinguish a possible discrepancy in the relative contribution of each of those subject domains to the differences with general education. It seems plausible that each domain will show a specific focus on social competence goals. As with all other comparisons this was done for the questions on attainability and own subject (see Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of mean scores between domains, on the question on social competence as an objective for own subject and as an attainable objective by dimensions and aspects of social competence

| | Comparison | | Dimensions | | | Aspects | | | |
| | | | Mean 1 – Mean 2★ | | | Mean 1 – Mean 2★ | | | |
	Domain 1	Domain 2	Intra-personal	Inter personal	Societal	Attitude	Knowledge	Reflection	Skills
Attainability	care	technology	2.32–2.24	2.29–2.18	2.08–2.08	2.28–2.23	2.21–2.10	2.26–2.14	2.14–2.10
	care	general.	2.32–2.44	2.29–2.41	**2.08–2.33**	**2.28–2.45**	**2.21–2.34**	2.26–2.36	**2.14–2.32**
	technology	general.	**2.24–2.44**	**2.18–2.41**	**2.08–2.33**	2.23–2.45	2.10–2.34	2.14–2.36	2.10–2.32
Own subject	care	technology	**2.82–2.55**	**2.79–2.49**	**2.47–2.21**	**2.69–2.47**	**2.55–2.32**	**2.72–2.37**	**2.67–2.38**
	care	general.	**2.82–2.43**	**2.79–2.40**	**2.47–2.22**	**2.69–2.40**	**2.55–2.29**	**2.72–2.31**	**2.67–2.33**
	technology	general.	2.55–2.43	2.49–2.40	2.21–2.22	2.47–2.40	2.32–2.29	2.37–2.31	2.38–2.33

★ The difference between the means of the two compared domains is significant at the ‚05 level. Means that are printed in bold differ significantly.

Concerning the survey question on the attainability of social competence goals, it appears that most differences exist between general education and the domain technology within pre-vocational education. This holds for all dimensions and aspects of social competence. General education teachers score significantly higher than technology teachers.

The care domain takes a unique position in this comparison, showing different faces. Regarding the intra-personal and the interpersonal dimensions, teachers in the domain care score somewhere in between those in general education and technology, with no significant difference with either one. On the societal dimension teachers in care score like teachers in technology, i.e. significantly lower than teachers in general education. Regarding the aspects attitudes, knowledge and skills as attainable goals care teachers and technology teachers score similarly as well; in both pre-vocational domains teachers score significantly lower than in general education. On the reflection aspect however, care teachers show no difference with general education. Both care teachers and general education teachers score significantly higher on reflection than their colleagues in technology.

Concerning the survey question on intention to work on social competence goals for all dimensions and aspects, the analysis reveals one explicit conclusion: teachers in the care domain score significantly higher than their colleagues in both general education and in pre-vocational technology. The comparison between teachers in general education and teachers in technology shows no significant differences. It is very likely that elements of social competence are more explicitly stimulated in education that is focused on practices that evidently show their interrelatedness with the social aspects of life, as is the case in the care domain. Teachers in technology not only score lower on their opinion regarding the attainability of the social competence goals for their students, they also seem to see less necessity to work on social competence goals within their own subject.

Gender

Female and male teachers show different opinions regarding social competence goals (see Table 4).

Female teachers' scores on attainability are significantly higher than those of male teachers. Apparently, women tend to have more confidence in their students or are more optimistic pertaining to their students' social abilities. Moreover, women show a higher intention to work on social competence in their own subject than men do.

When comparing the dimensions and aspects for both groups, it appears that for the aspects reflection and skills, women score significantly higher than men.

Teaching experience

We wondered whether the duration of time spent in the teaching profession and the amount of educational experience would show any variation regarding the opinion

Table 4. Comparison of mean scores between female and male teachers, on the question on social competence as an objective for own subject and as an attainable objective by dimensions and aspects of social competence

		Means								
		Perspectives		Dimensions			Aspects			
		Developmental psychological	Critical citizenship	Intra-personal	Inter personal	Societal	Attitudes	Knowledge	Reflection	Skills
Attainability	women	**2,24**	**2,37**	**2,38**	**2,36**	2,17	2,34	**2,26**	**2,31**	**2,22**
	men	**2,17**	**2,27**	**2,28**	**2,24**	2,13	2,27	**2,15**	**2,20**	**2,13**
Own subject	women	**2,43**	**2,67**	**2,67**	**2,63**	2,34	2,56	2,46	**2,55**	**2,53**
	men	**2,33**	**2,53**	**2,54**	**2,48**	2,26	2,47	2,36	**2,39**	**2,40**

on social competence goals strived for. The teachers questioned had educational experience within the range of 0 to 40 years. Eight experience groups were formulated, covering five years of experience each, for comparison. The analysis regarding experience, however, does not result in remarkably significant outcomes. The results for attainability do not differentiate at all. With regard to the results on own subject, a difference appears between two groups of teachers: expert teachers with 25–35 years of experience compared to teachers with between 0 and 5 years of experience. The more experienced teacher group shows significantly higher scores on the citizenship perspective, on the attitudes aspect, and on the societal dimension than the novice teachers. It seems that starting teachers have less affinity with teaching social competence, while experienced teachers feel called upon to work on social competence.

Conclusions

From our study it appears that teachers attach greater importance to the social competence goals derived from the 'educating for adulthood' perspective compared to the 'educating for citizenship' perspective, and consider these goals more attainable for their students. In general, teachers agree more easily with the desirability of social competence goals as part of their own subject than with the idea that these goals are attainable for their students. This holds for both perspectives.

How can these findings be interpreted? Firstly, it should be noted that teachers generally consider working on social competency goals to be a major topic. Both perspectives on social competence prove important, though not to the same extent. Secondly, the 'educating for adulthood' perspective is the one that most closely relates to traditional discourses on teaching. Irrespective of the pleas of some educationists and sociologists (like Dewey or Durkheim) earlier last century, for a broad conception of education, oriented toward citizenship and social participation, most thinking on education in former decades has been focused on 'basics', on building knowledge, and on intra-personal attitudes and skills (like self-esteem, self regulation). This developmental psychology perspective comprises social competence goals that teachers quite often regard as a basic necessity to learn (self-discipline, ability to cooperate). Finally, the teachers seem convinced of the idea that they should contribute to stimulating social competence in their lessons whether they think they will succeed or not. This seems to point at a discomfort with what teachers actually get done with their students as related to what they wish they could attain.

Teachers in particular value elements of social competence like a positive self-esteem, respect for other people and willingness to cooperate with others (attitudes on the intra and interpersonal dimensions). They appreciate their students' need to acquire a positive attitude towards other people. Apparently teachers hope that where there's a will, there's a way or they might think that when the will is lacking, knowledge and skills are sown in poor soil.

Our expectation that the developmental psychology 'educating for adulthood' perspective on social competence would be supported more often in pre-vocational

education and a citizenship perspective on social competence more often in general education, only partially proved to be correct. It turned out that the general education teachers indeed assign greater importance to the 'educating for citizenship education' perspective than teachers in pre-vocational education do. But this also holds true for the 'educating for adulthood' perspective. Moreover, both groups of teachers agree on the relative importance of the two distinguished perspectives; they all value the developmental psychology perspective more highly than the citizenship perspective, as attainable goals for their students and as goals for their subject.

The discrepancy between the survey results and the case studies results (Ten Dam & Volman, 2003) can be explained as follows. Firstly, the case studies were not representative for teachers in Dutch secondary education. They were focused on specific projects explicitly meant to enhance the social competence of students. Secondly, the curriculum levels of the studies are not equal. While the case studies concerned the concrete instructional design of social competence projects (the formal curriculum), the survey regards the opinions of teachers about social competence goals in general (as part of the ideal curriculum). Difference in curriculum level may cause different results (Goodlad *et al.*, 1979).

As far as the questions on attainability and work in own subject are concerned, it appears that pre-vocational teachers have less confidence in attaining the goals. Yet, the pre-vocational teachers show a significantly higher intention to work on goals in the intra-personal and interpersonal dimensions goals within their own subject than their general education colleagues. This reflects differences in teachers' perceptions of their students' abilities and needs related to school type. Further research will be necessary to understand the meaning of the discrepancy between the pre-vocational and general education teachers' thoughts on attainability versus working in their own subject.

International literature shows that within the developmental psychology perspective the *skills* for social competence are a particular focus of attention. This is apparent from the substantial amount of publications dealing with possibilities and programmes to enhance the skills of youngsters in this domain (Caplan *et al.*, 1992; Beelman *et al.*, 1994). This survey, however, shows that teachers' intentions are not primarily focused on skills, but on attitude instead. As to the higher valuation of the developmental psychology perspective above the critical citizenship perspective, it is not the reflection aspect, but the societal dimension that is less valued by teachers.

When considering the domains of education, it appears that teachers in the care domain demonstrate a greater intention to work on social competence goals than teachers in general education or technical pre-vocational education. This may be attributed to the opportunities the subject domain care offers to actually stimulate social competence. To give a concrete example, it seems logical to attend the concerns of a group of elderly clients in health treatment, but social goals such as the concerns of a homeowner towards the building engineer are less obvious.

The special position of the care domain found in our study may also be related with the findings on gender. As more women than men are teachers in this domain,

it is possible that the findings on domain and gender reflect each other. The results show that women are more optimistic regarding the attainability of the goals and regarding their own intention to work on the goals than men. Another choice of domains might have distinguished the impact of the separate variables domain and gender, but could not be made in our research design. The results on gender nevertheless are congruent with Biklen's (1995): female teachers tend to emphasize the pedagogical or social aspects of being a teacher, while men tend to emphasize knowledge and contents of their subject. Thus, the differences between women and men may also be explained by differences regarding their conception of the educational task.

Finally: teachers are positive about social competence goals. Stimulation of social competence is obviously not perceived as a mission impossible for formal education. However, the critical citizenship perspective proves to be the smaller twin. More efforts should therefore be made to clarify the relevance of the societal dimension of social competence for students' chances in society and for social relationships within the school.

In terms of a future research on social competence, attention should be paid to developing and evaluating instructional strategies for social competence education. Teaching strategies should be developed to support teachers (especially in pre-vocational education), in order to make them feel more confident about their ability to contribute to the development of their students' social competence.

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Notes

1. In The Netherlands the department named 'care and well-being' covers the domains health care, child care and beauty care. The department technology covers a range of engineering and engineering related technologies.
2. A non-response study was carried out, showing that the non-respondents did not attach less importance to social competence as an educational goal than the respondents.
3. Social communicative skills has been itemised into two questionnaire items: one for communicative skills, one for social skills. Social skills, priority number five, are regarded as more important then communicative skills, priority number ten.

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