



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Citizenship of young people

Geboers, E.A.M.

**Publication date**  
2014

[Link to publication](#)

#### **Citation for published version (APA):**

Geboers, E. A. M. (2014). *Citizenship of young people*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

#### **General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

#### **Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

# Chapter 6

## *Summary, discussion and conclusions*

The aim of this thesis was to gain insight into the citizenship of young people and the potential effects of citizenship education. In order to understand the concept of citizenship of people, we focused on a broad conceptualization of citizenship in the context of the daily lives of young people in which their citizenship is situated. It was assumed that such an understanding is essential for schools to align their educational goals and strategies with the citizenship competences of students.

In the recent past, political and social tensions in the Dutch society prompted discussion of the functioning of democratic society and the citizenship of people living in the Netherlands. The citizenship of young people in particular became the topic of discussion because of indications of a lack of citizenship knowledge, limited interest in society and little attention to societal issues among young adults (i.e. Coleman, 1993; Niemi, Sanders, & Wittington, 2005). Citizenship is considered an important factor in the development of interpersonal and societal competence (i.e. learning to act responsibly and adequately in Western society). The school is part of the daily life context of students and thus ideally a place to accumulate democratic experiences, meet and contact with others, reflect upon interpersonal relationships but also societal issues and both develop and practice citizenship competences (Biesta, 2011; Lawy & Biesta, 2006; Parker, 2003; Torney-Purta, 2002). It was therefore decided in 2006 to make citizenship education obligatory in all schools in the Netherlands (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2005).

For schools to instil and promote citizenship, a basic understanding of the actual citizenship competences of students is needed in addition to those factors which play a role in the development of these competences – including the citizenship education efforts. The results of the studies reported on in this thesis provide insight into the citizenship of young people and the effects of citizenship education on the development of the citizenship competences of young people in Dutch schools.

## 1 SUMMARY

### 1.1 Effects of citizenship education

In the review of the relevant research literature in Chapter Two of this thesis, insight was gained into the role of citizenship education in the citizenship development of students. The following research question stood central to the study reported on in Chapter Two:

#### *What are the effects of citizenship education on students' citizenship?*

A total of 28 effect studies on citizenship education were reviewed and covered the period between 2003 and 2009. Four types of citizenship education were identified as interventions: 1) curriculum in school in which citizenship education is part of an educational method or programme which is carried out in the classroom setting such as 'Student Voices Program' or other official materials used by the teachers to enhance the citizenship competences of students; 2) curriculum out of school in which citizenship education is part of the obligatory curriculum but nevertheless undertaken in such activities outside the school as excursions or -for example- the 'Democracy for all' programme; 3) pedagogical climate in which citizenship education is part of the organization of the classroom and the atmosphere created within the classroom by teachers including discussion and dialogue and nature of the interactions between teachers and students; 4) extracurricular activities in which citizenship education is part of additional, volunteer

activities such as 'service learning' programmes supervised by the school to develop citizenship competences of students.

The effects of a pedagogical climate in which citizenship is part of the entire classroom organization and climate have been studied most. Moderate effects on the citizenship competences of students were reported for such an approach. A citizenship curriculum in school in which citizenship education is part of an educational method or programme was found to be most effective and showed the largest effect sizes. A citizenship curriculum outside of the school and extracurricular activities were studied much less and found to produce no effects, small effects or contradictory effects compared to the other types of citizenship education.

The citizenship competences for which these types of citizenship education were found to have an effect were categorized along the line of 1) social tasks which are representative of young people's citizenship practices (i.e. acting democratically in a political manner or social manner, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences); and as 2) citizenship competences and behaviour which are needed to fulfil social tasks (i.e. knowledge, attitudes, skills, reflection and behaviour).

The quality of the reviewed effect studies was examined in terms of six possible research designs (i.e. cross-sectional, longitudinal, quasi-experimental with control group, quasi-experimental without control group, review or qualitative exploratory). The results show particular attention to be paid to the political attitudes and behaviour of students as an effect of an out of school curriculum and extracurricular activities in mostly cross-sectional studies although longitudinal studies of these types of citizenship education have also recently been undertaken. The quasi-experimental effect studies conducted with a control group showed the largest effect sizes for the use of an official curriculum in the school. It was further difficult to discern clear relations between the type of citizenship education, characteristics of the students, characteristics of the schools and the citizenship competences of the students. Most of the time limited information was provided about the characteristics of the students and schools. Questions thus remain about how citizenship education can encourage the development of citizenship on the part of the students particularly in light of differences between groups of students and schools. Despite some indications that aspects of the pedagogical climate and school curriculum can be successful in the enhancement of citizenship competences of students, the review of the empirical literature made it clear that it was not yet possible to draw clear-cut conclusions about the effects of citizenship education.

## 1.2 Citizenship competences of students

The aim of the study presented in Chapter Three was to develop and to validate a comprehensive framework to integrate the empirical data and theoretical insights into the citizenship of young people. The research question in this chapter was:

***What are the citizenship orientations and knowledge of students in primary and secondary education and which student characteristics can explain the differences between students?***

The citizenship competences of the students were measured using the Citizenship Competences Questionnaire (CCQ) of Ten Dam, Geijssels, Reumerman and Ledoux (2011). Students were asked to estimate their own citizenship competences but also to demonstrate their citizenship knowledge. The assessed citizenship competences were all situated in contexts which are representative of the daily lives of young people and operationalized in terms of four different components of citizenship (i.e. attitudes, skills,

reflection and knowledge) needed to adequately fulfil four categories of social tasks (i.e. acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences).

The self-estimated citizenship competences and assessed citizenship knowledge of the students were next transformed into a framework to capture the citizenship orientations and domains of knowledge which are important for understanding the citizenship competences of young people. First the scores on the subscales of the CCQ for 7,768 students between the ages of 11 and 16 years were factor analyzed. The identified citizenship orientations and domains of knowledge were then validated using a representative sample of 15,940 students (COOL<sup>5-18</sup>, 2009). Four citizenship orientations (i.e. societal interest, prosocial ability, reflective thinking and assertiveness) and two domains of citizenship knowledge (i.e. societal knowledge and interpersonal knowledge) could thus be distinguished.

A societal interest orientation involves attitudes which reflect a willingness to be a part of the society and take responsibility for others within the society. A prosocial ability orientation involves the skills needed for communication and adaptation of one's practices and habits to society in addition to familiarity with the social rules of society. A reflective thinking orientation involves critical thinking about social issues and social structures, critical reflection upon inequality and discrimination and trying to understand social relations. Finally an assertiveness orientation involves the skills needed to clearly formulate one's own opinions and stand up for these.

Societal knowledge concerns knowledge of the democratic principles of society, the organization of society and the norms which are at issue in society. Interpersonal knowledge concerns knowledge of prevailing social values, behavioural rules, and everyday social manners.

Taken together, the citizenship orientations and knowledge domains represent the specific citizenship attitudes, skills, reflection and knowledge needed for individuals to become competent citizens. And the overarching framework developed to understand the citizenship competences of young people not only contributes to the empirical knowledge base regarding the citizenship competences of young people but also any significant differences in these.

With regard to the latter, a number of background characteristics of students (e.g. gender, SES, ethnicity) were examined in relation to their citizenship orientations and domains of knowledge. The results showed girls to score higher than boys on most of the citizenship orientations and in both knowledge domains; the assertiveness orientation was the only exception. Students from ethnic minorities and students who do not speak Dutch in the home generally scored higher on the four citizenship orientations than majority students and Dutch-speaking students; these majority and Dutch-speaking students also scored higher on both domains of knowledge. Other background characteristics also affected the citizenship orientations and knowledge domains of the students but to only a small extent.

In addition, the results showed that different levels of school (primary education, prevocational education, general secondary education) to relate to differences found between the students. Students in prevocational education showed lower scores than other students for Societal interest, Assertiveness and both of the knowledge domains.

Finally, the participation of the students in societal or school activities, their engagement with the news and their perceptions of the school climate showed little positive relations to the citizenship orientations but also some little negative relations to the domains of knowledge. It is concluded that the framework for citizenship orientations and knowledge domains developed here can help schools to formulate goals which are directly related to the particular citizenship competences of students.

### 1.3 Types of student citizenship

The aim of the study presented in Chapter Four was to present types of student citizenship which may help teachers recognize the different forms of citizenship of relevance for their daily classroom practice but also align their educational goals and strategies with the citizenship competences of students. The following research question stood central in this study:

***Which types of citizenship can be distinguished in primary and secondary education and do these types relate to individual characteristics of students and school levels?***

A typology of student citizenship was successfully constructed using the response patterns of 7,768 students between 11 and 16 years of age for the four citizenship orientations and two knowledge domains described in Chapter Three. Four types of citizenship were identified and validated for a wide range of students in primary and secondary education (COOL<sup>5-18</sup>, 2009). And just how these four types of citizenship related to the characteristics of students and the different levels of school (primary education, prevocational education, general secondary education) was then examined.

For the four types of student citizenship, the following associations and characteristics were found to play a role:

1. Committed citizenship. These students report a generally high willingness and ability to contribute to society, and to participate in society. They reflect upon societal issues and formulate their own ideas. This group of students consists of relatively young girls, mostly from ethnic minority groups, with generally positive perceptions of their school climate, relatively high engagement with the news and active participation in their daily environment.
2. Indifferent citizenship. Students included in this type of citizenship report a lower willingness and ability to contribute to society and to participate in society than students showing other types of citizenship. They hardly reflect upon societal issues and do not come up with their own ideas or stand up for their own ideas. This group of students also possesses relatively less citizenship knowledge than the other groups of students. Relatively older boys from mostly a non-minority background are represented among this group of students who have generally negative perceptions of their school climate, are least engaged of all students with the news and participate least in their daily environment.
3. Ordinary citizenship. These students appear to represent an average level of willingness and ability to contribute to society, but they are not inclined to publically defend their own ideas. The group consists of both boys and girls from all ethnic backgrounds, ages and school years. The group shows average scores and is generally engaged with the news, participates in the daily environment and has a generally positive perception of the school climate.
4. Self-assured citizenship. The students in this group show to have a generally high level of societal knowledge and report high scores on the formulation and defence of their own ideas. They reflect relatively less on societal issues than the students in the other groups. This group of students consists of relatively older boys with generally negative perceptions of the school climate, less engagement with the news and low participation in the daily environment.

The results further showed the four types of citizenship to be distributed differently across the different levels of school: the committed type of citizenship was overrepresented among the primary education schools. The indifferent type of citizenship was relatively common among the prevocational education

schools while the self-assured type of citizenship was relatively common among the general secondary education schools. It was concluded that the types of citizenship identified here offer insight into the citizenship competences of students and thereby have the potential to provide a bridge between the pedagogical goals of schools and teachers, on the one hand, and the citizenship practices of students, on the other hand.

### 1.4 Citizenship development of students

The aim of the study presented in Chapter Five was to provide insight into the development of the citizenship competences of students during the first three years of secondary education. In the empirical literature, very little longitudinal research was available to provide insight into the development of the citizenship competences of students. Cross-sectional studies shed some light on the development of students' citizenship but more indirectly than longitudinal studies. The research question in this Chapter Five was therefore:

***How do citizenship competences of students in secondary education develop over time and which characteristics of the students or schools can explain the observed similarities and differences in the citizenship development of secondary education students?***

We collected longitudinal data on the citizenship competences of students in primary and secondary education. The longitudinal analysis included 2,224 students from 23 secondary education schools. The citizenship competences of the students were measured three times in a period of three school years (school year 2007/2008, 2008/2009 and 2009/2010). The responses of the students on the CCQ were analyzed in terms of the framework of four citizenship orientations and two knowledge domains presented in Chapter Three.

The longitudinal results revealed significant changes in the citizenship competences of the students throughout the first three years of secondary education, but not all changes were positive: 1) Societal interest and reflective thinking on the part of the students decreased over time, 2) Societal knowledge increased over time while interpersonal knowledge decreased, and 3) Prosocial ability and assertiveness of the students showed no changes during the first three years of secondary education. Furthermore, the results showed students from a minority background and the students in higher level schools (i.e. general secondary education) to develop a somewhat higher level of reflective thinking than the students from a majority background and the students in lower level schools (i.e. prevocational education). Those students who reported actively participating in society and engagement with the news also developed a higher level of reflective thinking than other students. Girls and students from a minority background developed more societal interest than other students. And the girls in this study developed somewhat more interpersonal knowledge than the boys in the study. Furthermore, the students in the higher level schools were found to develop a higher level of societal knowledge than the students in the lower level schools. Finally, in the present study, no or very small differences were found between schools with regard to students' citizenship orientation and knowledge domains.

## 2 DISCUSSION

### 2.1 Citizenship competences

The purpose of this thesis was to gain insight into the citizenship competences of students, their development and the effects of citizenship education on this development. Based on the earlier work of Ten Dam et al. (2011), the citizenship competences of students were understood and measured as knowledge, attitudes, skills and reflection regarding four social tasks (i.e. acting democratically, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences). The results of the body of knowledge provided by the studies in this thesis were combined to create an overarching framework of citizenship orientations and knowledge domains, which was then tested and validated. This framework contains specific combinations of knowledge, attitudes, skills and reflection related to the daily citizenship practices of young people.

The approach adopted in the research reported on here takes a broad perspective on citizenship – a perspective which entails both a political and social orientation towards citizenship with attention to shared norms, values and manners of behaving but also attention to individual autonomy and critical citizenship (see also Leenders, Veugelers, & De Kat, 2008; Ten Dam et al., 2011). Other conceptual frameworks for citizenship research mainly concern a political orientation towards citizenship with attention to primarily the future, political citizenship practices of adolescents when in adulthood (i.e. voting or willingness to demonstrate) (Cleaver, Ireland, Kerr, & Lopes, 2005; Schulz, Ainly, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010; Torney-Purta, 2002; Westheimer & Kahn, 2004). The citizenship orientations and knowledge domains of students provide an eligible understanding and interpretation of the citizenship competences of students in the Netherlands. The overarching framework of citizenship orientations and knowledge domains presented here thus represents an important empirical step towards more systematic research on the citizenship competences and practices of young people.

The framework we constructed has not only scientific validity but also practical relevance for education. The citizenship orientations and knowledge domains provide a possibility for schools to formulate goals that can be linked to the citizenship competences of students along with their development. The typology presented in Chapter Four, moreover, makes it possible to differentiate on the basis of their orientations and knowledge. The capacity to identify not only individual but also group patterns of citizenship competences and development opens up opportunities to improve citizenship education.

Prior research on the citizenship competences of students in the Netherlands showed Dutch students to have limited knowledge of cultural, political and economic citizenship issues (Wagenaar, Van der Schoot, & Hemker, 2011). International research also showed Dutch students to score substantially beneath the international mean on attitudes and knowledge of citizenship (Hoskins, Vilalba, & Saisana, 2012; Maslowski, Naayer, Isac, Oonk, & Van der Werf, 2010; Kerr, Lopes, Nelson, White, Cleaver, & Benton, 2007; Schulz et al., 2010). All in all, the citizenship competences of students in the Netherlands appear to be lagging behind those of students in other countries (see also Dijkstra, 2012). The present study, based on a large sample of young people in the Dutch educational system, provides additional insight into the state of the citizenship competences of students in the Netherlands. In particular the students who participated in our studies were found to have a relatively high degree of societal interest; be relatively well-adapted to prevailing norms and habits; be capable of acting socially; and to be rather able to reflect upon social issues. The students in our studies were also found to be relatively good at forming their own opinions in addition to demonstrate high levels of social democratic knowledge and knowledge of appropriate social behaviour. A relatively positive picture of the citizenship of Dutch students thus emerged from the present research. Despite this positive picture, the absence of international comparisons for the studies presented here prevents us from formulating final conclusions.

### 2.2 Differences between students

With regard to differences in the citizenship competences of students, our results partly confirm the results of other research (Geijsel, Ledoux, Reumerman, & Ten Dam, 2012) and partly contradict the results of previous research (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehman, Husfeldt, & Nikolova, 2002; Cleaver et al., 2005; Ireland, Kerr, Lopes, Nelson, & Cleaver, 2006; Keating, Kerr, Benton, Mundy, & Lopez, 2010; Kerr et al., 2007; Schulz et al., 2010; Torney-Purta, 2002). For example, in the ICCS, Schulz et al. (2010) found that girls in the Netherlands do not significantly outperform boys on civic knowledge while results of the present study and those studies in the Netherlands show girls to clearly outperform boys on citizenship knowledge (e.g. Geijsel et al., 2012; Ledoux, Geijsel, Ten Dam, & Reumerman, 2010; Netjes, Van de Werfhorst, Dijkstra, & Geboers, 2011). This inconsistency of our results with regard to the outcomes of international research can perhaps be explained by inclusion of the social dimension of citizenship. Most of empirical research shows girls to perform better on socially-oriented citizenship items than boys while boys do not necessarily score lower than girls on politically-oriented items (Amadeo et al., 2002; Cleaver et al., 2005; Ireland et al., 2006; Keating et al., 2010; Kerr et al., 2010; Torney-Purta, 2002). This presupposition is supported by our finding that there are no significant differences between boys and girls on our measure of assertiveness or, in other words the most politically-oriented scale in our study (see also Geijsel et al., 2012). We can nevertheless not conclude on the basis of these outcomes that girls or – for that matter – boys are better citizens (see also Ledoux et al., 2010). Both dimensions of citizenship – namely social responsibility and an ability to critically contribute to society – are considered important aspects of functioning adequately in society (Leenders et al., 2008; Westheimer, 2008). Future research on gender differences in the citizenship competences of students should thus examine gender-specific perspectives on citizenship in general and differing citizenship intentions in particular. This could conceivably lead to different strategies for empowering the two genders and stimulating active, participative citizenship (cf. Biesta, 2011).

In the CIVED study of Amadeo et al. (2003) and Torney-Purta (2002) but also in the CELS research, Cleaver et al. (2005), Ireland et al. (2006) and Keating et al. (2010) found that a higher socio-economic status (SES) on the part of the parents of students correlated with higher scores for citizenship knowledge and attitudes among students. This finding contradicts with the findings of our research, which showed the socio-economic status (SES) of the students to only exert a small effect on the results and then only for those students with a medium SES (i.e. parents with a secondary education level). Our findings are nevertheless in line with the results of the ICCS and the Dutch Cohort Study (COOL<sup>5-18</sup>), which also found only small effects of the SES of Dutch students on their citizenship knowledge (Ledoux et al., 2010; Schulz et al., 2010). It is possible that differing measures of SES can account for the discrepant results. In the CIVED study and the CELS, the SES of the students was measured using a question concerned with the number of books in the home (Amadeo et al., 2003; Cleaver et al., 2005; Ireland et al., 2006; Torney-Purta, 2002). In the ICCS and Dutch Cohort Study, SES was measured via questions about parental level of education, which is more in line with our measure of the students' SES in terms of the educational level of the parents. Regardless of how the SES of students is measured, the contradictory findings summarized here, call for additional research on the influence of sociological structures and equalities/inequalities within a society on the development of the citizenship competences of students.

Overlooking the international available knowledge base on the citizenship of young people led us to conclude that clear differences in the citizenship competences of students exist across countries (Amadeo et al., 2002; Geijsel et al., 2012; Ireland et al., 2006; Kerr et al., 2010; Maslowski et al., 2010; Schulz et al., 2010; Torney-Purta, 2002). Differences within countries also exist. For example, our research shows students from an ethnic minority background in the Netherlands to score higher on

citizenship orientations than majority Dutch students, who nevertheless show greater citizenship knowledge. Several authors have pointed out that the experiences and knowledge which people accumulate are influenced by their positions within a particular social, economic and political system and structure of the society they are living in (e.g. Banks, 1993; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). The experiences of ethnic minority students are presumably more dominated by differentiation and the presence of conflicting perspectives (cf. Geijsel et al., 2012), which may – in turn – prompt them towards a social interest and also to critically think about differences and inequalities more than majority students in society.

Building on this line of thought, we can assume that not only the citizenship competences of students can differ, but also their interpretations of citizenship. Once again, what counts as a ‘good citizen’ can differ from society to society and therefore probably depending on societal structures and equalities/inequalities within a particular society as well (cf. Hoskins et al., 2012). The question which logically arises from this is whether the country-specific characteristics of our pluriform Western society – which is dominated by attention to social cohesion and the integration of immigrants but also political and social tensions within Dutch society today – have influenced the citizenship perspectives and values of students living in the Netherlands. Cultural differences both across and within countries can conceivably result in different interpretations of citizenship, different values of citizenship and different citizenship competences across students (Cleaver et al., 2005; Geijsel et al., 2012; Netjes et al., 2011).

Given that students from different countries, cultures and backgrounds can lay a different emphasis on their citizenship competences (see also Arthur, Davies, & Hahn, 2008). The question is also whether the present results regarding the citizenship orientations and knowledge domains of students in primary and secondary education can be generalized to contribute to international understanding of citizenship competences. An international knowledge base and international comparisons are obviously needed to provide insight into the different citizenship competences which develop in differing socio-cultural contexts (Kerr et al., 2010). A more thorough understanding of the emergence of differences in the development of citizenship competences via cross-cultural research is thus needed to determine just how culture- or country-specific our findings with regard to the citizenship orientations and knowledge domains of students in the Netherlands may be.

The possibilities of the different interpretations of people across and within countries also holds for the interpretations with regard to the items of the CCQ. Whether or not students from differing cultural backgrounds similarly interpreted the items of the CCQ is open to question. Qualitative research using – for example – think aloud protocols or interviews can help provide insight into this question. The results of earlier research showing minority background students in the Netherlands to score higher on most citizenship competences than Dutch majority students (with citizenship knowledge as the exception) (Ledoux et al., 2010) also require consideration with this context. According to the authors, who also found such a pattern of results when motivational and self-confidence questionnaires were administered, minority students may be less self-critical when responding to questionnaire items than the Dutch majority students. Further examination of the CCQ – in which the citizenship of students was measured through a self-estimation of the competences – is therefore called for. Future research should also collect citizenship information from the parents, teachers and peers of students in order to gain a complete picture of the citizenship competences of students.

### 2.3 Development of citizenship

In addition to providing insight into the citizenship competences of different groups of students, the framework used here also provides insight into the similarities and differences in the development of the citizenship orientations and domains of citizenship knowledge of students. We observed a ‘dip’ in

the citizenship development of the students in our research around the age of 14-15 years, which suggests an influence of so-called ‘puberty effects’. From a developmental psychological perspective, rebellion against social conventions and rejection of a community orientation are known to occur around this age (Geijsel et al., 2012; Ledoux et al., 2010). From a critical pedagogical perspective, however, not only hormones may be blamed but also the experiences of students with having to follow rules without explanation, little or no possibility for discussion and little or no voice in school and other matters (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). Such experiences, both in and out of school, can prompt disengagement among older adolescents in particular (Geijsel et al., 2012; Ledoux et al., 2010). And as students get older, they are likely to be able to better estimate their own competences and become more critical of themselves, which may then be reflected in their responding to the CCQ (Ledoux et al., 2010). The question is, what happens after the age of 14-15 years. In the CELS, Keating et al. (2010) found the attitudes of students towards engagement and participation in society along with their reported political efficacy to increase during grade 13 (i.e. around the age of 18 years). In this thesis, we only followed students through grade 9 (i.e. 15-16 years of age). It therefore remains to be seen if the citizenship competences of students in the Netherlands show a developmental incline following their developmental decline.

The age differences in the types of student citizenship displayed by students in different age ranges (see Chapter Four) also raises the question of if and when indifferent citizenship can develop into committed citizenship (for instance). Additional longitudinal research which includes older age groups of students is thus needed to fully understand the development of citizenship.

Another important issue concerning the citizenship development of students is whether their demonstrated citizenship competences endure in their further lives. Social-psychological research has shown the attitudes and views of adolescents to be changeable but to stabilize later in life (Alwin, Cohen, & Newcomb, 1991). Similarly, both McFarland and Thomas (2006) and McLellan and Youniss (2003) found the political participation of students to become stable after the onset of adulthood. Dutch research has further shown societal orientations and participation during early life-stages to be predictive of these during later life-stages (see also Dijkstra, 2012). Citizenship competences acquired early in life thus appear to endure. Whether or not the competences acquired early in life actually contribute to social, critical citizenship and successful participation in the labour market later in life remains to be seen, however. It would therefore be very interesting to examine the citizenship competences of the students in our research again in their adulthood.

### 2.4 Citizenship education: the role of schools

The different citizenship competences of students in secondary education found in our study appear to correspond to the different levels of school. For example, students in schools for prevocational education showed the lowest citizenship orientation scores and also less citizenship knowledge. In contrast, students in general secondary education showed higher citizenship orientation scores and more citizenship knowledge than the other students in our research. The citizenship orientations of students in prevocational education appeared to be more directed towards appropriate social behaviour and socially responsible citizenship while the citizenship of the other students appear to be more directed towards reflection and autonomy or critical citizenship. These results showing different types of student citizenship for different levels of education (see also Chapter Four) provide evidence for the role of the school in the development of citizenship competences. In prevocational education indifferent citizenship was relatively common; in general secondary education, the self-assured type of citizenship was relatively common. The pressing question concerns the role of the school in these differences.

In principle in education, students should have equal access to the knowledge, values and skills

needed to adequately function in society. Our finding of differences between the citizenship competences of students within the different levels of school thus raise questions about the highly differentiated educational system in the Netherlands where students are tested and selected for different levels of secondary education at a relatively young age (i.e. 12 years). On the one hand, we can assume that students in the Netherlands are selected for a particular level of education depending on their cognitive abilities. Students in the lower levels of education may cognitively be less able to acquire knowledge of societal issues and critically reflect upon societal issues than students in higher levels of education – an assumption which seems to be supported by the results of the studies by Geijssels et al. (2012) and Ledoux et al. (2010). In both studies, students with higher cognitive abilities produced higher scores for citizenship knowledge but also somewhat higher scores for citizenship attitudes and skills when compared to students with lower cognitive abilities. On the other hand, there are indications that teachers in higher level schools focus more on the competences needed for active, critical participation in society while teachers in lower level schools focus more on the basic rules needed for social interaction and socially acceptable behaviour (Leenders et al., 2008; Ten Dam & Volman, 2003). Students in higher level education may thus accumulate more experiences with discussion and dialogue in the classroom than students in lower level education and these differences may, in turn teach them to reflect and think more critically about societal issues than students in lower level education. It can be argued that reflection and critical thinking have become basic skills in modern society and therefore constitute a relevant part of citizenship education (Ten Dam & Volman, 2004). Reflection and critical thinking about societal issues should thus be part of the education of students at all levels. The task for further research along these lines is to create greater clarity with regard to which citizenship education practices, methods and programmes are most effective for the different levels of education provided in the Netherlands.

In addition to the different cognitive capacities and levels of education, it can be argued that students in prevocational education in the Netherlands to have relatively low levels of self-confidence and social and communicative skills. As a result, teachers in schools for prevocational education might feel forced to focus on the basic rules of socially accepted behaviour and social interaction at this level of education, which leaves little time to attend to other citizenship orientations like reflective thinking and assertiveness (cf. Ten Dam & Volman, 2003). From a sociological perspective it can thus be argued that schools in at least the Netherlands reinforce social and cultural structures existing in society (cf. Archer, 2013; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Van de Werfhorst & Mijs, 2010). Only minimal differences were found between the schools with regard to the citizenship competences of their students, however. And we therefore did not analyse the characteristics of the school in relation to the citizenship development of the students within the context of the present research further. The question thus remains of whether the different emphases and goals for citizenship education stem from differing school perspectives and interpretations of citizenship or from educational practices which have been adapted to the characteristics of the students and the characteristics of the school. School interpretations of citizenship and the concomitant educational strategies and practices which they adopt for citizenship education for their students should thus be examined in conjunction with the citizenship development of their students in future research.

### 2.5 Limitations of this research

Despite the informative picture of the citizenship competences of students in primary and secondary education, a limitation on the present research is that information on the characteristics and citizenship practices of the schools was not available for analysis. It was also not possible to draw clear-cut conclusions about the effects of specific approaches to citizenship education and practices as earlier research showed it was difficult to separate the influences of citizenship education from those of the family, peers,

work and clubs. The question of exactly which school characteristics and educational practices contribute to the citizenship competences of students thus remains. The minimal differences in the citizenship competences of students found across schools, however, suggest that the influence of variation in the characteristics of citizenship education may be minimal. Assumptions about the specific role of schools in the development of the citizenship competences of students must also therefore be treated with caution.

It should also be noted that the schools within the Citizenship Alliance may be highly similar to each other as they were either already active with the implementation of citizenship education or intending to start with this. Nevertheless, we validated all of the findings in our research with findings from a representative COOL<sup>5-18</sup> sample. It can therefore be assumed that the outcomes reported here hold for the Dutch primary and secondary education context in general.

## 3 CONCLUSIONS

Specific activities and types of citizenship education as provided by teachers were found to have particular added value for the citizenship development of students. A pedagogical climate in which positive relationships between teachers and students exist, in which social behaviour is encouraged and in which dialogue and discussion takes place was seen to provide students with democratic experiences and opportunities to practice their citizenship competences (see also Anderson, 1982; Flanagan, Bowes, Johnsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998; Gniewosz & Noack, 2008; Finkel & Ernst, 2005; Isac, Maslowski, Creemers, & Van der Werf, 2013). Directing the attention of students to the news (via newspapers, television, radio) also appeared to be of value for the development of the students' ability to reflect upon societal issues (see also Torney-Purta, Richardson, & Barber, 2004).

More explicit educational methods in which teachers use official materials to develop the citizenship knowledge can probably enhance citizenship education further. Citizenship knowledge appears to develop differently than citizenship orientations and should therefore be approached differently. Negative results regarding the effects of active student participation in societal or school activities were found for the citizenship knowledge; the more students reported to be active in societal activities like volunteer work or such school activities as the student council, the lower their scores on citizenship knowledge (see also Isac et al., 2013). Citizenship knowledge can thus be viewed as a distinct aspect of citizenship and thus an aspect in need of its own, unique promotion. This position of citizenship knowledge aligns with the results of Ten Dam et al. (2011) who showed strong interrelations between the citizenship attitudes, skills and reflections of students but few interrelations with their citizenship knowledge. Citizenship knowledge should thus be attended separate from the citizenship orientations in the education of the students.

To close, insights provided in this thesis into the citizenship orientations and knowledge of students can help schools to work on their (obligatory) citizenship task. Knowledge about the citizenship orientations and knowledge of students in addition to the possibilities for their further development can support the schools to explicit and develop a vision and systematic approaches for citizenship education for all students in all levels of education. Schools can emphasize those citizenship values that they consider to be important on the basis of their pedagogical visions. By making the school a place to practice citizenship competences, students are promoted to be critically and socially engaged in society.