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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

CHARACTERISTICS AND EFFECTS



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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS:
CHARACTERISTICS AND EFFECTS

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor

aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam

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Chapter 1

General introduction

General introduction

This research is concerned with the development of inclusive education in Dutch secondary schools. Of specific concern are the general central characteristics of inclusive education and the impact of these characteristics on the school careers of students. The most important aim of inclusive education is to make education accessible for all children and adolescents, both boys and girls. With its origin in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), inclusive education has the broader aim of creating equal rights for all people. This, in turn, has given rise to a movement aimed at the rights of the child (UNICEF, 1989) and the right to Education for all (UNESCO, 1990, 2000, 2015).

These initiatives initially had little consequence for students with special educational needs (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). In the Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994), however, the principles, policies and practical guidelines needed for the implementation inclusive education were spelled out. This statement was specifically aimed at students with special educational needs but actually serves a much broader purpose, drawing upon the following assumption: “regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they can provide an effective education for the majority of children and thereby improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system” (p. ix). With the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), a record number of governments stated that they will strive to establish all of the conditions — both material and otherwise — needed to allow students with special educational needs to obtain an education in their direct environments. The ratification of this convention by many countries nevertheless took a long time.

In West European and Anglo-Saxon countries, where obligatory education has no longer been an issue since the second world war, the development of inclusive education has been aimed at the integration of students with special educational needs into the regular school system. The driving force behind this development at the turn of the century was to attain emancipation and equality for persons with disabilities, acceptance of differences and recognition of the unity of humans. The *deficiency* paradigm or thinking and acting in terms of limitations has gradually given way to a *development* paradigm: thinking and acting in terms of the possibilities and qualities of each person (Van Gennep, 2000). Financial considerations nevertheless continue to play a critical role due to the large and increasing number of students making use of special education services and facilities (Lawson & Van Veen, 2016).

Internationally, a more integrated approach to the guidance of children and adolescents is manifesting itself (Slee, 2008; Kerr, Dyson, & Raffo, 2014). Organizations operating at the interface of education and youth care are being stimulated to work on a more interdisciplinary basis and thus with each other in order to increase the effectiveness of the services they offer (Lawson & Van Veen, 2016). The question now is just how the policy and practice of inclusive education in the Netherlands has developed over the past few decades.

Policy developments in Dutch education

The desire for greater integration of regular and special education led in the 1980s to the establishment of the 'Going to School Together' policy for primary education [Weer Samen naar School; in Dutch]. A multi-track policy was opted for at this time (Meijer et al., 2004). This entailed regular and special education existing independent of each other but nevertheless working together via regional cooperative centres for schools [Samenwerkingsverbanden; in Dutch]. The aim was to include as many students with special educational needs in the regular education system as possible and only refer students to a special education facility when absolutely needed. Intensive cooperation was supposed to facilitate the *transfer* of the expertise of special educators to colleagues in regular education.

Evaluation of the 'Going to School Together' policy in 2003 (OCW, 2004) showed the number of students in special education to have indeed declined at the level of the system, but achievement of the more qualitative aim of providing adapted instruction and continuous development for *all* students was not widespread.

Education for students with special educational needs, previously referred to as adaptive education, stood central in the 'Going to School Together' policy. Different interpretations of the multidisciplinary thinking lying at the foundation of this policy were, however, found to be provided by schools and the regional cooperative centres for schools responsible for the implementation of the policy. The differences largely concerned: a) all students versus only those with special educational needs; b) reduction of school dropout versus promotion of achievement; and c) deficiencies versus possibilities of students (OCW, 2004). These differences in interpretation obviously have pedagogical consequences. Does the guidance of students with special educational needs take place — for example — in primarily the class under the guidance of primarily the teacher, does it take place primarily outside the class under the guidance of a specialist or is it conducted in cooperation with external partners? Such differences complicate the conduct of comparative research on inclusive education, its implementation and its effects (Blok, 2004; Florian, 2012; Göransson & Nilholm, 2014; Ledoux, 2016, p. 5). Evaluation efforts nevertheless revealed a clear need for improvement at both the class and school levels with regard to student monitoring,

utilization of evaluation data from individual students and the creation of a learning environment with sufficient possibilities for differentiation. The regional cooperative centres for schools were found, in contrast, to successfully influence the special educational needs policies of schools and to effectively use the policy space allocated to them (OCW, 2004).

With the introduction of Preparatory Secondary Vocational Education [VMBO] in 1998, which replaced preparatory vocational education [voorbereidend beroepsonderwijs, VBO in Dutch] and junior general secondary education [middelbaar algemeen voortgezet onderwijs, MAVO in Dutch], the special education needs of students in secondary education were given greater priority. In addition to the modernization of the curriculum and introduction of four new secondary education tracks, schools were required to officially affiliate themselves with a regional cooperative centre for schools. Analogous to what was being done in primary education, schools for regular and special secondary education were now expected to share their expertise and cooperate on the guidance of students.

Also with the introduction of preparatory secondary vocational education [VMBO], the earlier individual vocational education [IVBO] and secondary special education for students with learning and behavioural difficulties [VSO-LOM] were transformed into a single so-called learning support department [LWOO]. Students with special educational needs are given extra guidance in all four of the tracks of preparatory secondary vocational education, but in practice in most schools a separate track was created specifically for students with special educational needs. In such a manner, the learning support department [LWOO; in Dutch] replaced the former individual technical education [Individueel Technisch Onderwijs, ITO] and lower household education [Lager Huishouds- en NijverheidsOnderwijs, IHNO] while the former, little VSO-LOM schools were transformed into special education centres [orthopedagogisch-didactische centra, OPDC] or learning support departments [LWOO] within regular schools. Many of these special education centres took on — in addition to their existing educational function for students with special educational needs — an expertise function for the broader regional cooperative centres for schools. Schools for VSO-MLK [secondary special education for students with moderate learning disabilities] were also now required to officially affiliate themselves with a regional cooperative centre for secondary schools and were now called Schools for Practical Education [Praktijkonderwijs, PrO]. Just as the VSO-LOM schools, many of the generally smaller Schools for Practical Education [PrO] are affiliated with a larger school community.

The financing of the individual students receiving learning support [LWOO] and Practical Education was also standardized with the introduction of preparatory secondary vocational education [VMBO] in 1998. The national criteria are based upon the IQ of the student, the language and maths learning delays and any social-emotional problems. The schools, themselves, test for admission to a special programme. The

Regional Referral Committees [Regionale Verwijzingscommissies, RVCs] established by the government have been given the task of further determining whether the registered students formally qualify as having special educational needs and therefore the receipt of extra guidance and funding. The financing of these students has thus been based upon individual characteristics and deficiencies.

Other major changes occurred elsewhere in the system of special education in the Netherlands around the turn of the century. The most important is perhaps the introduction of the Regional Centres of Expertise [Regionale Expertise Centra, REC] in 2003. The special education schools which still remained after the introduction of the Regional Centres of Expertise were regionally clustered on the basis of four forms of expertise: cluster 1 for students with visual impairments; cluster 2 for students with auditory impairments; cluster 3 for students with intellectual and physical impairments; cluster 4 for students with behaviour problems. To stimulate the integration of these students into regular education, Student-based Financing [Leerling Gebonden Financiering (LGF); in Dutch] was introduced, which is better known as the ‘backpack’ arrangement. Students with special educational needs can continue to be educated at a regular school with the additional guidance of a support teacher. Not long after the introduction of all these regulations, marked increases were observed in the number of students admitted for learning support [LWOO], Practical Education and student-based financing (Algemene Rekenkamer, 2005, 2010; Minne, Webbink, & van der Wiel, 2009). Schools and certainly teachers experienced ever increasing problems, particularly with respect to students with behaviour problems [Onderwijsraad, 2010a). The number of students identified as having a ‘backpack’ increased to three times as much during the period of four years following the introduction of the arrangement, particularly for students with behaviour problems (cluster 4) and *despite* the number of students receiving special education remained relatively stable across this same period (CBS, 2009).

This continuous increase in ‘special educational needs students’ with the accompanying growth in the need for financing of the required support led in 2007 to the preparation of the Educational Fit Act [Wet Passend onderwijs; in Dutch]. The aim of the proposed act was to 1) make adapted education and continuous development available to all students; 2) educate all students — in keeping with European agreements — to at least the basic professional level of Upper Secondary Vocational Education [MBO]; 3) decrease school dropout in keeping with the Lisbon Treaty (2001, see European Commission, 2006); and 4) minimize students falling out of the system. Central to the Educational Fit Act, moreover, is that children be educated directly in the region where they live and that parents therefore be allowed to register their child at whatever school they want. Schools have a special educational needs obligation, which means that when they cannot provide the support a student needs, they are obligated to offer parents an alternative within the same region as the school. The definitive act requiring Educational

Fit for every student was finally passed by the Dutch parliament in 2012 and implemented in 2014 (Staatsblad, 2012).

With the implementation of the Educational Fit Act, the schools affiliated with the regional cooperative centres for schools made agreements on how they were going to organize the support within the region. The support could take place in the schools themselves, in other — typically special — schools, in cooperation with external care partners in the form of special educational needs arrangements or via a mix of these possibilities. In principle, it is possible for the schools to avoid the application of labelling students and the imposition of admission requirements in such a manner. Since the introduction of Educational Fit, extra financing is no longer allocated on the basis of the special educational needs of students at schools but, rather, budgeted via the regional cooperative centres. The schools within a regional cooperative centre for schools determine specific policy for the disbursement of support funds. This can vary from distribution on the basis of simply the school size (total number of students) to weighted need of special educational needs assessment (Jepma & Beekhoven, 2015).

At the same time as the Educational Fit Act, a Youth Care Act was prepared. This was done to emphasize the importance of such care and the need to coordinate the two related domains of policy. With the passing of these and some other laws, the municipalities were allocated a central role to play in the implementation of youth policy. The regional cooperative centres for schools are now required to attune their Educational Fit policy to their youth care policy, for example. Official consultation between school managers and external partners (e.g. social workers, special educators, psychologists, police) already occurred with the introduction of preparatory secondary vocational education [VMBO]). This was realized via external care teams. With the introduction of the Educational Fit and Youth Care Acts, this consultation was institutionalized. The aim is for better tailoring and coordination of the internal and external guidance provided for the child and — when needed — the family. In such a manner, the form and content of integrated youth was to be improved. And the position of parents for registration of their child for support and the formulation of a suitable support plan strengthened.

The establishment of a legal framework for Educational Fit does not mean that the underlying objectives have been clearly articulated and made sufficiently transparent. One of the objectives is, for instance, to abolish the labelling of students by no longer allocating funds on the basis of individual qualification (also see Van Swet, Wichers-Bots, & Brown, 2011). The aim is to allocate equal funds to all regional cooperative centres for schools, but this has yet to be achieved. School funding still takes place on the basis of individual educational needs, which is still largely based in practice on deficiencies (Ledoux, 2016). Moreover, two years following enactment of the Educational Fit Act, the effects on falling out of the system of students, school dropout, cooperation between regular and special education, cooperation between communities

and external care partners and — of course — the tailoring of the instruction in the class remain unclear.

Ledoux (2016) conceptualizes government policy as a cause-effect chain for which it is never certain that a desired development will lead to a desired result. In the case of Educational Fit, there are many open ends in both the legislation and the related policy. The regional cooperative centres for schools and individual schools still have considerable policy space, which may be a good thing from the viewpoint of innovation and change strategy. But from the perspective of the education system with its traditionally high level of autonomy at the level of the school (Honigh, Ruiter, Van Thiel, & Van den Akker, 2017), considerable time and space is needed for individual professional development, school development and the development of the necessary leadership (Onderwijsraad, 2016a; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). In situations where the support and attention is not offered or called for, local policy freedom can lead to only a patchwork of national implementation efforts and widespread uncertainty on the part of managers and educational personnel (ECPO, 2009). The long process of legislation concerned with Educational Fit — from preparation starting in 2007 to passing in 2012 — shows just how much difficulty the government has with making the transition from a deficiency-based education system to a system taking tailored instruction for all students as its starting point.

Inclusivity in Dutch educational practice

Information from the Dutch Inspectorate of Education [Inspectie van het Onderwijs; in Dutch], various national and international evaluations and research studies can give us insight into how things stand with regard to inclusivity in Dutch education. These studies zoom in on — among other things — the competence of regular education teachers (Gavish, 2017; Messiou et al., 2016), the quality of the education and support (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2014, 2015, 2016), the achievements of students with and without special educational needs, mostly in primary education (Pijl & Frostad, 2010) and the organizational aspects of inclusive education (ECPO, 2009; Heim, Ledoux, Elshof, & Karssen, 2016).

Invariably, the implementation of inclusive education shows itself to be tough material due in part to the many factors at play at a variety of levels within the education system and the diverse nature of the factors at play outside the system (also see Ledoux, 2016). The complexity of the change stems in particular from the fact that the pursuit of more inclusive education has consequences for much of the education system — primary, secondary and follow-up education — but also external partners such as municipalities and social services. All of these parties are expected to cooperate to provide the best possible guidance for students both with and without special educational needs. The regional cooperative centres for schools have reached a

reasonable degree of cooperation and coordination (Van der Steenhoven & Van Veen, 2012), but considerable hurdles have been encountered for adequate cooperation between educators and external partners (Jepma & Beekhoven, 2015; Rekers-Mombarg & Bosker, 2015). To start with, the development of a flexible infrastructure is needed for those from both inside and outside the school to be able to provide needs-based guidance (Lawson & Van Veen, 2016). In addition to this organizational hurdle, those directly involved must learn to speak the same language (Manor-Binyamini, 2011). Involvement and ownership by parents and students must also be given higher priority (Jeynes, 2012). Once these hurdles are overcome, the effects should be noticeable in both the class and the school. School managers and teachers obviously have important roles to play. The school development necessary for the realization of inclusive education must be viewed within a much broader context in a process which, due to its societal importance and scope, requires the involvement of not only parents and students but also many other actors including municipalities, external care partners and the local business community (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

For the implementation of Educational Fit, the Dutch government has opted for an integrated innovation strategy by simultaneously implementing the Educational Fit and Youth Care Laws. The schools and regional cooperative centres for schools are now in a position to cooperate closely with communities and other partners to better attune their policies to the needs of specific groups within the region. For the concrete implementation in schools, a bottom-up approach has been adopted with regional cooperative centres for schools and the schools being given a large degree of autonomy. With regard to content, the sector organizations of primary, secondary and upper secondary education have limited themselves — as instructed by the government — to offering a reference framework with sufficient policy space to allow the regional cooperative centres for schools and the individual schools to make their own decisions (Ludeke, 2013). This bottom-up approach has the advantage of promoting the innovative capacity and platform of support within the educational field. In 2009, however, the then Evaluation Commission Educational Fit [Evaluatie Commissie Passend Onderwijs, ECPO; in Dutch] pointed to the risk of Educational Fit resulting in an uncoordinated patchwork of objectives, means and effects (ECPO, 2009, p. 14). The adopted approach has thus been questioned but result-oriented objectives formulated concretely ahead of time are necessary to be able to measure the effects of Educational Fit-objectives such as reduced dropout, less students falling out of the system, less referral to special education, greater educational progression and success and — of course — adequate allocation of special education means (see also Ledoux, 2016).

Also with regard to the allocation of extra means for students with special educational needs, the government has adopted policy that provides clear financial frameworks (i.e. fixed budgets) and gives regional cooperative centres for schools and individual schools complete autonomy to determine their own policies. The goal of Educational Fit is, namely, to do away with the labelling of students by removing

standardized criteria and opting, instead, for a model which does greater justice to the tailoring of education to the educational needs of a wide variety of students. In actual practice, however, the allocation of extra funds in many schools two years following the introduction of Educational Fit still takes place on the basis of deficiency as opposed to potential (Ledoux, 2016).

Moreover, the extra means earmarked for students with special educational needs have been found to be unequally distributed across regional cooperative centres for schools. The observed differences cannot be explained in terms of differing educational needs across schools or regions, however (ECPO, 2010; Eimers, Kennis, & Voncken, 2016). Even though the existing system with fixed admission criteria appeared to be objective and transparent, the new system of distribution is failing to do justice to the actual educational needs of students. The new approach is also sensitive in actual practice to strategic behaviour on the part of schools (ECPO, 2010; Eimers et al., 2016). The unequal distribution of means for supported education (LWOO) and Practical Education is, according to Eimers and colleagues based upon the educational delays present among the students instead of standardized criteria. So, a new model of financing the guidance of special educational needs is inevitable. A model in which the two distribution models are integrated — the one based on educational needs and the other based on educational delays — appears to be most promising for the future.

At this moment, the regional cooperative centres for schools allocate funds for special educational needs less and less to individual students. Inclusive education is increasingly being aimed at the qualities of students instead of their deficiencies (Heim, et al., 2016). With the allocation of extra support in regular schools, however, researchers have detected large differences: those directly involved in the policy — the directors and coordinators in the regional cooperative centres for schools — report clear progress while the internal supervisors and care coordinators report less progress due to reduced transparency and expertise. The parents of children needing extra educational support are generally satisfied. The teachers and particularly those in secondary schools, in contrast, are experiencing difficulties with the tailoring of their instruction but nevertheless managing to provide systematic guidance with the aid of, for example, test results for the formulation and evaluation of individual education plans (see Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2014, 2015, 2016). The Netherlands Court of Audit [Algemene Rekenkamer; in Dutch] (2010) has already pointed to the inadequacy of the remedial and didactic competences of teachers in preparatory secondary vocational education [VMBO] and recommended greater attention to the required competences in the professionalization of these teachers.

A comparison of the results of the evaluation research from the previous Going to School Together programme (OCW, 2004) with the evaluation results for the preparation and implementation of the Educational Fit Act (i.e. the results just discussed) shows the transition from the old situation to the new to be gradually taking place in the Netherlands. While the span of time since the implementation of the

Educational Fit Act is quite short, the initial evaluation results do not vary much from those in 2004 (Ledoux, 2016). It was also noted back then that while organizational progress has been made, further customization and differentiation in the classroom is still required (OCW, 2004). This confirms the idea that inclusive education policy is difficult to put into actual practice. The policy determined at the macro and meso levels does not automatically lead to changes at the micro level (Fullan, 2007). The autonomy given to the regional cooperative centres for schools along with schools to develop their own vision of inclusive education and the manner in which education administrators and managers subsequently steer things have certainly played a role in how things have unfolded to date (Hooge, Hendriks, Buwalda-Groeneweg & Dekkers, 2016). It is abundantly clear that parents and students have very different opinions about inclusive education than the educational professionals (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2010; De Boer, Pijl, Post, & Minnaert, 2012; De Bruin, Van den Linden, Van de Vegt, & Van der Aa, 2012). Little is known about how parents and students perceive the current practice of inclusive education. Nevertheless, for the development of inclusive education, an inclusive culture in *and* around the school is essential. And both parents and students are critical stakeholders in this regard (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

School self-evaluation as an instrument for improving 'inclusive education'

School self-evaluation has an important role to play in the development of inclusive education. Self-evaluation can promote involvement on the part of school personnel, students, parents and other stakeholders (Creemers, Kyriakides, & Antoniou, 2013). It can also provide information which can contribute to the professionalization of the team (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2010). Such self-evaluation must meet a number of prerequisites, however. The evaluation instrument must be of sufficient quality to meet the external requirements of, for example, the Inspectorate of Education (Slegers & Van Dael, 2012). The support of external experts is therefore desired during the preparation and implementation of a school self-evaluation project (Janssens & van Amelsfoort, 2008). The quality of the dialogue within the school and with stakeholders from around the school is of critical importance for giving significance to the results of the self-evaluation (Nevo, 2002). Finally, a professional school culture is an essential factor for transforming the results of the self-evaluation into action and eliciting a continuous process of change and improvement (Vanhoof, Van Petegem, Verhoeven, & Buvens, 2009). Only a few schools to date have been found to utilize self-evaluation to proactively appraise the educational objectives which they have set for themselves (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2014); McNamara, O'Hara, Lisi, & Davidsdottir, 2011). Only a few schools to date have been found to utilize self-evaluation to implement and maintain development efforts. Self-evaluation has nevertheless been shown to help schools realize an inclusive school culture (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

At the beginning of the 21st century, a variety of self-evaluation instruments were developed for the guidance of students. As a result of circumstances at schools in the Netherlands around this time, school administrations and trade unions developed a need for a common framework for the provision of student care. A national self-evaluation project was subsequently launched to develop national standards for student care. At the time, 'student care' was understood to be "a coherent whole of activities and facilities for providing the systematic guidance of students on the basis of educational needs during their school careers" (Hoffmans, 2012, p. 4). Educational experts and representatives of schools were involved in the development of such a framework. The project produced a self-evaluation framework for student care [zelfevaluatiekader leerlingenzorg (ZEK); in Dutch] with a number of different instruments: questionnaires for school professionals, parents and students; audit and visitation materials; guidelines for document analyses. Given that the process is one of self-evaluation, the schools are left free to choose the instruments to be used for evaluation and the target group(s). The questionnaires for school professionals, parents and students have been used the most (Voncken & Schoonhoven, 2006). The school self-evaluation data from 79 schools (school professionals, parents and students) also provided the core material for the research reported on here.

Aim of the present research and specific research questions

The present research examines the development of inclusive education, particularly in secondary schools, in the period prior to the enactment of Educational Fit. The guidance of students with special educational needs in secondary education has been given increased attention over the past 20 years. And as a result, the number of students in special education has slightly declined during the same period. The labelling of students nevertheless continues to the rule as opposed to the exception (Ledoux, 2016). The increased attention to customized guidance of individual students has *not* minimized the number of students not being educated and, even though the Netherlands is making clear progress with the reduction of school dropout, the number of students without a basic secondary school education is still substantial (for the most recent figures, see <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/vsv>).

The aim of the present research was therefore to gain greater insight into the characteristics of inclusive education by examining the opinions of school professionals, parents and students at Dutch secondary schools. The underlying question was just how successful schools have been at adapting the guidance they provide to the varying educational needs of students. The research was conducted in the period preceding the legal obligation of schools to offer adapted guidance and continuing development for all students and to take joint responsibility with other schools in the region to give students with special education needs a suitable place in the regular school.

The following research question stood central.

What are the characteristics of inclusive secondary education and how do these characteristics affect the school careers of students?

This general research question was broken down into the following specific research questions.

- 1. What characteristics are required for reliable school self-evaluation and to what extent do these characteristics apply to the developed self-evaluation instrument for student care?*
- 2. What are the central characteristics of inclusive education and thus education equipped to handle the needs of all students, in particular those with special needs, according to secondary educational professionals in the Netherlands?*
- 3. To what extent does the characterization of a school as inclusive by educational professionals correspond to the characterisation of the school by parents and students?*
- 4. To what extent do school characteristics of inclusive education ensure successful school careers for both students with and without special educational needs?*

Outline of the dissertation

The four research questions were each answered in a separate study reported on here. In Chapter 2, the question of under which conditions school self-evaluation can help improve the educational quality of schools is addressed (research question 1). A review of the literature on school self-evaluation and school improvement, and self-evaluations of the quality of the student care in secondary schools constitutes the basis for the research conducted to answer this question. The self-evaluation framework for student care was examined in terms of a number of quality criteria derived from the relevant research literature.

The second research question is answered in Chapter 3. In the study reported there, a conceptual model for inclusive education is developed and empirically tested. At the same time, the extent to which school professionals recognize the characteristics of inclusive education distinguished in the model is determined.

In Chapter 4, the presence of an inclusive education culture in schools is examined. In order to do this, the extent to which the opinions of parents and students about inclusive education correspond to the opinions of educational professionals was examined (research question 3).

The results of the fourth study (research question 4) are reported in Chapter 5. This entailed an examination of the extent to which differences in the school careers of

students at the level of the school (repetition of a school year, dropout, shift to a higher or lower level of education) can be explained by perceptions on the part of educational professionals of the inclusive characteristics of the education offered in the schools.

The dissertation closes in Chapter 6 with some general conclusions with regard to the question motivating the present research, some critical reflection on the research reported and some suggestions for future research to develop inclusive education in the Netherlands on the basis of the present results.

Chapter 2

Improving the quality of education through self-evaluation in Dutch secondary schools

This chapter was previously published:

Van der Bij, T., Geijssel, F. P., & Ten Dam, G. T. M. (2016). Improving the quality of education through self-evaluation in Dutch secondary schools. *Studies in Educational Evaluation: 49*, 42–50.

Small adjustments were made to the form in which this chapter was published.

Abstract

In countries with a governance structure in which responsibility for the quality of education is shared between government and school boards, the past decades school self-evaluation has been stimulated as a way to encourage continuous quality improvement. However, working on the goals of quality assurance and school improvement at the same time is a challenge in general. To make a valuable contribution to both goals, the self-evaluation effort has to be of sufficient quality itself. In this study, we present a research-based framework for school self-evaluation (SSE) composed of both content and process factors that allows to evaluate the quality of self-evaluation in schools. We then used this model to evaluate the experiences in a comprehensive self-evaluation project that has been designed and used to help Dutch secondary schools promote the quality of student care. Our sample encompassed 79 Dutch secondary schools involved in this project. The findings show that the quality of SSE depends on the quality of the instruments (content) and process factors. However, to make a valuable contribution to school improvement and thereby the quality of education in the Netherlands more attention is needed for a balance between internal and external supervision and the role of school managers in the process of SSE. For future research more insight is needed in the challenges of meeting the content and process conditions of school self-evaluations, the governance and supervision issue at the level of schoolboards, the competence of change management in schools and the effects of SSE on the quality of education.

Improving the quality of education through self-evaluation in Dutch secondary schools

Introduction

Over the past decades, self-evaluation has acquired a prominent position in school processes (McNamara & O'Hara, 2008). Starting in the 1980s, in the context of government policy shifting towards decentralization and deregulation of governmental tasks in many Western countries, schools and especially their governing bodies have been allocated increased autonomy and hence greater responsibility for the monitoring of the quality of their education (Hooge, Burns, & Wilkoszewski, 2012). Simultaneously, self-evaluation has become more and more important (Ehren, Perryman, & Shackleton, 2015).

For schools, self-evaluation can be described as “a process, initiated by the school itself, in which carefully chosen participants make a systematic description and appraisal of the functioning of the school, with a view to making decisions or taking initiatives for (aspects of) the overall development of the school and school policy” (Van Petegem, 2005, p. 104). The relevant research literature suggests that self-evaluation ideally ought to include both an orientation towards quality assurance (determining *what* is good and *what* should be bettered) as well as quality improvement (providing inspiration for *how* things can be improved). However, realization of this double function appears to be rather difficult in actual practice (Geijsel, Krüger, & Slegers, 2010; Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). Improving educational quality involves school development: a multilayered interplay of professional learning and leadership of which research has shown its complexity and non-linear nature (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). In an attempt to deepen our insight into school self-evaluation, we therefore asked ourselves what is required for self-evaluation to significantly contribute to both educational quality assurance and school improvement.

In line with referred literature, school improvement is used in this study to refer to the combined process of educational improvement and school development necessary for sustainable improvement of educational quality with taking into consideration that this process is recursive by nature. After reviewing the monitoring of educational quality in the context of educational governance in the Netherlands, we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of self-evaluation for enhancing the quality of education. We summarize by composing a framework for content and process factors, which may be used to evaluate the quality of self-evaluation in schools. The significance of this model will then be assessed by evaluating the quality of the school-based self-evaluation that took place as part of a comprehensive project designed and used to help Dutch secondary schools promote the quality of student care. The research question

that underlies this assessment is: *What characteristics are required for reliable school self-evaluation and to what extent do these characteristics apply to the developed self-evaluation instrument for student care?*

Towards shared monitoring of the quality of education in the Netherlands

To better understand the requirements for self-evaluation to significantly contribute to quality assurance and school improvement, we need to place this in the context and history of the monitoring of the quality of education in the country concerned. Decades of the marketization and decentralization of government tasks in The Netherlands as in many Western societies have resulted in a system composed of relatively autonomous school bodies, boards, and districts. The national governments in these same Western societies now face a major dilemma of central control versus variety at the local level when it comes to the assurance of educational quality and the implementation of educational innovations (OECD, 2012a). While this dilemma is relatively new for many Western countries, the Netherlands has faced it for over a century already as the autonomy of schools has its roots in the Dutch Constitution. That is, Article 23 of the Dutch Constitution (1917) stipulates that “teaching shall be free” just as the starting of a school and the organization of a school. School autonomy is thus deeply embedded in the history and culture of the Netherlands. And as a consequence of this widespread autonomy, variety at the level of the school is an essential feature of an education system composed of mostly publicly funded but privately run schools. This same Article 23 from the Dutch Constitution nevertheless further stipulates that education should be an ongoing government concern. For example, there are regulations regarding the competence of teachers and the quality of education. Hence, school autonomy must be balanced with government control to insure that basic standards of education are met. For over a century in the Netherlands, thus, tension has existed between local variation among stakeholders and central control/accountability for the quality of the education provided. Or in other words, the history of Dutch educational policy can be seen to be an ongoing balancing act.

While the national government is responsible for the functioning of the Dutch education system in general, school boards must justify their policies, the organization of their education, and the results that they obtain to not only the government but also direct stakeholders (i.e., parents and other interested parties). The Quality Act [Kwaliteitswet; in Dutch] of 1998 holds that the boards of schools are formally responsible for the quality of teaching provided. Dutch government organizations, however, supervise whether schools do provide instruction that leads to intended learning results and uninterrupted school careers. The division of responsibilities between the government and school boards was articulated further in the Supervision of Education Act of 2002

[Wet Onderwijstoezicht; in Dutch] (OCW, 2012). The new task of the educational inspectorate became “assess the quality of education on the basis of observance of requirements for the type of education concerned” (section 3, paragraph 2 under a). In 2007 the Dutch educational inspectorate developed a risk-oriented model of supervision. In this model, the intensity of supervision is determined by the outcome of a risk analysis conducted by the inspectorate with an eye to answering the questions if there is a suspicion of risk and, if so, the extent of the risk. All schools were thus to supply student outcome data, annual reports, and financial statements for analysis by the inspectorate and indication of cases of possible risk (cf. OCW, 2012).

Although a decline in the number of schools ‘at risk’ over the past few years could be noticed, the general quality of the education provided in the Netherlands showed less progression, also in comparison to international trends (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2014). Therefore most recently, the content and process of the external supervision provided by the educational inspectorate has been called into question by the Ministry of Education again (Ehren & Honingh, 2011). In the future the inspectorate needs to provide more differentiated quality assessment and subsequent supervision for even schools with a sufficient or high level of educational quality (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2015). At the moment, the inspectorate introduces a new framework for the assessment and supervision of the quality of education in the Netherlands with emphasis on the accountability of local school boards for doing this. School self-evaluation will be an important part of this new framework and, indeed, it is laid down by law in the Netherlands that each school board must have a separate supervisory board responsible for the monitoring of the quality of the education provided by the school or schools falling under the auspices of the school board. Both the internal supervision of schoolboards and external supervision by the Inspectorate are geared to assessment as well as school improvement (cf. Gaertner, 2013; Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). Internal school supervisors, more than external ones, can serve as intermediaries between the government, the participants in the school, and the school environment. Such dialogue with the different stakeholders in a school has been shown to be especially important for promoting the learning capacity of an organization (Schillemans, 2011).

Although the upcoming model has some promising features to better connect to school improvement in general, not just for the weakest schools, the shared responsibility of government and school boards for the quality of education nevertheless raises a number of issues.

A first issue is the ambiguous attitude adopted by the government toward schools in the form of continually encouraging increased autonomy while simultaneously restricting educational freedom with the introduction of new rules. The pressure imposed by external regulation and accounting is at odds with the internal desire of schools to pay attention to predominantly the realization high quality of

education (Hooge & Honingh, 2014). Stated differently, the inspectorate should attend to not only the monitoring of schools to promote optimal performance but also the stimulation of quality development (Gaertner, 2013).

A second issue raised by the shared responsibility of government and school boards for the quality of education concerns the relations between the school board, the internal supervisory board and the more general school environment. Mergers resulting in large-scale schools and the introduction of professional school boards, on the one hand, and deregulation of education policy with increased autonomy for the school, on the other hand, are creating greater distance between school governors, school professionals, and others either directly or indirectly involved in school affairs. Dialogue is thus complicated, particular as most school boards are now responsible for the quality of education in multiple schools. Effective communication with the governors of individual schools, internal quality supervisors, school professionals, students, parents, and others in the local school environment is thus impeded. Moreover, for the legitimization of school policy and encouragement of continuous quality improvement, that is, proximity and trust have been shown to be important preconditions (Ranson, 2011).

A third issue concerns the notification of unwelcome side-effects of external supervision. The extent to which supervision by the educational inspectorate affects the quality of education provided by schools and/or student learning outcomes cannot be proved (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Gaertner, Wurster, & Pant, 2013). Research did nevertheless repeatedly point out some unwelcome side-effects of supervision by the educational inspectorate, which are found to include “window dressing,” a focus on strictly performance indicators within the school, and the preparation of the team for assessment visits beforehand (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007). Nevertheless, when Gustafsson et al. (2015) tested a theoretical framework encompassing the practices of six European inspectorates, they found the articulation of clear expectations and standards for planned school inspections to be closely tied to the more widespread implementation of self-evaluation and school improvement efforts in schools. School boards and school principals can focus too strongly on minimal inspection standards and thereby fail to articulate sufficiently ambitious educational expectations for their schools. As a result, these schools will only aspire to the maintenance of a minimum of quality instead of continued school improvement (Gustafsson et al., 2015; Nelson & Ehren, 2014). Hence, special attention for connection of SSE with school improvement processes is in order to understand how such unwelcome (side-)effects can be prevented.

The use of self-evaluation tools for balancing quality assurance and school improvement

Self-evaluation can play an important role in the maintenance of a balance between the internal and external forms of accountability described above. It can contribute to both forms of accounting by providing the information relevant to evaluate the quality of education (e.g., use of resources, student dropout rates, the guidance of students, and human resource development (cf. Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2010). Self-evaluation also creates an opportunity to promote the involvement of students, parents, and other stakeholders from the school environment and can contribute to the professionalization of the education team (Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004; Creemers, et al., 2013). Both involvement and professionalization are important for school improvement, which means that self-evaluation can be considered a specific form of quality assurance. For school self-evaluation, the initiative lies primary with the school itself; the school selects the instruments to be used and participants; and the self-evaluation is conducted for school improvement purposes, which makes the commitment of the team critical (see also Janssens & Van Amelsvoort, 2008).

The self-evaluation efforts of schools can take diverse forms. In many cases, self-evaluation is largely concerned with providing external accountability. The framework used by educational inspectorates — which are usually largely based upon measures of school effectiveness — then predominates. Alternatively or in addition, a school's self-evaluation efforts can more directly address school improvement. The content of the evaluation in such cases is then more context- and school-specific than when largely concerned with external accountability and therefore typically concerned with not just the educational practices of the school but also the organizational conditions that can contribute to educational improvement within the school (i.e., aspects of the school as a learning organization or a professional learning community) (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). However, although schools in general recognize the potential added value of self-evaluation, widespread self-evaluation has yet to occur among schools. In countries where school self-evaluation has been implemented, it can be seen to still be in mostly the development stage (Gaertner, 2013).

Among the possible causes of the limited implementation of school self-evaluation are the observed lack of a professional culture in schools as a whole (Gaertner, 2013; McNamara, et al., 2011; Hofman, Dijkstra, & Hofman, 2009). In addition, the largely introverted school culture has not yet sufficiently geared itself toward communication with the broader school environment (Vanhoof, et al., 2009). Quality assurance is further viewed to be largely a management task and only of tangential relevance for the classroom (Schildkamp & Visscher, 2010). In general, teachers do not feel at home with the collection and analysis of data and they typically lack the research skills needed to do this (McNamara et al., 2011). Several studies have also found schools to be incapable of producing satisfactory self-evaluation reports (i.e.,

a clearly written report) (Blok, Slegers, & Karsten, 2008). This latter finding suggests that schools must search for the means to conduct and report adequate self-evaluations and be willing to accept guidance in doing this (Blok et al., 2008; McNamarra & O'Hara, 2008; Geijsel et al., 2010). In general, it can be concluded that school professionals feel little sense of ownership nor joined responsibility for the system of monitoring the quality of education nor its artifacts.

With a view to stimulating school self-evaluation, a number of countries have developed specific methods, instruments, and training activities aimed at boosting the professionalism of schools and teachers for self-evaluation. These include Prose, EduBron, and ECEGO in Belgium; OFSTED in England; INIS and ESI at the level of the European Union; Q-primair and Q5 in the Netherlands (see Hutchinson & Young, 2011; Macbeath, 2011). Such instruments and projects are usually largely based on school effectiveness studies and the educational inspectorate frameworks (Schildkamp, Vanhoof, Van Petegem, & Visscher, 2012). Hence, such frameworks function as artifacts of external accountability standards with not necessarily a connection to the communicative, dialogical needs of situated school improvement processes. In opposition to the idea that schools lack professional culture, it might also be the case that available instruments and frameworks do not connect to the available professional culture unless this culture is framed by existing effectiveness criteria.

So, the dilemma of control versus variety regarding the assurance of educational quality and the implementation of educational innovations will not automatically become resolved by the introduction of self-evaluation. In order to decide upon a suitable self-evaluation instrument, schools must be aware of the underlying concepts that the different instruments draw upon and the validity of the different instruments. Moreover, school professionals should also be able to develop and validate professional standards themselves with attention to the nature of the processes to meet these standards, including the communication of concerns stemming from various stakeholders in the school and its environment for the shaping of educational policy (cf. Nevo, 2002). For continuous quality improvement and adequate educational quality, responsibility and accountability must be integrated in the profession of education at all levels of the system (Hargreaves, 2012). Moreover, scientists do and should continue to evaluate the quality of such self-evaluation instruments including the extent to which they match professional practice and school improvement (cf. Hofman, Dijkstra & Hofman, 2005).

The best way to conduct an effective self-evaluation appears to involve having an open framework for the supervision of the evaluation together with explicit support for the improvement efforts of the school (Janssens & Van Amelsfoort, 2008). Nevertheless, schools differ considerably in their choice of self-evaluation instruments and their actual use. These differences can be seen to stem from different perspectives on the self-evaluation task but also the organization and implementation of the self-evaluation effort (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2006; Schildkamp et al., 2012). Schools

that can be characterized as having a relatively innovative working culture, shared leadership, goal-oriented practices, cooperation, effective communication, mutual support, and reflection are more likely than other schools to introduce a self-evaluation instrument (Bubb & Early, 2009; Geijsel et al., 2010). In their study of variation in the conduct and quality of self-evaluation in Flanders, Vanhoof et al. (2011) revealed a strong association of the implementation of self-evaluation measures, capacity building, and transformational leadership with improved teaching, student learning, and teacher collaboration. Similarly, the adequate conduct of the self-evaluation and acceptance of its outcomes tend to increase when the participants are convinced that they can personally contribute to improving the quality of education provided in their school and thus committed to the school team (Schildkamp et al., 2012). Which leaves the question of whether school self-evaluation instruments can be designed in such a way that schools with different levels of innovative capacity can all use them for quality assurance and school improvement purposes. Moreover, from a school improvement perspective on SSE, however, not so much the existence of pre-conditions but the development of these pre-conditions is at stake, especially in those schools in which innovative capacity is lacking (Geijsel et al., 2010).

Contributions of self-evaluation to school improvement

When it comes to the actual effects of school self-evaluation on the quality of the education provided in a school and learning outcomes, our understanding is just as limited as for understanding the effects of inspection (Demetriou & Kyriakides, 2012; Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004). An insufficient intensity of self-evaluation and implementation of self-evaluation might be one of the causes of the observed lack of empirical evidence (Gustafsson et al., 2015; McNamara et al., 2011). It has also not been demonstrated that internal supervision (i.e., self-evaluation) actually promotes a better quality of education. The professional conduct and independence of the internal supervision (i.e., self-evaluations) is also open to question (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007). School principals tend to employ familiar, formal criteria and thus adopt the external requirements of the inspectorate for their school's self-evaluation and supervision, which can again lead to window-dressing and strategic behaviour when it comes to evaluating the effectiveness of a school's self-evaluation efforts (Schildkamp & Visscher, 2010). In addition, school teams are traditionally more oriented towards action than reflection (Bubb & Early, 2009; Schildkamp & Visscher, 2010) while it is *especially* reflection and feedback loops that can provide important insights for quality improvement (Geijsel et al., 2010; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). For quality self-evaluation, it is important that the process is clearly targeted and results in widely supported development items and concrete outcomes that are broadly accepted. The attitudes of the team members, the school culture, and the quality of policy-making within the

school are the critical factors (Vanhoof et al., 2009, 2011). When the team has been properly informed of the purpose of the self-evaluation, sufficient time and attention are devoted to its preparation, and the organization of the self-evaluation is made abundantly clear, this will strengthen the team's confidence in the self-evaluation and its outcomes with increased chances of widespread support as a result (Bubb & Early, 2009). External advisors, 'critical friends', and facilitators can contribute to the quality of the self-evaluation process by helping with the identification of blind spots, interpretation of the data, management of the process), promotion of dialogue with stakeholders, stimulation of both internal and external assessment, and selection of the topics for improvement (McNamara et al., 2011; O'Brien, McNamara, & O'Hara, 2014). But external guidance of the self-evaluation process alone does not guarantee quality improvement. In cases of only external guidance, for example, connection to the daily practices of school managers, teachers, students, and parents may be overlooked with the lack of discussion of such issues representing a missed opportunity to add value to the self-evaluation (Devos & Verhoeven, 2003).

Differences in the results of self-evaluation turn out to be closely related to the attitudes of the respondents toward the self-evaluation and the extent of integration into school policy (Vanhoof et al., 2009). In schools with high scores for self-evaluation, Hofman, et al. (2009) saw significant associations with external assessment by the inspectorate for such factors as pedagogy, didactics, and school climate. The schools with high scores for the quality of self-evaluation, moreover, showed many features of a learning organization.

Whether self-evaluation leads to school improvement thus depends on not only external factors such as the nature of the supervision provided by the inspectorate and school boards but also the ability of the schools themselves to feed evaluation results into current developments within the school and draft a development agenda. Even with such an agenda, however, the case studies of Devos and Verhoeven (2003) and Van der Bij and Van der Waals (2007) make it clear that many schools still did not or only partly succeeded with the implementation of the planned improvements one year later. This tallies with recent findings from the Dutch inspectorate (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2014) showing only 8% of school departments in secondary education to measure and analyze student learning outcomes, set objectives with regard to these learning outcomes in the future, take steps to improve upon the learning outcomes, and evaluate subsequent outcomes. As a whole, that is, self-evaluation has yet to be given a prominent place in education.

Content and process criteria for the quality of SSE

To make a valuable contribution to school improvement and thereby the quality of education in the Netherlands, the self-evaluation effort has to be of sufficient quality itself. Drawing upon the literature, criteria of such quality can be seen to concern both the content of the self-evaluation and the conditions under which the self-evaluation is conducted. Moreover, the quality and value of the self-evaluation is also determined by a suitable balance between internal and external accounting factors (Janssens & Van Amelsvoort, 2008; Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004). That is, criteria of the quality of a self-evaluation should refer to both issues of accountability and opportunities for school improvement. Kyriakides and Campbell (2004) already pleaded some years ago for a cooperative model of self-evaluation in which the quality criteria are determined by both the school and external supervisors. This cooperative model can be taken as the starting point for a dialogue between the school and various stakeholders. This dialogue must, of course, also meet a number of requirements (Nevo, 2002): It should be open; based upon mutual respect; and involve a willingness to accept the consequences of the evaluation and discussion.

Combining the aforementioned two perspectives (quality assurance and quality improvement) can help us categorize the criteria for evaluation of the quality of a self-evaluation. In Table 1, we summarize the criteria discussed above as pertaining to the self-evaluation process in general, accountability in particular, or school improvement in particular and then consider the required content and conditions. In such a manner, a framework for understanding the available criteria for assessing the quality of a school's self-evaluation is provided.

Table 1. *Framework for criteria of quality of school self-evaluation based on literature*

	Content criteria	Process criteria
Overall	User-friendliness of instruments and procedures	Availability of external support for self-evaluation Dialogue <i>in</i> school and <i>between</i> school and stakeholders
Accountability	Use of standards covering quality of education Harmonization with inspectorate's assessment framework Sufficient reliability and validity Relevance for several types of stakeholders	Necessity and added value perceived by all participants Transparency of procedures
School improvement	Possibility of harmonization with school situation Development in cooperation with practitioners	Growth towards professional, learning-oriented school culture Team involvement and ownership Cyclic approach Process supervision with an orientation toward learning and expertise in change management

Review of the Dutch self-evaluation instrument student care (SSC)

In the Netherlands, one of the few self-evaluation projects conducted at the school level is the project 'Quality of student care in pre-vocational secondary education' [1]. The project was initiated in 2003 by teacher trade unions and school board organizations to improve the quality of student care in secondary schools. The development of this project was subsidized by the government and resulted in several instruments including a specific method for the conduct of a school self-evaluation: the self-evaluation framework for student care (SSC, in Dutch *ZEK*), as described by Hoffmans (2012). After completion of this project, the instruments and materials were made more widely available to schools via a website (www.zek-onderwijs.nl). In the period from 2003 to 2007, more than 60% of schools for pre-vocational secondary education participated in the project (Voncken & Schoonhoven, 2006). And given the success of the project with pre-vocational secondary education schools, the SSC was adapted for use with other categories of schools: elementary schools, special education schools and even preschools.

After a brief review of the project, we asked ourselves if the quality criteria suggested in different studies can also be seen to be present in the SSC. And our answer is presented below.

SSC project starting points

For self-evaluation student care (SSC), student care is defined as a “coherent ensemble of activities and provisions for systematic guidance of students during their school career on the basis of educational needs of these students” (Hoffmans, 2012, p. 4). The starting points for the SSC are the following: support should directly benefit the development of the student; support should be maximally integrated into the teaching and learning processes; learning environment should be supportive and teachers should have high expectations for students; quality assurance and self-evaluation should be components of a cyclic and systematic approach to school improvement; and, finally, pluriformity and alternative views on student care should be respected (i.e., the SSC framework is not normative and both school improvement and quality assurance are presumed to be the concern of everyone — teachers and administrators but also students, parents, and others in the school environment; the SSC endorses the legal Inspectorate framework).

Method of conduct

Schools register to participate in the SSC project of their own accord. In a part of the schools’ necessity due to for instance a decrease in the amount of students or a low judgment of the inspectorate may be a precursor or motivation for the self-evaluation. By agreement, an external advisor is assigned to the schools that register. The project has a pool of over 20 experienced advisors at its disposal. The role of the external advisor is to monitor and help with both the content of the self-evaluation and the self-evaluation process. The first talk with school management and the “quality assurance coordinator” [3] — which almost every school has — is meant to inform the school of the goals of the self-evaluation and gain insight into the experiences of the school with quality assurance and self-evaluation. Next, a working group with school representatives is established for supervising the self-evaluation process. This working group decides upon the core themes and content to be addressed in the self-evaluation the target groups (e.g., professionals and management, parents and students), the type of data to be collected (e.g., a sample or the whole population), and the procedures to be followed. The quality assurance coordinator within the school coordinates the project and is responsible for the school-internal communication. After final registration, the school is given access to a web unit containing the SSC assessment instrument.

On the basis of what had been agreed upon in the working group, the quality assurance coordinator initiates the conduct of the self-evaluation. He/she communicate with the team, parents, and students; looks for current and reliable data; adapts instrument to the specific school situation when judged necessary; plans the data analyses; and oversees the planning and conduct of the self-evaluation process as a whole. After this, digital questionnaires are distributed to all participating groups.

The resulting data are analyzed by the quality assurance coordinator. All groups involved in the self-evaluation are analyzed separately, and the responses then examined for the extent of agreement. The results of the data analysis are discussed with the working group. The external advisor helps with the interpretation of the data and thus plays an important role in this phase of the SSC project. After this, the quality assurance coordinator together with the working group and external advisor prepare for a consent discussion. This discussion is used to agree upon the core topics emerging from the self-evaluation and which questions to present to the school team in conjunction with the results of the self-evaluation.

The consent discussion is organized by the quality assurance coordinator and/or a member of the school management team and conducted using the Socratic method of continued questioning and answering (Nevo, 2002). The aim of the discussion is to arrive at a shared opinion. The participants are encouraged to be curious about the views of others and thus ask questions rather than simply trying to defend a given standpoint. The quality of the arguments in favor or against a standpoint is the deciding factor. And the final objective is to formulate and agree upon a number of improvement items for the development agenda of the school.

A written report of the self-evaluation and consent discussion is drafted by the working group. The participants in the consent discussion are given the opportunity to point out any factual errors. The final version of the consent report is then presented to the school management and provides the foundation for items to be included in the school development agenda.

Outcomes of SSC project

The SSC instrument was developed in consultation with various experts in the field of education. This, together with the possibility of adopting the instrument to the specific situation of the school, strengthened the willingness of schools to use the instrument and undertake a self-evaluation instrument (Van der Bij & Van der Waals, 2007). In practice, the schools made few changes, which largely concerned the incorporation of school-specific issues into the questionnaire). The schools were free to decide how many quality standards to include and the target groups to be approached, and they indeed did this (i.e., varied along these lines). The information provided by the self-evaluations was primarily used by the schools themselves for quality assurance and school improvement purposes (Voncken & Schoonhoven, 2006).

The schools differed in the amount of attention devoted to the evaluation of their teaching and the quality of the self-evaluation that they conducted. The presence of a quality policy and a professional school culture proved to be important conditions for successful self-evaluations (Van der Bij & Van der Waals, 2007). External guidance also contributed to a positive self-evaluation process. The involvement of an external advisor to watch over procedures and appointments was reported to increase the

commitment of the school team to the self-evaluation process (Voncken & Schoonhoven, 2006). Sometimes the motivation to undertake a self-evaluation arose from the inspectorate (i.e., external assessment); sometimes the motivation arose from other signals (e.g., from parents); and sometimes the motivation stemmed from a perceived need on the part of the school management to put the quality of education and student care on the school agenda (Van der Waals & Kamphof, 2007).

The evaluation of the initial SCC project performed by Voncken and Schoonhoven in 2006 [2] showed the schools to be satisfied with the initial contact and registration process, the consent discussions, and the drawing of conclusion for a school development agenda. The schools were nevertheless *less* satisfied with the SCC instrument. Especially irksome were some technical problems with the installation of the programme. Many of the schools were not sufficiently equipped or able to deal with web units and digital instruments. To deal with this problem, training days were organized for the external advisors and internal quality assurance coordinators.

The schools were highly satisfied with the guidance provided by the external advisors who they perceived as knowledgeable and professional. Nevertheless, in particularly the schools for elementary vocational training— which is a specific stream of pre-vocational secondary education, the schools would like to have seen the instrument more attuned to their specific situations. A striking point was the comparatively long span of the self-evaluation process from school intake to producing a development agenda for the school: This period varied from 10 to 15 months. Among the factors found to contribute to this extended timespan were not being accustomed to the programme, the phenomenon of self-evaluation, the cyclic approach to be followed, and the handling of feedback within the school. Schools chiefly made use of the self-evaluation instrument with teaching personnel and management but also used the instrument with students and parents. The evaluation showed parents and students to only rarely be included in the consent discussions. As Voncken and Schoonhoven (2006) concluded, schools appear to regard quality assurance and school improvement as chiefly a matter for education professionals.

Summary of SSC instrument according to quality criteria for school self-evaluation

In Table 2, an overview of the comparison of the use of the SSC instrument with recognized quality criteria is presented. For each criterion it is expressed to what extent it has been applicable to SSC. In general, the SSC instrument covers most of the quality criteria stipulated elsewhere for self-evaluation. Applicable key criteria (indicated with + in Table 2) were care harmonization with the assessment framework used by the education inspectorate, involvement of the school team, transparent procedures, and clearly formulated school improvement recommendations. Less but still applicable criteria (indicated with +/- in Table 2) were those concerned with implementation of the

development agenda (i.e., a cyclic approach to the process of self-evaluation), the reliability and validity of the SCC instrument itself, and some of the technical problems.

Table 2. *Degree of presence of recognized quality criteria in SSC instrument*

	Content criteria	Findings	Process criteria	Findings
Overall	+/- User-friendliness of instruments and procedures	<i>Schools were satisfied except with technical problems pertaining to installation of the programme</i>	+ Availability of external support for self-evaluation	<i>Presence of external support for set up of self-evaluation</i>
			+ Dialogue in school and between school and stakeholders	<i>The consent discussion is one of the key factors of the SSE approach</i>
Accountability	+/- Use of standards covering quality of education	<i>Focus on student care</i>	+/- Necessity and added value perceived by all participants	<i>Necessity is one of the reasons for participating in SSC</i>
	+ Harmonization with inspectorate's assessment framework	<i>Attuned to the criteria used in inspectorate's framework</i>	+ Transparency of procedures	<i>Involvement of management and education professionals from start of self-evaluation</i>
	+/- Sufficient reliability and validity	<i>Quality varies from weak to strong</i>		
	+ Relevance for several types of stakeholders	<i>Participants are school professionals, students, and parents</i>		
School improvement	+ Possibility of harmonization with school situation	<i>Attune criteria to school-specific situation</i>	? Growth towards professional, learning-oriented school culture	<i>Depends on the participating school</i>
			+ Team involvement and ownership	<i>Team involvement throughout entire process</i>
	+ Development in cooperation with practitioners	<i>Evaluation instruments developed with education experts and school</i>	- Cyclic approach	<i>School follow-up after formulation of development agenda</i>
			+ Process supervision with an orientation toward learning and expertise in change management	<i>External advisor supervises process from beginning (registration) to setting of development agenda</i>

Conclusion

Since the 1980s, the education policies of many Western national governments have been aimed at decentralization and giving educational institutions greater autonomy while concurrently introducing or intensifying accountability measures (Ranson, 2011; OECD, 2012b). School boards have been given greater responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of educational quality, as well the 'playing field' changed rather strongly. In addition to formal accountability to the government, the local environment is playing an increasingly prominent role in judgements of the quality of education. This development in the governance of education calls for new forms of evaluation, forms that speak to both internal and external stakeholders in the quality of education and thereby contribute to school improvement. School *self*-evaluation presents a valuable means for involving students, teachers, parents, and others from the school environment in the process of quality assurance and school improvement. Based on the literature, we were able to identify a number of conditions for successful self-evaluation (see Table 1). The identified quality criteria concern the content of the instruments to be used as well as the self-evaluation process itself. The identified criteria concern both school accountability and school improvement. And the identified quality criteria could then be used to critically evaluate a Dutch self-evaluation instrument initially developed for use in pre-vocational secondary education and assessment of the quality of student care provided there.

Looking back, we can conclude that the SSC (self-evaluation of student care) instrument includes most of the quality criteria put forward in different studies for school self-evaluation (e.g., Hofman et al., 2005; Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004). The SSC instrument was designed by education experts in consultation with teachers and other school professionals to provide — in the long run — a widely accepted, quality framework for the guidance of students. The instrument is partly attuned to the evaluation framework of the education inspectorate in that it contains items concerned with the guidance of students and the professionalism of teachers. The SSC instrument also includes broader education items that concern, for example, the provision of a stimulating learning environment, a secure learning climate, encouragement of student participation, customization of the curriculum, and having sufficiently high expectations for students. As the SSC instrument is meant to be used for self-evaluation purposes, it can also be adapted to the specific situation of a school. During the initial phases in the development of the SSC instrument, that is, the instrument was repeatedly adjusted and updated. External advisors also played an important role throughout the development process and are expected to continue to play a role in the use of the instrument.

The majority of content criteria concern accountability while the majority of the process criteria concern school improvement. The question, of course, is whether this dichotomy in the quality criteria makes sense. Maybe we should start thinking of the skills and attitudes needed to implement a development agenda within a school as

important school content in light of continued educational change as one of the largest concerns in education today (Fullan, 2007). For instance, why does all initial teacher training not require at least some knowledge of organizational change and change theory?

The main question remaining to be answered is if school self-evaluation indeed contributes to school improvement and, if indeed it does, to what extent? As already mentioned in the introduction, just how far SSC actually contributes to school improvement and a better quality of education is difficult to determine using only performance data. Many schools have difficulties with the formulation and evaluation of a development agenda (Van der Bij & Van der Waals, 2007; Van der Waals & Kamphof, 2007). After formulating a development agenda, schools generally do not pay sufficient attention to implementation and the identification of feasible targets with clear evaluation points. Those schools that do manage to formulate and implement a development agenda, moreover, can be characterized as schools with a clearly professional and very learning-oriented culture. Schools that do not have the capacity to formulate and implement a development agenda may thus be challenged and then given sufficient care to develop this capacity (Geijsel et al., 2010). Based on the overview that we provided of the SSC instrument in terms of quality criteria, we dare to conclude that the challenge of a school with regard to the quality of student care and the supply of the care needed to subsequently meet this challenge will not be provided by the use of a self-evaluation instrument alone. In addition, greater attention must be drawn to the implementation of the results of self-evaluation in order to effectively use a development agenda once it has been formulated.

It remains to be seen if the SSC instrument produces reliable and valid data on the quality of student care provided by a school and the effects of the quality of this care on the school careers of students. Little evidence is available with regard to the reliability and validity of self-evaluation instruments to date (see Hofman et al., 2005). More research on the quality of self-evaluation instruments is thus needed. More cooperation between scientists and educational professionals could make a significant contribution to the quality of school self-evaluation.

The use of self-evaluation instruments such as the SSC raises several additional questions for their further use and relevance of school improvement. What is the congruency between the assessments conducted with various stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, teachers, school managers) and how should an observed lack of congruence not only be interpreted but also used to improve the quality of education provided by a school? How can self-evaluation be used for external accounting without damaging the strengths that it brings with it, namely school ownership and individual school selection of the topics judged to be important for evaluation? And perhaps most important, what is the association between the results of a self-evaluation at the level of the school and educational outcomes at the level of the student? These are important avenues for future research.

The results of this type of research are not only of scientific relevance but also of educational relevance. Combining quality assurance and school improvement is a complex process. Given the valuable opportunities offered by self-evaluation for the voicing of concerns and strengthening of educational ownership among parents, teachers, students, and other stakeholders in the school environment, school self-evaluation is probably here to stay. School self-evaluation and use of the SSC instrument can play an important role in the process of combining quality assurance and school improvement or as the opportunities it offers are among the main conditions for realizing sustainable educational quality. Finally, when the policy of the Dutch and other education inspectorates focusses on the quality of quality assurance in schools, the quality of a school's self-evaluation becomes critical. More attention is therefore needed for the development of the capacities of schools for improvement and the use of self-evaluation as a stimulus for all schools and not just those that already have a capacity for improvement. In other words, a combination of school self-evaluation and facilitation of the competence of change management in schools can lead to better student care and a higher quality of education. In this regard, the framework of criteria in the present study is not only useful for assessing the quality of school self-evaluation for scientific reasons, but can function as guideline for strategic action in practice as well. The framework might help school leadership and supervisors to invest in content and process conditions regarding both accountability and school improvement in order to increase the benefits of school self-evaluation efforts.

Notes

- [1] In the Dutch education system, pre-vocational secondary education is the lowest general track of secondary education and the complement of general secondary education. Students generally enter secondary school at age 12 in the Netherlands. Fifty percent of all students follow a pre-vocational secondary education track. The central aim of a pre-vocational secondary education is to continue to develop general competences (e.g., language, mathematics) and prepare the student for senior secondary vocational education/training.
- [2] This study was conducted in 2006 with 119 schools. Not all self-evaluations were completed in 2006 and therefore only 102 schools were included in the study.
- [3] The "quality care coordinator" is the person responsible in the school (e.g., teacher or some other staff member for the implementation and monitoring of a school's quality management plan.

Chapter 3

Modelling inclusive special needs education: Insights from Dutch secondary schools

This chapter was previously published:

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Small adjustments were made to the form in which this chapter was published.

Abstract

Inclusive special needs education is prominent on the international education agenda. Research on the characteristics of inclusive education for students with special needs and schools providing this is scarce, however. Our aim in the present study was therefore to further theory-building with regard to inclusive special needs education. On the basis of the relevant literature, we identified three central aspects of inclusivity: the learning environment, the guidance provided by teachers and the general care structure. With the help of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses conducted on data obtained from school professionals in 79 secondary schools in the Netherlands, we were able to identify 12 underlying characteristics for a conceptual framework to further research on the inclusive nature of schools and education. Multilevel structural equation modelling of the judgments of school professionals at the level of the school also showed that the inclusive special needs education in at least secondary schools can be characterized by two main factors: 1) learning environment and 2) guidance and care. The analyses showed considerable agreement on the important aspects of inclusivity for schools and thus how differences between schools can be explained. The results further showed the work of the care coordinator – which includes cooperation with external partners and teachers with mentoring roles – to be the clearest indicator of the extent of the inclusive special needs education within schools. This finding is interpreted as suggesting that the recommended teaching practices and student care for adequate included special needs education have not yet been integrated into teachers' thinking and acting. Follow-up research drawing upon the developed framework is therefore called for to not only more generally validate the framework but also determine if the situation in school has changed, now that the policy and practices for inclusive education have become more familiar.

Modelling inclusive special needs education: Insights from Dutch secondary schools

Introduction

Since the Salamanca Statement to help promote inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994), discussion has continued on the best ways of organising education to promote the learning and development of all children (Florian, 2012; Tomlinson, 2015) political considerations, socio-economic conditions and cultural-historical factors obviously influence the design and development of inclusive education systems (Hansen, 2012; Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; OECD, 2015). In many countries, students with 'special educational needs' are still taught in separate schools or separate groups sometimes with and sometimes without special guidance (Agalianos, 2012). More and more, however, schools are taking up the challenge of teaching students with special needs as much as possible within the regular classroom context.

Unfortunately, schools are finding themselves not completely able to realize the conditions needed for inclusive education. First, a widely shared, unequivocal interpretation of what constitutes 'inclusive special needs education' is not yet available. A marked discrepancy also exists between the ideological and practical commitment to inclusive education in schools, due to a lack of cooperation between scientists, politicians and school professionals (Erten & Savage, 2012; Göransson, Nilholm, & Karlsson, 2011; Jahnukainen, 2015). Furthermore, the principles put forth for educational practice greatly vary; they can range from simply calling for the integration of students with disabilities and learning disorders to stipulating what constitutes 'good education for all children' (Ainscow & César, 2006; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011). An important step in the realization of inclusive special needs education thus consists of achieving clarity on what inclusive special needs education requires of teachers and schools and therefore 'how to look for and recognize inclusion in schools' (Nind, Benjamin, Sheehy, Collins, & Hall, 2004, p. 259).

In the Netherlands, educational policy has targeted inclusive education for many years now. However, the process of formalizing inclusive educational policy into law and shaping school practices is still underway. In fact, observations of insufficient government attention to the Salamanca Statement of 1994 and the 'convention on the rights of persons with disabilities' (UNESCO, 2006) are increasingly being heard. The purpose of the present study was therefore to help stimulate the empirical study and realization of inclusive special needs education with the development of a conceptual model for evaluation and testing. We do not take a stand on the ongoing policy discussion but offer, instead, a theoretically and empirically grounded model for

better understanding the characteristics of the inclusive special needs education which schools are increasingly wanting to provide.

Inclusive special needs education

We define inclusive special needs education as accepting all students in regular education, if necessary in collaboration with schools of special education and/or external partners or agencies (e.g. social workers, youth care professionals, school attendance officers, police) (see also Mitchell, 2014; Hansen, 2012). Such a definition implies that students need not be diagnosed and labelled. Inclusive school policy and teaching practices are shaped by the different educational needs of students, not by the deficiencies of certain students compared to others. As such, the design of inclusive special needs education can be undertaken from the general perspective of school development, with attention to the educational views of school management and the professionalism of teachers (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010).

For the conduct of research and understanding the required characteristics of inclusive special needs education, characteristics at both the school and classroom levels must be taken into consideration. The results of a review study by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Meijer, 2004) on the implementation of inclusive education in secondary schools drawn from 14 European countries, for example, highlighted the importance of an environment in which the learning of *all* students is promoted by such pedagogical characteristics as cooperative learning, effective instructional methods, feedback, frequent assessment, flexible assessment and high expectations for what students can achieve. Sufficient expertise and contact within the school to provide specific guidance with regard to school practices were also found to be important as well as the organizational conditions needed to realize such guidance.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the relevant characteristics of inclusive special needs education and their interrelations at the level of the school but also the level of the classroom, we examined three domains of school functioning which could be expected to influence inclusive special needs education and have been shown to do so in the relevant literature: the learning environment, the guidance provided by teachers and the general care structure.

Among the characteristics of an inclusive *learning environment* are high expectations, positive feedback from teachers, frequent feedback with regard to learning goals, sufficient learning time, a supportive atmosphere, orderly surroundings, promotion of cooperation, promotion of reciprocity (i.e. mutual help) and student participation in lessons (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Meijer, 2004). These characteristics largely correspond to the characteristics of the learning environment shown to be of importance in school effectiveness research (see, for example, Muijs et al., 2014). In

terms of 'the basic psychological needs identified by Ryan and Deci (2000), an inclusive learning environment should offer students autonomy (i.e. encourage them to make their own choices), promote competence (i.e. allow students to experience learning as meaningful and teaching as attuned to their abilities) and attend to relationships (i.e. help students feel connected to teachers and other students). Teachers can encourage all of this with the use of such teaching methods as cooperative learning, peer tutoring and team teaching (Florian, 2008; Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014; Nevin, Thousand, & Villa, 2009).

The realization of an inclusive learning environment for students greatly depends on the *guidance provided by teachers* which can take the form of 'adaptive' teaching, a differentiated curriculum and socio-emotional support. Teachers must be able to customize their teaching, irrespective of whether the students are 'normal' or 'special'; they should be able to clearly recognize and acknowledge the potential of each student and they should be able to stimulate the individual development of each and every student. Doing all this requires not only well-developed classroom management and guidance skills (Mitchell, 2014) but also presupposes a positive teacher-student relationship (Watkins, 2012). The quality of the teacher-student relationship has been found to be particularly important for the school success of students with special educational needs (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). And optimization of the teacher-student relationship has been found to call for cooperation between those teachers working with the same students or classes, particularly in secondary education where different subjects are taught by different teachers (Florian, 2008). Social-emotional support and guidance in the sense of 'mentoring' has also been found to promote the well-being and school success of particularly students with special educational needs (Colley, 2003; Kyriacou, 2014). And either the teachers, special personnel or both can give students the social-emotional support which they need and are entitled to.

From the moment that fewer students began to be referred for special education, schools have paid *increased* attention to their internal *care (i.e., support) structures*. Although this care is primarily for students with special educational needs, the care expertise is no longer supposed to focus on deficiencies but instead on the educational and developmental needs of *all* students. As such, the support provided by available care structures in schools now should be more concerned with preventive than with curative needs (Meijer, 2009). Usually, for example, the internal care team discusses which students appear to need additional support. The external care team goes beyond this to harmonize the guidance provided by teachers and other at the school, family, and health and human service professionals (Muijs, West, & Ainscow, 2010; Soresi, Nota, & Wehmeyer, 2011). Among the health and human service professionals involved in the care structure are social workers, youth care professionals, school attendance officers from the community and police. This multi-professional collaboration requires shared knowledge, goals and views (Thornberg, 2012). Often the

care coordinator is the central figure in the school's care structure. Together with 'mentors' (teachers with an additional mentoring role for a group of students), the care coordinator usually maintains contact with the parents of students. And taking parents' expertise seriously and involving them in the guidance of their child increases the chances of a successful intervention (Jeynes, 2012). Finally, the individual education plan (IEP) occupies a special place within the school's care structure. An IEP has been shown to be particularly effective when not only the student but also the parents are involved in the creation and evaluation of the plan (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Javitz, & Valdes, 2012).

In Figure 1, the characteristics of inclusive special needs education are summarized in the form of a conceptual framework for further testing. Important are the design of the learning environment, the guidance provided by teachers and the general care structure. The arrows in the figure indicate the interdependence which we have assumed to occur between these three characteristics.

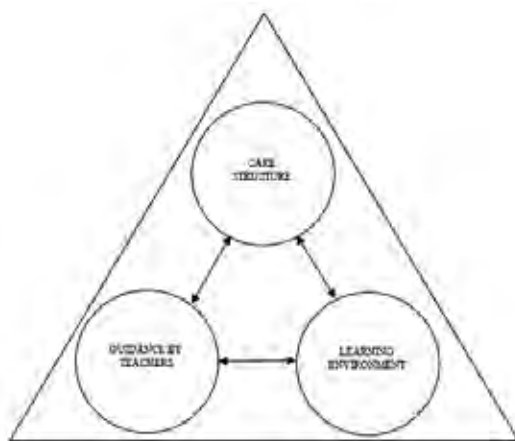


Figure 1. *Conceptual model inclusive education*

As yet, no research has been conducted on the interrelations between the important characteristics of inclusive special needs education at the level of the school. With the present study, we hope to remedy this situation and therefore formulated the following question: *What are the central characteristics of inclusive education and thus education equipped to handle the needs of all students, in particular those with special needs, according to secondary educational professionals in the Netherlands?*

Method

Study sample

Our proposed conceptual framework for inclusive special needs education was tested using the data from self-evaluations coming from 79 schools for secondary education in the Netherlands (2216 respondents). The schools were widely distributed throughout the Netherlands with a variance in school size that is regular given the general population of Dutch schools. The data was collected as part of a national self-evaluation project entitled 'Quality of student care'. And a two-step data collection procedure was followed. First the schools registered voluntarily. Then the school managers (top and middle management levels), teachers and guidance personnel (e.g. care coordinators, remedial teachers and mentoring teacher) were administered a questionnaire. Depending on the size of the school, the contact person for the school decided – with the approval of the external research consultant – to include all relevant individuals or a sample of relevant individuals, according to the following guideline: schools with less than 500 students all individuals; with more than 500 students a sample.

The self-evaluations were collected during the course of the school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. Table 1 presents an overview of the number of respondents per type of school.

Table 1. *Survey of the research population of secondary schools*

School types	Number of schools	Total number of respondents	Range of number of respondents per school	Cluster size*
Preparatory secondary vocational education	29	754	4 - 103	26.0
Comprehensive schools	35	1151	6 - 109	32.9
Practice education	15	311	9 - 32	23.0
Total	79	2216	4 - 109	27.3

* cluster size refers to the average number of respondents per school.

Measures

As part of the national self-evaluation project, a questionnaire was anonymously distributed via a web unit linked to a central programme, which was administered by a contact person from the school. The questionnaire was developed by a project team, which included the author of this dissertation on the basis of a literature study, consultants with practice experience and knowledge from the legal assessment

framework of the Dutch Inspectorate of Education. The questionnaire consisted of 222 items addressing issues concerning educational quality such as the teaching and learning process, guidance, care structure and trajectories. Respondents were asked to indicate their opinions by scoring the items along a four-point scale, supplemented with the option ‘don’t know’.

To operationalize the conceptual framework for purposes of the present study, we first selected the relevant topics from the questionnaire with items referring to 1) learning environment, 2) guidance provided by teachers or 3) care structure. Those items meeting the basic criteria for item formulation were then selected from the initial selection of items. Exploratory factor analyses and reliability analyses were then conducted to construct scales (all decisions were based on the theoretical framework as described earlier). This resulted in 12 scales concerned with the learning environment, guidance provided by teachers or general care structure with each scale showing a unidimensional factor structure and sufficient reliability.¹

The length of the questionnaire led to a relatively large amount of missing data towards the end of the questionnaire. The schools had also been instructed that they could disregard any questions or topics judged to be irrelevant for them. The percentage of missing data varied from 3.3% to 69.7%, with an average of 33.4%. In order to find out if the missing data reflected a systematic pattern of omission, the separate scales were tested at the school level to see if the scale scores correlated with the response completeness for the scale in question. None of these correlations proved significant, and no support was obtained for a systematic pattern of missing data. Further analyses were therefore based upon the assumption ‘missing at random’ for all missing data.²

On the basis of individual scores obtained for the school professionals completing the self-evaluation questionnaire (n = 2216), we computed the reliabilities, average scale scores and associated standard deviations (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Survey of scale scores, reliabilities, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis (N = 2216)*

Scale	Items (n)	α	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1 Stimulating learning environment	5	.75	1	4	3.02	.44
2 Secure learning environment	5	.72	2	4	3.04	.42
3 Participatory learning environment	4	.71	1	4	2.78	.46
4 Guidance by mentor	6	.84	1	4	3.00	.49
5 Individual guidance in lessons	4	.65	1	4	2.89	.50
6 Customized programme	7	.84	1	4	2.58	.59
7 Individual education plan	4	.81	1	4	2.68	.69
8 Parents as partners in guidance	4	.82	1	4	3.06	.57
9 Functioning of care coordinator	6	.92	1	4	3.07	.62
10 Functioning of care team	4	.89	1	4	2.93	.71
11 Consultation with partners outside the school	6	.89	1	4	2.96	.55
12 Harmonizing internal and external guidance	4	.85	1	4	2.85	.59

The reliability of the scales was good and varied from .71 to .92 with the exception of the scale for *individual guidance during lessons*, which qualified as only fairly reliable ($\alpha = .65$). The standard deviations for the 12 scales varied from .42 to .71. The scales showed fair to good normally curved; there was no indication of ceiling effects or extreme skewness.

Analyses

First, the descriptive data and reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) for each of the scales were determined. We then examined the extent to which data dependency in schools had to be taken into account. For this purpose, the intraclass correlations, design effects and interrater agreement were inspected. Thereafter, the unidimensionality and reliability of the scales were determined at the level of the school and the relations between the factors examined in confirmatory factor analyses.

To determine the extent of data dependency in schools, the design effect was computed and interpreted for all separate items and the average scale scores using the following rule of thumb: the design effects had to be at least equal to the value of 2 (see Table 3) (Muthén & Satorra, 1995).

Table 3. *Intraclass correlations, design effects and interrater reliability (ICC) at school level (N = 79)*

	Items (n)	ICC	Design effect	$r_{WG(I)}$
1 Stimulating learning environment	5	0.15	5.1	0.93
2 Secure learning environment	5	0.10	3.8	0.93
3 Participatory learning environment	4	0.15	5.0	0.88
4 Guidance by mentor	6	0.14	4.7	0.91
5 Individual guidance in lessons	4	0.18	5.8	0.88
6 Customized programme	7	0.17	5.7	0.89
7 Individual education plan	4	0.15	5.0	0.78
8 Parents as partners in guidance	4	0.14	4.8	0.85
9 Functioning of care coordinator	6	0.15	4.9	0.86
10 Functioning of care team	4	0.24	7.5	0.82
11 Consultation with partners outside the school	6	0.09	3.4	0.89
12 Harmonizing internal and external guidance	4	0.19	3.7	0.84

The design effects for the scales varied from 3.42 to 5.8 with an average effect of 4.02, which is considerably higher than the established criterion of 2. The size of the design effects could be seen to depend on not only the high intraclass correlations ($M = .12$; $SD = .06$; range = .03 - .31) but also the high average average of respondents within schools (across all scales 28.5).

We used multilevel structural equation models (SEM) with the help of Mplus to first test factor models at the level of the items for each scale separately and then at the level of the scale (see Appendix). Given that the research question concerned the distinguishable characteristics of inclusive education at the school level and as the formulation of the items concerned the characteristics of particular schools, only the external covariance matrix was used for the multilevel analyses. The internal covariance matrix was left free – no restrictions were imposed on the within models (Hox & Maas, 2001). The following criteria were applied to evaluate the fit of the models: values equal to or below .06 for the RMSEA and values equal to or below .95 for the CFI were taken to indicate a proper fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The reliabilities of the scale scores at the school level were estimated with multilevel SEM following the method described by Raykov (2001). With the help of correlation analyses at the school level, the pattern of connections between the characteristics of inclusive special needs education were examined. In order to verify the unidimensionality of the separate scales, we first tested all of the one-factor models at the level of the school. Considering the limited size of the sample of schools ($N = 79$), estimation of restrictive factor models was next used to examine the discriminant validity of the scales. This means that apart from specific scale items, the score of another scale is included as an observed variable in order to identify possible violators of the trait type (Oort, 1998) with Bonferroni correction to adapt the level of significance on account of the large number of models being estimated). The modification indices were then inspected for double loadings.

The construction of a characteristic at the level of an organization on the basis of individual responses only makes sense when there is sufficient agreement on the characteristic within the organization (Chan, 1998). For this reason, we also calculated the within-group rater reliability statistic (r_{wgj} ; James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1993). This agreement had to be at least equal to .70 (Le Breton & Senter, 2008). The r_{wgj} measure for all scales considerably exceeded the threshold of .70 (see Table 3). And once again, inspection of the distributions of the scale scores provided no indications of a ceiling effect. Last, it was examined to what extent the factors in the final model correlated with each other.

Results

As our research question was formulated at the school level and as the questionnaire asked for the opinions of respondents with regard to their own school practices, only the intervariance for the multilevel constructed model of inclusive special needs education was analysed. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Model estimates per characteristic of inclusive education with WLSMV estimates (analyses of interschool variance; N = 79) (see Appendix for items and factor loadings)

	WLSMV				
	X ²	df	p	RMSEA	CFI
1 Stimulating learning environment	12.967	7	0.073	0.020	0.999
2 Secure learning environment	11.864	5	0.037	0.025	0.998
3 Participatory learning environment	5.993	2	0.050	0.030	0.998
4 Guidance by mentor	70.419	10	0.000	0.053	0.990
5 Individual guidance in lessons	5.224	3	0.156	0.019	0.998
6 Customization	21.200	14	0.097	0.016	0.998
7 Individual education plan	2.213	3	0.529	0.000	1.000
8 Parents as partners in guidance	6.041	2	0.049	0.034	0.999
9 Functioning of care coordinator	32.305	10	0.000	0.039	0.998
10 Functioning of care team	3.839	3	0.279	0.014	1.000
11 Consultation with partners outside the school	8.040	9	0.530	0.000	1.000
12 Harmonization of internal and external guidance	0.377	2	0.828	0.000	1.000

The measures of fit for all of the models were good (see Table 4). In general, a RMSEA value (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) of .06 or less is indicative of an acceptable fit. A CFI value (Comparative Fit Index) of .90 or larger is generally taken to indicate an acceptable model fit³. For our model testing, all RMSEA values were below .06 and all CFI values above .95.

On the basis of preceding results, the unweighted scale scores and correlations between the scales were computed at the level of the school (see Table 5).

Table 5. Correlation matrix and reliability of scale scores* for the 12 characteristics of inclusive special needs education (reliabilities along diagonal in italics, analyses at school level) (N = 79)

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Stimulating learning environment	<i>.86</i>											
2 Secure learning environment	.54	<i>.90</i>										
3 Participatory learning environment	.41	.32	<i>.87</i>									
4 Guidance mentor/regularly assigned teacher	.51	.48	.41	<i>.91</i>								
5 Individual guidance in lessons	.44	.37	.44	.63	<i>.69</i>							
6 Customized programme	.37	.29	.43	.52	.56	<i>.94</i>						
7 Individual education plan	.31	.26	.34	.48	.46	.53	<i>.84</i>					
8 Parents as partners in guidance	.41	.34	.33	.51	.50	.46	.50	<i>.90</i>				
9 Functioning of care coordinator	.34	.35	.31	.46	.38	.38	.48	.49	<i>.96</i>			
10 Functioning of care team	.28	.29	.31	.45	.39	.39	.47	.47	.59	<i>.96</i>		
11 Interagency collaboration	.36	.34	.29	.56	.41	.36	.52	.50	.54	.55	<i>.96</i>	
12 Harmonization of internal and external care	.35	.36	.27	.54	.40	.46	.48	.47	.56	.60	.64	<i>.95</i>

All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level.

*The reliabilities of the scale scores were estimated using the method described by Raykov (2001). The correlation between the latent factor and the unweighted sum-score for the items is computed per scale as part of the factor modelling (using LISREL version 9.1).

The correlations varied from .26 to .64. Reliability was excellent with the exception of that for the scale *Individual guidance in lessons*, which was reasonable (Raykov .69; not presented in the Table). The high reliabilities could be attributed in part to the use of aggregated data, which tends to produce higher correlations than data calculated at the individual level (Robinson, 2009).

We concluded that our 12 factors reliably capture the nature of the inclusive special needs education at the level of the school. The pattern of correlations nevertheless suggested that higher order factors might be at work. This possibility was then examined by comparing four models in a confirmatory factor analysis. The goodness of fit indices for these models are reported in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of confirmative analyses of the second order factor models for inclusivity of schools (analysis of interschool variance; N = 79)

	X ²	df	p	RMSEA	CFI
A Three factor model	128.17	52	0.00	0.026	0.995
B Two factor model	126.34	54	0.00	0.025	0.995
C Two factor model with covariance of unique factors	113.93	54	0.00	0.022	0.996
D Two factor model with an additional factor	112.39	53	0.00	0.022	0.996

Based upon the conceptual framework, a model containing the three second-order factors of *learning environment*, *guidance provided by teachers* and *care structure* was estimated (Figure 1; model A in Table 6). The correlation between the second-order factors of *guidance provided by teachers* and *care structure* proved very high for this model (.996), suggesting a single underlying factor. The two factors were thus combined and labelled *guidance and care*. A modified model with the two second-order factors of *learning environment* and *guidance and care* was next constructed and tested (model B). The correlation between the two second-order factors was .78.

The discriminant validity of this model was next tested using a model containing the two second-order factors with the covariance of the unique factors (model C). However, two first-order factors – namely, *individual guidance in lessons* and *parents as partners in guidance* – gave rise to violations of unidimensionality.

On the basis of the information gained from the testing of the three previous models, it was decided to create a new second-order factor to explain the variance in the *individual guidance in lessons* and *parents as partners in guidance*. A fourth model including this new second-order factor was then created and tested (model D in Table 6). This last model provided a good fit for the data (RMSEA < .60 and CFI > .95).

In Figure 2, the fourth and final model containing the two second-order factors reflecting the inclusivity of schools is depicted (model D). As can be seen, the additional second-order factor encompassing *individual guidance in lessons* and *parents as partners in guidance* is included in the model and labelled *harmonization of guidance*. This factor reflects the collaboration of parents and school/teachers for the guidance of a child.

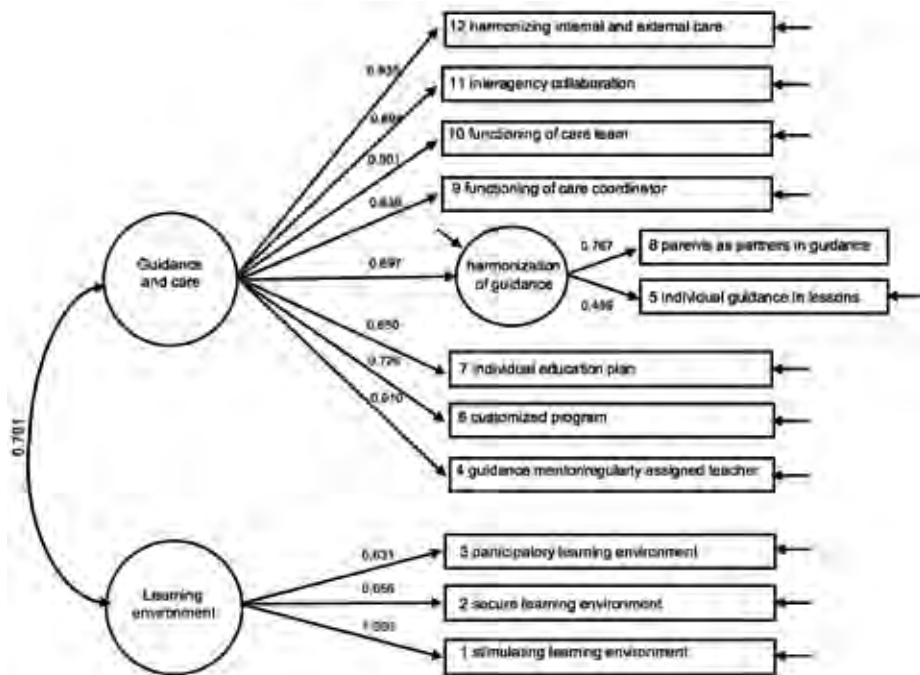


Figure 2. Confirmative model for factors of inclusive education at school level

The loading of *stimulating learning environment* on the factor *learning environment* was fixed at 1.000 to enable testing of the fourth model (see Figure 2). Furthermore, the second-order factor *guidance and care* appeared to largely build on *harmonization of guidance*, *guidance by mentor*, *consultation with partners in the environment* and *functioning of the care coordinator* with factor loadings of .94, .91, .89 and .84, respectively. This pattern of loadings shows the coordination and harmonization of the different 'care stakeholders' (e.g., parents, internal experts, external experts) by the mentor and care coordinator to be indicative of the inclusivity of a school. The actual care itself as provided by teachers in their lessons or the internal care team appears to be perceived as somewhat less indicative of the inclusivity at the level of the school with

the lowest factor loadings for *individual guidance in lessons* and *functioning of the care team* (.49 and .50, respectively).

In additional analyses, the extent to which the scores of a school on the factors *learning environment* and *guidance and care* correlate with each other was examined. A scatter plot with points representing the scores of the schools ($N = 79$) on *learning environment* (horizontal axis) and *guidance and care* (vertical axis) was created (see Figure 3).

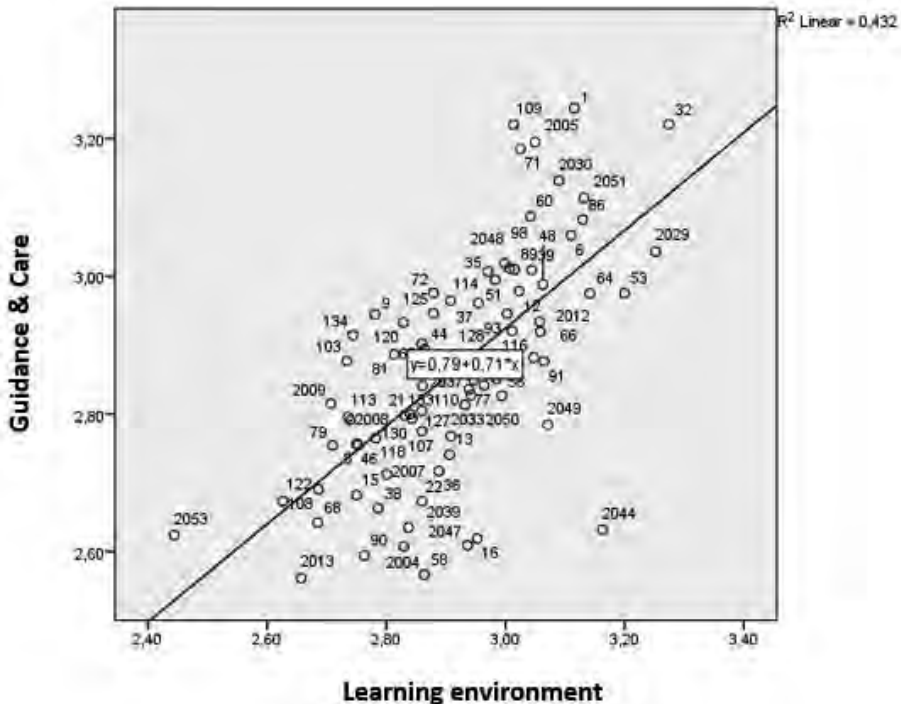


Figure 3. Connection between factors ‘learning environment’ (LE) and ‘guidance and care structure’ (GCS)

The correlation formula for the two main factors proved to be $y = .79 + .71 * x$. When the Pearson correlation between the two factors was calculated, it was found to be strong (.66; $p < .01$). The more a school was characterized as having an inclusive learning environment, the more it was characterized as having inclusive guidance and care.

Convergent validity

In order to ascertain the convergent validity, the results of our analyses were compared to those provided by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education during the same period. For

14 of the 79 schools, this information was available. Comparison of the schools' self-evaluation results with the judgments of the Inspectorate showed considerable correspondence: to the extent that the schools produced higher scores on the 12 characteristics of inclusive education, their appreciation by the Inspectorate was also higher. Only one school showed a divergent pattern of results. These outcomes are based on a small number of schools but nevertheless suggest a reasonable measure of correspondence between the final model evaluated in our study and the assessment results reported by the Inspectorate.

Conclusions and discussion

Research into inclusive special needs education shows diverging theoretical perspectives (Ainscow & César, 2006; Armstrong et al., 2011; Hansen, 2012; Jahnukainen, 2015), a lack of models to evaluate effectiveness (Erten & Savage, 2012) and different opinions on the most suitable methodological approach (Nind et al., 2004). All of this has been found to impede a better understanding of the characteristics of inclusive special needs education. On the basis of the available literature, we developed a conceptual framework encompassing special needs education: the *learning environment*, *guidance provided by teachers* and *care structure*. An operational model was tested using self-evaluation data collected from school professionals in 79 schools for secondary education in the Netherlands. The results showed the school professionals to distinguish a multitude of characteristics of inclusive special needs education and be in a position to use these characteristics to evaluate the inclusivity of their schools. The school variation on the 12 identified characteristics, moreover, could be largely explained by two main characteristics, namely *learning environment* and *guidance and care*.

As to the *learning environment*, the importance of a stimulating and secure learning environment in addition to student participation was pointed by Meijer in 2004. The average scale scores for the school professionals in the present study, however, showed student participation to be less present than a stimulating and secure learning environment. This suggests that the possibilities for autonomy and encouragement of student ownership (Ryan & Deci, 2000) may need to be more fully exploited within the context of inclusive special needs education.

The conceptual distinction between *guidance provided by teachers* and *care structure* at the level of the school did not stand up to empirical testing in the present study. The strong correlations between the two factors/domains therefore led to the construction of a combined factor, namely *guidance and care*, with eight characteristics. The results of the newly formulated model including *guidance and care* at the school level as a joint factor showed the clearest indicators for inclusive special needs education within schools, according to the school professionals themselves, to be the

work of the care coordinators and those teachers serving as mentors in addition to the harmonization of the care provided internally and externally along with the quality of the interagency collaboration. Harmonization of the individual guidance provided during lessons and the involvement of parents in this, however, were found to be less clear indicators just as individualized education plans, customized programming and the functioning of the care team. This outcome suggests that – from the perspective of school professionals – the inclusive special needs education provided by schools is primarily characterized in terms of activities *outside* the class. The roles of the care coordinators and mentors are important, but factors beyond the teachers and the classroom appear to be critical determinants of sufficiently inclusive education in the eyes of school professionals. An alternative explanation for this outcome is that inclusive instructional practices and student care have not yet to be sufficiently integrated into the thinking and acting of teachers.

The characteristics of individual guidance during lessons and the involvement of parents and external partners turned out to be very important and strongly interconnected in the judgements of the school professionals in our study. For this reason, a *new* factor was constructed, namely *harmonization of guidance*. This highlights the importance of suitable guidance for students with special needs; the sufficient and direct contact between parents and teachers; and the requirement of sufficient harmonization of the guidance provided for the student not only at the school but also at home.

A potential limitation on the present study is that the database which it drew upon stems from 2006. Assuming that educational policy has progressed since 2006, it is possible that the picture of inclusive special needs education provided by this data is outdated. Unfortunately, recent studies still show inclusive special needs education to be a more formal procedural arrangement than at the heart of current teaching practices. In 2014, for instance, the Educational Inspectorate in the Netherlands reported that individual education plans played little or no role in the actual teaching process. In most individual education plans, moreover, the goals and a concrete action plan were found to be missing. And for a great part of the schools, no periodic assessment was conducted (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2014). Similar findings have been reported elsewhere in the world. In Sweden, the individual education plan has been found to be employed as primarily an administrative tool and little or no involvement of parents and students in the development of such plans is reported (see Andreasson, Asp-Onsjö, & Isaksson, 2013).

A second possible limitation on the present study is that the data comes from schools which *volunteered* to participate in the original self-evaluation project. The geographic distribution of the schools in the sample was representative of the distribution of schools in the Netherlands, just as the variation in the size of the schools was representative. Nevertheless, generalization should be done with caution simply because schools which value self-evaluation have been shown to constitute a special

group of schools (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2010). Given that the intention of the present study was not to evaluate the level of inclusive education characterizing the school but, rather, to build and test a framework for future school comparison, this self-selection is not problematic.

In the present study, the correlation of *learning environment* with *guidance and care* as the chief characteristics of inclusive special needs education proved to be quite high. This suggests that, within separate schools, considerable consensus exists on the aspects of inclusivity which are important even though the schools may differ from each other on their inclusive special needs education. The framework for inclusive special needs education presented here with its clearly documented school-level reliability allows for not only comparison of schools but also determination of the shared perspectives of those schools which appear to particularly excel. And in such a manner, those characteristics which are of eminent importance for school improvement and the more widespread realization of inclusive special needs education can be identified (Ainscow & Sandil, 2010). The question of whether the next step drawing upon a shared perspective on what are best practices should be taken cannot be answered on the basis of the present results. Dutch legislation for 'Education that fits all' (Staatsblad, 2012) is nevertheless obliging schools to outline their philosophies in a so-called 'support profile', and a relevant follow-up study will be to determine how these support profiles/philosophies relate – or not – to the shared views of school professionals reported here on the critical characteristics of inclusive special needs education.

Effectiveness studies to date have insufficiently highlighted the role of the care structure for inclusive special needs education. The model and empirically derived characteristics of inclusive special needs education identified in the present study make it possible to examine the extent to which the relevant characteristics are recognized and implemented by schools, teachers and other stakeholders in the education process including the students themselves, parents, external professionals and inspectors. The degree of convergence among their opinions can then be examined. And the results of such study can provide valuable starting points for the further realization of inclusive education with a broad support base.

The reliability of the developed model at the level of the school also makes it possible to compare schools for the degree of inclusive special needs education. The characteristics of inclusivity in the *learning environment* and the *guidance and care* which in our study were distinguished at the school level, can be included as explanatory factors in effectiveness models allowing to thoroughly evaluate the success of inclusive education.

Notes

- [1] A separate technical report can be obtained from the authors.
- [2] The missing data analyses were carried out both on the assumption 'missing completely at random' (MCAR, pairwise deletion) and on the assumption of 'missing at random' (MAR, with the help of the EM algorithm). Also, in connection with the incidence of outliers, the Spearman rank correlation coefficients with Bonferroni correction between the average scale scores for a school and the proportion of valid data for the same school were computed. None of these correlations proved significant. A technical report on the missing data analyses can be obtained from the authors.
- [3] In a few cases, the estimation of the unique residual variance produced a negative value ('Heywood case'). In order to prevent this, the value of the relevant residual variance was fixed to zero (see Appendix for the results per scale at the item level). The estimations were also carried out with 'robust weighted least squares' (MLI) for ordinal data. This led to the same conclusions, which implies that the test level of the item scores can be interpreted both at interval and ordinal level.

Appendix

Items in the survey with factor loadings and residues after testing the unidimensional factor models (intervariance matrix, see Table 4 in this chapter).

1. Stimulating learning environment	Factor loading	Residue
At our school...		
1 pupils get positive feedback (on behaviour and work).	.988	.059
2 communication is relaxed and positive.	.645	.118
3 teachers show that they have positive expectations of pupils.	.987	.041
4 teachers show that they trust pupils.	.997	.001
5 pupils are allowed to express themselves (opinions, feelings).	.715	.136
2. Secure learning environment	Factor loading	Residue
At our school...		
1 teachers and pupils respect agreed security rules.	.757	.175
2 teachers and pupils respect each other (<i>don't ignore, offend, manipulate or bully each other, show respect for each other's privacy</i>).	.729	.146
3 teachers and pupils respect agreed social rules.	.975	.128
4 information about pupils and their home situation is treated confidentially.	.671	.260
5 pupils are treated equally and justly.	.675	.195
3. Participatory learning environment	Factor loading	Residue
At our school...		
1 pupils work together.	.899	.201
2 pupils are allowed to think along about their schoolwork (<i>choice of content, planning</i>).	.813	.140
3 pupils are involved in helping each other.	.996	.081
4 pupils are allowed to plan their own time for school work.	.684	.179
4. Guidance by mentor or regularly assigned teacher	Factor loading	Residue
At our school...		
1 every pupil has a properly functioning guide (<i>holds talks with pupil and parents; is port of call for pupils; supervises progress and discusses progress with teachers and care coordinator</i>).	.573	.151
2 the guide identifies developmental needs and, if necessary, initiates diagnostic testing	.814	.251
3 if necessary, guide adapts action plan.	.780	.159
4 teachers and experts regularly discuss guidance activities to be undertaken.	.995	.125
5 teachers carry out planned guidance activities.	.679	.293
6 teachers are available for pupils.	.554	.234

5. Individual guidance in lessons		Factor	
At our school...		loading	Residue
1	teachers observe pupils.	.799	.217
2	teachers identify problems (fear of failure, lack of concentration, social and emotional problems, dyslexia, lack of spatial ability).	.999	.001
3	every pupil is regularly informed about his/her progress and development.	.555	.134
4	care teams provide teaching and guidance of a group.	.188	.044
6 Customized programme		Factor	
At our school...		loading	Residue
1	a suitable programme is made up for each group (on the basis of data from the group action plan or recorded initial situation).	.630	.216
2	a structural provision is offered for the social and emotional development of pupils.	.831	.112
3	subjects, learning lines and activities are provided coherently.	.867	.106
4	teaching builds forward on acquired competences of pupils.	.922	.078
5	if necessary, teaching deviates from core objectives of basic education.	.848	.113
6	if necessary, pupils get dispensations.	.656	.164
7	there are learning trajectories for groups and individual pupils.	.754	.119
7. Individual education plan		Factor	
At our school...		loading	Residue
1	the action plan contains agreements about frequency and content of consultation with parents/caregivers and about their involvement in guidance.	.318	.169
2	a pupil has one action plan at a time (<i>principle of one child one plan</i>).	.883	.093
3	a pupil and his/her parents/caregivers have access to the action plan.	1.000	.000
4	the action plan is made up together with the pupil.	.451	.115
8. Parents as partners in guidance		Factor	
At our school...		loading	Residue
1	a transfer discussion is held with parents/caregivers when a pupil is enrolled	.869	.166
2	the guide regularly informs parents/caregivers about the progress of a pupil's development	.678	.204
3	guide, pupil and parents/ caregivers make agreements on (guidance) activities and responsibilities.	.491	.168
4	parents/ caregivers are involved in the transfer of the pupil to continuing education and/or the labour market.	.854	.167

9. Functioning of care coordinator		
At our school...	Factor loading	Residue
1 we have a properly functioning care coordinator.	.884	.119
2 our care coordinator manages the care team.	.866	.156
3 our care coordinator looks after coaching of mentors and experts.	.644	.317
4 our care coordinator consults with (special) primary education about intake procedures.	.733	.220
5 our care coordinator consults with coordinators of pupil care in continuing education.	.728	.212
6 our care coordinator consults with the care coordinators of other secondary schools and the coordinator of the cooperative association.	.963	.128
10. Functioning of care team		
At our school...	Factor loading	Residue
1 the care team prepares the action plans together with the teachers and guides.	.774	.225
2 the care team takes part in discussions about pupils.	.906	.094
3 the care team takes part in preparing the care plan.	1.000	.000
4 the care team consults with the management about care conditions.	.968	.049
11. Interagency collaboration		
At our school...	Factor loading	Residue
1 there is an organized consultation with relevant institutions about realizing good care (<i>social work in schools, municipal health service, police, compulsory education requirements, youth care office</i>).	.934	.144
2 consultation is resolute as to time, speed and decisions about pupils needing care.	.912	.181
3 outcomes of consultation are systematically fed back to the mentors involved.	.828	.164
4 has procedures and protocols for contact with external bodies.	.531	.297
5 has regular representatives with external bodies for contacts with the school.	.982	.152
6 has voluntary agreements with partners in organized consultation.	.999	.001
12. Harmonization of internal and external care		
At our school...	Factor loading	Residue
1 pupils needing care are quickly helped.	.724	.191
2 the consequences of the diagnosis are converted by the external institution into the action plan of the pupil.	.811	.169
3 regular feedback takes place between the external provider of assistance and the mentor.	.916	.092
4 guidance is evaluated by the external institution.	.999	.001

Chapter 4

Quality of inclusive educational practice in the experience of parents and secondary school students

This chapter is submitted for publication:

Van der Bij, T., Ten Dam, G. T. M., Oort, F. J., & Geijsel, F. P. (submitted). Quality of inclusive educational practice in the experience of parents and secondary school students.

Small adjustments were made to the form in which this chapter was submitted.

Abstract

Parents and students are the most important stakeholders in schools. For the development of an inclusive school culture, it is important that parents and students are involved and schools know what their experiences with the school are. In the present research, we examined the extent to which the opinions of parents and students about a school can be explained by the perceptions of educational professionals with regard to the inclusivity of their school. Self-evaluation data from educational professionals, parents and students were analysed from 102 schools. The perceptions of the parents and educational professionals resembled each other more than the perceptions of the students and educational professionals. Parents particularly acknowledged the guidance provided by the school, which accounted for more than 35% ($p < .01$) of the variance in their responding and is known to be an important characteristic of inclusive education. Student perceptions showed little recognition of the characteristics of inclusiveness as perceived by the educational professionals, with exception of a marginal amount of agreement found for the guidance. It was concluded that for parents and students inclusive guidance can be distinguished as a clearly recognized characteristic of inclusive education.

Quality of inclusive educational practice in the experience of parents and secondary school students

Introduction

Since the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), schools and teachers are more and more concerned with offering quality education to students with special educational needs in regular schools. The Netherlands, just like many countries around the world, has a tradition of independently organized special education. *Inclusive education* policy has nevertheless – modestly – been stimulated for the past few decades in both primary and secondary education. This development was given a further impulse with the passing of the Educational Fit Act in 2014 (Staatsblad, 2012). The Educational Fit Act is simultaneously intended to help reduce the cost of special education, and similar developments are unfolding in countries such as Belgium, Finland, Germany, Norway and the Czech Republic (Agalianos, 2012).

Research on inclusive education has mostly been aimed to date at the implementation of inclusive education policy, the guidance of students with special educational needs and the organization of this guidance (i.e., outlining the necessary care structure). Offering students optimal guidance for their development requires interdisciplinary cooperation with other schools, experts and institutions including the local government and youth care (Schuman, 2013). And research on the care structures and networks within and surrounding schools shows that the schools are having to pay greater attention to the *communication* with parents and external stepped-care partners than was previously the case (Muijs, et al., 2010; Soresi, et al., 2011). The previous – largely internal – orientation of schools is thus being challenged.

Research examining the consequences of inclusive education policy for primary or secondary education similarly provides insight into the following: 1) important characteristics of the learning environment (Cosmovici, Idsoe, Bru, & Munthe, 2009; Heemskerk, Volman, Ten Dam, & Admiraal, 2011; Ryan, & Deci, 2000); 2) the handling of differences in the class (Knackendoffel, 2007; Van Kraayenoord, 2007; Meijer, 2004); and 3) the guidance of students by teachers in the class (Kyriacou, Tollisen Ellingsen, Stephens, & Sundaram, 2009; Mitchell, 2014). Given these insights, inclusive education is increasingly entering the domain of teacher practices and not just policy development (Leeman & Volman, 2001).

From the aforementioned but also other studies (see also Van der Bij, Garst, Geijssel, & Ten Dam, 2016), additional factors can be seen to promote an inclusive learning environment: good class management, flexible instruction and individual guidance from teachers. The doubts of educational professionals which exist about the potentially detrimental effects of increased numbers of students with special

educational needs in regular classes can be largely dismissed (Persson, 2013; Ruijs, Van der Veen, & Peetsma, 2010). It is further being shown that inclusive education is more than just the effective guidance of students with special educational needs; in principle, *all* students can benefit from education which is inclusive.

Relatively little research has been conducted on the opinions of parents with regard to inclusive education (De Vroey, Struyf, & Petry, 2015). This is despite the fact that the involvement of parents is generally considered *essential* for the realization of an inclusive school culture (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Little is also known about the perceptions of parents and students of inclusive educational practices in secondary education. Prior research (i.e. Blok, Peetsma, & Roede, 2007; De Boer, et al., 2012) has been mostly concerned with primary education, which means that little is known about the perceptions of parents of inclusive secondary education. We need also more information on the perceptions of students as well and then particularly those of students in secondary education.

Inclusive education can certainly be viewed as an aspect of quality education. The question, of course, is whether parents and students also see things this way and value the efforts of teachers and school administrators to implement inclusive education in actual practice. In other words, we do not know enough about which elements of inclusive education are recognized and valued by parents and students in secondary education. Insight into student and parental perceptions is nevertheless needed for the ongoing development of inclusive education policy and practice. It is important for students and parents to recognize and accept the culture and characteristics of inclusive education. But the process of acknowledging the value of inclusive education is unfolding only slowly and encountering considerable difficulty. More attention is needed for the local development of inclusive education: a policy encouraging local actions, local leadership oriented on school development as well as the community (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, & West, 2012).

One possibility for stimulating the development of inclusive education is to involve parents and students to a larger extent. And one tool known to promote involvement is self-evaluation (Creemers, et al., 2013; Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004). Self-evaluation can promote ownership (Van der Bij, Geijsel, & Ten Dam, 2016), the functioning of the school as a professional learning community (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007) and the development of an inclusive school culture (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). The aim of the present research was therefore to gain insight into the realization of a school culture which is perceived to be inclusive for students with special educational needs by both parents and students.

Parents and students on inclusive education

Parents are usually positive about the participation of students with special educational needs in regular education (De Boer, et al., 2010; Gasteiger-Klicpera, Gebhardt, & Schwab, 2012). Parents generally consider it important that their children learn to deal with differences (De Boer, et al., 2012). The opinions of parents nevertheless correlate strongly with socio-economic status, parental level of education, experiences with inclusive education and their own child's type of educational need. Especially parents with a higher socio-economic status, a higher level of education and/or experience with inclusive education tend to be most positive about the inclusion of students with special educational needs in regular education (de Boer et al., 2010). With regard to the quality of the guidance given to their children in schools, parents have been found to be more negative (De Bruin, et al., 2012). Parents express doubts about mostly the inclusion of students with behaviour problems and students with learning disabilities in regular education (De Boer, et al., 2010).

The opinions on inclusive education voiced by the parents of students with special educational needs vary more widely than the opinions of other parents. Some parents of students with special educational needs are fully in favour of inclusive education while others worry about the placement of their child in such education. The latter group is worried primarily about the quality of the guidance and social participation of their child (De Boer, et al., 2010).

Parents generally consider the guidance received by their child to be an important aspect of the quality of the education in a school (De Bruin, et al., 2012). Secondary schools have been found to communicate rarely with parents about the guidance of their children, however, and one can hardly speak of a partnership under such circumstances (Antonopoulou, Koutoruba, & Babalis, 2011; Hornby & Witte, 2010). Both schools and parents are very hesitant in this regard (Onderwijsraad, 2010b). Parents indicate that they would like to have contact with the school about — for example — extra support for their child but the communication between school and parents is limited to predominantly the reporting of student progress. And this situation occurs despite both parents *and* schools clearly acknowledging the importance of communication with regard to student guidance (De Bruin, et al., 2012). To improve this communication, according to De Bruin and colleagues, we need to be able to speak of a pedagogical and didactic partnership. Parents want to hear from the school about how they can best guide their child (didactic partnership), but parents can also play an important role in the formulation of the school support plan for their child (pedagogical partnership). Teachers, mentors and parents still have too little contact with each other regarding student guidance (Antonopoulou, et al., 2011; De Bruin, et al., 2012).

The assumption that parental involvement can positively affect the well-being of students and their school careers is generally accepted (Sanders, 2008; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). In the research on parental involvement to date, however, widely varying

types and forms of involvement are examined (Jeynes, 2007). Some of the studies, for example, have examined the home situation and parental help with homework (Domina, 2005) or the involvement of parents in school activities (McNeal, 2012) or the cooperation between school and parents (Sanders, 2008). This complicates the comparison of study results (McNeal, 2012). Most of the research on parental involvement has also been conducted with only young children, moreover, which means that implications for older children are extrapolated from results for younger children. And the extrapolation of such results has very likely overestimated the expected positive effects of parental involvement on older students (Jeynes, 2007). Another problem with the research on parental development to date is the difficulty of demonstrating a causal relation between parental involvement and a child's academic achievement. Clear, empirical evidence for a direct, positive effect of parental involvement on academic achievement has yet to be found.

When teachers and parents consider each other fully fledged partners in the education of a child, this will presumably contribute to the development of students and their learning (Jeynes, 2012). To determine the — possibly extra — guidance needed for students, cooperation between schools, teachers and parents is *essential*. Schools need input from the surrounding environment and thus the involvement of parents to realize an inclusive school culture (Ainscow, et al., 2012).

Considerable research has been conducted on the experiences of students with an inclusive learning environment. Most of this research has been conducted in primary schools and often aimed at the differences in the experiences of students with special educational needs versus other students in the class. Much less research has been conducted on student perceptions of their instruction and guidance in secondary schools. The results of this limited research nevertheless show students to experience the educational learning process as positive, involving a stimulating learning environment with sufficient individual attention, positive peer relations and a school climate which offers plenty of space for their own contributions (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999; O'Rourke & Houghton, 2008). Secondary school students also consider it important for teachers be able to adapt their instruction to meet specific needs (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). That is, these students have a need for individual guidance but do not want to be singled out or put in a position of exception. O'Rourke and Houghton (2008) found a surprising difference between the perceptions of teachers and secondary school students with special educational needs: While teachers expected structure to be a critical aspect of the learning environment for students with special educational needs, the students themselves indicated a desire to have teachers who exude calm and a capacity to present material in an interesting and motivating manner. An inclusive learning environment is really thus important for the learning and development of *all* students.

Characteristics of an inclusive school

Structural and cultural aspects of the school climate are critical for making it inclusive. In the school, a shared vision and set of values carried by the team must be clearly visible and tangible. Stated differently, we should be able to speak of coherence with regard to various aspects of inclusivity both inside and outside the school. In the present research, this coherence will be further explored.

The present research is based on a framework for inclusive education recently developed and tested by Van der Bij, et al. (2016a). The framework encompasses what have been identified as three central characteristics of inclusive education, namely: the learning environment, the guidance provided by teachers and the care structure (see Figure 1).

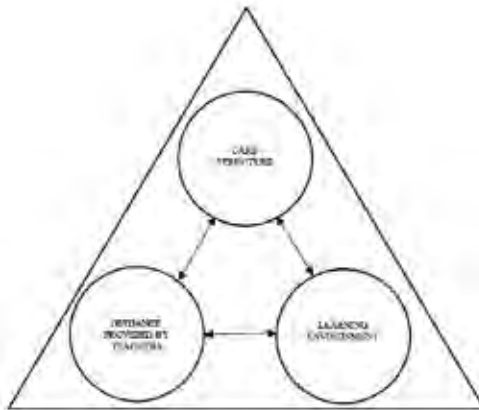


Figure 1. Central characteristics of inclusive education

The learning environment for inclusive education should be stimulating, safe and inviting to thus promote active participation on the part of students. The guidance provided by teachers for inclusive education should include a teacher specially appointed for this purpose (often called a mentor in the Dutch system of education) and individual support as needed from both inside and outside the class which is adapted to the educational needs of students. The care structure for inclusive education should entail the organization of the guidance for students in such a manner that the various partners are sufficiently involved and their involvement/guidance coordinated in an effective and efficient manner.

Taken together, the perceptions of the central characteristics of inclusive education shared by educational professionals, parents and students can be taken to indicate the presence or absence of an inclusive culture within a school. The general assumption motivating the present research was therefore that the extent of inclusivity

reflected in the opinions of parents and students about a school will be largely determined by the extent of inclusivity reflected in the opinions of the educational professionals themselves. And the following research question was formulated to test this general assumption: *To what extent does the characterization of a school as inclusive by educational professionals correspond to the characterisation of the school by parents and students?*

Method

Study sample

In the present research, school self-evaluation data from 102 schools for secondary education located in the Netherlands was analysed. The self-evaluation data was collected as part of a larger national school self-evaluation project entitled 'Quality of Student Care in preparatory vocational secondary education and practical education' (Van der Bij et al., 2016a; 2016b). To start, the schools registered on a volunteer basis to participate in the self-evaluation project. Self-evaluation data was then collected from the educational professionals, parents and students affiliated with the schools. In smaller schools, data was collected from all educational professionals, parents and students. In larger schools, data was collected from a random sample of the educational professionals and a stratified sample of the parents and students who were selected on the basis of lower/upper grade and department in the school. The educational professionals and students were surveyed anonymously via a web unit during school hours. The parents were surveyed either digitally or with the latter taking place at parent-teacher meetings.

In keeping with the stated self-evaluation procedure, the schools were free to choose just which groups to involve in the self-evaluation. In Table 1, an overview of the study sample is presented, including the number and range in the number of participants per respondent group. Overall, the sample consisted of 2216 educational professionals, 6720 parents and 16511 students.

Table 1. *Overview of study sample*

	Schools	Educational professionals		Parents		Students	
	N	n	range (mean)	n	range (mean)	n	range (mean)
Educational professionals, parents & students	56	1632	4 - 109 (29.1)	5350	5 - 355 (95.5)	12401	22 - 750 (221.4)
Educational professionals & parents	1	36	--	41	--		
Educational professionals & students	5	252	22 - 69 (50.4)			1396	100 - 832 (279.2)
Parents & students	11			802	6 - 387 (72.9)	1978	37 - 713 (179.8)
Educational professionals	17	296	6 - 29 (17.4)				
Parents	6			527	7 - 220 (87.8)		
Students	6					736	16 - 211 (127.7)
Total	102	2216		6720		16511	

Measures

The digital questionnaires for the educational professionals, parents and students were developed on the basis of a review of the research concerned with student care/guidance, experiences of mentors and teachers specially appointed for the educational guidance of students and the legal framework provided by the Dutch Educational Inspectorate.

Questionnaire for educational professionals

The questionnaire designed for the **educational professionals (EP)** contained 12 scales encompassing 60 items to be judged along a four-point Likert scale which included 'I don't know' as a response option. The items addressed specific elements of inclusive education underlying the three central characteristics of inclusive education, namely: an inclusive learning environment (IL), inclusive guidance by teachers (IG) and an inclusive school support structure (IS):

- Inclusive learning environment (IL_{EP})
 - o Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim_{EP})
 - o Safe learning environment (IL-safe_{EP})
 - o Participatory learning environment (IL-partic_{EP})
- Inclusive guidance (IG_{EP})
 - o Guidance by mentor or specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor_{EP})
 - o Individual guidance during lessons (IG-lesson_{EP})
 - o Adapted/customized programme (IG-adapted_{EP})

- Inclusive school support structure (IS_{EP})
 - o Individual action plan (IS-plan_{EP})
 - o Involvement of parents/caregivers in guidance (IS-partners_{EP})
 - o Functioning of the care coordinator (IS-care_{EP})
 - o Functioning of the support team (IS-team_{EP})
 - o Consultation with partners from the school environment (IS-consult_{EP})
 - o Coordination of internal and external guidance (IS-coord_{EP})

For more information on the 12 scales, sample items, scales means and scale reliabilities, see Appendix A and Appendix B in this chapter as well as the Appendix in Chapter 3 of this dissertation (Van der Bij et al. (2016a).

Questionnaires parents and students

The questionnaire designed to assess the opinions of the **parents (P)** and **students (S)** contained 62 items distributed across 11 scales. Once again, the items were judged along a four-point Likert scale which included 'I don't know' as a response option. The formulations of the items for the parents and students were virtually the same. For the *Safe learning environment* scale, for example, the wording of the item for the student questionnaire was *I feel safe at school* while the wording of the item for the parent questionnaire was *My son/daughter feels safe at school*. Respondents were also free to leave an item unanswered. The average number of missing responses per item proved to be 23.8% for the parents with a range of 6.4% (item *My son/daughter talks regularly with the mentor about how things are going.*) to 51.1% (item *The school has rules for how students and teachers interact with each other*). For the students, the average number of missing responses was 18% with a range of 7.4% (item *By us, students are allowed to help each other*) to 83.5% (item *The teachers are honest to me*). The missing scores for the parents and students were imputed with the aid of the SPSS Expectation Maximalization (EM) algorithm and under the assumption of 'missing at random'.

With the aid of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, four unique scales reflecting various aspects of inclusive education could be identified for the parents and students alike (see Appendix C for an overview). The four scales were internally coherent with the instrument of educational professionals and could be labelled as follows:

- Stimulating learning environment according to parents (IL-stim_P) and students (IL-stim_S)
- Safe learning environment according to parents (IL-safe_P) and students (IL-safe_S)
- Guidance by mentor or specially appointed teacher according to parents (IL-mentor_P) and students (IG-mentor_S)
- Individual guidance during lessons according to parents (IL-lesson_P) and students (IG-lesson_S)

The fit of a four-factor model for the parents and students was found to be good: for the parents, $X^2=267.633$ (df=6, $p=.000$), RMSEA= .058, CFI =.981; for the students,

$\chi^2=6.131$ (df=112, p=.05), RMSEA= .085, CFI =.981. The reliabilities, means and standard deviations for the four scales are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Overview of reliabilities, means and standard deviations for four scales representing central characteristics of inclusive education according to parents (n=6720) and students (n=16511)*

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's α		Mean		Standard deviation	
		Par	Stu	Par	Stu	Par	Stu
Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim)	5	.66	.59	3.11	2.57	.47	.60
Safe learning environment (IL-safe)	7	.80	.69	3.15	2.67	.52	.64
Guidance by mentor or specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor)	4	.85	.77	3.02	2.58	.69	.75
Individual guidance during lessons (IB-lesson)	4	.82	.73	2.83	2.60	.63	.66

Note: Par means parents; Stu means students.

The four scale reliabilities as measured for the **parents** were reasonable to good and varied from .66 to .85. The scale means showed little variation (2.83 to 3.15). The standard variations fluctuated between .47 and .69. The normal distribution of the results for the scales was reasonable to good; there was no indication of either floor or ceiling effects.

The four scale reliabilities as measured for the **students** were reasonable to good (.59 to .77) but slightly lower than those found for the parents. The means for the four scales were almost the same and ranged from 2.57 to 2.67, which was again slightly lower than for the parents. The standard deviations fluctuated between .60 and .75 for the students, which was higher than for the parents. The normal distribution of the items constituting the scales for the students found to be reasonable normal to good with again no indications of floor or ceiling effects. In Appendix D, a table can be found with the correlations between the scores on the 12 scales for the educational professionals, the scores on the 4 scales for the parents and the scores on the 4 scales for the students.

Analyses

With the aid of confirmatory factor analyses (Mplus 6.1), factor models were fit to the data from the educational professionals, parents and students. The following fit indices and criteria were used for this purpose: a) χ^2 test; b) a CFI with a minimal value .90; and c) a RMSEA < .05. The fit measures for the model with 12 specific characteristics of

inclusive education according to the educational professionals were found to be sufficient to good (see also Van der Bij et al., 2016a). The possibility of creating second-order factors representing the central characteristics of inclusive education from the perspective of educational professionals was also explored. With the three factors Inclusive learning environment (IL_{EP}), Inclusive guidance by teachers (IG_{EP}) and Inclusive support structure (IS_{EP}), the fit of the model was found to be good ($\chi^2=128.17$ ($df=52$, $p=.00$), $RMSEA=.026$, $CFI=.995$) (also see Van der Bij et al., 2016a).

In keeping with the analyses for the educational professionals, models with second-order factors representing the core characteristics of inclusive education from the perspectives of the parents and the students were also tested. This proved possible for the following factors representing central characteristics of inclusive education perceived by parents and students:

- Inclusive learning environment according to parents (IL_P) or students (IL_S) as second-order factor for Stimulating learning environment ($IL-stim_P / IL-stim_S$) and Safe learning environment ($IL-safe_P / IL-safe_S$)
- Inclusive guidance according to parents (IG_P) or students (IG_S) as second-order factor for Guidance by mentor or specially appointed teacher ($IG-mentor_P / IG-mentor_S$) and Individual guidance during lessons ($IG-lesson_P / IG-lesson_S$).

It was not possible to combine the data from the parents and students; the relation between the two was not addressed in the anonymous surveys. However, I was known for all of data of all the respondents (educational professionals, parents and students) which school was addressed. Moreover, intra-class correlations for the scales scores of parents and students indicated that multilevel analyses were called for. So, in analysing the data, two levels of data had to be taken into consideration: the level of the educational professionals, parents and students and the level of the school with which they are affiliated. The variable school is a categorical variable with 102 different values (there were 102 schools). For this reason, multilevel multiple regression analysis was conducted with the aid of Mixed Models in SPSS. The average scale scores on Inclusive learning environment and Inclusive guidance according to the parents ($n=6720$) and students ($n=16511$), respectively, were included as the dependent variables. The aggregated average scale scores for the central characteristics of inclusive education — namely, an Inclusive learning environment, Inclusive guidance by teachers and Inclusive support structure — according to the educational professionals ($n=2216$) were included as the predictors.

In the first step of the analyses of the data, effects were tested of the central characteristics of inclusive education by the educational professionals (school level predictors: Inclusive learning environment (IL_{EP}), Inclusive guidance by teachers (IG_{EP}) and Inclusive support structure (IS_{EP}) on the central characteristics as perceived by parents (IL_{ou} and IG_{ou}) and students (IL_{LL} and IG_{LL}).

In the second step, a model was next tested for each of the specific characteristics of inclusive education according to the parents and students (see Table

2) with the specific characteristics of inclusive education according to the educational professionals as predictor variables. This second step was only undertaken when significant effects were detected in the testing of the models in this first step of the analyses. On account of possible multiple collinearity (see correlations between the scales in Appendix D), these results must be interpreted with caution.

Results

Correlations were calculated between the central characteristics of inclusive education according to the educational professionals and the scales for the central characteristics according to the parents and, respectively, the students (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Correlations between school means on scales for core characteristics of inclusive education according to educational professionals, parents and students (N=56 schools)*

	IL _{EP}	IG _{EP}	IS _{EP}	IL _P	IG _P	IL _S	IG _S
Inclusive learning environment according to educational professionals (IL _{EP})	1						
Inclusive guidance according to educational professionals (IG _{EP})	.66**	1					
Inclusive support structure according to educational professionals (IS _{EP})	.54**	.78**	1				
Inclusive learning environment according to parents (IL _P)	.11	.35*	.29*	1			
Inclusive guidance according to parents (IG _P)	.16	.56**	.30*	.62**	1		
Inclusive learning environment according to students (IL _S)	-.01	.01	-.11	.38**	.38**	1	
Inclusive guidance according to students (IG _S)	.14	.36**	.18	.51**	.80**	.72**	1

* Correlation is significant at .05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed).

With regard to the Inclusive learning environment according to the educational professionals (IL_{EP}), it can be seen that none of the characteristics of inclusive education according to the parents or students showed a significant association. For Inclusive guidance according to the educational professionals (IG_{EP}), a moderate correlation was found with an Inclusive learning environment according to the parents (IL_P) (.35, $p < .05$) and Inclusive guidance according to the parents (IG_P) (.56, $p < .01$) as well as a moderate correlation with Inclusive guidance according to the students (IG_S) (.36, $p < .01$). Inclusive support structure according to the educational professionals (IS_{EP}) showed only a moderate correlation with the scales for Inclusive learning environment according to the

parents (IL_P) (.29, $p < .05$) and Inclusive guidance according to the parents (IG_P) (.30, $p < .05$). No significant correlations were found for the correlations of inclusiveness scales by educational professionals and Inclusive learning environment or Inclusive guidance according to the students.

What stands out further in the correlation outcomes, is the particularly high correlation of .81 for Inclusive guidance according to the parents (IG_P) with Inclusive guidance according to the students (IG_S). Apparently, the parents and students strongly share the same ideas with regard to this characteristic of inclusive education — more than for the Inclusive learning environment, for example, which only showed a moderate correlation of .36 for the opinions of the parents and the students.

In order to determine the extent to which the parents and students perceived the inclusive character of the school similarly to the educational professionals or, in other words, the extent to which the perceptions of the parents and students can be explained by the mean perceptions of the educational professionals with regard to the inclusive character of the school, multiple regression analyses were performed. In Table 4 (see following page), the results are presented for the testing of the models in step 1 of the analyses (central characteristics) (see also Analyses).

With Model 1, effects were tested of the averaged opinions of the educational professionals with regard to each of the three central characteristics of inclusive education in their school (IL_{EP} , IG_{EP} , IS_{EP}) on the opinions of the parents and students with regard to *Inclusive learning environment* (IL_P and IL_S). The intra-class correlation (ICC) showed the variance in the responses of both the parents and students, on average, for an Inclusive learning environment to be marginally determined by school (for the parents .08; for the students .04). None of the effects were found to be significant.

With Model 2, the effects of the averaged opinions of the educational professionals with regard to the three central characteristics of inclusive education in the school (IL_{EP} , IG_{EP} , IS_{EP}) on the opinions of the parents and students with regard to *Inclusive guidance* (IG_P and IG_S) were tested. The intraclass correlations (ICC) showed the variance in the scores of the parents on Inclusive guidance to be explained for a large part by school: .36. For the students, the variance explained by school was marginal: .02. There were significant effects of the extent to which the school, on average, was judged to be characterized by Inclusive guidance by the educational professionals (IG_{EP}) on the opinions of the parents and students with regard to the presence of inclusive guidance in their schools (IG_P and IG_S). These effects can be considered large in light of their values: 1.25 for parents and .96 for students.

In short, the testing of Models 1 and 2 showed the opinions of the educational professionals with regard to the Inclusive guidance provided in the school (IG_{EP}) to significantly explain the opinions of not only the parents (IG_P) but also the students (IG_S)

with regard to Inclusive guidance; as opposed to no effects concerning Inclusive learning environment in the school.

Table 4. Overview of results of multiple regression analyses for the effects of school characteristics of inclusive education according to educational professionals on the characteristics of inclusive education according parents and students (significant effects in **bold**) ($N_{school}=57$ for analyses regarding parents; $N_{school}=61$ for analyses regarding students)

	Parents IL _P (n = 6720)			Student IL _S (n = 16511)		
	Estimate	Std. error	p	Estimate	Std. error	p
Model 1: IL_P / IL_S with IL_{EP} / IG_{EP} / IS_{EP}						
Fixed effects						
-intercept	2.70	.28	.000	2.94	.69	.000
-predictors:						
- IL _{EP}	-.15	.12	.240	-.02	.30	.955
- IG _{EP}	.24	.15	.105	.41	.36	.260
- IS _{EP}	.07	.14	.648	-.48	.32	.136
Random effects:						
-residual variance level 1 ⁱ	.20	.00	.000	.26	.00	.000
-intercept variance level 2 ⁱⁱ	.01	.00	.000	.07	.01	.000
ICC	.08			.04		
Model 2: IG_P / IG_S with IL_{EP} / IG_{EP} / IS_{EP}						
Fixed effects:						
-intercept	1.65	.52	.002	1.76	.60	.005
-predictors:						
- IL _{EP}	-.52	.22	.026	-.29	.26	.270
- IG _{EP}	1.25	.27	.000	.96	.31	.003
- IS _{EP}	-.26	.25	.309	-.34	.27	.217
Random effects:						
-residual variance level 1 ⁱ	.34	.01	.000	.33	.00	.000
-intercept variance level 2 ⁱⁱ	.03	.01	.000	.05	.01	.000
ICC	.36			.02		

ⁱ level 1: parents and pupils; ⁱⁱlevel 2: school

We next asked ourselves which *specific* characteristics in the area of Inclusive guidance actually play a role in the explanation of the opinions of the parents and students. While high correlations were found to be the case and we can possibly speak of multiple collinearity, it was still decided to test some models for each of the two specific characteristics of Inclusive guidance:

- the extent of individual guidance provided by a mentor or specially appointed teacher according to parents and students (IG-mentor_P / IG-mentor_S) (Model 3) and

- the extent of individual guidance provided during the lesson according to parents and students (IG-lesson_P / IG-lesson_S) (Model 4).

The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Overview of results of multiple regression analyses for the effects of average school scores for educational professionals on average scores for parents and students with regard to specific characteristics of Individual guidance in the school (significant effects in **bold**) ($N_{school}=57$ for analyses regarding parents; $N_{school}=61$ for analyses regarding students)

	Parents IG-mentor _P (n = 6720)			Students IG-mentor _S (n =16511)		
	Estimate	Std. error	p	Estimate	Std. error	p
Model 3: IG-mentor_P / IG-mentor_S with IG-mentor_{EP} / IG-lesson_{EP} / IG-adapted_{EP}						
Fixed effects:						
-intercept	1.11	.45	.016	1.54	.59	.012
-predictors:						
○ IG-mentor _{EP}	.68	.19	.001	.58	.28	.046
○ IG-lesson _{EP}	-.25	.18	.163	-.43	.24	.077
○ IG-adapted _{EP} (??? what's this doing here?)	.23	.15	.127	.24	.22	.288
Random effects:						
-residual variance level 1 ⁱ	.44	.01	.000	.50	.01	.000
-intercept variance level 2 ⁱⁱ	.03	.01	.000	.07	.01	.000
ICC	.35			.15		
Model 4: IG-lesson_P / IG-lesson_S with IG-mentor_{EP} / IG-lesson_{EP} / IG-adapted_{EP}						
Fixed effects:						
-intercept	.36	.54	.511	1.08	.45	.021
-predictors:						
○ IG-mentor _{EP}	.36	.22	.106	.15	.22	.483
○ IG-lesson _{EP}	-.05	.20	.798	-.15	.18	.410
○ IG-adapted _{EP}	.60	.17	.001	.60	.17	.001
Random effects:						
-residual variance level 1 ⁱ	.35	.01	.000	.38	.01	.000
-intercept variance level 2 ⁱⁱ	.00	.01	.000	.04	.01	.000
ICC	.39			.31		

ⁱ level 1: parents and pupils; ⁱⁱlevel 2: school

With the testing of Model 3, we could determine the extent to which the scores of the parents and students on *Guidance of mentor or specially appointed teacher* (IG-mentor_P and IG-mentor_S) were explained by the scores of the educational professionals on each of the specific characteristics of inclusive education (IG-mentor_{EP}, IG-lesson_{EP} and IG-adapted_{EP}). The variance in the scores of the parents for Guidance of mentor or specially

appointed teacher was to a large extent explained by school (ICC .15). Only the effect of the school average for Guidance of mentor or specially appointed teacher as judged by the educational professionals (IG-mentor_{EP}) on the judgements of the parents with regard to the same (IG-mentor_P) appeared to be significant and sufficient to good (.68); for the students, no significant effects were found for this aspect of the individual guidance provided by the school.

In short, the extent to which educational professionals perceive guidance to be provided by a mentor or specially appointed teacher in the school (IG-mentor_{EP}) appears to shape the impressions of parents with regard to such.

With Model 4, the same model was tested as before but now for *Individual guidance during lessons*. The variance in the scores for the parents and students were determined to a high degree by the school (ICCs of .39 and .31, respectively). Even though we expected to find a significant effect of the school average on the judgements of the parents and students with regard to such, only the effects of the school average for the judgements of the educational professionals with regard to *Adapted/customized programme* (IG-adapted_{EP}) were found to be significant. For both the parents and the students, the effect was reasonably large (.60).

In short, the extent to which educational professionals perceive an adapted/customized programme of instruction to be provided in the school (IG-adapted_{EP}) appears to explain the extent to which not only parents but also students perceive the school as providing individual guidance during lessons (IG-lesson_P and IG-lessons_S).

Conclusions and discussion

Educational policy in the Netherlands is increasingly being aimed at the inclusion of students with special educational needs in regular schools. The most recent measure taken along these lines is the passing of the Educational Fit Act (Staatsblad, 2012). The realization of the best educational 'fit' for all students and thus inclusive education requires practices which are suited for this purpose and thus embedded in an inclusion-oriented school organization and school culture (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). School self-evaluations can provide insight into the shared vision of those involved in the inclusivity of the school and just what people can count on in the school.

In the present research, the data from the self-evaluations of educational professionals (e.g. teachers, school administrators, remedial teachers, special care providers) and the opinions of parents and students affiliated with 102 secondary education schools located in the Netherlands were analysed to gain insight into differences in the experiences and perceptions of inclusivity. In a previous study (Van der Bij, et al., 2016a), three central inclusive school characteristics underlying the judgements of educational professionals were identified and shown to pertain to the

learning environment, guidance provided by teachers and school care structure. In the present study, we compared the opinions of educational professionals on the inclusive characteristics of the school with the opinions of parents and students on the inclusive characteristics of the school. We expected the extent to which the schools were judged to be inclusive by the educational professionals to determine the extent to which parents and students perceived the schools to be inclusive. The central question posed in the present study was therefore: *To what extent does the characterization of a school as inclusive by educational professionals correspond to the characterization of the school as inclusive by parents and students?*

The study results show first and foremost the opinions of the parents with regard to the inclusive characteristics of the school to indeed be shaped by the opinions of the educational professionals with regard to such. The opinions of the students were guided less by the opinions of the educational professionals than found for the parents, which reflects a familiar pattern. Research by Bokdam, Tom, Berger, Smit and Van Rens (2014) points to at least three explanations for this pattern. First, students are known to have a tendency to complete questionnaires on a more ad hoc basis than adults, which produces a more variable pattern of responding among students than among adults. Second, students are rarely involved — if at all — in the development of a school and so the patterns of responding can be less consistent. And third, parents are generally more concerned with the school than students, presumably due to the parental sense of responsibility for their child's development.

The results of the present research further show educational professionals, parents and students to agree predominantly on the inclusive characteristics of the guidance provided in the school. For the parents, more than one-third of the variance in their opinions with regard to the guidance could be explained by the opinions of the educational professionals. Guidance appears to be a clearly recognizable and important aspect of the inclusivity of a school when parents are asked about this. The total score for the inclusive characteristics of the school according to the educational professionals, however, did not explain a significant amount of the variance in the opinions of the students with regard to the same inclusive characteristics. It can be concluded on the basis of this information that schools with what is characterized as inclusive guidance by the educational professionals associated with the schools make a difference in the opinions of parents and students with regard to the inclusivity of the guidance offered by the school.

The initial results found in the present study were reason to undertake a deeper analysis of which specific guidance characteristics shaped the opinions of the parents and students. In doing this, we had to keep the possibility of multiple collinearity in mind as the association between the measured characteristics at the level of the school was very high. The results of these additional analyses were largely in line with what we expected. There were two dependent variables: guidance by mentor or specially appointed teacher and individual guidance during lessons. The opinions of the parents

with regard to the inclusive quality of the guidance provided by a mentor or a specially appointed teacher could be explained by the mean values for the educational professionals with regard to the guidance provided by the mentor or specially appointed teacher. A plausible explanation for this association is that the mentor is the first point of contact for parents. The quality of the mentorship in the school is thus an important indicator for parents of the quality of the education in the school.

More than 30% of the variance in the opinions of both the parents and students about the inclusivity of the individual guidance provided during lessons was explained by the mean school scores for the educational professionals with regard to such. Similarly, the mean school scores of the educational professionals for the customized nature of the educational programme exerted a reasonably large effect on the scores of the parents (39%) and students (31%) with regard to such. In short, without capitalizing on possible multiple collinearity, we can conclude that to the extent that the school judges the guidance offered students to be more inclusive, parents and students do the same.

The results of the present study differ from the results of other studies in two ways. First, it was found that in the perceptions of parents and students in general the guidance in the school was an important inclusive characteristic and for not just students with special needs. In other words, inclusive guidance made a difference for every student. This research outcome can also thus be taken as support for the importance of personalization in education for which there is considerable attention these days, worldwide and in the Netherlands. The manner in which the inclusive variables were operationalized in the present research can contribute to the development of a self-evaluation framework to help personalize inclusive education. Second, opinions at the level of the school as opposed to the individual were measured in the present research. Comparison of the quality of the inclusive quality of the education as measured in the present research with that measured by the Educational Inspectorate, for example, might thus be of interest, particularly with regard to the implementation of the Educational Fit Act (Staatsblad, 2012).

It should be noted with regard to the present research that it was not possible to nest the data from the parents and students or couple the data from the parents and students to, for example, the mentor. These points should thus be taken into consideration when considering the inclusive quality of a self-evaluation. Therefore, a more accurate tuning of background variables of the instruments is needed at the start of a school self-evaluation. For such school self-evaluation, advice on the analysis of the results is not always sought ahead of time, which can be seen to result in limitations on the possibilities for analysis at a later stage in the evaluation. In the present study, we nevertheless succeeded with the help of mixed methods modelling to answer our research questions.

The purpose of the present research was to gain insight into the realization of a regular school culture which is inclusive for students with special educational needs and also recognized as such by both parents and students. For many schools, closer involvement of parents and students is still needed (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006; Blok et al., 2014; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). The present research showed the self-evaluations of educational professionals on a number of characteristics of inclusive education to be reflected in the judgements of parents and students, particularly in the domain of guidance. Particularly the guidance of a mentor or specially appointed teacher, individual guidance during lessons and an customized educational programme make impression on parents and students. This does not mean that the other characteristics of inclusive education are less important than the inclusive guidance characteristics. A logical assumption, for instance, is that individual guidance in the lesson can only be provided when the school support structure and learning environment are arranged to allow this. In the present research, we also therefore examined interaction effects: the extent to which the care structure strengthened, for example, the effects of the characteristics of the guidance offered by the school. None of the interaction effects were found to be significant, however. In follow-up research, preferably with nested data, it is therefore recommended that the testing of structural models containing both direct and indirect effects be made possible.

A number of studies have shown both educational professionals and parents to have 'cold feet' when it comes to inclusive education (Antonopoulou, et al., 2011; Blok et al., 2014; De Boer, et al., 2010; De Bruin, et al., 2012; Hornby & Witte, 2010; Gasteiger-Blicpera, et al., 2012). In follow-up research on inclusive education, it is therefore recommended that the manner in which an inclusive school culture develops itself be examined. Important questions in this regard are which factors and interventions promote the development of an inclusive school climate and care structure, what role the school leadership plays in this and just how the cooperation within the network of internal and external experts, parents and other external care providers works. Ideally, research into such developments should also allow for direct (data) feedback to the schools and local interpretation of the data in combination with possibilities for in-depth data analysis (Geijssel, et al., 2010; Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007). The design, analyses and results of the present self-evaluation research offer a starting point for the design of such studies. Also, the present results show just how much information the perceptions and opinions of students — the most important stakeholders — can contribute to the development of inclusive education in schools.

Appendix A

Scales for specific characteristics of inclusive education according to education professionals

Scale	Description of the scale	Sample item
Inclusive learning environment (IL)		
Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim _{EP})	The extent to which teachers hold positive expectations for students and are able to realize a relaxed and positive learning climate.	<i>At our school, teachers make it clear that they have positive expectations for students.</i>
Safe learning environment (IL-safe _{EP})	The manner in which teachers and students deal with agreed-upon safety regulations and interaction rules.	<i>At our school, teachers and students adhere to agreed-upon interaction rules.</i>
Participatory learning environment (IL-partic _{EP})	The possibilities of students to shape the learning process, possibly together with fellow students.	<i>At our school students are welcome to think along with us on the arrangement of work (selection, content, planning).</i>
Inclusive guidance (IG_{EP})		
Guidance of mentor or specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor _{EP})	The role of the mentor or specially appointed teacher in the guidance of students.	<i>At our school, mentor/teacher takes note of developmental needs and initiates diagnostic testing when needed.</i>
Individual guidance during lessons (IG-lesson _{EP})	The manner in which teachers observe students, take note of special educational needs and provide guidance during the lesson.	<i>At our school, every student is regularly given information on his/her progress and development.</i>
Customized program (IG-adapted _{EP})	The manner in which teachers manage to realize a suitable programme for their students.	<i>At our school, a suitable programme is formulated for group on the basis of information derived from the or a description of the starting situation (group education plan).</i>
Inclusive care structure (IS_{EP})		
Individual action plan (IS-plan _{EP})	Agreement on how to act and proceed with regard to required guidance and consultation.	<i>The plan for how to proceed (IEP) is formulated together with the student at our school.</i>
Involvement of parents/caregivers in guidance (IS-partner _{SEP})	The manner in which parents are involved in the guidance of their child.	<i>Parents/caregivers are regularly informed in a timely manner about the developmental progress of their child at our school.</i>
Care coordinator (IS-care _{EP})	The tasks and roles of the care coordinator.	<i>We have a care coordinator to guide the care team of our school.</i>
Care team (IS-team _{EP})	The tasks and roles of the care team.	<i>The educational care team in our school prepares the action plan for how to proceed together with teachers and others providing guidance (mentors, specially appointed teachers familiar with the student).</i>
Consultation with external partners from the school environment (IS-consult _{EP})	Consultation with the external care partners.	<i>Consultation outcomes are systematically reported back to mentors/teachers of our school.</i>
Coordination of internal and external guidance (IS-coord _{EP})	The cooperation between guidance at the school and external care partners	<i>At our school, regular feedback is provided by external care partners and mentor.</i>

Appendix B

Descriptive statistics for scales representing specific characteristics of inclusive education according to education professionals (N=2216 education professionals; N=79 schools): number of items, reliabilities, means and standard deviations (see also Van der Bij, et al., 2016a)

Scales	Items	α	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim _{EP})	5	.75	1	4	3.02	.44
Safe learning environment (IL-safe _{EP})	5	.72	2	4	3.04	.42
Participatory learning environment (IL-partic _{EP})	4	.71	1	4	2.78	.46
Guidance by mentor / specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor _{EP})	6	.84	1	4	3.00	.49
Individual guidance during lessons (IG-lesson _{EP})	4	.65	1	4	2.89	.50
Customized program (IG-adapted _{EP})	7	.84	1	4	2.58	.59
Individual action plan (IS-plan _{EP})	4	.81	1	4	2.68	.69
Involvement of parents/caregivers in guidance (IS-partners _{EP})	4	.82	1	4	3.06	.57
Care coordinator (IS-care _{EP})	6	.92	1	4	3.07	.62
Care team (IS-team _{EP})	4	.89	1	4	2.93	.71
Consultation with external care partners from the school environment (IS-consult _{EP})	6	.89	1	4	2.96	.55
Coordination of internal and external guidance (IS-coord _{EP})	4	.85	1	4	2.85	.59

Appendix C

Scales for specific characteristics of inclusive education according to parents and students

Scale	Description of the scale	Sample item
Inclusive learning environment according to parents (IL_P)		
Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim _P)	The extent to which teachers hold positive expectations for students and are able to realize a relaxed and positive learning climate.	My son/daughter is often allowed to do assignments together with another student.
Safe learning environment (IL-safe _P)	The manner in which teachers and students deal with agreed-upon safety regulations and interaction rules.	My son/daughter feels safe at school.
Inclusive guidance according to the parents (IG_P)		
Guidance of mentor or specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor _P)	The role of the mentor or specially appointed teacher in the guidance of students.	My son/daughter talks regularly with the mentor about how things are going.
Individual guidance during lessons (IG-lesson _P)	The manner in which teachers observe students, take note of special educational needs and provide guidance during the lesson.	When my son/daughter has a problem, the teachers quickly see it.
Inclusive learning environment according to students (IL_S)		
Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim _S)	The extent to which teachers hold positive expectations for students and are able to realize a relaxed and positive learning climate.	I am often allowed to do assignments together with another student.
Safe learning environment (IL-safe _S)	The manner in which teachers and students deal with agreed-upon safety regulations and interaction rules.	I feel safe at school.
Inclusive guidance according to the students (IG_S)		
Guidance of mentor or specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor _S)	The role of the mentor or specially appointed teacher in the guidance of students. (CK omitted 'task')	I regularly talk with my mentor about how things are going. about how I am doing)
Individual guidance during lessons (IG-lessons _S)	The manner in which teachers observe students, take note of special educational needs and provide guidance during the lesson.	When I have a problem, the teachers quickly see this.

Appendix D

Correlations between scale scores for education professionals, parents and students (N = 56 schools)

Scales	IL-stim _{EP}	IL-safe _{EP}	IL-partic _{EP}	IG-mentor _{EP}	IG-lesson _{EP}	IG-adapted _{EP}	IS-plan _{EP}	IS-partners _{EP}	IS-care _{EP}	IS-team _{EP}	IS-consult _{EP}	IS-coord _{EP}	IL-stim _S	IL-safe _S	IG-mentors	IG-lessons
Education professionals																
1. Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim _{EP})																
2. Safe learning environment (IL-safe _{EP})	.67**															
3. Participatory learning environment (IL-partic _{EP})	.49**	.37**														
4. Guidance by mentor or specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor _{EP})	.67**	.50**	.42**													
5. Individual guidance during lessons (IG-lesson _{EP})	.38**	.24*	.40**	.61**												
6. Customized programme (IG-adapted _{EP})	.59**	.39**	.57**	.67**	.47**											
7. Individual action plan (IS-plan _{EP})	.41**	.26*	.43**	.57**	.36**	.66**										
8. Involvement of parents/caregivers in guidance (IS-partners _{EP})	.57**	.35**	.29**	.76**	.70**	.62**	.58**									
9. Care coordinator (IS-care _{EP})	.54**	.45**	.40**	.63**	.52**	.52**	.37**	.64**								
10. Care team (IS-team _{EP})	.25*	.12	.23*	.41**	.35**	.37**	.20	.53**	.46**							
11. Consultation with external partners from the school environment (IS-consult _{EP})	.57**	.39**	.30**	.71**	.51**	.42**	.40**	.66**	.57**	.67**						
12. Coordination of internal and external guidance (IS-coord _{EP})	.54**	.46**	.27*	.70**	.40**	.51**	.40**	.63**	.64**	.73**	.85**					

(Continuation of Appendix D)

Scales	IL-stim _p	IL-safe _p	IL-partic _p	IG-mentor _p	IG-lesson _p	IG-adapted _p	IS-plan _p	IS-partners _p	IS-care _p	IS-team _p	IS-consult _p	IS-coord _p	IL-stim _p	IL-safe _p	IG-mentor _p	IG-lesson _p	IL-stims	IL-safes	IG-mentors	IG-lessons
	Parents																			
13. Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim _p)	-.01	-.05	.19	.02	-.10	.33**	.44**	.08	.01	-.16	-.25*	-.17								
14. Safe learning environment (IL-safe _p)	.03	.00	.19	-.03	-.12	.22*	.25*	-.06	-.05	-.26*	-.25*	-.20	.86**							
15. Guidance by mentor or specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor _p)	.11	.02	-.04	.25*	-.01	.26*	.14	.17	.19	-.08	-.07	.01	.55**	.56**						
16. Individual guidance during lessons (IG-lesson _p)	.28*	.12	.18	.34**	.14	.50**	.47**	.33**	.26*	-.10	-.06	.03	.77**	.68**	.76**					
Students																				
17. Stimulating learning environment (IL-stim _s)	-.03	-.07	.01	.12	.08	.24*	.20	.29**	.30**	.13	-.01	.05	.45**	.28*	.52**	.55**				
16. Safe learning environment (IL-safe _s)	.16	.19	-.03	.31**	.23*	.24*	.07	.31**	.37**	.18	.13	.22	.21	.29**	.51**	.52**	.61**			
19. Guidance by mentor or specially appointed teacher (IG-mentor _s)	.19	.19	-.08	.44**	.20	.34**	.22*	.37**	.37**	.03	.08	.14	.28*	.18	.73**	.68**	.56**	.71**		
20. Individual guidance during lessons (IG-lesson _s)	.27*	.18	.08	.43**	.21	.51**	.32**	.36**	.33**	-.01	.02	.09	.47**	.40**	.76**	.81**	.63**	.68**	.87**	

Chapter 5

The effects of inclusive education on the school careers of students in secondary education

This chapter is submitted for publication:

Van der Bij, T., Ten Dam, G. T. M., Boei, F., & Geijsel, F. P. (submitted). The effects of inclusive education on the school careers of students in secondary education.

Small adjustments were made to the form in which this chapter was submitted.

Abstract

Inclusive education has a long history, but relatively little research has been done on how it affects the school careers of students in secondary education. A lack of consistency in policy concerned with inclusive education and variability in how such policy is put into practice impede studying its effectiveness. With the aid of a model for inclusive education based upon data from the self-evaluations of 1792 school professionals coming from 59 secondary education schools in the Netherlands, the extent of the influence of inclusive education on the school careers of students was evaluated. Schools characterized as having inclusive guidance and support for students with special needs contributed to a significant extent to a successful school career. Students in schools with an inclusive learning environment *in combination with an inclusive care structure* nevertheless repeat a year less often. No effects were found for the further educational progress of students.

The effects of inclusive education on the school careers of students in secondary education

The perspective of inclusive education

Inclusive education has been on the educational agendas of many countries for quite some time now. Internationally, the first steps were taken for the establishment of inclusive education with the signing of the Salamanca Statement in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). The conference giving rise to this statement was a follow-up on the World Conference on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) in which the right to education was identified as a key human right. In 1994, 92 countries and 25 organizations signed the Salamanca Statement confirming the right of students with *special* needs to also receive an education. In 2006, this statement was sharpened further with the establishment of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with (UN, 2006). Article 24 of this convention ensures the right of persons with disabilities, students with special educational needs included, to education.

These measures have influenced the educational policies of countries over the past decades. And in these policies, a shift has taken place from the guidance of students with special educational needs in special schools to the guidance of students with special educational needs in regular schools (Hansen, 2012; Tomlinson, 2015). This shift has been broadly endorsed, but actual implementation into schools has been slow due in part to the complexity of the matter (Ainscow & Cèsar, 2006; Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Ledoux, 2016; Lindsay, 2007; Pranger & Sontag, 2009). In the Netherlands, the integration of students with special needs into regular education formally only occurred in 2014 under the Educational Fit Act [passend onderwijs; in Dutch] (zie Staatsblad, 2012). As a consequence of this, a transition is taking place in primary, secondary and upper secondary education towards not only integration of students with *special educational needs* into regular education but also increased attention to and acceptance of *differences* in the educational needs of *all* students. The implementation of inclusive education has thus become a part of school development in general. More than was previously the case, thus, school administrators and teachers, in particular, must be able to recognize differences in the educational and developmental needs of students and to differentiate these (Tomlinson, 2015; UNESCO, 2009). Given that inclusive education requires teachers to customize their teaching to individual needs, the guidance skills of teachers are called upon to a greater extent than was previously the case (Ainscow & Cèsar, 2006; OECD, 2015).

To support teachers in their efforts of customize their instruction, increased attention is being paid in Dutch secondary education to student monitoring and support. By this is meant “a coherent whole of activities and services for the systematic guidance

of students during their school careers and on the basis of their educational needs” (Hoffmans, 2012, p. 4). The required activities and services for the monitoring and support of students are identified by the educational professionals, the teachers themselves and experts specifically appointed to do this within the schools. In such a manner, schools now have access to a team in which a special educator and/or a school psychologist is working to meet the extra support needs of students in conjunction with the guidance already being provided by mentors and teachers. Viewed from such a perspective, it can be seen that the aim of such efforts is to realize an inclusive school culture in which the guidance of *all* students is better attuned to their educational needs (cf. Lamote, Speybroeck, Van den Noortgate, & Van Damme, 2013; OECD, 2012a).

The research presented in this chapter is aimed at gaining greater insight into the effectiveness of the school as an environment in which adequate support and care are provided for students with differing educational needs. The question is put forward to which extent regular education can meet the differences between students by inclusive education: with central characteristics concerning inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance by teachers and the establishment of an inclusive care structure. More specifically, the question stands central to what extent school characteristics of inclusive education ensure successful school careers for both students with and without special educational needs.

Effectiveness of inclusive education in the school

To date, we have little insight into the effectiveness of measures taken at the level of the school to promote inclusive education (also see Ledoux, 2016; Pranger & Sontag, 2009). In models of school effectiveness, the following factors are typically taken into account: context, input, process and output factors (Scheerens, 2000; see also Watkins & Ebersold, 2016). *Context factors* pertain to the environment, such as the neighbourhood in which the school is located. *Input factors* pertain to student, parent and teacher characteristics and the school facilities. *Process factors* pertain to the interventions conducted by the school at the levels of the school and class to obtain the desired output, such as the organization of the guidance of students (school level) and the instructional approaches of the teachers (class level). These factors are influenced most, of course, by the school itself. *Output factors* pertain to the results attained by the students at the levels of the school and individual. These factors mostly concern cognitive outcomes in school effectiveness studies but may also concern the school careers of students including dropout (Dynarski et al., 2008; Lamote et al., 2013) and repetition of a year (IBO, 2015; Meijnen, 2013; Van Vuuren & Van de Wiel, 2015). In the Dutch education system, schools for preparatory vocational secondary education (VMBO, 12-16 years) offer four tracks of education which differ according to the level of cognitive ability required: 1) the basic vocational track, 2) the advanced vocational track,

3) the both theoretical and vocational track and 4) the theoretical track. These tracks are in addition to the two general secondary education tracks preparing students for university. In Dutch secondary education, which entails selection on the basis of cognitive capacity and educational profiles connected to a specific level of education. For example, the basic vocational track is the 'lowest' level, the theoretical track is the 'highest' level in preparatory secondary vocational education. The shifting of educational level plays an important role in the assessment of school effectiveness (Korpershoek et al., 2016). This is referred to as 'qualification failure' when a student must repeat a year or switch to a lower level of education (Reezigt, Swanborn, & Vreeburg, 2013). The question that can be asked then is: What — for example — is the relation between the educational position of students in the third year of secondary school and the recommendation for educational level provided at the end of primary school? Is the position higher than the recommendation made before, then an upward shift has occurred; is the position lower, then a downward shift has occurred.

The basic assumption underlying the model for effectiveness (Scheerens, 2000), adopted for purposes of the present research, is that context, input and process factors jointly affect output. In connection with considerations of parsimony, careful selection of the factors for inclusion in the comprehensive model is also of utmost importance (see Figure 1).

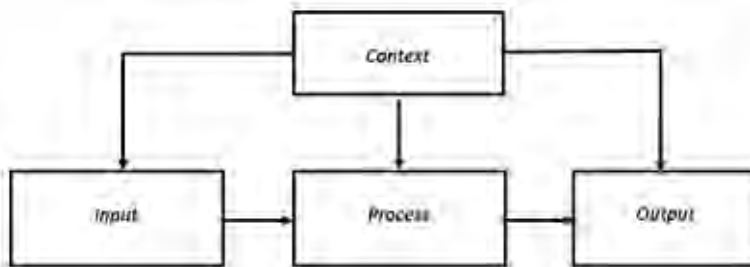


Figure 1. *Basic model for school effectiveness (Scheerens, 2000)*

Erten and Savage (2012) plea for the connection of research on inclusive education with research on school effectiveness when examining the effects of inclusive education. For this purpose, they argue, it is important that the essential characteristics of inclusive education be operationalized in terms of school effectiveness factors. In a previous study, we distilled the characteristics of inclusive education from the relevant literature (Van der Bij, et al., 2016a). On the basis of subsequent empirical research amongst education professionals in Dutch schools of secondary education, we developed a model for inclusive education. The model includes the following aspects of inclusive education.

- Inclusive learning environment: a stimulating but safe learning environment in which possibilities for students to participate exist as well.

- Inclusive guidance: the guidance of a mentor or specially appointed teacher along with adapted instruction and guidance in the class.
- Inclusive monitoring and care structure: the arrangement of the support for students within the school in addition to cooperation and coordination with organizations outside the school.

These identified characteristics of inclusive education largely subsume process factors which have already been shown to be effective in education research. Examples are having high expectations for students and their achievement, positive feedback from teachers, clear learning goals, allowing sufficient time to study, a secure and orderly learning environment, student participation in lessons and attention to the self-regulation and metacognitive skills of students (see Van der Bij, et al., 2016a; cf. Scheerens, 2000). Other characteristics such as cooperative learning, effective instructional methods, regular feedback and formative assessment have been shown to promote the learning of all students, both with and without special educational needs (Ainscow, et al., 2012; Meijer, 2004; Scheerens, Luyten, Steen, & Luyten-de Thouars, 2007). Moreover, also in an inclusive school the instruction and support takes place in such a form that all students — irrespective of their special educational needs — have equal access to support (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Graham & Harwood, 2011). Students with special educational needs (and their parents) therefore feel supported and taken seriously as a result of such support and care (De Boer, et al., 2010; Rytivaara & Vehkakoski, 2015).

To evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive education, it is important that both process output factors be taken into consideration. In the research conducted on inclusive education to date, the focus has been on output factors and, in particular, the experiences of students with special educational needs in addition to achievement outcomes (Ellinger & Stein, 2012; Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007; Gasser, Malti, & Buholzer, 2013; Sermier Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin, 2012). The previously mentioned complexity but also the diversity of the education population makes it difficult to interpret these marginal research results (also see Lindsay, 2007; Erten & Savage, 2012; Watkins & Ebersold, 2016). In general, marginal effects are reported.

The starting point for the present research was that the process characteristics of inclusive education can be expected to positively affect the school careers of *all* students (Lamote et al., 2013; OECD, 2012). The central question in the present research was therefore: *To what extent do school characteristics of inclusive education ensure successful school careers for both students with and without special educational needs?* The expectation is that the school careers of students in a given school will be more successful to the extent that the school is characterized as inclusive.

Method

Study sample

Data was used in the present study from students participating in the school self-evaluation project entitled 'Quality of student care in preparatory vocational secondary education and practical education' [Kwaliteit van Leerlingenzorg in VMBO en Praktijkonderwijs] (Van der Bij, et al., 2016b). The data was collected in the academic year 2005/06 (N=59 schools) and the academic year 2006/07 (N=20 schools). In addition to the school self-evaluation data concerned with the quality of student care, data on the school careers of the students was also available for 59 of the 79 schools. The 59 schools included in the present study involved 31 preparatory vocational secondary education schools and 28 broad schools offering the full range of secondary education (preparatory vocational to preparatory university). The participating schools were representative of the range of schools in the Netherlands with regard to geographic distribution and size.

A total of 1792 school professionals (teachers, school administrators, care coordinators, student supervisors and special educators affiliated with the schools) completed the digital questionnaire entitled 'Self-evaluation instrument Student Care' (SSC) (Van der Bij et al., 2016b). In smaller schools (< 500 students), all of the education personnel were asked to complete the questionnaire. In the larger schools (> 500 students), respondents were selected in such a manner that both the lower and upper levels of secondary school were represented in addition to all subject areas. In Table 1, an overview of the study population is presented.

Table 1. *Overview of study population*

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of respondents	Range for number of respondents per school	Mean number of respondents per school
Preparatory secondary vocational education *	31	836	4 - 103	27
Preparatory secondary vocational and general secondary education**	28	956	6 - 109	34
Total	59	1792	4 - 109	30

* *These schools offer four preparatory vocational secondary education tracks requiring differing levels of cognitive skill for students generally 12-16 years of age.*

***These schools offer all secondary education tracks requiring differing cognitive levels for students generally 12-18 years of age; tracks can range from basic vocational to pre-university (i.e., university preparatory).*

Measures

Independent variables

The Self-evaluation Instrument Student Care (SSC) contains 59 items to be evaluated along a four-point Likert scale which also includes 'I don't know' as a response option. The items encompass 12 scales concerned with the inclusiveness of the learning environment, guidance provided by teachers and school care structure (see Appendix A for sample items and scale information).

- Inclusive Learning Environment (IL) with the following subscales:
 - stimulating learning environment;
 - secure learning environment;
 - participatory learning environment.
- Inclusive Guidance (IG) with the following subscales:
 - guidance of mentor or regularly assigned teacher;
 - individual guidance in lessons;
 - customized programme.
- Inclusive Care Structure (IS) with the following subscales:
 - individual education plan;
 - involvement of parents/caregivers;
 - functioning of the care coordinator;

- functioning of the care team;
- interagency collaboration;
- harmonisation of internal and external care.

In order to be able to draw conclusions at the level of the school, the scale means were calculated on the basis of the scores per item for all of the relevant education professionals. The reliability of the scale scores for the different schools was then calculated (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Reliability of the scales for the central characteristics of inclusive education in schools*

	Number of items	Cronbach's α	Mean
Inclusive Learning Environment (IL)	14	.87	2.93
Inclusive Guidance (IG)	17	.85	2.80
Inclusive Care Structure (IS)	28	.93	2.90

Dependent variables

School career was operationalized within the present study using four variables: dropout, repetition of a year, positive difference, negative difference. Each is described separately.

Dropout (DR): the percentage of students dropping out of school or not enrolling for further study after completion of secondary school. Dropout data was obtained, from the Dutch 'Attacking School Dropout' project information for the period 2005-2010. Figures were available at the level of the school and supplied as absolute frequencies. For use in the present study, the averages across the years were calculated and subsequently converted in percentages. In such a manner, a single indicator was attained per school for the percentage of students dropping out.

Repetition of a year (REP): the percentage of students having to repeat one or more years at a school up to and including the third year of secondary school. The data on repetition of a year (REP) was obtained from the Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS) governed by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). In order to compare schools, the absolute frequencies were transformed into percentages of the total population in the third year of secondary education at the relevant school.

The data on positive or negative difference in level of education being followed in the third year of secondary school was also obtained from DANS. For the construction of the

variables positive and negative difference variables, the following levels of education need to be distinguished:

- Track 1: the basic vocational track [in Dutch: VMBO-basis];
- Track 2: the advanced vocational track [in Dutch: VMBO-kader];
- Track 3: the blended theoretical-vocation track [in Dutch: VMBO-gemengde leerweg]
- Track 4: the theoretical track [in Dutch: VMBO-theoretische leerweg];
- Track 5: the university of applied sciences preparatory track [in Dutch: HAVO];
- Track 6: the research university preparatory track [in Dutch: VWO].

In the DANS data base, the data for students and schools in track 3 and 4 are combined. The curriculum of these groups is mostly similar, with exception of one subject, and in practice these students are often grouped in the same classes.

Positive difference (PD): the percentage of students following a higher level of education (higher track) in the third year of secondary school than recommended at the end of primary school or, in other words, a positive difference between the educational recommendation at the end of primary school and the third year of secondary school. Given the tracks as listed above, the following categories of positive difference were distinguished:

- PD₂: progression from basic vocational track to the advanced vocational track;
- PD₃₋₄: progression of advanced vocational tracks to the tracks with a more theoretical curriculum;
- PD₅: progression to university of applied sciences preparatory track;
- PD₆: progression to research university preparatory track;

Negative difference (ND): the percentage of students following lower level of education (lower track) in the third year of secondary school than recommended at the end of primary school or, in other words, a negative difference between the educational recommendation at the end of primary school and the third year of secondary school. Given the tracks as listed above, the following categories of positive difference were distinguished:

- ND₁: decline of the advanced vocational track to basic vocational track;
- ND₂: decline of theoretical-vocational tracks to the advanced vocational track;
- ND₃₋₄: decline of the university of applied sciences and research university preparatory track to the two tracks with a more theoretical curriculum;
- ND₅: decline to university of applied sciences preparatory track.

In order to compare schools, the absolute frequencies of positive and negative difference were transformed into percentages of the total population in the third year of secondary education at the relevant school. The sum scores were then calculated on the basis of the PD/ND scores for the different academic years (student cohorts). It should be noted that the original school recommendation for some students could be a

double recommendation (e.g., a student is recommended for either the highest level of preparatory vocational education or the level of university of applied sciences preparation). If the relevant student was in the higher (or lower) level of education during the third year of secondary school, one could still speak of a positive (or negative) difference in the level of education being pursued although less clear cut than for other students. For this reason, it was decided to assign per school for the percentages of students with a double recommendation after primary school a weighting of 1 and those with an unambiguous school recommendation a weighting of 2. These scores were then transformed to Z-scores in the end.

In order to determine if the variables we constructed accurately represent the school careers of the students, it was checked if the correlations between the output variables dropout (DR), repetition of a year (REP), positive difference (PD) and negative difference (ND), were positive. The observed associations were found to be generally high, positive and significant, as can be seen in Appendix B.

Background variables

In the present research, use was made of three student background variables to evaluate the effects of inclusive education on the school careers of students.

- *Problem region* [in Dutch: APCG or Armoede Probleem Cumulatie Gebied] is the percentage of students at the level of the school coming from a so-called *poverty problem-accumulation area*. This variable indicates the home environment of the students; comparable to socio-economic status (SES).
- *Supported learning* [in Dutch: LWOO or Leerweg Ondersteunende Onderwijs] is the percentage of students qualifying for official learning support in the period of 2007-2013. These are students with a preparatory vocational secondary education recommendation but delays in the areas of language and/or maths or possibly social-emotional problems and therefore receiving funding for extra guidance after meeting the national criteria. Note that no students with officially funded supported learning are found in tracks/levels 5 and 6 of secondary school.
- *School type* makes a distinction between two core categories of schools: a strictly preparatory vocational secondary education school [in Dutch: categoriaal VMBO] versus a broad secondary education school offering preparatory vocational secondary education in addition to two general tracks (track 5 and 6) preparing students for university [in Dutch: brede scholengemeenschap].

Given that the background data was gathered from different sources, use was made of a unique identification code for each school (so-called BRIN number). In such a manner, a file was created with all of the necessary data at the level of the school in it (N=59 schools).

Analyses

On the basis of the variables operationalized above, a research model was constructed to help us test for some specific effects of inclusiveness on student school careers (see Figure 2).

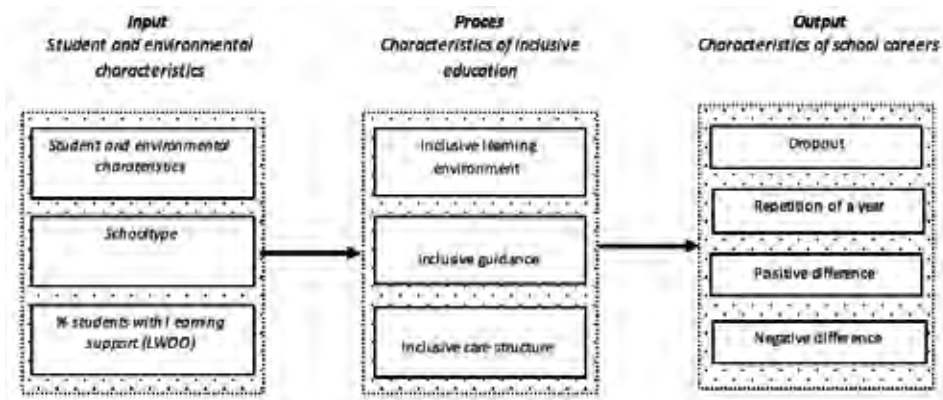


Figure 2. Variable model for the effectiveness of inclusive education in schools on secondary school careers of students

It was hypothesized that:

- the extent to which the schools can be characterized as having an inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance and an inclusive care structure will contribute to less dropout, less repetition of an academic year, more positive differences with respect to the original level of secondary education recommendation and fewer negative differences with respect to the original level of secondary education recommendation;
- the characteristics of inclusiveness will be developed to a greater extent in schools with a relatively greater percentage of students registered as having special educational needs and therefore educational policy and guidance which is more adapted to this group of students.

In order to be able to draw valid conclusions about the effects of inclusive education on the school careers of students, the measures of the inclusive nature of the learning environment, guidance provided by teachers and the care structure in the schools all took the influences of the background variables into consideration.

The data obtained as described above was analysed as follows. To start with, raw correlations (one-sided) were calculated to gain insight into the associations between the variables included in the proposed model. Thereafter, the extent to which the

background variables (problem region, supported learning and school type) effectuate the correlation between the process and output variables was investigated. For the variables of Problem region and Supported learning, semi-partial correlations were calculated using the strictest SPSS variant (i.e., method 'part'). Given the categorical nature of the variable School type, an ANOVA (T-test) was conducted to examine the possible effects of this background variable.

Results

Correlations (one-sided) were calculated between the independent variables of Inclusive Learning environment (IL), Inclusive Guidance (IG) and Inclusive Care Structure (IS) and the dependent variables of Dropout (DR), Repetition of a year (REP), Positive Difference (PD) and Negative Difference (ND) (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Correlations between independent and dependent variables (one-sided; N=59 schools)*

	IL	IG	IS	DR	REP	PD ₂	PD ₃₋₄	PD ₅	PD ₆	ND ₁	ND ₂	ND ₃₋₄	ND ₅
Inclusive Learning Environment (IL)	1	.69**	.75**	-.06	.28*	-.18	-.05	.15	.13	-.16	-.09	-.07	.18
Inclusive Guidance (IG)	.69**	1	.82**	.32**	.15	-.01	-.00	.15	.10	-.30*	-.26*	-.25*	-.17
Inclusive Care Structure (IS)	.75**	.82**	1	.10	.24*	-.18	-.14	.19	.15	-.47**	-.36**	-.30*	-.14

**Correlation is significant at .01 level (1-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at .05 level (1-tailed).

Note: ND₁: decline to basic vocational track; PD₂ ND₂: progression or decline to advanced vocational track; PD₃₋₄ ND₃₋₄: progression or decline to the two theoretical-vocational tracks; PD₅ ND₅: progression or decline to university of applied sciences preparatory track; PD₆: progression to research university preparatory track.

From the rough correlations, it could be seen that the inclusive learning environment (IL), inclusive guidance (IG) and inclusive care structure, (IS) have a lot on common, which is comparable to the results of previous research (Van der Bij, et al., 2016a). The correlations between these variables were all high and significant ($p < .01$): the shared variance between inclusive learning environment and inclusive guidance was 47% ($r = .69$); that between inclusive learning environment and inclusive care structure was 56% ($r = .75$); and that between inclusive guidance and inclusive care structure was 67% ($r = .82$).

School dropout

Striking was the moderate but significant positive correlation between inclusive guidance (IG) and dropout (DR) ($r = .32, p < .01$). A higher score for school dropout thus appeared to be associated with a higher score for inclusive guidance in the school.

Repetition of a year

Inclusive learning environment (IL) and inclusive care structure (IS) had only marginal effects on repetition of a year (REP). The correlations between an inclusive learning environment and inclusive care structure, on the one hand, and repetition of a year, on the other hand, were both significant ($p < .05$) but low ($r = .28$ and $.24$). The inclusive learning environment and inclusive care structure explained 8% and 6%, respectively, of the variance in repetition of a year. In schools where the education personnel judged the inclusive learning environment and inclusive care structure to be relatively greater, the need to repeat one or more of the first three years of secondary school was thus relatively lower. No significant association was found between inclusive guidance and repeating of a year.

Positive and negative differences from original level of school recommendation

No significant associations were found between inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance and inclusive care structure, on the one hand, and positive differences from the original level of education recommended in preparatory vocational secondary education ($PD_2, PD_{3-4}, PD_5, PD_6$) on the other hand.

Regarding negative difference, the correlations between inclusive guidance (IG) and the negative difference from the original level of education being recommended were minimal but significant for variables ND_1, ND_2, ND_{3-4} ($-.30, -.26$ and $-.25; p < .05$). Also, the associations with inclusive care structure (IS) were moderate but significant for variables ND_1, ND_2, ND_{3-4} ($-.47$ with $p < .01, -.36$ with $p < .01$ and $-.30$ with $p < .05$, respectively). Those schools with education personnel judging the inclusive guidance and inclusive care structure to be higher thus showed fewer negative differences from the original level of education recommended for the students in the school. The inclusive care structure of the school explained the most variance in the preparatory vocational secondary education level of education being followed. For the negative difference concerning decline to the basic vocational track (ND_1) and the advanced vocational track (ND_2), this was 22% and 13% of the variance, respectively. For the negative difference concerning decline the theoretical-vocational tracks (ND_{3-4}), this was 9%. No significant associations were detected between inclusive learning environment (IL) and negative difference ($ND_1, ND_2, ND_{3-4}, ND_5$).

To summarize, an overview is presented in Figure 3 of the aforementioned significant effects (r^2) of the characteristics of inclusive education on the secondary school careers of students.

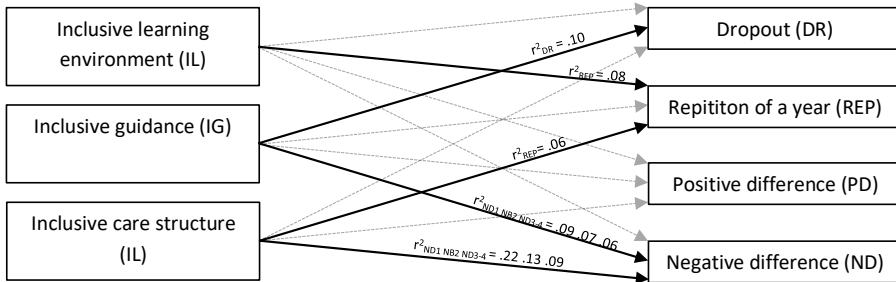


Figure 3. Overview of effects of central characteristics of inclusive education on characteristics of the secondary school careers of students (arrows in bold indicate significant associations; $p < .05$ or $p < .01$)

Note: BV = decline to basic vocational level (track 1; ND_1); AV = decline to advanced vocational level (track 2; ND_2); TV = decline to theoretical-vocational level (track 3 and 4; ND_{3-4})

Control for background variables

To supplement the analyses of the process factors (i.e., influence of characteristics of inclusive education) on the output factors in the current study (i.e., key aspects of secondary school careers and school failure/success), the potential influence of some critical background variables was next examined: percentage students coming from a poverty problem-accumulation area (i.e., problem region), percentage students registered as having adapted/special education need and type of school being attended (i.e., strictly preparatory vocational vs. broad). Semi-partial correlations were first calculated to determine the strength of the associations between the process and output variables following control for the influence of problem region (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Semi-partial correlations between central characteristics of inclusive education and key aspects of student school careers after correction for influence of problem region (N=59 schools)*

	DR	REP	PD ₂	PD ₃₋₄	PD ₅	PD ₆	ND ₁	ND ₂	ND ₃₋₄	ND ₅
Inclusive Learning Environment (IL)	.18	-.16	-.23	.02	.17	.15	.01	.10	.09	.19
Inclusive Guidance (IG)	.18	-.18	-.21	.03	.18	.13	.02	.10	.09	-.17
Inclusive Care Structure (IS)	.18	-.18	-.21	.03	.19	.15	.03	.10	.09	-.14

Note: DR: Dropout; REP: Repetition of a year; ND₁: decline to basic vocational track; PD₂ ND₂: progression or decline to advanced vocational track; PD₃₋₄ ND₃₋₄: progression or decline to the two theoretical-vocational tracks; PD₅ ND₅: progression or decline to university of applied sciences preparatory track; PD₆: progression to research university preparatory track.

The percentage of students coming from what could be characterized as a poverty problem-accumulation area of the Netherlands (i.e., problem region) did *not* change the observed associations between the characteristics of inclusive education and the characteristics of the secondary school careers of the students (i.e., school failure/success).

After control for the percentage of students registered as having supported learning (LWOO) per school, the associations between the characteristics of inclusive education and the school careers of the students were observed to change (cf. Table 5).

Table 5. *Semi-partial correlations between central characteristics of inclusive education and key aspects of student school careers after correction for percentage of students registered as having official learning support (LWOO) per school (N=59 schools)*

	DR	REP	PD ₂	PD ₃₋₄	ND ₁	ND ₂	ND ₃₋₄
Inclusive Learning Environment (IL)	.63***	.52***	-.07	.11	-.32	-.41**	-.41**
Inclusive Guidance (IG)	.51***	.56***	-.14	.08	-.25	-.37**	-.37**
Inclusive Care Structure (IS)	.59***	.53***	-.06	.14	-.13	-.33**	-.35**

** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Note: 1. Students with officially funded supported are not found in tracks/levels 5 and 6 of secondary school; for this reason, there is no positive/negative difference data for these levels of education in the present figure. 2. DR: Dropout; REP: Repetition of a year; Note: ND₁: decline to basic vocational track; PD₂ ND₂: progression or decline to advanced vocational track; PD₃₋₄ ND₃₋₄: progression or decline to the two theoretical-vocational tracks.

The percentage of students with official learning support (LWOO) in a school strongly influenced the associations between the three characteristics of inclusive education (IL, IG and IS) and two of the characteristics of the secondary school careers of the students, namely dropout (DR) and repetition of a year (REP). The amount of variance explained by characteristics of inclusive education was found to range from 30% to 40% ($p < .001$). The effects of having learning support (LWOO) were less strong but nevertheless present for a negative difference at levels 2 and 3 of preparatory vocational secondary education (ND₂ and ND₃₋₄). The amount of variance explained by characteristics of inclusive education varied between 11% and 17% ($p < .01$). For the variables PD₂, PD₃₋₄ and ND₁, no effects of having special needs were visible.

Control for school type being attended

The possible influence of the type of school being attended on the associations between the characteristics of inclusive education and the student school careers was tested in an ANOVA (independent samples t-test). This test revealed significant differences between the strictly preparatory vocational secondary schools and the broad secondary schools for inclusive guidance ($p < .01$) and inclusive care structure ($p < .05$). Given the minimal differences between the means, however, the differences were difficult to interpret. On inclusive guidance, $M=2.91$ $SD = .17$ was found for strictly preparatory vocational secondary schools versus $M = 2.78$, $SD = .14$ for broad schools; on inclusive care structure, $M=2.93$ en $SD = .18$ was found for strictly preparatory vocational secondary schools versus $M = 2.82$, $SD = .16$ for broad schools.

Conclusions and discussion

Inclusive education has a long developmental history and also thus a long research history, mostly pertaining to conceptual issues. In the present research, inclusive education was evaluated from the perspective of school effectiveness research (Reynolds, Teddlie, Creemers, Scheerens, & Townsend, 2000). Up until today, little research has been conducted on the actual effectiveness of inclusive education (Erten & Savage, 2012) with and — in particular — the school careers of students in secondary school including dropout, repetition of a year and either a positive or negative shift in the level of education being followed (Meijnen, 2013). The core question in the present research therefore concerned the effects of inclusive education — inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance and inclusive care structure — on the secondary school careers of students. In addition, the influence of a number of potentially critical background variables was examined: coming from a poverty problem accumulation area of the Netherlands (i.e., problem region), the percentage of students in the school registered as having an official adapted/special education need and the type of

secondary school being attended. The expectation was that students in schools with a relatively more inclusive education culture would show relatively less dropout and less of a need to repeat a year in addition to more positive differences and less negative differences from the original level of education recommendation.

When interpreting the present results, it should be kept in mind that inclusive education, particularly at the level of secondary education, is still being developed in the Netherlands (Ledoux, 2016). The results of the present research reflect the situation in schools following the recent introduction of the Inclusive Education Act in 2014.

On the basis of the present results, it can be concluded that schools with an inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance and inclusive care structure contribute significantly to successful secondary school careers. The inclusive guidance and inclusive care structure in a school appear to influence school careers the most. An inclusive learning environment in the sense that a stimulating, safe environment is created in which students are given ample opportunities to participate was found to contribute least to the secondary school careers of the students in our research.

The inclusive guidance provided in the school and above all the inclusive care structure of the school exerted relatively large effects on the occurrence of a negative difference between the initial level of education recommended and the level (i.e. track) currently being followed. In particular, the strictly preparatory vocational secondary schools and the schools with a relatively large percentage of students registered as having an official learning support (LWOO) showed relatively fewer negative differences in the level of education being followed than the broad secondary schools and schools with a lower percentage of students with an official learning support (LWOO). That is, most probably, on schools with relatively high amount of students with official support for their learning problems, policy towards inclusive education might be further developed and also more supported and empowered by the school team.

The present results further show an inclusive learning environment and inclusive care structure to positively affect dropout; the more inclusive the learning environment and the better the care structure in the school, the lower the number of students dropping out. Once again, the effect is stronger in schools with a relatively large percentage of students with official learning support. It is quite likely that in schools with a relatively large percentage of students with special educational needs, the policy of the school and arrangement of the learning environment, provision of — individual when needed — guidance and care structure is carried more by the entire team than in other schools.

An inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance and inclusive care structure did not appear to create positive differences in the level of secondary school being followed relative to the original recommendation. In other words, inclusive characteristics of the schools did not lead to students studying at a higher level of education than previously recommended. This finding is in line with the tendency for

progression to a higher level of secondary education to occur infrequently in the Netherlands (Onderwijsraad, 2014).

A surprising result is the negative association found between inclusive guidance and school dropout. To the extent that school professionals judge the inclusive guidance offered by their schools to be higher, the more *frequently* dropout is found to occur. A possible explanation for this finding is a reversed direction of causality, namely that in schools with higher dropout rates, considerable more guidance is called for the quality of guidance provided. This explanation becomes even more plausible when we consider that the data on school dropout has been averaged across *multiple* academic years.

Just as surprising is the present finding that the variable of location of the school in a problem region does not make a difference for the effects of inclusive education. In other studies, the variable problem region has been found to be of importance for particularly the school careers of students (Lamote et al., 2013; Van Rooij, Pass, & Van den Broek, 2010). It is possible, of course, that the presence of a particularly inclusive school culture neutralizes the otherwise negative effects of a problem region on the school careers of students.

The outcomes of the present study are confirmed in part by the outcomes of previous studies. Also in these studies, the inclusive learning environment and inclusive guidance of students or, in other words, the pedagogical-didactic orientations of the teachers stand out as important characteristics (Dynarski et al., 2008; Lamote et al., 2013; Wilson, Tanner-Smith, Lipsey, Steinka-Fry, & Morrison, 2011). Tailoring of instruction — a component of inclusive guidance in the present research — is mentioned in many studies as one of the most important prerequisites for handling differences between students and meeting the needs of all students (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Reezigt et al., 2013; Waslander, 2011). Previous studies have also shown parents and students to consider inclusive guidance at the school — including adapted instruction and individual guidance in the classroom — a critical determinant of the inclusivity of schools.

The present research shows that it is possible to apply an effectiveness model to examine inclusive education with the aid of self-evaluation data from schools. The data used in the present study was available at the level of the school, which meant that analyses could only be conducted at an aggregated level and not with nested data. The outcomes of the present research show that the effectiveness of inclusive education can be made transparent with the help of the types of instruments, models and databases used here. In replication research, the observed associations and effects should be studied longitudinally. Such information together with the results of the present research can help schools with the further development and implementation of inclusive education.

Research into the effects of inclusive education policy is of equal importance as the government has given little priority to evaluation of the *effects* of its educational policy over the past decades — despite a call for more evidence-based and result-

oriented education (cf. Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Meijnen, 2013; Waslander, 2011). Research on the ability of inclusive education to combat such important educational themes as dropout and educational failure is of great importance to give the government insight into the effects of its educational policies.

The characteristics of inclusive education used to evaluate the school careers of the students in the present research can also be used in discussions of the what and how of inclusive education and the (self-)evaluation of the quality of education being provided. In such a manner, schools can help teachers improve their daily teaching practices, meet the educational needs of their students and positively influence the school careers of all students.

Appendix A

Scales for specific characteristics of inclusive education as identified by education professionals. All scales were confirmed in a second order factor model (see Van der Bij, et al. (2016a) or Chapter 3 (with Appendix) in this dissertation).

Scale	Description of the scale	Sample item
Inclusive Learning Environment (IL)		
Stimulating learning environment	The extent to which teachers hold positive expectations for students and are able to realize a relaxed and positive learning climate.	Teachers show that they have positive expectations of students at our school.
Secure learning environment	The manner in which teachers and students deal with agreed-upon safety regulations and interaction rules.	At our school, teachers and students respect agreed social rules.
Participatory learning environment	The possibilities of students to shape the learning process, possibly together with fellow students.	Students are allowed to think along about their schoolwork at our school (choice of content, planning).
Inclusive Guidance (IG)		
Guidance by mentor or regularly assigned teacher	The role of the mentor or always the same teacher in the guidance of students.	The mentor/teacher identifies developmental needs and, if necessary, initiates diagnostic testing.
Individual guidance in lessons	The manner in which teachers observe students, take note of special educational needs and provide guidance during the lesson.	At our school, every student is regularly informed on his/her progress and development.
Customized programme	The manner in which teachers manage to realize a suitable programme for their students.	At our school, a suitable programme is made up for each group on the basis of information from the 'group education plan' recorded initial situation.

(Continuation of Appendix A)

Inclusive Care Structure (IS)		
Individual education plan	Agreement on how to proceed and communication with teachers and students with regard to required guidance.	At our school, the plan for how to proceed an action plan is formulated together with the student.
Parents as partners in guidance	The manner in which parents are involved in the guidance of their child.	The guide regularly informs parents/caretakers about the progress of a pupil's development at our school.
Functioning of care coordinator	The tasks and roles of the care coordinator in organizing and coordinate the intern and extern support of student with special educational needs.	Our care coordinator manages the educational care team.
Functioning of educational care team	The tasks and roles of the educational support team in organizing the support of students with special educational needs.	At our school, the care team prepares the action plans together with the teachers and guides.
Interagency collaboration	Effectively organizing the consultation and support of students with the external care partners	Consultation outcomes are systematically reported back to mentors/teachers at our school.
Harmonization of internal and external care	Coordination and harmonizing the internal and external care of students with special (educational) needs.	At our school, regular feedback takes place between the external care partners and the mentor.

Appendix B

Correlations between student school career characteristics of dropout (DR), repetition of a year (REP), positive difference from educational level initially recommended (PD) and negative difference from educational level initially recommended (ND) (N=59 schools)

	DR	REP	PD ₂	PD ₃₋₄	PD ₅	PD ₆	ND ₁	ND ₂	ND ₃	ND ₅
DR										
- Drop out	1									
REP										
- Repetition of a year	.19	1								
PD ₂										
-Positive difference	.29	-.05	1							
PD ₃₋₄										
-Positive difference	.28*	-.01	.31	1						
PD ₅										
-Positive difference	-.05	-.39*	-.60**	.02	1					
PD ₆										
-Positive difference	-.10	-.37*	-.62**	.00	.99**	1				
ND ₁										
-Negative difference	-.15	-.39*	.27	.28	-.24	-.17	1			
ND ₂										
-Negative difference	-.30*	-.37**	-.07	.38*	.20	.23	.47**	1		
ND ₃										
-Negative difference	-.39**	-.38**	-.15	.24	.27	.30*	.42**	.97**	1	
ND ₄										
-Negative difference	-.26	.06	-.20	.14	.15	.24	.76**	.54**	.58**	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Note: ND₁: decline to basic vocational track; PD₂ND₂: decline or progression to advanced vocational track; PD₃₋₄ND₃₋₄: decline or progression to theoretical-vocational track; PD₅ND₅: decline or progression to university of applied sciences preparatory track; PD₆: progression research university preparatory track.

Chapter 6

Summary and general discussion

Summary and general discussion

Inclusive education is internationally one of the central concerns in education. In recent decades, policy on inclusive education has changed considerably (Grimes, Kumar, & Stevens, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). Attention has shifted from the diagnosis and treatment of special educational needs by experts, and the supply of additional resources for individual students (i.e. compensatory measures) to a more social view of ‘inclusion’ aimed at keeping all students in regular education, including students with special educational needs (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006).

The actual implementation of inclusive education is obviously and significantly influenced by political, socio-economic and cultural-historical factors (Armstrong, et al., 2011; Paliokosta & Blandford, 2010; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009; Sahlberg, 2011). That is why, *‘in practice, most countries have hybrid policies and are improving their inclusionary practices incrementally’* (UNESCO, 2015, p.102).

Many schools still teach students with special educational needs in separate groups, either with or without specialized guidance (Grimes, et al., 2015). But more and more schools are taking up the challenge of teaching students with special educational needs as much as possible in regular classes. This requires the capacity for education personnel to work with differentiation (Deunk, Doolaard, Smale-Jacobse, & Bosker, 2015; Meijer, 2004; Spratt & Florian, 2015). But practice has been found to remain intractable in primary and particularly secondary education where subject-bound programmes still stand central (Deunk et al., 2015; Dyson, 2001; Florian & Rouse, 2001). Schools lack examples of good inclusive practice (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). Teachers also report a lack of confidence in their competences to offer inclusive education (Nind & Thomas, 2005). Leadership which encourages the sharing of effective practices is thus needed along with educators who are willing to familiarize themselves with inclusive education and the best practices for such (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Robinson, et al., 2008).

The current state of affairs in scientific research is also hampering the implementation of inclusive education. A better understanding of the central characteristics of inclusive education is needed to make today’s education more inclusive and thus suited for all students, including those with special educational needs. Research into inclusive education shows very different theoretical perspectives (Ainscow & César, 2006; Armstrong, et al., 2011; Hansen, 2012; Jahnukainen, 2015), a lack of models for the evaluation of the effectiveness of inclusive education (Erten & Savage, 2012; Watkins & Ebersold, 2016) and conflicting opinions on what constitutes the most suitable approach for research into inclusive education (Nind, et al., 2004).

The research presented in this dissertation addresses the inclusion of students with special educational needs in regular education. In particular, it addresses the

promise of school self-evaluation for the development of inclusive education, the characteristics of education needed to make it inclusive, the impact of inclusive education on the school careers of students and the recognition of the characteristics of inclusive education by parents and students. The central research question was:

What are the characteristics of inclusive secondary education and how do these characteristics affect the school careers of students?

Four studies were conducted to answer this question and thereby contribute to the effectiveness of education for all students, including those with special needs.

The main findings from the four studies are summarized below. The general conclusions to be drawn are then discussed together with their implications for theory, practice and further research. And to conclude, the central research question is answered.

Summary of the main findings and conclusions

Four studies were conducted of inclusive secondary education in the Netherlands. The studies drew upon the self-evaluation data of 79 schools for secondary education. The first two studies addressed school self-evaluation and the modelling of inclusive education. The next two studies examined parental and student perceptions of the characteristics of inclusion and the effects of inclusive education on the school careers of students in secondary education.

In **Chapter 2**, the promise of school self-evaluation as an instrument to improve student care and promote inclusive education was examined. In countries with a governance structure in which responsibility for the quality of education is shared between government and local school boards, school self-evaluation has been stimulated over the past few decades as a way to encourage continuous quality development.

In particular, school self-evaluation has been presumed in this study to promote the development of inclusive education and thus the care for *all* students but particularly those with special educational needs in regular schools. Working on the goals of quality assurance and school improvement is a challenge in general. To make a valuable contribution, the self-evaluation efforts of schools obviously have to be of sufficient quality. In the present study, the quality standards needed for productive self-evaluation by schools were therefore explored. The following research question was asked: *What characteristics are required for reliable school self-evaluation and to what extent do these characteristics apply to the developed self-evaluation instrument for student care?*

To start with, a framework for school self-evaluation was created with both content and process factors to enable the measure of the quality of school self-evaluations. A review of the relevant research literature revealed two types of criteria to be important for evaluation purposes: *content* and *process* criteria. Three additional types of criteria could be identified and concerned the *function* of the school self-evaluation: overall criteria, accountability criteria and school improvement criteria. The criteria identified for effective self-evaluation by schools were next entered into a matrix and the experiences of schools in a comprehensive self-evaluation project 'Quality of student care in preparatory vocational secondary education and practical education' were evaluated. The sample in this project included 79 Dutch secondary schools. Evaluation of the quality of the self-evaluations conducted as part of the aforementioned project showed the content and process criteria to be largely met. Strong elements revealed by the self-evaluation instrument for student care were found to be: alignment with the external content of the Inspectorate of Education; participation of several stakeholders (care professionals, parents and students); involvement and ownership by educational professionals (development in cooperation with team); availability of external support; and transparency of the implementation process and dialogue. Nevertheless, use of the self-evaluation results to promote growth towards a more professional, learning-oriented school culture occurred to a lesser extent. For a considerable number of the schools using the self-evaluation instrument, a cyclic approach and systematic follow-up activities were missing. This also appeared to stem from the absence of a professional learning culture in these particular schools as revealed by the follow-up activities.

The results of the present evaluation of the use of a self-evaluation instrument by schools showed the quality of the instrument and its contribution to school improvement to depend upon not only the perspective taken by the school self-evaluation but also various content and process factors along with the school organisation and implementation efforts. To make a valuable contribution to school improvement and particularly the promotion of inclusive education, greater attention is needed to the coordination of the internal and external supervision and the competences for change management on the part of school managers (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Robinson et al., 2008; Robinson, 2014).

In **Chapter 3**, the central characteristics of inclusive education in secondary schools were investigated. Although inclusive education is prominent on the international education agenda, research on the characteristics of inclusive education for students with special needs and schools providing this is scarce. At the same time, inclusive education is presumed to provide a better quality of education for all students and not just those with actual special educational needs. The aim in this study was therefore to further the building of theory regarding inclusive education. The research question was as follows: *What are the central characteristics of inclusive education and*

thus education equipped to handle the needs of all students, in particular those with special needs, according to secondary educational professionals in the Netherlands?

A literature review was performed to develop a conceptual framework which addressed three central characteristics of inclusive education: the learning environment, the guidance provided by teachers and the care structure. Data were obtained from educational professionals in 79 Dutch secondary schools. The data was gathered using the self-evaluation framework previously described (see Chapter 2). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses identified 12 characteristics to underlie the central characteristics in inclusive education. Considerable agreement was found between the educational professionals on the important aspects of inclusivity for schools and thus on how differences between schools can be explained.

Multilevel structural equation modelling on the self-evaluation judgments of the educational professionals at the level of the school further showed two main factors to underlie the 12 characteristics of inclusive education in secondary schools: the provision of 1) an inclusive learning environment and 2) inclusive guidance within an inclusive care structure. The factors 'guidance provided by teachers' and 'care structure' showed considerable overlap in the structural model. In the expert opinion of educational professionals, moreover, the work of the care coordinator – for instance, with respect to the cooperation with external partners and teachers – serving as mentors – was the clearest indicator of inclusive education within a school and thus most critical. This finding shows the required teaching practices and student guidance for adequate inclusive education to not have been integrated into teachers' thinking and acting at the time of this study (see also Onderwijsraad, 2016a).

In **Chapter 4**, the findings of the preceding study are further elaborated by examining the extent to which parents and students recognise the characteristics of inclusive education in their schools. Parents and pupils are the most important stakeholders in schools. For a school culture to be and become inclusive for all students, including those with special educational needs, it is imperative that parents and students be involved and that educational professionals know how parents and students experience the education being provided. The following research question was formulated to address the perspectives of parents and students on inclusive education in the school being attended: *To what extent does the characterization of a school as inclusive by educational professionals correspond to the characterisation of the school by parents and students?*

The sample for this study included 2216 educational professionals, 6720 parents and 16511 students from 102 Dutch secondary schools. The results revealed considerable correspondence in the opinions of educational professionals and parents with regard to the characteristics of inclusive education but less correspondence in the opinions of educational professionals with those of the students. Large differences were found for particularly the central characteristic of 'inclusive guidance provided by

teachers'. The underlying characteristics of 'guidance by a mentor or regularly assigned teacher' and 'individual guidance in lessons' appeared to be most critical in this regard.

The views of parents and students with regard to an inclusive learning environment were not significantly explained by the characteristics of school inclusiveness, a stimulating and safe learning environment and the possibilities of students to shape the learning process, possibly together with fellow students. These results suggest that educational professionals need to pay greater attention to the creation of an inclusive learning environment and especially the promotion of participation and ownership by *all* students. All in all, the results of this study of parental and student perceptions of inclusive education in secondary schools showed that parents and students recognize inclusive guidance as a clearly central characteristic of inclusive education.

In **Chapter 5**, the effects of inclusive education on the school careers of students are examined. While research on inclusive education has a considerable history, little research has been performed on its effectiveness. The absence of uniform policy for inclusive education in general and particularly in the Netherlands as well as marked diversity in the implementation of inclusive education within the school have impeded documentation of the effectiveness of inclusive education. In general and also in the present research, the focus has been on those characteristics of inclusive education which can be considered to indicate a better quality of education in general and not just in schools specifically for students with special educational needs. In the present study, the effectiveness of inclusive education at the level of the school was examined in terms of the school careers of students. The research question was: *To what extent do school characteristics of inclusive education ensure successful school careers for both students with and without special educational needs?*

For this research, an effectiveness model incorporating various input, process and output factors was developed. The self-evaluation data from 1792 educational professionals assessing the 12 underlying characteristics of inclusive education (see previous studies reported here) was aggregated at the level of the school (N=59), with the schools for Practical Education omitted for purposes of the present study. The inclusive education data was combined with data available on the school careers of students, namely dropout, repetition of one or more years and a shift to a higher or lower educational track (measured during the third year of secondary school) than recommended previously (i.e. at the end of primary school). Semi-partial correlations were calculated and the characteristics of inclusive education were found to indeed affect the school careers of the students significantly. The provision of inclusive guidance and existence of a clearly inclusive care structure exerted the most influence; the existence of an inclusive learning environment exerted the least influence. The more a school could be characterized as inclusive, the lesser the amount of dropout, repetition of a year and shift to a lower educational track. Unfortunately but nevertheless similar to the case for most other secondary schools in the Netherlands, the students in even

schools to be characterized as providing highly inclusive education did not show so much progression to a higher educational track; no effects proved significant for a positive difference in educational track. Also contrary to what might be expected, the social-economic context of the school did not influence the effects of the inclusive characteristics of the schools on school careers.

Overall, it could be concluded that schools providing clearly inclusive education positively influence the school careers of their students. In the schools with relatively more students with special educational needs, moreover, these results were found to be even more marked and positive. And a shared vision in the team on the importance and components of an inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance and inclusive care structure appears to underlie this success.

Discussion of the main results and conclusions

The results and conclusions of this dissertation have several implications for research in the field of inclusive education and the implementation of inclusive education. The theoretical and practical contributions of the present results are discussed below, followed by consideration of some possible limitations on the presented studies, directions for future research and the general conclusions to be drawn.

Theoretical contributions

With its focus on content and process criteria as well as the use of self-evaluation results for accountability and improvement purposes, the theoretical framework presented here adds to the more systematic study of school self-evaluation. In many Western countries since the 1980s, government policy has shifted towards decentralization and deregulation of governmental tasks (OECD, 2012) with schools and especially their governing bodies being allocated increased autonomy and hence greater responsibility for the monitoring of the quality of education being provided (Hooge, et al., 2012). As a consequence, school self-evaluation has gained importance (Ehren, et al., 2015) and acquired a prominent position in school development (McNamara & O'Hara, 2008). Within this context, research into the quality of self-evaluation remains important and should place more focus on processes in addition to products in the future. The developed theoretical framework for assessing the quality of school self-evaluation should also therefore be piloted further in future research.

The model of the central characteristics of inclusive education presented here meets the need for an empirically motivated, reliable model of inclusive education. The reliability of the developed model at the level of the school makes it possible to compare schools with respect to the inclusiveness of their education. Such comparison can then

contribute to a better understanding of inclusive education in theory and in practice (see also Erten & Savage, 2012; Meijnen, 2013).

The characteristics of inclusivity identified as critical at the level of the school – an inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance and an inclusive care structure – can be incorporated into effectiveness models for a more thorough evaluation of the success of today's inclusive education efforts. A unique contribution of the present research is incorporation of attention to the inclusive care structure into the effectiveness model. This aspect of inclusive education has not been sufficiently highlighted in previous effectiveness studies.

With the newly developed effectiveness model for inclusive education, this dissertation also facilitates research into the implementation and effects of educational policy and the development of inclusive education policy (see also Ledoux et al., 2007, Ledoux, 2016). In recent times, the Dutch government did not prioritise evaluation of the effects of its educational policy, unless her policy focussed on evidenced-based and results-oriented education. The outcomes of the effects study presented here provide a better understanding of the specific effects of the learning environment, the guidance provided by teachers and care structure in the school on the school careers of students. More specifically, stimulating and participatory learning arrangements, the guidance of a mentor and individual guidance in lessons but also internal and external collaboration were seen to limit dropout, repetition of a school year and movement to a lower track of education.

The model with characteristics of inclusive education presented here has an additional advantage for research after the establishment of inclusive education policy in schools and the regional cooperative centres for schools. Schools and the regional cooperative centres for schools in the Netherlands are relatively autonomous with regard to policy on inclusive education today. The implication of this is that the schools and regional cooperative centres for schools can differ in their elaboration of inclusive education policy. The characteristics of inclusive education and the research model presented here can facilitate the evaluation of the effects of inclusive education policy as implemented at different schools.

Finally, the results the research presented here show an inclusive learning environment as a central characteristic of inclusive education to be less recognized by parents and students than by school personnel and to not significantly contribute to the impact of inclusive education on the school careers of students. Looking back at the history of policy implementation as described in the general introduction, it can be concluded that particular attention was paid at the turn of the century to such organizational inclusive education characteristics as having regional cooperation between schools and a care structure (see also Ledoux et al., 2007), but less attention paid to the creation of an inclusive learning environment or, in other words, the creation of a stimulating, participatory learning environment for all students. In this connection, an interesting result of the present study is that the effectiveness of a school's inclusive

education was found to be larger when relatively more students with special needs were being educated in the school. When necessary, in other words, educational professionals appear to stretch their practices to reach the needs of students with special educational needs. The present research indeed shows *all* types of students to benefit from a higher degree of inclusive education in the school. This is in keeping with the background to international inclusive education policy as decided upon in the UNESCO agreements (1994, 2006).

Practical contributions

The theoretical model presented here with specific quality criteria for school self-evaluation has not only scientific relevance but also practical relevance. For schools, school boards and school managers in particular, it is important that adequate choices be made with regard to the type of self-evaluation they want to pursue, with more emphasis on accountability or school improvement. A balance of both appears to be preferably. School management can use self-evaluation to fully stretch a school for improvement but also identify for instance different types of guidance and external expertise needed. For governance and policy makers, it is important to understand how school self-evaluation can add to both external and internal demands of quality assessment. The model presented here facilitates school managers and schoolboards at the use of school self-evaluations. The theoretical framework can be used to make optimal choices with regard to the content and process factors and the additional measures to be taken.

Although the research reported on here is international in that it addresses what is needed for effective school self-evaluation and inclusive education, the *context* of the research is specific to the Netherlands. Therefore, the presented model for school self-evaluation can be useful for schools and regional cooperative centres for schools the implementation of the law Educational Fit. In accordance with the Dutch legal requirement of Educational Fit (Staatsblad, 2012), schools and regional cooperative centres for schools have been given a large degree of autonomy for the implementation of the Educational Fit policy (ECPO, 2009; Honingh, et al., 2017). As a result of this autonomy the visions on inclusive education are very different across schools and regional cooperative centres for schools, educational professionals, parents, students and other stakeholders. The use of school self-evaluation in conjunction with attention to the central characteristics of inclusive education can stimulate the implementation of inclusive education and thus insure 'Educational Fit' for all students. The framework for school self-evaluation presented here can provide a guideline for strategic action. It can help school leaders and schoolboards to invest in the necessary content and process conditions needed to provide quality education but also guide accountability and school improvement. Use of the framework for school self-evaluation in conjunction with attention to the central characteristics of inclusive education can help realize

Educational Fit and high quality, inclusive education which thus meets the needs of all students.

The present results highlight the importance of adopting an integrated approach to school development, an approach in which attention is devoted to the three central characteristics of inclusive education, namely: an inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance and an inclusive care structure. The operationalization of the twelve characteristics underlying the central characteristics of inclusive education can be used by schools as quality indicators and thus to strengthen the education efforts of a school.

The present research showed educational professionals, parents and students to greatly value the customization of educational programmes and provision of – often individual – guidance by teachers during lessons. Different studies (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2014, 2015, 2016; OCW, 2004) nevertheless show an ever-recurring need for better guidance of students with special educational needs by educational professionals and customized programmes for students. Greater attention must thus be paid during initial teacher training and the continuing professional development of teachers to these two important topics (see also Onderwijsraad, 2016b).

Limitations of the research

The strength of the present research, in general, is the variety of perspectives taken on inclusive education: research from the perspective of school self-evaluation, research from the perspective of an integrated vision on school development, research from the perspectives of educational professionals, parents and students and – also – research from the perspective of school effectiveness. These different perspectives give the present findings considerable validity.

The school self-evaluation instrument was developed for practical as opposed to scientific purposes. The use of school self-evaluation constitutes therefore both a strength and a possible limitation of the present research. The use of a substantial number of respondents including educational professionals, parents and students participating in the school self-evaluation project means powerful results at the level of the school. A potential limitation is that the database stems from 2006, which is prior to the enactment of the requirement of Educational Fit. More recent studies (Ainscow, et al., 2012; Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2014, 2015, 2016; Messiou et al., 2016; Waslander, 2011) nevertheless show slow uptake for inclusive education, which is still perceived as only a formal, legal requirement by most school managers and educational professionals as opposed to a matter of the heart (Onderwijsraad, 2016b).

The schools participating in the school self-evaluation project all participated on a volunteer basis. The reasons for their participation varied from a declining student enrollment and/or a low evaluation by the Inspectorate of Education to a need for greater self-reflection and/or innovation in the school. The sample of schools used in

the self-evaluation project was representative of the geographic and size distribution of schools in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, generalization of the present results to other schools must be done with caution as schools freely undertaking self-evaluation have been shown to constitute a divergent and unique group of schools (Voncken & Schoonhoven, 2006).

A final possible limitation of the present research concerns the matching of educational professionals with parents and students. Matching was only possible at the level of the school, given that the school self-evaluation instrument was only developed to evaluate the quality of student care at the level of the school. Therefore, in the development of the school self-evaluation instrument there was paid no attention for a match between parents and students at the family level; nesting of data was not possible.

Directions for further research

This dissertation suggests several directions for further research. Firstly, more research is needed on the challenges of meeting the content and process conditions for effective school self-evaluation including the use of the instrumentation and in particular the fine tuning of the self-evaluation instrument to assess the quality of student care in the school following on from the Educational Fit Act. Future research should also gather greater insight into the circumstantial governance and supervision issue at the level of school managers and school boards (see also Hooge, et al., 2016) as well as the competence of leadership and change management. Greater insight into school self-evaluation is needed to not only develop and maintain a high quality of education but also equip schools as professional communities to change their educational practices and guidance of students as needed and learn from self-evaluation data.

The reliability and validity of other school self-evaluation instruments can be optimized on the basis of the results presented here. The school self-evaluation instrument presented here might also be extended to include new scales on topics of inclusion of importance to specific groups of schools or topics raised by new research on inclusive education. Extension of the effectiveness model as developed in Chapter 5 might also provide the basis for the addition of questions to the school self-evaluation instrument for student care.

How schools can use self-evaluation for external accounting purposes without damaging the strengths which self-evaluation brings – namely school ownership and individual school selection of topics judged to be important for evaluation – also needs to be studied in the future. In addition, the school self-evaluation instrument presented here might provide for a better nesting of data from several sources in the future in order to allow for more sophisticated analyses. This can be achieved, for example, by more involvement of experts/scientist in the preparation of the school self-evaluation.

And the correspondence between the inclusive education efforts of schools and educational outcomes for students may then be examined in greater depth. Trust in the relevance of scientifically reliable school comparisons is a necessity for schools to commit to self-evaluation. The research reported here can hopefully contribute to this trust.

Follow-up research drawing upon the developed model of the central characteristics of inclusive education is called for to not only validate this model more generally but also determine if the situations in schools have changed, now that the policy and practices for inclusive education have become more familiar. Schools have the opportunity to use the model to monitor their improvement with regard to inclusive education. The developed model further makes it possible to examine the extent of recognition and implementation by schools, educational professionals, parents, students, external care partners, inspectors and other stakeholders. The degree of convergence among opinions can then be examined. And the results of such comparison can provide clear starting points for a broad support base for inclusive education.

As part of the legal framework for Educational Fit, schools are now obliged to outline their inclusive education philosophy in a so-called 'support profile'. In research following up on the present research, just how these support profiles/philosophies relate – or do not relate – to the views of school professionals will be examined. In addition and in light of the relatively small number of schools participating in the present research, a broader – conceivably cohort – study on the effects of Educational Fit on the school careers of students is important to help refine the model of the central characteristics of inclusive education presented here.

General conclusion

Taken together, the four empirical studies presented here collectively answer the central research question, namely: *What are the central characteristics of inclusive secondary education and how do these characteristics affect the school careers of students?* It can be concluded that an inclusive learning environment, inclusive guidance by teachers and an inclusive care structure are central characteristics of inclusive education. Guidance by a mentor and individual guidance during lessons are mostly recognized and appreciated by parents and students. Guidance by teachers and an inclusive care structure positively affected the school careers of students when examined at the level of the school. With these conclusions, it can be seen that *all* students and not just those with known special educational needs can benefit from the characteristics of inclusive education. This is all the more reason to continue with the implementation of inclusive education policy. It can further be concluded that greater attention is needed for inclusive education practice and, in particular, the manner in which educational professionals can shape the participation of students in the learning

environment. Inclusive education, according to the results the research presented here, is a step towards higher educational quality and should therefore be anchored broadly and deeply in educational practice. This means greater attention to inclusive education in the professional development of teachers and school practice.

To conclude, realizing an inclusive school culture goes beyond the implementation of a vision, the characteristics of inclusive education, the required organization and sufficient funding. Realizing an inclusive school culture involves promotion of broad acceptance of diversity and equity. This dissertation has hopefully contributed to the realization of an inclusive education culture by encouraging educational professionals and other stakeholders to apply school self-evaluation to examine central characteristics of inclusive education and thereby help sustain the pedagogical and social strength of education and society.

Nederlandse samenvatting (summary in Dutch)

Kenmerken en effecten van inclusief onderwijs

Inclusief onderwijs is internationaal een van de belangrijkste thema's van onderwijsbeleid. De afgelopen decennia is het beleid ten aanzien van inclusief onderwijs behoorlijk gewijzigd (Grimes, et al., 2015; UNESCO, 2015). De aandacht verplaatste zich van een op deficiënties gerichte visie – diagnose en begeleiding door experts, extra compenserende maatregelen voor individuele studenten – naar een meer sociaal georiënteerde, op 'inclusie' gericht visie met als doel *alle* leerlingen de mogelijkheid bieden regulier onderwijs te volgen, ook de leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften (Ainscow, et al., 2006). De implementatie van inclusief onderwijs wordt echter sterk beïnvloed door politieke, sociaaleconomische en cultuurhistorische factoren (Armstrong, et al., 2011; Paliokosta, 2010; Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009; Sahlberg, 2011). Daarom vordert het beleid ten aanzien van inclusief onderwijs in de meeste landen slechts gestaag: "in practice, most countries have hybrid policies and are improving their inclusionary practices incrementally" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 102).

Op veel scholen krijgen leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften nog steeds onderwijs in aparte groepen, zonder of met extra specialistische begeleiding (Grimes, et al., 2015). Steeds meer scholen zijn echter de uitdaging aangegaan om leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften zoveel mogelijk in reguliere klassen onderwijs te laten volgen. Dit vereist van leraren competenties in het omgaan met verschillen (Deunk, et al., 2015; Meijer, 2004; Spratt & Florian, 2015). Maar de praktijk in het primair en vooral het voortgezet onderwijs, dat sterk op vakinhoudelijk en programmatisch is georiënteerd, blijkt weerbarstig (Deunk et al., 2015; Dyson 2001; Florian & Rouse, 2001). Voorbeelden van 'good practice' ontbreken op scholen (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). Leraren geven aan dat ze weinig vertrouwen hebben in hun capaciteiten voor het bieden van inclusief onderwijs (Nind & Thomas, 2005). Leiderschap dat het delen van effectieve praktijken stimuleert is noodzakelijk, zodat leraren zich de achterliggende ideeën van inclusief onderwijs en 'good practices' ervan eigen kunnen maken (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Robinson, et al., 2008).

De uitkomsten van het huidige wetenschappelijk onderzoek belemmeren eveneens de implementatie van inclusief onderwijs. Een beter begrip van de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs is noodzakelijk om het onderwijs meer inclusief te maken voor alle leerlingen, ook de leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften. In het onderzoek naar inclusief onderwijs is sprake van verschillende theoretische perspectieven (Ainscow & César, 2006; Armstrong, et al., 2011; Hansen, 2012; Jahnukainen 2015), theoretische modellen om de effectiviteit van inclusief onderwijs te evalueren ontbreken (Erten &

Savage, 2012; Watkins & Ebersold, 2016) en er bestaan verschillende opvattingen over de meest geschikte methodologische aanpak voor onderzoek naar inclusief onderwijs (Nind, et al., 2004).

Het onderzoek dat in deze dissertatie wordt gepresenteerd richt zich op de inclusie van leerlingen reguliere voortgezet onderwijs, in het bijzonder leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften. Het onderzoek richt zich met name op de mogelijke bijdrage van zelfevaluatie aan de ontwikkeling van inclusief onderwijs, de kenmerken om het onderwijs inclusief te maken, het herkennen van de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs door ouders en leerlingen en de effecten van inclusief onderwijs op de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen. De centrale vraagstelling was:

Wat zijn de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs op scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs en in hoeverre beïnvloeden deze kenmerken de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen?

Vier studies werden uitgevoerd om deze vraag te beantwoorden om daarmee bij te dragen aan de effectiviteit van onderwijs voor alle leerlingen, ook de leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften. In dit hoofdstuk worden de belangrijkste resultaten van deze vier studies samengevat. Daarna worden de conclusies bediscussieerd en de implicaties voor theorie, praktijk en vervolgonderzoek. Tenslotte worden algemene conclusies beschreven met betrekking tot de centrale vraagstelling.

Samenvatting van de belangrijkste bevindingen en conclusies

Vier studies over de inclusief voortgezet onderwijs in Nederland zijn uitgevoerd. Deze studies waren gebaseerd op zelfevaluatiedata van 79 scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs. De eerste twee studies waren gericht op zelfevaluatie van scholen en de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs. De laatste twee studies onderzochten de percepties van ouders en leerlingen ten aanzien van de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs en de effecten inclusief onderwijs op leerlingloopbanen.

In **hoofdstuk 2** werd de bijdrage van zelfevaluatie als instrument om de kwaliteit van leerlingenzorg te verbeteren en inclusief onderwijs te bevorderen onderzocht. In landen waar de verantwoordelijkheid voor de kwaliteit van onderwijs als een gedeelde verantwoordelijkheid tussen overheid en lokale onderwijsbesturen wordt beschouwd, is de afgelopen decennia zelfevaluatie als instrument voor continue kwaliteitsverbetering gestimuleerd.

Zelfevaluatie werd in deze studie vooral gezien als een mogelijkheid om als instrument in te zetten voor de ontwikkeling van inclusief onderwijs en zodoende de zorg voor alle leerlingen, in het bijzonder de leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften. Zelfevaluatie kan bovendien in positieve zin bijdragen aan de verbetering van onderwijskwaliteit en schoolontwikkeling in algemene zin. Om dat te

bereiken is het nodig dat zelfevaluaties op scholen van voldoende kwaliteit zijn. De kwaliteitsstandaarden die daarvoor nodig zijn werden in deze studie onderzocht. Dit leidde tot de volgende onderzoeksvraag: *Wat zijn de kenmerken voor betrouwbare zelfevaluaties van scholen en in hoeverre zijn deze kenmerken van toepassing op het zelfevaluatie instrument voor leerlingenzorg?*

Om te beginnen werd aan de hand van literatuuronderzoek een kader voor zelfevaluatie ontwikkeld met als doel de kwaliteit van zelfevaluaties te kunnen beoordelen. Uit het literatuuronderzoek bleek dat de kwaliteit van zelfevaluaties er te beoordelen op twee criteria: inhouds- en procescriteria. Ook werden drie aanvullende criteria die betrekking hadden op de functie van zelfevaluatie gevonden: criteria van meer algemene aard, criteria betreffende de verantwoording en criteria die betrekking hebben op schoolontwikkeling. De kwaliteitscriteria voor effectieve zelfevaluatie werden in een matrix gezet en vervolgens werden de ervaringen van scholen met het zelfevaluatieproject 'Leerlingenzorg in het VMBO en praktijkonderwijs' op deze criteria geëvalueerd. De steekproef bestond uit 79 scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs.

Uit de evaluatie van het zelfevaluatie instrument voor leerlingenzorg als onderdeel van het hiervoor genoemd zelfevaluatie project bleek dat het instrument grotendeels voldeed aan de gevonden inhouds- en procescriteria voor zelfevaluatie. Sterke aspecten van het zelfevaluatie instrument voor leerlingenzorg waren de afstemming met de inhoud van het beoordelingskader van de onderwijsinspectie; het betrekken van verschillende stakeholders (externe professionals, ouders en leerlingen), de betrokkenheid en het eigenaarschap van de onderwijsprofessionals (ontwikkelen in samenwerking met het team), de beschikbaarheid van externe experts en de transparantie in het proces en de dialoog. Het toepassen van zelfevaluatie om de ontwikkeling van een professionele lerende schoolcultuur te ontwikkelen bleek een minder sterk aspect. In veel scholen ontbrak een cyclische benadering en systematisch aanpak van de vervolgvacatures na afronding van de zelfevaluatie. Dit bleek sterk afhankelijk van de aanwezigheid van een professionele lerende cultuur op deze scholen.

De resultaten van dit onderzoek naar het gebruik van het zelfevaluatie-instrument in scholen toont aan dat de kwaliteit van het instrument en de bijdrage aan schoolontwikkeling niet alleen afhankelijk zijn van de verschillende perspectieven op zelfevaluatie, de inhouds- en de procescriteria, maar eveneens van de schoolorganisatie en de ondernomen implementatie activiteiten in de school. Om een waardevolle bijdrage te kunnen leveren aan schoolontwikkeling, in het bijzonder het stimuleren van inclusief onderwijs, is meer aandacht gewenst voor de afstemming tussen het interne en externe toezicht op de kwaliteit van het onderwijs en de competenties ten aanzien van verandermanagement bij schoolleiders (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Robinson, et al., 2008; Robinson, 2014).

In **hoofdstuk 3** werden de hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs in scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs onderzocht. Hoewel inclusief onderwijs een prominente plek inneemt op de internationale onderwijsagenda, is er relatief weinig onderzoek verricht

naar de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs voor leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften en scholen die inclusief onderwijs praktiseren. Tegelijkertijd wordt verondersteld dat inclusief onderwijs leidt tot kwalitatief beter onderwijs voor alle leerlingen, ook de leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften. Het doel van deze studie was bij te dragen aan de theorievorming omtrent inclusief onderwijs. De onderzoeksvraag was als volgt: *Wat zijn de hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs volgens onderwijsprofessionals in het voortgezet onderwijs in Nederland, zodat tegemoet gekomen kan worden aan de speciale onderwijsbehoeften van leerlingen?*

Om deze vraag te beantwoorden werd een literatuuronderzoek uitgevoerd dat leidde tot een model met drie hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs: de leeromgeving, de begeleiding door leraren en de zorgstructuur. De data werden verkregen van onderwijsprofessionals uit 79 scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs in Nederland. De data werden verzameld met behulp van het hiervoor beschreven zelfevaluatie instrument (zie hoofdstuk 2). Op grond van exploratieve en confirmatieve factoranalyses werden twaalf onderliggende kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs gevonden.

Tussen de onderwijsprofessionals bestond aanzienlijke overeenstemming over deze belangrijke aspecten van de inclusiviteit van scholen daardoor verschillen tussen scholen verklaard kunne worden.

Multilevel structural equation modelling met betrekking tot de oordelen van onderwijsprofessionals over hun school toonde aan dat er twee hoofdfactoren ten grondslag lagen aan de twaalf kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs op scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs: het voorzien in 1) een inclusieve leeromgeving en 2) inclusieve begeleiding binnen een inclusieve zorgstructuur. De factoren inclusieve begeleiding en inclusieve zorgstructuur hadden een aanzienlijke overlap in het structurele model. De onderwijsprofessionals waren bovendien van mening dat de activiteiten van de zorgcoördinator, bijvoorbeeld de samenwerking met externen en leraren/mentoren, de belangrijkste factor van inclusief onderwijs binnen hun school is. Dit resultaat duidt erop dat de vereiste inclusieve onderwijspraktijken en leerlingbegeleiding nog onvoldoende waren geïntegreerd in het denken en handelen van leraren op het moment van deze studie (zie ook Onderwijsraad, 2016a).

In **hoofdstuk 4** worden de uitkomsten van deze voorgaande studie verder uitgewerkt door te onderzoeken in hoeverre ouders en leerlingen de door onderwijsprofessionals gepercipieerde kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs in hun school herkennen. Ouders en leerlingen zijn de belangrijkste stakeholders in scholen. Om een inclusieve schoolcultuur te realiseren en te houden is het noodzakelijk dat ouders en leerlingen betrokken worden en dat onderwijsprofessionals weten hoe ouders en leerlingen het geboden onderwijs ervaren. De volgende onderzoeksvraag werd geformuleerd om de opvattingen over inclusief onderwijs van ouders en leerlingen ten aanzien van hun school te achterhalen: *In hoeverre komt de karakterisering van de*

inclusiviteit van de school door onderwijsprofessionals overeen met de karakterisering van de school door ouders en leerlingen?

De steekproef voor deze studie omvatte 2216 onderwijsprofessionals, 6720 ouders en 16511 leerlingen van 102 Nederlandse scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs. Uit de resultaten bleek dat er een aanzienlijke overeenkomst bestond tussen de meningen van ouders en onderwijsprofessionals met betrekking tot de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs, maar dat er veel minder overeenstemming was tussen leerlingen en onderwijsprofessionals. Met name het hoofdkenmerk 'inclusieve begeleiding door leraren' werd herkend. In dit verband werden de onderliggende kenmerken 'begeleiding door een mentor of vaste leraar' en 'individuele begeleiding in de lessen' het meest herkend.

De meningen van ouders en leerlingen ten aanzien van de inclusieve leeromgeving kon niet significant worden verklaard door inclusieve school kenmerken als een stimulerende, veilige leeromgeving, eigenaarschap van het leerproces en de mogelijkheid om samen te werken met medeleerlingen. Deze resultaten zijn een indicatie dat onderwijsprofessionals meer aandacht zouden moeten besteden aan het realiseren van een inclusieve leeromgeving, in het bijzonder het stimuleren van participatie en eigenaarschap van alle leerlingen. Samengevat, blijkt uit de resultaten van deze studie naar de percepties van ouders en leerlingen ten aanzien van inclusief onderwijs op scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs dat ouders en leerlingen vooral de begeleiding door een mentor of vaste leraar en individuele begeleiding in de lessen herkennen als duidelijke hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs.

In **hoofdstuk 5** zijn de effecten van inclusief onderwijs op de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen onderzocht. Hoewel het onderzoek naar inclusief onderwijs een rijke historie kent, is er weinig onderzoek gedaan naar de effecten ervan. Zowel het ontbreken van eenduidig inclusief onderwijsbeleid in het algemeen, vooral ook in Nederland, en de diversiteit bij de implementatie van inclusief onderwijs binnen scholen hebben het onderzoek naar de effecten van inclusief onderwijs belemmerd. In het algemeen en ook in het huidige onderzoek ging de aandacht vooral uit naar kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs die kunnen worden beschouwd als algemeen erkende kwaliteitsindicatoren voor goed onderwijs. Deze zijn echter niet gebaseerd op scholen voor leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften. In de huidige studie werden op schoolniveau de effecten van inclusief onderwijs op de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen onderzocht. De onderzoeksvraag was: *In hoeverre dragen de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs bij aan succesvolle schoolloopbanen van alle leerlingen?*

Voor dit onderzoek werd een effectiviteitsmodel ontwikkeld met verschillende input, proces en output factoren. De zelfevaluatie data van 1792 onderwijsprofessionals, waarbij de twaalf onderliggende kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs werden getoetst (zie de hiervoor gepresenteerde studies), werden geaggregeerd op schoolniveau (N=59). De scholen voor praktijkonderwijs werden verwijderd vanwege hun specifieke karakter. De zelfevaluatiedata met betrekking tot

inclusief onderwijs werden samengevoegd met data die beschikbaar waren over schoolloopbanen van leerlingen, namelijk voortijdig schoolverlaten, zittenblijven en op- en afstroom (gemeten in het derde leerjaar van het voortgezet onderwijs en gebaseerd op het verschil tussen het advies van de basisschool en de onderwijspositie). Na het berekenen van de semi-partiele correlaties van de variabelen van deze studie bleken de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs inderdaad van invloed te zijn op de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen. Het bieden van inclusieve begeleiding en de aanwezigheid van een heldere inclusieve zorgstructuur hadden de grootste invloed. Hoe meer een school als inclusief gekarakteriseerd kan worden hoe minder voortijdige schoolverlaters, zittenblijven en afstroom naar een lager onderwijsniveau. Helaas, maar niettemin overeenkomstig de andere scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs in Nederland, werden er ook bij de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen op scholen die als inclusief gekarakteriseerd kunnen worden geen significante effecten geconstateerd bij opstroom naar een hoger onderwijsniveau. Eveneens in tegenstelling tot de verwachtingen beïnvloedde de sociaaleconomische context van de school niet de effecten van de inclusieve kenmerken van scholen op de schoolloopbaan van leerlingen.

Over het geheel genomen kan worden geconcludeerd dat scholen met een duidelijke inclusieve onderwijscultuur de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen positief beïnvloeden. In scholen met relatief meer leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften waren deze effecten nog sterker. Een door het team gedragen visie ten aanzien van het belang van de onderdelen van een inclusieve leeromgeving, inclusieve begeleiding en inclusieve zorgstructuur lijken aan de basis te liggen van dit succes.

Discussie van de belangrijkste resultaten en conclusies

De resultaten en conclusies van deze dissertatie hebben verschillende implicaties voor onderzoek op het gebied van inclusief onderwijs en de implementatie van inclusief onderwijs in scholen. De theoretische en praktische bijdrage van de resultaten van dit onderzoek worden hierna bediscussieerd, gevolgd door een beschouwing over de mogelijke beperkingen van de gepresenteerde studies, suggesties voor vervolgonderzoek en de algemene conclusies.

Theoretische bijdrage

Met de focus op zowel inhouds- en procescriteria als het gebruik van de resultaten van zelfevaluatiedata voor verantwoording en verbetering van de kwaliteit van onderwijs levert het hier gepresenteerde theoretische kader een bijdrage aan een meer systematische bestudering van zelfevaluatie op scholen. In veel Westerse landen is het overheidsbeleid sinds de jaren tachtig van de vorige eeuw meer in de richting gegaan van decentralisatie en deregulering van overheidstaken (OECD, 2012) waarbij scholen

en vooral hun besturen steeds meer autonomie kregen en daarmee een grotere verantwoordelijkheid voor het monitoren van hun onderwijskwaliteit (Hooge, et al., 2012). Zelfevaluatie werd hierdoor steeds belangrijker (Ehren, et al., 2015) en kreeg een prominenter plaats binnen schoolontwikkeling (McNamara & O'Hara, 2008). Binnen deze context blijft onderzoek naar de kwaliteit van zelfevaluaties belangrijk met de restrictie dat in vervolgonderzoek naast de inhoudelijke aspecten van zelfevaluaties ook meer aandacht nodig is voor de procesmatige kant ervan. Het ontwikkelde theoretisch kader voor het beoordelen van de kwaliteit van zelfevaluaties kan daarbij als basis dienen voor vervolgonderzoek.

Het in deze dissertatie gepresenteerde model met de hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs voorziet ook in de behoefte aan een empirisch onderbouwd, betrouwbaar model voor inclusief onderwijs. De betrouwbaarheid van het ontwikkelde model op schoolniveau maakt het mogelijk scholen met elkaar te vergelijken voor wat betreft de inclusiviteit van hun onderwijs. Deze vergelijking kan bijdragen aan een beter begrip van inclusief onderwijs in theorie en praktijk (zie ook Erten & Savage, 2012; Meijnen, 2013).

Uit het huidige onderzoek is gebleken dat de kenmerken van inclusiviteit die cruciaal zijn op schoolniveau – een inclusieve leeromgeving, inclusieve begeleiding en een inclusieve zorgstructuur – deel uit kunnen maken van een effectiviteitsmodel voor een meer grondige evaluatie van de opbrengsten van de huidige pogingen om inclusief onderwijs te realiseren. Een bijzondere bijdrage van het huidige onderzoek is het toevoegen van de inclusieve zorgstructuur aan het effectiviteitsmodel. Dit aspect van inclusief onderwijs heeft tot op heden onvoldoende aandacht gekregen in voorgaande effectiviteitsstudies.

Met het nieuw ontwikkelde effectiviteitsmodel voor inclusief onderwijs biedt deze dissertatie de mogelijkheid onderzoek te doen naar de implementatie en effecten van onderwijsbeleid en de ontwikkeling van inclusief onderwijsbeleid (zie ook Ledoux et al., 2007, 2016). De afgelopen jaren heeft de Nederlandse overheid weinig prioriteit gegeven aan de evaluatie van de effecten van haar onderwijsbeleid, ondanks het feit dat dit beleid op 'evidence-based' en resultaatgericht onderwijs gericht was. De uitkomsten van de huidige effectstudie zorgen voor een beter begrip van de specifieke effecten van de leeromgeving, de begeleiding door leraren en de zorgstructuur in de school op de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen. In het bijzonder stimulerende en participatieve leerarrangementen, de begeleiding door een mentor en individuele begeleiding in de klas, maar ook de interne en externe samenwerking kunnen voortijdig schoolverlaten, zittenblijven en afstroom naar een lager onderwijsniveau beperken.

Het hier gepresenteerde model met kenmerken van inclusieve onderwijs heeft een bijkomend voordeel voor onderzoek naar de implementatie van inclusief onderwijsbeleid in scholen en samenwerkingsverbanden. In Nederland zijn scholen en samenwerkingsverbanden relatief autonoom in het voeren van hun beleid ten aanzien van inclusief onderwijs. Het gevolg hiervan is dat scholen en samenwerkingsverbanden

kunnen verschillen in de uitwerking ervan. De kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs en het hier gepresenteerde onderzoeksmodel kunnen behulpzaam zijn bij de evaluatie van de effecten van de verschillende beleidsvormen van inclusief onderwijs in scholen.

Ten slotte volgt uit de resultaten van het huidige onderzoek dat ouders en leerlingen een inclusieve leeromgeving minder herkennen als hoofkenmerk van inclusief onderwijs dan onderwijsprofessionals en dat een inclusieve leeromgeving bovendien niet significant bijdraagt aan het effect van inclusief onderwijs op succesvolle schoolloopbanen van leerlingen. Terugblikkend op de geschiedenis van de implementatie van inclusief onderwijsbeleid zoals beschreven in de introductie (hoofdstuk 1) kan worden geconcludeerd dat sinds de eeuwwisseling de meeste aandacht is uitgegaan naar de organisatorische aspecten van inclusief onderwijs zoals de vorming van samenwerkingsverbanden en de zorgadviesteams (zie ook Ledoux et al., 2007). De aandacht ging veel minder uit naar het creëren van een inclusieve leeromgeving of, met andere woorden, aan het creëren van een stimulerende, participatieve leeromgeving voor alle leerlingen. In dit opzicht is een interessant resultaat van de huidige studie dat op scholen met relatief meer leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften de effecten van de inclusiviteitskenmerken juist groter waren. Met andere woorden, wanneer het nodig is zijn onderwijsprofessionals bereid hun praktijken te verbreden en te verdiepen om tegemoet te komen aan de onderwijsbehoeften van alle leerlingen, ook de leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften. Uit het huidige onderzoek blijkt dat *alle* leerlingen profiteren van kwalitatief sterk ontwikkeld inclusief onderwijs. Dit komt overeen met de grondgedachten van internationaal inclusief onderwijsbeleid zoals vastgelegd in verschillende verdragen van de UNESCO (1994, 2006).

Bijdrage aan de praktijk

Het hier gepresenteerde model met specifieke kwaliteitscriteria voor zelfevaluatie is niet alleen van waarde voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden, maar heeft ook praktische relevantie. Voor scholen, bestuurders en schoolleiders in het bijzonder, is het belangrijk dat zij deugdelijke keuzes maken met betrekking tot het type zelfevaluatie dat zij beogen, met meer nadruk op verantwoording of schoolontwikkeling. Een balans tussen beide heeft de voorkeur. Schoolleiders kunnen zelfevaluatie breed inzetten ten behoeve van schoolontwikkeling, maar ook om bijvoorbeeld verschillende soorten begeleiding en de noodzakelijke externe expertise in beeld te brengen. Voor de professionals die zich met verantwoording en beleid bezighouden, is het van belang zich te realiseren dat zelfevaluatie zowel een externe als interne functie kan vervullen met betrekking tot kwaliteitszorg. Het hier gepresenteerde model ondersteunt schoolleiders en besturen bij het gebruik van zelfevaluaties. Het theoretische kader kan worden gebruikt om goede keuzes te maken ten aanzien van de inhouds- en procescriteria en de additionele maatregelen die genomen moeten.

Hoewel het hier gepresenteerde onderzoek gebaseerd is op wat internationaal beschouwd kan worden als belangrijk voor effectieve zelfevaluatie en inclusief onderwijs, is de context van dit onderzoek specifiek Nederlands. Daarom kan het hier gepresenteerde model voor zelfevaluatie ook voor scholen en samenwerkingsverbanden van betekenis zijn bij de implementatie van de wet Passend Onderwijs. Overeenkomstig het wettelijk kader voor passend onderwijs (Staatsblad, 2012) hebben scholen en samenwerkingsverbanden een grote mate van autonomie gekregen bij de implementatie van passend onderwijsbeleid (Bekkers, 2011; Honingh, et al., 2017). Dit heeft geresulteerd in een veelheid aan visies ten aanzien van inclusief onderwijs van scholen en samenwerkingsverbanden, onderwijs-professionals, ouders, leerlingen en andere stakeholders. Het gebruikmaken van zelfevaluatie in combinatie met de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs kan de implementatie van inclusief onderwijs stimuleren en op deze manier zorgen voor passend onderwijs voor alle leerlingen. Het in dit onderzoek gepresenteerde kwaliteitskader voor zelfevaluatie kan dienen als een richtlijn voor strategisch handelen. Het kan schoolleiders en bestuurders helpen om aan de noodzakelijke inhoud en proces voorwaarden voor zelfevaluatie te voldoen om onderwijs van hoge kwaliteit te realiseren, daarbij rekening houdend met de verantwoordingsfunctie en schoolontwikkeling. Het gebruik van het kwaliteitskader voor zelfevaluatie in samenhang met de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs kan helpen bij het realiseren van passend onderwijs en inclusief onderwijs van hoge kwaliteit en daarmee tegemoetkomen aan de onderwijsbehoeften van alle leerlingen.

De huidige resultaten benadrukken het belang van een keuze voor een integrale benadering van schoolontwikkeling, een benadering waarin aandacht wordt besteed aan de drie hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs, namelijk: een inclusieve leeromgeving, een inclusieve begeleiding en een inclusieve zorgstructuur. De concrete uitwerking van de twaalf kenmerken die aan de basis liggen van de hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs kan door scholen worden gebruikt als kwaliteitsindicatoren om hun onderwijs te ontwikkelen.

Uit het huidige onderzoek blijkt dat onderwijsprofessionals, ouders en leerlingen grote waarde hechten aan maatwerk programma's en begeleiding door leraren tijdens de lessen, vooral individueel. In verschillende studies (Inspectie van onderwijs, 2014, 2015, 2016; OCW, 2004) wordt echter een steeds terugkerende behoefte geconstateerd aan betere begeleiding van leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoefte door onderwijsprofessionals en aan meer maatwerkprogramma's voor leerlingen. Het is dus nodig dat in de initiële lerarenopleiding en post-initiële professionaliseringsactiviteiten een hoge prioriteit wordt toegekend aan deze twee belangrijke onderwijstopics (zie ook Onderwijsraad, 2016b).

Beperkingen van het onderzoek

In zijn algemeenheid is de verscheidenheid aan perspectieven op inclusief onderwijs een sterk aspect van het huidige onderzoek: vanuit het perspectief van zelfevaluatie, het perspectief van een geïntegreerde visie op schoolontwikkeling, het perspectief van onderwijsprofessionals, ouders en leerlingen en ook vanuit het perspectief van schooleffectiviteit. Deze verschillende perspectieven dragen bij aan de validiteit van de huidige bevindingen.

Het zelfevaluatie instrument was ontwikkeld voor praktische in plaats van wetenschappelijke doeleinden. Dit gebruik van het zelfevaluatie instrument vormde niet alleen de kracht maar hield ook een mogelijke beperking in. Het substantieel aantal respondenten, onderwijsprofessionals, ouders en leerlingen op scholen dat deelnam aan de zelfevaluatie leverde op schoolniveau krachtige resultaten op. Een mogelijke beperking is dat de database uit 2006 afkomstig is, hetgeen voor de invoering van de wet Passend Onderwijs is. Uit meer recente studies (Ainscow, et al., 2012; Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2014, 2015, 2016; Messiou et al., 2016; Waslander, 2011) blijkt weliswaar een lichte vooruitgang in de ontwikkeling van inclusief onderwijs, maar voor de meeste schoolleiders en onderwijsprofessionals betekent de uitvoering van inclusief onderwijs voldoen aan formele, wettelijke vereisten in plaats van inhoudelijk betrokkenheid (Onderwijsraad, 2016b).

De scholen die hebben deelgenomen aan het zelfevaluatie project deden dat op vrijwillige basis. De redenen om deel te nemen aan het project varieerden van dalende instroom van leerlingen en/of een lage beoordeling van de Inspectie tot en met de behoefte aan zelfreflectie en/of innovatie binnen de school. De steekproef van scholen aan het zelfevaluatie project was representatief qua geografische spreiding en schoolgrootte. Desondanks zal bij het generaliseren van de huidige uitkomsten naar andere scholen voorzichtigheid betracht moeten worden omdat het vrijwillige karakter van deelname aan het zelfevaluatie project leidt tot een divergente, unieke groep van scholen (Voncken & Schoonhoven, 2006).

Een laatste mogelijke beperking van het huidige onderzoek betreft het matchen van onderwijsprofessionals met de ouders en leerlingen. Een koppeling tussen de databestanden was alleen mogelijk op schoolniveau vanwege het feit dat het zelfevaluatie instrument was ontwikkeld om de kwaliteit van de leerlingenzorg op schoolniveau te evalueren. Daarom is bij het ontwerp van het zelfevaluatie instrument geen rekening gehouden met een koppeling tussen ouders en kinderen op individueel gezinsniveau. Het 'nesten' van data was in dit geval dus niet mogelijk.

Suggesties voor vervolgonderzoek

De dissertatie biedt verschillende mogelijkheden voor vervolgonderzoek. In de eerste plaats is meer onderzoek nodig om aan de inhoudelijke en procesmatige voorwaarden voor effectieve zelfevaluatie te voldoen, inclusief het gebruik van de instrumenten en in het bijzonder de 'fine-tuning' van het zelfevaluatie instrument om de kwaliteit van leerlingenzorg te toetsen mede in verband met de invoering van de wet Passend Onderwijs. Vervolgonderzoek zou eveneens meer inzicht kunnen verschaffen omtrent het verantwoordings- en toezichtsvraagstuk op schoolleiders- en bestuurlijk niveau (zie ook Hooge, et al., 2016) evenals de competenties ten aanzien van leidinggeven en verandermanagement die opportuun zijn bij de uitvoering van zelfevaluaties binnen scholen. Meer inzicht in het verloop van zelfevaluaties op scholen is nodig, niet alleen om een hoge onderwijskwaliteit te ontwikkelen en te handhaven maar ook om scholen op een zodanige wijze te equiperen dat zij als professionele leergemeenschap met behulp van de zelfevaluatiedata in staat zijn hun onderwijspraktijken en de begeleiding van leerlingen te verbeteren.

De betrouwbaarheid en validiteit van andere zelfevaluatie instrumenten voor scholen kunnen worden geoptimaliseerd op basis van de in deze studie gepresenteerde resultaten. Het zelfevaluatie instrument uit dit onderzoek kan eveneens worden uitgebreid met nieuwe schalen voor thema's die van belang zijn voor specifieke groepen of scholen of thema's die voortkomen uit nieuw onderzoek naar inclusief onderwijs. Het effectiviteitsmodel zoals dat in hoofdstuk 5 is gepresenteerd kan ook als basis dienen om nieuwe vragen toe te voegen aan het zelfevaluatie instrument voor leerlingenzorg.

Hoe scholen zelfevaluatie kunnen gebruiken voor externe verantwoordingsdoeleinden zonder daarbij de kracht van zelfevaluaties tekort te doen, namelijk eigenaarschap van de school en de vrijheid van de school om zelf keuzes te maken in de te evalueren thema's, is eveneens een aspect dat nader, diepgaand onderzoek vereist. Bovendien zou voor het huidige zelfevaluatie instrument 'nesting' beter gewaarborgd moeten worden om diepgaandere analyses mogelijk te maken. Dit kan bijvoorbeeld worden gerealiseerd door experts of onderzoekers meer te betrekken bij de voorbereiding van de zelfevaluatie. Ook de samenhang tussen de pogingen die scholen doen om inclusief onderwijs te realiseren en de resultaten van leerlingen kunnen dan grondiger worden bestudeerd. Vertrouwen in het belang van wetenschappelijk betrouwbare vergelijkingen van scholen is een noodzaak voor scholen om zich te committeren aan zelfevaluaties. Het huidige onderzoek draagt hopelijk bij aan dit vertrouwen.

Vervolgonderzoek gebaseerd op het in dit onderzoek ontwikkelde model met de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs is niet alleen van belang om dit model in zijn algemeenheid te valideren, maar ook om na te gaan in hoeverre de situatie in scholen is veranderd nu het beleid en de inclusieve onderwijspraktijken meer gemeengoed zijn geworden. Scholen kunnen het model gebruiken om hun eigen progressie ten aanzien

inclusief onderwijs te monitoren. Het ontwikkelde model maakt het voor scholen tevens mogelijk de mate van acceptatie en implementatie bij onderwijsprofessionals, ouders, leerlingen en stakeholders te onderzoeken. De mate van overeenstemming tussen opvattingen kan dan immers worden onderzocht. De resultaten van dergelijke vergelijkingen kunnen zo de basis vormen voor een breed draagvlak voor inclusief onderwijs.

Als onderdeel van de wet Passend Onderwijs zijn scholen verplicht hun visie op inclusief onderwijs uit te werken in een zogeheten 'ondersteuningsprofiel'. In vervolgonderzoek zou kunnen worden onderzocht in hoeverre deze ondersteuningsprofielen aansluiten op de opvattingen van onderwijsprofessionals. In het licht van het relatief beperkt aantal scholen dat onderdeel uitmaakte van dit onderzoek is het ook denkbaar een breder cohortonderzoek uit te voeren naar de effecten van passend onderwijs op de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen om zodoende het huidige model met de hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs te verfijnen.

Algemene conclusie

Alle vier de empirische studies die in deze dissertatie zijn gepresenteerd hebben gezamenlijk de centrale vraagstelling beantwoord, namelijk: *Wat zijn de hoofdkenmerken van inclusief voortgezet onderwijs en in hoeverre beïnvloeden deze kenmerken de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen?* Op grond van de resultaten van het onderzoek kan worden geconcludeerd dat een inclusieve leeromgeving, inclusieve begeleiding door leraren en een inclusieve zorgstructuur de hoofdkenmerken zijn van inclusief onderwijs. Begeleiding door een mentor en individuele begeleiding tijdens lessen worden het meest herkend en gewaardeerd door ouders en leerlingen. Uit het onderzoek blijkt eveneens dat op schoolniveau de begeleiding door leraren en de inclusieve zorgstructuur de schoolloopbanen van leerlingen positief beïnvloeden. Op basis van deze conclusies is het gerechtvaardigd te stellen dat niet alleen leerlingen met speciale onderwijsbehoeften maar alle leerlingen profiteren van de kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs. Dit is reden te meer om de implementatie van inclusief onderwijsbeleid voort te zetten. Verder kan worden geconcludeerd dat meer aandacht nodig is voor inclusieve onderwijspraktijken, in het bijzonder de wijze waarop onderwijsprofessionals de betrokkenheid van leerlingen in de leeromgeving vormgeven. Inclusief onderwijs is, blijkens de resultaten van het huidige onderzoek, een stap voorwaarts naar hogere onderwijskwaliteit en zal daarom breed en diep in de onderwijspraktijk verankerd moeten worden. Dit betekent meer aandacht voor inclusief onderwijs in de professionele ontwikkeling van leraren en in de schoolpraktijk.

Concluderend, een inclusieve schoolcultuur realiseren behelst meer dan alleen de implementatie van een visie, kenmerken van inclusief onderwijs, de vereiste organisatie en voldoende financiën. Het realiseren van een inclusieve schoolcultuur

betekent het stimuleren van een brede acceptatie van diversiteit en gelijkheid. Hopelijk levert deze dissertatie een bijdrage aan het realiseren van een inclusieve onderwijscultuur door onderwijsprofessionals en andere stakeholders aan te moedigen met behulp van zelfevaluaties de hoofdkenmerken van inclusief onderwijs in hun school te onderzoeken en daardoor bij te dragen aan de sociale en pedagogische kracht van het onderwijs en de samenleving.

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About the author

Teije van der Bij completed his PhD research on inclusion in secondary schools and 'Educational Fit', while working as a consultant education. Gathering science and practice, this research is the crowning achievement of his efforts in various educational innovations for more than 40 years as a teacher, school leader and educationalist.

Teije's journey in the education landscape started in 18 March 1952 when he was born in Kortezaag, a little rural village in the north of the Netherlands. After his study, he worked 8 years as teacher Dutch and social studies in secondary education, most of the time on an experimental comprehensive school (Middenschool) in Gorredijk. At this time, he worked also for the Dutch organisation for curriculum development (Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling) and was member of a study group for Dutch teachers in comprehensive schools. In 1981, he started as project manager of an experimental comprehensive school in Gorredijk and was appointed as member of the management team. From 1981 to 1994 he was board member and president of the cooperation of Dutch schools for comprehensive education and in this function, he had deliberations and negotiations with the ministry of Education and political parties. He was (co-)author of several publications and organised conferences about curriculum development and modulation, change management, school organisation and school development, and social diversity. In 1996, he graduated as master Educational Sciences at the University of Groningen.

Currently Teije works twenty years as a consultant education at the University of Applied Science NHL in Groningen with innovation, school development, change management, school self-evaluation and quality care as most important areas of activity, mainly in secondary education. In the beginning of this age he initiated and guided for six years a network of eight homework free schools. From 2004 till 2008 he was member of the national project 'Quality of student care in secondary education'. One of the core activities of this project was the implementation of the instrument 'self-evaluation student care' in schools. Alongside he is primarily focused on school self-evaluation, an orienting study on 21st century skills in Practical Education at the University of Applied Science NHL in Groningen and the guidance of students of the Master Educational Needs in their practice-based research and lecturer of the Master Educational Needs at the University of Applied Science Stenden in Leeuwarden.

Contributions of the author and co-authors to the papers in this dissertation

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 is based on the article:

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Contributions

Teije van der Bij is the first author of this paper. Femke Geijsel and Geert ten Dam were the supervisors of Teije van der Bij. The authors collaboratively conceptualised and designed the study. As a form of audit, they discussed all the steps in the process of analysis and its outcomes. The supervisors contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the selected literature, and reviewed and revised the manuscript.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is based on the article:

Van der Bij, T., Geijsel, F. P., Garst, G. J. A., & Ten Dam, G. T. M. (2016). Modelling inclusive special needs education: insights from Dutch secondary schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 31*(2), 220-235.

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Contributions

Teije van der Bij is the first author of this paper. Femke Geijsel and Geert ten Dam were the supervisors of Teije van der Bij. Femke Geijsel and Harry Garst contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data on which the study is based. The authors collaboratively conceptualised and designed the study. As a form of audit, they discussed all the steps in the process of analysis and its outcomes. The supervisors reviewed and revised the manuscript.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 is based on the submitted article:

Van der Bij, T., Ten Dam, G. T. M., Oort, F. J., & Geijsel, F. P. (submitted). Quality of inclusive educational practice in the experience of parents and secondary school students.

Contributions

Teije van der Bij is the first author of this paper. Femke Geijssel and Geert ten Dam were the supervisors of Teije van der Bij. Femke Geijssel and Frans Oort contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data on which the study is based. The authors collaboratively conceptualised and designed the study. As a form of audit, they discussed all the steps in the process of analysis and its outcomes. The supervisors reviewed and revised the manuscript.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 is based on the submitted article:

Van der Bij, T., Ten Dam, G. T. M., Boei, F., & Geijssel, F. P. (submitted). The effects of inclusive education on the school careers of students in secondary education.

Contributions

Teije van der Bij is the first author of this paper. Femke Geijssel and Geert ten Dam were the supervisors of Teije van der Bij. Femke Geijssel and Fer Boei contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data on which the study is based. The authors collaboratively conceptualised and designed the study. As a form of audit, they discussed all the steps in the process of analysis and its outcomes. The supervisors reviewed and revised the manuscript.

Dankwoord

Een reis van 10.000 mijl begint met de eerste stap (Lao Tzu, 604-531 v.Chr.). Toen ik de allereerste stap voor dit onderzoek zette, wist ik in grote lijnen het doel van de reis, maar hoe die reis zou verlopen en wat mij te wachten stond, was natuurlijk nog onduidelijk. Mijn drive om aan dit onderzoek te beginnen was de vraag hoe onderwijs recht kan doen aan verschillen tussen leerlingen, ook de leerlingen met extra onderwijsbehoeften. Voor mij is de menselijke maat van de onderwijsprofessionals en de leerlingen daarbij het belangrijkste referentiekader. Onderwijs dat deze verschillen als uitgangspunt voor leren neemt, stimuleert onderwijsprofessionals om innovatief en kwalitatief goed onderwijs te bieden, draagt bij aan de persoonlijke ontwikkeling van leerlingen en bereidt hen voor op het omgaan met diversiteit in de samenleving.

Het werken aan deze dissertatie bood mij de gelegenheid dit thema diepgaander te onderzoeken. De vraag stellen wat goed onderwijs is voor *alle* leerlingen roept vele vragen op met minstens zoveel antwoorden. Gelukkig hebben mijn beide promotoren Femke Geijssel en Geert ten Dam mij ontzettend ondersteund om kritisch naar mijn onderzoeksvraag te blijven kijken, de grote lijn vast te houden, maar ook op de moeilijke momenten het vertrouwen te geven om door te gaan. Hoewel ik steeds het gevoel heb gehad dat we als team samenwerkten, was Geert vooral degene die mij heeft geleerd kritisch naar mijn onderzoeksvragen en de teksten te kijken. Van Femke leerde ik mijn onderzoek nauwkeurig te verantwoorden en te beschrijven. Beste Geert en Femke, ik kon altijd op de meest uiteenlopende momenten een beroep op jullie doen en daarvoor ben ik jullie buitengewoon dankbaar.

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Deze dissertatie zie ik als het hoogtepunt van mijn onderwijscarrière, maar het is eveneens het officiële einde. Stoppen op het hoogtepunt van je carrière komt vaker in topsport voor. Mijn betrokkenheid bij onderwijs is altijd sterk geweest. De komende maanden zal blijken in hoeverre ik het onderwijs los kan laten.

In his dissertation *'Inclusive education in the Netherlands: characteristics and effects'*, Teije van der Bij presents a conceptual model of the characteristics of inclusive education. The model is constructed with the use of the self-evaluation data of educational professionals of Dutch secondary schools. Besides educational professionals also the perceptions of parents and students of inclusive education were investigated in this research. The study of the effects of inclusive education showed that not only students with special needs but *all* types of students benefit from an inclusion learning environment.

