

Monitoring ethnic minorities in the Netherlands

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Article 1 of the new Dutch Constitution adopted in 1983 reads as follows: 'All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in all circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race, or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted.' Symbolically the fact that the commitment to equality is the first written down in the basic law of the Netherlands marks an attachment to the fight against discrimination. Dutch nationhood has been built on the recognition of diversity in society.

Historically, there have been several 'pillars' in Dutch society reflecting religious pluralism: a Protestant pillar, a Catholic pillar and a non-denominational or lay pillar. Peaceful coexistence among various groups in society rested upon their equal access to societal and political institutions (equal opportunities) and the 'emancipation' of all segments of society so that there would not be groups with a lower social position (equality in outcomes).

In 1983, along with the Constitution, the policy on ethnic minorities also saw the light (*Minderhedennota*, 1983). In effect it extended 'pillarisation' (*verzuiling*) and the Dutch commitment to equality to new groups considered to be 'socially disadvantaged': postcolonial migrants

such as Surinamese, Moluccans, and Antilleans, former guest-workers such as Turks and Moroccans and other groups including asylum-seekers and caravan dwellers. In 1998, a policy aimed at bettering the position of minorities in the sphere of employment was targeted at minorities (SAMEN Wet or Act for the Stimulation of Labour Market Participation).

Discrimination based on ethnic and racial origin is not the only form of discrimination that

Dutch laws have sought to prohibit. The 1994 Equal Treatment Act created an Equal Treatment Commission to examine cases of direct and indirect discrimination in employment, education and the provision of goods and services on the basis of ethnic and racial origin, nationality, religion, belief, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, marital status (and working hours in employment).

Racial and ethnic discrimination is discussed mainly with respect to immigrant communities that have settled in the post-war period (post-colonial

migrants and guest-workers as well as their families). This is clearly reflected in the decision to classify persons as members of an 'ethnic minority' according to their country of birth and the country of birth of their parents as it features

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in municipal registers, instead of using self-classification in censuses.

First, we recount the history of ethnic minority policy in the Netherlands and the development of the 'ethnic minority' and 'allochthonous' categories. This leads us to examine the use of statistics in public policy, and we focus more specifically on the case of education. Finally, we briefly examine current debates regarding the situation of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands.

The genesis and evolution of Dutch minority policy

Until the late 1970s, the Netherlands were a reluctant country of immigration and, in fact, had a negative migratory balance until 1961 as many Dutch left to settle abroad. After the Second World War, the main incoming flows first concerned about 300,000 citizens from Indonesia of European descent and mixed origin that came after independence in 1949. Starting a bit later than other European countries in the 1960s and 1970s, the Netherlands recruited unskilled workers from countries around the Mediterranean (southern Europe, Turkey, Morocco). Later, their families came to join them (family reunification or family formation). Since the 1970s, there has also been migration between Dutch overseas territories and the Netherlands, mainly from Surinam, which became independent in 1975, and the Dutch Antilles (Curaçao and other islands) and Aruba. Nearly all migrants in the latter categories have Dutch citizenship.¹

The 1979 Report

By the end of the 1970s, a number of factors had convinced political elites that the benign neglect of immigrant communities justified by the official stance that the Netherlands was not an immigration country was wrong-headed. It became clear that immigrants were there to stay and that, as the economy worsened and industry was restructured, they were not faring well. There were also signs of inter-ethnic tensions and some violent incidents (the hijacking of trains by Moluccan youths, arson attacks on Turkish dwellings). In 1979, the Scientific

Council for Government Policy (WRR) issued a report on the subject. It recommended that the fiction of temporary migration be abandoned and that an integration policy be developed that would promote the participation of immigrants in social and economic life and good inter-ethnic relations with a focus on equal opportunity and the fight against discrimination.

The 1980 government draft policy on minorities resembled the WRR report with regard to the policy proposals that it contained. There was a political will to do something about the situation of immigrants but little expertise in this area so the few scholars that worked on the topic had an opportunity from the late 1970s through part of the 1980s to have a real impact on the input side of policy.²

The 1983 Minority Policy

According to official policy as approved by Parliament, minority policy applies to those immigrant groups 'for whose presence the government feels a special responsibility (because of the colonial past or because they have been recruited by the authorities), and who find themselves in a minority situation' (*Minderhedennota* 1983, p. 12). The definition refers mainly to post-colonial migrants and guest workers if and only if their social situation is worse than that of native Dutch. Minorities are thus not defined by their status (national vs. foreigner) nor by their race or colour but instead by their social position and by the responsibility that the Dutch state feels towards them. This is important to keep in mind to the extent that the original list made in 1983 could change but only if new groups fulfil the conditions. Chinese community leaders have recently expressed the wish to be recognised as minorities, but have not been considered to qualify as such.

Ethnic minorities were listed in 1983 to include: Surinamese, Antilleans and Arubans, Moluccans, Turks, Moroccans, Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Greeks, Yugoslavs, Tunisians, Cape Verdians, Roma/Sinti and caravan dwellers (an indigenous semi-nomadic group). They comprised about 450,000 people at the time.

The 1983 Minority Policy formulated three main goals:

- promoting equality before the *law*;
- promoting *multiculturalism* and the emancipation of ethnic communities;
- improving the *social and economic situation* of minorities.

In brief, the policy targeted specific groups yet sought to have a comprehensive approach to their ‘emancipation’ (their attaining equality with other groups) that could encompass cultural, legal, economic, and social aspects.

The definitive statement of Dutch minority policy stated among its goals that of ‘preventing discrimination and fighting it wherever it occurs, and also improving legal provisions when necessary.’ (*Minderhedennota* 1983, p. 10). A report, known as the ‘phone book’ for its length, was commissioned that year to investigate legal discrimination. It combed Dutch law and found 1300 such instances of legal discrimination, many of which have since disappeared (Beune & Hessels 1983).

The new policy also included the definition of ethnic minorities (*Minderhedennota* 1983). To understand the ‘philosophy’ of ethnic minority policy and the way it relates to anti-discrimination measures and ethnic monitoring, it is crucial to note that ethnicity and social class are closely linked. In order to ‘qualify’ as an ethnic minority, an (ethnic) group must suffer socio-economic disadvantage. As a consequence, monitoring is necessary to establish the socio-economic position of such group and to target policies that seek to achieve social equality.

The indication of target groups for integration policy is now effected by memoranda that are subjected to parliamentary debate (Outline Policy Memorandum, Kamerstukken II [Parliamentary Papers of the Second Chamber] 1993/94, 23 684, no. 1). It is recommended that changes in the description of the integration policy target groups be explicitly subjected to parliamentary evaluation. A proposal to change should be made public two months before it is introduced to the States General. This opens the possibility for parliamentary and public discussion. As the inclusion of refugees and caravan dwellers indicates, minority policy can extend beyond ethnically defined groups.

Except for caravan dwellers, the remaining groups were immigrant groups. In the absence of a census that could have offered the possibility

of self-definition, counting minorities relied on municipal registers that identified minorities on the basis of their country of birth and that of their parents. This pragmatic solution can be explained by the fact that the idea was that one had to go beyond citizenship/nationality as a means of identifying minorities since post-colonial minorities from Surinam or the Antilles were Dutch citizens. Since most of the people concerned in the early 1980s were first and second generation migrants, there was no reason at the time to resort to a category not linked to migration.

Dutch minority policy has been formally discontinued but the categories targeted by minority policies have not drastically changed since the early 1980s. Most studies focus on the four largest migrant-origin groups showing socio-economic disadvantage. Although the way they are identified (their country of birth and that of their parents) means that they will be soon hard to track in databases, the categories are stable and are not contested. Statisticians who want to conduct longitudinal studies but also NGOs and other political bodies support the existing categorisation.

The 1989 Immigrant Policy report: a shift in terminology and approach

Yet, what has changed is the goal of policy and the terminology used in political and policy discourse. Only a few years after the adoption of minority policy, a new report by the WRR, with the title, *Allochtonenbeleid* (WRR, 1989) suggested that too much emphasis had been put on multiculturalism and not enough had been done to improve the socio-economic situation of immigrant minorities. This is when the idea of a law to register the number of minority people in firms was raised. Instead of ‘ethnic minorities’, the report spoke of ‘*allochtonen*’, people of non-Dutch (‘allochthonous’, by analogy with autochthonous) origin. The change in terminology suggested that those who had hitherto been treated as ‘minorities’ were first and foremost from a different background, language and culture than the Dutch and that this was a primary reason for the difficulties that they faced. The emphasis of policy should thus be to help them ‘integrate’ within that culture rather than continue to nourish separateness in the name of multiculturalism.

In practice however, the category used to identify 'allochthones' was the same as that for ethnic minorities: country of birth and parents' country of birth. The idea was to produce a measurement tool that could be available from the population register and would be applicable to as many minority groups as possible, including minorities having Dutch nationality and/or being born in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, the category 'allochthones' did not distinguish foreign-origin populations with socio-economic difficulties from those that fared better in society. The statistics bureau thus subdivided allochthones in their aggregate tables depending on their country of origin. It contrasted Western with non-Western allochthones and native Dutch persons. In the subdivision between 'Western' and 'non-Western', the unfavourable socio-economic position of the grouping in the Netherlands has been a major consideration. Thus, as a result of using socio-economic status criteria, Indonesians, like Japanese persons, were classified as Western allochthones.

The SAMEN Act. Fighting discrimination in the labour market

One area of policy innovation has been the adoption of instruments to render effective the goal of socio-economic equality. The 1980s had seen many reforms that focused on equality before the law for foreign minorities rather than proactive policies to ensure socio-economic equality. At the beginning of the 1990s, the government and other social actors felt that the participation of minorities in the labour market should be increased, because they were lagging behind in this field. Once again, the policy advisors of the government think-tank WRR played an important role. In their previously quoted report *Allochtonenbeleid*, the advisors underlined that too many non-natives were unemployed. With respect to work, they took direct inspiration from the example of the Canadian Equity Act. They wanted a law that would provide public contracts to employers that hired immigrant workers (WRR 1989).

During the 1990s, issues linked to immigration and asylum, Islam and the position of ethnic

minorities came to the forefront of political debate and the media paid more attention than in the 1980s. Concomitantly, the economic situation improved with lower unemployment and higher growth. Ethnic minorities benefited to some extent from this improved context and from some targeted policies. Still, in the political sphere, parties such as the liberal right-wing VVD of Frits Bolkestein and other voices criticised minority policy and considered that minorities were 'welfare abusers'.

In 1994, the *Wet bevordering evenredige arbeidskansen voor allochtonen* (Act on the Promotion of Proportional Labor Market Opportunities for Allochthones) came into effect. The aims of the Act were to improve the position of minorities in the labour market and combat factors such as discrimination.

The crux of the Act was that employers had to register the number of members of minority groups in their service and formulate policies to increase minority representation on their payroll and to stabilise minority employment.³ The law was evaluated in 1996: the conclusion drawn was that the Act was an administrative hassle with few results. Companies complained about the complexity and volume of procedures and administrative requirements (*Jaaroverzicht Minderhedenbeleid*, 1998, p. 30). On the other hand, complaints were raised about poor monitoring and enforcement of the law. Therefore, the Act was adapted and changed.

The successor SAMEN Act (Act for Stimulation of Labour Market Participation) was introduced on 1 January 1998. This Act was meant to support enterprises in the implementation of a multicultural employment policy. In 2001, the act was prolonged, but in 2003 it was decided to end its implementation as of 1 January 2004. Although the Act obliged employers with more than 35 staff to register ethnicity and produce a yearly report, the employers could also refuse to register ethnicity, without the need to further motivate their refusal.⁴ Interest groups could sue the employer, after first lodging an appeal with the employer against the refusal.

According to the SAMEN Act, a proportional representation of ethnic minorities was achieved when an enterprise had as many employees from a target group as were represented in the *regional* working population.

Qualifications and skills were also taken into account. The government listed percentages that should finally be reached for each region. The entrepreneur registered those who belong to the minorities. A public annual report showed the number of persons from the target groups and the measures for the coming year to reach a better proportional representation of minorities. In practice, the Act worked better than its predecessor.

At first, about one-third of employers lodged an annual report and reports were often not up to standard. In particular, many employers did not refer to the correct proportional percentages. Many employers in the beginning were reluctant about the SAMEN Act, but this resistance is said to have declined over recent years thanks to control mechanisms and lobbying. The Act was not just an administrative measure. It was meant to put the position of ethnic minorities in the labour market on the agenda. Registration made it possible to identify whether proportionate labour participation of ethnic minorities was effected within the enterprise. Difficulties in human resource policies could thus be acknowledged.

The national employment service (*Arbeidsvoorziening*) was actively involved in the implementation of the SAMEN Law with fifty company advisors and a national facilitator on ethnic minorities (the advisors are known as BAMs or '*Bedrijfsadviseurs minderheden*'). Moreover, the national employment service aims for proportional placement of ethnic minorities in so-called 'labour market trajectories/itineraries' (*trajecten*), which were developed for people with major employability problems. Although the number of placements in such trajectories increased, the placement rate for job seekers from ethnic minorities was still lower than that for their native Dutch counterparts (*Jaaroverzicht Minderhedenbeleid* 1998, p. 31). Similarly, the Dutch social partners have concluded agreements on ethnic minorities entitled *Met minderheden meer mogelijkheden* (More possibilities with minorities) in 1990, in 1997, and in 2000. In the agreement, the social partners at the central level advised the collective bargaining partners (sector level) to agree on certain initiatives and also showed individual companies how to derive their own target figures from these.

The evaluation report published by the government in September 2003 claimed that the aim of this Act, which had a temporary character, was to raise awareness among employers, and that this aim had been reached. Subsequent abrogation was also part of the government's aim to reduce administrative burdens for employers. NGOs oppose the abrogation of the SAMEN Act. According to the LBR (National Bureau against Racial Discrimination) the aims of the Act have not yet been reached. LBR opposes the decision to abrogate 'the only legal instrument which supervises the stimulation of access and mobility of ethnic minorities in the Dutch labour market' (de Fey *et al.* 2004, p. 211). Unemployment is still disproportionately high among ethnic minorities when compared with native Dutch. In addition, during the years 1999–2003, 70% of employers had actually met the requirement to hand in a report of the registered data following the SAMEN Act. According to LBR this indicates that there is support among employers for compliance with the law. The LBR has no confidence in the voluntary registration by employers proposed by the government, nor in the proposed establishment of a 'National Centre for Diversity Management', which is not considered a real alternative to legal requirements. The LBR has expressed bitterness that the government should have abrogated the Act, whereas in its 15th and 16th reports to the CERD (1998–2002), it had mentioned that the Act was extremely effective. Moreover, for the Equal Treatment Commission and the judge statistical data are important to provide evidence of indirect discrimination. Therefore, in this view, continuing registration of employees' ethnic origin and sex is important. In its 2003 report about minorities, the Social Cultural Planning Office (SCP) claimed that, in view of rising unemployment, measures specifically targeted at minorities were necessary.

Ethnic categorisation and monitoring

Regarding the monitoring of the socio-economic situation of the groups concerned by the legislation on anti-discrimination, the Dutch

case is singular. There has been no census conducted by interviewing the total population in the Netherlands since 1971. Statistics Netherlands produces the census data from municipal registers, partly in combination with sample survey data. There is an extensive amount of data available through automated municipal population registers (GBA) and other databases that can be linked together.⁵ Moreover, there is a plethora of 'monitors' and social science studies tracking ethnic groups.

CBS data from the municipal registers. Monitoring without self-classification in censuses

The last census based on interviewing the total population in the Netherlands took place in 1971. It used to be conducted every ten years. In the 1970s, there was a discussion on the census. First, some argued that people felt an invasion of their private lives and that the census questions violated their right to privacy. Left-wing critics threatened to boycott the census interviews. Second, there was a suspicion surrounding censuses because of the use of personal data during the Second World War to track down Jewish populations and send them to concentration camps. It was said, for instance, that Amsterdam had been the city where the largest number of Jews had been arrested because population registers had been extensive and well kept. In any case, the planned 1981 census never took place. Statistics Netherlands prepared the decision, which was then approved by Parliament. Statistics Netherlands believed that it would not have been reliable because of high non-response figures already evidenced in other surveys and two small-scale census pilots. It was not worth the enormous cost of conducting a survey of the whole population, while cheaper ways of getting the census data were available through the registers.

Instead, Dutch population and household statistics are based, as in Sweden and Norway, on municipal population registers – known as the GBA system (*Gemeentelijke Basis Administratie persoonsgegevens* or municipal basic registration of population data) – that have been fully automated since 1994. It is no small irony that, although the census was abolished to

protect the privacy of individuals, the system that replaced the interviews with the total population contains many pieces of information that can be linked to other databases. As Dutch statisticians and social scientists interviewed by the authors underlined, the system has the potential, much more than the census ever did, to resemble Big Brother in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In the absence of a census, there is therefore no nation-wide survey with questions on race and ethnicity. It should be underlined that there is no question on religion in the registers.

The word 'basic' in the title of the automated municipal population registers refers to their nature as population registers within a system of local registers: the local registers on social security, on water and electricity supply, the local registers of the police departments dealing with the foreign population in the Netherlands and the national registers for old age pensions. The GBA system introduced in 1994 replaced the paper card system of population registers. The GBA is a decentralised and comprehensive system. Due to legal provisions, there is no central counterpart of these municipal registers. Every municipality in the Netherlands has its own population register containing information on all inhabitants. The information is listed per individual in a 'personal list'. In the registration system each inhabitant has been given a unique personal identification number (PIN). This PIN enables the authorities to link a person's data to those of his/her spouse, parents and offspring since their PIN is included in the personal file. This allows the construction of data on the nuclear family and on households. Among the data in the file, there are personal data, along with data about parents and offspring.

CBS (the Central Bureau of Statistics) makes the data available for monitoring purposes to government institutes and ministries. For example, the last SCP Minorities Report (Dagevos, Gijsberts & van Praag, 2003) analyses administrative data (along with general and special survey data) on the educational and labour market attainment of immigrants and their children by ethnic origin, using the CBS category of 'non-Western allochthones'. This category is separated out into Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean origin groups (as target groups of the former ethnic minorities

policies) and a residual category of 'other non-Western allochthones'. This residual category, which has been available since 1994, refers mostly to relatively recent asylum seekers. Examples of relevant general administrative data sources that have been analyzed by ethnic origin are the registration of employees and employers, of students who enter and leave school, and of those who take and pass their final exams. In addition, specific policies in the areas of education, employment and access to social provisions often come with their own ethnic registration and categorisation systems with a view to evaluating policy implementation and outcomes.

CBS makes frequent use of the general 'ethnic' category of 'non-Western allochthones' which includes immigrants from less developed countries (LDC) and their children, and excludes North America and Western Europe. Reflecting the ethnic diversification of new immigration and a decreased emphasis on ethnic categories as target groups for special policies, the CBS category broadens the scope beyond the four ethnic minorities that were targeted by the former ethnic minorities policies. Still, by focusing on immigration from LDCs, some notion of 'collective disadvantage' attached to 'cultural difference' – which was a prerequisite to qualify as an 'ethnic minority' under the former policies – is retained in the general CBS category. Lastly, it is noteworthy that children of mixed parentage are usually included in the 'non-Western' category if one parent is of non-Western origin.

The SPVA surveys on minorities

The main primary data source on ethnic disadvantage in the Netherlands are the periodical SPVA surveys (*Sociale Positie en Voorzieningsgebruik Allochtonen*). These are special minority surveys with a focus on education and the labour market, which have been repeated at four or five year intervals since the late 1980s. The SPVA data inform regular reports on the position of ethnic minorities to the Dutch parliament, as well as many more specific research reports and publications on ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. Data from previous waves are in the public domain and hence freely available for academic research.

The SPVA surveys are concerned with socio-economic disadvantage and with equal

access to social provisions for the four major minority groups by ethnic origin (i.e., Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean origin groups according to the formal definition of ethnic minorities by the Ministry of Interior based on the country of birth of at least one parent) as compared with a Dutch origin reference sample. The main focus since 1988 has been on educational and occupational attainment, along with special questions on migration histories and settlement, language mastery and family formation, which are not usually available from general surveys. In addition, the latest 1998 and 2002 surveys include an extensive list of attitudinal questions about cultural values (e.g., gender roles and child rearing), religion, social networks, associational life, ethnic self-identification, perceived prejudice, and discrimination. These extensions reflect a growing political concern with the socio-cultural integration and acceptance (versus ethnic segregation) of immigrants and their descendants in Dutch society. Interestingly, the attitudinal questions aimed at measuring immigrant integration are situated almost exclusively in the private and communal life spheres. They do not cover aspects of full democratic citizenship in the public domain, such as media use, public opinion and political participation.

Random samples of households are drawn from the commune/municipal registers (N = 4.004 in 1988, N = 4.030 in 1991, N = 4.096 in 1994, N = 7.553 in 1998 and N = 4.199 in 2002). Respondents are approached for personal interviewing with multilingual questionnaires by trained co-ethnic interviewers. Reported response rates vary between ethnic groups and communes/municipalities and the overall response rates have declined over the years from 50 to 79% in 1988 down to 44 to 52% in 2002. In order to correct for selective non-response, the SPVA 2002 data have been weighted to reflect the population distributions by gender, age and migration generation within ethnic origin groups (based on the commune registers). In the last two surveys, the samples have been extended to cover not only the metropolitan area (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht) but also a number of middle-sized communes with significant numbers of ethnic minorities.

Within households, the so-called 'head of the household' is interviewed and core information is gathered about other household members, including children. In addition, a shortened version of the main questionnaire for heads of households is also presented to one other adult member of the household (age 15–65). Typically, most statistics on the socio-economic attainment of minorities based on SPVA use only data from (predominantly male) heads of households. But even when other adult respondents are included, SPVA data are not fully representative of the female population, which is selectively under-represented, in particular Turkish and Moroccan women. Unfortunately, this feature of the sampling design limits the usefulness of SPVA for the purpose of monitoring the equal access of women from ethnic minorities to education and to the labour market.

Monitoring for policy purposes: the case of education

The availability of detailed information on the school careers of Dutch children and youth by ethnic origin groups enables researchers and policy makers to keep track of educational disadvantages and risks attached to ethnic minority status. Still, these same statistics chart the massive educational progress that has been made by the so-called second generation over the last decades – thus correcting persistent negative public images of ethnically segregated schools and underachieving ethnic youth. Special educational policies are directly informed by major surveys such as SPVA, PRIMA, and VOCL, analysing school careers as a function of ethnic and social class origins.

Tracking disadvantage in schools

Data on cohorts of students have been collected since 1965 and for non-Western allochthones since 1989, and CBS is now seeking to determine whether it can produce data on allochthones in earlier cohorts (i.e., the 1977 cohort). The students are followed through their educational career including tertiary education until they gain access to the labour market. Two major

data sources complement largely retrospective data on ethnic minority school careers from special SPVA-surveys: PRIMA and VOCL. Both cohort studies are complementary to the SPVA surveys for several reasons: they relate ethnic origin and socio-economic background of the parents to standardised measures of school achievement; they include a sizeable category of 'other non-Western allochthones' in addition to the four major minority groups; and they allow for dual comparisons with disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children and youth of Dutch origin, using parental education as an indicator of social disadvantage (Gijsberts, 2003).

PRIMA (*Landelijk cohortonderzoek primair en speciaal onderwijs*) extends the 1988–1992 evaluation studies under the heading of LEO (*Landelijke Evaluatie Onderwijsvoorrrangsbeleid*) which were set up to evaluate national educational priority policies for students from socially disadvantaged and/or ethnic minority families since 1986. Every other academic year student samples in group 2, 4, 6 and 8 of primary education have participated in PRIMA 1994–5, 1996–7, 1998–9 and 2000–1. Data collection is based on representative clustered samples of students in primary schools (close to 700 schools). Schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students are over-sampled (about 200 schools). Disadvantaged students are defined by educational priority policies as students of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese or Antillean origin and/or students whose parents have only lower secondary qualifications or less. In total about 57,000 primary school pupils participate in each round. Paper-and-pencil questionnaires are filled out by all pupils in class. In addition, background and context data are gathered from parents, teachers, and school directors. Student, parent and school questionnaire forms are combined with standardised test scores measuring educational progress in mathematics and Dutch at the end of primary school. The exam scores, together with the judgement of the school director taking into account motivation, effort, and capabilities, are at the basis of a final and binding school advice. On the basis of their school advice, children are oriented towards vocational streams or general streams leading to higher education within the Dutch school system.

Similarly, VOCL (*Voortgezet Onderwijs Cohort Leerlingen*) was set up in 1993 with a view to follow up students through secondary education. The aim of the VOCL research is to relate educational choices, progress and achievement in secondary schools to the school advice and the initial academic performance of students in year 1 and 2, their family background (ethnic and social class origins and educational support at home) and the school context (ethnic and socio-economic composition and school effectiveness). The first VOCL 1993 panel study has followed over 20,000 students, adding yearly updates on their school career and performance levels. In parallel, the second VOCL 1999 panel study has followed over 19,000 students up to year 3 of secondary school. The clustered sample of schools represents all secondary schools in the Netherlands. Students fill out paper-and-pencil questionnaires in class, as well as standardised tests measuring their educational progress and attainment. Due to large numbers, the school careers of male and female students in the CBS category of 'non-Western allochthones' (Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean, and other) can be analysed and compared with the careers of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged male and female students of Dutch origin.

Overall, children in the category of 'non-Western allochthones' start their school careers with significant educational disadvantage, in particular in language-related domains (Gijsberts, 2003). Within this broad category, children of Surinamese parents and from mixed marriages with a Dutch partner are less disadvantaged: their performance is on a par with that of Dutch pupils who are socially disadvantaged (i.e., whose parents have only lower secondary qualifications or less). Conversely, Turkish, Moroccan and Antillean children are doing worse. Lastly, within the residual category of 'other non-Western allochthones', initial disadvantage is most pronounced for children from non-Western countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq (Mulder & Uerz 2002).

Since primary schools with large numbers of socially disadvantaged and ethnic minority pupils receive additional funds as part of educational priority policies, a key question is to what extent children from ethnic minorities are indeed enabled to catch up with their native

Dutch peers. Although ethnic minority pupils are still at a disadvantage at the end of primary school, especially on language tests, they are also found to make more rapid progress than their Dutch classmates. As a consequence, the 'ethnic' achievement gap is much reduced at the end of primary school. Moreover, when ethnic comparisons are controlled for parental education as an indicator of social class origin, differences in mathematics scores are fully accounted for, but not ethnic differences in language scores. On the other hand, the ethnic composition of schools has little impact on the achievement of ethnic minority pupils and this (slightly negative) impact is even smaller towards the end of primary education. Finally, trend analysis across PRIMA cohorts shows that primary schools were more effective in closing the ethnic gap in 2002 than they were in the mid 1990s, and this is most true for schools with large numbers of ethnic minority pupils (Gijsberts 2003). This positive trend suggests that educational priority policies have enabled an institutional learning process so that, over time, schools are developing more effective strategies to cope with language and learning problems in multi-ethnic classrooms. In fact, the generous funding and the specific expertise of primary schools with large numbers of ethnic minority pupils may be (part of) the reason why ethnic segregation per se has little or no negative impact on the school performance of minority children in the Netherlands.

The earliest and hence most decisive branching point in the Dutch school system is the official school advice at the end of primary school. Comparing the proportions of children who receive a positive assessment for higher education (hbo+) across ethnic categories, they vary from 10–20% of the ethnic minority children, over 20% of the socially disadvantaged Dutch children, to 20–30% of 'other non-Western allochthones', and up to 40–50% of the large majority of Dutch children in the non-disadvantaged category. At the end of the 1980s and up to the mid 1990s, ethnic minority children were receiving more positive school assessments than Dutch children with similar test scores, the main reason for this (most probably unintended) positive discrimination being a tendency among school teachers to discount the (generally poor) language scores of

minority children (Tesser & Iedema 2001). Since the late 1990s, however, this tendency has no longer been in evidence (Gijsberts 2003). One controversial issue is whether 'objective' test scores should prevail over the 'subjective' judgement of school teachers. In light of the often doubtful predictive validity of test scores for ethnic minorities (Bleichrodt & van de Vijver 2001), teachers may be well advised to give ethnic minority pupils 'the benefit of the doubt'.

After two years of secondary education, however, ethnic minority students again experience more upward mobility and rather less downward mobility than students of Dutch origin with the same school assessment (Herweijer 2003). Even in the absence of a 'positively biased' school assessment, secondary school teachers seem more reluctant to refer ethnic minority students with poor results to lower streams – as shown by the ethnic monitoring of critical transitions in minority school careers in secondary school (Herweijer 2003). The majority of the ethnic minority students in higher streams move steadily upward, pass their final exams, and move on to higher education. The downside is that minority students more often fail their exams than their classmates of Dutch origin. Moreover, ethnic minority students who fail run higher risks of dropping out. Thus the Dutch tracking system does not adequately protect minority students from the risk of school dropout.

Using data on minorities to remedy disadvantage: the weighting system

As ethnic and social class origins overlap greatly, the relative importance of ethnicity versus social class in explaining (and remedying) 'ethnic' educational disadvantage has been a matter of debate. Although this debate has never been settled, policies since the late 1990s have tended to de-emphasise ethnic difference and discrimination, referring to general social disadvantage rather than ethnic origin. This ambivalence is reflected in the national weighting system (*Gewichtenregeling*), which has been used since 1986 to allocate most of the funding under the heading of educational priority policies. According to this system pupils of Dutch origin who qualify as socially disadvantaged (i.e., whose parents have lower secondary qualifications or

less) are weighted 1.25; pupils with an ethnic minority background *and* whose parents have low qualifications are weighted 1.9; moreover, to qualify for funding through the weighting system, schools must have 9% or more disadvantaged pupils (weights 1.25 or 1.9). In 2003 about one in four pupils was weighted as disadvantaged (Bronnenman-Helmers & Turkenburg 2003). The legitimacy of the weighting system is controversial. The main issues are: how accurately the weights represent disadvantage in different social and ethnic groups; whether the funding attached to the weights is used effectively to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all; and whether the correction of social disadvantage should be abandoned in favour of an individualised approach to learning problems. Taking the latter approach, the current government has announced the replacement of the weighting system by individual tests at the start of primary school.

Most policy efforts to increase educational opportunities for ethnic minority children focus on primary education. In general, policy targets are premised on the normative principle of proportional representation and negotiated at the national level (e.g., +4% ethnic minorities in secondary streams leading to higher education by 2006). Since 1998, however, educational policies have been mostly decentralised to the communes and schools under the general heading of local educational disadvantage policies (GOA). National directives leave much room for local variation in the implementation of policies and the measurement of policy outcomes.

At the primary level, most funding (e.g., 268 million Euro in 2003) is allocated through the weighting system, which is complemented by educational support policies providing special funding for schools with large numbers of socially disadvantaged pupils that submit a plan to improve the instructional quality. While the weighting system is limited to primary education, special policies at the pre-school level are in fact derived from it. They are aimed at increasing the pre-school participation of ethnic minority children, who would have a weight greater than 1 according to the weight system. With a view to reducing the initial educational disadvantage of ethnic minority children, special stimulation programmes are offered to enhance their language competence and to prepare them

for primary school. At the secondary level, so-called 'cumi' students (or students from 'cultural minorities') are defined by ethnic origin and length of stay. In 2003 cumi status was attributed to 8.5% of all students in secondary schools. Most of the funding attached to cumi students goes to extra language support for recently arrived immigrant youth. At the national level, the government has committed communes and schools to a 25% reduction of ethnic differences in language tests in 2006.

Conclusion

To this day, minority policy has not eradicated socio-economic inequality among ethnic groups in the Netherlands. Part of the problem lies in the fact that segregation endures and that, almost by definition, minorities face discrimination both on the basis of class and ethnicity. The Dutch model of pillarisation implies that it is normatively acceptable that groups should co-exist, but this does not mean that they should be only 'separate but equal'. Policy debates since the 1990s have suggested that a social mix is desirable to allow the advent of social equality. The challenge in the Netherlands is to avoid the simple coexistence of groups without any real social interaction. In other words, one preoccupation is segregation, the lack of interethnic and inter-group relations. If there is segregation in education, housing, and employment, groups that are poorer and with less social and cultural capital than others have fewer chances of 'climbing the social ladder'. Segregation can help perpetuate social difference.

Socio-economic inequality is inherent in the official Dutch definition of 'ethnic minorities' as not only culturally different but also (collectively) disadvantaged. It seems important to take into account class origins (e.g., parental education and occupational status) in 'ethnic statistics', not only for analytical reasons – to separate out the unexplained variance due to ethnic origin after taking into account non-ethnic sources of unequal opportunities or outcomes – but also for pragmatic reasons. In particular, restrictive measures which disproportionately affect ethnic minorities most often

come under the guise of socio-economic criteria (e.g., new income guarantees that are required for cross-border marriage, government plans not to subsidise new schools with more than a maximum percentage of enrolled disadvantaged pupils – which in fact make the recognition of new Islamic schools highly unlikely – or the Rotterdam proposal to restrict the freedom of settlement for newcomers under a certain income level). To denounce such measures as indirectly discriminatory, statistical evidence would require measures of social class origins along with ethnic origin.

There is also continued segregation in employment and education that hinders the stated policy goal of 'emancipation' of minorities. Residential segregation indices have been published periodically for the four officially recognised ethnic minorities (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilleans) and for a residual category of 'other non-Western allochthones'. The 2003 SCP Minorities Report confirms the well-known and extremely uneven spatial distribution of 'non-Western allochthones', with major concentrations in the most urbanised West of the country, in particular in the metropolitan area (the four major cities): 'non-western allochthones' make up 10% of the total population, but no less than 20% of all inhabitants in Utrecht and up to 30% and more in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague are of non-Western origin. Across the four cities, over half of the children under age 15 are of non-Western origin (van Praag 2003).

In the past few years, political and media attention has been intense, notably during the 2002 legislative electoral campaign when Pim Fortyun, the leader of the *Leefbaar* party, denounced Muslim minorities as backwards and condemned their attitudes towards women and gay people. In the current Dutch situation of heightened emotional political debates, the role that social science studies and statistics play is a fascinating question. While monitors showed an improvement of the situation of ethnic minorities, especially with respect to education and employment throughout the 1990s, this was ignored by elected politicians and the media, which increasingly spoke of the failure of the integration of minorities.

Although not prescribed by law, there are several monitors. They aim at determining the

social position and access to services of ethnic minorities. Others also list complaints of discrimination and cases before the Equal Treatment Commission and the public prosecutor. Yet the conclusions drawn from the monitors are often at odds: politicians and governments in the 1990s pointed to the studies to underline the 'failure of integration' of minorities while NGOs on the contrary considered that they justified more active diversity and anti-discrimination policies. Only in 2004 did a Parliamentary Commission report suggest that integration was not failing in spite of government policies.

The government's attitude towards minority policy is often contradictory. New surveys are planned while others are discontinued. Budgets are cut to conduct studies while new expert commissions and monitors are planned. Only one law, the 1998 SAMEN Act, explicitly called for the monitoring of minorities with the aim of achieving a multicultural workplace in the Netherlands by publishing the numbers of members of minorities in companies of more than 35 employees. Yet, as discussed above, the programme was terminated at the end of 2003.⁶ This has occurred in spite of its use by the Equal Treatment Commission and by lobbying NGOs.

Notes

1. Today, immigrants remain highly concentrated in the four big cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) with 40% of the largest minority groups (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, Antilleans) living there. By 2002 about 20% of incoming migrants come from the countries of origin of the four large minority groups (Turkey, Morocco, Surinam, the Antilles/Aruba). They come mainly under the label of family unification or family formation. Migrants now come from a larger number of countries. Moreover, there was a sharp increase in the number of asylum-seekers

arriving in the Netherlands in the 1990s from places such as former Yugoslavia and Somalia yet the numbers of asylum claims have since then declined.

2. Interview with Rinus Penninx, IMES, Amsterdam, 19 April 2004.

3. Interview with Jessica Silversmith, MDA.

4. It should be noted that the SAMEN Act defined minorities somewhat differently from both the prevailing policy definition of ethnic minorities and the definition of allochthones by Statistics Netherlands.

5. Since 1998 and the passing of the *Koppelingswet*, a law that aims at preventing illegal residents from accessing public services and benefits, the GBA has in fact been used to track undocumented foreigners.

6. Statistics Netherlands can produce data on the position of minorities in the labour force from employment databases, but only as aggregates (without any disclosure of individual companies).

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