

How can education be used to enhance social cohesion when considering diversity and immigration in the Netherlands?

Education in the Netherlands

Immigration

Diversity through immigration entails less social cohesion

Status quo social cohesion Netherlands: overallly high but low for perceived ethnocultural tensions/ acceptance of diversity

Free school choice

Economically advantaged children go to schools with larger resources

as opposed to

Economically disadvantaged children who go to schools with high proportions of immigrant children

Early division into tracks depending on abilities

Immigrant children (often language difficulties in first years)

Consequence

Less chance to get into high tracks

Transmission classes

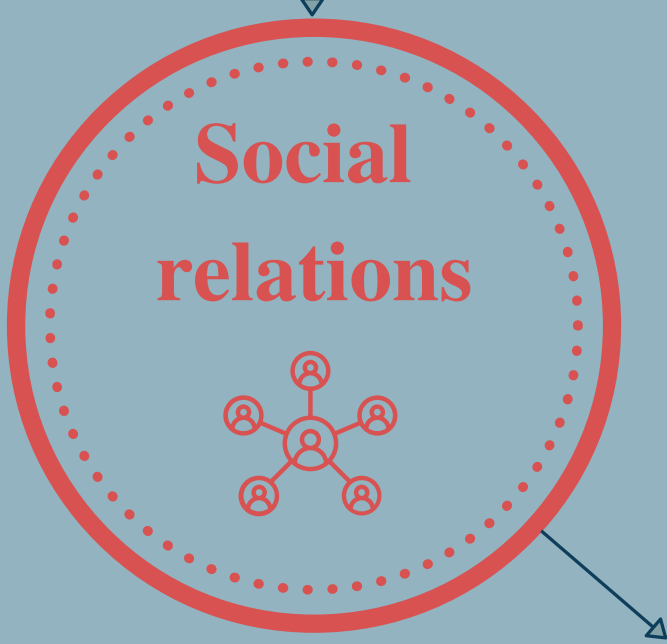
Immigrant children: mandatory two years before regular classes

Consequence

Completely isolated from Dutch pupils for two years

Lack of interactions between children with/without immigration background

Extent to which people interact with one another



Sense of 'us', people identifying with one another



People having relatively equal opportunities



Extent to which citizens are actively engaged + trust society as a whole



The more exacerbated those characteristics, the higher the level of social cohesion

Solutions

1 Implement the contact theory



Aim: promote direct interactions between students with and without immigration background.

Problem: positive effects of that theory reduced due to freedom of school choice, division into tracks and transmission classes

Solutions



- push back track division by 2/3 years
- transitional classes merged into normal classrooms + extra language classes
- free school choice replaced with central application

2 Implement intercultural education



Aim: create culturally competent students

How? Improve the inconsistent 2006 law aiming to make it mandatory to teach social participation and active citizenship in schools by making it compulsory for schools to implement clear guidelines

3 More funding for disadvantaged schools



Aim: solve inequality in performance: improve learning for children with immigration background via individual attention = more teachers needed

4 Make some training materials mandatory to become a teacher



Aim: increase chances of students to engage in society via classrooms allowing for open discussion + individual expression

What is needed? Competent teachers able to identify division

Increased social cohesion

References

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