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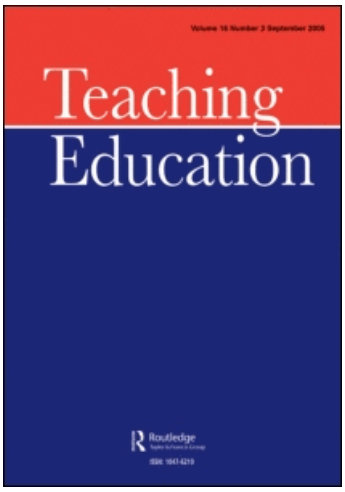

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Preparing Teachers for Intercultural Education

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ABSTRACT *Intercultural competence is still not automatically part of teacher education. It is not only a political issue; it is also a matter of the curriculum characteristics of institutes for teacher education. This article discusses a project, launched by the Dutch Ministry of Education, on the operationalization of intercultural education in preservice teacher education in The Netherlands. The way in which intercultural education is presented to students appears to be superficial and lacking a critical perspective. This is partly due to the way in which institutes deal with the current trend towards self-regulated learning in higher education and to the absence of close ties with intercultural practices in schools.*

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Intercultural education became an issue in Europe mainly as a result of the growing ethnic diversity of the population due to immigration in recent decades. This immigration has occurred in the context of decolonization and labour migration as well as being related to unsafe living conditions in many parts of the world. The percentage of immigrants in The Netherlands is currently about 9% of the total population. Most immigrants live in the big cities in the west of the country. In Amsterdam, for example, one-half of the youth is of ethnic minority origin. There are many different groups of immigrants: immigrants from Turkey and Morocco, from Indonesia and the former Dutch colonies in the Caribbean, and refugees from several parts of the world. The reasons for migration, the language spoken, the educational level, and the cultural differences from the Dutch vary from group to group. Policies to deal with the consequences of this new situation have been initiated since the end of the 1960s. The national policies of the different European countries show a universalization in the domains of intervention but differences in national traditions have also emerged (Fase, 1994). The central goal of the Dutch policies was to reduce or eliminate the educational disadvantage of children insofar as they are a consequence of social, economic and cultural circumstances. Another important goal was to stimulate, through the medium of "intercultural education", the socialization of young people for citizenship in the multicultural society. According to the Ministerie Van Onderwijs En Wetenschappen (1981), young people should learn about each other's ethnic–cultural background, circumstances and

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culture in order to further mutual understanding and to combat prejudice, discrimination and racism.

Since the mid-1980s intercultural education has been compulsory in Dutch schools. The instruments for implementing intercultural education are general guidelines and brochures, subsidizing the development of educational resources and facilitating inservice training courses for teachers (Driessen, 2000). There is an emphasis in the field of intercultural education on "governing by input". Money and resources are provided, on request, on a project basis and it is up to the educational sector, schools in particular, to experiment with the design of intercultural education. Successful schools can serve as a model for schools that might implement the projects that are developed. Policy directives on the content of and "quality standards" in intercultural education are somewhat limited. This is linked to the relative importance given to intercultural education and the pillarization of Dutch education. The educational sector is internally divided into blocks of different religious and pedagogical orientations. "Freedom of education" is an important characteristic of Dutch education. Central policy only globally prescribes and monitors the content of the curriculum and pedagogics. The common core curriculum, which schools have to follow, is in comparison with the National Curriculum in the UK, for example, very general (Karsten, 1998).

Although intercultural education has been compulsory in Dutch schools for almost two decades now, very few schools indeed have succeeded in incorporating "the intercultural" into the curriculum. Forms of intercultural education have been developed mainly in schools with an ethnically mixed pupil population. As has also been identified by Gaine (2000) in the UK, "white" schools did not seem to realize the need for intercultural education. There has been a debate on intercultural education in academic circles in The Netherlands since the 1970s. Like the international discussion on intercultural education, there are different approaches in this debate. The two most important are a social relations approach with an accent on affective and socio-psychologically oriented objectives, such as respect, acceptance and self-image, and a critical approach taking account of cultural political issues and of inequalities based on ethnicity in the socio-economic structure (Auernheimer, 1997; Banks, Cookson, Gay, Hawley, Irvine, Nieto, Schofield & Stephan, 2001; Banks & McGee Banks, 1995; Gay, 2002; Leeman, 2003; Lund, 2003; May, 1999; Sleeter, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1987). In practice, the social relations approach is dominant.

This paper explores the provision of intercultural education for preservice teachers. After some information about the Dutch context and a review of relevant literature, we will present and discuss our research on the *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom Project*, a ministerial initiative in this field.

Intercultural Education in Dutch Teacher Education

Primary school teacher education forms part of higher professional education in the Dutch education system and as such is separate from university education. Students follow a four-year course in preparation for entering the profession. There are

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around 50 institutes for primary teacher education throughout The Netherlands. The staff is predominantly white. This is also true of the students, although recently more students from ethnic minorities, particularly in the large cities, have registered for teacher education.

According to Homan (1999) intercultural education is given only a minimum of attention in initial teacher training. Teachers' intercultural knowledge, attitudes and skills are still ill defined. Policy documents state that all teachers have to be prepared to teach in a multi-ethnic classroom, they should have the competence to offer all pupils a safe and powerful learning environment, and should be able to prepare all students for citizenship in a multicultural society. This competence should be developed as an integral part of the professional competence of teachers. Institutes for primary school teacher education have not taken a leading role in this. Reports, such as that on the common curriculum in primary school teacher education (PmL, 1998), do not take ethnic–cultural diversity in the classroom into account. They use a narrow definition of differences between pupils that is predominantly based on differences in talent, tempo and temperament (PmL, 1998, p. 29). Only incidental reference is made to ethnic–cultural differences. This situation is probably related to the dominant interpretation of multiculturality in Dutch society that places more emphasis on encouraging integration through participation than on respect for ethnic–cultural diversity.

Ideally, teacher education should educate teachers to have a broad vision of the differences between pupils. Developing this competence starts with motivating students to take diversity in the classroom and schools into account. Causey, Thomas and Armento (2000) point out that the tenacity with which preservice teachers in the US cling to prior knowledge and beliefs about other people makes it difficult to influence their knowledge and attitudes. Most students come from a monocultural background and lack insight into the causes and manifestations of social and ethnic–cultural diversity and inequality. According to these authors, when American students start their teacher education they have a simple picture of the world that is characterized by "optimistic individualism". They tend to believe in absolute democracy and naive egalitarianism. No research on this issue in The Netherlands is available but the situation is probably similar. The picture Causey, Thomas and Armento paint of students is very familiar.

Teacher Preparation: the literature

Some work has been done on how to facilitate preservice teachers' learning about diversity and intercultural education. In addition to intercultural education, terms like multicultural education, anti-racist education, inclusive education and education for social justice are used in the field of education and ethnic–cultural diversity. These concepts sometimes overlap but they can also have a different meaning (Lund, 2003; May, 1999). In The Netherlands and most of the rest of Europe one usually talks about intercultural education. The term is used in a variety of approaches. A narrow approach to intercultural education fails to name and address racism and other forms of discrimination, and does not pay attention to

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intersections of class, race and gender. From a critical perspective there is concern that some forms of intercultural education implicitly support assimilation into the mainstream and may actually foster ethnic stereotyping by treating cultures as static. Use of an essentialist definition of cultural identity may foster the abuse of culture in intercultural education. A broad and critical definition of culture and of intercultural education has been the inspiration for this article (Benhabib, 2002; Leeman, 2003; Leeman & Volman, 2001).

Critical theorists on intercultural education agree that teachers should be trained to take ethnic–cultural diversity and racism seriously, to be able to reflect critically on them in relation to their professional agency, and know how and be able to implement several intercultural approaches (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Cochran-Smith, 1995, 2000, 2001; Gay, 2002; Hoffman, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 1999). In the literature on intercultural education and teacher education, different accents are placed on how this ideal could be developed. Arguing from a "racial identity development theory", Carter and Goodwin (1994) emphasize the importance of teachers' racial self-knowledge. According to them it is imperative that teachers learn ways of coping with ethnic–cultural identity as a social, educational and personal construct. Teachers must be aware of the potential meaning of ethnic identity in personal life, for the feeling of well-being, and in the learning outcomes of all pupils in the education system. They should be able to develop an ethnic–culturally responsive pedagogy and interculturally inclusive curricula. Carter and Goodwin (1994) argue that this demands a high level of reflection from teachers on their "own racial identity". They concentrate exclusively on racial and ethnic identity, whereas other researchers incorporate the concept of ethnic–cultural identity into a broader and hence more complex interpretation of social–cultural diversity (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 1999). They all emphasize that a competent teacher in this field presupposes a reflective teacher. Competence in intercultural education is not an extra facet of teachers' professionalism but should become an integral part of that professionalism. Various authors (Cochran-Smith, 1995, 2000; Gay, 2002; Hoffman, 1996; Ladson Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) presuppose an extended professionality of the teacher, a willingness and ability to reflect on the interconnection between the different aspects of this professionality in relation to the social, economic, political and cultural conditions of teaching. Education needs to be extracted from the rigid level of the classroom and placed in a broader social context. Ideal teachers are reflective practitioners who take the social and political implications of their actions into account. This involves their identity, autobiography and political orientations on the multicultural society; not only cognitions, but also attitudes and emotions are involved.

If this objective is to be achieved, what should the content and structure of teacher education be? The traditional approach to teacher training, in which one tries to interest students in a particular theory, teach them that theory and train them in the corresponding practical competences, is no longer adequate (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Instead, a model that places realistic experience, in combination with reflection based on interaction and dialogue with fellow students,

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teacher trainers and inservice teachers, offers a better basis for success. The concept of teachers' competence in intercultural education has not been sufficiently developed to expect consensus on the nature of the relevant knowledge and on the desired teacher cognition and attitudes. Intercultural competence affects the feelings, values, needs and concerns of the preservice teacher. This is why several authors (Causey, Thomas & Armento, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b) consider autobiographical reflection and experiencing diversity in concrete learning and child-rearing situations to be the most important issues in intercultural competence. They all agree that processing information alone is not sufficient. Every student must actually personally experience diversity, for example, in the form of a work-experience placement in an ethnically heterogeneous environment or by living temporarily in a social setting that is very different to his/her own social and ethnic–cultural background. In addition to this, students' horizons could be extended by studying cases of successful teachers who are able to make practical effective use of "an eye for diversity". The work-experience placement must be combined with moments of critical reflection. Partly to address the problem that primary schools do not always provide the kinds of teaching advocated by teacher education programmes, Cochran-Smith (1995) emphasizes the need not only to teach preservice teachers the best current practices, but also to give them a critical perspective of the diversity of critiques of these practices. Hoffman (1996) puts the accent on learning the basic principles of the anthropological method rather than on experience. This method works from a holistic and comparative perspective that furthers exploratory and reflective learning. She also argues for a critical perspective on intercultural education in teacher education, a perspective that avoids culturalism and too great an emphasis, typically Western, on self-esteem.

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Project on Intercultural Education

Two Dutch Ministries set up a special project group in 1994 to stimulate "intercultural education" in all educational sectors. Its main objective was to facilitate the implementation of intercultural education as a regular school activity in all schools. To achieve this the Intercultural Education Project Group set up various research and development activities (Projectgroep ICO, 1995). One of these development activities was the *Intercultural Learning in the Classroom Project*. This project, as designed by the Intercultural Education Project Group, involved teachers and teacher educators collaborating on the development of intercultural activities and experimenting with them in the classroom. The 12 teacher educators and 62 teachers, selected for their interest and experience in intercultural education, participated in the project for one year. The teacher educators were all employed in preservice primary school teacher education in six different institutes. The teachers were employed in primary education, secondary education, and vocational and adult education. Their institutes and schools were in different parts of the country and varied in the ethnic composition of the student/pupil population. Mainly white teachers participated, which reflects the composition of the teaching profession in The Netherlands. The participants were divided up in four sector networks: teacher

education, primary education, secondary education, and vocational and adult education. The main task of the four sector networks was the development of examples of intercultural learning integrated into the daily activities in the classroom. The networks received professional guidance and supervision from institutions with expertise in intercultural education. The teacher-networks model was chosen because of the idea that teachers are knowledgeable thinkers who need a dialogue with other teachers to be able to produce a conceptualization of intercultural learning that is based on actual practice and hence will be of interest to other teachers (Anderson, Herr & Nihlem, 1994; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Veugelers & Zijlstra, 1996).

As intercultural education is such a general concept that can be shaped to any educational and political agenda, the Intercultural Education Project Group drew up some general guidelines for teachers. They were asked to pay attention to processes of identity formation and to emphasize dialogue in their teaching activities, as well as paying attention to diversity among pupils and, in doing so, to move beyond the prevailing practice of culturalism. Culturalism predominantly sees and addresses people as members of an ethnic–cultural group and associates them with the cultural characteristics of that group.

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Research

The Intercultural Education Project Group was responsible for the overall design of the project on intercultural learning in the classroom and commissioned us, as researchers, to evaluate the project within one year. This required an overall description of the operationalization and the possibilities for implementing intercultural learning as developed by the four networks (Ledoux, Leeman, Moerkamp & Robijns, 2000). For this purpose we drew up a research plan comprising several research techniques.

With a view to gaining more insight into the participants' ideas and the process of operationalization, we developed a questionnaire for the teachers about their opinions on intercultural learning. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the project period. The researchers also observed network meetings as these meetings functioned as the platforms for discussion, reflection and exchange between teachers.

To answer the question on operationalization, we analysed the written examples of intercultural learning, the end products of the four sector networks. We developed a framework for describing the examples of intercultural learning in which the teachers were asked to pay attention to the following subjects: the target group, the objectives, the content, the pedagogical approach, the assessment, the competences required of pupils and teachers, the possibilities for implementation in the regular curriculum, the positive experiences and the possible pitfalls. For a better understanding of the examples and to gain an impression of the classroom practices of the teachers, the researchers observed some of the lessons and discussed them reflectively with the teachers. To answer the question on implementation, we analysed the examples produced by the four networks and also interviewed teachers

and management team members of a selection of the participating schools and institutes.

This article focuses on the results of the research on the teacher education sector. In total, 62 examples of intercultural education were published by the four networks: 18 for primary education, 12 for secondary education, 22 for vocational and adult education, and 10 for teacher education. The examples differ greatly. An intercultural learning activity may, for example, take up just one lesson or a whole series of lessons, or merely focus on an everyday occurrence. Even though guidelines for the description of the examples were drawn up, the teachers in all the networks did not implement them or use them in their reports in the same way. This made the analysis complicated. The different sorts of reports resulted in lacunae in the information; this forced the researchers to interpret the texts further themselves. For the purposes of triangulation, two researchers worked on this analysis and the interpretation of the examples was based on their discussions.

We formulated general themes for the analysis, such as the educational approach (objectives, content, pedagogics, assessment), the approach to intercultural learning (concept of diversity, processes of identity formation, dialogue) and teachers' competences. As the number of examples developed in the different educational sectors was not the same, we decided not to make a quantitative comparison between the products of the networks. However, it is useful to have an impression of how often a particular subject or phenomenon is mentioned so we decided to use terms like few, half, most, and so on. The analysis was made per network and as a whole.

The network on teacher education produced global descriptions of the examples with little detailed information on the objectives, content and pedagogy. This made the analysis a difficult task. Unfortunately, the examples of this sector provided scarcely any evaluative information on the teaching process and the responses of the students to this. Hence, there is little to report on the successes, problems and pitfalls experienced. The examples in this network, with one exception, were part of the regular curriculum taught to all students. The majority of the examples (six of the 10) formed part of the modules on general professional orientation at the beginning of the four-year course. The examples are in the form of learning paths that last several weeks. They are split up into steps, each one comprising a specific learning activity.

Two important themes came to the fore in the analysis of the material for the network on teacher education: teachers'professionalism and the conceptualization of diversity, and the relationship between theory and practice in teacher education.

Teachers' Professionalism and Diversity

The teacher education network scarcely complied at all with the request to move beyond culturalism, unlike the other networks, especially the primary education network. "Cultural differences" are the subject of more than one-half of the examples in the teacher education network, giving information and possibilities for reflection on styles of upbringing, lifestyles, and the norms and values of immigrant groups. In most examples, preservice student-teachers are mainly given information

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on ethnic–cultural differences between groups. These examples have a somewhat essentialistic approach to ethnic–cultural differences. Little attention is paid to differences within groups, to individual variations and to a contextual analysis of cultural differences.

As ethnic diversity was generally absent from the student and teacher population of the institutes and from most of the related teaching-practice schools, the institutes explored ways of broadening students' experience with ethnic minorities. This was done in a rather superficial way in the form of videos or a visit to a school in a more heterogeneous area. This information was dealt with mainly in the form of individual written assignments. It is unlikely that the students participating in these examples of intercultural education will have had the opportunity to reframe their understanding of ethnic–cultural diversity. For example, a student from the north of The Netherlands, where there are few people from ethnic minority groups, wrote the following comment after a short visit to an ethnically mixed school in the centre of Rotterdam: "I thought that the children were *really very ordinary* and nice, but of course it's difficult to say as I was only at the school for a short time" (emphasis added).

The project as a whole marked the beginning of the operationalization of teachers' competence in intercultural education. The networks on primary education and on vocational and adult education especially contributed to this. The teachers in these networks emphasized general skills, such as creating a feeling of safety in the group and having the necessary skills to guide a dialogue in the class. Although the participants were asked at the start of the project to pay attention to the task of teachers to guide and stimulate the processes of identity formation, they paid little heed to the request. Creating a feeling of safety was considered to be very important as pupils are expected to make a personal contribution in many of the examples of intercultural learning in the form of their own opinions, preferences, life history and feelings. These often concern extremely personal and sensitive issues like escaping from the country of origin, bullying and religious experiences. To be able to talk about such subjects there must be a safe atmosphere in the group, pupils must take each other seriously and not try to make each other look stupid. The following strategies for creating a safe atmosphere in the group have been drawn up in the examples of the networks:

- show that you value and respect pupils;
- express interest in pupils' stories;
- offer your own personal contribution;
- do not immediately react in a normative way to a pupil's opinion;
- do not force pupils to contribute personally; and
- maintain the feeling of safety in the group.

Guiding a dialogue in a heterogeneous class is considered not only to be important, but also difficult. The teachers specifically named the following essential competences for this:

- the ability to lead a group discussion about sensitive issues;

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- the ability to discuss dilemmas concerning values; and
- sensitivity to relationships (status, hostility, etc.) within a class and the ability to take these relationships into account when guiding the dialogue.

Most of the teachers in the networks could not find answers to questions like the following: What do you do when Dutch pupils refuse to be open to cultural and ethnic diversity and express stereotypical images about ethnic minorities in the classroom? How can a dialogue be a multiperspective exercise without getting bogged down in intercultural conflicts? How do you give shape and form to meaningful learning and at the same time avoid culturalism in relation to ethnic difference?

It is striking that practical skills were hardly dealt with at all in the network on teacher education. With the exception of an example about the specialization "working in the multi-ethnic school" and a subject-oriented example about geography, the examples were not directly linked to teaching practice. The objectives of the examples were mainly knowledge and attitude oriented. Practising professional skills did not feature in the objectives of most of the examples. We can conclude that intercultural competence was given a limited interpretation in the network of teacher educators. The examples developed in this network focus exclusively on dealing with ethnic–cultural differences and on the knowledge and attitudes of students at a general, fairly superficial level. Only some of the formats attempt to relate this to the actual practice of teaching in the classroom, a lacuna that is reflected in the subject content and the lack of concrete objectives in teaching-practice placements.

Another problem is that there is not much scope in the 10 examples for reflection on intercultural education and the profession by sharing knowledge and ideas with others. Students often work individually or in pairs, only coming together in a larger group for a lecture or an audio–visual presentation. This method of working offers few opportunities for utilizing the contribution of fellow students and the teacher in the process of reflection. In addition, self-study features strongly in the examples and two of them are based totally on self-study. This means that part and, in some cases, all of the learning process takes place without any interaction with a teacher educator.

As already mentioned, the majority of the examples formed part of the modules on general professional orientation. In this way the institutes tried to avoid marginalizing intercultural education. The pedagogical approach of the examples concurred with the general approach of the institutes. Their general philosophy is based on active and self-regulated learning. This recent trend in higher education is very promising but does demand a huge cultural change in the institutes (Niemi, 2002). We identified a rift between the training in theory and its practical implementation in the examples. It was stated in the examples that it is important to encourage students to alternate between theoretical information and the practical situation in schools. They should also be encouraged to link what they have learned with their own subjective concept of teaching and education, which comprises ideas, existing knowledge, emotions and values. This principle is, however, only dealt with superficially in the examples we analysed. In one of the examples, exclusively aimed at

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the orientation on the profession, students are given only written information on the ideal teacher. They are asked to reflect on this in the context of their own childhood experiences of school and, as a practical exercise, are given the assignment of interviewing a primary school teacher. This method might provide an opportunity for self-reflection but it is questionable whether it will prompt the reframing of knowledge, attitudes and ideas about the profession. A critical approach to intercultural education requires students to be trained to respect and take ethnic–cultural diversity seriously, and to equip them with an arsenal of competences for actual teaching. An extended professionality of teachers is assumed; teachers who can link their own identity, autobiography and political orientations on the multicultural society with their professional agency and relate the potential social and political implications of their actions to their professionality. The objectives as defined in the examples are more restricted. There is a greater accent on what exists, and on knowing rather than reflecting and experiencing. Although all the examples start from the same didactic principle of making a link with the subjective concept of the student, the assignments and methods chosen scarcely encourage students to reflect and reframe their ideas. Little attention is paid to the social consequences of ethnic–cultural diversity and of teachers' agency. We can only conclude that little extended professionalism can be expected from the use of these examples. This conclusion is not exceptional. Sleeter (2001), in her review of literature on teacher education and multicultural education, also found an "overwhelming presence of whiteness" and an absence of an intercultural redefinition of the professional teacher.

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Theory and Practice in Teacher Education

Confronted with this rather culturalistic and superficial operationalization of intercultural learning in the examples, the management teams of the participating institutes pointed out in the interviews that some culturalism in the examples is probably connected with the fact that the participants in this network had little experience of intercultural education in comparison with participants in the other sector networks. This also explains why the concept of teachers' intercultural competence was not developed further. Owing to their lack of familiarity with the issues, they were unable to distance themselves from cultural stereotyping. The pedagogy used in the examples was in general deplorable. The management teams pointed out that the examples were developed at the same time as the first attempts were being made to introduce self-regulated learning into higher education. This trend towards active learning could provide good opportunities for reflective training. However, in The Netherlands self-regulated learning has been accompanied by a cut in money and resources for teaching.

The way in which the actual trend towards self-regulated learning in higher education was interpreted in Dutch institutes of teacher education did not facilitate a more thorough incorporation of competence into intercultural education in the curriculum. The courses into which intercultural education has been integrated are structured on principles of active learning, which means that students work indepen-

dently. Although the concept of active learning does promote active reflection and an analytical way of working, the result in this project was a considerable amount of learning without supervision and limited opportunities for interaction between students and between students and teachers. This can be detrimental to the quality of the intercultural professional teacher. Attention to diversity is needed throughout the teacher education curriculum. Teacher educators must develop assignments that prompt intercultural questions as a matter of course, a difficult task for which the teacher educators participating in the project were manifestly not ready. One of the problems here is the lack of experience with diversity in the primary school classroom and with intercultural education of the teacher educators themselves. In addition to the lack of money for serious development and of specific professional requirements in the somewhat liberal, non-committal approach of the Intercultural Education Project Group, there is another crucial critical point concerning the project. While the integration of theory and current practice is the predominant principle in the modern model for teacher education, the strategy chosen in the project is based on development in separate sector networks. The network of teacher trainers has not been able to learn from the experience and expertise of the primary teachers' network. A missed opportunity, which reflects the hierarchical structure of the field. The ideal education community is one in which teacher trainers, researchers and teachers work closely together on an equal footing to improve education. This is still far from being realized, at least in The Netherlands.

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