



Utrecht University

How do the vision and mission of policymakers and advocacy groups about Appropriate Education relate to the definition of inclusive education?

S.I. Raterman, 4003810

BACHELOR THESIS PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

200600042

First examiner: Dr. C. Tijsseling

Second examiner: Dr. B.A.M. Van de Rijt

Date: 24 June 2016

Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this research was to examine the mission and vision of policymakers, parents and teachers about the Dutch policy on inclusive education, named as *Passend Onderwijs: Appropriate Education (AE)*, and to discuss in which way these missions and vision relate to the theoretical definition of inclusive education. **Method:** a qualitative content analysis of 39 published documents about Appropriate Education (AE). **Results:** the objectives behind the implementation of AE derive partly from problems experienced in the former educational system. Policymakers, parents and teachers alike, agree on the need of a bigger influence in education on finding an appropriate place for every pupil and decreasing bureaucracy in the system. Views differ on the roles that every concerning party has to play in the realization of this policy. **Conclusion:** the system of AE is partly inclusive, because of the focus on realizing an appropriate place for every pupil. However, it lacks focus on quality of education.

Keywords: inclusive education, appropriate education, special educational needs, policy research

Education for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) has experienced a great deal of change worldwide over the years. Nowadays, pupils with various types of special needs can attend regular education in many countries (Nakken & Pijl, 2002), but that has not always been the case. This change was set into motion largely by the Salamanca Statement that was founded in 1994 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). According to the statement, pupils with special educational needs should be included in mainstream education regardless of background, culture, language, socio-economic status or educational needs (UNESCO, 1994). These UNESCO documents that were adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in 1994, state that inclusive education should challenge all exclusionary policies and practices in education. Inclusion became the recommended policy according to the Salamanca statement because in the statement it is argued that it is illegitimate for schools to 'banish' pupils with special educational needs (Pitt & Curtin, 2004). This is based on a growing international consensus regarding the right of all children to a common education in their locality regardless of their background, attainment or disability. Furthermore, the Salamanca Statement states that mainstream schools that are inclusive are most effective in fighting discrimination and creating a society in which education is available at the same rate for everyone (UNESCO, 1994). The statement also explains that inclusive schools offer effective education for a majority of pupils and this improves the cost-efficiency of the whole educational system (UNESCO, 1994). This implies that inclusive education is beneficial not only for pupils with special educational needs, but for society as a whole. The arguments to promote inclusive education are pointed both towards academic success and to community building

(Solveigh, 2016). Since the Salamanca Statement was drawn up, educators all over the world have been working towards the implementation of the inclusive vision (Ainscow & César, 2006; UNESCO, 1994, 2001), and a growing number of pupils with special educational needs are attending mainstream schools (Corbett & Norwich, 1997).

International development of inclusive education

In the 1960s, the Western-European educational system was known for its segregated institutions for individuals with disabilities (Vislie, 2003). This segregation occurred due to existing differences between all kinds of pupils, whether they had special educational needs or not. Schools started to react to these differences by segregating those different pupils (Ainscow & César, 2006). The moment it came to the attention that segregation was happening on a large scale, plans were made to start integrating instead (Vislie, 2003). Integration became the main issue on the agenda until the end of the 1980s, when the international community and national governments discussed how to promote the rights of disabled persons to inclusive education (Vislie, 2003). The concept of integration states that pupils with special educational needs have the right to attend schooling at mainstream schools (Vislie, 2003). Integration does not focus on the quality of the education in the first place, but tries to let the pupil with a disability take place one way or another in a regular school setting (Farrel, 2001).

Education based on integration is mainly focused on the idea of fitting the pupil into the system. This shows that the concept of integration is increasing the general idea that pupils only have the right to regular education if they can adjust to the existing program and function in the existing scholarly system (Schuman, 2007). From this perspective, a disability will always be a problem of the individual and not a socially constructed concept (Barton, 2003). Thereby it is hard to critically assess whether the educational environment might actually be contributing to the exclusion of SEN pupils (Schuman, 2007). The concept of integration originates from a medical paradigm that is mainly focused on what disabled individuals are not able to do compared to the 'normal' standard. The concept of integration also localizes the problems individuals with a disability are facing and considers this as a medical problem and a personal tragedy instead of the possible impact of an environment that could improve life standards. This is in line with perceiving individuals with a disability to be vulnerable, not functioning socially and having to rely on medical help and special education. This view clearly does not lead to improvement of the position of disabled people and their representatives (Schuman, 2007).

As a reaction to the medical paradigm in which the integrational perspective was rooted, the social paradigm was developed in the beginning of the nineties (Oliver, 1996). The social paradigm or social model of disability, refers to a disability as a problem of the society and not of the individual with a disability. The problem is regarded

as society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of individuals with a disability are fully taken into account in its social organization (Oliver, 1996). Parallel to the social paradigm, the concept inclusion was developed as an alternative for the concept of integration. The concept of integration may be seen as a child adapting to a host setting while inclusion may refer to the host adapting in order to meet the needs of actual pupils (Lindsay, 2007). This shifted the focus from 'change the individual' to 'change the environment'. After all, the environment is the reason a disability becomes a handicap (Brown, 2001). This is described in the World Health Organization (WHO) documents on International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps. According to the WHO, these are the three levels of a disability. The impairment is the physical issue and the disability is an outcome of these physical issues in terms of functional performance and activity by the individual. Disability thus represents disturbances at the level of the person. Handicaps however, are concerned with the disadvantages experiences by the individual as a result of impairments and disabilities. Handicaps thus reflect interaction with and adaptation to the surroundings (WHO, 1980). This view leads to a critical analysis of the regular environment that puts barriers for people with disabilities that doesn't empower them to develop their possibilities to the fullest (Barton, 2003).

According to Farrel (2000) the alternative term inclusion was introduced as a more accurate way of describing the quality of education offered to pupils with special needs in integrated settings. The idea of inclusion differs from integration because of the role of the educational quality. With integration, quality of education is not a factor (Farrel, 2000). As a result, pupils with special educational needs might be going to a mainstream school, while still being isolated from the regular classroom. This way, integration might as well be segregation (Farrel, 2000). The transition to inclusive education seems to be mainly depending on the recognition that the barriers that many pupils meet in education, are not primarily the consequence of their disability, but from the way the educational system is organized and the way it handles disabilities and SEN (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). In evolving inclusive education, terms such as special educational needs are no longer usable because they still refer to the medical paradigm (Gerschell, 2005). With inclusion, the classroom has to adjust to the pupils and they are being actively involved in the education. Inclusion is also a broader term, referring to the community as a whole (Vislie, 2003). The terms inclusion or inclusive education have now largely replaced integration and are intended to represent a different concept. In practice this may translate going from a needs based agenda to a rights based agenda (Lindsay, 2007).

The definition of inclusion

By using the term inclusion, it is important to understand what it means, and to what extent the concept is clear. As said before, integration and inclusion are the two concepts that have been used in international context for the past 20 years to analyze and improve the position of children and adults with a disability, both in education and the society as a whole (Farrel, 2001). Depending on the cultural factors, integration and inclusion appear to be difficult to differentiate even though they do not seem to imply the same phenomena (Schwab, Holzinger, Krammer Gebhardt & Hesseld, 2015). It is important to question the purpose of inclusion, and to see inclusive education not as just a social and structural issue about how various aspects of a school are organized to meet diverse pupils' needs, but also to consider inclusive education as an ethical issue (Solveigh, 2016). Inclusion can be regarded as an idea about what school systems, schools and classrooms should accomplish, and is as such, an expression of an educational philosophy (Blake, 2003).

In literature on inclusive education, there is not a formally fixed and stable use of terminology and no official working definition. (McLeskey et al, 2014; Vislie, 2003). The exact meaning of the term inclusion is not always clear and there is a lack of consensus with regard to its definition. Often the terms integration and inclusion are used interchangeably (Bartolo, 2010). Initially, inclusion was often contrasted with integration but later on, the discussion within research on inclusion and inclusive education shifted to different interpretations of the idea of inclusive education from the perspective of parents, children practitioners, teachers and leaders. (Solveigh, 2016).

The definitions of inclusion and inclusive education are broadly described by many authors. According to De Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2009), inclusion refers to the process of educating pupils with disabilities in the regular education classrooms of their neighborhood schools. Vislie (2003) describes the aims of inclusive education as providing good-quality education, and a community for learners with a community – based education for all (Vislie, 2003). The definition of inclusion from Ainscow and César (2006) regards the idea that all pupils in a class are regarded as individuals with different initial positions, who should all benefit from the best possible opportunities for learning without the need to differ between pupils with and without SEN. Ainscow (2005) differentiates four key elements that characterize inclusion. First of all, inclusion is a process and not a single event (Ainscow, 2005). Consequently, we should keep looking for the best reaction to diversity in pupils. Second, inclusion is aimed at the identification and removal of barriers (Ainscow, 2005). Furthermore, inclusion is based on the principle that mainstream schools are capable of offering qualitative education to all pupils, which is being realized by adjusting the education to the student. Finally, inclusion aims at

pupils that are at risk for marginalization, exclusion or underachievement (Ainscow, 2005).

A distinction can be made between the narrow and broad definition of inclusion. The broad definition focusses on diversity and the way of responding to this diversity. The narrow definition aims mostly on pupils with special educational needs within mainstream schools. A school should be able to adjust to pupils with special educational needs that are present at that school (Ainscow & César, 2006). In research conducted by Goransson and Nilholmen (2014), four different understandings of inclusive education were found. In a hierarchical order these understandings are: Inclusion as the placement of pupils with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of pupils with disabilities, inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of all pupils and inclusion as creation of communities (Goransson & Nilholmen, 2014). Considering the last definition, in a society in which individualism is the main ideology, proposing an ideal in which the community is seen as a model does seem to be a challenge (Goransson & Nilholmen, 2014)

From the broad range of understandings of the concept of inclusion mentioned in the paragraph above, it can be argued that there is not one single sentence or explanation that can be used to describe inclusive education. In this study, the concept of inclusion will be regarded as a combination of all these explanations, with focus on quality of education, equality of pupils, education in neighborhoods and creating opportunities (Ainscow & César, 2006; De Boer et al., 2009; Goransson & Nilholmen, 2014; Vislie, 2003)

Disabled pupils and their parents

The generic term 'specific educational needs and disabilities' (SEND) (Devecchi, Dettori, Doveston, Sedgwick, & Jament, 2011) is used to cover all pupils who have developmental difficulties that affect their learning, their behavioral, emotional and social development, their communication and their ability to care for themselves and to gain independence (Lindsay, 2007). The Dutch Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB, 2009) makes a distinction between pupils with a severe disability and serious behavioral problems who are at a school for special education, and pupils with less severe disabilities who can be educated in mainstream schools (CPB, 2009). With the introduction of the concept 'zorgleerlingen': pupils in need of care, the attention shifted to the question what type of pupils are applicable for which type of help instead of the focus on the way teachers handle pupils that need extra care and attention and the differences between teachers on this matter (Meijer, 2009).

Pupils with SEN in regular schools have relatively more difficulty participating socially in regular education (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert 2009). The reason why these pupils experience difficulties in their relationships with peers without disabilities has not

yet been found. It seems likely that aspects of acceptance such as the attitudes of parents of typically developing pupils play a key role, since children develop attitudes by being exposed to and adopting attitudes of their parents (Katz & Chamiel, 1989). Parental support and involvement is regarded as important in facilitating inclusive education (Palmer, Fuller, Arora, & Nelson, 2001)

Ever since a debate organized by parents of children with learning difficulties in 1981, parents in The Netherlands have been suggesting a change of mind in the educational system. In 1981 already, parents wanted to be able to decide which school their child should attend (Pijl, Meijer, & Hegarty, 1997). Parents hope and expect that physical integration will lead to their child to participate socially with the peer group (Scheepstra, Nakken, & Pijl, 1999). This does not seem to apply to all parents. The study conducted by De Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2009) reveals that parents hold positive or neutral attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with disabilities in regular education. Parents of children with SEN are neutral and often indicate that inclusion was not a good option for their child while parents of typically developing children show more positive attitudes towards inclusive education (De Boer et al., 2009). Parental attitudes are related to several variables including socio-economic status, type of disability, education level and experience with inclusive education (de Boer et al., 2009).

Attitudes of teachers toward inclusion

A key element in the successful implementation of any policy is the staffs' view of that policy, in this case: teachers. They have the major responsibility of implementing the policy (Avramadis & Norwich, 2002). Assuming that the successful implementation of any inclusive policy is largely dependent on educators being positive about it, a great deal of research has sought to examine teachers' attitudes towards the integration and more recently the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream school (Avramadis & Norwich, 2002). Schuman (2013) argues that the implementation of AE will only succeed if the Dutch government and educational system realize the transformation from integrational thinking to inclusive thinking. This means mental schedules of educational professionals should change from the medical to the social perspective (Schuman, 2013).

The reports on the progress of the implementation of AE in 2013 and the ECPO research by Walraven, Kieft and van der Vegt (2013) showed that about half of the teachers in mainstream education in 2013 felt only slightly involved in the changes concerning AE. About thirty percent did not feel involved at all. This shows that AE did not create a lot of enthusiasm at that time. A large number of teachers also held the perspective that this policy was only implemented because of financial reasons (Walraven et al, 2013). Research by Avramadis and Norwich (2002) shows that the majority of teachers who were not currently participating in inclusive programs had strong negative

feelings towards inclusion and felt that decision makers were out of touch with classroom realities. Furthermore, teachers seem to think AE means the disappearance of special needs education, which is not the case in The Netherlands. Segregated education will remain next to inclusive education. (Hofsetter & Bijlstra, 2014).

Although the movement for inclusive education is part of a broad human rights agenda, many educators have serious reservations about supporting the widespread placement of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools (Avramadis & Norwich, 2002). Teachers might not feel capable to deal with pupils with SEN. This insecurity about being able to handle pupils is described by Goei and Kleijnen (2009) and might be attributed to the fact of a mismatch between the behavioral repertoires of the teacher and student. (Hofsetter & Bijlstra, 2014). Attitudes towards integration are strongly influenced by the nature of the disability, the educational problems being presented and, to a lesser extent, by the professional background of the teachers (Avramadis & Norwich, 2002). Teachers, although positive towards the general philosophy of inclusive education, do not share a total inclusion approach towards education. They have different attitudes about placements of pupils with SEN in regular education, based largely upon the nature of the pupils' disabilities. There is enough evidence to suggest that in the case of the more severe learning needs and behavioral difficulties, teachers have more negative attitudes to inclusive education. Teachers are more willing to include pupils with mild disabilities or physical impairments than pupils with more complex needs. (Avramadis & Norwich, 2002). Hofsetter and Bijlstra explain this phenomenon by stating that teachers were already feeling incapable of teaching pupils in a non- inclusive system. This makes it very clear to understand their reservations towards an inclusive educational system. (Hofsetter & Bijlstra, 2014)

Developments on inclusive education in The Netherlands.

Since August 1, 2014, a new educational system that aims for inclusive education has been implemented in the Netherlands. Referred to as Passend Onderwijs: 'Appropriate Education' (AE) meaning fitting, or suitable education, schools are now obliged to offer pupils with SEN a place that is most appropriate for them (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur & Wetenschap: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2012; Hofsetter & Bijlstra, 2014). Pupils who need extra care, used to be placed at a school for special education. Nowadays, every pupil should be able to attend a mainstream school in their own neighborhood. This does not mean that special schools are disappearing all together. If parents choose to place their children in a special school, this should still be possible. This is described as, 'what can be mainstream should be mainstream, what has to be special can be special' (Greven, 2007). The Dutch government has tried for 20 years to realize the integration of pupils with SEN in the regular education system. This process started in 1990 with the launch of the Samen Weer Naar School (Back to School

Together; SWNS) program (Schuman, 2007). In 2005, the Dutch government started the development of AE as a continuation to SWNS to offer more pupils with specific educational needs education at regular schools and to simplify the care system (Schuman, 2013). The goal of these educational reforms was to integrate pupils with a disability or specific educational need and to empower the position of parents in the process (Schuman, 2007). Participation in the regular environment is seen as the best guarantee for a healthy development of all pupils. Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means to fight discrimination, create an accessible society, create an inclusive society and guarantee that every child gets to get education (UNESCO, 1994, Salamanca Statement article 2, point 5). Inclusive education has been promoted on two bases, the rights of children to be included in mainstream education and the proposition that inclusive education is more effective (Lindsay, 2007).

From this theoretical research, it becomes clear that inclusive education is the preferred educational policy for pupils with SEN. However, both parents and teachers have reservations about the idea. Nevertheless, they are willing to work towards an inclusive school system, but they do not always know how to do this. In this study, the aims of the newly implemented Dutch policy of AE will be analyzed and compared to the theoretical concept of inclusion in order to determine whether AE can be considered as an inclusive educational system. To do so, the mission and vision of policymakers, but also other advocacy groups, that is: parents and teachers, will be analyzed. This will result in a clear understanding of the mission and vision of policymakers, teachers and parents concerning the AE policy. The research question of this research is *how does the vision and objective of policymakers and advocacy groups about Appropriate Education relate to the definition of inclusive education?* It is expected that the vision and mission of policymakers contains wishes to ongoing improvements about the position of pupils with a disability. This expectation is based on the ongoing changes in thinking described in this theoretical outline. However, according to the literature it is expected that parents could have reservations towards the idea of inclusion (De Boer et al., 2009). The same can be expected with teachers (Goeij & Kleijnen, 2009; Hofstetter & Bijlstra, 2014) Furthermore, since the concept of inclusion is not clearly defined, it is expected that AE will contain all inclusive features (McLeskey et al, 2014; Vislie, 2003).

This research is scientifically relevant because it aims at the exposure of differences between used concepts and visions of these concepts between different groups of people. This research will add new scientific knowledge about the differences in vision on inclusive education between policy makers, teachers and parents. This makes this research relevant for society in general. With the exposure and acceptance of differences in opinions and visions, there can be worked towards a better chance of succeeding of inclusive education.

Method

To analyze the vision and mission behind the implementation of AE in the Dutch educational system, documents concerning this policy, that is the Appropriate Education Bill, are studied and analyzed for arguments on AE. This way, a perspective as broad as possible is covered and links between all different visions and missions can be made. Those arguments will be compared to the definition of inclusion that has been found in the scientific literature. In this way, a thorough analysis on the inclusiveness of AE can be made.

Research design

The type of research used is content analysis, a research method for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952; in Bryman, 2012). Content analysis was chosen as a research method for this study because it is an ideal method to study questions concerning written communication (Stemler, 2001). Content analysis can both be used as qualitative and quantitative research method since it allows to focus on word count and/or word meaning, including metaphors to provide the cultural context in which texts. The aim of the current study is to extract the vision and mission behind the policy through texts. Consequently, the focus will mainly be on word and phrase meaning, so that a meaning can be extracted from all the existing information.

In order to perform content analysis, texts were analyzed using MAXqda, a program for qualitative data analysis. Before analyzing this data, a unit of analysis was created to make sure there was a set focus during the research. That focus was on everything in the documents that is about the vision and mission behind AE. The documents were read thoroughly; whereafter the researcher has coded every relevant piece while using MAXqda. This way of working means working with open coding, no codes were made in advance. The search for these specific themes was done using the three different steps of coding described in Boeije (2010) as open, axial, and selective coding. During the open coding process, no distinction was made in the relevance of the information. The next step, axial coding, was used to select more and less relevant themes and the different codes are collected into categories. At the end of this process, a code tree with all relevant codes and themes was put together. Using this code tree, the last step of the coding process is the selective coding in which the data was structured and combined (Boeije, 2010). Eventually, an overview of arguments, meanings and visions can be made by comparing all these codes and quotes. The definition of inclusion has been stated in the theoretical part of this thesis. That scientifically based definition of inclusion will be used as a fundamental concept in the process of trying to find this definition in policies and other written texts.

Used content

The means of communication that were studied are openly published printed documents such as reports, laws or transcripts of meetings. The printed articles and reports that were used for the analysis were derived from different sources. Governmental policy, but also documents from advocacy groups for teachers and disabled people were taken into account. In this way, possible differences between policy makers and advocacy groups will be visible. Because documents that were available online at the visited websites were used, the sample can be seen as a convenience sample (Bryman, 2012). To ensure the relevance of this research, only the most recent and updated documents were analyzed. In order to do this, only texts published in the range from 2012 till 2016 have been analyzed. All together, 39 texts were analyzed. Of those 39, 19 were governmental documents extracted from the websites www.rijksoverheid.nl. The parental was represented in 11 documents from the website of advocacy group Ieder(in) and the teacher view in 3 documents from teacher unions Algemene Onderwijsbond and CNV Onderwijs. This inequality in documents was straightened by 6 remaining documents found on rijksoverheid.nl that represented teacher views.

Validity and reliability

Reliability means the influence of the observations by coincidental measurement defects. Reliability is measured by the precision of the methods of data gathering and the instruments of measurement. A research can be called reliable when repeated measurements lead to the same conclusions (Boeije, 2010). To ensure reliability in the current research, every step of the research process and every action is described in the method section. Validity is about the existence or non existence of systematical distortions that can influence the research. A distortion can occur in qualitative research when researchers are biased and because of that are systematically selective in their observations or analyses (Zwieten & Willems, 2004). To increase validity, it is important that the researcher minimalizes their personal ideas which makes the research as free of norms as possible. This can be realized by a systematical reflection on the role of researcher in the research. Validity can also be seen as the role that methods have in the way that the research and the conducted results actually have researched the concept that was the aim of the research. This is mainly about the question if what is being claimed to be researched, actually is being researched (Zwieten & Willems, 2004). To increase validity, concepts that are being studied in the content analysis are based on theoretical literature, so the concepts are clear and the texts are searched for the right concepts to measure the concept that has to be measured. Context analysis is not often generalizable, it is possible for findings to be generalized depending on the context, units of analysis and the sample type and size but this is not the norm. These issues extend

to the concept of external validity, which also tends to be difficult for qualitatively designed content analysis to achieve.

Ethical aspects

The ethical aspects of content analysis with openly published texts is less complicated than, for instance, an experimental design in which actual persons are being tested. This research is not studying individuals' opinions, but is solely using public documents to analyze what was said by organizations and the government. Therefore, the research was not submitted to an ethical commission beforehand. In further research it might be useful to do so however, because individuals' quotes are being used in the analysis. It is important to realize that the results of the research may still influence the persons or organizations that published the documents. Because the goal of the research is to explain what aspects of the policy might be unclear, it is important to realize that the public opinion about the policy might be effected by the outcomes of this research. Furthermore, this study has both a particularistic as universal benefit, since it helps the researcher to understand the phenomenon better, but can also be reported back to policymakers and other advocacy groups (Van Hees, de Jonge, & Nauta, 2003). The goal of the study is not to obtain facts or truths out of the analysis, but solely to understand the policy better (Van Hees et al., 2003).

Results

In this section, the results from the document analysis are presented. In this study, 39 texts concerning the implementation of AE in the Netherlands were analyzed. During the analysis, a code tree containing several important sections was designed. This code tree consists of several layers of codes and sub codes; the whole code tree is displayed in the appendix. In this section, the findings are described using the different sections from the code tree. First of all, the overall mission for policy change will be showed, divided in the categories: constraints of the original system and aims of the AE system. After that, the vision behind the policy change will be showed using the categories: beliefs and roles described for the involved parties.

Mission for policy change according to policymakers and advocacy groups.

The texts revealed data concerning the mission for educational policy change. It became clear that an important mission for change was the fact that the old system was faulty according to both policymakers and advocacy groups. The reasons for these constraints are explained in the first part of this chapter, after which the aims of the AE system are explained.

Constraints of the original system

According to the the texts, both policymakers and advocacy groups saw several problems in the old educational system. The prior system was seen as disadvantageous

for SEN pupils because an increasing number of pupils were being sent to special education. This increase was explained by the fact that pupils with special educational needs were increasingly getting diagnosed. Also, for parents and schools it might be financially more resourceful to send the pupils to special education. This increase of pupils in special education was described as a problematic situation since the chances of getting a degree and finding a job are limited when a pupil goes to a special educational school. According to the documents of both government and parental advocacy groups, this is not in line with the increasing demands upon people with a disability to participate in society.

Another problem with the former system was described as its bureaucratic and complex nature in which there was a high chance that pupils would stay home for a longer period of time because they were not able to find an appropriate place in the educational system. Both policymakers and advocacy groups agree that children not attending a school at all is absolutely unacceptable. Due to what is described as extreme bureaucracy, the old system was seen as neither efficient nor effective when it comes to sending pupils to school. The help was not specialized for individual cases, and there was limited freedom of choice for parents to decide where they wanted their children to go to school. Also, partly because of the complexity and bureaucracy the financial system was under pressure.

Other reasons for change that are found in the texts have to do with the perspective on disability in the old system. According to policymakers the system was formed around the disability, so around the perspective of what SEN pupils cannot do, and took the disability as a starting point for deciding which kind of education a pupil should receive. Furthermore, parent's organizations claim that change in the system was necessary because pupils with intellectual disabilities faced high risks of being excluded from education in general.

It becomes clear that both policymakers and influential advocacy groups used the problems they described existing in the old system as a starting point to develop new goals of handling education for SEN pupils. These aims are described in the next section.

Aims of the Appropriate Education System

In this section the aims of policymakers and advocacy groups about the implementation of AE are described. These are all goals that were directly described with the word 'aim' or 'goal' and relate to the previously described mission of what to accomplish with the AE system.

The goals stated in the texts are based on ideals about what pupils with SEN and children in general have rights to. Both policymakers and advocacy groups agree on the aim that all pupils deserve a place in education that is as appropriate as possible for them. The aim is described as reducing the number of pupils staying at home, and

finding a place that everyone agrees to be the best place for a particular pupil. The state-secretary describes his aims towards the reduction of pupils not being able to attend a school as follows: In 2020, no pupil should be at home for longer than 3 months and no pupils should be wait listed for receiving education. All parties agree that all efforts should be aimed at making sure that every child goes to school, and favorably a regular school. According to policymakers, AE should make sure as many pupils as possible attend regular schools in their own neighborhoods. From the parental perspective the aim seems to be set mainly on having the right of choice. The reasons given for the wish of pupils going mainly to regular schools is that this way pupils will be best prepared for a place in society. With the right adjustments in education, pupils with SEN can get a future in which they can express their qualities. According to governmental documents, this also translates to the labelling of pupils, the aims of this system are that less medical indication based on diagnosis will be necessary, and adjustments can be made leaving from the perspective of what pupils can do instead of what they cannot. Policymakers realize this asks for a change of mind in which it is considered normal that children with and without disabilities go to the same schools and no pupils being discriminated based on what he or she can not do. The central question in this system would be what a child needs to develop optimally.

So, AE is described as a policy that has the perspective of the pupil and what he or she needs to learn the most as starting point. This results in the proclamation that schools and teachers should change their didactics to individual needs and deliver the best quality of education for every individual pupil. According to policymakers, education should challenge pupils to get the best out of everyone. This is combined with the general idea stated in governmental documents, that the quality of both education and teacher should increase. Claims that investments in teacher training should increase are made in several documents from both the government and teacher unions. This is based on the view that teacher support is an important piece in the AE puzzle. Nevertheless, it is not mentioned how teachers should be trained better. With the implementation of AE schools and school networks get the sole responsibility of offering high quality education, and making sure every pupil has an appropriate educational place. The AE law states schools have the obligation to care, meaning that schools are responsible for realizing AE for every pupil. AE gives schools more responsibilities and according to the government, chances to spend money more effectively and efficiently. An important part of the system is stated as, more cooperation between schools and decreasing bureaucracy in these school networks. The obligation to find an appropriate place for every pupil is seen by policymakers as the core value in AE. Policymakers and advocacy groups want education to prepare all pupils for a place in society. Furthermore, they expect SEN pupils to

develop better getting education sized for them in regular classes and through interaction with regular pupils.

Another aspect of the aims that are described in policy documents connected to the implementation of AE is the decrease of bureaucracy in the system and making the system more efficient and effective. The aim is to integrate childcare and education where the focus is on the pupil and not on money issues. This is realized by decentralizing childcare and education by making childcare a responsibility of the municipality and education a responsibility of local school networks. By getting the responsibility for finding an appropriate place in education the expectation is that the system becomes more transparent and gives parents more influence because finding a place for a pupil is a process parents and school do together. Initially, funds for education were lowered but eventually no savings were made on the educational system. The aim is to spend money according to the goals of AE, where the focus is on the individual pupil, not on money.

The vision behind the AE system according to policymakers and advocacy groups

In the analyzed texts several statements on what the vision behind the concept of AE is were found. These are all underlying thoughts about what is right and what should happen, that support the objectives described in the last section. These statements concerning the vision of policymakers and advocacy groups are divided between beliefs about education for pupils with a disability in general and the roles that those involved, such as teachers and parent, should play.

Beliefs

A strong belief that is visible in the argumentation for AE of both policymakers and advocacy groups is that all children deserve a place in regular or special education. Equal treatment of children and humans in general is seen as a duty of the government and society as a whole. For pupils with SEN, a place in regular education means the realization of individual tailoring of education to create a place as appropriate as possible. This focus on individual rights is a change compared to former educational policies and results in the belief that it is the duty of each school to get the best out of every pupil and that in no case education should lead to segregation. A part of the belief system that is described, is that pupils, both disabled and non-disabled, have the right to an appropriate place in education and the right to education that fits their possibilities. The idea that every pupil has an appropriate place in education is connected to the expressed hopes to create a place in society for every individual with a disability and to live a fulfilling life.

Roles described for involved parties

According to the analyzed documents from mainly parental advocacy group Ieder(in), parents are not considered to be involved in the process of implementation of AE. Policymakers and parental organizations agree on the fact that parents should be informed about their rights and obligations. This way, it is believed parents could be an equal partner in conversations about what they want for their children, so preferences of parents can be taken into account. Since finding a fitting place for a pupil is seen as the responsibility of school networks and parent, the vision is that AE can only work if parents are well-informed. Research that monitored the preparations for implementation of AE shows that the closeness of parents to AE has influence on their knowledge of the policy. Parents have experience with the policy know more about it. Furthermore, the media seems to be the most important source of information for parents. Most parents do not expect too many changes when it comes to their children's education within the AE system. Parental organizations claim that parents can be well-informed through those organizations and things like advisory phone lines.

Teachers and the information teachers have about the AE system plays a big role in the execution of the system. It becomes clear that teachers can have certain images about AE that might leave them feeling unsatisfied about the system, but that does not always mean their assumptions are correct. The negative image of AE among teachers is reflected in the fact they think the system is only a means of saving money, thinking their workload will only expand, too many pupils will be in one classroom and that non-disabled pupils will not get the attention they need because of the many different levels of development in one class. These negative thought towards the policy also derive from the fact that teachers do not feel they are trained well enough to manage all the different pupils in AE. Policymakers and teacher associations relate these negative attitudes to the fact that teachers had little to say in the decision making process, which leaves them feeling uninvolved even though it is important that teachers support these plans. According to policymakers the role of teachers in AE is a shaping one, teachers are the ones who are expected to give shape to the implementation of AE. This means teachers should be well informed and possess skills belonging to AE. Teacher training to increase professionalism and skills are therefore thought of as an important part of the implementation of AE

Furthermore, the role of schools, school networks and the municipalities are expected to change with the implementation of AE. School boards are now responsible for carrying out the policy, which leaves a crucial role to school leaders. Policymakers think it will be easier to help pupils when responsibilities lie at school level. This means a good communication between regular and special schools has to be realized, but also communication between schools and parents is crucial. Although these plans are

described, parental organizations claim the AE solution will be an only on paper one in many cases if schools do not act up. Also problems are being seen in the fact that responsibilities between the educational sector and the childcare sector, which pupils with SEN often both are involved in, are not well specified. According to parental organizations, this might lead to financial vagueness and insecurity.

Conclusion and discussion

This research investigated the vision and mission of policymakers and advocacy groups about Appropriate Education relate to the definition of inclusive education. Those missions and visions will be explained in this conclusion and compared to the theoretical concept of inclusion that was derived from the scientific literature. This theoretical concept was described as: as a combination of explanations with focus on quality of education, equality of pupils, education in neighborhoods and creating opportunities (Ainscow & César, 2006; De Boer et al., 2009; Goransson & Nilholmen, 2014; Vislie, 2003).

The results show that a dominant reason for changing the educational system by implementation of the AE-system, were problems that existed in the old system. This is interesting, because it allows to compare what policymakers say about problems with the old system, and how they describe their plans to find solutions in a new system. The first reason why the old system was perceived as not sufficient anymore, was that over the years an increasing number of pupils went to special education. Because of the goals of inclusion that there should be no need to differentiate between children, the mission to change this relates to inclusive thinking (Ainscow & César, 2006). Furthermore, the idea that the system should not result in pupils staying at home is inclusive thinking. The realization that the old system approached the problem starting with the disability can result in a change from the medical to the social paradigm (Oliver, 1996).

These ideas about what had to change were translated into goals, such as: finding a place as appropriate as possible, no pupils left at home, an important role for the right of choice of pupils and their parents and less labelling and using the medical paradigm. Clearly, these goals derive from the problems that were experienced were seen in the old system. When comparing these goals to the concept of inclusion, it becomes clear that underlying beliefs are in correspondence have to do with the ideas of equal treatment and finding a fitting place for every pupil. These are inclusive goals, so in this way inclusion is a part of the AE system. However, an important component of inclusion missing in these plans is the focus on quality which is a main point in the concept of inclusion (Farrel, 2000). This focus on quality of the education is missing in the mission and vision of policymakers, but also of parental and teacher organizations. The idea of

inclusion differs from integration because of the role of the educational quality (Farrel, 2000), but this is not represented in the policy.

Decreasing bureaucracy seems to be an important part of the mission behind implementing AE for policymakers, parents and teachers. This existing bureaucracy is a result of the system that labels every pupil and places them in an existing category. This derives from a strong need to differentiate between pupils. Concerning the idea of inclusive education, in which there should be no need to differ between pupils, the idea of decreasing bureaucracy fits with the inclusive way of thinking (Ainscow & César, 2006). Also, this can be seen as a change to a more social paradigm of disability, in which there is no need to indicate based on the more medical way of thinking (Oliver, 1996). This is in line with the proposition made by Lindsay (2007) that inclusive education is a more effective way of schooling. This relates to changes that should be made in spending money not on labelling of children, but more on education of teachers.

Policymakers and teachers realize that changes are necessary mainly in teacher training and teacher support. Even though this awareness is stated in many texts, no clear plans have been made to produce this change. This development is alarming because, as the literature says, a key element in the successful implementation of the policy is the views of the educational staff who have the major responsibility for implementing it (Avramadis & Norwich, 2002). However, no clear plans are made to educate teachers in another way, so a change of mind to a more inclusive way of thinking can be made. Both policymakers and teacher organizations agree to the relevance and importance of the training and ideas of teachers. However, teachers do not feel they actually get enough training. In conclusion, it seems to be that educating teachers is a goal, but no actual teacher training program has yet been realized. This is an important finding since a mental change of mind (Schuman, 2007) and the feeling of having the right competences (Goeij & Kleinen, 2009) are necessary to make AE succeed as a policy.

Another important finding is about the task that is placed on parents concerning the education of their children. It is acknowledged by both policymakers and parental organizations, that there is a fundamental importance that parents are aware about what AE means for their children and what their rights and obligations in this system are. This is the case for parents of children with and without special needs. Parental support and involvement is regarded as being greatly important in facilitating inclusive education (Palmer, Fuller, Arora, & Nelson, 2001). This willingness and understanding of parents' roles does not translate into the actual feeling of parents, and policymakers realize that parents are not involved enough at the moment. Concerning the literature that says parents play a crucial role in the success of inclusive education, it seems more work is needed towards helping parents to understand what AE means. With the realization that

inclusive education is the stepping stone to creating an inclusive society, a change of thinking about disability is going to be a part of society. For parents, this means they have to decide to be open to this change or not. An important part for both the government and teachers is to show that AE means inclusion and a continuous quality for all pupils.

In regard to these findings, it is possible to define an answer to the research question how the vision and mission of policymakers and advocacy groups about Appropriate Education relate to the definition of inclusive education. The system of AE is implemented because policymakers and advocacy groups want to realize finding a fitting place for every pupil. This is based on some aspects of inclusive education as starting point, but not the whole concept is represented, because there is a lack of focus on quality of education. The expectations were that the policy would not be completely based on the concept of inclusion (McLeskey et al, 2014; Vislie, 2003). Based on the knowledge that an 'easy' and fixed concept of inclusive education does not exist, and for that reason is not easily implemented. That expectation seems to have been confirmed in this study, were it becomes clear that only some aspects of inclusion are found in the mission and vision behind AE.

Regarding the current research on the policy of AE in the Dutch educational system, different limitations should be taken into account. It is important to realize that the current findings are based solely on the 39 analyzed documents. When more documents would have been analyzed, more useful information would have been found to understand the policy better. Because the current research is only a bachelor's thesis this was not possible.

Another limitation, is the fact that this research was conducted and coded by just one researcher. In content analysis, it might be preferable to work with multiple coders so it is possible to check for inter-coder-reliability (Bryman, 2012). This means checking if more people get the same message from a certain piece of text. Given the fact that only one researcher did all the coding and analysis and interpretation, it is possible that the results are partly influenced by the researcher's vision and interpretation. However, a part of this limitation is dissolved by the sole realization that personal vision can play a part and reflection of the researcher (Bryman, 2012?)

The last limitation that is important to mention, is the fact that the number of documents were not equally divided for the three groups: policymakers, parents and teachers. Most documents were from policymakers, and this might mean that the results mostly represent their mission and vision. This implicates that for further research it would be interesting to focus more on the parental and teacher perspective to make a clear comparison.

Considering the findings and limitations of this study, multiple implications for further research on the topic appear. It is interesting that the reasons for change to inclusion are described in almost every analyzed document, as solutions for existing problems. A drive for change is obviously more the bureaucratic and financial issues and less the mindset that there should be better treatments and equal rights for children with SEN. Based on this results, the question can be asked if that is a problem. It would be preferable if every policymaker, parent and teacher handled from pure inclusive interests, but if the the inclusive vision can be achieved through other means like, wanting to save money, that also works. It would be interesting though, to gain insight into the interests besides the mission and vision to find out what would be necessary to make people think absolutely inclusive. Also, further research in this area should focus on how to make sure labelling and indication on basis of a diagnosis can be reduced.

For further research it would be interesting to look at more documents from for instance the 'shaping' period, so the years before 2012 when the plans were made. Also, it would be possible to quantify the results when more documents were analyzed (Bryman, 2012). In further research it would be relevant to count times in which certain themes present themselves, in order to say more about what for instance is the most important reason for change and see differences between policymakers, parents and teachers.

An important finding considering teachers is that teachers are not yet feeling prepared, and no real plans to change this are being made. It would be very interesting to start conducting research in the area of what teachers need, or how to reform the system in a way that AE is not something hard anymore but rather something that is normal. In this matter, it is extremely important that teachers have certain ideas which they are schooled in, and changing this way of thinking will not be easy. For further research and in the practical field it would be a challenge to try and see how teachers can change their ideas and feel competent enough to educate all sorts of pupils in one classroom.

For further research, it would thus be relevant to analyze more documents and make sure these documents are a more equal reflection of all parties involved. However, it is clear that the change towards a more inclusive society is on its way through the educational system in The Netherlands. Looking at how the position of pupils with SEN changed over the past years, it is clear to say that awareness about equal treatment and equal chances in education and society is absolutely rising. We are not there yet, but the Appropriate Educational system is yet another step in the direction of realizing a fully inclusive society.

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Appendix: Axial code tree

Constraints of the old system

Participation in society

- Chance of getting a degree smaller in special education
- Chance of getting a normal job smaller
- Increase of demands in society from people, also with disabilities

Number of children going to special education

- Increase in the number of SEN labelled children because of better diagnostics
- Parents and schools had a financial interest in choosing special education
- Freedom of choice for parents was limited
- An increasing number of students is being sent to special education

Complexity of the system

- System was bureaucratic and complex
- System wasn't effective or efficient
- Financial system under pressure

Perspective on disability

- Old system labelled and started from the perspective of what children can't do
- Old system took the disability as starting point
- Help wasn't fixed on the individual

Pupils are staying home

- Unacceptable that children don't go to school for a longer period of time
- Children that are at home are in conflict with international treaties
- Children with intellectual disabilities face the highest risk of being excluded from education
- In the current system there are a lot of children staying at home

School buildings are often not accessible

Aims of the new system

Finance

- Financially controllable
- Focus has to be on the pupil, not money
- There will be no savings on education
- There will be no financial savings
- Money has to be spent according to the aims of appropriate education
- Getting money available for appropriate education is a big win
- Financial changes bring unclarity and insecurity
- Finance and definition problems between parents and schools

Bureaucracy and complexity

- As less as possible complexity and bureaucracy
- Less bureaucracy
- No unnecessary bureaucracy
- Less trouble for parents
- Appropriate education is a means of decentralizing
- Decreasing bureaucracy in school networks

Integrating care

- Cooperation between regular and special education
- Cooperation with parents
- Cooperation between education and environment
- Important role for the cooperation between schools
- *Transparency*
 - Transparent who gets money
- *Quality of education*
 - Quality of education and teachers should go up
 - School has the job of offering good education
 - Good mix of theory and practice should be part of appropriate education
 - Above all, ae means high quality of education
 - Ae is not a school type, more a way of working
- *Professionalism of teachers*
 - Trust in professionalism of the teacher
 - Investing in professionalism of the teacher
 - Teachers should shape appropriate education
 - Teacher has to be a professional in appropriate education
 - Good teachers
 - Teacher support is important
- *Schools have the obligation to care*
 - Schools have to give the child a fitting place
 - Appropriate education is a chance for schools to spend money more effective and efficient
 - Appropriate education gives schools more responsibilities
 - Obligation to care from schools is the core behind appropriate education
- *Interaction with regular pupils*
 - Better development by seeing and acting with regular pupils
- *Prepare kids for society*
 - That way children are best prepared for a place in society
- *Educational fit*
 - More custom made education
 - As fitting as possible
 - Finding a fitting place that everyone sees as the best place for that particular pupil
 - Didactics applied to individual needs
 - Tailoring
 - Increasing tailoring
 - All children deserve a place as fitting as possible
 - As many students as possible a fitting place in regular education
 - A fitting place for every student
 - Appropriate education should make sure as many children as possible attend normal schools in their neighbourhood
 - Aim: every child a fitting place in education
 - Goal is that every child gets a fitting place
 - An integral fitting offer should be realized

No children staying at home

- Making sure less children are staying at home
- Reducing the number of students that are staying at home
- All children deserve a place
- The government has the responsibility to create an educational system that everyone can participate in
- Better prerequisites to prevent stay at homers
- Appropriate education should lead to decrease of stay at homers
- It is unacceptable that children stay home for a long time
- No students at home or on waiting listst
- In 2020 no student that is home for longer than 3 months
- All effort should be aimed at making sure every child goes to school
- In complex situations it is possible that it takes longer to find the right education and care

Purpose of education

- Education should challenge pupils
- Get the best out of every pupil
- Appropriate education should imply the change that children wit hand without disabilities go to the same schools
- Students with a disability should not be discriminated which their qualities show

Labelling

- Less medical indication
- No more indication on basis of diagnosis
- Less labelling

Perspective of disability

- Start from what children can do and consider what they can't do
- Starting from what children can do instead of what they can't do

Change of mind

- Realizing appropriate education asks for a change of mind
- labour market can benefit
- The central question should be what a child needs to develop optimally
- what is needs to learn optimally

Imaging

- Wrong images about appropriate education exists

Practices of the new system*School networks are responsible*

- School boards are responsible for acting the policy
- Crucial role to school leaders
- Only half of the school and cooperation's have plans at this point
- Getting the responsibilities at the schools makes it easier to help children
- Appropriate education brings new responsibilities
- Schools feel they don't have enough money, staff and time for these changes
- Cooperation between regular and special education

- Parents, schools and cooperation's should see finding a fitting place as a common task
- Schools can specialize in certain fields
- School is obliged to find a fitting place for every child
- Physical accessibility is a responsibility of school and municipality
- Finding the right school is about the match between child and school
- *Cooperation with other policy changes*
 - Chance for more cooperation's in handling child problems
 - Two policy changes that influence each other
 - Appropriate education and childcare next to each other
 - Clear dividend of attention between education and childcare
 - Cooperation between education and childcare
 - Aim is to have more matching with broad childcare domain
 - Appropriate education means a mix of help from schools and the municipality
 - Pupils can now go to school only partly
 - Government should try to apply the changes in education and childcare at the same time
 - Different laws not in cooperation is the reason for problems
 - Not clear how responsibilities are divided
 - Different laws not in cooperation
- *Class growth*
 - Classes are not expected to grow bigger
- *Process of change*
 - Change will go slow
 - Smart organization of procedures is necessary
 - The solution is in many cases a paper one
- *Rights*
 - Right shouldn't be based on what organization you are dealing with
- *Involvement of parents*
 - Involvement and communication with parents and children is crucial
 - Parents aren't involved in appropriate education enough
 - Preferences of parents should be taken into account
 - Preferences of parents can be share in the ondersteuningsplanraad
 - Parents should be well informed through advisory phone lines
 - Parents can use own persoonsgebonden budget to finance for any extra needs
 - Parents should be informed about their rights and obligations
 - Parents should be able to choose where their child goes to school
- *Parental organizations*
 - Parents should have good organisations for and by parents themselves
- *Parental knowledge*
 - Appropriate education can only work if parents are well informed
 - The closer parents are to appropriate education, the more they know about is
 - Media seems to be the most important source of information for parents

- Parents don't expect too many changes for their children
- Parents should have enough information to be an equal partner in conversation
- *Ideas of teachers*
 - Teachers have certain imaging about appropriate education that does not necessarily are right
 - Think appropriate education is a means of saving money
 - Think big classes will occur
 - Think regular pupils wont get the attention they need
 - Teachers see appropriate education as a means of saving money
 - There is negative shaping of the concept among teachers
 - Teachers expect more pupils, more work and more administrative tasks
 - Teachers expect more student adopted to regular education
 - Teachers think appropriate education will influence students in a negative way

- *Informed teachers*
 - How teachers and parents are informed differs per school
 - Prepositions are not workplace oriented enough, more inside information from people who really work with these children is necessary

- *Involvement of teachers*
 - Teachers do not feel fully involved in the process
 - It is important that teachers support the plans
 - Teachers have got more work to do, appropriate education plays a role in that
 - Teachers should be well informed
 - Teachers and parents are at the basis of appropriate education

- *Education of teachers*
 - Teachers don't feel that they are educated enough
 - Don't think that they are trained enough
 - Teachers feel educated enough, but not able to manage all the differences inappropriate education
 - Investment in teacher training should be made to make appropriate education a success
 - Teachers don't think they had enough training
 - Every teacher should word on their professionalization, this will be measured in a professionalization register
 - Teacher training is necessary
 - Teachers have to possess complex skills belonging to appropriate education

Beliefs about what's good for children in education

- *AE is about the right to education*
 - All children deserve a place in education
 - Education shouldn't lead to exclusion
 - Appropriate education is for all children
 - Equal treatment is a duty

- Access to education has to be the same for every child
- Every child has the right to education
- Every child should go to school
- Every child has the right to appropriate education, fitting their needs
- Every child has the right to education that fits their possibilities

— *Appropriate education realizes individual tailoring*

- All children deserve a place as fitting as possible
- Tailored help
- Get the best out of every pupil

— *Focus has changed to the individual*

- Disabled child has the right to education to be able to live a fulfilling life and participate actively in society