

**The Merry-Go-Round of Disadvantage:
Educational Policy and Integration in Segregated Schools**

ISBN 978 90 5170 867 7

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Cover design and lay-out: Victor de Vries

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Rozenberg Publishers, Bloemgracht 82hs, 1015 TM Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tel.: + 31 (0) 20 625 54 29

Fax: + 31 (0) 20 620 33 95

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www.rozenbergps.com

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Educational Policy and Integration in Segregated Schools**

Achterstand als draaimolen:
Onderwijsbeleid en integratie op gesegregeerde scholen
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr. J.C. Stoof, ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 30 mei 2008 des ochtends te 10.30 uur

door

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geboren op 14 maart 1978 te Leiden

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*Aan Anner,
Volg altijd je hart*

Acknowledgments

Five days a week, head teachers, teachers and pupils at two segregated schools in a town in the Netherlands work hard to achieve educational success. Parents, in and around those schools, support and motivate their children to work diligently and to seize the opportunities that education offers. It has been a thrilling experience to be among them. Their candid sharing of their vision, experiences, and considerations made my research possible. I am grateful for their welcoming me into their schools and impressed by their sincerity and dedication despite the challenging circumstances in which they live and work.

Another thrilling experience is the completion of this thesis, which would not have been possible without the considerable support and encouragement I received along the way. I would first like to thank Robert Maier and Willibrord de Graaf. Your accessibility, critical reading of my work, and your trust in me was inestimable. The space you gave me allowed me to grow at my own pace and to my own satisfaction. I would also like to thank Wim Hoppers who put considerable effort into helping me understand the educational system in South Africa and beyond. I have become passionate about the questions of social participation you introduced me to in a system supposedly accessible to all children. It has been a great pleasure to have been able to put your knowledge and advice into practice.

Completing this thesis would not have been possible without my family and friends to whom I am deeply indebted. You encouraged and advised me on so many matters, and we had numerous inspiring conversations about my dissertation. Throughout the past few years, I was able to share both the highs and the lows with you. I really enjoyed the walks along the beach, the cups of tea, the telephone calls, the e-mails we exchanged, and the outings we went on. We will always be there for each other, and this I truly appreciate.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and my dear brother Martijn, who taught and encouraged me to follow my heart. Without your love, I would never have reached this point in my life. And most of all, I want to thank my beloved Erik. You made me believe in myself and develop my potential. We truly complement each other.

*De kleine vijver
loopt vol met het blauw van de
zomerse hemel**

* Houwink, R. (1992). *Door het open raam. Een keuze uit nagelaten haiku en tanka, met een nawoord door Anton Gerits*. Amsterdam: De Beuk.

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1.

Deux Chevaux: Immigrant Children and Segregated Schools

*The quality of education at this school is good.
But when driving to France, you'll simply arrive later
if you're driving a Deux Chevaux rather than a Mercedes.*
[sl270404conversationht]¹

The head teacher at the *Sleutelschool*, a Dutch primary school attended by many immigrant pupils, is speaking. The Deux Chevaux refers to his pupils. His metaphor raises questions. Does he mean to say that his pupils will eventually attain the same as pupils from native-Dutch backgrounds: does he consider that to be possible? And is he only speaking about a different make of car or about the different quality of the two cars? What about the reputation of his Deux Chevaux: what do other drivers expect of the capabilities of the Deux Chevaux and how do they respond to it? Is the same route taken to France irrespective of which car is being driven? And what about the driver - are different people driving different kinds of cars, are the drivers of the two cars equally satisfied with their trip, and do they experience different kinds of problems along the way?

These are just a few questions that can metaphorically be raised about a school that serves many pupils from immigrant backgrounds. The reader has probably already unwittingly answered some of these questions: but are these answers in line with what actually happens at what are referred to as 'black schools'? As a matter of fact, the term 'black school' itself places question marks about the reputation of these schools: it associates these schools with problems and 'black schools' may be regarded as the Deux Chevaux among schools. The growing popularity of the alternative epithet 'colourful school' suggests that schools want to get rid of that negative connotation (see e.g. Den Brok, Hajer, Patist & Swachten, 2004).

1 Quotation from the Sleutelschool's head teacher in a conversation on 27 April 2004. See chapter four for an explanation of the coding.

2 'Black schools' is a term formally used in the Netherlands to refer to schools that serve more than 50% of pupils belonging to ethnic minority groups. In the Netherlands there are 1,595,280 pupils in primary education in 2006-2007. Fifteen percent (237,110) of these pupils belong to ethnic minority groups (CBS, 2007). There are 6970 regular primary schools in 2005-2006. One in ten of these schools is a black school. In the big cities the percentage of black schools is much higher: there are 623 schools in the four big cities of which over 50% are black schools; one in three has even more than 80% of pupils belonging to an ethnic minority group (SCP, WODC & CBS, 2005).

1.1 The Colouring of Segregated Schools: Between Connotation and Practice

The connotation of 'black schools' having problems is disputable: when considering their day-to-day functioning, segregated schools may be considered problematic, while they may be considered to function satisfactorily when what they achieve is taken into consideration.

Concerning their daily functioning, schools that serve high numbers of pupils from non-native Dutch backgrounds, which often tend to be located in cities, struggle with problems such as: low educational levels of parents; a considerable discrepancy between parents' educational levels; many broken and one-parent families; significant ethnic and socio-economic diversity; many pupils with language deficits and pupils who are not motivated to learn; high numbers of pupils in need of additional educational support; and more frequent school truancy (Inspectie, 2006a). Furthermore, another inspectorate report (Inspectie, 2006c) concludes that physical violence among pupils is on the increase in primary schools, and particularly in those located in the four big cities (where most immigrants live), and that teachers at these schools are more often subjected to verbal threats by parents. The importance of the socialisation role of these school organisations is increasingly emphasised.

Furthermore, between 1998 and 2002, black schools were over-represented among schools that performed badly. Badly performing schools is a classification used by the Dutch inspectorate and applied to schools that, for three consecutive years, and at the end of primary education, fail to achieve the expected outcomes of schools with a comparable pupil population. Badly performing schools tend to be characterised by conflict between the teachers, the team and the parents, and the school management and the teachers about the pedagogic course to be taken (Inspectie, 2006b). Though the number of black schools classified as poorly performing schools appears to be declining, the chance that pupils from non-native Dutch backgrounds attend a poorly performing school is still twice as high as might be expected given their general numbers (Inspectie, 2006b).

Given the developments and problems in segregated schools, the negative connotation that 'black schools' are problem schools would seem to be correct. The problems and dynamics that occur in these schools have a considerable, negative impact on the learning and teaching in these schools. But contrary to what may be expected given these problems, segregation does not necessarily result in lower educational attainment³. Segregation in neighbourhoods (Gramberg, 2000) and in classrooms (Peetsma, Van Der Veen, Koopman & Van Schooten, 2006) is not necessarily related to pupils' cognitive attainment. Though the effect of school segregation is somewhat contested, it is never considered to be particularly significant. For example, Driessen, Doesborgh, Ledoux, Van Der Veen and Vergeer (2003) conclude that it does have an influence on pupils' cognitive development, but only a minor one. They found no effect on non-cognitive development, such as wellbeing and self-esteem. Others argue that those schools with a high percentage of ethnic minority pupils in particular seem able to make up for language and maths deficits. These schools have supposedly found ways to deal more appropriately with immigrant pupils (Gijsberts

3 Schools in the Netherlands are ranked in categories and their relative scores are compared. Added value is the criterion. Schools with many pupils from immigrant backgrounds are, for instance, not expected to attain the same as schools attended by pupils from mainly native-Dutch, higher socio-economic backgrounds.

& Dagevos, 2005; SCP et al., 2005). Verkuyten and Thijs (2002) furthermore conclude that segregation has a positive effect on the issue of racial harassment: where ethnic minority groups are in the majority, they are less likely to be subjected to racism. Seen from these research outcomes, the problematic connotation of the term 'black schools' is contestable; attending this kind of school does not necessarily result in a lower educational outcome.

What is striking in these studies on segregated school organisations⁴ is the variety of issues addressed⁵. Studies that aimed to single out factors that determine either the failure or success of these kinds of school organisations did not result in evidence for one specific hypothesis or another: evidence was found to support all hypotheses (Van Der Grift & Houtveen, 2006) or disprove them all (Overmaat & Ledoux, 2002). Therefore, the outcomes and processes discussed above may all be part of and important to the everyday reality in segregated school organisations. These findings still provide little understanding about what actually happens in segregated school organisations as a whole. It raises questions about how segregated schools deal with the challenges of their local environment in a context of negative connotations, but also of achieved success.

1.2 The Functioning of Segregated Schools in a Wider Context

Studying the relationship between segregated schools and immigrant pupils and parents requires a broad approach. It is important to consider the connotations already mentioned and also the policy contexts.

Concerning connotations, concepts such as "disadvantaged children" and "segregated schools" influence the relationship between segregated schools and immigrants through peoples' subjectivities and their behaviour. For example, ideas about immigrant pupils and parents and about segregated school organisations influence parents' school choice: native-Dutch parents may decide not to enrol their child in a nearby segregated school because of negative connotations associated with these schools (see e.g. Trouw, 2004a, 2004b, 2006).

Connotations also influence the dynamics in the school itself: teachers and head teachers, as the following incidents illustrate, may feel well or badly represented by, among other things, newspaper reports. Teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool*, another Dutch segregated primary school, had displayed a newspaper article in the staffroom, with the heading: "Kids, shut up". It relates the experiences of a former teacher who pays a visit to a 'black school'. Having followed lessons at this school for a week, the former teacher concludes that despite all kinds of different ideologies on constructivist teaching methods,

4 I prefer the term 'segregated schools' rather than 'black schools' because it emphasises more demographic situations and social conditions such as parents' school choice. The concept of 'black school' in my opinion incorrectly overlooks the heterogeneity of the pupils belonging to ethnic minority groups and tends to stigmatise pupil's skin colour and depart from an essentialism-approach to non-native Dutch backgrounds. However, the term 'segregated schools' can also be used to refer to schools that only serve native-Dutch pupils (the white pupil, so to speak). In this dissertation I refer only to those schools with high percentages of pupils belonging to ethnic minority groups.

5 This kind of fragmentation is not restricted to the phenomena of segregated schools but characterises Dutch research on educational disadvantage in general. Due to fragmentation and despite the many studies conducted, little is still known about how different factors come to constitute educational disadvantage (Meijnen, 2003).

that when it comes to education, the only thing that will really work is for these immigrant pupils to have the material drilled into them (NRC, 2004). The bad taste left by the article is striking and surely does not give rise to the impression that teaching in segregated schools can be fun. The fact that it was displayed on the staffroom wall might be a sign of the negative expectations among teachers in segregated schools, as have been described in many studies (Jungbluth, 2003).

The topic of negative teacher expectations had also hit the head headlines earlier (Algemeen Dagblad, 2003; Volkskrant, 2003), and the head teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* pointed out that, in his opinion, negative expectations do indeed cause problems in the contact with immigrant parents and pupils. But his teachers reacted rather sceptically to this series of articles: not all of them refuted the conclusions, but the articles were a blow because they felt they were being blamed while teaching in, what they consider to be a very problematic situation.

Policy also affects the relationship between segregated schools and immigrant pupils and parents. Chapters two and three discuss the influence of policy on this relationship in detail: here I draw on two newspaper articles to illustrate the importance of taking policy into consideration when studying segregated schools' attempts to deal with the challenges their local environment poses.

An alderman from the city of Amsterdam recently proposed introducing a 'child-raising obligation' for parents. He emphasised the need for this obligation by referring to, among other things, the misbehaviour of ten-year old immigrant children with an Islamic background in response to a lesson about farm animals during which pigs were also the subject of discussion. In response to the incident, the school decided that this kind of lesson would no longer be given. But the alderman did not agree with this decision because, in his opinion, parents are accountable for this kind of misbehaviour: they failed to teach their children why education is important and taught them not to talk about pigs. His idea was to draw up a minimum number of child-raising requirements and make meeting the requirements compulsory by imposing certain financial restrictions, such as cutting down on social security benefits or lowering family allowance, if they were not met (Volkskrant, 2007).

This proposal may be considered to positively support segregated schools because it may result in clearer definitions of schools' and parents' responsibilities for pupil behaviour. But the obligation may also have a negative effect because it might give rise to stigmatisation, it may hold individual parents responsible for problems over which they do not have full control, it may increase the financial burden in families, or it may result in disputes about what can reasonably be expected of all parents, irrespective of the situations in which they live.

The idea to appoint the most experienced teachers at schools in disadvantaged areas (Bos, 2006) also gives rise to numerous questions. Does a lack of expertise among teachers explain the existing problems, and why would experienced teachers be able to achieve success? Are they more capable of meeting the basic requirements, so that normal teaching and learning can take place, or have they developed their own alternative approaches? And if the most experienced teachers work in segregated schools, how is their knowledge and skills transferred to their younger, less experienced colleagues?

These two policy proposals indicate that the policy context in which segregated schools function only complicates the way in which they deal with their local environment. Policy imposes its own challenges on school organisations because interventions may create unforeseen imbalances in the school's relationship with the environment and also because policy implementation seems to require critical interpretation.

Taking these influences of the wider context in which segregated schools function into consideration, it becomes clear that the segregated schools and immigrants are not 'a Deux Chevaux': a two-stroke engine. Their relationship is not an independently functioning system: it is influenced by social developments and policy, and, vice versa the relationship between segregated school organisations and immigrants is also an element in social developments and policy.

1.3 Focus of the Study

The central question of this study is how segregated schools deal with educational disadvantage among their pupils. Their attempts and the outcomes of their attempts are studied in the context of both local circumstances and policy. As far as local circumstances are concerned, attention is first given to some of the, previously discussed, challenges that confront segregated schools, and secondly to the way in which those involved in and around the school, such as parents and pupils, conjointly shape the relationship between the school organisation and its local environment.

As far as the policy context is concerned, I am initially interested in the policy measures to which schools have to respond, either because they are held accountable for implementing these measures, or because the measures influence their existing relationship with the local environment. Secondly, problem definitions that underpin policy measures are considered because they influence subjectivities and behaviour and, therefore, the interaction between teachers, head teachers, pupils and parents.

How segregated schools deal with educational disadvantage is examined in terms of processes to be found in the relationship between segregated schools and their local environment, and in particular between head teachers, teachers and immigrant parents and pupils. The outcomes of these processes are not measured through the results of, for example, language and mathematics tests. Instead, attention is given to whether the assumed causes of educational disadvantage are met and solved in segregated school organisations.

1.4 An Overview of the Book

Drawing attention to the role of the educational system in integration processes is somewhat problematic in a context in which discussions about immigrants are becoming ever harsher: because emphasis is increasingly put on the responsibility of the individual immigrant to integrate in Dutch society, drawing attention to the institute can serve as an excuse for non-assimilation (Duyvendak, 2006). Nevertheless, the aim of this dissertation is to gain an understanding of the educational institute and its role. The reason for this is, firstly, and as pointed out in this chapter, because understanding the role played by segregated schools in

educational disadvantage is fragmented and does not yet provide an understanding of what happens on a daily basis in these schools. Despite this lack of insight, media reports and policy proposals regarding segregated schools give rise to commotion and have a deep impact on the functioning of segregated schools and on their relationship with immigrant pupils and parents. Seen from that angle, a better understanding of the challenges confronting these schools and the way in which they deal with these challenges is essential.

This dissertation was also motivated by some dissatisfaction with the deficit discourse that dominates Dutch research and educational policy. This approach is not only somewhat one-sided because it fails to consider opportunity structures and processes of inclusion and exclusion in the educational system (Ledoux, 2003; Rijkschroeff, Duyvendak & Pels, 2003), but also because of its one-sidedness it may also be considered as a perspective whose explanation of educational disadvantage is unsatisfactory. By examining the role of the school organisation, the aim of this dissertation is to investigate the possible limitations of a deficit approach, and to develop a more comprehensive approach to the phenomenon of educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils.

The discussion about possible shortcomings of the deficit approach is taken up in chapter two, which examines research into educational disadvantage. It discusses a number of problems with current thinking about educational disadvantage and proposes an alternative approach to this phenomenon. To develop this approach research into the interaction between pupils, parents and teachers is interrelated with research on policy processes and on dynamics in school organisations.

Chapter three focuses on policy debates. I discuss changes in problem definitions in integration policy and examine how these changes are interrelated with problem definitions in educational policy and with recently introduced educational measures. I argue that even though the importance of the relationship between segregated schools and immigrant parents is increasingly emphasised in an attempt to combat educational disadvantage, the deficit discourse as applied in policy and its instrumental approach to school organisations seems to have driven segregated schools and immigrant parents apart.

Chapter four provides the methodological framework used in this dissertation. It discusses the theoretical points of departure, the (sub) research questions derived from the theoretical exploration, expectations about the outcomes of the study, and the analytical approach used to formulate an answer to the research questions. This chapter also provides information about the methodological approach of the study and, in its final sections, includes a general introduction to the two schools and their neighbourhoods.

Chapter five turns to the empirical data generated as part of this study. It covers the "Walk-in Morning", which is for parents with children in grades one and two. The schools were obliged to implement this activity with the formal objective of improving contact with parents and of enhancing the skills of parents to support their children's educational career. The focus in this chapter is in particular on the translation of policy into practice, and the effects of the translation on the interaction between teachers and parents.

Chapter six discusses topics that concern the two schools at the time of research. It covers information about problems experienced with pupil behaviour and parent involvement and about how the schools attempt to deal with those problems. This chapter takes a closer look at the interaction between teachers and head teachers and situates the

interaction within processes of ascribing and identifying with identities and of formulating and implementing policy.

Chapter seven covers the final empirical data generated as part of this study. It analyses the “Mother-tongue Programme” which is conducted at both schools, but for which the schools hold no formal responsibility. The programme intervenes in the schools’ relationships with their local environments as its aim is to teach the Dutch language and stimulate parent involvement among women who barely speak Dutch at all, and who are generally considered to be difficult to make contact with. A striking finding in this chapter is that schools miss out on getting into contact with the participating women.

Chapter eight concludes this dissertation with a summary of the main findings, and formulating answers to the research questions. It also discusses the implications of this study for combating educational disadvantage among ethnic minority groups. A drawback in combating educational disadvantage is located in the current, dominant, deficit approach to immigrants. It not only hinders segregated schools when dealing with the challenges their local environments pose, but even seems to reinforce the problem of educational disadvantage. Therefore, the necessity to develop an alternative conceptualisation of educational disadvantage is emphasised. This study, albeit limited to two segregated schools, offers an initial understanding of how an alternative might be developed.

2.

School Organisations and Home Upbringing: Educational Disadvantage as the Outcome of Interaction

It is well known that educational disadvantage is related to pupils' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds: a lower socio-economic position and an ethnic minority background increase the risk of falling behind in education (e.g. Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Breen & Jonsson, 2005; Sirin, 2005; OECD, 2007). Children from these backgrounds are, amongst other things, more often behind in mathematics and language in primary education; they generally attend lower forms of secondary education; they drop-out of secondary and tertiary education more frequently; and they more often fail to obtain a diploma at the end of their educational career (Kao & Thompson, 2003; SCP et al., 2005; Tolsma, Coenders & Lubbers, 2007).

Family circumstances and styles of upbringing are generally regarded as an important explanation for the relationship between educational disadvantage and pupils' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (e.g. McLoyd, 1998; Sullivan, 2001; Driessen & Doesborgh, 2003; Tesser, 2003). Family circumstances such as a low family income, poverty, large families, single-parent families, low levels of education, illiteracy, poor housing, and living in impoverished neighbourhoods all play an important role in this relationship. They have a negative influence on educational achievement and they appear more often and more frequently to accumulate in families from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds (Leseman, 2002; Gesthuizen, De Graaf & Kraaykamp, 2005).

Besides these risk factors, differences in families' socialisation practices are also an important explanation for the relationship between family backgrounds and educational positions. Considerable diversity can be found in children's knowledge when they enter formal education. Children from lower socio-economic or ethnic minority backgrounds already fall behind at an early age: their language and maths development is below those of children from higher socio-economic or native backgrounds (e.g. Tesser & Iedema, 2001; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; SCP et al., 2005; Steensel, 2006). Because socialisation practices prepare children for education (it influences what they learn and how they learn prior to starting school), they are seen as an important explanation for educational disadvantage (Entwisle & Alexander, 1993; Leseman & Van Den Boom, 1999; De Graaf, De Graaf & Kraaykamp, 2000).

A deficit-perspective on socialisation practices in families from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds dominates the discussion about educational disadvantage

in the Netherlands. The socialisation practices from these families are generally conceived of as not preparing children very well for participation in the educational system: the children are less prepared or their preparation is of a lower quality. Their child-raising styles tend to be characterised by: hierarchical communication, a focus on discipline, a focus on group behaviour and social unity, and less attention for explanatory talk. These features do not fit in well with educational norms, which draw on: ideas of negotiation, more egalitarian communication structures, a focus on individual autonomy, and an emphasis on the importance of explanatory talk (Pels, 2000; Driessen, 2001; Meijnen, 2003; Eldering, 2005).

Opinions about how to close the gap between deficit home upbringing and socialisation practices in the educational curriculum tend to differ. The idea of bringing upbringing in the home context in line with a school's practices appears most frequently and underpins the current, major focus on interventions in early childhood. The aim is to work on deficit-remediation and to prevent and combat disadvantage before the children enrol in formal education (Reezigt, 2003; Leseman, 2007).

Others, however, espouse the idea of 'equal opportunities'; a reform of the educational system should lead to differences being better incorporated, which would then result in a more level playing field for all pupils irrespective of their backgrounds (Heath, 1985; Lareau, 2003; Dronkers, 2007). In this perspective, the white, middle-class values of child upbringing, on which the educational system is based, are seen as problematic.

What is also subject to discussion is whether socialisation practices depend on socio-economic or on cultural backgrounds, or a combination of both. The details of this vast discussion are beyond the scope of the present dissertation, but generally speaking, a socio-economic background is considered to have more influence than a cultural background (Tesser & Iedema, 2001; Van Ours, Veenman & Verhoeven, 2002; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Meijnen, 2003). The latter is also seen as an explanation for the residue of educational disadvantage left unexplained by socio-economic background (see e.g. Andriessen, 2006). There are numerous causes of the "cultural-background effect", including the mother tongue and the quality of Dutch spoken at home (Driessen, Van Der Slik & De Bot, 2002), the immigrant children's motivation to achieve educational success (Phalet, Andriessen & Lens, 2004), a country's modes of incorporation of immigrants (Portes & MacLeod, 1996), and processes of discrimination and stigmatisation (Paulle, 2002; Farkas, 2003).

Studies on educational disadvantage in the Netherlands tend to emphasise the importance of deficit socialisation practices more than the detrimental social and economic circumstances in which children grow up (Pels, 1989). In the context of the current integration debate, which is discussed in detail in chapter three, the focus on deficits is strengthened. It may however result in accepting immigrant pupils' educational disadvantage as a result of unsound child-raising styles (Gowricharn, 2006), and further diminish the attention paid to the role of the educational institute (Rijkschroeff et al., 2003).

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that paying attention to the educational institute is important in order to arrive at a better understanding of immigrant pupils' educational disadvantage, and to combat it. The argument is that even though social, economic and cultural practices in immigrant families may differ from those in native-

Dutch, middle-class families and are connected with educational disadvantage, these differences in themselves do not really explain educational disadvantage. To understand this relationship, information is needed about the processes through which differences actually bring about educational disadvantage. I go beyond the assumption that either certain backgrounds prepare children less well for education, or that the educational system presents pupils from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds with fewer opportunities. As I will demonstrate, these perspectives fail to explain the 'how' of educational disadvantage. Neither background resources, nor educational opportunities (or the possible accumulation of the two) result in educational disadvantage. Instead, it is the interaction between socialisation and educational practices that is decisive. This chapter develops a theoretical perspective in which the educational disadvantage of immigrant pupils is conceived of as the result of a negotiation process about the subjective meaning of socialisation and educational practices for pupils' educational positions.

This theoretical perspective is developed as follows: section 2.1 further discusses the influence of socialisation practices on educational positions. I examine the dynamics of these practices, the attempts of parents, pupils and teachers to remediate for possible detrimental effects, and the norms applied to judge socialisation styles. Section 2.2 explores the role of school organisations in the relationship between socialisation styles and educational disadvantage. To this end, the outcomes and approaches of School Effectiveness Research are discussed. This discussion provides an opening for a further theoretical exploration of a perspective on educational disadvantage to which interaction and norms are central. I start this theoretical exploration at the micro-level of the educational system: section 2.3 discusses how immigrant pupils and parents respond to the educational curriculum. This is followed in section 2.4 by an examination of teachers' development of the educational curriculum in their daily teaching practice. Section 2.5 combines the understandings of the role of pupils and parents and those of teachers and develops an understanding of how their behaviour constitutes the relationship between socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and educational positions. Section 2.6, subsequently, moves on to the level of educational policy and examines how policy restricts interaction at the micro-level. This section is followed by an examination of the school's role in this framing effect of policy: school organisation is situated in its policy and local context in section 2.7. Section 2.8 concludes this chapter by highlighting the theoretical points of departure of this dissertation.

2.1 Dynamics in the Relationship between Socialisation Practices and Educational Practices

Studies on socialisation practices in ethnic minority families predict (Pels, 2000) and describe (Coenen, 2001) that socialisation practices in immigrant families change. Parents adapt their socialisation practices over time and as the result of living in the Netherlands. These changes do not occur independently of the educational system. On the contrary, parents also adapt their styles in response to the educational system (Coenen, 2001). Other contexts that influence the child-raising styles of immigrant parents are, for example: child characteristics, extended family pressure, relationships within the core family, and perspectives on the home country (Pels & De Haan, 2003; Eldering, 2005). As a result of

these context and time dependent developments, significant diversity develops between ethnic minority groups (Pels, 2000; Smit, Driessen & Doesborgh, 2005) as well as within these groups (Van Der Hoek, 1994; Coenen, 2001).

The changes that occur in the socialisation styles among immigrant groups are increasingly seen less as developing linearly towards the dominant model of socialisation. Instead, the developments are variable and context-dependent and elements of the initial socialisation practice are combined with elements from the dominant socialisation style, to which new elements are also added. Socialisation practices are adjusted in response to the bi-cultural situation in which immigrant children grow up (Coenen, 2001; Pels & De Haan, 2003).

Besides socialisation styles being interrelated with the educational system and depending on immigration-specific circumstances, deficits in socialisation styles do not necessarily result in educational disadvantage. Many of the immigrant pupils whose home situations are considered to be less supportive of their educational career continue to fall behind in education. But there are also pupils who succeed, and their numbers are on the increase (SCP et al., 2005).

Studies on these successful immigrant pupils show that they, and their parents, do not passively bear the negative consequences of their background characteristics. Van Der Veen (2001), for instance, concludes that successful pupils from Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds come from families in which the parents are less able to support their children and have little knowledge about the Dutch education system. But the parents attempt to compensate by emphasising the importance of education, by stimulating the child to achieve, and by arranging for support when a child falls behind. Moreover, pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds do not just simply accept the detrimental influence of their parents' socialisation practices. They, for example, attach a different meaning to their families in their educational careers compared with successful native-Dutch pupils (Hustinx & Meijnen, 2001), or they try to compensate for their experienced lack of parental support by drawing on the support that elder siblings can offer (Crul, 2000).

The entanglement of socialisation styles with the educational system, the education context-specific judgement on socialisation styles of immigrant parents as being less supportive, and the non-deterministic influence of socialisation styles on educational positions, are insights that equally apply to the role that educational opportunities play in the existence of educational disadvantage.

Bearing in mind that socialisation styles fit in with the bi-cultural situations in which immigrant pupils are raised, the question whether the educational system offers equal opportunities to pupils growing up in different circumstances becomes even more pressing (Heath, 1985; Lareau, 2003). However, transferring problems of educational disadvantage from deficits in the socialisation practices to shortcomings in the school system would seem to be too simplistic. Diversity among pupils poses a realistic threat to educational processes and outcomes. For example, the impact on educational processes of speaking a language at home that is different from the language of instruction at school should not be underestimated. After all, pupils in the educational system need to acquire conventional knowledge that prepares them for society (Spillane, 2002). Locating the causes of educational disadvantage in an inadequate provision of opportunities tends to overlook this embedding

of the educational system in its wider social contexts.

Moreover, disadvantaged positions of immigrant pupils are not determined by educational norms. On the one hand, because the pupils and parents try to compensate, and on the other hand because the schools also try to adapt their processes in order to combat educational disadvantage. Parents and pupils, for example, compensate for their relatively weak position on the job market by developing higher aspirations (Hustinx & Meijen, 2001), and by ignoring the advice about the level of secondary education given at the end of primary education, which tends to be lower than the advice given to equally successful native-Dutch pupils (Van Der Veen, 2001). Moreover, there are schools that, given their pupils' backgrounds, achieve more than what is generally expected of them: they "succeed against the odds" (Maden, 2001). Arrears in language and mathematics are combated at these schools and it is generally assumed that they have found ways to deal with the differences in the resources their pupils bring with them (Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2005; SCP et al., 2005).

These insights into the influence of socialisation practices and educational opportunities on the educational positions of immigrant pupils point out that, firstly, socialisation practices and educational practices do not function autonomously. They are linked together and are mutually adaptive. Secondly, judgments about the soundness of socialisation practices and educational practices depend on the criteria used. They depend on the extent to which other societal contexts, in addition to the educational context, are taken into consideration. Finally, neither immigrant parents and pupils, nor schools passively endure the negative effects that family circumstances and educational opportunities tend to have on the educational attainments of immigrant children. They play an active role in disproving the assumed relationship between immigrant backgrounds and educational disadvantage. Taking these understandings into consideration, educational disadvantage is not the accumulated product of deficits in immigrant parents' socialisation practices and the restricted educational opportunities offered to them. It results, instead, from a far more interactive and reciprocal, dynamic, and norm-dependent process between socialisation and educational practices.

2.2 Educational Disadvantage as the Outcome of Interaction: Learning from School Effectiveness Research

To further discuss relationships between home upbringing and the educational system, this section examines the role of the school organisation by discussing findings from School Effectiveness Research (SER)⁶. It offers an opening for a further theoretical exploration of a view on educational disadvantage to which interaction and norms are central.

6 A distinction can be made between research into school effectiveness and research into school improvement. The latter focuses on how school organisations adopt innovations and develop successful practices. Both approaches are underpinned by the assumption that research findings are generally applicable, irrespective of the schools' contexts. Because of this shared assumption, drawing a distinction between school effectiveness and school improvement is not necessary for the line of argumentation developed in this section and for the sake of readability the term School Effectiveness Research is used.

Using this SER approach may appear to contradict the proposed view on educational disadvantage. Indeed, SER generally aims to control for circumstances rather than to explain how it interacts with educational outcomes (Scheerens, Bosker & Creemers, 2000), and SER uses a causal approach of educational processes instead of a more interactive and dynamic one (Luyten, Visscher & Witziers, 2005). However, this perspective is explored for three reasons.

Firstly, the functioning of school organisations is central to this dissertation. Because of its prominence in Dutch research and in educational policies on educational disadvantage (Ledoux, 2003), SER is expected to influence the functioning of school organisations both through policies and programmes that depart from a SER perspective and through the way in which head teachers and teachers perceive the functioning of school organisations. Discussing SER therefore provides some contextual understanding of the functioning of school organisations as discussed in the empirical chapters of this dissertation.

Secondly, in response to criticism about SER's ignorance of the impact of the school's circumstances, the influence of local circumstances on the functioning of school organisations is increasingly taken into consideration. More information is now available on this matter. Discussing these understandings is important because it also provides for a contextual understanding of the functioning of school organisations. Among other things, the relationship between the local circumstances and the school's functioning will constitute a significant framework for head teachers and teachers to make sense of their own daily work and that of their pupils.

Thirdly, SER has come in for some severe criticism (see e.g. Thrupp 2001; Luyten et al., 2005): for example, because SER failed to study the interaction between school organisations, pupils and their parents from different backgrounds. Reflecting on the criticism provides a first focus in the theoretical discussion that follows this section.

Success Factors at School Organisations?

School effectiveness research addresses the question as to why certain school organisations succeed, while others fail. The assumption that by identifying the characteristics of successful school organisations and transferring them or replicating them in schools in other contexts is what underlies this research approach. In other words, the assumption that what works for one school will also work for another school and what works for the majority of pupils will also work for a minority of disadvantaged pupils both underpin SER (Jansen, 1995).

The following characteristics are generally found at successful schools: leadership at these schools is active and strong; the school culture is positive; attention is continuously paid to professional development of the teachers; parental involvement is high; relationships between school, parents and pupils are good; the school climate is safe and orderly; the schools are information-rich environments; and teachers have high expectations of their pupils (see, for example, Henchey, 2001; Chapman & Harris, 2004; Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004). Having high expectations of pupils, and active and strong leadership in particular are considered important for schools that serve many pupils from lower class or ethnic minority backgrounds (Proudford & Baker, 1995; Lupton, 2004).

In the Netherlands, the above factors were found *not* to characterise successful

schools that serve high percentages of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieved relatively high educational outcomes as measured against national standard tests for mathematics and language, and who therefore were regarded as successful (Overmaat & Ledoux, 2002). Overmaat and Ledoux (2002) tested whether indeed some of the factors which, according to School Effectiveness Research, contribute to effectiveness, characterise the kind of schools mentioned. They, for example, put forward the hypothesis that teachers at these successful schools have positive expectations for pupils from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds, are not prejudiced about their specific social or ethnic-specific backgrounds, and that they make an effort to develop the cognitive and cultural resources of these pupils. Their hypotheses were not confirmed and sometimes their findings even contradicted what they expected to find. Overmaat and Ledoux (2002) concluded that, according to norms on effective schools, these kinds of schools do not function any differently or any better than schools that serve a similar pupil population but fail to succeed.

To explain these results, Overmaat and Ledoux (2002) point out that SER assumes that effective schools are relatively stable. Considerable fluctuations in the schools' educational outcomes or teaching methods are not expected. This contradicted the developments in the schools included in their study. These schools were characterised by instability. Eighty percent of the schools involved in their research had recently undergone far-reaching changes, such as major changes in pupil numbers, in staffing or management and in their educational philosophy.

Segregated Schools and the Achievement of Success

Instability indeed seems to be a characteristic of schools attended by high numbers of pupils from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds. Generally, these schools are located in so-called disadvantaged areas where, amongst other things, poverty, crime and unemployment rates are high. As Lupton (2004, 2005) describes, the challenges that confront schools in disadvantaged areas are considerable and have a deep impact on the school itself. She briefly outlines the following de-stabilising challenges confronting schools located in disadvantaged areas in England: the schools are confronted with a wide range of abilities and prior attainments, and those pupils who perform the worst have serious learning needs; material poverty characterises the local environment of the school, and this has serious consequences for pupils' basic health provisions such as food and clothing, financial contributions of parents, and learning materials available at home. Furthermore, the emotional environments are charged. The number of pupils who are traumatised, unhappy, anxious or vulnerable is higher than at schools located in more affluent neighbourhoods. The schools serve a minority of children who have severely disturbed behaviour and who regularly struggle to get through a school day without any hitches. On top of that, parental involvement is low, and levels of non-attendance are high. Both high pupil mobility and the frequent occurrence of incidents, finally disrupt planning and the progression of daily work.

All these challenges affect the stability of school organisations and threaten its quality. Quality might be affected negatively because staff recruitment and retention at these schools is a serious problem; pupil numbers often decline, which increases the risk

of the school being closed down; work can be emotionally stressful and unsatisfying for teachers because educational outcomes are generally low; and quality declines because the instability gives rise to day-to-day management problems (Lupton, 2004, 2005). Also in the Netherlands, segregated schools are characterised by these kinds of problems that threaten their quality (Inspectie 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Jungbluth, 2006).

Given the instability of schools located in disadvantaged areas and the threats this poses to the quality of the school organisation, SER increasingly emphasises that these schools may need to reorganise themselves in a different way compared with schools in more affluent neighbourhoods. Studies that focus on this topic stress the importance of an adaptive approach in which school organisations dynamically respond to the many challenges that confront them (see e.g. Harris & Chapman, 2004; Muijs et al., 2004).

Though these kinds of studies still enumerate factors that contribute to the success of school organisations in disadvantaged areas, the exact usefulness of the dimensions given is seen to depend on the contexts and the particularities of the school organisation. For example, Maden (2001) states that in successful schools located in disadvantaged areas, teachers feel supported, the school ethos or culture has developed towards securing continuous improvement, qualitative relationships are supported on an individual level, while group level organisational relationships are also taken into consideration, and strong leadership is in place. Nevertheless, she emphasises that her study does not provide identity kits for strong leaders: what strong leadership is depends on the particularities of the school and the challenges that confront it. Similarly, West, Ainscow and Stanford (2005: 77) argue that there are no recipes for improving the functioning of schools in disadvantaged areas. Rather, the question is how “the right sort of ingredients can be mixed to suit the contexts and circumstances of individual schools”.

These kinds of blueprints are missing for various reasons; what constitutes good practice in one respect may have a detrimental effect in another (Proudford & Baker, 1995; Lupton, 2004); solving the different kinds of challenges that a school is confronted with may require different leadership approaches (Blair, 2002); and approaches that are the exact opposite may be equally successful in apparently similar school organisations (Lupton, 2004). Therefore, a more adaptive approach of the school organisations that takes the characteristics of the challenges and contexts into consideration is regarded as a means for schools in disadvantaged areas to improve their educational outcomes (Leeman & Volman, 2001; Harris & Chapman, 2004; Lupton, 2004, 2005; West et al., 2005).

Achieving Success in Interaction: Who Profits and for what Reason?

SER increasingly takes the complex reality as experienced by schools serving many pupils from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds into consideration to explain school organisational success or failure. But according to Thrupp (2001), these more contextualised and dynamic approaches of managerial, instructional and organisational dimensions of schools do not explain success. In his criticism of SER, he argues that the effectiveness of the school organisation does not only depend on the managerial, instructional and organisational dimensions of the school. The success of these dimensions depends on how pupils and parents respond to them, and the interactions with teachers and the head teacher that subsequently arise. For example, teachers and the head teacher

do not alone create a school ethos: it is negotiated with pupils and parents. Therefore, to understand the success of schools in disadvantaged areas these interactions at the micro-level require further investigation.

Studying interactions at the micro-level also requires taking into account whether outcomes differ along lines of social categories. SER did not address this question, assuming that what works for the majority also works for the minority. The use of average student achievements - primarily for mathematics and language tests - as an indication of the schools' performance created a blind spot: the question whether all pupils equally benefited from the observed school success and from the school structures is ignored (Luyten et al., 2005).

The study by Power and Clark (2000) illustrates the necessity of examining the groups of pupils and parents who tend to benefit from a certain kind of school organisational structure. Their study on parent evenings shows that parents who spoke little or no English and parents whose children were having difficulties at school tended to benefit less from the growing access to information about the child's progress. The schools in their study had developed a number of arrangements to inform parents about their children's progress. The schools' efforts exceeded legal requirements as they organised more meetings and included more information in the reports. The parents acknowledged these efforts, but the parents from non-English backgrounds had difficulty understanding grading systems and abbreviations, whereas parents whose children had problems at school thought the report to be implicit and generalised with concern to the problems their children experienced. The arrangements, as a result, resulted in different effects among the parents from different backgrounds and whose situations differed.

The developments in and criticism of SER point to the following interrelatedness of local circumstances and school organisations. Outward, local circumstances of poverty and cultural diversity influence the school organisation's functioning through mechanisms such as extreme learning needs, high staff turnover, and low parental involvement in the school organisation. Whether a school organisation attended by many pupils from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds is successful, depends on its ability to adaptively respond to these many and frequently changing challenges. Instead of following a blueprint solution, these kinds of schools have to look for approaches adapted to the characteristics of the specific problems confronting them at a particular moment and in a certain context. However, a school does not control the challenges, not only because these challenges frequently change and put a considerable burden on the schools, but also because the success of their approaches depends on how pupils and parents respond. Moreover, the approaches do not have the same effect among different groups of pupils and parents: some pupils and parents benefit more from their attempts than others.

To further understand educational disadvantage therefore requires an examination of school-specific practices, the responses of parents and pupils to these practices, and the mechanisms that cause social background-specific effects. The following sections discuss these processes. A final remark however needs to be made on the perspective taken. Drawing on the understanding derived from the discussion on SER, this dissertation is based on the belief that education is not an instrument through which full control over social phenomena, such as disadvantage and segregation, can be gained. Instead, education

and social phenomena are considered to be interrelated: the manner in which education is organised shapes social phenomena and, at the same time, social phenomena shape education – which is a perspective also referred to as a “governance perspective” (see e.g. Dale, 1997; Trommel & Arentsen, 2005). However, this is not an undisputed perspective; an instrumental view on education is also frequently taken.

In this chapter the governance perspective is adopted and its functioning is theoretically further explored. The next chapter, chapter three, reflects on the current interrelatedness of social phenomena and education, by discussing integration and education policy. It shows that a governance perspective and an instrumental perspective on education are both adopted in current education policy. I reflect on the influence of these approaches on the interrelationship between education and social phenomena. But firstly and as said above, in the following sections I further explore the functioning of the interrelationship between school organisations and their local circumstances, and particularly the role that educational norms play therein. I start this exploration at the micro-level of interaction between pupils, parents and teachers and examine how these interactions are related to educational disadvantage. I then move on to the policy level, which is followed by a discussion on the role of the school organisation.

2.3 Identity Expressions in Response to Daily Schooling

One of the first to study interaction between teachers and pupils within schools and to draw relationships between these interactions and social inequality was Willis (1978). His study *Learning to Labor* broke with the idea that educational outcomes are determined by educational structures. Willis showed that pupils actively contributed to their attainment by responding to the education offered to them. The behaviour of working class boys - “the lads” - at an inner-city school in England disrupted normal proceedings in the school and prevented learning from taking place.

Their resistance to education, Willis theorised, was influenced by how the boys saw themselves: as heterosexual and masculine boys from working-class backgrounds for whom education had little to offer. This identity construction, in which the boys were seen to draw decisive relationships between their lower class background and the educational system, made the boys engage in processes of schooling in disruptive ways. They denied the value of education and challenged dominant norms of conduct. The lads’ resistance, Willis concluded, contributed to their educational failure, as it prevented them from learning and hence the lads actively contributed to the reproduction of class inequality. Similarly, lower class parents’ attitude towards education and possible resistance to its value is also considered to result from how they perceive themselves in society (Gorman, 1998).

In these kinds of studies, pupils and parents are not passive bearers of the education offered to them: they take agency in their own and their children’s educational career as they respond to the education offered, and their responses affect their educational progress. Their responses become visible through behaviour, and this behaviour takes multiple forms. For example, pupils’ responses include: talking and messing about with friends in the classroom; wearing specific kinds of clothing; or verbally challenging teachers. But pupils may also remain silent in the face of curricula that put them in powerless positions, or

submit to the authority of teachers despite feeling unjustly treated (see e.g. Davidson, 1996; Wright & Weekes, 2003).

Willis' and subsequent studies on pupils' and parents' resistance, understood that their behaviour is underpinned by identity constructions in which perceptions of socio-cultural inequality are related to perceptions of the value of the educational system (McFadden, 1995). The studies assumed that pupils and parents consider education as irrelevant or unjust because of the social groups to which they, according to the researcher, belong. Drawing on ideologies of class, cultural or gender inequality, or a combination of these categories, pupils and parents are conceived of as dismissing the value of education and of the value of appropriately participating in educational structures.

The Daily Curriculum and how Identity matters

An alternative understanding of the behaviour of pupils and parents was proposed for two reasons. Firstly, because this kind of reasoning failed to satisfactorily explain the intersection of reproductive processes of class, cultural and gender inequality (Morrow & Torres, 1994), and secondly, because social structures were considered to impinge on the pupils' and parents' consciousness, these understandings did not explain agency well, and neither allowed for much variance in pupils and parents' responses to education (McFadden, 1995).

Alternatively, pupils and parents' identity constructions are not considered as being formed by abstract ideologies on their backgrounds, but by their experiences with day-to-day teaching (McFadden, 1995; Paule, 2005). Pupils and parents respond to concrete aspects of schooling such as negative speech acts of teachers, disciplinary measures, sanctions, or lack of support. As a result, the behaviour of pupils and parents not only becomes less predictable, but also less coherent: they respond very differently to apparently similar experiences with the day-to-day curriculum. Davidson's case descriptions, for example, show how a pupil remains silent and isolates herself, whereas another pupil starts to skip classes and does not do the set homework, and again another pupil sometimes conforms to the daily curriculum and at other times rebels through certain speech acts. Furthermore, the responses of individual pupils to variable experiences are not always clearly articulated or consistent; they sometimes remain silent and comply, while at other times they openly challenge the curriculum (Davidson, 1996). Assuming that parents and pupils respond to the daily curriculum in multiple ways, implies that the effects of their behaviour on educational attainment are open-ended and dynamic. A-priori, little can be said about the identity constructions that matter in their responses to schooling (Morrow & Torres, 1994; McFadden, 1995).

Assuming that pupils and parents' behaviour is not directly influenced by the social groups identified with, does not necessarily imply that social categories such as class, culture and gender do not matter in their responses. On the contrary, when their behaviour is shaped in response to day-to-day teaching, social categories do matter: some pupils and parents will account for their responses to the daily curriculum by actively referring to social backgrounds (see for example Davidson, 1996), but also when these kinds of references are absent, their behaviour can be considered as identity expressions related to social categories.

The above can be illustrated by the diary descriptions of a white teacher's experiences in a classroom dominated by pupils with ethnic minority backgrounds (Pearce, 2005). The teacher describes how British Indian and British Pakistani pupils, in response to the question about what kinds of food were most popular in the class, respond by listing food such as fish and chips, and pizza. Only after being asked whether chapattis etc. might not be the most popular, did the pupils start to list a number of Asian dishes. Furthermore, the teacher describes how these pupils choose traditional British names for their characters in stories and how the pupils hesitate to speak their mother tongue in school even though nobody had forbidden them to do so. This pupil behaviour indicates that the pupils came to understand what appropriate answers and behaviour (i.e. appropriate identity expressions) are in the school context. But their behaviour also implies (an understanding of) a valuation of different languages, customs and collective identities in the educational context.

The curriculum to which pupils and parents respond, consists of decisions about what knowledge they should include and what they should omit (Korn, 2002). Some aspects are considered worth teaching, while other aspects are ignored or considered unworthy. Through the teaching materials and through interpersonal relationships, pupils and parents learn what behaviour is positively valued in the educational context, and depending on their backgrounds, they will recognise and come to know themselves differently in and through the curriculum. Illustrative of this process is Bursztyn's reflection on the function of education to preserve parental traditions (Bursztyn, 2002). Bursztyn questions whether pupils from cultural backgrounds in which arranged marriages is common practice are offered the same opportunities in education for adhering to their parents' values as those pupils who are from cultural backgrounds that do not have this cultural practice. Obviously, the answer is 'most probably not'. It is unlikely that arranged and non-arranged marriages are equally often and equally positively reflected in, for example, reading materials used in the Netherlands and other European countries. And equally unlikely is that teachers will talk about arranged marriages as frequently and as positively as about non-arranged marriages.

Even though this example smacks of a relativistic approach, it illustrates that processes of schooling differently reflect and value identities of pupils and parents from various backgrounds. This hierarchic reflection of identities in the curriculum has consequences for pupils and parents; it tells them what identity expressions are worth considering in the educational setting, and which not. Because parents and pupils respond to these reflections, the curriculum is also considered to constitute their identity. Choosing traditional British names only for story characters is a striking example of this. Another example is provided by Gilles (2002) who describes how parents remained silent during workshops that were underpinned by a deficit perspective on the parents' socio-economic positions, and stopped attending them. Teachers in these workshops did most of the talking and explained to parents how to improve the support they offered to children. Whereas parents raised all kinds of questions and topics and engaged in discussion when workshops departed from the point of view that parents knew best how to improve their living-situation in order to support the educational career of their children. The curriculum, therefore, is seen to make and mould identities (Davidson, 1996), to mirror identities (Bingham, 2001) or to construct identities in a dialogue (Burstzyn, 2002). The following sections examine further

how identities are reflected and hierarchically structured in everyday teaching.

2.4 Teachers and the Production of the Daily Curriculum

Pupils respond to day-to-day teaching, but the daily curriculum in which they see themselves reflected and to which they respond is not something that is fixed and predetermined. Teachers influence its form and content (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), and this is the subject of this section.

Initially, teachers' influence on the daily curriculum was considered to operate through teachers' expectations of pupils that differ along socio-cultural lines. These expectations were assumed to directly reinforce educational inequality. In their study *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) claimed that teacher expectations function as self-fulfilling prophecies: if teachers systematically have lower or higher expectations of pupils, it influences the pupils' educational performance. Those pupils of whom the teachers have high expectations will perform better, and the performance of pupils of whom the teachers have low expectations will decrease. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) concluded that these teacher expectations function without objective grounds for differences in the pupils' performance.

Teacher expectations were repeatedly found to differ along lines of social categories; teachers generally expect less of pupils and parents from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds. Teachers, for example, more frequently ascribe characteristics of lacking interest, lacking knowledge, lower levels of motivation, incapacity, non-encouragement, and less trustworthiness to these parents (Pigott & Cowen, 2000; Lott, 2001; Hermans, 2004).

Teacher Expectation and the Reproduction of Educational Disadvantage: A Complex Process

But attempts to replicate the experiment of Rosenthal and Jacobson failed and the study was criticised for methodological flaws. The functioning of teacher expectations in the experimental setting was considered different from the functioning in real situations (Spitz, 1999). In the classroom, teacher expectations depend not only on the backgrounds of pupils but also on their behaviour (Brophy, 1983).

Inspired by the Rosenthal and Jacobson study, Jungbluth (1985, 1993, 2003) repeatedly studied the relationship between teacher expectations and educational inequality in the Netherlands. He also found that teachers have lower expectations of pupils from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds: they more frequently ascribed characteristics of inadequate learning behaviour and more often questioned the intellectual capacities of these pupils. Jungbluth furthermore found teachers to differentiate in the daily curriculum they offered to pupils. Differentiating occurred in the learning materials they used and the rules and regulations they enforced. However, he found no systematic links between teacher expectations and curriculum differentiation (Jungbluth, 1985).

Jungbluth (1985) used portraits of pupils for his study on the relationship between teacher expectations and curriculum differentiation. These portraits consisted of information about pupils' backgrounds and their behaviour. The descriptions of pupil behaviour sometimes met teacher expectations and sometimes they did not. Jungbluth

expected to find teacher expectations to affect differentiation in the curriculum, and the differentiation to subsequently result in educational outcomes differing along lines of socio-economic backgrounds. This line of reasoning was not confirmed in his 1985 study. In a follow-up study (Van Der Hoeven, 1990) a relationship between teacher expectations and educational outcomes related to socio-economic backgrounds was found. But this study failed to capture whether this relationship was the result of curriculum differentiation as Jungbluth had assumed. Again, the role of the teacher in educational disadvantage remained a black box.

That a stable set of systematic choices and decisions on differentiation in the curriculum was not found, may not be considered surprising: as mentioned earlier, pupil behaviour is rather variable, is not always coherent or clearly articulated, and it is also affected by social contexts such as the peer group (see e.g. Paulle, 2005). It is unlikely that the portraits used by Jungbluth captured this complexity of pupil behaviour. Moreover, teachers are confronted with pupils' responses to the curriculum they teach. Teachers most likely also take these responses into consideration when differentiating in and teaching the daily curriculum. A stable pattern of curriculum differentiation presumably overlooks these dynamics and interrelationships between the teacher and the pupil.

The daily curriculum, instead, can be conceived of as coming about in a process of interaction between pupils, parents and teachers. They engage in a process of mutually responding to each other and as a result, negotiate the identity-reflections and judgements underpinning the daily curriculum. Pupils and parents base their behaviour on an interpretation of what behaviour and answers are valued in the daily curriculum. Teachers, in turn, interpret and value the behaviour of pupils and parents to base the daily curriculum upon. From this point of view, day-to-day teaching and learning can be understood as a productive process that brings about the educated person: beliefs about the educated person shape the daily curriculum and, at the same time, the beliefs about the daily curriculum shape the educated person (Levinson & Holland, 1996). This perspective, however, first raises the question of how education can bring about production and reproduction through the same process (Sadovnik, 1991; McFadden, 1995). And, secondly, to allow for processes of production, success of reproduction in processes of schooling cannot be assumed in advance, yet, reproduction continues to be a significant outcome of education (Morrow & Torres, 1994). Understanding how these interactive and productive processes between pupils, parents and teachers relate to educational disadvantage requires further investigation.

2.5 Social Categories in Processes of Schooling

In the previous sections I argued that the educational disadvantage of immigrant pupils is not the result of deficits in home upbringing or educational opportunities. Educational disadvantage appears instead to result from a more interactive process between socialisation and educational practices in which norms are at stake. I started to examine this interactive process at the level of the pupils, parents and teachers. I concluded that the educational curriculum structures collective identities hierarchically. But the reproduction of educational disadvantage results neither from parents and pupils' responses to the

curriculum because of necessarily identifying with collective identities, nor from teachers' decisions about the daily curriculum because they necessarily adapt the daily curriculum to the collective backgrounds to which pupils and parents are ascribed by the teacher. Instead, while the identifications and ascription of collective identities may form an element in the behaviour of pupils, parents and teachers, they also respond to concrete behaviour. Parents and pupils, for example, respond to the speech acts and material choices of the teacher, while the teacher responds to pupils and parents' behaviour such as when they remain silent or challenge the teacher verbally. Because of this interrelatedness of the pupils, parents and teachers' behaviour, identities, at the level of the individual person, are conceived of as being produced and the value of identities as negotiated. But if the value of identities is open to contestation and if individual identities are constructed, how then does education produce outcomes that depend on pupils and parents' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds? This question is covered in this section by further exploring the role of identities in interactions.

Expectations and the Observation and Interpretation of Behaviour

Boys of African-Caribbean backgrounds sitting low in their chairs, bums at the front of the seats and with outstretched legs resting on heels, is a description of their behaviour that shows similarities with Willis' description of the English lads' behaviour. Their behaviour can be interpreted as one way of expressing their disengagement with or resistance to the curriculum (see e.g. Davidson, 1996; Wright & Weekes, 2003). But Youdell (2003), who provides this description of the boys' behaviour, points out that, in seeming contradiction to these identity expressions, the boys continue to attend lessons, they ask and answer questions and they express concern about forthcoming examinations. But she also observed that this involvement and participation goes unacknowledged by teachers and head teachers. They focus on the boy's slouching and interpret their behaviour as a form of disengagement. On the basis of this interpretation, the head teachers and teachers construct an undesirable learning identity of these boys: high achievers would not expose themselves like that. Slouching, however, is, in this school, only allowed in classes where achievement is low: boys in higher achieving classes are not allowed to expose themselves like that and are confronted with corrective measures.

Youdell's description, the selective interpretations of the teachers and head teachers, can be regarded as the result of the labels applied to these boys. Labels consist of ideas and expectations about the characteristics of the people to whom the labels are applied, and Appiah (1994a) theorises that these expectations influence the observation of the labelled person. The observations become selective as the behaviour that confirms the expectations is acknowledged, while behaviour that does not fit the expectations is de-labelled. It is the selective observation on which decisions about the course of action to be taken are based.

Illustrative of the process of de-labelling is the study by Archer and Francis (2005) into teacher perceptions of pupils from British-Chinese backgrounds. They observe that teachers describe pupil behaviour that does not fit in with their expectations as atypical. For example, British Chinese girls who do not do their homework and who are loudmouthed in the classroom and therefore do not meet with the dominant view that girls from this background work diligently, are described by the teachers through a notion of low-individual

learning abilities. Through this construction, teachers are able to maintain their belief that girls from British Chinese backgrounds are diligent albeit somewhat passive pupils who perform well. Only low learning abilities may cause them to behave in a disruptive manner (Archer & Francis, 2005).

This idea about the functioning of ascribed labels ties in with discussions about schooling as a productive process. I have pointed out that the identification with and ascription of identity labels is an element in the teachers, pupils and parents' behaviour, but that they also respond to each other on the basis of concrete behaviour. Therefore, pupils, parents and teachers in the context of the everyday curriculum were conceived of as producing identity and negotiating its value. Yet, an extra dimension is added to this process because the labelling has consequences for how teachers observe and interpret the behaviour of pupils and parents, and vice versa, how pupils and parents observe and interpret the behaviour of teachers. Drawing on the later work of Bernstein (2000), an initial understanding of the reproductive functioning of ascribing labels is arrived at.

Educational and Social Categories and the Reproduction of Disadvantage

Bernstein (2000) theorised how pedagogic communication incorporates arrangements of society and functions to reproduce social order. To explain the functioning of pedagogic communication, he distinguishes two types of communication: the regulative discourse and the instructional discourse.

The instructional discourse consists of the selection, pacing and evaluation of knowledge, and it defines legitimate communication in educational settings. It arranges who is allowed to do what, at what times, and with what consequences, by drawing on educational classifications. For example, high-achievers are given extra learning materials; the disadvantaged child is offered knowledge at a slower pace; and in lower performing classes slouching is allowed. In short, the instructional discourse refers to the beliefs about teaching and learning.

The instructional discourse does not have overt links with labels referring to social categories: it draws only on educational labels such as "the disadvantaged child", "the child with special needs", "the supportive home-environment" or "the high-achieving child". In this way, instructional discourse seems to only position children and their parents in the educational field. But Bernstein argues that the educational field does relate to the social positions of pupils and parents. This link is constituted through what he calls the "regulative discourse".

The regulative discourse labels pupils and parents in terms of (constructed) collective backgrounds: they, for example, are labelled as being from a lower socio-economic background. Bernstein argues that the instructional discourse is underpinned by regulative discourse but that this link is not directly visible: social classifications in terms of culture, gender etc. do not bear overt links with the educational classification of 'disadvantaged child' and, say, the slower pacing this may result in. This link, he argues, is constituted through a re-contextualisation of the beliefs about the characteristics of the (constructed) social group. For example, women from a Chinese background may be considered as, among other things, being characterised by passivity and docility (the regulative discourse). And these characteristics are, in the context of education, believed to be detrimental to learning

processes (the instructional discourses). Generally speaking, several regulative discourses underpin educational categories. For example, the educational label 'disadvantaged child' is underpinned by regulative discourses on integration, language development, and on socio-economic backgrounds. The assumed characteristics of social groups are selectively picked on and selectively related in the educational label of being 'disadvantaged'. The instructional discourse being underpinned by the regulative discourse means that teachers' decisions on day-to-day teaching are related to social categories, albeit in an indirect, and often implicit manner. It is only through the beliefs about the characteristics of socially constructed groups and about the opinions on how these characteristics relate to educational positions, that a link is established. As a result of this indirect link, educational labels are seemingly neutral.

Singh's study of student communication while working with computers in the primary school classroom empirically demonstrates the working of the instructional and regulative discourses and shows how selective observation and interpretation of pupil behaviour tends to reinforce social inequality (Singh, 1993). In the computer classroom he studied a number of girls who had more computer expertise than some of the boys as they frequently worked with computers at home. The teacher, however, constructed the girls in the classroom as inept computer users and as having little knowledge of computers. Singh observed that unlike the boys, none of the girls worked with computers after school hours or during their spare time, and that they withdrew from lessons and remained silent when problems needed to be solved. Despite their expertise, the girls were passive and docile in the classroom. This – mainly implicit - regulative discourse (the rules of communication in the educational setting), Singh demonstrated, resulted from multiple interactions in the classroom. Among other things, he showed how the teacher called upon boys to solve problems with computers, while girls were asked to call upon the boys to solve the problems. Hence, the teacher positioned the boys as experts and the girls as 'messengers'. Furthermore, the teacher asked the boys to show girls how to do 'things'. Finally, also the boys themselves positioned themselves as experts because they negotiated knowledge with the teacher, which the girls did not.

Taking these interactions into consideration, the girls' passivity is not an indication of their inability; instead, such a link is constructed in the interactions between the people involved. Singh (1993) therefore describes this belief as a 'myth'. The teacher constructed this myth as correct by selectively drawing on regulative discourse. For example, he described a girl who performed well with the computer as atypical ("she comes from a long line of competent women"); and the teacher interpreted the behaviour of his pupils in the belief that learning is stimulated through competition and self-confidence, which the teachers considered to be characteristics more innate to men.

Bernstein's work is useful for the link established between pedagogic labels and labels on collective backgrounds, but the notion of agency is underdeveloped in his theory (Sadovnik, 1991). Agency in his theory is located in the pupil, who, by becoming aware of the instructional discourse and by developing the skills to work strategically within the dominant rules of communication could bring about change in the regulative discourse (Bernstein, 2000). Awareness of instructional discourse could be raised if pupils were competent in certain contexts, and incompetent in other contexts. For example, because of

their experiences as competent computer users at home, girls in the computer class could gain an insight into the instructional discourse which positioned them as inept computer users (Sing, 1993).

However, this view on agency is unsatisfactory for two reasons. Firstly, it offers little negotiating space to pupils, parents and teachers: internally generated innovations are likely only to bring about minor changes, and these innovations cannot account for more significant shifts of form, values and structures in education (Ball, 1990). Combating educational disadvantage is not likely to occur in this theory. Secondly, it assumes that labels on collective backgrounds are necessarily at stake. However, to allow for agency and multiple behavioural responses of pupils and parents, the importance of specific identity labels, as discussed, cannot be assumed prior to interaction. Therefore, this perspective on the functioning of labels sheds light on the reproductive functioning of educational practices, but still fails to satisfactorily explain its productive functioning. To further develop the explored perspective on educational disadvantage, and in particular to better understand agency and the opportunity to combat educational disadvantage, the next section appropriates concepts from policy theories. Changed understandings of the working of policy prove useful for the view on educational disadvantage discussed so far.

2.6 Framed Interaction; Identity Repertoires

The work of teachers was commonly approached as being regulated by policy. Policy in this approach is considered to be a government tool to regulate practices (Dale, 1997). Regulations and rules on, among other things, the selection of knowledge, the pacing of knowledge transmission, and the evaluation of knowledge incorporation determine the curriculum. These regulations and rules are imposed top-down on daily teaching practices, and regulate the teachers' work through rewards and sanctions. Failure to adequately carry out tasks and responsibilities is considered as an incompetent implementation or irrational resistance on the part of teachers and head teachers (Levinson & Sutton, 2001).

But views on the working of policy change: whereas an instrumentalist view considers policy as developing rationally at the level of the state and as translating linearly into educational practices, policy is increasingly seen as a form of governance (Dale, 1997; Trommel & Arentsen, 2005). Compared with the instrumental approach, a governance perspective draws on different understandings of both the relationships between actors in the educational system and the functioning of policy-content. Firstly, policy is not regarded as being developed only at the state level. Instead, multiple actors at different levels in the educational system engage in processes of policy development (Dale, 1997). Secondly, policies are not mechanically implemented by, amongst others, teachers. Instead, top-down policies are subjected to local interpretation and scrutiny and policies are interpreted, challenged and adapted (Trommel & Arentsen, 2005).

In the concept of governance, policy comes about in interaction. Actors who hold different positions, have different views, and different interests, engage in interaction to have their view on the meaning of education prevail upon policy. In the process of drawing up policy, these actors negotiate, compromise and comply strategically which views will prevail over policy.

Illustrative of this process is the study conducted by Blackmore (1995) on the production of policy in dialogues between administrative leaders. Blackmore describes how in dialogues between administrative leaders, the perspectives of feminist educators are generally dismissed. One way in which female administrators' perspectives were excluded from the policy process is through the bureaucratic approach of policy. Most of the administrative leaders approached policymaking as a rational technique: a neutral process with a policy document as the outcome. Cost-effectiveness and efficiency should characterise the development of the document in the male-dominated working environment. If feminist educators addressed equity issues, or the need to consult school managers on women's issues, their views were dismissed as ideological or as obstructing the effective process. Blackmore concludes that the texts that result from such practices are the outcomes of dialogues between different writers who adhere to a multiplicity of discourses and who hold different power positions, and do not equally represent the different opinions (Blackmore 1995).

Due to this political process of negotiating, compromising and complying strategically, policy-content becomes ambiguous. It includes strands of multiple voices that are not necessarily fully coherent, and policy content may include flaws or can be incongruent at some points. Tomlinson (2003), for example, discusses how global developments result both in economic challenges and questions of social justice. Tomlinson argues that policy that addresses these issues introduces opposite measures and results in effects in favour of the economic challenges.

The inclusion of multiple voices, open-ends and inconsistencies in policy allows for interpretation, scrutiny and change by the actors who implement policy. These actors do not - as an instrumentalist approach assumed - mechanically implement policies, but instead they negotiate and reorganise the multiple discourses involved in policy.

In this translation process, multiple interests again matter: teachers' professional identities, personal identities but also their material or other kinds of interests are at stake (Ball, 1987). Due to the interpretation, adaptation and changing of policy as part of the process of implementing policy, policy development and policy implementation cannot be seen as separate processes (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). Instead, policy is brought about at all levels of the educational system by a multiplicity of actors.

This changed understanding of the functioning of policy and of the relationships between actors in the field of policy, allows for agency of and dynamics between the multiple actors involved in the translation of educational policy into practice. Levinson and Sutton (2001) point out that this agency and these dynamics become visible at two points in policy processes. Firstly, when the interests and language comprising a governing charter are negotiated into some viable form. And secondly, when the formulated charter, temporarily reified as text, is circulated across the various institutional contexts, where it may be applied, interpreted and/or contested by a multiplicity of local actors. Policy, then, comes about in horizontal and vertical dynamics: at the school level, teachers and head teacher engage in discussions with each other (horizontal dynamics) to translate policy confronting the school organisation into practice (vertical dynamics).

Identity Labels and Possibilities for Combating Educational Disadvantage

This governance perspective on policy has implications for the understanding of interaction between teachers, parents and pupils. I examined that the ascription and identification with labels on educational categories and on collective backgrounds play an important role in the reproductive functioning of education. Yet, productive processes and the combating of educational disadvantage also occur: the labels do not function deterministically. Appropriating the governance perspective on policy to the view on interaction between actors, indicates two possibilities for combating educational disadvantage.

Firstly, educational labels used in policy are subject to how teachers interpret them. Teachers may, for example, interpret and change understandings of how to best teach “low-achieving pupils”, or how to best deal with “disruptive pupils”. These adaptations of individual teachers result in diverse daily teaching approaches, which in turn also include open-ends, inconsistencies, and multiple voices. In that way, the teachers’ set-up of the daily curriculum leaves space for negotiation for parents and pupils.

Secondly, a possibility for change is located in the ascription of characteristics to (constructed) social groups. Labels on collectivistic backgrounds and how they interrelate with educational labels can be subject to change. For example, ideas on the characteristics of parents from an Islamic background may change, or different characteristics are ascribed to pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers may furthermore develop different beliefs about how home upbringing styles relate to cultural backgrounds, or how impoverished neighbourhoods relate to growing up in families from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

However, the opportunities to develop alternative beliefs on teaching and learning processes, and to ascribe different characteristics to social groups are restricted. While policy leaves space for interpretation and change, it simultaneously restricts the opportunity to develop and appropriate alternative understandings. Shared concepts and policy structures result in this restriction. To theorise on this ambiguous functioning of policy, use is made of Bourdieu’s concept of ‘field’ (see e.g. Shore & Wright, 1997).

Restrictions on Changes of Identity Labels

Drawing up policy involves concepts that refer to shared understandings. The use of these concepts allows for communication between actors but it also paves the way for a course of action. It does so, because it indicates which schools and pupils are in need of additional support: it defines the subjects of interventions. In the field of education, for example, concepts such as “disadvantaged pupils” and “professional school organisation” generally refer to an understanding such as ‘children from a lower class background stand a higher chance of falling behind in education’ (which is an understanding derived from the dominant view in Dutch research on educational disadvantage), and ‘school organisations are stable entities that function to the benefit of all children’ (which is an understanding that was shared for a long time within the paradigm of school effectiveness research). These kinds of definitions legitimise that those children and schools labelled as “disadvantaged” and “malfunctioning” become the targets of intervention. These kinds of conventions are referred to as paradigms (Rossi, 2004), discourses (Shore & Wright, 1997), systems of expert knowledge (Popkewitz, 2000), or regulative discourses (Bernstein, 2000).

Discourses function to define and fixate the constellation of the field (and thus restrict the actors' agency) because the concepts draw boundaries between good and bad school organisations, between disadvantaged and average pupils, or between good and bad practices of policy implementation. They function to name and classify (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997; Shore & Wright, 1997), or as Popkewitz (2000: 22) argues, an expert knowledge system functions as:

A discursive map that "tells" us symbolically how to order the objects of the world for scrutiny and practice. In schooling, particular "maps" are drawn to promote a more inclusive school through categories such as "learning disadvantaged", "the needy child", "at-risk family", and "urban" education. If we think of these categories as "map-making", we understand them as not merely labels ascribed to groups of people who need special help in teaching. The categories function to organize the territories of membership by producing boundaries between the members and the non-members. The maps drawn about children are not neutral but are practices that divide and normalize.

Seen from this perspective, commonly shared concepts are ideological constructions that say something about the construction of the education system rather than the subject it refers to (Popkewitz, 2000). Through concepts, people are ascribed to positions, and relationships between them are defined, thereby determining the constellation of the field. This constellation impinges on peoples' behaviour and the interactions between them, and hence commonly shared concepts conceived of as setting outer-limits to the agency of actors.

General discourse, however, does not merely function symbolically as it translates into structural conditions such as administrative systems, distribution of financial means, and decisions on staffing. Structural conditions tend to reinforce underlying ideas (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997).

Illustrative of this interrelationship between discourse and structural conditions are the developments in the field of pre- and elementary education. In the Netherlands, pre and elementary education is considered to be an effective means to combat educational disadvantage of immigrant children at an early age. This intervention strategy is based, among other things, on the perspective that the causes of educational disadvantage are primarily located in the family. The emphasis on pre- and elementary education was accordingly translated into programmes and financial redistribution. Schools that serve many immigrant pupils are obliged to implement pre- and elementary education programmes and they receive extra resources to, for example, lower the size of the classes in the lowest grades of primary education. Even though teachers and head teachers interpret and adapt policy, for example by discussing what programme they will use in their school (having the option to choose from several programmes) or whether they will cut down on the size of the classes or instead increase the number of teachers in a classroom, they are unlikely to challenge or replace the policy itself, and its underlying assumptions about the malfunctioning of immigrant families. The schools are, for example, less likely to decide not to use these kinds of programmes because they will then be met with sanctions. It is not in

the school's interest to challenge dominant discourse and to develop alternative practices, because they are not judged as being sound or because they are not financially supported. In that way, policy structures tend to reinforce generally-shared concepts.

As a result of this interrelatedness of policy discourse and policy structures, the correctness of the practical content of policy is primarily subject to scrutiny and interpretation, while the policy structures and the concepts used are less challenged (Popkewitz, 2000). Nevertheless, changes do occur in discourses at the level of the state (Ball, 1990) as well as at the level of the school organisation (Proudford & Baker, 1995). Discourse may change when awareness grows that particular activities control or direct the inclusion or exclusion of certain groups of actors.

Combating Educational Disadvantage – An Ongoing Struggle

An example of a paradigm shift is the discussion on integration of immigrants in the Netherlands. Integration in the Netherlands was initially defined in terms of employment rates. When unemployment figures increased considerably in the late 1980s, integration policies were described as having failed. In the late 1990s, not only did employment figures rise (due to policy measures and improving economic circumstances), but also the perspective on the problem of integration changed. Integration was now defined in terms of assimilation to Dutch norms and values. Ethnic minorities, particularly those with Islamic backgrounds, were described as being insufficiently adapted. The perceived failure of integration policy gave rise to an enquiry. However, the commission's conclusions were generally dismissed. Drawing on the definition of integration in terms of employment, the commission concluded that overall integration had succeeded. However, viewed from the then dominant perspective of integration as a problem of social cohesion, their conclusions were not regarded as plausible and were therefore challenged (Snel & Scholten, 2005).

This example shows that discourse can be subject to change; that is, when problems are defined in a different way. The example also illustrates that a field constellation may change when a discourse changes into another discourse (in this example from integration as measured in terms of employability to integration as measured in terms of social cohesion), but that the field in itself does not cease to exist when discourse changes. The continued existence of a field, albeit in different constellations, implies that full inclusion of all (constructed) social groups can never be achieved. After all, this would mean that the field would no longer reproduce itself and thus cease to exist. To come to grips with this characteristic of the field, Appiah (1994b) and Popkewitz and Lindblad (2000) argue that inclusionary and exclusionary practices are not organised in a dichotomy. Instead, these practices need to be considered as inextricably interrelated. Though the introduction of a newly created paradigm may create opportunities to combat educational disadvantage among certain groups where the old paradigm failed to do so, the newly created paradigm will, in turn, create a field constellation that functions to the exclusion of other groups.

This understanding of the functioning of the field means that the interaction between teachers, pupils and parents, or between a school organisation and its local environment will never result in a complete combating of educational disadvantage. While they have opportunities to combat educational disadvantage by severing relationships and by building up new ones, the existence of educational disadvantage will continue to characterise their

relationship and interactions. Combating disadvantage can therefore be considered as an ongoing struggle (Ross, 2002).

To conclude, by drawing on theories of policy, this section developed the understanding of educational disadvantage as proposed in the former sections. A governance approach to policy has been appropriated to the discussion on the productive and reproductive functioning of interaction between pupils, parents and teachers. This governance approach showed that ascribed labels at the level of individual people are, on the one hand, subject to negotiation as they include multiple voices, are hybrid, and not fully consistent. On the other hand, it indicated that the negotiating space of individuals is limited and that the ascription of labels tends to function in a reproductive manner. Outer limits and restrictions result from commonly shared concepts and policy structures that only legitimise certain practices.

The framing effect of labels on interactions between individual teachers, parents and pupils can be captured by the notion of “identity repertoires” (Blommaert, 2005). Several collective identities can be used to build up a person’s individual identity: for example, male, African American, and lower class. The notion of identity repertoires refers to all identities theoretically available to an actor. A priori, little can be said about which of the available identities - the elements of the repertoire - will underpin parents and pupils’ responses to the daily curriculum. But whatever the responses of the parent or pupil may be, in order to interact with the teacher (and others) their response needs to be acknowledged by the observer as an identity expression and will be subject to positioning. Only then can it be responded to. The need for acknowledgment and the consequences that identity expressions bring about means that parents and pupils cannot freely choose from their identity repertoire⁷. They depend on the discourses available in the setting in which they interact with the teacher (Appiah, 1994a). Quoting Bingham (2001) helps to illustrate this point:

Identity is recognized to the extent that it is intelligible. When I seek recognition, I have already agreed to a state of subjection because the terms by which I can be recognised at all are set in advance by the discourses available to the one-recognizing.

Discourses available to the teacher, therefore, frame the interaction with pupils and parents: these discourses set the outer limits of the interaction that is possible. In this line of argumentation, there is one point that requires further investigation. Because discourse has no rationality and agency in itself (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997), the influence of

⁷ Blommaert elaborates on the repertoire as the ability to choose a certain identity. While this notion does not exclude repertoires in which certain identities are put more or less to the fore, Appiah’s reflection on identity seems a useful addition. Appiah suggests (1994a: 108): “I don’t recall ever choosing to identify as a male; but being-male has shaped many of my plans and actions. In fact, where my ascriptive identity is one on which almost all of my fellow-citizens agree, I am likely to have little sense of choice about whether the identity is mine; though I can choose how central my identification with it will be, choose, that is how much I will organize my life around that identity”.

policy discourse and structures on the level of interaction between individuals depends on how policy is appropriated by the teachers. This appropriation, as noted previously, depends on the interactions between multiple actors in which policy is interpreted, adapted and changed. Though the discourses available to and appropriated by the teacher are constituted at different sites, the school organisation is likely to be one of the most significant ones. Therefore, the final section of this chapter discusses the dynamics in school organisations.

2.7 School Organisations: Translating Policy into Practice

In the previous sections I suggested that educational positions are subject to framed negotiations. At the micro-level of the educational system, i.e. in the interaction between individuals such as teachers, pupils and parents, educational norms that are used to ascribe and position identities can become subject to negotiation and change. Combating educational disadvantage therefore not only results from bringing “disadvantaged pupils” and their parents in line with educational expectations but also by changing educational norms.

These kinds of changes, I argued, are not self-evident because of the framing effect that policy has on interaction at the micro-level. The framing effect of policy results from the general understanding of educational disadvantage it advocates and from the translation of this understanding in educational structures such as financial distribution and educational legislation. However, policy has no framing rationale in itself; its effects depend on the actors who develop and implement policy. This section addresses the role of the school organisation in policy and identity-negotiation processes through a discussion on school organisational theories and theories on the educational institute.

School Organisations and the Change of Educational Norms

In theories on school organisational development, a distinction is commonly made between ‘single-loop’ and ‘double-loop’ learning. Single (or first) loop learning refers to change processes that maintain core norms and practices in school organisations. The status quo of the organisation and teaching practices is left unchallenged because only reactively, are adaptive changes made to better suit the environment. First-loop learning has also been described as symbolic change (Fullan, 1991), which may be considered a problem when more substantial changes are required. Symbolic change however, may also appear to be useful in the light of too many demanding or harmful changes. In this case, symbolic change maintains the stability and continuity of school organisations (Day, 1999).

Double (or second) loop learning is more substantial because it affects roles and responsibilities of all actors, including parents and pupils in school organisations. It alters pedagogic practices including purposes, theoretical and practical approaches, and daily actions. Because of striking at concepts of education and teaching knowledge and skills, double-loop learning is demanding and highly complex. It creates doubts about routines and assumptions in school organisations, which can be emotionally stressful and difficult to translate into alternative everyday teaching practices.

The distinction made between single- and double-loop learning has similarities with

the distinction I made between combating educational disadvantage by fitting immigrant pupils and parents in with educational expectations and by changing educational norms. Second-loop learning, which supports the latter way of dealing with educational disadvantage, is conceived of as better preparing school organisations and their teachers for meeting the demands placed upon them by the rapidly changing world in which diversity and competition flourish (Day, 1999).

Challenging and changing existing conceptions of education in school organisations include questions of defining alternative conceptions and translating them into practice. To cover both the development of alternative definitions and the development of alternative practices, a theoretical distinction is generally made between the meaning of change and the process of change (Fullan, 1991), the content and form of change (Hargreaves, 1994), or between concepts of appropriate pedagogy and of appropriate organisation (Coburn, 2004). This theoretical distinction raises awareness that in order to change educational norms attention should be given to both the subjective meanings of actors and to the social structures between them in school organisations.

Between Policy and Practice: the Role of Head Teachers and Teachers

In the previous sections I was critical of an instrumental approach to policy-implementation processes and of an effectiveness approach of school organisations. Both approaches pay little attention to the agency of actors in the educational field and to the social and cultural dimensions of education. Concerning the role that subjective meanings of actors and social structures between them play in educational change processes, I mentioned that the instrumental view on policy tends to explain the failure to adequately implement policy in school organisations as the result of incompetent implementation or irrational resistance on the part of teachers and head teachers (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). School effectiveness studies approach subjective meanings and social structures as elements in school organisations that need to be soundly developed. Successful schools, in this approach, have succeeded in implementing the right conditions (Henchey, 2001; Chapman & Harris, 2004; Muijs et al., 2004).

I do not intend to dismiss the popularity of these kinds of managerial approaches to school organisation, or the influence they have on the constellation and functioning of the educational institute. However, in this section I discuss a perspective on school organisations and the role that subjective meanings and social structures play therein, which is more in line with the argument I have so far developed by examining processes of identity negotiation and policy translation.

Theories on the educational institute point out that ambiguity characterises educational goals and social structures in school organisations. Education serves multiple purposes which cannot be reconciled (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Ball, 1987). There are, for example, tensions between the pastoral and cognitive aims of education, between the need to include and to select via educational processes, and between the necessity to adapt education to local circumstances while preparing for the non-local. Due to these irreconcilable objectives, decisions on the purposes of education create tensions in other educational domains. These tensions, Clark, Dyson, Millward and Robson (1999), point out, can be resolved by changing decisions, but the tensions themselves cannot be solved.

However, consensus on educational purpose and a sharing of educational values are a core value in a school organisation's functioning. Teachers need to feel represented by the school's policy and therefore strive towards social cohesion in the organisation. Conflict about the meaning of education can result in fragmented teams, stress, and high teacher turnover (Achinstein, 2002), and therefore threaten the functioning of the school organisation (Meyer & Scott, 1983). School organisations are therefore tasked with developing community among people with multiple and ambiguous subjective meanings on education (Achinstein, 2002). This is possible by building loyalty through educational policies that are multiply interpretable (Ball, 1987; Hargreaves, 1994).

A school organisation's policy that is multiply interpretable creates tensions in another respect: for the school organisation's functioning to be legitimised, actors outside the school need to positively judge its policy and practices. To avoid punitive measures, such as, for example, being labelled a poor quality school or to avoid threats of closure, the school will therefore need to endorse certain, legitimised interpretations and practices. It necessarily has to adopt external policies and the subjective meanings that are part of them (Ball, 1987). As a result, a school organisation's policy does not equally represent the subjective meanings of all people in the school organisation, and instead, certain meanings will prevail over others. This, again, threatens feelings of representation among the people in the school organisations.

The tensions between sharing core values in the school organisation and adopting educational policy while dealing with subjective meanings of the actors and with ambiguous educational goals, is, however, not restricted to disputes about ideologies. The process of defining a school's policy and its practices is affected by the social constellation of the school organisation.

Teachers have considerable autonomy over the form and content of their teaching practices, which allows them to adapt their practices to their perceptions and to the particular circumstances in which they teach (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Teachers' autonomy is considered to result in a loose coupling of policy and practice (Ball, 1987): pressures from the institutional environment do not necessarily result in the intended changes in the classroom (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003)⁸. This loose coupling and the existence of professional autonomy are considered important for the functioning of the educational institution because it provides the necessary goal diversity.

At the same time, head teachers are legally put in the position to maintain the stability of the school organisation. They are responsible for both the adoption of educational policy and the maintenance of the school organisation's stability. These tasks result in interaction between teachers and head teachers that show the double-edged functioning of the teachers' autonomy. On the one hand, the head teacher will necessarily need to take into account the professional status of the teachers and allow them a say in policy matters. This enhances feelings of sharing and social cohesion in the school organisation. Autonomy, hence, puts constraints on the head teacher's control over the school organisation.

But on the other hand, being formally put in the position of controlling the organisation,

8 The precise linking of policy and practice depends on complex processes and multiple elements. A more detailed discussion on this topic is beyond the line of argumentation followed here. For more information on this topic see for example Coburn (2004) and Burch (2007).

the head teacher decides who has a say on what topics and what legitimate forms of communication are. Therefore, hierarchical structures put constraints on the autonomy of the teacher: the range of concerns about which teachers can exercise influence is restricted. The acceptance of autonomy, then, at the same time both includes and excludes teachers from discussions on policy and subjects them to the authority of the head teacher (Ball, 1987).

In sum, policy discourses and policy structures need to be adopted by school organisations in order to have their functioning legitimised by external actors such as the school inspectorate and parents. But this incorporation does not come about, as instrumental perspectives on policy implementation and school effectiveness approaches assume, through consensus and rational decision-making. Instead, head teacher and teachers engage in interaction and morality to have their interests and objectives prevail over the school organisation's policy and practices. The necessity to collaborate while also accepting the teachers' autonomy binds them however to develop policy and practices in good faith. Conflict between the teachers and head teachers, after all, also threatens the school's functioning. A school organisation's policy and its educational practices therefore come about in a process of what Ball (1987) called "micro-politics of the school organisation".

The framing effect of policy on the interactions between teachers, parents, and pupils, this section showed, results from normative discussions and social relationships in school organisations. These discussions and relationships are particularly visible when the coupling of practice and policy becomes subject to development, as the result of changes in either the everyday reality or the policy context of the school organisation. These changes affect the micro-politics of the school organisation because it influences the actors' feelings of representation and the existing social relationships between the head teachers, teachers, parents and pupils. Commonly shared assumptions about the school's policy and daily practices may then be challenged and result in a change of educational norms.

2.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter presented the theoretical framework of this dissertation. It developed from the point of view that difference in socialisation styles relating to pupils and parents' backgrounds do not account well for immigrants' disadvantaged educational positions. The explanation that particular socialisation styles prepare immigrant children less for education or that the educational system offers fewer opportunities to these children fails to take into consideration that: 1) socialisation and educational practices are interrelated; 2) judgements on the socialisation styles and educational opportunities are norm-dependent, and 3) pupils, parents, and teachers do not passively bear the consequences of socialisation and educational practices on educational outcomes. I therefore suggested that an alternative conceptualisation of educational disadvantage is necessary.

This chapter developed an alternative understanding of educational disadvantage relating to pupils' social backgrounds by interrelating theories on interactions between pupils, parents and teachers with theories on policy processes and on school organisations. The argument developed that educational disadvantage is the outcome of interaction between parents, pupils and teachers in which educational norms are negotiated and reproduced.

In advance to the interaction, little can be said about the social categories at stake and about its productive and reproductive outcomes. But the reproduction of educational disadvantage along lines of socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds tends to be its general outcome because of the non-critical use of commonly shared concepts that translate into educational structures. Through these concepts and structures people from different backgrounds are ascribed to positions in the educational field and relationships between them are defined, hence framing their interaction.

To examine interaction between teachers, parents and pupils and its tendency to reproduce educational disadvantage, it is important to analyse the following elements: firstly, processes of ascribing and positioning identities at the level of interaction between teachers, parents and pupils. These people ascribe and identify with identities on the basis of beliefs about teaching and learning processes and about assumed characteristics of cultural and other social groups. The ascription of and identification with identities is constitutive to behaviour and to the observation and interpretation of it.

Secondly, the multiple meanings, open ends and ambiguities in policy. This feature of policy allows for interpretation and change by actors, therefore opening up the opportunity to combat educational disadvantage by negotiating and changing the underlying educational norms. However, the opportunity to negotiate and change policy is also limited because of its use of commonly shared concepts that appear to be neutral and because policy translates into policy measures that support and legitimise certain interpretations and practices more than others.

Finally, the micro-politics of school organisations. Via these micro-politics policy discourse and policy measures come to have their framing effect on interaction between teachers, parents, and pupils. The actors in school organisations engage in discussion to translate policy discourse and measures into concrete practices. These discussions and their outcomes are affected by both hierarchical structures in the organisation and the subjective meaning constructions of the actors.

These theoretical insights provide a context for the study of educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils. Emphasis is on the school organisation, whose dynamics are analysed in the context of dealing with both policy and local circumstances. The next chapter discusses current integration and education policy. The focus is on the definition of educational disadvantage and its translation into policy measures. I examine the characteristics ascribed to school organisations, immigrant parents and pupils, and discuss how they are positioned in relation to each other.

3.

Policies on Integration and Education: Double Binding Segregated Schools and Immigrant Parents.

I suggested in the previous chapter that the educational disadvantage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is not simply the result of background characteristics, but the outcome of interaction between teachers, parents and pupils in which educational norms are at issue. I also suggested that policy is constitutive to the interaction because it emphasises a specific understanding of educational disadvantage and defines sound educational practice. These definitions not only affect actors' behaviour by putting forward certain educational norms on which they generally draw, but they are also an element in the actors' behaviour because it places the actors in specific positions and relationships. This chapter discusses the content of policy in order to examine its overall effect.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how current policy on integration and on educational disadvantage in the Netherlands influences micro-politics in school organisations. I discuss problem definitions in current policies, and consider how they are translated into specific measures. I examine the characteristics ascribed to school organisations, parents and pupils, and analyse how they are positioned in relation to each other. Attention is given in particular to segregated school organisations and to parents and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. I demonstrate that even though considerable emphasis is placed on locally-adapted relationships between school organisations and parents, educational policies and measures tend to position segregated schools and immigrant parents in such a way, that developing legitimised and locally-adapted interaction is rather difficult.

Because educational policies in the Netherlands have been strongly influenced by changing perspectives about the problems of immigrant integration in Dutch society, the changes that occurred in the ideologies underpinning the integration debate are part of the policy-exploration presented here. As far as educational measures are concerned, I limit myself to those introduced after 2002, a year that is seen as a turning point in the debate about immigrant integration in the Netherlands. I do not study here the translation of policy into concrete educational programmes and educational practices. Where relevant, this will be covered in the empirical chapters to follow.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: section 3.1 discusses the changes in the ideologies underpinning the integration debate in the Netherlands since the late 1960s. This description introduces a number of key issues in the integration debate and shows how articulation of these issues has changed over time. Section 3.2 examines changes in

the understanding of educational disadvantage. Developments in the educational field do not simply follow developments in integration discourses, but, as we will see, there are a few striking similarities. Section 3.3 discusses current, concrete restructuring in the educational field. Financial redistribution measures, decentralisation trends, citizenship education legislation, and a governance model for the steering of educational relationships, all show how the various policy discourses are translated into concrete educational structures that ambiguously construct relationships between segregated schools and immigrant parents. In section 3.4 these measures are reflected upon in the light of the perspective on educational disadvantage as developed in the previous chapter. Section 3.5 concludes this chapter by interrelating the changes in integration and educational policies with the measures that ascribe and position identities of immigrant parents and pupils, and segregated schools.

3.1 Integration Policies: Aiming at Assimilation and Bonding

The position of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands has increasingly become a topic of debate and since it was explicitly articulated, integration policy in the Netherlands has undergone a number of changes (Entzinger, 1998; Snel & Scholten, 2005). Policies on the socio-cultural integration of ethnic minorities in particular have changed (Duyvendak & Rijkschroeff, 2004). Initially, in the 1960s and early 1970s, it was understood that guest workers were to stay in the Netherlands only temporarily. The underlying assumption was that they would eventually return to their country of origin. Because most guest workers were employed as manual workers, their generally low educational levels were not considered to be a problem. Policies focused on the guest workers' welfare and, in the light of their re-migration, emphasis was placed on cultural maintenance.

The position of guest workers changed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many lost their jobs because fewer low-skilled jobs were available, and family reunion and family forming took place on a large scale. It was gradually acknowledged that the guest workers were to stay in the Netherlands and would not return to their country of origin. And though the Netherlands was not yet formally seen as an immigration country, it became regarded as a society that had to be changed into a multicultural society. As a result of these developments, the 'ethnic minorities policy' was developed, which stressed the necessity of emancipation and participation of ethnic minority groups to combat socio-economic disadvantage. The assumption was that by maintaining their own culture and language, ethnic minorities would be able to emancipate and integrate in Dutch society. The question whether maintenance of one's own culture and language was actually possible in the receiving society was seldom raised (Snel, 2003).

However, it soon became obvious that, despite these initial efforts, ethnic minority positions failed to improve. Moreover, new groups of immigrants continued to arrive and their positions were also disadvantageous. These developments in the late 1980s, resulted in the Netherlands being formally described as an immigrant country. Emphasis was then put on the necessity of their participation in educational structures and the labour market, which were seen as the main socio-economic instruments for integration. Furthermore, the perspective gained strength that policies had been too protective and too group-based, and the goal of maintaining one's own cultural identity was left to the immigrants themselves.

The early 1990s saw the development of new policies under the name of 'integration

policies'. Though the changes in these policies were not substantial, emphasis was more clearly put on citizenship (WRR, 2001). Citizenship should be enhanced in a way that was less noncommittal compared with the past. From 1998 onwards, citizenship programmes for newcomers were made obligatory and made available for those already living in the Netherlands (Glastra & Schedler, 2004).

In 2000, the integration debate escalated, and integration policies were considered to be failing. Despite improvements in terms of socio-economic integration (Duyvendak, 2006) and despite historical and societal contexts (Gowricharn, 2006), the general tenor of the discussion was that too little attention had been given to the problems that cultural diversity poses to the receiving society. Initially, it was thought that restricted socio-cultural integration or the maintenance of one's own cultural identity stood in the way of socio-economic integration. For instance, the Scientific Council for Government Policy argued that a combined orientation on Dutch society and on the country of origin could result in loyalty conflict among second-generation youth (WRR, 2001: 141). Policy should therefore focus on accepting the laws of the country and democratic decision-making processes, and not adopt content-wise positions concerning the assimilation of ethnic minorities: those decisions should be left to the immigrants (WRR, 2001: 229).

But as in other countries, the events of 11 September 2001 had an impact on the debate about the multicultural society and the goals of integration in the Netherlands. Moreover, internal political developments, such as the rise of the populist political party of Pim Fortuyn, who was murdered just prior to the 2002 elections, showed that public opinion regarding ethnic minorities had become more negative. This was reinforced by the fear of radicalisation of Islamic youngsters, especially after the killing in 2004 of Theo van Gogh, a well-known publicist who has criticised Islam as being backward and out of place in the Netherlands. A lack of socio-cultural integration is seen as a threat in itself - it jeopardises social cohesion (Snel & Scholten, 2005; Duyvendak, 2006).

In this context, the government elected in 2003 (a Christian-Democrat and Liberal coalition) drew up a New Integration Policy (Tweede Kamer, 2003). In a certain sense, this policy was not particularly new, given the measures that had already been put in place. But the tone and the emphasis were much more evident and the approach was based more on obligation and on the socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants (Snel, 2003; Ghorashi, 2006). Multiculturalism was no longer considered to be the norm. Bonding was now the objective. Learning the Dutch language and adhering to principles of the Dutch democratic state became essential. The latter aim in particular was formulated in the light of a growing fear of Islamic fundamentalists. The distance, or even gap, between Dutch and immigrant groups was seen to be the root of the problem (Snel, 2003). Native Dutch and immigrants would not have contact with each other due to segregation and not build up relationships because of their culturally different behaviour. Shared citizenship should be enforced by putting priority on a selective immigration policy and by intensifying compulsory citizenship programmes for newcomers and already established immigrants. Furthermore, integration was made the responsibility of the individual: no longer the furnishing of provisions and measures, but the stimulation of initiatives by individuals or organisations should become the adage. These starting points were endorsed over and over again, and the conclusions of a parliamentary enquiry into the effects of integration policy were not

accepted: whereas the commission tasked with the enquiry concluded that integration policy had partly, or in some cases, fully succeeded (Tweede Kamer, 2004a), the government met these conclusions by stressing that in the past differences had been too easily accepted and cultural relativism and multiculturalism could no longer be the norm (Tweede Kamer, 2004b). The rules and definitions of sound integration had, by then, changed significantly (Snel & Scholten, 2005; Gowricharn, 2006).

This brief overview indicates the main shifts in integration policy, which has increasingly started to focus on assimilation by espousing the preference of Dutch norms and values; by creating measures to promote integration that accentuate the position of immigrants in terms of participation in institutions; and by searching for ways to dismantle concentrations of immigrants in certain neighbourhoods and schools (Snel & Scholten, 2005). From a focus on socio-cultural characteristics that could function as a bridge for integration in Dutch society, through a focus on disadvantageous socio-economic positions on the labour and educational markets that hinder integration, integration policy developed towards a focus on socio-cultural characteristics that obstruct integration. These changes towards the idea that immigrants should be willing and responsible for becoming part of Dutch society requires institutes such as education to stimulate the assimilation of immigrants. Paying attention to opportunity structures and exclusionary mechanisms in institutes is increasingly disapproved of because demanding attention for the role of institutes may excuse immigrants from assimilating (Duyvendak, 2006).

3.2 Policies on Education: Disadvantage as a Threat to Social Cohesion

The idea of meritocracy gained ground in the Dutch educational system of the late 1960s. Gradually, the lower educational positions of (native Dutch) children from “working-class” backgrounds were seen as a problem. The lack of social mobility of those children was no longer considered the inevitable outcome of their socio-economic background, but the result of unequal educational opportunities. If their aptitude and effort are taken into account instead of their background, children from working-class backgrounds could be just as successful as those pupils from middle and higher socio-economic backgrounds. But their talent remains hidden because their low birth is the guiding principle for the education offered to them (Van Heek, 1976). The idea evolved that working-class children should benefit more from the education offered to them, which resulted in an incentive policy [*stimuleringsbeleid*] in the 1970s. Additional resources were given to schools attended by the children of manual labourers. The occupation of the breadwinner was the criteria for extra funding (Meijnen, 2003).

Meanwhile, new groups of pupils entered the Dutch educational system. Children from guest workers and children from immigrants from the former colonies started to attend schools, particularly in the big cities. As the guest workers’ stay in the Netherlands was understood to be temporary, a categorical policy catering for children from non-native Dutch backgrounds was developed in the 1970s. Apart from policies to combat educational disadvantage among native-Dutch pupils, provisions that focus on the integration of ethnic minority children with the maintenance of their own culture were developed. Intercultural education, education in their own language and culture, and specific lessons for learning

Dutch as a second language were provided (Ledoux, 2003; Rijkschroeff et al., 2003).

In 1985, these two policy strands are conjoined in the Educational Priority Plan [*Onderwijsvoorrangsbeleid*]. This plan aimed to combat educational disadvantage related to economic, cultural or social factors and resulted in additional funding for schools serving high numbers of pupils from the targeted groups (both native and non-native Dutch). A so-called weighting factor was introduced that allocated the financial means proportionally among the schools. The extra resources were mainly used to appoint more staff and to lower the class sizes in these schools (Rijkschroeff, Ten Dam, Duyvendak, De Gruijter and Pels, 2005). Furthermore, because ethnic minorities were to stay in the Netherlands, it was considered less important for these ethnic minorities to maintain their own culture: while maintaining their own language was still considered important, cultural elements were supposed to be part of regular education. Financial means were, however, not made available for intercultural education (Rijkschroeff et al., 2003), and the core curriculum generally remained unaffected by these policies: the developments and newly-introduced activities were either added to the existing curriculum or were offered as extra-curricular activities (Ledoux, 2003).

Besides the allocation of additional resources through the weighting system, extra financial means were also made available for educational priority areas: the causes of educational disadvantage beyond the control of school organisations were stressed, and the necessity of an integral approach in which schools and welfare agencies cooperate to combat disadvantage was emphasised. However, discussions about the pros and cons of different kinds of cooperation continued for several years and only in 1993 was legislation on the educational priority areas introduced (Meijnen, 2003). A national policy framework [*Landelijk Beleidskader*] states which kind of activities in the educational priority areas were eligible for financing in the period 1993-1997.

Meanwhile, the educational position of ethnic minorities was still disappointing and gave rise to discussion: there was little evidence of an effective and enduring policy (WRR, 1989). By then, educational disadvantage was no longer associated with a lack of equal access to educational opportunities as it had been in the 1960s. Instead, educational disadvantage and the term '*allochtonen*' (i.e. immigrant) were increasingly associated with 'problems' (Meijnen, 2003) and with unemployed minorities living on social security (Karsten, 2003). Attention for children from native-Dutch backgrounds who had fallen behind in the educational system decreased significantly, even to such an extent that they were eventually described as a forgotten group (SCP, 2003).

In this context, the question as to whether a centralised government approach was still suitable arose, and in 1998 responsibilities for policies were decentralised to the municipalities (Karsten, 2003). The national level was no longer regarded as suitable for dealing with all the local specificities of disadvantage. Municipalities were required within a national framework [*LBK-GOA: Landelijk Beleidskader Gemeentelijk OnderwijsAchterstandenbeleid*] to develop a plan for a local educational compensatory policy in cooperation with schools. The national framework for 2002-2006 consisted of the following priorities: large-scale introduction of pre and elementary education programmes; a reduction of language disadvantage; more participation in the higher forms of secondary education; and, the curbing of drop-out levels in secondary education. A target was set

for each goal and in order to reach them, municipalities and schools were expected to work together with child health centres, childcare and youth institutions in a coherent approach. The municipalities were made responsible for meeting the targets and were given increasing autonomy on matters of financial distribution. Programmes for Education in Immigrant Living Languages [*OALT: Onderwijs Allochtone Levende Talen*], which were meant to give children the opportunity to learn their mother tongue even if they were born in the Netherlands, were also decentralised to the municipalities in 1998. These programmes were later abolished in 2002 because priority was then given to learning the Dutch language (Tweede Kamer, 2002).

Two years after the decentralisation policy, in 2000, a more centralised measure was introduced: a separate policy plan was developed for a select group of schools [i.e. Educational Opportunity Plan; *Onderwijskansenplan*]. Segregation along ethnic lines was, for the first time, described as a problem (Karsten, 2003). Schools with very high percentages of pupils from the target groups, were, under certain conditions, including school outcomes that fall short of expectations, eligible to extra resources. These resources were to be invested to raise the general quality of the school organisations. The selected, underperforming schools received a supplementary budget for four years on condition that they develop a school-specific plan to improve their performance. These plans focused on internal school dynamics such as school management, teacher professionalisation, and learning methods. But as a result of this school effectiveness approach, little attention was given to the specific needs of the target groups or to the relationships between the schools, social agencies and the local environment (Meijnen, 2004).

In 2004, the Minister of Education took up the starting points of the new integration policy when re-formulating the principles for compensatory educational policy under the heading of “Education, Integration, and Citizenship” (MinOCW, 2004a). The slow integration of certain ethnic minority groups and imminent segregation were described as ‘urgent problems in society and education’ that need to be addressed. Not speaking the Dutch language was seen as the core of the problem that causes other, related problems such as cultural distance and disadvantage at the start of the educational career. Several measures to combat educational disadvantage were put forward as part of the agenda on Education, Integration, and Citizenship. The government announced that schools would be obliged by law to work on social integration and active citizenship. Furthermore, financial distribution structures for disadvantaged pupils in primary education were changed. Finally, responsibilities for combating educational disadvantage were further decentralised to the schools. Schools were considered to be in the best position to develop educational practices adapted to the specificities of the social environment and to combat segregation. These reforms, established around 2004, are discussed in more detail in the sections below.

To conclude, educational disadvantage has repeatedly been redefined, and ethnic minority pupils were increasingly regarded as problematic. Attention changed from native Dutch pupils in need of extra facilities, to immigrant pupils who had to be encouraged to integrate and gain equal access to the educational system (and subsequently the labour market), to, finally, immigrant pupils, particularly those from Islamic backgrounds, who were seen as a threat to social cohesion. This more ‘cultural’ approach to educational disadvantage fits in with the more general policy shifts on integration.

Increasingly, the cultural and socio-economic dimensions of educational disadvantage were more narrowly defined: language deficit and problems of segregation are focused upon and questions of multilingualism and of opportunity structures in the educational system were, for example, either no longer raised or less so. Combating segregation and combating a lack of integration were increasingly seen to be the responsibility of schools. But meanwhile, no attention was paid to whether schools actually had to function any differently in order to achieve these aims. Instead, the schools were expected to bring the immigrant pupils in-line with existing norms. Indeed, the question as to whether the curriculum had to be amended to incorporate cultural diversity was never taken up seriously, and with the current focus on the socialising tasks of education, this question is even less likely to be addressed.

3.3 Recent Measures in the Educational System

The previous sections have shown that ideas about integration and educational disadvantage have changed. The changes in the views on educational disadvantage have been significantly imprinted by integration policies, but also comprised some educational system specific developments. This section considers several measures that have recently been introduced into the educational system. The aim is to analyse the extent to which current educational policies support the view on educational disadvantage as proposed in the former chapter. For this analysis I use two angles. First, I argued in the previous chapter that policies include multiple voices, strands and flaws and that policies are not always consistent. This characteristic of policy leaves room for interpretation and adaptation at, amongst other things, the level of the school organisation. I am particularly interested in the opportunities these measures create for school organisations to develop a view on their local environment in which interaction between their role and that of the local environment are central. From the second angle I look at policy as a way to define the constellation of the educational field. Here, I consider policy measures as ascribing identities to school staff, pupils and parents, and as defining relationships between them. This ascription and positioning of identities frames the interactions that school organisations engage in with their local environment.

The measures discussed have been introduced since 2002 – a year that is seen as a turning point because it was around that time that the political debate on immigrant integration in the Netherlands changed drastically. The discussion is limited to measures that concern primary education: the majority of educational disadvantage and integration policies aim at children between four and twelve years of age.

3.3.1 Financial Redistribution

Extra financial resources was one of the first measures established to combat educational disadvantage. In 1986 a ‘weighting system’ was developed to make additional funds available for schools with disadvantaged pupils from Dutch and non-Dutch disadvantaged backgrounds. Children were allocated a weighting in line with certain criteria. For example: the children of parents who had higher or secondary education were given a weighting of 1.0; children whose Dutch parents were not highly educated were given a weighting

of 1.25, and children with poorly educated parents of non-western origin were given a weighting of 1.9. However, schools only received money once the threshold of 9% of pupils with this additional weighting had been passed.

The criteria for additional funding have changed a number of times. For example, the weighting of 1.25 was initially based on the criterion of one parent not being highly educated, but later changed to both parents not being highly educated. Karsten (2003) points out that these changes were based neither on an increased understanding of what the causes of educational disadvantage were, nor on changes in the characteristics of the groups considered to be disadvantaged. Instead, the changes were a response to practical problems such as the group of disadvantaged pupils becoming too large. Moreover, while this weighting system has partly been accepted as a way of promoting educational opportunities, it has also been criticised as being too imprecise and unspecific. For example, because schools could do what they wanted with the money, and because the system was not considered sufficiently adequate to tackle the disadvantages of native Dutch children (see for instance SCP, 2003).

In 2001, the Educational Council recommended the criteria be revised in accordance with the most robust criterion for educational disadvantage - the educational level of parents - while at the same time maintaining the criterion of ethnicity for children. But the latter should be explicitly linked with language disadvantage, which was to be tested and quantified (Onderwijsraad, 2001). This advice has certainly played a role in further discussion surrounding the weighting system, which led in 2003 to the government decision that ethnicity should no longer be a criterion. The weighting is now defined such that a child with parents with low vocational education counts for an additional 0.3, a child with parents with only primary education counts for 1.2. Of the latter group, 25% might be subject to additional financing: children in this group with a significant language deficit (to be detected by a test) count for an additional 2.4. But this latter weighting is only applied to children aged four to eight (i.e. the first four years of schooling). The threshold for receiving additional means is set at 5-6% of the pupil population with the specific intention of including more disadvantaged native Dutch pupils in this system (MinOCW, 2005a).

In addition to the introduction of a new weighting system and a lowering of the threshold, the weighting system is limited to a maximum of 80% of pupils per school. By maximising and restricting the weighting for language disadvantage to 80% of pupils, schools are not encouraged to accept all children with deficits and therefore segregation, to a certain extent, can be prevented. This argument assumes that schools with very high percentages of ethnic minority pupils might strive towards a concentration of immigrant pupils because of the availability of additional funds as a result of the extra weighting (Bosker & Guldmond, 2004; MinOCW, 2005a). This supposition would seem incorrect given the fact that most schools with very high percentages of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are to be found in concentration neighbourhoods and have hardly any influence at all on the inflow of pupils. Instead, parental choice is decisive⁹. It is known that both immigrant and native Dutch groups prefer a mixed school, but if this is not possible as a result of the population composition in a particular neighbourhood, it is generally the more highly educated 'white' parents who look to send their children to other schools (Denesen, Driessen & Slegers,

2005). Where there are black schools, immigrant parents accept them for practical reasons (vicinity) but also because of the schools' ability to deal with language difficulties and other problems caused by disadvantage (Karsten, Ledoux, Roeleveld, Felix & Elshof, 2003). The phenomenon of segregation is therefore not the result of the existing weighting system but of social processes and conditions. However, this insistence on segregation as a problem expresses the idea that integration in education is now primarily defined in terms of a cultural gap that should be closed by mixing¹⁰ (Gramberg & Ledoux, 2005; Snel & Scholten, 2005).

As a result of the new weighting system, schools serving disadvantaged pupils from native-Dutch backgrounds receive more additional resources than they used to receive in the previous weighting system. The importance of paying more attention to this group of pupils was stressed in the report entitled 'Native Dutch pupils, a forgotten group' [*Autochtone leerlingen; een vergeten groep*] (SCP, 2003). It argued that even though numbers of non-Dutch and native-Dutch disadvantaged children are more or less the same, the latter group disappeared almost completely from the political agenda. Too much focus has been put on the problematic socio-cultural and socio-economic position of ethnic minority groups, while the disadvantaged position of native-Dutch pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds stagnated, and may even have deteriorated. The disappearance from the political agenda is explained by the fact that non-native Dutch pupils would be more visible because they are concentrated in the cities; disadvantages of ethnic minorities are described as more evident due to cultural and linguistic barriers; and the disadvantages among pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are more severe. The native Dutch, disadvantaged group, on the contrary, would be more difficult to focus on as they tend to be spread throughout the country and disadvantages are the result of inadequate child-raising styles which are more difficult to envisage (Ledoux, 2003; SCP, 2003).

The little progress made by pupils from disadvantaged, Dutch backgrounds is worrying, but explaining the phenomenon is mainly guesswork (SCP, 2003). One factor might be the old weighting system. Native Dutch, disadvantaged children are scattered in schools throughout the country and they therefore often attended schools that did not receive additional funding (40% compared with 8% for immigrant children). These schools were unable to employ extra staff, which may mean fewer school facilities to support these pupils. But other causes are also mentioned. A widening gap between the preparation for education at home and the preparation-level required at school, with the latter having developed in line with the increasing level of education of the general population could account for the phenomenon. Furthermore, talent may also have been exhausted among this disadvantaged group: the level of education of the Dutch population has generally increased, and 'the reservoir of talent' may have come to an end. Furthermore, an attempt has been made in the Netherlands

9 Parents in the Netherlands are free to choose which school their children attend, and if they are unsatisfied about the school they can enrol their child in a different one or, as an association formed by parents they may set up a school and enrol their children in it. Schools of a particular ideology (e.g. Catholic, Islamic schools) or who adhere to particular educational and instructional principle (e.g. Jena-Plan, Montessori), are compared to state-school, equally financed by the state.

10 The restriction on the financing to 80% of the pupils with a weight at a school, can also be regarded as an attempt to block the founding of Islamic schools (Gramberg & Ledoux, 2005) – but this topic is beyond the here presented discussion.

to curb the numbers of children receiving special education: more children with learning and/or psycho-social problems now continue to attend regular primary schools. And finally, specific characteristics of the rural environment (low-education or low-skilled employment, speaking a dialect) may also contribute to the effect of a stabilised disadvantage (SCP, 2003).

The question about the unexplained relative deterioration of the disadvantaged native Dutch children points to one of the most persistent problems with analyses of compensatory policies: the lack of satisfactory explanations for the emergence and persistence of educational disadvantage, and the possible role of schools to deal with this situation. Reviewing what is understood about the causes of educational disadvantage in the Netherlands, Meijnen (2003) points out that a lot is known about individual factors that contribute to educational disadvantage. However, little is known about how these factors interrelate and how they come to constitute disadvantage in educational practice.

3.3.2 Decentralisation

Decentralisation of educational policies has been a trend that affected all schools, for instance with the introduction of lump sum financing, but the focus here is on the decentralisation of policies on educational disadvantage. As mentioned in the former section, these policies were decentralised to the municipalities in 1998 because the national level was no longer considered appropriate for dealing with local specificities of educational disadvantage. This decentralisation had only just taken shape and the effects had not even been evaluated (Meijnen, 2004) when further decentralisation was announced in 2003. Educational disadvantage policies were further decentralised to the level of the school and the 1998 Municipal Disadvantage Policy [*GOA: Gemeentelijk OnderwijsAchterstandenbeleid*] was abolished.

The proposal for new legislation (Tweede Kamer, 2005a) redefines the relationship between municipalities and schools. The obligation to draw up a four-year local plan for executing educational disadvantage policies was abrogated; instruments that have proved to be efficient and effective must be used instead. Schools and municipalities are obliged to deliberate as 'partners' on the promotion of integration and the prevention of segregation and on the fight against educational disadvantage. Pre and elementary education programmes that are regarded as successful means to combat educational disadvantages should be given high priority. Within this framework, the municipalities are responsible for the implementation of pre-school activities in child healthcare, childcare, playgrounds, and they should link these pre-school activities with the school organisations. Schools are responsible for the fight against educational disadvantage and they must set out how they intend to tackle it in a school plan and school prospectus. But the schools must meet several criteria. Firstly, the additional financial means that schools receive via the weighting system have to be spent on the first four years of primary education. This criterion may be considered somewhat questionable bearing in mind the discussion about the unexplained disadvantage among native Dutch pupils and the failure to come to grips with the complexity of the phenomenon. Secondly, schools must implement programmes with a proven track record. The emphasis is on the importance of using elementary education programmes and of monitoring pupils' progress. But while pre and elementary education has become a spearhead for educational disadvantage policy, the claimed effectiveness remains highly

contested (for a review, see Leseman, 2002). And thirdly, school organisations have to invest in developing good relationships with parents (MinOCW, 2004b, 2005b, 2005c). This criterion is further addressed under the 'governance' heading.

The task for schools and municipalities to combat segregation through jointly developed means reflects the growing concern about segregation and the search for ways to dismantle concentrations of immigrants in certain neighbourhoods and schools. The Council for Societal Development was asked to advise on this matter. The Council advised accepting the reality of concentration and not to strive for measures to disperse concentrations of people (RMO, 2005a). In that respect the Board's advice was in line with studies that pointed to the fact that concentration did not per se imply non-integration. Instead, the Council advocated developing an integration policy that stresses unity under the heading of democratic values, a policy that accepts differences in order to allow people to express their distinctive attributes and facilitates binding processes. In response to the advice, the government expressed particular concern about the proposal to tolerate a culture of difference. It reiterated its preference to combat concentration, and stated again that multiculturalism had to be abandoned, while agreeing that forced assimilation should not be the goal (Tweede Kamer, 2005b). In response to subsequent advice from the Council for Societal Development (RMO, 2005b), the minister of integration stressed that inter-ethnic contact most self-evidently develops through education, and argued that disadvantages can be combated by doing something about the cultural-alooftness of certain groups in society (Verdonk, 2006). This argument indicates that education is seen as a panacea for many problems and as an easy instrument with which to tackle them, for the simple reason that all children are obliged to attend school. The danger is then of course that schools are held responsible for solving problems over which they have no control.

3.3.3 Citizenship and Social Cohesion

As of January 2006, schools are tasked by law to enhance social integration and active citizenship. This means that schools' roles have been extended with the task of socialising pupils so that they subscribe to the principles of the democratic constitutional state and that pupils from different backgrounds can have contact with each other (MinOCW, 2004a). The exact interpretation of the tasks of social integration and active citizenship is left up to the school. Their concrete visions and courses of action should be set out in, among other things, the school plan which is to be monitored by the inspectorate (Inspectie, 2006d).

Prior to the introduction of this task, the inspectorate studied what schools already had in place concerning their societal task. They concluded that the majority of schools had stated some kind of perspective on citizenship in their school plan. Respect and preparing pupils for society were mentioned the most often. But these views were still rather limited and not really developed in any detail. The inspectorate emphasised the importance of school organisations developing their own vision of the role they want to play in enhancing social integration and active citizenship. A well-formulated vision, the inspectorate argued, was even more important given the problems reported by the school. Schools, for instance, expressed concern about the limited contact they had with parents or about the lack of cultural diversity among their pupils (Inspectie, 2006e).

Policy documents have also been criticised. What citizenship education entails is described in rather abstract terminology, and while the objective of encouraging citizenship is set for all schools, the social tasks are primarily associated with problems, deficits, disadvantaged pupils and schools serving high numbers of disadvantaged pupils. Moreover, though the social tasks also concern the more privileged schools and pupils, their role is not really considered (Turkenburg, 2005). Stressing Dutch norms and values may adversely affect its aims: the introduction of an educational learning method that fosters accomplishment in Dutch society, for example, may reflect the fact that immigrant pupils and their parents are not part of that society (Verkuyten, 2006).

In advice on how schools could further develop their vision on citizenship, the Educational Council advised linking up with the social networks of pupils i.e. parents and peers. School plans and visions should actually link up with the home situation and the child-raising styles of parents, so that the schools develop a course of action that results in the achievement of the objectives they set. To be able to develop such a vision, good contact with parents is considered a necessary condition and schools should take differences between groups of parents into account (Onderwijsraad, 2005). Developing a good relationship between schools and parents is, as mentioned, also one of the criteria for schools' financial spending and considered necessarily to combat segregation. The importance placed on this relationship should be understood in the context of the recent changes in the governance of the educational system.

3.3.4 Governance

Trends that include decentralisation and give schools more say on financial spending, are conjoined with a trend to control the educational system through governance principles. From the government's control of educational processes i.e. telling schools what to do, schools are increasingly given more autonomy to develop practices that best suit their particular situation. Schools are regarded as the ideal place for dealing with the specificities of the social environment (MinOCW, 2004a, 2004b) and they are increasingly given a say on policy content (MinOCW, 2005b). Schools are acknowledged as centres of professionalism and are given more room to operate in a way they consider appropriate. Supposedly, the government should no longer prescribe school practice, but instead it should set limits to the autonomy of school organisations and professionals by introducing accountability and implementing certain criteria for financial spending.

The minister claims to restrict schools' autonomy in two ways. Firstly, school practices should link up with societal and political priorities, and secondly, schools are obliged to account for their practices both horizontally (e.g. pupils and parents) and vertically (e.g. municipality and inspectorate) (MinOCW, 2005b). The necessity to connect with societal and political priorities goes hand in hand with an emphasis on the need to counteract processes of segregation and to stimulate citizenship. Horizontal accountability requires an adequate flow of information to parents and pupils (for instance, about the school's objectives and performance) and also necessitates formal positions for parents and pupils within the school organisation (for instance, in the representative advisory board). Vertical accountability implies that schools need to state how they interpret and adapt their teaching practices to local situations in annual reports and the school prospectus. The inspectorate

will monitor how schools perform against the objectives they have set themselves, and the inspectorate's reports are public domain (MinOCW, 2004b). Both horizontal and vertical accountability should help parents when deciding what school their child will attend. As more information becomes available about the quality of the different schools, parents' decisions about school choice should function as an incentive for the schools to achieve high educational quality.

The relationship between parents and schools is seen as important for various reasons: parents can help schools with their integration and active citizenship tasks; parents' school choice has to be influenced by the schools in order to combat segregation; and parents have to monitor and have a say in school quality through, amongst other things, their choice of school. But those schools that serve many pupils in the groups targeted by educational disadvantage policies - and who are therefore primarily associated with the first two tasks mentioned above - struggle to build up and sustain contact with parents. They often fail to improve contact with parents (Smit, Driessen & Doesborgh, 2002; Smit, Driessen, Vrieze, Kuijk, & Slegers, 2005) and they have high pupil turnover (51-61%), making continuity difficult (Roeleveld, 2003).

These kinds of problems in the relationship between schools and immigrant parents are touched upon in policy documents: for example, immigrant parents are more often excluded from having a say on educational matters, and they often do not feel welcome or even feel denigrated in their contact with teachers compared with native Dutch parents (MinOCW, 2004b), and schools with high numbers of immigrant pupils would continue doing their best to establish contact with parents but sometimes without success or even disillusion (Onderwijsraad, 2005). Despite these problems, the responsibility of the school is stressed over and over again: they are expected to persevere in their attempts to establish contact with parents (Onderwijsraad, 2005) and to consider building up good contact with parents as their task (MinOCW, 2004b). It seems that a clear understanding of how parental involvement can be improved upon is lacking.

3.4 Policy Measures and Implications for the School-Environment Relationship

At the end of this overview, I consider how the different measures allow school organisations on the one hand to interpret and change policies when translating them into practice, and on the other hand, how the ascribing of identities to school organisations and parents sets outer-limits to these practices.

In the former chapter I reflected on policy as not necessarily being fully coherent and as including flaws and diverse strands. The following are all examples of these policy features: the open-ends in citizenship education and in the perspectives on the relationship between parents and schools; the different strands underpinning changes to the weighting system; the contested effectiveness of the pre and elementary education programmes; and the possible counterproductive effects of citizenship education. These features allow for policy interpretation and for this interpretation to be adapted to local specific situations.

Decentralisation and governance trends seem to support this adaptation process. These trends encourage and expect schools to use their knowledge about both their own particular role and about local circumstances to develop their daily teaching practice. Hence, in line

with the view on educational disadvantage as proposed in the former chapter, current measures seem to create an opportunity to develop dynamic relationship between school practices, the local environment and the policy guidelines.

But, as also discussed in the previous chapter, the positions to which the different actors are ascribed restrict the possible relationships. The measures show that immigrant parents and their children are targeted in educational policies as being in need of stimulation and support. The changes in the weighting system that emphasise the importance of language deficit, coupled with the strong focus on pre and elementary education programmes, locate the causes for educational disadvantage with individuals and groups, and with ethnic minority groups in particular. On top of that, the law on citizenship education, the restriction of financing only 80% of pupils with a 'weight', and the task of municipalities and schools to present concrete plans on how they are going to combat segregation, are all measures that define educational disadvantage in terms of insufficient integration. Immigrant parents are in particular ascribed identities of being both insufficiently integrated and unwilling to participate in Dutch society and of being inherently lacking the know-how and skills to soundly prepare for and support their children's educational career. A deficit-perspective on immigrant parents seems to dominate educational disadvantage policy. This is in stark contrast with the fact that, as part of the governance model and of citizenship education, parents are also positioned as important partners of the school. Parents are expected to monitor quality and they are considered an essential part of the process of adapting education to the local situation.

These identity ascriptions to immigrant parents are not only contradictory, but also place them in a certain position in relation to the school. It seems that the parents become increasingly dependent on the school's practices. They depend both on the school's understanding of the ambiguities and contradictions in policies, and on the school's capacities to reflect on their own roles, and in particular on the mechanisms that may include or exclude immigrant parents from participating. This dependency results, firstly, from the ascription of deficit as being inherent to the parents. This identity-ascription reduces attention for differences in the situations in which pupils grown up and that affect their educational changes: issues such as poverty, quality of housing and the safety of neighbourhoods are taken less into account. The measures, for example, ignore conditions and social processes such as demographic trends, school choice, the possible negative effects of citizenship education, and the influence of schools on parents' say. Secondly, when problems are regarded as being inherent to certain groups, the educational institute itself is less subject to scrutiny. Issues such as educational opportunities and inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms as mentioned in the discussion on native Dutch pupils, are less likely to be included in discussions on educational disadvantage of groups of pupils who do not speak the Dutch language and who enter the educational system with a disadvantage.

The different measures expect school organisations to develop practices that are efficient and relevant given their particular context. These expectations are, as said, ambiguous because the success of citizenship education and early-education programmes is not guaranteed. Dealing with problems regarding contact with parents, for which there are no clear solutions, and with unexplained educational disadvantage are the responsibility of schools, and schools are held accountable for problems about which they have no control.

When these ambiguities are considered as an opportunity to adapt teaching practices to the local circumstances, it has to be borne in mind that translating these ambiguities into locally adapted practices requires taking the reality of the school into account. It is precisely this reality that is ignored in current measures: the measures are about achieving goals of inclusion and participation, whereas the real life obstacles are generally not considered in the policy equation. Schools' opportunities to develop localised practices are significantly restricted by having to account for themselves through activities that do not consider their every day reality. This tension between autonomy and standardisation hits segregated schools in particular because these schools are supposed to make use of pre and elementary education programmes; segregated schools are negatively affected by the changes in the weighting system; as citizenship education mainly concerns their pupils; and as segregated schools struggle with problems of segregation and restricted parental involvement.

The positions ascribed to schools and parents mean that school staff in segregated schools and immigrant parents are highly vulnerable to criticism both within and outside the school organisation. Therefore, while cooperation between segregated schools and parents from immigrant backgrounds is increasingly emphasised, the underlying discourse seems to drive them apart.

3.5 Conclusions: Double Binding Segregated Schools and Immigrant Parents

This chapter examined the developments in Dutch policy on integration and educational disadvantage. It showed that policies on educational disadvantage are significantly imprinted by a changed understanding of what integration involves. Influenced by a growing emphasis on the necessity of assimilation, the solution to educational disadvantage is increasingly formulated in terms of learning the Dutch language and combating segregation. At the same time, decentralisation tendencies have further developed and a governance perspective on the steering of the educational system has resulted in increased responsibility for school organisations. Schools are expected to carry out the tasks of stimulating integration, combating segregation and compensating for educational disadvantage among young children. A good relationship between schools and parents, in particular between segregated schools and immigrant parents, is presented as an important condition for schools to succeed in these tasks. However, the identities ascribed in policy measures to parents from immigrant backgrounds and to segregated schools seem to define relationships between them in such a way that building up a context-specific and interactive relationship is rather difficult. The influence of the educational institute on parents' participation through opportunity structures and through mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are left unaddressed, while vice versa, the influence of the parents' situation, such as poverty, housing, and social networks on the functioning and stability of school organisations is not taken into account. Leaving out the reality of both the conditions under which staff from segregated schools work and the problems that immigrant parents face when participating in the educational system makes both school staff and immigrant parents vulnerable to criticism. However, it seems that this criticism can be met most acceptably by school staff by pointing at the – ascribed deficit of – immigrant parents, but for immigrant parents there seems no one to blame apart from themselves.

4.

Methodological Framework

This chapter sets out the methodological framework of this study, in addition to the theoretical framework developed in the two previous chapters. It covers a number of aspects: section 4.1 discusses the focus, aims and research questions of the study. The study focuses in particular on the interaction between teachers and parents and situates their interaction in the contexts of the school organisation and policy. Section 4.2 discusses the analytical approach to this interaction and these contexts. It focuses on the dimensions that are analytically distinguished for the data analysis. Thereafter, the focus is on the methodological approach. To gain the desired understanding of the daily practices in segregated schools and to interrelate their practices with the institutional context, a qualitative research approach appears to be the most appropriate. Section 4.3 discusses why an embedded and multiple case study was opted for, and how the issue of generalisation is dealt with. This section also provides information on the criteria and method used to select two schools and three activities at each of them, and on the methods used to collect data. It also includes information about the system used in the empirical chapters to indicate the data sources. Section 4.4 introduces the schools themselves. It presents an initial image of the schools, which gradually develops in the empirical chapters to follow.

4.1 Focus, Aims and Research Questions

Integration policy in the Netherlands has undergone a number of changes since it was explicitly articulated (Entzinger, 1998; Duyvendak & Rijkschroef, 2004). The socio-cultural dimension of integration is increasingly emphasised, not only to enhance immigrants' socio-economic integration, but also as an important objective in itself. Socio-cultural integration should prevent disruption of the nation state as shared notions of citizenship are seen as contributing towards the maintenance of social cohesion and democracy (Snel & Scholten, 2005; Duyvendak, 2006).

Besides changed ideas on why socio-cultural integration is important, ideas about how to achieve it have also changed. From a group-based approach in which provisions were made available for immigrant groups, the focus is currently on an individual approach in which immigrants are held accountable for their participation. Those immigrants identified as insufficiently integrated are generally considered as failing to take up their responsibility

and as unwilling to make use of the opportunities offered to them by the receiving state (Snel, 2003; Ghorashi, 2006).

The combination of focusing explicitly on socio-cultural integration and targeting the individual immigrant has resulted in Dutch integration policy being described as 'assimilationism' (Snel & Scholten, 2005; Ghorashi, 2006). It fits in with neo-liberal and neo-conservative tendencies that are also to be found in other Western countries (Tomlinson, 2003; Apple, 2004). But it is the rapid paradigm shift in what was generally regarded as a 'tolerant country' that captures the attention in particular (Vasta, 2007).

The integration debate affects the educational system in two ways: firstly, ideas about how to deal with diversity in education change and, secondly, ideas about how education should contribute to the development of society change. These changes have been described in chapter three as double binding segregated schools and immigrant parents. On the one hand, segregated schools and immigrant parents are expected to jointly contribute more, through education, to social cohesion. But on the other hand, segregated schools and immigrant parents in particular, are increasingly held accountable for problems of dealing with diversity in education. These expectations seem to have a problematic impact on the interaction between segregated schools and immigrant parents as they, through their collaboration, become highly vulnerable to criticism.

This understanding of how current integration and education policy impinge on the interaction between segregated schools and immigrant parents is particularly important given the theoretical exploration of educational disadvantage presented in chapter two. This exploration started from the point of view that educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils does not straightforwardly result from deficiencies in immigrant pupils' resources and from a lack of educational opportunity structures offered to immigrant pupils. Instead, educational disadvantage would seem to be the result of more complex processes of interaction between teachers, immigrant pupils and their parents. Via the daily curriculum they seem to engage in negotiations over the ascription and positioning of parents' and pupils' identities, which has implications for the extent to which parents' and pupils' competences are used and for their access to education. This negotiation process and its outcomes appear to be interrelated with dynamics and developments at the level of the school organisation and with processes of translating policy into practice.

In accordance with this theoretical framework, this dissertation focuses on the interaction between teachers and parents in segregated schools and analyses their interaction in the context of the school organisation and of policy that concerns immigrant parents and segregated schools.

Aims

In the context of the changing integration debate and its implications for education, this dissertation has three aims. Firstly, it aims to increase understanding of the dynamics and developments in segregated schools. Knowledge about segregated schools, as pointed out in the introductory chapter, tends to be fragmented and to pay little attention to the schools' everyday reality. Furthering understanding of segregated schools is important as they are increasingly tasked with finding solutions to the problems that diversity poses to Dutch society.

The second aim of this dissertation is to study whether the educational disadvantage of immigrant pupils can be explained differently. Educational disadvantage is currently generally seen as the result of immigrant parents' child-raising styles. The parents are thought to fall short of soundly preparing and supporting their children's educational career. However, it would seem that things are not that simple because child-raising practices and educational practices are interrelated; parents, pupils and teachers do not only work on deficit remediation, but they also respond to each other's practices; and because judgements on child-raising styles and educational practices depend on the circumstances that are taken into consideration and those that are not. The aim of this dissertation is to ascertain whether interaction between the norms set in the educational system and group-related differences may provide an alternative and more satisfying explanation for immigrant pupils' educational disadvantage.

The third aim of this dissertation is to further consider current integration and education policies. I intend to discuss the practices in segregated schools and the phenomenon of immigrant pupils' educational disadvantage in the context of these policies. Given the discussion that current policy may double bind segregated schools and immigrant parents, it seems useful to analyse the influence of a paradigm that emphasises the individual's responsibility to assimilate into the receiving country, on the opportunities to combat educational disadvantage in daily practice.

Research Questions

The key research questions underlying the analysis of daily practice in segregated school organisations in their attempts to combat educational disadvantage are:

- (1) How do parents and teachers at segregated primary schools try co-operatively to combat educational disadvantage?
- (2) How do processes of putting policy into practice in segregated primary schools form an element in the interaction between teachers and parents and affect its outcomes?

4.2 Analytical Approach

The theoretical framework of this dissertation discussed that the levels of interaction, dynamics in the school organisation, and of policy are interrelated. They not only seem to affect each other but also form an element in each other's functioning: the levels are interrelated. However, these levels are, for analytical purposes, distinguished in this study's data analysis. This section presents the analytical framework and focuses on the dimensions that are considered at the levels of policy, school organisations, and interaction between teachers and parents respectively.

4.2.1 Policy

Policy in this dissertation is approached from a governance perspective: it is conceived of as coming about in negotiations between people at all levels of the educational system (Dale, 1997), and as being the subject of interpretation and change (Trommel & Arentsen, 2005). Instead of seeing policy implementation as a rational and top-down process, it

is considered as a process of translation in which interests, meaning constructions and hierarchical structures are at stake. Nevertheless, the more instrumental perspective on policy, will, because of being generally used across the board, affect how people negotiate and interpret policy.

In addition to considering the policy translation process at the levels of the school organisation and of the individual teacher in the data analysis, attention is also given to how policy works on the actors' discussions and interpretations. Therefore, policy documents as they are circulated in the two schools are analysed.

Two dimensions of policy are included in this policy-text analysis. Firstly, the dimension of policy that allows for interpretation. This is referred to as "hybrid" policy (Van Zanten, 2002), which means that the open-ends, multiple strands, and ambiguities in policy allow for interpretation, scrutiny and change (Tomlinson, 2003). Secondly, the policy dimension that restricts possible interpretations of and changes to the documents. This dimension consists of two sub-elements that are referred to as 'discourse' and 'structures'. Discourse refers to conventions about the pupils, parents, teachers, and schools who are in need of intervention and why such interventions are considered important. It draws distinctions between constructed groups of pupils, parents, teachers and schools (Shore & Wright, 1997; Popkewitz, 2000). Structures refer to educational measures that result from the identification of the people who are in need of intervention. When referring to this sub-element in the policy analysis, attention is, for example, paid to materials, time-schedules, administrative systems, and rules of collaboration.

The analysis of policy-text not only serves to identify who is the subject of intervention and the reason for it, but it also serves to identify positions in the educational system to which people are ascribed and how the relationships between these people are defined (Popkewitz, 2000). This construction of the educational field is seen to influence the behaviour of people and the interaction between them.

4.2.2 School Organisations

School organisations are dealt with in this dissertation from a micro-political perspective. They are considered as being characterised by ambiguous collaboration of teachers and head teachers. Collaboration is seen as ambiguous because of tensions between teachers' autonomy in and head teachers' control over the school organisation (Hargreaves, 1994; Achinstein, 2002) and because of tension between the need to adopt policy and its underpinning assumptions while also leaving space to interpret policy (Meyer & Scott, 1983; Ball, 1987; Clark et al., 1999; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003).

A distinction is drawn in the analysis of the interaction between head teachers and teachers between meaning construction and organisation (see also Fullan, 1991; Coburn, 2004; Hargreaves, 2004). The dimension of meaning construction refers to the content of the interaction between teachers and head teachers. It focuses on the meaning constructions of these people and how they negotiate their, sometimes ambiguous, meaning constructions. The focus is on beliefs about teaching and learning. The dimension of organisation refers to the structures of their interaction. Attention is given to the hierarchical relationship between teachers and head teachers and to the situation in which they discuss their beliefs.

The interaction between teachers and head teachers is seen as affecting policy: it results in the interpretation of policy documents and a translation into everyday practice, or it results in the development of policy as the outcome of discussions on practice (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). Each of these two ways in which dynamics and developments in the school organisation influence policy, is analysed in terms of the adaptations made to the assumptions and relationships (i.e. the discourse) that underpinned existing policies.

4.2.3 Interaction between Teachers and Parents

The interaction between teachers and parents is approached in this dissertation from the perspective of identity-negotiations. Teachers and parents are perceived as engaging in negotiations about judgments on the value of identities for education via the teacher's organisation of and the parent's responses to the daily curriculum. To analyse this interaction attention has to be paid to: the identities at issue, the process of negotiation, and to the outcomes of the interaction.

The focus in the analysis of the negotiated identities is on educational identities that consist of two dimensions: firstly, a pedagogic dimension, consisting of beliefs about teaching and learning and, secondly, a cultural dimension, consisting of beliefs about the characteristics of constructed social groups (Bernstein, 2000). Attention is paid to similarities and divergence in the identities ascribed and identified with by teachers and parents and in their judgements on the value of these identities.

The negotiation process is considered to take place via the everyday curriculum (McFadden, 1995). To analyse the negotiation process, two dimensions that concern both teachers and parents are distinguished: firstly, the observation and interpretation of a person's behaviour and, secondly, the organisation of the curriculum. As far as the observation and interpretation of behaviour is concerned, attention is paid to its inclusiveness (Youdell, 2003) and to the interpretation of behaviour that disconfirms ascribed identities (Archer & Francis, 2005). Concerning the organisation of the curriculum, the focus is on the structures of the everyday curriculum, which consists, for example, of materials, rules on communication, and time schedules.

Finally, when examining the outcomes of identity-negotiations, attention is given to how interaction may contribute towards combating educational disadvantage. Two possibilities are distinguished: firstly, attempts to meet the norms of identities that are judged positively, i.e. to fit parents in with norms of conventional identities, and, secondly, attempts to change norms in such a way that alternative identities become positively valued, i.e. to change educational norms underpinning daily practice to meet parents' different needs and competences.

4.3 Methodological Approach

As stated in chapter one, knowledge about what happens in segregated schools tends to be fragmented: little is known about the day to day processes in segregated school organisations. Therefore, this study is explorative in nature. Attention is paid to the interaction between teachers and parents and these interactions are contextualised by considering policy translation processes in the school organisation. This contextualisation

is expected to be important as it may have a systematic effect on the interaction between teachers and parents and form an important explanation of the interaction outcomes.

Using a qualitative research approach would seem appropriate to arrive at the desired insights. Firstly, because the aim is to understand dynamics in school organisations and not to study factors that influence school internal dynamics or to study trends that appear over time in these dynamics. This aim may best be achieved by applying a qualitative research approach (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). And secondly, a qualitative research approach is useful for investigating whether indeed, and if so how, the institutional context is highly pertinent to interactions in the school organisation (Yin, 1994).

This section first reflects on the decision to use a multiple approach, i.e. studying more than one school in-depth, and an embedded approach, i.e. studying subunits within the schools. This decision is based on considerations about the generalisation of research findings and about the studying of locally diverse interaction. Secondly, it discusses the selection criteria and procedure used to sample schools and cases for the study. Thirdly, it includes information on the data collection process.

4.3.1 Qualitative Research: A Multiple and Embedded Case Study Approach

The aim of qualitative research to learn more about dynamics and processes tends to exclude the possibility of conducting the study on a large-scale and in a representative sample. This restricts the possibility of generalising research findings, which is generally considered as a logical but, nevertheless, important omission of this research methodology.

As Steward (1998) points out, the shortcomings of qualitative and quantitative research methods are well known. In his opinion, it is therefore not useful to judge these methods by means of the same concepts: qualitative research methods will always fall short in terms of generalisation because of the non-random sampling and the limited number of actors that can be studied. To judge the usefulness of the research outcomes from qualitative studies he proposes using the concept of 'perspicacity', which he defines as: "the extent to which ethnographers can develop a construct or theory, about structures, processes or relationships that is specified sufficiently so as to be applied beyond the site of the research" (Steward, 1998: 16). To realise perspicacity, Steward (1998) emphasises the importance of staying in the research field for an extended period of time and to revisit the sites studied.

Also Yin (1994) defines the value of qualitative research in terms of developing theories that can be generalised, which he refers to as "analytical generalization". But besides emphasising the importance of working longer at the research sites, he also argues that a comparative component in the research design contributes to the realisation of analytical generalisation. He says: "if two or more cases are shown to support the same theory, replication may be claimed. The empirical results may be considered yet more potent if two or more cases support the same theory but do not support an equally plausible rival theory" (Yin, 1994:31).

The idea of developing a theory that can be generalised to research sites not studied, is relevant for this dissertation, as one of its aims is to investigate whether a more comprehensive focus on the interaction between the educational system and home upbringing practices may provide an alternative understanding of educational disadvantage.

To be able to develop a theory on educational disadvantage that can be generalised, the research sites are visited for a longer period (a year and a half) and studied at intervals. Furthermore, a comparative element is also included in the research design. The study was conducted at two schools and several similar activities were studied at both of them. More information on the selection of the schools and cases and on the data collecting methods is included in the following section. I now explain the decision for studying several cases at each school.

The study examines whether the institutional context constitutes a highly pertinent context for the processes at the local level. The theoretical framework explored that generally accepted ideas on the relationship between educational positions and pupils and parents' identities, through interaction between head teachers and teachers, affect locally diverse interactions between teachers, pupils and parents. It seems that generally accepted discourse and the structures that result from commonalities, have a reproductive effect on the existence of educational disadvantage. To study these interrelationships, educational norms and the use of generally shared ideas in the interaction between head teachers and teachers and in the interaction between teachers and parents, are examined.

However, in his study on discourses of identity in multi-ethnic London, Bauman (1996) shows that actors at the local level do not simply reproduce generally shared ideas. Instead they use alternative - what Bauman referred to as - "demotic discourse". In Bauman's study, generally accepted discourse and local, alternative discourses turn out not to be two discourses at the extremities; instead actors' local usage of discourses and practices sometimes affirm and sometimes deny the generally accepted ideas. Bauman's findings point out that when studying local, interactive processes and how they relate to generally shared ideas, it is important to choose the activities such that the generally shared ideas become applied locally and that the actors engage in a diversity of meanings that they create and live (Bauman, 1996, p. 30). As far as this dissertation is concerned, this insight implies that speaking about immigrant pupils' educational disadvantage in general, may cause interviewees to simply recall generally accepted ideas. Focusing on the meaning of daily practices in relation to educational disadvantage may cause interviewees to express the complexity, diversity and localness of their actions, and, as said, this does not exclude the use of commonalities.

Seen from this angle, it is considered important to focus on specific cases in the two schools and not to focus on the school organisation in general. Therefore, the decision was taken to conduct embedded case studies. The selection of specific cases within the two schools may give rise to the idea that the activities chosen are just a minor or even obsolete part of the school organisation, and that the sub-cases are not representative of the school organisation as a whole. This leads back to the discussion on the generalisation of the research findings of qualitative studies. It should be borne in mind that the aim of this thesis is to understand the mechanisms through which non-local structures of inequality are reproduced in locally diverse and context specific processes. Insights gained into these mechanisms should be applicable to other research sites: within the schools, and to other schools. Therefore, a comparative element is included in the selection of the schools and also in the selection of activities at both of them.

4.3.2. *The Selection of Schools and Activities*

The schools and activities are purposefully sampled. Three criteria guide the selection of the schools and activities. Firstly, for the sake of generalisation, choosing comparable schools and activities is considered important. A maximum amount of comparable data is aimed at: the schools should be comparable and the activities should be comparable within and across the two schools.

Secondly, striving towards a maximum of variation plays an important role in the selection of the activities. Maximum variation improves generalisation because it maximises the chance of cases turning up that do not support conventional thinking, which stimulates the study of rival theories (Becker, 1998). Generalisation may be claimed if cases support the same theory but do not equally support an equally plausible rival theory (Yin, 1994). Maximum variation is aimed at in two respects: (a) with concern for policy processes, the aim is to include a case in which policy translation processes results from the circulation of texts, and a case in which policy translation processes result from actors' discussions in an attempt to develop some concrete form of policy (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). And, (b) with concern for the home-school relationship, the aim is to include a case in which this relationship changes as the result of policy that the school is obliged to implement, a case in which the relationship changes as the result of the school's own initiatives, and a case in which changes in the home situations occur and to which the school may respond, but not necessarily.

Thirdly, the selection of the activities should allow for the analysis of policy-context, micro-politics of the school organisations, and interactions between teachers and parents. Though each of these dimensions appears in each case, the opportunity to analyse them in detail differs. To cover each of the dimensions equally, the cases were selected such that the data on each dimension accumulated and that information rich data were generated for each dimension. This is achieved by selecting cases during the course of the research: it allows for any identified information gaps to be covered, and for linking up with issues that are relevant at the time of the research to the functioning of the school organisations.

These three criteria and practical considerations, such as time and manpower, resulted in the selection of two schools and three activities at each of them.

The Selection of Two Schools

For the schools to be comparable, attention is paid in the selection procedure to similarities in the schools' policy contexts and in the characteristics of their local environment. The *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* were selected for the research. These two schools are both primary schools located in one municipality. Within this municipality they are located in two areas with concentrations of immigrants. They both serve high percentages of immigrant pupils (i.e. more than 70%). Furthermore, the schools are of the same denomination: both are public schools and therefore they fall under the same school board.

Because of these similarities, the two schools are generally confronted with similar national and municipal educational policies. However, a few differences in their policy context do occur. One of the schools is, for example, and as discussed in more detail in the following section, an "Educational Priority School" [*onderwijskansenschool*], and is

in the process of developing into a community school [*brede school*]. Moreover, there are considerable differences between the characteristics and developments of the two schools. They, for example, differ in terms of the size of their pupil population and in staffing. Section 4.4 provides a general introduction to the two schools.

The Selection of Activities

Three activities were selected at the two schools: the Walk-in Morning activity, a topic of concern at the schools, and the Mother-tongue lessons. The Walk-in Morning activity and the Mother-tongue lessons are conducted at both schools and therefore a comparison of these activities across the schools is possible. These two activities generate data about policy and interaction between teachers and parents in particular, while information on the interaction between teachers and head teachers is somewhat less pronounced.

Studying interaction between teachers and head teachers from a micro-political approach is possible when pressing issues are involved (Ball, 1987). To generate, in addition to the Walk-in Morning activity and Mother-tongue lessons, rich information on this dimension, topics that are pressing at the two schools are selected - i.e. the topics relating to pupil behaviour and parent involvement.

These two topics were also selected with the idea of realising maximum variation. It facilitates the study of policy translation processes that develop from discussions, while the Walk-in Morning activity and Mother-tongue lessons include policy translation processes that result from the circulation of texts. The two topics also add to the variation realised in the home-school relationship. Holding the Walk-in Morning activity is obligatory for both schools; the Mother tongue lessons interfere in the school's environment to which they may respond; and the two topics of concern in the school develop in the individual schools themselves.

4.3.3 Methods of Data-Collection and Representation

Extensive fieldwork was conducted to generate data on the practices in the two segregated schools. This section provides information on: the time-schedule of the fieldwork, the data-collection methods, and the system used to indicate data-sources in the empirical chapters to follow. Because of the significant amount of data collected, the diversity of data-collection methods, and the many cases the data involve, detailed information about the number of interviews conducted, the kinds of documents used, the number of observations, the outings joint etc. is included in appendix 1.

Schedule

Data were gathered at each school over a period of a year and a half. Gaining access to the two primary schools took time: the *Sleutelschool* was contacted in mid October 2003, and the research started immediately after Christmas Holidays on 12 January 2004. The *Professor Bakkerschool* was contacted in mid September 2003 and the research started on 10 March 2004. Access to the schools was initially gained through the head teachers who subsequently asked the Representative Advisory Body and the School Board for permission. Due to conflict in the team (not related to the research) and some resistance to the research in its Representative Advisory Body, gaining access to the *Professor Bakkerschool* took even

more time.

Data were generated in phases: after an introductory period of about three weeks at each school - in which I acquainted myself with the school organisations, the three activities were studied at intervals. In that way, I revisited the schools several times. During each phase, besides examining the specific activity, I was also more generally involved in the school organisation, for example, by attending meetings, joining outings, and having lunch with the teachers. The following table presents an overview of the general time schedule of the research:

Table 1. Overview of the research phases

	<i> Sleutelschool </i>	<i> Professor Bakkerschool </i>
Introductory Phase	January 2004	March 2004
Walk-in Morning	Mid April – end of June 2004	End of August – beginning of October 2004
Pupil Behaviour / Parent Involvement	Mid January – end of April 2005	End of February – end of May 2005
Mother Tongue	November 2004	December 2004

Methods of Data Collection

Several data collection methods were used throughout the research:

a) Interviews.

Interviews generate a major part of the data. All the interviews were semi-structured: a topic list was used to pursue a range of topics I considered important to discuss, but the interviewees were also given the opportunity to shape the content of the interview. They could introduce topics they themselves were interested in, and which they considered important to highlight.

Depending on the activity studied, decisions were taken on the interview approach and selection of interviewees. For the Walk-in Morning activity, interviews were conducted with teachers, parents, and the member of the school management formally responsible for the activity. After initial observations of and informal conversations about the Walk-in Morning, teachers were asked to make an appointment for an interview. Two criteria guided the selection of teacher-interviewees: first, an attempt was made to speak to at least one teacher from each class and, second, an attempt was made to speak to teachers who had different opinions about the Walk-in Morning: i.e. some teachers were identified by their colleagues as being in favour of the Walk-in Morning, while others were seen or considered themselves to be less engaged. For this latter criterion to be applied, it was necessary to draw on information from the periods in which I acquainted myself with the schools and in which I conducted some initial research into the activity. Teachers voluntarily participated

in the interviews: in two cases, teachers did not want to be interviewed. Nevertheless, some information about their experiences and points of view was generated through informal conversations.

Two strategies were used to interview parents about the Walk-in Morning activity. First, during the Walk-in Morning, parents were randomly asked whether they would speak to me briefly about the Walk-in Morning: I wanted to ask a few questions about their experiences. Parents who take their children to school but who do not stay for the Walk-in Morning and those parents who do attend, were addressed in this way. However, this approach implies that, prior to the interview, I had no information about the parents' fluency in the Dutch language, which is the language used for the interviews. In a few cases, this hampered the interviews. Second, after some "ad-hoc" interviews, a number of parents were asked to take part in an interview to talk in more depth about the Walk-in Morning. In these interviews, topics, including those that parents frequently raised in the shorter interviews, were addressed more extensively.

Most of the parents were spoken to on an individual basis, though some of them asked for another parent to be included in the conversation. A few interviews were therefore conducted with two or three parents at the same time. The majority of interviewees were women, who generally also attend the Walk-in Morning more often.

The teacher was sometimes involved in arranging the interviews with parents: they were particularly keen to arrange for a conversation with those parents they considered as 'having an opinion', 'engaged', or 'doing their best'. But besides helping with appointments, teachers also expressed their opinion about the parents I had just spoken with, or to express their interest in the parents' points of view. They, for example, comment: 'And, did she like the Walk-in Morning?'; 'I am curious about what they tell you'; 'That mother is not representative'; 'She only asked you for that document because it is a status symbol for her, she can't even read it'; or 'She is really engaged in her children's education'. These kinds of responses are also treated as data.

The interviews conducted as part of the Walk-in Morning were not recorded. This decision was taken because of my still relative unfamiliarity with the teachers and the ad-hoc basis on which the interviews with parents were arranged. In this context, using a tape recorder might be a distraction and might put the interviewees in a position they may experience as not being particularly confidential in nature. Instead, notes were taken during the interviews and they were worked out in more detail afterwards.

Most of the interviews were conducted in a classroom or in the staffroom, a few parent interviews were conducted in the corridors - if there was no classroom available, and one teacher preferred to sit outside in the playground.

For the topics of pupil behaviour and parent involvement, interviews were conducted with the head teachers, deputy heads and teachers. They were sampled in a similar way to the method used for the teacher interviews on the Walk-in Morning. These interviews were, however, recorded and transcribed. The decision to record these interviews was taken, firstly, because I had got to know most of the teachers - I had been at the schools for about one year, and secondly, because of the formal role that I had been given in the schools. The head teacher and deputy head formally informed the teachers about my research and the teachers were asked to co-operate. The interviewees were asked for permission to have

their interviews recorded, and anonymity was guaranteed. Two teachers later asked to have access to the transcription of the interviews, which I sent to them. The interviews were generally conducted in the teacher's classrooms. Occasionally, the remedial teaching room or the ICT classroom was used.

Concerning the Mother tongue programme, the two teachers who gave the lessons were interviewed. These interviews were, with their permission, recorded and transcribed. One teacher was interviewed at the school, the other at the Regional Education Centre where she works. Regular teachers and coordinators were asked in conversations about their involvement in the programme, they were not separately interviewed about this topic. The women who took the lessons were interviewed in groups. The programme assistant functioned as an interpreter during these interviews. These group interviews were, with the women's permission, recorded and transcribed. The conditions in which the women were interviewed differed significantly per school, which affected the data-collection process. More information about these differences can be found in chapter seven, section 7.4.

b) Conversations

Conversations, both held in person and overheard, were a second source of information. Notes on conversations were, while still at the research site, jotted down as soon as possible and worked out in detail afterwards.

Conversations were held with a wide variety of people, including parents and school support staff. They took place at different locations, for instance, in the playground, during lunch breaks, and at school events. Compared with the interviews, the conversations were generally shorter, had a more informal character, occurred more spontaneously, and they also came about at the initiative of the people spoken with.

c) Observations

Observation and participant observation comprise a third method used to collect data. These methods were used to generate general data and data on the specific activities. General data were, for example, gathered by observing meetings and report evenings, and participating in outings and lessons. Concerning the specific activities, Walk-in Mornings, Mother-tongue lessons, and meetings on the topics of pupil behaviour and parent involvement were observed. My role in the meetings on pupil behaviour and parent involvement is further addressed in chapter six. Notes on the observations and participant observations were jotted down as soon as possible, and worked out in more detail after having left the research site.

d) Document Analysis

The analysis of documents was another method used to collect data. Several kinds of documents were analysed: school documents that are not generally available to the public (such as minutes of meetings, guidelines for activities such as the Walk-in Morning, and the schools' newsletters); school documents that are publicly available (such as the school plan and school handbook); school inspectorate documents (accessible via the internet); the *Piramide* handbook that includes information about the Walk-in Morning; policy documents and evaluation reports on the Mother-tongue programme; and municipal documents

containing figures and descriptions of the schools' neighbourhoods. Where possible, the documents were photocopied, and otherwise passages from documents were copied by hand.

e) Discussions on Research Findings

Finally, data were gathered through discussions on research reports that were written for the benefit of the schools. These kinds of reports were written about the Walk-in Morning activity and the topics of pupil behaviour and parent involvement. The report about the Walk-in Morning was first discussed with the deputy heads and then in a meeting with the teachers concerned. The report on the topic of pupil behaviour was discussed with the head teacher and deputy head. They decided to make the research report accessible to the teachers and to organise a workshop on the topic. The report on the topic of parent involvement was discussed with the deputy head and a teacher. They decided that the research report would not be used any further. More information about these discussions and decisions is to be found in chapter six.

Data Representation

People are cited and fragments from documents and observations are used in the empirical chapters to follow. These data presentations are, for the sake of readability and in the majority of cases, written in the first person. As far as the names of schools, pupils, parents or teachers are given, they are not real names with a view to maintaining anonymity.

The following system is used to indicate the source of data:

Sl: data gathered at the *Sleutelschool*

Pb: data gathered at the *Professor Bakkerschool*

100105: date of data collection [day-month-year]

interview/observation/conversation etc.: method of data collection

teacher/parent etc.: person spoken with

Ht: head teacher

T: teacher

P: parent

DdR: Dieneke de Ruiter, interviewer

<...> The interviewee covered the subject again at another moment during the interview: the topics addressed in the meantime are left out of the quotation presented.

4.4 Introduction to the Schools

A distinction is made in the Netherlands between the four big cities (Utrecht, The Hague, Amsterdam and Rotterdam) which have over 250,000 inhabitants, medium-sized cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, and smaller cities with less than 100,000 inhabitants. The two schools in this study are located in a medium-sized city. The number of inhabitants with

non-Western backgrounds in this municipality is somewhat higher than average (14.1% and 10.4% respectively). The biggest immigrant group has a Moroccan background.

The inhabitants from non-Western backgrounds are unequally spread over the city: they are concentrated in parts of certain neighbourhoods. The *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* are located in neighbourhoods where approximately one third of the inhabitants are from non-Western backgrounds. The schools are introduced in this section by presenting data on their neighbourhoods obtained from municipal documents, information on the pupil population and staff members obtained from school documents; information from school inspectorate reports; and by providing more general descriptions of the schools based on data gathered throughout the research.

4.4.1 *The Sleutelschool*

The *Sleutelschool* is located in part of a neighbourhood that is characterised by blocks of flats (80%) and high numbers of rented council housing (93%). Unemployment levels (7.4%) and the number of one-parent families (more than 7%) are high compared with the rest of the municipality, and average disposable income is lower. Approximately 90% of the pupils attending the *Sleutelschool* live in its immediate surroundings.

The pupil population averages 240, but enrolment numbers are dwindling (230). Lower socio-economic backgrounds and a diversity of cultural backgrounds characterise the pupils who attend the *Sleutelschool*. Of the pupils, approximately five pupils are without a weighting, 10% are 0.25 pupils, and the majority (88.2%) has a weighting of 0.9^{11, 12}. The ethnic minority pupils are mainly from a Moroccan background.

Thirty-five teachers, including the principal and deputy principal, work at the *Sleutelschool* in 2005 (about 20 full-time jobs). Thirty-five percent of the teachers are between 50 and 60 years old, 30% are between 40 and 50 years old, approximately 23% are between 30 and 40 years old and about 9% are between 20 and 30 years old. There are 5 support staff¹³.

The *Sleutelschool* has a relatively stable history of school management and staffing. The current head teacher has held his position for 11 years. Though staff turnover does not appear to be exceptional, some teachers point out that young and inexperienced teachers often leave after one or two years of teaching at the *Sleutelschool*. Indeed, younger teachers seem to be somewhat underrepresented at the school.

The pupil population and parent contact are less stable. The pupil population changed in the last ten years from almost completely native-Dutch to a population that consists mainly of immigrant pupils. Many pupils repeat grades and the numbers of pupils who are eleven years or older are high¹⁴. Furthermore, numbers of pupils who arrive during their school career are high and most of the children attend the school for less than six years.

11 The figures are estimates: the *Sleutelschool* has an annex at which asylum seeking children are taught. The school plan is not always clear about whether the annex is included in the figures or not. The figures are supposed to cover only the *Sleutelschool* – and not to include the annex.

12 In brief, 88,2% of the pupil population are ascribed an immigrant and lower socio-economic status; 10% are native Dutch, with a lower socio-economic status. For a more extensive explanation of the weighting system see section 3.3.1.

13 For reasons similar to those mentioned in footnote 11, these figures are estimates.

14 Exact figures are missing because the auxiliary branch with refugee children is also included in the statistics.

Contact with parents, teachers recall, decreased significantly when the pupil population started to change. Parent involvement continued to remain limited: the school has no parent council, the parent representatives on the school's representative advisory body do not function well, and, except for some informal activities like jumble sales, no activities are organised for parents and they are not asked for help with outings.

According to school inspectorate reports, the *Sleutelschool* has an average score in 2002 compared with schools with a similar pupil population, while in 2004 they score slightly below average. In 2002 the school inspectorate concluded that the *Sleutelschool* offers modern and educationally sound teaching materials. The school is complimented in particular because of the fact that it serves more than 90 percent of non-native Dutch pupils, and the numbers of new pupils are high. Nevertheless, the inspectorate concludes the 2002 report by stating that education can be improved by taking the differences in level between children into account and by implementing adaptive education.

The inspectorate observed new consultative structures in 2004. Indeed, at the time this research was conducted, the introduction of new teaching approaches and collaboration structures seem to be spearheads at the school. The head teacher and teachers are, however, not wholly satisfied with these developments. The head teacher complains about a few, older teachers: in his opinion they are not adopting the new teaching approaches and do not co-operate in their implementation. Some teachers complain about the head teacher: he is far too focused on ICT and pays too little attention to the changes that have taken place in the pupil population, which has a negative effect on pupil behaviour and teacher expectations. But besides this element of friction, there are no evident problems in the team.

The head teacher delegated responsibilities for contact with the neighbouring institutions and with parents to the confidential advisor and to one of the support staff members. These two people complain that the head teacher does not seem to be particularly interested in the problems and developments in the neighbourhood. They consider this to be a problem because financial problems, domestic violence and marital difficulties, among other things, appear prominently in the neighbourhood and affect the children and the school organisation.

The confidential advisor sums up some of the problems that pupils are confronted with: she estimates that forty to fifty percent of pupils at the *Sleutelschool* are confronted with domestic violence; she also takes care of about twenty pupils whose families have been contacted by the child welfare and the child protection board. On top of that, about 10 mothers – who often have more than one child at the school – have, at one time or another, stayed in women's shelters. Problems of social isolation, depression, or physical problems such as lethargy and overweight are also to be found among mothers and sometimes among the older female pupils. Moreover, a few fathers and, incidentally, a mother are in prison. Boys are regularly involved in petty crime and girls from Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds are often married off when they grow older. Even if families seem to be harmonious, she ends by saying that problems may occur, for example, if a family with six children lives in a two-room apartment. Similar problems are touched upon by a person working for a social-care institution in the vicinity of the school when talking about the families she supports.

According to the confidential advisor and the support staff member, the head teacher and teachers are little aware of the proportions of the problems in the neighbourhood and among their pupils. Indeed, when asked for information about the features of the neighbourhood, the teachers and the head teacher tend to refer to the confidential advisor and the support staff member. They expect them to be able to provide this kind of information.

The teachers and the head teacher frequently compare their work with that of teachers working at schools for special education: the pupil populations are equally difficult and the sizes of the classes are equally small. However, the staff members point out that they are not a school for special education, but simply at a public school that serves “the riffraff in society”. Other schools located in the neighbourhood send children with problems to their school and parents who are slightly better off avoid them.

Teachers and the head teacher consider that they work hard, they put considerable effort into attaining teaching standards, into improving internal consultation structures, and into adapting educational levels to the needs of the individual child. Nevertheless, teaching at the *Sleutelschool* sometimes exhausts them, and the outcomes of their hard work is not always satisfying. Meanwhile, the head teacher and people from neighbouring institutions point out that the image of the *Sleutelschool* is deteriorating, and this is seen as a major cause of the dwindling pupil numbers.

4.4.2 *The Professor Bakkerschool*

The *Professor Bakkerschool* is located in a large neighbourhood. Levels of income, quality of housing, and levels of education all diverge considerably in this neighbourhood. But the part in which the *Professor Bakkerschool* is located and in which most of its pupils live is characterised by blocks of flats (70%), high levels of rented council housing (77%), generally low levels of income and high unemployment rates (with peaks of 8%).

The *Professor Bakkerschool* is a small school that after years of dwindling enrolment numbers and a latent threat of closure, saw its pupil population grow to 180 in the 2004-2005 school year. In the 2003-2004 school year, there were 174 pupils, 74% of whom with non-native Dutch backgrounds, and who have a weighting of 0.9. Ten percent of the pupil population have a weighting of 0.25 or 0.7, and 16% have no weighting. Similar to the *Sleutelschool*, Moroccan pupils are in the majority among the immigrant pupils.

Twenty teachers, including the principal and deputy head, worked at the *Professor Bakkerschool* in 2003. Five percent are aged between 20 and 30, 35% are between 31 and 40 years old, 25% are between 41 and 50 years old, and 35% are older than 51. There are 5 support staff.

A high staff and school management turnover characterises the *Professor Bakkerschool*. Changes in management took place five times in the last fourteen years, and most recently in 2004. The head teacher reports that in the last two years 12 teachers have left the school.

The deputy head and head teacher see the history of the *Professor Bakkerschool* to be problematic. In the past, the school consisted of three auxiliary branches that, in their opinion, were not well managed: the school did not invest in the professional development of the teachers, teaching methods were outdated, expenditure was far beyond the school's

budget, the teachers did not collaborate, and the team seriously provoked a head teacher who subsequently left.

In 2001, after a year in which the school operated without a head teacher, a regular teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* - who has worked at the school for one year - became the new head teacher. He is 27 years old. Only one teacher is younger and one other teacher is also in her thirties. The rest of the teachers are 40 and older. In 2002, another regular teacher was appointed deputy head. They became the managers of a team they characterise as “not very forthcoming”, “traditional”, “conservative” and “mistrusting”. But opportunities for improving the school open up when the school is designated as an Educational Opportunity School¹⁵ [*Onderwijskansenschool*]. They receive significant financial resources for a period of four years, which should be spent on developing and implementing a school-development plan that is based on an analysis of the school’s specific situation.

There are no exact figures on the problems in the school at the time of research. In 2003 the school inspectorate concluded that 7% of the pupils repeat grades one or two, which is above the norm of 5%. The school responds that pupils who arrive during the course of their school career are the reason for this problem. But there are no exact figures on this phenomenon, and the rate of repeating a year in the higher grades is also unknown.

Furthermore, the school inspectorate concluded that the number of pupils sent to special education does not differ from general figures. The scores in grade eight are also regarded as average, but many pupils fall behind in other grades and in certain subjects. The school inspectorate noted that these figures are just above a critical minimum. In its defence, the school pointed out that pupils on individual programmes are included in the data and these few individuals have a negative effect on their mean scores.

According to the head teacher and the teachers, improvements in the school have been achieved over the last few years. The image of the school seems to have improved accordingly, as pupil enrolment numbers did rise. The image improvement also relates, in their opinion, to the focus on the school’s relationship with neighbouring institutions and parents. This relationship is one of the spearheads in the head teacher’s approach. He is in charge of, among other things, organising immediate support from child-welfare if serious problems arise in home situations; he introduced an open-door hour in which parents can ask him for help; he is trying to develop the school into a community school [*brede school*]; and he maintains a relationship with the police, community centres and organisations that organise after-school activities for children.

Most of the teachers describe the head teacher as engaged and inspirational. However, a number of teachers are negative and say that things are just fine as long as you agree with him. The head teacher is somewhat less positive about the team: in his opinion, a number of teachers are openly negative about immigrant pupils and parents, and improvements are difficult to achieve because the team is not very innovative and is too focused on details and rules.

15 Schools that are assigned to the Educational Opportunity Plan are generally schools whose quality is below standard and they serve high percentages of pupils from low socio-economic and non-native Dutch backgrounds.

During breaks teachers often talk about individual pupils who are difficult to manage and they often emphasise that work is putting them under significant pressure. Levels of sick leave are high at the *Professor Bakkerschool* and there is a lot of conflict in the team during the research period. Though somewhat extreme, the situation in which one of the teachers, after having stood in for a colleague and being struck by the children's apparent lack of competencies, vents his feelings by saying: "Can't we hang up a sign saying: 'School for Stupid Children'?", is illustrative of their feelings. Nevertheless, teachers report they enjoy working at the *Professor Bakkerschool*: they explain that, when in need, they can always ask their colleagues for personal support.

The school inspectorate concluded in 2005 that the *Professor Bakkerschool* scores on average compared with other schools with a similar pupil population. The school, despite its recent management changes, improved in quality over the last few years. The inspectorate argues that the Educational Priority Plan was decisive in these developments, but also considers the improvements to be vulnerable. They notice that after the Educational Priority Plan came to an end and with the management changes that recently took place, school development is still far from systematic: priorities are unclear and the school insufficiently monitors the quality of its learning and teaching. The school inspectorate also concludes that teachers use the teaching styles they see fit and do not bring their approaches in line with those of their colleagues, and most teachers do not take sufficient care of the needs of individual children. Pupil enrolment numbers are dwindling again in the 2006-2007 school year.

5.

Working on Deficit Remediation: The Outcomes of a Walk-in Morning

In the previous chapters I identified what I consider to be the key issues at stake in the thinking about the educational disadvantage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and presented the conceptual and methodological framework applied in this dissertation. In this chapter I turn to the empirical data I generated at the *Sleutelschool* and at the *Professor Bakkerschool*. The data discussed in this chapter involve the Walk-in Morning activity, organised at both schools for parents with children in grades one and two. The parents are expected to enter the classroom to play with their children at the beginning of the school day.

The goal here is to examine how school organisations translate policy into practice and how educational norms underpinning the activity are negotiated in the interaction between teachers and parents. This chapter first demonstrates that, although room is left to change the deficits ascribed to parents, the daily interaction tends to reproduce, if not produce, the disadvantaged positions of parents and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Secondly, this chapter demonstrates that the actors' positions in school organisations are important to understand the progress and outcomes of the interaction that takes place during the Walk-in Morning.

The chapter begins with a discussion about the policies that underpin the Walk-in Morning activity. The policy discussion comprises three sections: 1) section 5.1 discusses government policies on pre and elementary education. It examines the developments in these policies and analyses how parents are positioned within these policies. 2) Section 5.2 examines the pre and elementary education programme of which the Walk-in Morning is part. It shows how discourses in national policies are translated into programme texts. 3) Section 5.3 continues this discussion by focusing on the specific instructions for the Walk-in Morning.

The discussion on these policy contexts is followed by an analysis of how the Walk-in Morning was put into practice in the two schools. The Walk-in Morning at the *Sleutelschool* is discussed first (section 5.4), followed by the Walk-in Morning at the *Professor Bakkerschool* (section 5.5). For both schools, data are presented first on the conditions in which the programme was translated into practice, followed by the translation process itself that the teams engaged in. This is followed by details of the actual daily practice in the classrooms, followed by an examination of the parents' experiences and opinions. Sections 5.6 and 5.7

conclude the chapter by analysing and comparing the data on the Walk-in Mornings at the two schools, and by drawing conclusions about the processes observed.

5.1 Policies on Pre and Elementary Education

In the Netherlands, specific provisions for young children from lower socio-economic, Dutch and non-Dutch backgrounds are referred to as pre and elementary education [*Vroeg en Voorschoolse Educatie*]. Programmes to stimulate the development of young children have been implemented locally since the 1970s. But in the early 1990s, pre and elementary education provisions became one of the focal points in national policy on educational disadvantage. Municipalities were legally obliged to develop local policies on this matter. Since then, the importance of providing for pre and elementary education has been emphasised, and the national government has made more resources available for these provisions. This section discusses these pre and elementary education provisions and the changes that they have undergone. It discusses in particular the views about parents that underlie these kinds of provisions.

In the early 1990s, cohort studies were introduced to measure children's educational positions at the end of grade two in the Dutch educational system (age six). These studies showed that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those from ethnic minority backgrounds were, even at this young age, already considerably behind. The disadvantages in language and mathematics barely decreased at all in the school years to follow. As discussed in chapter two, it was concluded that home upbringing accounted for the differences in educational positions as some informal learning settings better prepare a child for primary education (Reezigt, 2003; Leseman, 2007).

Therefore, changing the informal learning settings of families was initially seen as an effective means to combat educational disadvantage. Interaction between mother and child in particular were the subject of intervention. Home-based programmes with the objective of improving the quality of child-raising styles by teaching mothers to adopt a stimulating and supportive role were introduced. The mothers were consulted by a paraprofessional at home and they attended group meetings. In the Netherlands, the *Opstapje* programme (Step-Up, after the Israeli programme HIPPY - Home Intervention Programme for Preschool Youngsters) was widely adopted.

Neither Dutch, nor international research has indicated that home-based interventions established significant changes in the cognitive and socio-emotional development of disadvantaged children¹⁶. Some positive findings – particularly for re-structured programmes such as *Opstap-opnieuw* (Step-Up Once Again) – were found in some domains of educational attainment, but more general and sustained improvements were not observed.

While home-based programmes did not achieve the expected improvements in the child's development, they were not abolished. The perspective developed that these programmes may positively support parents in coping with daily stressors arising from the context in which they raise their children (Leseman, 2002). To realise the aim of combating educational disadvantage, a combination of centre-based and home-based interventions has increasingly been promoted as the most effective pre and elementary education strategy

16 For an extensive review of studies see Leseman (2002) and Driessen (2004).

(Leseman, 2007).

In addition to restructuring existing home-based programmes around 2000, Dutch policy on pre and elementary education had, by then, changed considerably. The focus gradually turned to centre-based programmes rather than home-based programmes, and substantial budgets were provided for pre and elementary education facilities. Furthermore, structures of responsibilities changed. In 2002, responsibility for pre and elementary education devolved to the municipalities. Between 2002 and 2006, municipalities were responsible for the financial spending on pre and elementary education programmes (99 million euros). Their remit was to enrol 50% of pupils belonging to the target groups¹⁷ in nationally approved centre-based pre and elementary education programmes. Approved centre-based programmes are seen as effective in combating educational disadvantage and they meet the following criteria: they have a structured didactic approach, are run by qualified teachers, and they stimulate linguistic proficiency. In practice, there are two programmes that meet all the criteria: *'Piramide'* (Pyramid) and *'Kaleidoscoop'* (Kaleidoscope). The development of both programmes was publicly funded, as were their experimental implementation and evaluation (Reezigt, 2003).

Centre-based programmes aim directly at the cognitive and language development of the child. Professionals carry out these programmes in the two years prior to formal education (toddlers aged two to four) and in the first two years of formal education (when the children are aged four to six). The importance of centre-based programmes is, for example, described as follows in policy documents (MinOCW, 2005a: 5):

Development (of the motor system, cognitively, and socio-emotionally) is very fast in the early years of childhood and at this stage, considerable differences in the development of children can emerge. Pre and elementary education plays an important role in this. It aims to prevent language and development disadvantages among groups that belong to the target groups as defined in policies on educational disadvantages, or to combat these disadvantages as early as possible.

Participation in centre-based programmes should equip children for successful participation in the grade children learn to read (grade three, age six).

On a general level, centre-based programmes seem to have a moderate effect on the cognitive abilities of disadvantaged children. But not all studies report improvements in pupils' attainment and the effectiveness of these programmes is contested¹⁸. The outcomes of centre-based programmes depend significantly on how they are implemented - the duration of enrolment, the intensity of the care provided, the quality of the professionals involved, and on collaboration with other care facilities all influence outcome (Leseman, 2002; Reezigt, 2003; Driessen, 2004).

Despite the effects of pre and elementary education being moderate, the objectives were intensified and financial spending increased. The aim of achieving 50% of the pupils belonging to the target groups was extended to 70%. Additional financial means were spent on, amongst other things, the further professionalisation of teachers, particularly in the

17 Defined by the Ministry of Education using socio-economic and cultural background criteria.

18 See Leseman (2002) for an extended review of studies.

field of language education. Furthermore, responsibilities were further decentralised. In 2006, the responsibilities for elementary education devolved to school governing bodies, while municipalities remained responsible for pre education. Pre and elementary education has then become most prominent in Dutch policies on educational disadvantage in primary education.

Pre and Elementary Education and the Position of Parents

While home-based programmes directly target parents, parents are not directly addressed in centre-based programmes. Nevertheless, the latter programmes also see parents as important: the family is an important social context for these programmes. In two recent letters, the Minister of Education stressed the value of also targeting the family. She pointed out that some centre-based programmes currently have a module on parental involvement and that this is one way to strengthen parents' role in the prevention and combating of educational disadvantage (MinOCW, 2006b). In the long term (after 2010) a vision should be developed on how to substantially involve parents in centre-based programmes (MinOCW, 2006a).

Ignorance of the family context, the Council for Societal Development had earlier concluded, might relate to the still limited success achieved with centre-based programmes. They explained the influence of the family on the effectiveness of centre-based programmes as follows (RMO, 2002: 11):

<...> the gap with the dominant Dutch society is disproportional in families that have not (yet) lost the traditional child-raising context. This particularly applies to families from immigrant backgrounds: the continuity within the family results in discontinuity with the surrounding, wider society. This [problem of discontinuity] equally applies to low social native-Dutch families with concern for their general participation.

Though centre-based programmes focus directly on the child and the increasing attention for centre-based interventions resulted in a decreasing focus on home-based interventions - the former by and large replaced the latter, parents' upbringing skills are still considered as the main cause of educational disadvantage.

Several remarks can be made about this view on parents¹⁹. Firstly, by focusing on the child-raising styles of parents, the phenomenon of educational disadvantage is explained psychologically and the causes are individualised (Moss, Dillon & Statham 2000; Gillies, 2005a; Vandenbroeck, 2006). In the case of pre and elementary education policies, attachment and development psychology legitimises the view that educational disadvantage results

19 Discourse analyses conducted in the UK (Moss et al., 2000; Gillies, 2005a, 2005b) and in Belgium (Vandenbroeck, 2006; Vandenbroeck & Bouverne-De Bie, 2006) are used here to examine the positioning of parents in pre and elementary education policies. Only Vandenbroeck (2006) focuses directly on Early Childhood discourses. The other studies focus on how discourses on parenting (Gillies, 2005a, 2005b), the child in need (Moss et al., 2000), and on the autonomous child (Vandenbroeck & Bouverne-De Bie, 2006) have legitimised interventions in the private spheres of upbringing. Although each of those studies contains policy, country and subject specific information, they demonstrate similar tendencies on the positioning of parents in early childhood provisions.

from inadequate parenting (Vandenbroeck, 2006). Attachment psychology emphasises the importance of parents' relationship with their child for developmental processes, and development psychology distinguishes several stages in child development. Such psychological theories define certain parent-child relationships and certain developmental processes as normal, and hence give rise to the construction of 'the child in need' and 'the malfunctioning' family' (Moss et al., 2000; Gillies, 2005a). As a result, parents are held accountable for the educational attainment of their children. Gillies (2005b) points out that this not only puts pressure on parents to prepare their child in a sound manner for formal education, but also the success of the support offered to parents is ultimately made the moral responsibility of the parent. The parents should be willing and able to raise their children appropriately.

Secondly, the construction of certain child-raising styles as normal results in a de-contextualisation of parent-child interactions (Vandenbroeck & Bouverne-De Bie, 2006). Negotiations between parent and child and a relationship in which the child is considered a competent, social actor have become norms for educational success. Negotiation, self-expression and verbalization of the self are, for instance, considered adequate outcomes of sound child raising and parenting in a stimulating and supporting manner. However, the appropriateness of such skills and attitudes is contextually-bound; they are familiar and attractive to West-European, middle-class families, while lower-class parents or parents from immigrant backgrounds have different notions of good parenting that are related to the social, cultural and material situation in which they live. Gillies (2005a) for example points out that parents from working-class backgrounds are more concerned with teaching their children the skills to deal with the instability and injustices that characterise their living conditions. This context-bound usefulness of parent-child interactions is however ignored in home-based interventions. The support simply aims to equip mothers with the necessary, middle-class parenting skills. In other words, the skills taught to the mothers in home-based interventions are taught in isolation from the context in which they were found to be effective.

Finally, empowering malfunctioning families is generally regarded as a solution to educational disadvantage. To this end, pre and elementary education programmes in the Netherlands use group-based approaches. The advantage of this approach is that interventions can be adapted to the particular needs of groups considered to be disadvantaged, thereby improving the accessibility of these interventions for the target groups. At the same time, however, a group-based approach also perpetuates the model that these are malfunctioning families. It may therefore simultaneously result in stigmatisation and discrimination (Vandenbroeck, 2006).

5.2 A Pre and Elementary Education Programme: *Piramide*

Between 2002 and 2006, municipalities were responsible for implementing the pre and elementary education programmes. The municipality where the *Professor Bakkerschool* and *Sleutelschool* are located decided, in co-operation with the head teachers and school governing bodies, that all what are referred to as Educational Priority Schools [*Onderwijs*

*Voorrangsscholen*²⁰] had to implement the *Piramide* programme. The *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* both work with this programme. Part of the *Piramide* programme is the *Spelinloop* activity (literally 'play walk-in', further referred to here as Walk-in Morning). The Walk-in Morning is an activity organised for parents. This section discusses the positions ascribed to parents in the *Piramide* programme.

The *Piramide* handbook for teachers describes parents as being invaluable when it comes to a child realising its full developmental potential. Collaboration between the school and parents, as well as parents' support for their children at home are essential for the child's development (Van Kuijk, 2003: 251). The handbook describes the supportive behaviour of parents at home, for example, as follows (Van Kuijk, 2003: 252-253, original emphasis):

Parents strengthen the motivation and interest of the child for activities in the class when they are interested in what the child does and what the child experiences at school, and when they talk about this at home. The child feels it is taken seriously by the parents.

Parents can enhance children's learning by discussing at home what the child has learned at school. For example, by drawing together or looking through a piece of work, by doing a little game, by repeating songs or by reading a short story aloud.

Parents can talk with their children in a variety of ways. They can negatively regulate behaviour ('I'm warning you!', 'Stop that!'), or they can talk in a positive and affirmative manner to their child ('well done', chat enjoyably together or make jokes) and they can explain and give information about the things that they do together with their children. Especially when parents often respond in *a positive and educative way*, i.e. by using more enriching, *more complex language and speaking with the child in a critical manner*, they teach their children behaviour that enhances their opportunities of success at kindergarten and at school.

The handbook refers to the positive descriptions of parent's supportive behaviour as 'characteristics of families with successful children'. It argues that these characteristics are less obvious in 'traditional child-upbringing' styles. Moreover, differences in child-raising styles between these more 'traditionally' oriented families and those used at school are considered to result in conflict and mutual incomprehension between the school and the parents.

The *Piramide* handbook continues this line of argument by making a link between this problematic style of parenting and the cultural backgrounds of parents and teachers (Van Kuijk, 2003: 252, original emphasis):

20 Educational Priority Schools are schools serving a certain percentage of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and who therefore receive additional resources. Threshold values are set by the municipalities.

Parents from other cultures can be an important source of information to you. To understand why children respond in a certain way you need to know the cultural background of the family. This knowledge can prevent problems arising as a result of mutual incomprehension. A difference between child-raising styles at home and at school can result in conflict and mutual misunderstanding: Western child-raising is based on tolerance and on considerable equality between parents (caretakers, teachers) and children. In other, more traditional child-raising situations there often is a strong hierarchy and inequality between parents (and other child-raisers) and children. Parents and teachers should talk about their different child-raising styles and adapt their mutual expectations.

The last sentence of this excerpt states that parents and teachers should discuss things together and jointly adapt their expectations. This idea of partnership is further addressed in the handbook. It describes parents and teachers as partners in childrearing because parents have involved teachers in the upbringing of their child, and not the other way around. Teachers, therefore, are expected to establish and maintain contact with parents. They should not reject parents but instead try to empathise with parents and accept them as they are. It says: “even when they think differently about child-raising and school, that does not mean that the different backgrounds are unequal” (Van Kuijk, 2003: 253).

The importance of developing a partnership is explained as follows (Van Kuijk, 2003: 252):

Tuning the parents’ child-approach and your approach is necessary. Differences in upbringing at home and at school should be kept to a minimum. Differences between upbringing at home and in the class occur for each child, but when the differences are too great it may cause problems. For example, when the child is told at home to hit back to defend itself while this is not accepted in class. The teacher, together with the parents, will have to construct a line in the child’s upbringing, and from both sides it should be clear how matters proceed at home and in the classroom. This is particularly important for children who have behavioural problems.

This excerpt presents a child-raising style (telling the child to hit back to defend itself) that has a negative connotation and one may question what ‘a line in child-raising’ is supposed to consist of with regard to this particular example. But on a more general level, it too is questionable what partnership means as parents are considered - to a certain extent - as incapable of preparing their children well for education. In the *Piramide* handbook as well as in the assumptions underlying pre and elementary education policies, parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and particularly those from non-native Dutch backgrounds, are considered to malfunction. With this perspective in mind, aiming at partnership and treating parents on an equal footing would seem to be somewhat contradictory.

The *Piramide* handbook does not discuss this possible tension between notions of deficit and of partnership. However, it discusses some factors that may influence contact between teachers and parents. It argues that while parents are generally willing to become positively involved with their child, they may not always be capable of doing

so. A number of possible reasons for this inability are described: for example, linguistic barriers, socio-economic circumstances in the family (financial problems, quality of housing), or psychosocial problems in the family (marital problems, illness). Furthermore, also the teachers and the school organisation may hinder parents becoming more positively involved. Negative attitudes, ignorance, or not being well informed, may all prevent parents from becoming more involved. The handbook offers some superficial guidelines to overcome these problems. It stresses the importance of communicative skills and attitudes of teachers and recommends, among other things, that they “pay attention to differences between groups of immigrant parents and not to consider or approach them as one, big group” (Van Kuijk, 2003: 256). The handbook tends to locate the causes of stigmatisation in the school and among the teachers, while the handbook itself uses language such as ‘traditional’, ‘Western child-raising is based on ...’ which may also have stigmatising effects.

Comparing the ideas expressed about parents in the *Piramide* handbook with those expressed in the pre and elementary education policies, the similarities in the positions ascribed to parents are significant. The educational disadvantage of pupils is explained by reflecting on parents’ child-raising styles. A particular kind of interaction between the parent and the child (responding positively, affirmatively etc.) is put forward as the pedagogic norm for successful educational development. Parenting styles that are different from these kinds of interactions are labelled as deficit and problematic and are presented as the reason for their children’s disadvantaged educational position.

Whereas pre and elementary education policies did speak in terms of target groups (defined in terms of both socio-economic and cultural background criteria), the *Piramide* programme focused explicitly on parents’ non-Dutch backgrounds. A non-Western background is interrelated with deficits, both in the parents’ child-raising styles that are regarded as traditional and in the communication with the school which is characterised by conflict and miscommunication.

5.3 Guidelines on the Walk-in Morning

The *Piramide* programme describes the Walk-in Morning as a daily activity organised for parents and pupils. The teacher has to put out materials that pupils can use immediately and independently on several tables. Parents are supposed to play together with their child. The Walk-in Morning lasts thirty minutes at most. The play-situation created at the Walk-in Morning is characterised by ‘free-choice’ - pupils are allowed to decide which materials they want to play with, for how long and with whom. This is considered important because, on the one hand, it will improve the transition from home to school (because pupils can start the school day in a way they want to) and, on the other hand, it will improve pupils’ ability to make decisions, to solve problems and to play co-operatively.

Parents’ participation in their children’s games is also supposed to enhance pupils’ transition from home to school. Furthermore, the Walk-in Morning should lower the barriers that parents experience in their contact with the school. The Walk-in Morning creates an open and inviting atmosphere in which parents can literally ‘walk in’. It is assumed that the informal atmosphere, the personal contact and the active role of the parent in the classroom all reduce barriers in parents’ engagement in the child’s education. On top of

that, the Walk-in Morning provides an opportunity for teachers and classroom assistants²¹ to maintain contact with parents. The informal atmosphere, the extension of daily contact moments between teachers and parents (when parents bring their children to school) and the opportunity to contact the parent through the child or the activity they are involved in, should help maintain contact. Nevertheless, the guidelines also emphasise that parents are not really supposed to talk with each other, as they have to play actively with their child. Parents furthermore have to understand that the Walk-in Morning is not a half hour period during which they can ask the teacher questions. To prevent this happening, teachers are advised to communicate with the parent through the activities of the child.

Perhaps most significant is that the guidelines for the set-up of the Walk-in Morning ascribe a non-interactive role to parents and teachers. Parents are supposed to sit down next to their children and play with them, and interaction between teachers and parents should be kept short and informal. Parents and teachers should not substantially interact during the Walk-in Morning. This raises questions about the underlying objective of teachers and parents becoming partners. What remains unclear is how teachers and parents develop a partnership when communication is restricted and superficial. Furthermore, if parents from non-Dutch backgrounds do indeed lack the ability to interact with their child so that the child's educational development is not successfully supported, it remains unclear what is expected of them during the Walk-in Morning. Are these parents, irrespective of their capabilities, expected to appropriately engage in the activity and participate on an equal footing? The *Piramide* handbook does not address these issues.

The following sections discuss how the teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* and the *Sleutelschool* translated the activity into practice. For the sake of readability, the following table gives a brief overview of the guidelines for the set-up as described in the *Piramide* handbook, and of the practical realisation in both schools. It gives an initial indication that the schools have made (structural) adaptations to the activity and that the daily practices of the Walk-in Morning are school specific. They made changes to the timetables and to the classrooms involved, and they made decisions about structures of responsibilities.

21 Classroom assistants [*tutoren*] assist the teachers. Their presence in the classroom is specific to the *Piramide* programme: they have been appointed as part of the programme. They do not necessarily hold professional qualifications in the field of education.

Table 2. Overview of the practical aspects of the Walk-in Morning (W.i.M)

	Guidelines	Professor Bakkerschool	Sleutelschool
Frequency	Daily	Daily	Twice a week
Duration	30 minutes	15-30 minutes	15-20 minutes
Groups involved	Groups 1 and 2 (aged four to six)	Groups 1 and 2 Group 3: W.i.M is organised irregularly Group 4: will organise the W.i.M. from April 2005 onwards	Groups 1 and 2
Number of classes involved		5 classes: Two grades 1 One grade 2 One grade 3 One grade 4	4 classes: Two grades 1 Two grades 2
Number of teachers involved		8	8 +1 (maternity replacement)
Number of classroom assistants involved		1	4
Managerial Responsibility		Head teacher	Deputy head

5.4 The Walk-in Morning at the *Sleutelschool*

5.4.1 *Translating Policy into Practice*

The *Sleutelschool* organises the Walk-in Morning amid a number of other activities for parents. As they are formally obliged to, the school organises a general information evening at the start of each school year; discusses school reports with parents; and three parents are members of the representative advisory body. Furthermore, they organise some activities on their own initiative: they distribute a weekly newsletter among parents (which covers different kinds of information), and they irregularly have informal activities such as a jumble sale or puppet theatre. But teachers, deputy head and head teacher are critical of the activities: the newsletter is not widely read, the parent evenings are poorly attended, and the parent section does not perform well. While informal activities are generally well attended, these activities are, in the opinion of teachers and head teacher, of limited value for teaching and learning processes.

Teachers and the deputy head speak about their contact with parents as being in a downward spiral. In the past they had more contact with parents, when parents were invited to join outings, to help organise celebrations, and, for example, to assist with reading aloud. However, negative experiences such as parents not turning up and parents not being able to do what was expected of them, resulted in tension within the team. The deputy head recalls a row a few years ago. The teachers of grades one and two had asked parents to help organise a celebration. But that particular evening only one parent turned up. The teachers quarrelled, and they then decided not to ask parents any more to be involved in the school's activities unless, for whatever reason, they were forced to. This has become an unwritten rule in the school organisation. Teachers, deputy head, and head teacher point out that the problems with parents started about eight to nine years ago, when more and more pupils came from ethnic minority backgrounds and the native-Dutch children left the school.

The Walk-in Morning is organised in a context characterised by continual negative experiences with parental involvement and by some tension in the team. These problems are related to a changing pupil population: problems only got worse when more pupils from non-native Dutch backgrounds attended the school. Furthermore, the Walk-in Morning is a little unusual in that parents are not normally involved in educational matters. There are no comparable activities that aim to improve contact by allowing parents into the classroom during teaching hours.

The Walk-in Morning was first organised in October 2003. Before the official start, the team²² had a number of discussions about the Walk-in Morning. But as several of the teachers point out, they did not discuss the objectives. One of the teachers explains:

We discussed how to set up the Walk-in Morning, but we didn't discuss the objectives. Furthermore, the evaluative section was never given a follow-up. Next year, I would like to discuss the objectives. After all, we try to stimulate parents to come into the classroom, but it isn't clear to me why this is important and what we expect from the parents when they are there. Another objective is to let the parents see what materials we use. Well, I think, that's been achieved. But still, the materials displayed during the Walk-in Morning are just a minor part of the materials we use in the classroom. Parents for example do not see the small pieces of cognitive work that pupils do [sl250604nterviewteacher]

This comment is typical of teachers' reflections on the objectives of the Walk-in Morning. The teachers ascribe a variety of objectives to the Walk-in Morning but at the same time raise questions about the formulated objectives or about possible alternative objectives:

Hopefully, during the Walk-in Morning, children show their parents what they do in the classroom, the materials they use. And this may subsequently stimulate parents to engage in similar activities with the child at home. But I'm not sure whether this

22 In this chapter the term 'team' refers to the teachers involved in the Walk-in Morning (those teaching in grades one and two) and the deputy head (who has formal responsibility for these grades).

actually happens. <...> I consider the Walk-in Morning to be a success if parents say: 'Well, let's just play with my child for fifteen minutes.' That's better than just bringing the child to school, but whether parents see it that way... [sl040604interviewteacher]

I enjoy the opportunity to have contact with different parents and to see each other briefly. But I don't ascribe more objectives to the Walk-in Morning. To me, the Walk-in Morning is an initial step towards parental involvement. After this step other activities should actually be set up to inform parents about the activities in the classrooms and what is expected of children. But I doubt whether the school really wishes to involve parents. [sl180604interviewteacher]

I use the Walk-in Morning as an opportunity to say something briefly to the parents or ask them something. Another aim could be that parents start to stimulate their children more, but, as far as that's concerned, I don't really see any difference. While it's important, understanding each other is difficult. <...> Expecting too much of the parents may scare them away; really, it's difficult for them, the language, the skills, the knowledge. [sl280604interviewteacher]

I prefer to start the school day with a Walk-in Morning. It's an activity that I organise for the children and when parents join in that is fine, but it's not absolutely essential, and they can't take over the teacher's role. Sometimes they can't even do a jigsaw. I choose materials that pupils can use without my guidance. The materials need to be attractive to the pupils, so that they can choose materials they like using. And these materials aren't necessarily directly targeted at learning, handiworks also stimulate learning. <...> and of course the Walk-in Morning also offers parents the opportunity to show an interest in their child's schoolwork. Children often show pieces of work to the parents who at home, and I'm sorry to say this, often throw it straight into the bin. So the Walk-in Morning has several objectives, not just one, but its effects are also difficult to measure. [sl030604conversationteacher]

These quotations show that teachers ascribe different objectives to the Walk-in Morning. They may aim at pupils – as in the last excerpt – or at parents. What is noticeable is that each of the teachers, irrespective of whether they organise the Walk-in Morning primarily for pupils or for parents, focuses on the need to enhance parents' support of their children. Parents' knowledge of the materials, their interest in their children's work, or their activities with the children at home, need to be improved upon. But at the same time, teachers doubt whether improving parents' supportive behaviour is realistic. They formulate alternative, more superficial objectives, such as aiming at parents just being there or holding a pleasant conversation.

Teachers' reflections on the feasibility of the objective of stimulating parents' supportive behaviour show something of a disagreement. Similar to the quotation of the teacher in the second excerpt, a few teachers focus on the role of the team and mention the negative experiences in the past and the somewhat sceptical atmosphere. In their opinion, these team characteristics prevent them from developing more substantial contact with the

parents. Other teachers, as can be seen in the other excerpts, express their dissatisfaction with the contact with parents and they argue that they are unable to improve parents' involvement. Besides having different objectives, teachers also have different opinions about the usefulness of the Walk-in Morning.

The objectives, different perspectives and past experiences were not discussed prior to the Walk-in Morning being introduced. The team discussions focused on the practicalities: for instance, the materials to be used; what to do if parents talk to each other; and how to start and end the activity. These were also the kinds of issues discussed in an evaluative session with an external *Piramide* trainer in November 2003. The outcomes of these discussions resulted in a number of guidelines, but the teachers were free to set-up the Walk-in Morning as they saw fit. Two teachers decided to make significant changes to the proposed set-up; the others mainly follow the guidelines of the Walk-in Morning and only made some minor changes to the set-up. One teacher, who decided to set-up the Walk-in Morning differently, argues that she organises the Walk-in Morning for pupils and not for parents: parents are welcome to attend, but to her "they are really just extras". Compared with her colleagues, she displays a lot of handiworks that relate to the lesson content for the rest of the day (the other teachers only use a few handiworks that have no clear link with the teaching subject). She also organises the Walk-in Morning outside formal hours because, she explains, her colleague does not really like organising it. Yet, the classroom assistant and the parents have not been informed about it and parents do not attend these extra Walk-in Mornings. The other teacher who opted for a different set-up experimented with group activities. During the group activities children, for example, had to group their parents from small to tall. The teacher explains that attendance numbers improved when she first started organising these activities, and pupils and parents seemed to enjoy it. However, preparing the activities took her a lot of energy and after a while attendance decreased again. Therefore, she went back to organising the Walk-in Morning as advised.

Teachers who follow the guidelines on the organisation of the Walk-in Morning choose materials with which pupils can work self-reliantly and which can be displayed quickly and easily put away. A few jigsaws, building blocks, materials that prepare for reading and mathematics, and painting materials, are generally found in their classrooms. They have made changes to such an extent that some have introduced a rotation system and they only change materials once a month.

Some teachers said that prior to the implementation of the activity they had had their misgivings: would they be able to attract parents, what about those parents who may behave disruptively, or what should they do if parents continuously asked questions about the child's progress? But they had no substantial discussions about whether they actually considered the Walk-in Morning to be appropriate. A few teachers report that they welcomed the activity, others are less positive and express their initial worries and feelings that the Walk-in Morning had been forced upon them. The deputy head also speaks in terms of the Walk-in Morning being obligatory. However, as the following excerpt shows, she does see it in a positive light:

It was actually a good thing that the municipality forced us to work with this *Piramide* programme. Well, forced upon, don't take that too literally.... I mean, the head teachers

involved had some discussions with the municipality. They discussed what method to choose, either *Piramide* or *Kaleidoscoop*. They chose *Piramide* and we were obliged to use this programme. This actually suited us fine. For quite some time we had been discussing what new teaching materials to use in grades one and two. We couldn't decide: someone wanted this method, another that method. So, when *Piramide* was introduced everybody actually seemed satisfied. And the Walk-in Morning also suited us well. We did not have many activities to improve parents' involvement and this at least gave us an idea, introduced an approach. [sl250604interviewdeputyhead]

The introduction of the *Piramide* programme is presented by the deputy head as a solution to discussions in the team. It presented them with a course of action.

But discussions did not end with the introduction of the Walk-in Morning. A few months after the introduction (March 2004), several teachers increasingly voiced their dissatisfaction with the activity. They complained about the decreasing levels of parents' attendance, the boring materials, the preparation time involved, and the unsatisfactory contact with parents. It reminded them of past experiences and other activities that, in their opinion, had failed to succeed. They are in favour of holding the Walk-in Morning only once a week or even of abandoning it altogether, but the deputy head disapproves. She rejects the suggestion, because in her opinion it implies that the Walk-in Morning will soon be abolished altogether. Yet, she develops a schedule for next year in such a way that each teacher has to organise the Walk-in Morning only once a week. Reflecting on these decisions, she says: "then at least we can say we have tried".

These interactions in the team at the *Sleutelschool* show that teachers are allowed autonomy over the practices in their classrooms. They can change the set-up of the Walk-in Morning to their liking. However, the teachers do not have a say about the suitability of the activity. Their opinions on the objectives and whether they are realistic, on the willingness of the team to involve parents, and on the suitability of the set-up of the Walk-in Morning, are not considered during the translation of the programme into a school organisational activity. Teachers are obliged to organise Walk-in Mornings irrespective of prior experiences with and personal views on parent involvement. The deputy head justifies this limitation to the teachers' influence by pointing out that as a team they were simply obliged to implement this activity. They will have to prove that they have put effort into making the Walk-in Morning a success. But teachers clearly ascribe different objectives to the Walk-in Morning and there is no shared view about what to expect of parents during the Walk-in Morning. Nevertheless, the different objectives and set-ups are underpinned by the shared view that parents in one way or other fall short of preparing their children well for their educational career.

5.4.2 *The Walk-in Morning in Practice*

The Walk-in Morning at the *Sleutelschool* is organised twice a week from 8:40 to 9:00am. Parents are informed about the Walk-in Morning in the school guide, which says: "There is a Walk-in Morning twice a week in the nursery school, during which parents can play with their children. The parents can also see what their children are working on".

In practice the Walk-in Morning seems to be a regulated activity: parents either

stay from 8:45 to 9:00, or they bring their child to the classroom and leave the school between 8:40 and 8:45. In these first five minutes the teachers frequently interact with the parents about organisational aspects, and then the interaction between teacher and parents diminishes significantly. Parents who decide to stay for the Walk-in Morning sit next to their child. Parents sometimes talk with each other, but generally not for long. After having received the organisational messages from parents (such as a child being ill), teachers start to organise the Walk-in Morning by encouraging pupils to choose a game, support or instruct them when necessary, and sometimes they involve them in a game. However, they do not get involved in conversations with the parents; they may sometimes make a joke or a short remark. At nine o'clock the Walk-in Morning ends with a tape being played, and then the parents quickly leave the classroom and pupils go and sit in a 'circle', the institutional starting ritual. The structure of the Walk-in Morning appears to be explicit; unwritten rules seem to regulate the communication between teachers and parents and children.

The Walk-in Morning was cancelled a number of times without prior notice and for a number of different reasons: a teacher had been unable to prepare; a teacher was absent and the classroom assistant took over but decided not to organise a Walk-in Morning (though she normally participates in them); and because of an incidental activity for the children the Walk-in Morning once ended after 15 minutes. Each time the parents were informed about the cancellations when they came to attend the Walk-in Morning. One teacher once remarked to me: "Now you can see how important we think the Walk-in Morning is".

Parents' attendance differs per class. In one grade one class, the number of parents who attend the Walk-in Morning is considered high: there are approximately seven parents – mothers and fathers – who attend. In the other grade one, there is only one mother who stays regularly and no more than three other mothers stay on an irregular basis. In both grades two, attendance fluctuates; generally three mothers attend, with highs of seven and lows of one. Moreover, there is one father who attends sporadically.

Teachers report problems on the proceedings of the Walk-in Morning. They mention the following interdependent problems: limited time to prepare; limited availability of suitable materials; attendance numbers decrease, and it is generally the same parents who attend; parents increasingly talk to each other and to the teacher; some parents are not able to support their children's work (for example, they are unable to do jigsaws or cannot even write); and teachers feel unable to correct parents who, in their opinion, do not participate in the Walk-in Morning as intended.

In the opinion of the teachers, the problems encountered relate to the structural conditions of the Walk-in Morning (time schedule, materials etc.). For instance, they observe that parents who work (mainly fathers and a few mothers) or those who follow courses (especially mothers following Dutch language courses) are unable to attend. The time schedule excludes some parents. Furthermore, they consider the materials somewhat boring because they put parents in passive positions, and they wonder whether they themselves would regularly attend this kind of activity and whether they would actually enjoy doing so. Neither do they consider the materials suitable for all parents. Some parents are illiterate or have little education and are therefore unfamiliar with the materials. Teachers observe that these parents struggle to engage in the children's play. Here are some excerpts that

illustrate these reflections:

I didn't really know what to do during the Walk-in Morning. Initially, I displayed materials on the tables and children could also play with dolls or draw on the blackboard. But at some point, I didn't enjoy it any more. And I don't think the mothers did either. Fewer mothers attended. And the mothers would often sit next to their child and say for example to the child: 'do this', or 'try that', but, then, when the child refused, the mother would stop interfering. The mothers would just sit there, simply next to their child and I noticed they more often began to talk to other mothers, mainly in their own language. Well, then, the objectives of the Walk-in Morning are not achieved. [sl150404conversatianteacher]

I think it's a pity that its always the same parents who attend. On the one hand, some parents never come, they don't dare to [...]. But on the other, I don't expect them to always attend. Some of them have to go to work and of course they sometimes have an appointment. And besides, I didn't always go to those coffee mornings at my child's playgroup. It's simply too much. [sl230404conversatianteacher]

The Walk-in Morning, as described in the *Piramide* method, actually assumes that parents can, to a certain extent, take over the teacher's role. Which, as I said before, is absolutely impossible. Parents aren't familiar with the materials and they don't know what to do with them. It's like having six extra children in my classroom. [sl040604interviewteacher]

Though in these excerpts teachers are critical of the materials they use, the expectations they have, and the assumptions underpinning the activity, they at the same time ascribe shortcomings to the parents, and on the basis of a variety of expectations. In these excerpts the parents are considered to be too passive in their interaction with the children, they would not dare to attend, and they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to support their children properly. These are just a few examples of what is expected of the parents. In the following excerpts the teachers again express other norms. But there is more to these excerpts - the perspective that parents fail to meet expectations prevails in the teachers' reflections.

Sometimes a father attends the Walk-in Morning. But then, he always looks as if he's embarrassed. You know, he simply feels embarrassed because his daughter is working with clay instead of working with games that directly stimulate the child's reading abilities. I really disapprove of that, how can you feel embarrassed about your own child? I don't really feel like asking why fathers don't attend or asking him why he doesn't feel at ease. That's really his problem, and it's the fathers' problem if they have difficulties with mothers and a female teacher. I don't like him, I don't enjoy talking to him. What I sometimes do, is, I say to his daughter 'look at that, daddy is also very good at working with clay'. The man went very red in the face [sl040604interviewteacher]

It's difficult when parents have conversations in their mother tongue. I mean, it doesn't happen often or regularly but it's still annoying. I once remarked on it to them and tried to make a joke about it, saying that Dutch is what is spoken in the classroom. But I found it difficult to say, after all there are some mothers who don't speak Dutch at all, or only a little bit. Anyway, they shouldn't speak with each other. They are supposed to play with their child [sl250604interviewteacher].

I try to do something about the falling attendance. I sometimes ask older brothers or sisters to stay for the Walk-in Morning. It seems to work. But anyway, attendance in my classroom is not that bad. There are generally about seven parents. I'm simply lucky; I think that the parents in my group are generally more involved [sl280604interviewteacher].

In these fragments parents are supposed to attach value to their children's work irrespective of what the child does, parents should not talk during the Walk-in Morning, and they are supposed to attend. It is typical of the teachers to mention a significant variety of detailed norms parents are supposed to meet. And though teachers are sometimes critical of the Walk-in Morning's set-up and assumptions, which mean these norms might not be met, they more strongly expressed the view that, in general, parents fail to meet the norms. Parents lack the knowledge, skills and interest. This perspective on parents is little affected by the teachers' own critical comments about the organisation.

Because the norms are not self-evidently met, teachers experience problems, which they try to solve. As the excerpts above indicated, teachers make changes to the set-up and they aim to interact with parents in order to meet the norms they have set. In the following three observations, the teachers also aim to meet the norms of what they consider a sound Walk-in Morning. They do so rather differently:

- Observation One - Reading aloud:

Today a mother will be reading aloud to the pupils in grade two. Time passes and just when the teacher wants to start another game with the other mothers who are there, the mother shows up. She and the teacher discuss something by the door and then the mother leaves. At 8:58 when the mothers are about to leave, the mother comes back. The teacher invites her to sit down on the chair in the middle of the circle. The mother hesitates and speaks to another woman in her mother tongue, but after another invitation she sits down, without a book. The teacher tells her she can start. But what book shall I read, the mother asks, she doesn't have one. The teacher quickly gets a book, a thin one about a red ball. She gives the book to the mother who looks at it. The mother whispers a few sentences to the teacher, and asks for confirmation. The teacher nods a few times. In the mother tongue, another mother puts a question to the mother who is supposed to read. Then the teacher is addressed after which the mothers leave. The teacher explains to the children that the mother had taken the book home to practice. She will be there next week to read to them. [sl150404observation]

Just when the teacher has told the mothers there will be no Walk-in Morning today and the mothers have left the classroom, the mother who is supposed to read aloud arrives. It is 8:52. There is only one other mother left and she stays to listen. The mother reads the first two pages, but it's difficult for me to understand the story. I'm sitting at the back of the class and she has a strong accent. While the mother reads, the teacher starts visualising the story. She makes the children pretend to throw a ball in the air and catch it again. In this way the mother each time reads one or two pages after which the teacher explains and visualises what happens with the red ball. As a result it becomes perfectly clear to me what the story is about. The mother finishes reading and the teacher compliments her. She says she enjoyed it and that the mother did very well. The children are enthusiastic. They applaud when the teacher asks them to. The son of the mother also gets a pat on the back and is addressed by his peers. The mother kisses her son goodbye and leaves the classroom. [sl220404observation]

In an interview, the classroom teacher reflects as follows about the occasion on which the mother read the book aloud: *I noticed that the children were enthusiastic. But no, that's not something special to me. It's normal for children to be proud when their mother does something at school. When I was a child, I also used to be very proud when my mother joined school outings.* [sl100604interviewteacher]

- Observation Two - Speaking Dutch:

In a conversation with a teacher of one of the grades one, I focus on the high attendance numbers in their classroom and that today I saw mothers who had not previously attended. The teacher explains that these two mothers are indeed new; their sons are new to the class. She reflects that these mothers attend the Walk-in Morning and will sit next to each other. The teacher then recalls the following: *Last time they were talking to each other in their mother tongue. Then the deputy came in and told them to speak Dutch in the classroom. The mothers left immediately. It simply is a bit too much for them. It's better to just let them be.* [sl080606conversationteacher]

- Observation Three - A daughter drawing:

There are three fathers and one mother in the classroom. Gadisha chooses to draw as the teacher predicted she would. Father stands behind her and watches. When the classroom assistant wants to write her name on the drawing, the father says it isn't necessary. Not every drawing needs to be taken home. Later on the teacher walks past, she makes a joke 'your whole house must be full of Gadisha's drawings, isn't it?'. [sl230404observation].

During a conversation the deputy head focuses on the fact that working at the Sleutelschool can be strenuous for teachers. She says: *Children like ours, strongly influence the pleasure we have in our work. It's a child like Gadisha and her parents who make working more fun. These parents are almost Dutch, and they have this little bit extra. They know the Dutch language, know the culture.* [sl110105conversationdeputyhead]

Gadisha's father is positive about the Walk-in Morning. He thinks it is valuable to see how his daughter performs. The Walk-in Morning shows him what his daughter enjoys, and at home he uses that knowledge. He started to draw with her and to make things with their hands at home. <...> But what he finds a pity is that the Walk-in Morning is not structured enough. Every week his daughter chooses to draw and over time it is as if she does not care, it is as if she thinks 'let me draw quickly for dad, he'll leave and then we can move on to something more fun.' He would prefer the children to be encouraged more to take up different kinds of work. [sl230404conversationparent]

What is noticeable when we compare the three interactions, is that each observation defines normal parental behaviour. In the first excerpt, normal parental behaviour is constructed as reading aloud, in the second excerpt the norm of speaking Dutch in the classroom is set, and in the third example the teacher and the deputy principal stress the fact that linguistic or cultural barriers do not hinder the communication with the father. 'Normal behaviour' is possible and they make jokes and talk about the enjoyable aspects of such interaction.

However, the actors involved evaluate the interaction differently. In the first example, the teacher successfully helps the mother overcome her linguistic barrier, but the teacher does not see it as such. She stresses the fact that what the mother did is normal. In the second example, the two mothers involved break with the norm of speaking Dutch in the classroom. Irrespective of whether they are able to or not, the deputy tells them that they are wrong to do so. The teacher, subsequently, focuses on the negative consequences of such an intervention, yet did not interfere. In the third illustration, the teacher and the deputy head both stress the enjoyable aspects of 'normal behaviour'. But from the father's perspective, the interaction is not really successful as he wishes the teachers would steer his daughter more. These three illustrations can be read as indications of how parents are - implicitly and explicitly - confronted with normative expectations about what a parent is supposed to be and do. Parents may, according to the teacher, sometimes act 'correctly', as in illustration one, or, according to the deputy head, act 'incorrectly' as in illustration two. But what differs are the norms that are set, when they should be met and how they should be met.

There is however more to these fragments than just the teachers having set a variety of norms and the parents being confronted with them: in order for the teachers to conclude whether or not parents have met the norms, the situations are selectively interpreted. The positioning of the mother in the first excerpt as 'just acting normal' is striking because reading aloud did not appear at all as something the mother could carry out easily. She seemed to struggle with the Dutch language and even the teacher helped to successfully meet the norm of reading aloud. The teacher ignores the mother's linguistic background and her own behaviour. In the second excerpt the teacher positions the two mothers as not being able to stand the comment of the deputy head. From the teacher's reflection it seems that the appropriateness of the deputy head's interference is questionable and that the relationship between the deputy head and the teacher, or the situation at that particular moment, prevented the teacher from interfering. The mothers' decision to leave therefore might not simply be the outcome of them not daring, as the teacher concludes, but is constituted in a more complex situation in which the behaviour of and the relationship

between the teacher and deputy head also mattered. In the final excerpt the teacher and deputy head conclude that normal behaviour is possible. But the father concludes otherwise. It seems that the deputy head and teacher are positive about the situation because the father's perspective is not considered.

The positioning of the parents by teachers in terms of having met a wide variety of norms, therefore, results from interpretations in which aspects such as the teachers' effort, their critical reflections, and the reflections of the parents are ignored or overlooked. In that way, the teachers maintain their existing perspectives on the parents about what appropriate and inappropriate parental behaviour is. Parents are simply positioned as either meeting or as failing to meet the norms that teachers have set. Therefore, as the following two quotations also illustrate, the Walk-in Morning, rather than changing the deficit-perspective, results in the general understanding being reconfirmed. Teachers continue to believe that most parents are incompetent because they lack certain skills and knowledge, and that this causes their children to be disadvantaged.

The way that they play with the child, it's like I have six extra children in my classroom. Those parents are behind their children, more or less. They often can't do handicrafts themselves, or they don't know things. A mother recently proudly presented a jigsaw to me that she had done with her daughter. Well, all the pieces fitted, but it was completely wrong. And those parents who prompt answers, then I've to say: "we know that mama can do this, but can you also do it yourself"? Or those parents, just standing in the classroom shrugging their shoulders and saying: "she doesn't want to do anything else" Oh, really I'm fed up. But there is one mother who indeed is pleasant to observe. She really co-operates with her child, and of course she will sometimes prompt him, but they generally co-operate. They choose a game together and work together to solve it. This mother encourages her son to work. And she encourages her son to choose a new game, like 'we've done this game three times now, can't you choose something else?'. And when she doesn't know the game she'll ask me for a short explanation. This mother is truly interested in her child and really wants to learn. [sl040604interviewteacher]

I've noticed considerable differences between the mothers attending the Walk-in Morning. Some mothers work together with their child very appropriately. But others simply tell their children the solutions or they do the games themselves. There's also one mother who always wants to show me that her son has finished his work and is able to work with those materials. Her son is repeating this grade. But sometimes I notice that the children choose a game that the parents disapprove of, and the parents feel a bit embarrassed. For example, when the child wants to play with the "water table". And I don't really see that as a problem as such, but I would like the parent to take more initiative and to tell the child to choose another game. But I all too often see pupils do what they like to do and parents simply follow the child. And, actually, I can learn a lot from those differences. For instance I noticed that the mother of a boy was unable to finish off a jigsaw. Really that is important to me: I understand this boy's disadvantage better and I know that he will most likely struggle

with other learning materials in the future. [sl250604interviewteacher]

The next section focuses on parents' reflections on the Walk-in Morning. It analyses how parents reflect on the positions that they have during the Walk-in Morning and on the interactions they engage in with the teachers. It shows that parents' concerns are also reinforced rather than changed as a result of the Walk-in Morning.

5.4.3 Parents' Perspectives on the Walk-in Morning

Some parents explain that there are practical reasons for them not attending the Walk-in Morning - they have to go to work, or they take a language course in the morning. Those parents who do attend generally say that they enjoy the Walk-in Morning, though a few are somewhat less positive. In particular, parents see playing with their child as important and enjoyable:

I attend the Walk-in Morning almost every time. I think it's important for my son to see that his mother wants to know what he's doing at school. <...> But also playing with your child is important; I can show an interest in what he does and I can see what materials are used and what happens in the classroom. The atmosphere is pleasant and I feel welcome. [sl240604interviewparent]

I enjoy the Walk-in Morning, and [she laughs] I learn from it too. You know, I don't know all those games and my daughter explains them to me. Of course, I also help my daughter with some of the games. [sl250504interviewparent]

The Walk-in Morning is enjoyable and it's nice to play with my son for 15 minutes or so, then at least I have time and I can work with him in a concentrated way. At home, there's little time and space to do so. He plays with his older sisters at home [sl110604interviewparent]

I think it's valuable to see how my daughter performs. The Walk-in Morning shows me what she enjoys playing with, and I can use that information at home. I've started to draw with her and to make things with our hands at home. <...> But what I think is a pity, is that the Walk-in Morning is not really structured. Every week my daughter chooses to draw and over time it is as if she doesn't really care anymore, it's as if she thinks 'let me quickly draw for dad, he'll leave and then we can move on to something more fun'. I would prefer the children to be more stimulated to take up other pieces of work.' [sl230404conversationparent]

The reasons why parents enjoy attending the Walk-in Morning are rather similar to the objectives that the teachers had initially set. The parents consider it as an opportunity to show the child their interest for school; to learn more about the materials used in the classroom; to support the child's schoolwork; and to support the child at home. Some parents explain that they are not familiar with all the materials (as in the second excerpt) and others link the activities engaged in with those at home (as in the third and fourth

excerpts). Their reflections point out that these parents do benefit from the Walk-in Morning; they get more familiar with the materials and interact with the child in a way they were not really used to doing. Hence, while teachers doubted the usefulness of the Walk-in Morning when it comes to improving parents' supportive behaviour, parents are more positive.

Because they did not consider the objective realistic, teachers decided to lower their objectives. They aimed at pleasant conversations with the parents or focused on the pupils instead. The following excerpts show that parents notice that contact with teachers is somewhat brief and superficial. Some of them do not see this as a problem given the fact that time is short, the children are around and the teachers are busy.

Contact with the teacher is valuable too. After all, I can quickly ask something or hear a little more about my child. About his behaviour for example, it has really improved. [sl160404interviewparent]

I noticed that contact with the teacher has improved. There is more time to have a short conversation and to get to know each other. It's much easier to ask something quickly [sl180404interviewparent]

Other parents are more negative about their contact with the teachers:

I sometimes have the feeling that teachers try to avoid me; they prefer not to talk to me. Maybe it's because I'm a teacher myself, maybe that makes it more difficult. Maybe they think I interfere too much with my daughter. Actually, I never talk with the teachers during the Walk-in Morning. And I know, it's not the idea, but now it comes to an end just after we've said 'hello' to each other. <...> The teacher will never show me my daughter's work or have a short conversation, it seems she avoids me. When I stay slightly longer after the Walk-in Morning, I always get the feeling they want me to leave. When I want to help clear the tables, they tell me it's the children's responsibility or that the classroom assistant will do so later during the day. [sl180604interviewparent]

When I ask the teacher a question, whether I may briefly ask her something, then the teacher will always respond like, "just wait a minute", "just a sec", "I have to pay attention to that child first". The teacher will never address me or inform me about something. I have to ask. And really I'm not shy, I can express myself clearly, but it's like they don't want to tell me anything. [sl221204interviewparent]

While teachers and parents do share general pedagogic values (i.e. showing the child an interest in their education, engaging in education-related activities, and being familiar with the educational materials) the contact that develops between teachers and parents during the Walk-in Morning seems to make little difference to whether parents meet these norms or not. The interaction between teachers and parents seems to tell the parents their position during the Walk-in Morning: the parents' comments reflect the teachers' efforts

to have pleasant conversations and to create a nice atmosphere, while at the same time the teachers also disapprove of the parents' capacities and correct their behaviour. Parents sometimes feel in a position to hold a conversation, albeit a brief one, while at other times they feel that they are a nuisance to the teacher or feel ignored.

Parents did not solely interpret the restricted contact with the teachers in the context of the Walk-in Morning. During the conversations and interviews they compared the situation experienced during the Walk-in Morning with other experiences they had had:

P1: The Walk-in Morning is new. Last year, there was no such thing.

P2: I help a lot round Christmas time and these kinds of activities.

P1: Teachers should tell parents more explicitly what we, as parents can do to support our children. Especially with language, because our children are behind, that's how it is. <...>. Our children are bilingual and for that reason there must be a lot of attention for language development. We, as parents can support our children, but then we ought to know what to do and what not to do.

P2: I'm told to go to the library, but it'd be better if the teacher told me which books to read. [sl220604interview (with two) parents].

After having said that she sometimes feels unwelcome during the Walk-in Morning and that contact with the teachers is limited, the parent continues as follows:

The atmosphere is not open, not really. Once one of my older daughters had taken a test. And by accident she brought it home, which is not normally the case, I never see those things. Well maybe my daughter doesn't take these things with her, or maybe these are simply not handed out. But anyway, she had made mistakes and I looked through it. I noticed that three answers were not incorrect at all. In my opinion the teacher had not corrected the work well, so I went to the teacher to discuss it. But one of those answers, the teacher did not agree to having made a mistake: my daughter's answer was incorrect. But to me, she hadn't posed the question right. But the teacher wouldn't agree, so I addressed the confidential advisor. She said I was right and told me to discuss the matter again with the teacher. But the teacher still told me she was right. I left it at that. But I got the impression that's the reason why I don't get any pieces of my daughter's work anymore. I'm trouble, I stick my nose in their business. [sl180604interviewparent].

And other parents use the conversation on the Walk-in Morning to express other topics of concern:

DdR: Your husband told me, that when he attends the Walk-in Morning he can see what his daughter does at school, and at home he can use that information...

P: I'm worried whether my daughter is learning enough at this school. I wonder whether the children are stimulated enough. In my opinion, the children need more attention, but it's like the teachers just let them go, just let them do what they like doing. That's why we teach her to write and count at home. Now she's able to write her own name and count to ten. She hasn't learned that at school yet, but

you can't wait until they are in grade three to teach them those things, can you?
[sl221204interviewparent]

While we are speaking about what the mother does during the Walk-in Morning and whether her daughter enjoys it, the mother changes the topic:

P: Before starting this school in September, my daughter attended a playgroup. But she still doesn't speak Dutch well.

DdR: Have you spoken to the teacher about this?

P: No, I haven't. I've spoken to other mothers and they say that at this school, at the end of grade eight, you aren't allowed to decide which secondary school your child will attend. That's not allowed at this school, but it is at others. It's because there are only children from foreign backgrounds here, only Moroccans.
[sl140504interviewparent]

Each of those parents is worried or negative about the contact they have with the teachers. Their concerns differ: they feel badly informed, excluded from discussions, or worry about their children's level of education and progress. But each of those concerns is raised by the parents in the context of a conversation at the Walk-in Morning. Therefore, the contact that develops between teachers and parents during the activity seems to fuel parents' general concerns and negative views about the teachers and the school organisation as a whole, rather than supporting the remediation of deficits ascribed to parents.

In the last excerpt, the parent links her position of being insufficiently informed about her daughter's progress to her non-native Dutch background. The other parents, except for the parent in the second fragment, also drew such a link and they were equally negative about the school organisation. The following fragment is illustrative of their comments:

Language will always remain difficult for foreign children and that's why so much attention has to be paid to it. But the school has a bad name in the neighbourhood. Many people say it's a bad school and that children get advice at the end of grade eight that is far too low. Their attainments are bad. My daughter, for example, they always told me she was doing fine. But then she got bad advice, she was told to go to vocational training. I'm really angry about that. When they say things are going well, then they should be going well and then I can have high expectations of my child. When language is a problem then they should not say things are fine, they should tell me what my daughter is struggling with so I can arrange for help. <...> But these are foreign children, and for foreign children they are doing fine.
[sl220604interviewparent]

Seen from these reflections, the Walk-in Morning may further alienate teachers and parents. Moreover, it seems that parents lower their expectations of the school and the teachers, as teachers did of parents for other reasons. This mutual lowering of objectives may mean that both teachers and parents are unable to manifest their interest for and engagement in the child's education. This outcome is counter to the objectives of the Walk-in Morning.

It must be noted that not all parents were equally negative about the school. But

more positive views were expressed less often, and only in short conversations (and not during in-depth interviews). Moreover, these parents also drew links between the Walk-in Morning and the school being a school attended by pupils mainly from non-native Dutch backgrounds. Hence, while some parents are somewhat more positive or just explain they would like to have some more information, they too reflect on their experiences with the Walk-in Morning outside the context of the activity itself. As the following two fragments illustrate, these more positive reflections contain elements of concern, but the teachers are not directly held accountable, as the other parents did.

I am having a short conversation with two mothers in the corridor. One of the mothers says that she appreciates the Walk-in Morning because it enables her to observe her son's progress. For instance, she observed that he initially found finishing a jigsaw difficult, but now he is much better at it. She continues her observation as follows:

*They say it's a black school²³. I think that's stupid. My neighbour, for example, says so, and that's why her child doesn't attend this school. And at the same time, I hear from the mothers whose children attend the *Sleutelschool* that they regret there are hardly any Dutch children at this school. They feel they don't attend because of them. So when you [she says to the other parent] enrolled your child at this school I heard many positive responses. Other parents were pleased with a blond child in the class. [s1160404conversationparents].*

I ask the mother whether she has any contact with other mothers during the Walk-in Morning. The mother responds as follows:

*I regret that the *Sleutelschool* is a black school. I regret there aren't more Dutch parents, I would like to know more about the problems they have with child raising, exchanging experiences, so to speak. Anyway, the presence of Dutch children is important for the language development of the children and their integration. I'd like to have more contact with Dutch mothers; speaking Dutch would help me too. And I'd also like to know more about the problems that the school experiences, and how they try to solve them. [s1130504conversationparent]*

Apparently, the Walk-in Morning is attended because the children enjoy it and because parents (on their own initiative) are able to get a bit of information. Otherwise the activity has little added value for the parents' broader concerns about their children's educational attainment and about the school being segregated along ethnic lines.

5.4.4 Summary and Concluding Remarks on the Walk-in Morning at the Sleutelschool

The teachers and the deputy head at the *Sleutelschool* express the belief that most of their parents fail to adequately support the child's educational development. For the child's development they consider it important that parents know, among other things, about the materials used in the classroom, empathise with the child's experiences, engage in school-like activities at home, and show their interest by attending school activities. But parents

²³ "Black school" is a concept commonly used in the Netherlands to refer to a school with a high percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds.

fail to meet those norms as they, for example, do not know how to do small tasks; do not all attend; do not value play; do not direct the child; are not fluent in Dutch; and hold conversations in their mother tongue.

A remark has to be made on the educational norms expressed by the teachers: in contrast to the deputy head, they do not explicitly refer to parents' backgrounds. Neither in pre and elementary education policies are such references made, but a reference to parents' cultural backgrounds is explicitly made in the *Piramide* handbook. In the handbook, a non-Dutch background is interrelated with "traditional" child-raising styles and with problematic communication with teachers. Not only do teachers' descriptions of sound parental behaviour show considerable similarities with those presented as characteristics of successful families in the handbook, but observations also indicate that teachers do ascribe parents to particular backgrounds. The following two observations are illustrative:

The teacher speaks with a mother. She explains that today they will read Little Red Riding-Hood and she asks whether the mother would like to read a Moroccan fairy story aloud next week. The mother responds by saying that she doesn't know any Moroccan fairy tales; she only reads Dutch books and fairy tales. [sl270504observation]

The teacher invites a mother, whose child is new to the school, into the classroom, which she does. Her child decides to do handicraft and her mother sits down next to her. After a few minutes the teacher addresses her. She tells the mother that in grade four there is a very friendly mother, who is also from an Indonesian background. The teacher emphasises that of course she does not have to contact her, but anyway, she is a very friendly mother. [sl130504observation]

Taking the valuation of particular child-raising styles and the references to parents' backgrounds in interactions into consideration, it appears that, though not explicitly expressed, cultural norms underpin the teachers' pedagogic norms.

Teachers support the idea that parents' knowledge of and interest for the education of their children has to be improved and that the Walk-in Morning could be used to this end. But they also question whether it will actually do so. Previous attempts to remediate parents' deficits were not successful and some teachers doubt whether they as a team put enough effort into their attempts, while others doubt whether their expectations are realistic.

However, prior to the introduction of the Walk-in Morning, the team did not discuss the objectives of the activity, the teachers' expectations, or the existing situation in the school organisation. The deputy head presented the Walk-in Morning as an activity organised for parents and they then only discussed practical matters. These discussions offered the teachers a course of action, but at the same time they were given considerable autonomy over the set-up of the Walk-in Morning. Indeed, the individual teacher's practical realisation varies albeit some point out they are somewhat restricted in their adaptations by the materials and preparation time available.

While gaining experience with the Walk-in Morning, the teachers noticed several problems in the set-up of the activity. They noticed, among other things, that the set-up

is not suitable to reach all parents; that the materials are somewhat boring; and that the child's activities might be difficult for some of the parents to be involved in.

Teachers have tried to solve those problems, for example, by displaying more easily accessible materials, aiming at pleasant conversations, focusing their attention on pupils instead, or by organising group activities. Parents respond to these changes. They may for example enjoy the pleasant conversations, read aloud, or decide to stop coming to the Walk-in Morning.

When reflecting on parents' behaviour, teachers' observations and interpretations however turned out to be selective. They de-contextualise parents' behaviour by not taking parents' characteristics (e.g. not speaking Dutch fluently, being illiterate, having to go to work), and their own behaviour and decisions into consideration (e.g. organising group activities, aiming at pleasant conversations). Parents' behaviour is just interpreted as a sign of meeting or failing to meet the norms of sound parental involvement.

As a result, teachers' interpretations of parents' behaviour reconfirm and reproduce their beliefs about the parents. They regard the parents as incompetent child raisers because they manifest certain characteristics. They ignore how parents' characteristics, which they generally labelled as deficient, established effects in interaction with the teachers and the particularities of the Walk-in Morning's set-up. Like a boomerang, no matter what they do, the teachers end up where they started, i.e. with the belief - and problem definition - that the majority of parents are deficient. Parent characteristics cause their children to fall behind in education.

Seen from the perspective of the parents, a similar process seems to occur. The experiences with the Walk-in Morning and the interactions with the teachers in particular, seem to fuel parents' concerns about the language development of their children, their access to information, and about the quality of education offered at the *Sleutelschool*. The parents interpret the superficial forms of contact and the sometimes disapproving attitude of teachers in the wider contexts of both the parents' non-Dutch backgrounds and of the school's problematic image as it serves many pupils from non-native Dutch backgrounds. For these reasons, parents lower their expectations of the Walk-in Morning, as do teachers, but for different reasons. However, it may also fuel - as Hermans (2004) observed among Moroccan parents - contra-narratives among the parents in which the teachers are increasingly held accountable for educational attainment. Interactions during the Walk-in Morning, then, at least partly reinforce the negative experiences and negative atmosphere concerning parental involvement at the *Sleutelschool*. But it may even have a detrimental effect on it, as it cumulates the negative experiences of teachers and unintentionally further alienates parents and teachers.

5.5 The Walk-in Morning at the *Professor Bakkerschool*

5.5.1 Translating Policy into Practice

For several reasons, the Walk-in Morning at the *Professor Bakkerschool* may be considered an unobtrusive activity. Firstly, the *Professor Bakkerschool* has several activities in which parents participate and the Walk-in Morning is one of them. Besides the formal parent

and information evenings, twice a year the school organises project evenings during which children can display some of their theme-related work, they sporadically organise coffee mornings to discuss education-related matters, and they ask parents to help with celebrations and outings. Furthermore, the parent council has been re-established, two parents are representatives on the school advisory board, parents take care of pupils who stay over for lunch, and each day between 8:30 and 9:30am parents can consult the head teacher without first making an appointment.

Secondly, the Walk-in Morning merged into the existing drop-off time in grades one and two. In the past, parents brought their children to these grades between 8:30 and 8:45am. The children sat in a circle and waited for their classmates to arrive. They were supposed to sit quietly and if they wished to they could look through a book. Lessons started at 8:45. This opening of the school day changed with the introduction of the *Piramide* programme. Each day, the teachers of both grades one and two, organise a Walk-in Morning. Parents can still bring their child between 8:30 and 8:45 but they can now play with the child and with the variety of games and materials displayed. Children walk around the class and choose a game of their liking. Lessons in grade one start in a circle between 8:50 and 9:00 when parents have left or when the teacher decides it is time to start. In grade two the teacher organises the Walk-in Morning slightly differently. In her classroom parents are allowed to play with their child between 8:30 and 8:45. At 8:45 she closes the classroom door and parents are supposed to leave. However, the Walk-in Morning continues for the children and they can engage in an activity until 9:00. The lesson then starts with the children sitting in a circle.

Thirdly, little information about the Walk-in Morning is provided for the parents. No information is provided in the school guide distributed among the parents. Under the heading "school timetable" it simply says that the children in grades one and two have a "fifteen-minute start to the day" [*inloopkwartier*] at which the parents can walk in. Teachers point out that they inform parents about the Walk-in Morning at the first parent evening; but not all parents attend this evening as pupils in grade one can enrol any time during the school year. The parents of these pupils may simply miss this evening.

Reflecting on parent involvement, most teachers point out that it has improved over the past few years. About ten years ago parent involvement started to decline when more immigrant pupils enrolled at the school. Due to the negative experiences they had, some of the teachers lost confidence in the parents and according to their colleagues these teachers have become rather sceptical about parental involvement. Nevertheless, the school made attempts to improve parent involvement. The deputy head for example says that they used to organise an annual bingo evening to raise additional funds. But they noticed that many immigrant parents were not interested in the event. So the school started to organise jumble sales, with refreshments, and indeed more parents attended and more funds were raised.

Nevertheless, teachers, deputy head and head teacher say that teachers and parents alienated. The many changes that took place in the school's management are considered to have had a detrimental effect on this process: parent involvement was never given the attention it needed. However, matters changed with the arrival of the most recent head teacher. He put a lot of effort into improving contact with parents, also because of the

rapidly dwindling numbers of pupil enrolment. Both teachers and parents acknowledge his efforts and the teachers and deputy head do say parents' trust in the school has returned.

It was in this context, that the Walk-in Morning was implemented. However, the team never discussed it. The teachers just followed the *Piramide* course at which they were, among other things, instructed on the Walk-in Morning and then started to organise the activity. There are no internal school documents available that state the school's policy on the Walk-in Morning.

The teachers do not regret the lack of any discussions. They point out that the handbook provides clear guidelines that require no further discussion. However, the teachers also explain that in the lowest grades they don't have many discussions about other kinds of educational matters. Some do not want to touch on the subject any further; others say it simply does not work on a personal level. Indeed, while conducting research at the *Professor Bakkerschool*, two teachers of the lowest grades, came into conflict with each other, though for reasons unrelated to the Walk-in Morning activity.

According to the head teacher, the teachers were positive about the Walk-in Morning when they implemented it. They had told him that their contact with parents improved. Nevertheless, he doubts whether all the teachers involved really support the aim of improving parental involvement and he questions whether the Walk-in Morning is really used to its full extent. He observes that: "*the teachers only say 'good morning' to the parents and 'how are you', and then conversations end*". Despite these critical comments, the head teacher assumes that everything is still going well because teachers have never reported any problems to him. On top of that, the Walk-in Morning was extended to groups three and four.

Because of the positive experiences of her colleagues, the teacher from grade three also introduced the Walk-in Morning in her group. She explains that when she introduced it she had once observed a Walk-in Morning in grade two but otherwise had had no discussions about it. This teacher stopped organising the Walk-in Morning when parents hardly attended at all. But since she heard that the Walk-in Morning will be introduced formally in grades three and four (around April 2005), she has taken up the activity again despite attendance numbers continuing to be low. This teacher was included in the study of the Walk-in Morning.

The aim of introducing the Walk-in Morning in grades three and four is part of the Educational Opportunity Plan [*Onderwijskansenplan*]. In the school there are means available to buy materials for these grades, and per grade the teachers have already discussed what materials to order. One of the teachers from grade four recently drew up a document stating what the aims are and how to organise the Walk-in Morning in grades three and four. However, at the time of the present research they had not yet introduced the activity and therefore these teachers were not part of this study.

The organisation of the Walk-in Morning does not seem to have disrupted normal procedures in the school. There were no meetings and the existing drop-off time changed only slightly. Except for the different timetables, the set-up of the Walk-in Morning is similar in each classroom. Teachers choose diverse materials that link up with the themes addressed in the daily lessons and are suitable for the different levels of the children. The children can do handicrafts, play games on the computer, draw, build, work with

development stimulating materials, or play with theme related materials. And except for the teacher from grade three who is dissatisfied about the low level of parent attendance, other teachers simply consider it part of the school day. They report they are satisfied, primarily because pupils no longer wait in the circle for their peers to arrive but can start their school day as soon as they have arrived.

5.5.2 *The Walk-in Morning in Practice*

Despite these positive reflections on the Walk-in Morning and despite the Walk-in Morning not causing many problems, the teachers are somewhat wary about my presence in the classroom and my research on the Walk-in Morning. They say they were not informed beforehand of my presence, they forget appointments made for interviews; ask in advance of an interview if we can keep it short as they have better things to do; ask the head teacher whether I actually have his permission for an interview; and they say that they prepared for the interview by reading the *Piramide* handbook.

It becomes clear during the interviews that the teachers, except for the teacher in grade three, refute the perspective that the Walk-in Morning is an activity that aims to enhance their contact with the parents. The teachers stress the importance of the Walk-in Morning for the pupils. Time being better spent at the beginning of the school day is important to them.

Nevertheless, the teachers do attach importance to parents' attendance at the Walk-in Morning. The following excerpts illustrate this:

In my opinion, the most important aim is that children learn to make decisions and to play together. And it's not me who supports them in that, but the parents. The Walk-in Morning also gives parents the opportunity to practice playing with their child [pb070904interviewteacher]

It would be nice if more parents attended because many of them still see this grade as one where the children only play. They frequently ask me when they will learn to write letters, and so on. If they stayed, they would see the materials we use and that do stimulate cognitive development. They could see that these materials are quite difficult, and that they help their children to learn. And it would also enhance their empathy at home, if they knew what their child does at school and what it learns. But actually, I'm satisfied with the Walk-in Morning. The children can start working immediately and that's the most important thing for me [pb160904interviewteacher].

When I speak with parents, it's always about the child. These are just superficial conversations, not that intensive because that's not what the Walk-in Morning is meant for. Just simple and pleasant conversations. Sometimes I do give some general advice, like 'your child doesn't know his colours yet' and then I advise them not to teach their child all colours at once, but to start with one or two. Or I tell them what the learning theme is at that moment, or advise the parent to have a look and see what we are actually doing in the classroom. But actually the most important thing

is that they attend and I won't say anything when the parent is playing with the child [pb061004interviewteacher].

What is noticeable in these quotations is that teachers' consider it important that parents have certain skills and knowledge. Parents may acquire them by attending the Walk-in Morning: then they can practice the necessary skills and by observing, gather relevant information. Teachers do not seem ascribe an important role to themselves in this process.

Teachers and the head teacher talk of a lack in both parents' skills to support the child and knowledge about the child's education and they relate these deficits to pupils' disadvantaged educational positions:

Because parents play with these materials during the Walk-in Morning, I hope that they will also start doing these things at home. That, for instance, they will read aloud at home too. After all, these children arrive at the school with language and development disadvantages. [pb070904interviewteacher]

Parents put too much emphasis on learning; they frequently ask when the children will learn the alphabet. They don't want their children to play with dolls. And that of course influences the child, who then doesn't want to play with dolls. This has a negative effect on the language and social development of the child. The child is at a disadvantage, simply because playing with dolls stimulates the active use of language. [pb160904interviewteacher]

Ht: I think it's important that you tell the parent about what's happening in the class and that you encourage parents to talk with the child. And you can make these things clear to parents not by standing around in the class, but when parent and child are working together to sit next to them and to help parents improve their interaction with the child. You stimulate them also doing these things at home and in that way you create opportunities that they will interact more with their children. It's the interaction with the children that's so important. <...>

DdR: So, behind the aim of improving contact between teacher and parents is another aim. Namely, improving the contact between parent and child at home?

Ht: yes, that's important

DdR: Does that mean parents currently interact too little with their child?

Ht: Yes that's right.

DdR: How do you know?

Ht: That's something you notice. Among other things in the way they communicate with the child and the significant disadvantage in language and social-emotional development. If you simply have a look at our test results, you'll see they score very, very low. And you should understand, these are not stupid children. That's what I believe in. [pb100904interviewheadteacher]

Not reading aloud, not stimulating the child, not appropriately interacting with the child, not understanding the value of play, and lacking knowledge about what happens in the class, are all characteristics ascribed by the teachers and head teacher to parents. They believe that these characteristics cause the children at their school to fall behind. The Walk-in Morning, in their opinion, may help overcome these deficits.

But whereas the head teacher, as is evident in the last quotation, stresses the importance of teachers contacting parents, the teachers ascribe considerably less importance to their role. They argue that when the parents are playing with the children they will not interfere. The teachers assume that parents can improve their competences just by attending the Walk-in Morning and by making use of the opportunities it offers them. They consider the Walk-in Morning as rather self-evident.

Contact between teachers and parents did indeed hardly occur during the Walk-in Mornings. In grades two and three only one mother attended in each class, and except for saying good morning the teachers did not address these women. In both grades one, more parents attended: between four and seven parents. The majority are mothers, but one or two fathers also attended. The teachers of these grades had slightly more contact. In one of the classrooms a mother told the teacher about what had happened at her flat the previous afternoon, and the teacher spoke briefly with a mother about a jigsaw and her child's ability to read the letter 'r'. In the other class the teacher asked two mothers whether they would attend the parent evening that day, and she had a short conversation with a mother about a jigsaw. However, these conversations were rather brief. Contact with parents was therefore restricted in all grades.

In the following excerpts, two teachers reflect on their interactions with parents and they explain why they remain passive most of the time. The first fragment is taken from an observation at which the teacher expresses her thoughts about a mother who is sitting at one of the school desks and is looking through her son's exercise books during the Walk-in Morning. The second fragment is taken from an interview (already cited in part above) in which the teacher explains how she communicates with parents during the Walk-in Morning.

The teacher addresses me: "Do you see that mother over there?" – the mother is looking through her son's exercise books – "I'm sure she's waiting for me as the teacher to go and talk to her and talk about what her son does and how he's getting on. But I won't, that's not what the Walk-in Morning is meant for. In grade three, parents can come twice a week, but then they're supposed to interact with their child, to go and see what the child's doing and how the child performs. That is what I expect this mother to do, but see, her son is playing over there, he's busy with stamps and instead of going to him to see what he's doing, she's sitting and waiting for me to tell her. Well, I won't. Last week I had a discussion about that with another mother. The mother was at the Walk-in Morning and came to me to ask how her child was doing. Well, I told her to have a look at her son who was working on the computer. But the mother refused, she wanted me to tell her. That really annoys me" <The teacher pulls a face, and put her hands in the air in despair> [pb100904observation].

Now and then I do give a bit of advice, for example, you know, your child doesn't know his colours yet, maybe you can practice a bit at home'. And then I will advise them not to teach all the colours at once, but to start with two or three colours at a time. <...>. But the most important thing is to attend, and I will not give advice when the parent plays with the child. Except for a mother like Khalim's. I do explain to her how these development-stimulating materials are to be used. She's very involved and when I explain the materials, she enjoys it and will subsequently teach it to Khalim. As a result, I don't have to explain it to him later during the day. But with Dina's mother, it won't make sense to do this; she doesn't speak a single word of Dutch. For her, coming to the classroom for a short period of time is simply enough. Language is the problem, really. Like with the mother of Sarah. Sarah is an afterthought, and I have taught all her older brothers and sisters. At that time, the mother could not speak Dutch and we weren't able to communicate. But meanwhile, she has learned some Dutch and I now know she's a pleasant mother, which I've never known as we could not speak with each other. Nowadays, more mothers are learning the Dutch language; some of them have lessons three times a week and become more fluent. And actually, I think that is positive, after all they live here, in the Netherlands [pb061004interviewteacher].

In both excerpts the teachers formulate several goals parents are expected to meet. In the first excerpt for instance, the teacher sets norms for the parents observing and interpreting the activities of their children; not asking questions of the teacher; and responding positively to the teacher's suggestions. In the second excerpt the teacher speaks, among other things, about: attending; developing pleasant contact with the parents; and, ultimately, the parent taking over part of the teacher's role.

The teachers position the parents on the basis of these norms. The first teacher argues that this mother does not understand the ideas behind the Walk-in Morning; that this mother is presumably unwilling to listen to her advice; and that conflict is likely to arise when she addresses this mother. This teacher does not make her expectations clear to the mother. The second teacher positions the parents in terms of their engagement in the education of their children, of it being pleasant to talk with them, and their understanding of the teachers' instructions. It seems that the more a parent meets her norms, the clearer she becomes about her expectations concerning the involvement of parents in the teaching and learning processes.

In the above quotations, the teachers report enjoyment about a mother meeting their norms, and then, communication becomes more substantial. The mothers who do not meet their norms are not communicated with at all or only a little. And the teachers report dissatisfaction with or attach less importance to their contact with these parents. As the following quotations show, this relationship has been found more frequently in teachers' reflection on their contact with parents. The quotations are selected in such a manner that two topics are addressed (fluency in Dutch and handing out a game) and that for each topic one teacher reflects positively on what happens during the Walk-in Morning, while the other teacher is less positive.

Of course, I do understand when somebody is unable to do something. For example, when a mother can't speak Dutch, then of course she should first speak Arabic with the child and play with the child. I won't demand the child to understand me immediately, if at least the mother starts playing with the materials then the child will become familiar with them and the child's understanding of the teacher who speaks Dutch will follow naturally. In that way the mother supports the work of the teacher. Only later will I stimulate the mother to also speak Dutch with the child. [pb070904interviewteacher]

The teacher asks how my interview with a parent went. I respond that unfortunately the interview did not go that well as the mother's command of Dutch was low. The teacher replies; Yes, that's often a problem at this school. But currently, there are a husband and wife in the classroom who speak Dutch very well, and they are so involved. Now again, they play together with their son; that is very pleasant.

You know, it's different with Dutch mothers. For example, I have two boys in my class and their mother looks after the children who stay for lunch. Those children are not particularly intelligent, and when their mother comes to the Walk-in Morning they fight for her attention. So the mother is unable to play with them in the class and so she doesn't come along. But last week, when she was in charge of the children staying over for lunch, I went to her and handed her a game. Like, there you are, here is something you can try at home first. Then, when you come to the Walk-in Morning, at least you will know the game and how to play it with your sons. And this week she changed the game for another one, the mother seems happy with it. [pb230904interviewteacher]

Sometimes I'll give some advice like try this or that at home. But not often, because I noticed that parents do things wrong, they didn't understand. From what the parents tell me, I know their pedagogic approach isn't sound. They'll sit at the computer for two hours or so until the children know the words, while I told them to practice for just ten minutes a day. Or I give them a game to play at home, and the next day they'll bring it back and say 'we've done it'. While there are so many brothers and sisters at home, you know, they could have played with this game for a whole week. But I don't try to explain – I already explained to them what to do, they've done their best and I can't keep on correcting them. [pb160904interviewteacher]

In these quotations, it is again noteworthy that not meeting norms – the command of the Dutch language is a problem, and parents not soundly using the games – interrelate with passivity among the teachers. Meeting norms, on the contrary, coincides with more contact (except for the second excerpt in which the teacher does not reflect on her contact with these parents). The teachers therefore primarily seem to involve those parents who better fit in with their expectations of supporting their children's learning.

It is also noticeable that the teachers are more positive when speaking about parents who meet norms. Teachers appear to be satisfied if the parents speak Dutch, are engaged,

play with the child, play the game offered by the teacher, ask for another game, and are pleased about the teacher's initiative. On the contrary, those teachers who are less positive reflect on parents who do not meet norms. These parents do not speak Dutch, do not understand instructions, do not use the games appropriately, and do not ask for a new one.

Two remarks have to be made about these fragments. Parents fail to meet norms in fragments two and four. But the norms set are problematic for two reasons. Firstly, because some of the parents just do not speak the Dutch language, and secondly, because having to improve parents' interactions with their children puts teachers in a difficult position.

In the first fragment, the teacher acknowledges that speaking the Dutch language is a norm that cannot be met by all parents. She therefore lowers her aims and she expects them only to attend and to play with their child. This adaptation is similar to the one described by the teacher cited earlier (who spoke about the mothers of Khalim, Dina and Sarah). This teacher also lowers her aims for these parents who are not fluent in Dutch: they are simply expected to attend and to play with their children.

In the fourth fragment, the teacher feels trapped in the need to tell the mother how to soundly engage in the Walk-in Morning, while she considers this not respectful and while she expects the mother not to understand her. Therefore, she decides to remain passive and not to interact with the parents. This decision is similar to the one made by the teacher who did not correct the mother who was looking through her son's notebook. This teacher touches on this problem in the following manner:

None of the mothers walk into the class, sit down and start to play with their child. They do not understand, and that's really difficult. How to direct them? I can't tell them 'sit down and read that book'. That is really difficult, and it has to do with respect for the parent because I would tell the mother from some kind of disrespect, some kind of negative feeling, and that, I don't want to. [pb230904interviewteacher].

These kinds of teachers' comments about the norms and assumptions underpinning the Walk-in Morning could have been an incentive to reflect on the usefulness of the activity for those parents who are not fluent in Dutch, and on the contradictory assumptions about the interactions between parents and teachers.

The second remark about those fragments concerns the cultural norms set by teachers. These seem to legitimate teachers' acceptance of the exclusion of most of the parents from more substantial communication during the Walk-in Morning, and hence to reinforce the deficit position the parents are ascribed.

The teachers interrelate the parents' failure to meet the pedagogic norms with assumed characteristics of parents' backgrounds. In the first two fragments, the teachers point at the importance of parents' fluency in the Dutch language for them to be able to communicate with the parents. Though divergence of this criterion may indeed be considered to affect interaction, the teachers place moral responsibility on the parents to improve the situation. They argued: (first fragment) *"only later I will stimulate the mother to also speak Dutch with the child"*, and (second fragment) *"there are a husband and wife in the classroom who speak Dutch very well and they are so much engaged"*. The teacher cited earlier expressed similar

opinions, she said: “*Nowadays, more mothers are learning the Dutch language, some of them have lessons three times a week and become more and more fluent. And actually, I think that is positive, after all they live here, in the Netherlands*”, and she also emphasised that the mother of Khalim, who is fluent in Dutch, is rather engaged and that she was only able to find out how pleasant the mother of Sarah was after the mother had started to learn the Dutch language.

The teachers not only see a limited command of the Dutch language as a structural barrier to communication, but they also ascribe parents who are not fluent in Dutch with characteristics of being less engaged in the education of their children and of having to take up their responsibility of learning the Dutch language. Teachers’ positive interactions during the Walk-in Morning with those parents who speak Dutch prove to them that problems are not located in interaction, but in the parents’ skills and attitude. In that manner, they legitimise their own passivity.

The teachers in the other fragments do not refer to the parents’ linguistic background but focus instead on the parents’ lower socio-economic and “foreign” backgrounds:

The teacher has reflected on the pedagogic values of the parents being different from hers (for instance they put too much emphasis on the cognitive aspect of learning or don’t want their child to play with dolls), and the negative effects that this has on the development of the child. She then continues her argument as follows: “But I’m not really surprised, these aren’t the only things that slow down development, it’s the whole social environment. Children watch TV for days on end, they aren’t read to, they don’t go anywhere and so it isn’t really weird that they lag behind. Really, I don’t have the illusion that they can all go on to pre-university education. Of course you do as much as you can, but for their level and their milieu, that means you will not get that far, or at least, most of them.” [pb160904interviewteacher]

I establish a different relationship with foreign parents, in that relationship, it will come down to, I will only say the most important things. For example, when a foreign mother attends one morning, I would say hello to her, shake hands and say: ‘Nice that you’re here’, but nothing more because of the language barrier. I’ll pay as little attention to this mother as possible to prevent this mother feeling observed or criticised. She should go home only with the feeling ‘the teacher was very pleased that I was there’. That is why I’ll only say the most important things and say that I am pleased to meet her. *She then continues to say that her contact with Dutch parents is different and reflects on the mother to whom she gave a game to play at home* [pb230904interviewteacher]

The first cited teacher interrelates parents’ lower socio-economic backgrounds with assumed problematic characteristics of parent-child interaction, while the second teacher interrelates parents’ non-Dutch backgrounds with assumed characteristics of feeling uneasy, uncertain and easily criticised. Compared with the teachers who focused on language, these two teachers do not seem to consider the situations as changeable. While the other teachers still left the possibility of communication open (i.e. when parents became more fluent

and showed an interest and willingness), these two teachers consider the problems in the interaction as the inherent outcome of the parents' backgrounds.

In an interview the head teacher shows an awareness of both the pedagogic norms underlying the Walk-in Morning activity and teachers' reference to cultural norms. He says the following about the pedagogic norms:

DdR: Do you know how parents experience the Walk-in Morning?

Ht: Well, like, I come to take my child to school, simply like, ' Nice, I love my child', Like the way how I experience it when I take my child to school. Not much more.

DdR: So, they don't know what the Walk-in Morning is meant for?

Ht: No

DdR: Isn't that necessary?

Ht: I think that at a certain point in time you have to be clear about your expectations.

DdR: That you expect them to improve their interaction with the child?

Ht: Yes

DdR: Why isn't that actually said?

Ht: It has to do with a language barrier and also partly because of being afraid of being pedantic.

DdR: Pedantic?

Ht: I'm going to tell you what you should do at home, and that's pedantic. When I say like, I notice that today you didn't bring fruit and my aim is to convince you that you should bring fruit. I'm going to tell you very precisely what you should do, and I'm repeating that over and over again. You'll get mad, at some point. That's pedantic.

DdR: But aren't you being pedantic right now, in an implicit way?

Ht: Well, you have to understand, I think that at some point, one should be more open about it, that you say much more clearly like we find it important that.... And of course you will struggle with the language. But we always say when somebody comes to enrol a child at our school but who doesn't speak Dutch <continues with loud voice>: "You have to speak Dutch at home" <laughs> and at the parent evenings we have parents who are illiterate and then we say "you have to read books with your child!". Well, uhuh <disapproving sound stressing the inappropriateness of the advice> [pb100904interviewheadteacher].

And he has this to say about the cultural norms:

At this school, it's said that: "they have to adapt, because we are a Dutch school". <...>. There is something of a notion - I wouldn't call it a notion of norms and values, well I mean, maybe I should say they aren't my norms and values - like 'this is a Dutch school, and we happen to have a lot of immigrant pupils, but this Dutch school should continue to be a Dutch school. So that means that we speak about Dutch geography, about Dutch history, that we speak Dutch, and that *you* [emphasised] got here, and

that *you* [emphasised] will adapt to us. That's a very strong point of view at this school. [pb100904headteacher]

These two interview fragments indicate that the head teacher is aware of the pedagogic and cultural norms underpinning the Walk-in Morning. He observes that these norms are a problem for some groups of parents and hinder the development of the deficit position parents are ascribed. Again, the experiences with the Walk-in Morning seem to allow for some more comprehensive reflection on the causes of educational disadvantage. However, the head teacher did not attempt to solve the problems he observed. He did not organise team meetings to discuss the Walk-in Morning and neither did he get involved in the teachers' practices as long as they themselves did not report having problems. Instead, he gave the teachers full autonomy over the Walk-in Morning. Moreover, as part of the school organisational plan for the improvement of parental involvement he included the Walk-in Morning as an activity to be formally extended to grades three and four.

5.5.3 Parents' Perspectives on the Walk-in Morning

Many of the interviewed parents looked puzzled when asked about their experiences with the Walk-in Morning. After having explained that the first half hour of each school day is meant, that is, when they are allowed to come into the classroom and play with their child, the parents understand what kind of activity is being talked about. However, one parent also immediately corrects; it is not half-an-hour, but ten, fifteen minutes at the most that they are in the classroom. Taking into consideration that the Walk-in Morning merged into an existing structure and that little information is given to parents, the parents' unfamiliarity with the term 'Walk-in Morning' may not be considered surprising.

Having cleared up confusion about the kind of activity they are being interviewed about, parents voice similar perspectives about why they consider it important to get into the classroom in the morning. Some parents regret they cannot come; they are taking care of younger children, they have to go to work, or they are following language lessons in the morning. But irrespective of whether they often attend, the parents explain that they enjoy playing with their son or daughter, that they like to see the materials that are used in the classroom, and that they favour the opportunity to show an interest in their child and the importance of education. Two parents also point out that they buy toys similar to those used in the classroom. Here are some illustrative comments from the parents:

Unfortunately I can't often be there: I'm taking a morning language course. I regret not attending more frequently as I always enjoy those moments when my son starts to explain what he does in class and even sometimes explains how to use certain materials. [pb030904interviewparent]

I attend as often as possible. My son enjoys it when I do and I like to be involved with the class. [pb170904interviewparent]

I like coming into class in the morning. I like to be in the class for a while and not only dropping the children off at the front door. But I don't consider it important for a particular reason; I mean, I also do jigsaws with my children at home. [pb310804interviewparent]

Generally speaking, the parents appreciate this time in class and prefer it to just dropping the child off at school. Parents explain that during the Walk-in Morning they will engage in play with their child, look at the materials, teach the child how to use certain materials, or, the other way round, that the child shows them the materials and explains how to use them. The mother who looked through her son's exercise books during the Walk-in Morning explains that by doing so she can see how her son is getting on. She looks through several exercise books - mathematics and language - but she says she also looks at his drawings.

The parents do not describe themselves in terms of not understanding what to do during the Walk-in Morning. Some of them point out that they are not familiar with all the materials, but if necessary the children will explain them to them. Others refer to their command of Dutch: even though they consider themselves as not being fluent in this language it does not stop them participating because they do understand the teacher and because the materials are not too difficult (which, in contrast, the homework of the older children is). The mother who looked through the notebooks also had a clear goal in mind when attending the Walk-in Morning. Compared with the teacher, she ascribed a similar importance to the activity, however she reached her objective in a way that the teacher disapproved of.

Parents, then, are rather univocal in their perspectives on the Walk-in Morning. They consider it important to support their children in their education. They can use the Walk-in Morning to show the children their interest and to support it. Generally they will sit next to the child and observe or play together with the child. Those who behave differently seem to do so with similar intentions i.e. to learn more about the child's educational attainments and to support the child's development. A limited command of the Dutch language does not hinder them from meaningful participation in the activity.

Comparing the ideas of parents about their role in their children's education and about how, in that respect, they make use of the Walk-in Morning, with the ideas of teachers, teachers and parents do consider the activity important for similar reasons. This might be somewhat surprising, firstly because the parents were not explicitly informed and because they do not attach particular significance to the activity in their daily routine of taking the child to school. Secondly, parents formulate these ideas irrespective of what they actually do during the Walk-in Morning (e.g. playing with the child, looking through notebooks, examining the materials), and irrespective of their level fluency in the Dutch language. Both observations seem to contradict the assumptions of the teachers about parents' incapacity to either understand or to fully benefit from the set-up of the Walk-in Morning.

5.5.4 Summary and Concluding Remarks on the Walk-in Morning at the Professor Bakkerschool

The Walk-in Morning activity was implemented at the *Professor Bakkerschool* as an activity organised for parents. Teachers and head teacher share the perspective that problems in the interaction between parents and pupils are generally the reason for the children at their school being disadvantaged. It is thought that parents fail to prepare and support their children well for and during education. They lack the necessary skills and knowledge: such as, speaking Dutch; playing with the child; being familiar with the materials used in the classroom; and understanding why play is important for the child's development.

However, the teachers of grades one and two are somewhat wary about defining the Walk-in Morning as a parental activity. They stress that the school day now starts better since the introduction of the Walk-in Morning, but not too much has to be expected about their contact with the parents and the improvement of parents' interaction with children.

From their few reflections on the little contact they have with parents, it became clear that the Walk-in Morning places the teachers in an uneasy position. Firstly, the Walk-in Morning is not suitable for parents who are not fluent in Dutch. The teachers experience problems with their communication with these parents and generally expect them to just be there. Secondly, if teachers are able to communicate with parents they are confronted with the problem of having to rectify the parents' interaction with the children. Because they generally disapprove of how the parents are involved with their children, the teachers feel they fail to communicate with the parents in a respectful manner. In both cases, the teachers' withdraw from communication.

Indeed, there was no substantial interaction between teachers and parents in any of the classes. The teachers would generally be busy organising the last few things before the school day started, while parents were playing with or just sitting next to their child. More substantial interaction did occur, albeit still on a very small scale, with those parents the teachers considered to be more fluent in Dutch and as more engaged and understanding. This situation appears to be at odds with the embedding of the Walk-in Morning in the school organisation as a parental activity. However, the teachers justify their limited contact either by expressing the opinion that the observed deficits are inherent to parents from a lower socio-economic or a non-native Dutch background, or by expressing the view that parents first have to prove their willingness and to take up their responsibility before more substantial interaction would make sense. Because teachers position parents in that manner, they neither question the activity itself nor the interaction. Instead they justify their passivity as the logical outcome of parents' deficit characteristics.

The head teacher is critical of both the lack of communication between teachers and parents, and the cultural norms underpinning the daily practice of the Walk-in Morning. However, he does not interfere in the teachers' practices. Instead, the Walk-in Morning has caused little disruption to the school organisation seemingly characterised by considerable tension and conflict between the teachers. The introduction of the Walk-in Morning had not been discussed with the teachers, there were no formal guidelines about the activity, and except for an external course and handbook, the teachers were given full autonomy over the daily practices.

Given the restricted information made available to the parents about the Walk-

in Morning, the embedding of the activity in the existing drop-off time, and the little communication with the teachers, parents' lack of information on the Walk-in Morning may not be considered surprising. However, the parents do express ideas about how they can make use of the drop-off time to express their interests in their children's education. Parents' ideas about how the Walk-in Morning can be of use to them do seem to be rather similar to the opinions of the teachers. But in contrast to the teachers, parents do not see that their lack of fluency in the Dutch language or their backgrounds prevents them from participating in a meaningful manner.

The Walk-in Morning at the *Professor Bakkerschool* does not seem to affect the existing positions of the parents, teachers or the head teacher. Neither are parents made more aware of what is expected of them or presented with the opportunities to meet those expectations, nor does interaction between parents and teachers or between teachers and head teacher result in a more comprehensive understanding of how the educational norms underpinning the activity function to include or exclude some of the parents. The deficit-perspective on parents is neither changed, nor challenged with the introduction of the Walk-in Morning. Instead, the Walk-in Morning is established in such a manner and context that it reinforces the ascribed parental deficits.

5.6 Analysis

The Walk-in Morning activity has been the main focus of this chapter. This activity is part of the well-known Dutch pre and elementary education programme *Piramide*. National policies on educational disadvantage oblige schools serving high percentages of pupils belonging to the target groups, to make use of pre and elementary education programmes. Procedures about the choice and implementation of pre and elementary education programmes differ per municipality. The municipality in which the *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* are located decided, after a consultation of head teachers, that the indicated schools would implement the *Piramide* programme. Therefore both these schools implemented the Walk-in Morning. The aim of this activity is to improve contact between parents and the school and for parents to enhance the educational support they offer their children. This chapter discussed how the activity translated into daily practice.

Educational Norms and Parents' Positions in the Walk-in Morning

Pre and elementary education policy is based on the assumption that certain child-raising styles do not prepare children particularly well for the educational system. Inadequate parenting, particularly that of the mother, is seen as an important explanation for educational disadvantage. Due to its group-based approach (pre and elementary education policy focuses on children whose parents are not highly educated and/or from a non-Western background) the ascribed pedagogic deficits are interrelated with non-native Dutch and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Pre and elementary education policy has resulted in numerous centre-based programmes. The *Piramide* programme has been nationally approved as an effective programme and is generally used throughout cities in the Netherlands.

The analysis of the *Piramide* handbook indicated that the ascription of a deficit identity to parents legitimises the Walk-in Morning activity. The handbook presents parent

behaviour such as talking with the child about education, engaging the child in education-related activities at home, motivating the child, and speaking in an affirmative manner with the child, as being necessary conditions for educational success. In some families these conditions are absent or insufficiently developed and the Walk-in Morning is expected to contribute towards improving both these parents' interactions with the children and their communication with the teachers. The *Piramide* programme explicitly links the ascribed deficits to cultural norms: parents from a non-Western, "traditional" cultural background are characterised by a more frequent failure to meet these pedagogic norms and to soundly interact with the teachers.

However, the ascribed deficits and the aim of fitting the parents in with a 'normal' home upbringing appeared to be somewhat at odds with the expressed focus on teachers. Teachers are expected to develop partnership with immigrant parents and to communicate on a basis of respect. Moreover, the instructions advised teachers to keep contact with parents brief. Indeed, the policies on the Walk-in Morning included multiple strands and were hybrid (Blackmore, 1995; Tomlinson, 2003), thereby allowing the teams to interpret and change them while translating policy into practice.

The teams at both schools believe that child-raising styles relate to educational positions. Parents who motivate their child, show an interest in their education, and who have knowledge about educational materials and developments are ascribed a more advantaged educational position. A significant variety of pedagogic norms is used by the teachers in the daily practice of the Walk-in Morning to assess the appropriateness of parents' upbringing styles. Deficits are generally ascribed to the parents on the basis of norms such as: not speaking the Dutch language, to whisper the answers, not valuing play, not attending certain activities, being unable to read aloud, being unable to do handiworks or jigsaws, and failing to guide the child.

Parents at both schools also interrelate their child-raising styles with the educational achievements of their children. They too consider it important to stimulate the child, show an interest, and maintain contact with the teachers. Parents draw upon those norms to ascribe value to the Walk-in Morning and they express ideas about how they can make use of the activity in order to meet those norms. In their opinion, they do, generally speaking, engage in the activity in an appropriate manner.

Comparing the perspectives of the two teams with those of the parents, it is noticeable that teachers and parents express similar pedagogic norms; however, they differ in their beliefs as to whether parents meet or fail to meet those norms. Teachers ascribe deficits to the parents, while the parents consider themselves to be competent.

Teachers and parents' references to cultural norms are more variable than those to pedagogic norms. Teachers at the *Sleutelschool* did not explicitly mention cultural norms, while teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* did. The opposite is true for parents: parents at the *Sleutelschool* emphasised the importance of their backgrounds, while parents at the *Professor Bakkerschool* did not do so. In general, teachers and parents use cultural norms which refer to parents' non-native backgrounds and their lack of fluency in the Dutch language. Occasionally, cultural norms refer to parents' lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* interrelate characteristics such as a lack of

knowledge about education, problematic communication with the teachers, and inappropriate attitudes towards the children with the parents' non-native Dutch backgrounds. Parents at the *Sleutelschool* ascribe themselves characteristics of having restricted access to information, being approached in a denigrating manner, and being offered education of a lower quality because of their non-native Dutch background. Other scholars have found similar patterns of beliefs among teachers and parents: teachers more generally express low expectations such as a lack of interest, knowledge and motivation when it concerns pupils and parents from lower class backgrounds and ethnic minority backgrounds (Pigott & Cowen, 2000; Lott, 2001), while parents from these backgrounds more often express feelings of and report experiences with exclusion from information and from decision taking, and with discrimination against them in schools (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Hermans, 2004; Crozier, 2005; Smit, Driessen & Doesborgh, 2005).

Attempts to Change Parents' Positions

The study has shown the following about the development and application of the educational norms discussed above. At both schools the activity was initially implemented as a parental activity to diminish the deficits ascribed to parents. The assumption is that through parents' attendance at the Walk-in Morning their interaction with the child would increase and improve, they would become more familiar with educational materials, and the teacher could develop and maintain contact with the parents. Contrary to these intentions, however, the Walk-in Morning provides few opportunities to either remediate the ascribed deficits by bringing parents' attitude and knowledge in line with teachers' general expectations about child upbringing, or to negotiate the correctness of the ascribed deficits and to change the norms that have resulted in this assessment. Instead, the data showed that, in general, the Walk-in Morning results in the reinforcement of the deficits ascribed to parents and of the teachers' belief that those deficits explain disadvantaged positions.

The mechanisms resulting in the reinforcement of the ascribed deficit identity differ per school. At the level of interaction between teachers and parents, the following happens at the *Sleutelschool*. After gaining experience with the Walk-in Morning, the teachers at this school noticed shortcomings in its set-up and outcomes. They therefore made changes to both the manner in which they organised the activity and to the objectives aimed at. Parents, in their interaction with the teachers, are explicitly and implicitly confronted with the educational norms underpinning the set-up and the teachers' behaviour. The parents respond to the daily curriculum, but teachers selectively observe and interpret the behaviour. The teachers ignore the assumptions underlying the daily practices; they no longer reflect on possible shortcomings of the set-up; and they do not contextualise the behaviour of the parents as they ignore their own behaviour and the characteristics of the parents. As a result, parents' behaviour is judged solely by drawing on educational norms. Indeed, these kinds of selective observations function to reconfirm the ascribed deficit identity and to justify positions of educational disadvantage (Youdell, 2003). In general, teachers draw the conclusions that the parents fail to meet those norms, which in their opinion explains both the limited success of the activity and their frustrations.

Parents at the *Sleutelschool*, in their turn, notice their little contact with the teachers and the few opportunities they have to express their concerns, needs and opinions. They

link these experiences to their non-native Dutch background and express the opinion that because of this background the school cares less about them and their children. They continue to attend the Walk-in Morning because their children enjoy it and because they consider it valuable for their children, but otherwise it does not appear to improve their contact with the teachers.

The *Professor Bakkerschool* presents the Walk-in Morning as a parental activity that aims to improve parents' involvement in the education of their children and in the school. However, teachers have changed the meaning of the activity and focus on a better start to the school day. They have very little contact with the parents and they do not consider it their task to communicate more extensively with the parents.

Teachers at this school express the belief that parents' inappropriate interactions with the children are inherent to parents from a non-native Dutch and lower socio-economic backgrounds, or cannot be improved as long as the parents do not take the moral responsibility to become integrated and to learn the Dutch language. Ascribing these characteristics and holding individual parents responsible, seemed to legitimise the little contact that the teachers have with the parents (Gillies, 2005b). Indeed, teachers' interactions appeared to be exactly the opposite of what could have been expected on the basis of the ascribed deficits to parents: the more teachers considered parents to meet pedagogic norms, the more they facilitated these parents to support their children. Teachers engaged in these kinds of interactions with only a few parents. They did not take any notice of how the Walk-in Morning failed to suit all parents equally, of the assumptions underlying the activity which put them in ambiguous positions, nor did they observe that the outcomes of the activity appeared to be the opposite of some of its formal aims.

Parents at the *Professor Bakkerschool*, meanwhile, were given little information about the activity. It appears to them as a pleasant, informal way of dropping their children off at school. Moreover, as they are not confronted with teachers' expectations, they just consider themselves as making rightful use of the activity by showing their child their interest and by learning more about the materials used in class. Meanwhile, most of them are however excluded from information: the teachers only offered more significant information to only a few of them. The Walk-in Morning at the *Professor Bakkerschool*, therefore, appeared to result in disadvantaged positions instead of combating them.

At both schools similar educational norms underpin the Walk-in Morning, and at both schools the activity results in the deficits ascribed to parents being reinforced. These norms however develop in different ways at the two schools. As I will show, these different processes and their similar outcomes interrelate with the school-specific micro-politics. These micro-politics are discussed by first focusing on the situations that existed prior to the introduction of the Walk-in Morning, then on the interactions that occurred between the teachers and the head teachers, and finally on the positions held by parents in the two schools. These elements are compared for the two schools.

The Walk-in Morning in the Context of the School Organisation

Prior to the introduction of the Walk-in Morning, the teachers, deputy head and parents at the *Sleutelschool* had little contact. Past, negative experiences had played an important role in the restricted contact as it then existed. Only at formal, obligatory organised occasions

are parents invited to the school. Otherwise the school organises informal activities such as jumble sales, but these kinds of activities are not considered to be of educational importance. The unwritten rule is not to ask parents for support in the school organisation. There is tension between the teachers; some are of the opinion that not much more can be expected of the parents, while others would like to put some effort into improving contact with parents. It seems that the deputy head tried to solve this dispute in grades one and two by obliging these teachers to work with the Walk-in Morning and by presenting it as an activity that aims to improve contact with parents.

Parents at the *Professor Bakkerschool* are more involved in the school organisation; they are, among other things, asked to participate in outings and to join the re-established parent council. The head teacher had initiated these improvements of parent involvement and some of the teachers had supported him in his efforts. But not all teachers were positive about these developments. The tension that may result from these kinds of different opinions do however not directly affect the realisation of the Walk-in Morning because the teachers have full autonomy over the activity.

Prior to the introduction of the Walk-in Morning, the positions that the head teacher and deputy head, the teachers and the parents had in the school organisation differ per school. Despite these differences, the Walk-in Morning was put into practice in rather similar ways at the two schools. The deputy head, head teacher and teachers engaged in interactions to discuss practical matters of the activity, for instance, the time schedule and the information supply. Past experiences, current contact and different opinions were not discussed. Therefore, the teachers started to organise the Walk-in Morning using only the handbook and some practical instructions.

This situation works out differently at the two schools. The practical set-up of the Walk-in Morning differs and while the teachers at the *Sleutelschool* organise the Walk-in Morning during teaching hours and experience problems with the materials, the teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* organise the Walk-in Morning before the school day starts and they are satisfied with the materials they use. Moreover, the Walk-in Morning at the *Sleutelschool* is more formal and regulated in character than the activity at the *Professor Bakkerschool*.

When the teachers experience problems with the Walk-in Morning, the teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* can simply change the meaning they attach to it. Because here the activity does not take place during school hours the teachers can argue that the drop-off time is being better spent. On top of that, because they are given a considerable say over the Walk-in Morning and because parents are not well informed, they can easily change their focus from parents to the pupils, who would benefit from the activity. Moreover, the head teacher does not interfere in the teachers' practices even though he observes that the contact between teachers and parents is somewhat limited. Together with the hybrid policy, the combination of these positions and relations in the school organisation allow the teachers to barely interact at all with the parents during the Walk-in Morning.

Teachers at the *Sleutelschool* can, for several reasons, change the meaning attached to the activity much less easily: the parents are better informed; the deputy head stresses the Walk-in Morning is a parental activity; and, the activity is organised during school hours at which normally parents are not supposed to enter the classroom, which makes it necessary

to explain parents' being there. When the teachers notice that as a parental activity the Walk-in Morning is not much of a success and they complain about the activity, the deputy head stresses the importance of continuing the activity. But other than practical support, no support is offered to the teachers. This puts the teachers in a position to locate the causes of their inability to successfully manage the Walk-in Morning beyond their responsibility and power, which they do by focusing on the parents' deficits.

Parents' different responses to the Walk-in Morning can also be explained by applying the micro-politics perspective. Prior to the Walk-in Morning, the parents at the *Sleutelschool* had restricted access to the school organisation, and the teachers generally considered parents as difficult to engage in the school and as difficult to establish contact with. The Walk-in Morning is organised relatively explicitly at the *Sleutelschool*: parents are informed that they are expected to attend and to play with their children. Nevertheless, teachers sometimes somewhat carelessly skip the activity. Moreover, the teachers sometimes – explicitly and implicitly – express their disapproval of the parents during the Walk-in Morning. The combination of these experiences might have fuelled parents' perceptions of being ascribed a deficit position and of the school excluding them on purpose.

The parents at the *Professor Bakkerschool* held different positions prior to the Walk-in Morning and their experiences during the Walk-in Morning also differ. Before the Walk-in Morning they were able to engage in school activities and the head teacher and some other teachers explicitly ascribed importance to parental involvement. The Walk-in Morning itself does not put any clear expectations on the parents; it is simply a nice way of bringing their children to school. During the Walk-in Morning the parents are not often confronted by teacher disapproval because there are generally only minor communication moments. Moreover, some parents experience – and others observed – that they are instructed in-depth about what their child is learning and how they can be of help. The combination of these experiences probably results in these parents being more positive about the Walk-in Morning.

Therefore, the differences in the micro-politics at the two different schools explain the interactions that developed there. The interactions depend on the positions held by the actors in the school organisation and the relationships developing between them. As previously discussed, the interactions at both schools resulted in mechanisms that generally reinforce both the ascribed deficits to parents and their ascribed disadvantaged position.

The Walk-in Morning in its Policy Context

Is it possible to explain these interactions and outcomes in a different way? Did, in line with an instrumental view on policy, the teachers not inadequately translate the policies into practice? The policies on the Walk-in Morning have been found to be hybrid: aims are set for both pupils and teachers, and while teachers are supposed to build up contact with the parents, they are at the same time not supposed to have intensive contact with the parents. Seen from that perspective, most of the teachers work within the formal guidelines. One may only consider the teacher who organised group activities as not adhering to these guidelines. But she actually based her decision to organise group activities on her observation of there being ambiguity between having little contact with parents, while at the same time aiming to develop contact with the parents. From that point of view, her

choices may also be seen to be supported by some of the guidelines. Hence, the explanation that the teachers simply failed to implement the activity well does not seem correct. The guidelines allow for the kind of changes they have made to both set-up and objectives.

The *Piramide* handbook furthermore includes some ambiguity concerning developing partnership and ascribing deficits to parents. Did the teachers not emphasise the latter perspective too much and focus too little on the idea of partnership? Were their expectations not too low? This perspective fails to consider that the deficit perspective is also very prominent in the pre and elementary education policies and the *Piramide* handbook. Moreover, though some teachers were rather negative about the parents, most of them put effort into the activity and had initially tried to have contact with the parents. It seems that primarily the failure to improve contact caused them to fall back on the perspective that parents are deficient.

Finally, when reflecting on the role of the school management, one may argue that the deputy head and head teacher failed to adequately support the realisation of the Walk-in Morning. They may have been incapable of or little interested in guiding the development of the activity well. But besides the teachers being trained externally, one may question whether something was indeed going wrong with the Walk-in Morning. The problems experienced by teachers did not appear to be any different from the problems experienced in the past. Moreover, the manner in which the teachers carried out the activity was in line with the guidelines and the parents did not complain. Therefore, the problems experienced with the Walk-in Morning appeared as a normal outcome of an activity attended by parents believed to be deficient.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

The Walk-in Morning programme is the first illustration presented in this study of the interrelationship between policy-translation processes, micro-politics in school organisations, and identity-negotiations between individual teachers, parents and pupils. It firstly demonstrates that neither the characteristics of parents and pupils nor those of the school organisations satisfactorily explain the interactions taking place during the Walk-in Morning. The progress and outcomes of the interactions depend instead on the positions of the actors in the two school organisations. Constitutive to these positions are the following three interrelated elements. Firstly, the characteristics ascribed to parents, pupils, and teachers in policies and by these persons themselves (e.g. parents are ascribed deficits, pupils are positioned as disadvantaged and teachers are expected to soundly manage the Walk-in Morning). Secondly, concrete structures in the school in the form of for example materials, school rules, and timetables. And finally, the existing social relationships in the school organisations and the social relationships that develop when policies are translated into the schools' practices (for instance, the more substantial contact with parents at the *Professor Bakkerschool*, the tension in the teams, and interference from the deputy head and head teacher). Therefore, the outcomes of the Walk-in Morning result from interaction in which actors are ascribed and hold different positions and in which relationships develop between them.

The data also illustrated that the interactions taking place during the Walk-in Morning

reinforce the assumption underlying the activity: namely, that parents from ethnic minority are characterised by deficit, which explains their children's educational disadvantage. Moreover, the activity seems to - at least - partly reinforce the deficit positions teachers ascribe to the parents. These outcomes result from daily practice in which interactions are at stake but in which teachers and head teachers eventually and in line with the deficit perspective, do not acknowledge the influence of their own behaviour and the particularities of the activity. Instead, responsibilities for the interactions are transferred to the parents by reverting, after some critical reflection, to the deficit perspective.

6.

Seeking Control over the Local Environment: Pupil Behaviour and Parent Involvement

In this chapter I continue to explore the interrelationship between policy-translation processes, micro-politics in school organisations and identity-negotiations between people. I discuss empirical data on the topics of pupil behaviour and parent involvement. Pupil behaviour at the *Sleutelschool* became a major topic of concern after two experienced teachers expressed their dissatisfaction about pupil behaviour and about the school's approach to behavioural needs. Parent involvement is a topic of concern for the deputy head at the *Professor Bakkerschool*. The school's attempts to improve parent involvement are soon evaluated. But not all teachers support the activities still to be rolled out as part of their policy plan. Some teachers even adopt a counterproductive stance towards the improvements that have been achieved.

This chapter takes a closer look at the interactions between teachers and head teachers. Responding to the challenges that their environment poses, the teams ascribe certain characteristics to themselves and to pupils and parents, and they develop strategies to deal with these characteristics. The data indicate that the schools fail to gain the desired control over the environment, not because of assumed deficits, but because of the influence of a deficit perspective on parents and pupils, and an instrumental approach of school organisations on their interactions.

The chapter first discusses the topic of pupil behaviour at the *Sleutelschool* (section 6.1) and then the topic of parental involvement at the *Professor Bakkerschool* (section 6.2). For each school the discussion starts by reflecting on the developments that took place prior to the research and which resulted in the head teachers' requests to have research conducted. Since my research is part of the head teachers' strategies to solve the problems they face in the school organisation, the interactions with the researcher are addressed in sections 6.1.1 and 6.2.1 respectively.

After having discussed the head teacher and deputy head's views on the current situations at the *Sleutelschool*, teachers' general understandings of pupils' behavioural needs are discussed in 6.1.2. Subsequently, section 6.1.3 discusses why two experienced teachers sounded the alarm bells about pupil behaviour and how their appeals were responded to. Section 6.1.4 examines the teachers' perspectives on team collaboration and on teachers' competences, which are core elements in the perspectives of the head teacher and deputy head and of the two experienced teachers who sounded the alarm bells. Section 6.1.5

presents the details of a meeting in which the topic of pupil behaviour was discussed, and 6.1.6 concludes the data on the *Sleutelschool* with a summary and some final remarks.

A very similar sequence is followed when presenting the data gathered at the *Professor Bakkerschool*: after having discussed the deputy head's view, the teachers' perspectives are addressed in 6.2.2. Similar to the deputy head, they explain the problems in the school by ascribing deficits to parents and by characterising the team in terms of being fragmented. However, they believe that attempts to improve collaboration and to change negative attitudes will bear little fruit. Nevertheless, they are obliged to attend a meeting on parent involvement. Details of this meeting are presented in section 6.2.3. Section 6.2.4 concludes the data on the *Professor Bakkerschool* with a summary and some final remarks. The data gathered at the two schools are analysed and compared in section 6.3 and section 6.4 concludes the chapter by drawing conclusions on the observed processes.

6.1 Pupil Behaviour at the *Sleutelschool*

At each entrance to the *Sleutelschool* are four brightly coloured posters hanging on the wall that depict abstract people. Each poster states one rule: a red-framed poster states: 'We are kind and polite at school', a yellow-framed one states: 'We solve problems together', a third poster framed in green states: 'We are quiet at school', and a poster framed in blue states: 'We keep the school, our belongings and the environment neat and tidy'. The posters also hang in the vestibules of the pupil's entrances, on the wall next to the head teacher's office, they can be seen on the television screens with school information hanging in the staffroom and again near the entrances, they are found in each classroom, discussed in the parents' school handbook, can be read on the school's internet site, and parents and pupils are regularly reminded about the four rules in the weekly newsletter.

Teachers and management drew up these four rules in March 2002, and the posters are part of a project entitled 'norms and values' that was officially launched at the beginning of the 2002/2003 school year. In retrospect, school management and teachers explain that the programme and posters were a reaction to the problems that teachers were increasingly having with pupil behaviour. After a period in which behaviour was experienced as less disruptive, pupil behaviour is once again a problem at the beginning of the 2004/2005 school year.

Two teachers from grade four, who see themselves and who are described as rather experienced, sound the alarm bells during three subsequent team meetings. They tell their colleagues that they are losing control of their groups because of pupils' severe behavioural and learning needs, and it affects them - they feel tired, demotivated and uncertain about the situation in their classes. Another teacher endorses their statement that something needs to be done as he too is having problems with his class. Furthermore, the behavioural problems are on the increase in the physical education lessons. Around November 2004, the physical education teacher and a number of other teachers describe the problems that occur during physical education as extraordinary. It is likely that two pupils will be suspended, and school management is discussing the problems with their parents.

Normally problems with pupil behaviour are mainly to be found in the higher grades, but behaviour has also become a topic of discussion in the lowest grades when a parent

is hostile towards one of the teachers. The worries of the teachers in the lowest grades are further fuelled when they hear that the nursery school teachers are also increasingly experiencing problems with the behaviour of their toddlers.

Pupil behaviour is the main subject of discussion in the corridors and the staffroom. Again during a meeting, a teacher draws attention to the topic. She lets the team know she will no longer join her colleagues during breaks: she is fed up with the discussions about behaviour. The problems and the negative atmosphere in the team also affect the work of the head teacher and deputy head as it is up to them to solve severe conflicts with pupils, and to come up with ad hoc solutions for teachers who say they can no longer cope with their class.

It is clear from these developments in the school that took place between August and December 2004, that pupil behaviour has given rise to a variety of problematic developments that require attention. When the head teacher is absent and the issue is raised again during a collective meeting, the deputy head decides that something more substantial must be done about the situation, and she reflects on her decision as follows:

I noticed that the atmosphere was getting worse, again the issue was raised during one of the meetings and I then promised I would discuss matters with the head teacher. Meanwhile, I asked the teachers to try to remain positive and think positively, and to be strict and consistent with the children. [sl250105interviewdeputyhead]

The following was written in the minutes to this team meeting held in November 2004:

We noticed that the behaviour of our pupils is a topic that is discussed regularly. The discussions are held in a such way that they have a negative effect on the atmosphere in the team. We would like to do something about this negative spiral. We will write a short memo on this theme and submit a proposal to the assembly. [sl081204noteonmeeting]

The memo promised in these minutes was not written (in December 2004 the deputy head says that the head teacher has not yet had time to address the issue), but instead, a memo, dated 12 January 2005, announced my research into pupil behaviour.

6.1.1 Perspectives of the Head Teacher and Deputy Head and the Role of a Study

In December 2004 I discuss a report about the Walk-in Morning with the deputy head. I use the opportunity to explore the possibility of conducting more research at the school. I am keen to learn more about the interactions and discussions in the team that relate to the way the school deals with its environment.

With the Walk-in Morning fresh in mind, the deputy head responds that contact with parents in the higher grades is not a point of discussion. Instead, it is pupil behaviour that is frequently discussed. She explains that feelings are currently running high, and that teachers are frustrated, and she wonders why this is the case: is pupil behaviour really taking a turn for the worse? And if this is the case, what are the causes and how can the problem be solved? Thinking out loud, she says that it would be interesting if I could

speak with the teachers about their experiences and opinions. My findings could be useful, as they might shed light on what can be done to improve some of the teachers' pleasure in their work, and it may help them take decisions about team training courses for the following year. They might then have a good idea about the courses on pupil behaviour they should offer the staff. It may also be necessary to offer this kind of course to just a few of the teachers, because not all teachers are experiencing problems with pupil behaviour.

I express my interest for the topic, but she then hesitates, and says:

Then we should do something with it [the research], pay attention to it. And, you know, sometimes attention seems to be out of proportion. After all, only five children have extreme behavioural needs and each of them already receives extra attention. There are even teachers who no longer come to the staffroom, because they can't talk about anything else [the problematic behaviour of pupils]. Not at meetings and not during breaks. [sl011204conversationdeputyhead]

After discussing the matter further, she promises she will discuss whether it is a good idea to study this topic with the head teacher. The next day she informs me that I am welcome to discuss the issue with the teachers.

When, for the very first time, I speak very briefly with the head teacher about my research into pupil behaviour, he too focuses on the extent of the problem. He remarks: 'There are only five or six pupils involved'. When I interview him two weeks later, I ask him what he meant by his remark, and he responds:

If you bring the problem back into proportion, you will see that the group of pupils who cause problems is not a very big one, you will actually only be talking about a few pupils, a few pupils who are difficult to handle and who disturb what goes on in the group. <...> So in my opinion, you should find out who these few are, and try to get them under control, otherwise the discussion will be about having 236 difficult pupils in your school. And of course, that's not the case. <...> If you can identify those few problem children, then you can start thinking about solutions: can you improve teachers' competences, change the learning materials, or can't the problems really be solved since they involve individual disorders? [sl260105interviewheadteacher]

Comparing the quotation of the head teacher with the one of the deputy head, what is noticeable is that they both speak about the size of the problem. They define the problems with pupil behaviour as slight. But because of the effect that it has on the staff's pleasure in their work and the way in which teachers talk about those pupils, the problem has become more considerable. In their opinion, solving the problems with the few individual pupils is mainly a matter of improving teachers' competences and teaching approach. Changing the atmosphere in the team to become more positive, however, requires a change of teachers' attitude.

Though they consider that the few pupils whose behaviour is exceptionally bad to be the core problem, they also express the opinion that, generally speaking, the behaviour of the pupils at their school is particularly difficult:

Pupils are of course not difficult because they're coloured or from a different background, but anyway many of them are difficult. They're difficult to handle. It takes a lot to stay in contact with these children. As a teacher it can be exhausting. You can't compare it with schools in more affluent neighbourhoods where a teacher walks in, snaps her fingers and grade eight falls silent. [sl260105interviewheadteacher]

Behavioural problems occur regularly, it happens more often. There are children at this school who are on the edge of what's acceptable and what's not. In terms of behaviour they're really balancing on a knife edge, and then it all comes down on the teacher. We've a number of very good teachers and they don't seem to have problems. But with those who are slightly less competent, it goes beyond all limits. [sl250105interviewdeputyhead]

The head teacher and deputy head consider pupil behaviour at the *Sleutelschool* as generally difficult to manage and as challenging for the teacher. They speak about a number of problems experienced with the behaviour of pupils: it is difficult to maintain authority, contact with the children is not easily established, and behaviour is more often unacceptable. Reflecting on these general characteristics of the school's pupil population, they again emphasise the importance of teachers' competences: managing difficult behaviour requires teachers to have good teaching skills. The competences of teachers are central to both the head teacher and the deputy head's view on why some teachers fail to manage pupil behaviour adequately:

You've got to be careful that the idea that some teachers don't teach well develops in the team. But of course that is the case. <...> I'm sure that this year's grade seven, where a lot of problems seem to lie, who are said to be so difficult, will turn out to be a nice group when they've moved on to next year's teacher. [sl241204interviewdeputyhead]

What you see is that problematic behaviour is managed well one year, while the next year it isn't because there is a different teacher. Therefore, you need to think much more in terms of teachers' competences, like how do we deal with these kinds of children, how do we make sure that this group is educated well and is motivated? [sl260105interviewheadteacher]

Similar to their argument that those pupils with extreme behavioural needs can be identified, the head teacher and deputy head point out that those teachers who fail to manage pupil behaviour well can be identified. This lack of competence is observable in the teacher's and the pupils' behaviour: the teacher complains, does not manage the class well, and the teaching is of an inferior quality, while the pupils are not well-motivated and not pleasant to deal with.

It should be noted here that the deputy head and head teacher do not consider the two teachers who sounded the alarm bells (and whose views are discussed below) to be incompetent. To explain why these two experienced teachers failed to manage the behaviour in their classrooms, the head teacher and deputy head point out that one of them had not

taught for a year, so maybe she just had to get used to it again. On top of that, this teacher had a number of very difficult children in her class. As for the other teacher, they point out that it may not have been her, but her younger, far less experienced colleague with whom she teaches one class (both work part-time) who failed to cope with the pupil behaviour. The head teacher and deputy head place considerable importance on the competences of individual teachers: the fact that two experienced teachers initiated the discussions on pupil behaviour does not disprove their view as these teachers are regarded as untypical and their circumstances as exceptional.

Besides stressing the importance of competences, the head teacher and deputy head point out that those teachers who are experiencing problems (including the two who sounded the alarm bells) do complain a lot. These teachers talk negatively about the pupils and they express their dissatisfaction at formal assemblies and at informal teacher gatherings. As a result, a negative atmosphere emerges due to which, the head teacher and deputy head argue, *"You can get into a negative spiral as a team"*, with teachers often sending pupils out of class into the corridor, consulting the head teacher and deputy head more often, colleagues blaming one another, and teachers becoming stressed and tense. This results in problems such as increased levels of sick leave and additional ad hoc tasks for the head teacher and deputy head.

The head teacher and deputy teacher not only hold individual teachers responsible for the problems experienced with the pupils, but they also hold teachers accountable for the atmosphere in the team and the current malfunctioning of the organisation. They expect teachers to speak in a rational, balanced manner about the problems, even though pupil behaviour is demanding and circumstances can be exceptional:

In a few grades, situations are exceptional and then you talk about it more often, it becomes the subject of discussion. And if you talk more often about it, it also seems as though it happens more frequently. But for yourself, you really need to keep it in proportion. [sl260105interviewheadteacher]

The deputy head and head teacher point out that pupil behaviour is becoming *"a school problem"* if teachers speak too negatively about pupil behaviour, and when a negative atmosphere develops in the school. When it becomes a 'school problem' something needs to be done collectively. The head teacher points out that his role is one of facilitator: he has to facilitate both the individual teacher who fails to manage his or her classroom, and a team that no longer seems to be coping well. If problems occur, the head teacher argues, he should notice it and offer support. However, support is not offered immediately, but only after the teachers, once they have tried, failed to solve problems alone. *"The last step is to involve the school management"*, the deputy head declares.

Support for the team consists, for instance, of: internal school workshops; intensive courses given by externals; and school organisational structures such as the posters pointing out norms and values. According to the head teacher, a lot has already been done about pupil behaviour: they have a method for dealing with the socio-emotional development of pupils; the project on norms and values with rules for pupils was developed; a file with school rules is available for teachers; in each classroom there is a logbook where

notes about pupils' disruptive behaviour are jotted down; and recently, a protocol for the successive measures to be taken when pupils misbehave was drawn up. "But if a programme for norms and values goes no further than pictures in your classroom, and you don't do anything else with it..." the head teacher says, but he does not finish his sentence. He also speaks about the implementation of these kinds of school-based structures as being "as weak as the weakest link". He also argues that you cannot expect such programmes to have an immediate effect, and that the effects of programmes will always be somewhat restricted as long as the pupils' home situations continue to be a problem. The deputy head also points out a number of problems with the school policies:

The programme needs to be looked at again. We once decided to use a logbook where we could write down pupils' misbehaviour. But I don't think anybody still uses it. Some did, but in the lower grades teachers questioned the relevance because problems are different in their grades. Some did work with it. But I suppose that currently nobody uses it any more. It didn't work that well. Or then problems get less urgent and you think "things are going fine I don't need to write things down any more". <...> Making agreements is difficult. It goes well for a while but then things move into the background. Only when the problems occur again, do you start working on it. [sl250105interviewdeputyhead]

Again, the head teacher and deputy head emphasise the responsibility of the teachers: the teachers have to soundly implement and make use of the school's policies. Otherwise, they will be less successful at dealing with pupil behaviour.

Two remarks need to be made about the head teacher and deputy head's perspectives on pupil behaviour and about developments in the team. Firstly, current developments in the team have placed the head teacher and the deputy head in a position in which they can no longer consider problems with pupil behaviour as the problems of individual teachers. The functioning of the entire school organisation is under threat as a result of the frustrations among teachers, some teachers being fed up with their colleagues' complaints, the ad hoc solutions, and the issue being raised again and again. The head teacher and deputy head need to take action. My research seems to be part of their strategy; they presumably wish the research to contribute to defining the problems as small and controllable and to improve the situation in the team by paying attention to the topic, as the teachers wished.

Secondly, they address teachers in their professional status in a number of ways: as individuals who have to be competent to deal with the generally more difficult behaviour of the pupils attending the *Sleutelschool*; as a group that is responsible for the way in which they discuss problems; and finally, as holding responsibility for the sound implementation of the school's policies. They draw strong relationships between pupils' behavioural needs and teachers' professional identity. Their own role is described as supporting this professional role of teachers: they provide support when teachers ask for it. Therefore, the head teacher's and the deputy head's beliefs about pupil behaviour appear as functional and linear: i.e. when the necessary conditions are rightfully met (i.e. teachers are competent and do not speak too often about the problems) the challenging behaviour of their pupils can be kept under control. Keeping behaviour under control implies that normal learning and teaching

processes can take place in the school: the pupils are well taught and motivated and the lessons are disrupted less often.

6.1.2 Behavioural Needs: Generally Ascribed Characteristics and Common Explanations

The teachers at the *Sleutelschool* are univocal in their view on the behaviour of the pupils attending their school: it is generally challenging. But what kind of behaviour is considered problematic differs from situation to situation. And while not every teacher reports experiencing all these kinds of problems, they do acknowledge their existence.

Pupil behaviour is described as undesirable outside the classroom, in the corridors, in the playground and during physical education lessons. Wild and noisy behaviour, wrangles and fights are disapproved of, but occur frequently:

It's really striking that it's less at other schools. Children at other schools normally try to solve their own problems. But here, they don't. It immediately turns into a fight, pushing and shoving, stuff like that. They simply still have to learn how to deal with people, to know what is acceptable and what is not. [sl030205interviewteacher]

Hitting each other is normal, it's a game. And that's sometimes difficult because when the game is no fun any more it turns into a fight. And I don't always know the difference - when they are punching each other, they'll say something like: "Yes, teacher it's only a game", but then I think, maybe you say so because otherwise you'll be hit even harder later on. [sl150205interviewteacher]

T: Fights occur quite a lot in the *classroom* because, and you probably already heard this from others, they react aggressively to each other. That is, I think, one of the major problems.

DdR: That is what happens in the classroom?

T: Well, that mainly happens outside the classroom, but you do notice it in the classroom.

DdR: How?

T: Well, for example, they have to work together, but they don't want to work with the other person. Or they say "Teacher, he says this or he says that". You notice, but of course they do not call names out loud when you are around. But you notice, and that's annoying. [sl240205interviewteacher]

Teachers experience different kinds of problems in the classroom: situations in their classrooms are disturbing and demanding. In the classroom pupils will try to undermine the position of the teacher, they are cheeky because, for example, they refuse to turn around, to keep quiet or to do an exercise, and they just stare at the teacher when reprimanded. Moreover, some will pretend they just do not understand, are unmotivated, or do not aim for success. As a result, the teacher's authority can be undermined, and this may spread quickly among the other pupils. Maintaining control is seen as a challenge at the *Sleutelschool*:

If you work for a longer period of time at this school, then they'll listen. But when you're a new teacher, it is hard. They hardly listen at all. They have little respect. [sl030205interviewteacher]

That's a rather disturbing aspect of their behaviour; they are so loud-mouthed. Without shame they will tell the teacher that they are stupid, or say to the teacher 'you are boring'. They won't do the things they have to do. For example, they refuse to move a table if the teacher asks them to. You can't allow that, you'll have your back to the wall. [sl250105interviewdeputyhead]

For example, you ask something and they immediately respond like this [with a high-pitched voice, one arm in the air and waving with his hand, the teacher continues] 'yeh but, hey I haven't done this'. [sl290405interviewteacher]

Behaviour in the classroom can also be disturbing in a different way. The so-called 'care-children' cause problems - they demand the attention of the teacher by crying, shouting, refusing to work, or not getting on with their work. This behaviour influences learning processes because it requires the teacher's attention and it is also demanding in terms of pedagogic skills. Less time is left for other pupils and the lessons are frequently disrupted. These children with extreme needs, in contrast to pupils who try to undermine the teachers' position, are generally not popular with their classmates. Moreover, their behaviour is seen as beyond their control.

Andy is slightly autistic and withdraws from the lessons. Kamilla is from the international group, she's from a Palestinian background and her home situation is a problem, the girl cries a lot. Jennifer, a Dutch girl also comes from a problem family and she attracts a lot of attention by, amongst other things, swearing. [sl190105interviewteacher]

That girl literally shouts to get attention. <...> She's doing better now. But before she always made comments whenever you said or asked something. When you asked her to do an exercise she would reply: 'But what for, I don't understand anything'. And always as loud as possible, so that everybody can hear her. <...> She is not good at all at maths. I see that more often, that when things are far too difficult for them, they panic and react like 'I can't do this' and then they do nothing at all. [sl150205interviewteacher]

The team describe pupil behaviour in negative terms and consider the problems as typical of the kind of school that the *Sleutelschool* is. They believe that the problems with pupil behaviour explain their educational disadvantage. Pupil behaviour has a detrimental effect on teaching and learning processes because peer interactions are negative and full of conflict, teaching processes are disrupted and undermined, and learning processes are slowed down and disrupted.

The problems with pupil behaviour are primarily explained by referring to (ascribed) deficits in the pupils' home situation. Parents are ascribed characteristics such as: lacking authority; failing to correct improper behaviour; not stimulating children's intellectual and social capacities; and teaching their children values of pride and honour. These characteristics are considered to result in less social behaviour and in behavioural and learning needs. The ascribed deficits are interrelated with assumed characteristics of group-backgrounds. The problems are considered typical of families from lower socio-economic and a non-native Dutch background and of single-parent families.

Besides holding parents accountable for problems with pupil behaviour, teachers also focus attention on deficits in the living environment of the child and on problematic characteristics of segregated schools like the *Sleutelschool*. The neighbourhood is described by teachers in terms of violence, criminality, lack of security, and a lack of social and peer networks, as found in sports clubs. These characteristics are considered typical of neighbourhoods where the unemployed, people with financial and drugs problems, and people who are little integrated in Dutch society are concentrated.

The characteristics ascribed to segregated schools are as follows: they serve the riffraff in society; other schools send their most problematic children to these schools; there is high pupil turnover; extreme learning needs; relatively high numbers of refugee children; and, high numbers of pupils with personal disorders who need special education. Demographic trends, characteristics of the educational system, and parents' school choices are put forward by the teachers as the main explanations for these characteristics of segregated schools.

Though generally sharing beliefs about why pupils have behavioural problems, teachers point out that the problems are dynamic and difficult to predict. Moreover, there are numerous ways to deal with these problems. The next section discusses teachers' reflections on the usefulness of school organisational policies on pupil behaviour.

6.1.3. Alarm Bells: We don't Cope with Pupil Behaviour

The two teachers who sounded the alarm bells early on in that school year are known to be experienced teachers who have hardly any problems with difficult pupil behaviour. Both teachers explain that they felt they were losing control of their class, and that learning processes were not meeting the required standards. But they describe the causes in different ways. One of them experienced problems because *"The atmosphere is bad; they wrangle, are intolerant, and the children continuously meddle in each other's affairs"*, which severely disrupted the learning and teaching processes in her class. The other teacher felt that particularly the diversity of learning and behavioural needs among her pupils and a few pupils who behaved in an extremely disruptive way caused the problems. The combination of pupils in her group is, in her view, a coincidence; one child was not accepted at another school, one child was new to the group, and one child was in the process of being placed in special education.

Both teachers argue that the problems experienced are not their sole responsibility and that such kinds of problems can occur in any grade. They expect the other teachers to be experiencing similar problems, and that they too sometimes fail to meet standards or are unable to manage pupil behaviour. Moreover, they argue that problems in the school as a whole are on the increase. Therefore, they argue for consultative structures among the

teachers, to make agreements about how to handle problematic behaviour, to pay attention to those children who do not receive enough support because of their too demanding classmates, and to support young, inexperienced teachers for whom these groups in particular are a considerable challenge. According to these teachers, such discussions have been missing in the team, while in their perspective they touch upon the very core of learning processes.

However, before consulting their colleagues, they had got together to discuss matters intensively. They were a little uncertain about raising the issue because they were worried about their own capacities and felt a bit ashamed of “*getting bothered by eighteen pupils*”. As a result, problems had got considerably worse in their classes and they felt frustrated when they did raise the issue. They were disillusioned about their colleagues’ responses:

They seemed to be slightly shocked: “two old hands with problems”- but what about them, don’t they have problems? <...> They hardly responded, one or two said something like ‘yeeeh that this happens to the two of you’, but furthermore it hasn’t been discussed. [sl170105interviewteacher]

I wanted to stress the fact that we also have children who can do well and who are performing well, but I didn’t get any response from my colleagues. That was confined to ‘I’m surprised you’re having this problem’ and ‘you of all people, that you can’t handle it’. They responded in a surprised way, but I can’t do anything with that. [sl190105interviewteacher]

In response to the complaints of the two teachers, the head teacher consulted the two teachers in question. The three of them decided to move a boy and that the teachers would spend extra time on social activities in their groups. These solutions only involved their classes.

Two comments can be made about the developments that occurred after two teachers had experienced problems with pupil behaviour and shared their problems and views with the team. Firstly, the opinions of the head teacher and deputy head and those of the two teachers about problems with pupil behaviour do seem to differ. While the two teachers define it as an expanding problem that can be dealt with through collaboration, the head teacher and deputy head consider it a small and controllable problem that can be solved by improving the competences of individual teachers and by taking measures with certain teachers and pupils.

The head teacher and the deputy head seem little inclined to take the appeals of these two teachers into consideration: they suggest that by expressing their worries publicly and several times, the two teachers have contributed to the negative atmosphere in the team. Moreover, contrary to the emphasis put on collaboration by the two teachers, the head teacher supports them by developing solutions that only concern them. Nevertheless, having expressed their worries and dissatisfaction during collective meetings has put the topic of pupil behaviour on the school agenda. The head teacher and deputy head felt obliged to come up with an answer to the negative atmosphere and the problems that had developed in the team.

Secondly, (feelings of) competences are at stake in the interactions. The two teachers reported having doubted their capacities, and were therefore reluctant to report their problems. Their colleagues do not openly take sides when the two teachers express their concerns in the collective meeting: while they endorse the competences of two teachers, they do not respond to their appeal for a collective approach. Moreover, the two teachers stress the need for collaboration, but their colleagues' responses are rather half-hearted.

6.1.4 Defining Solutions: Teachers' Perspectives on Collaboration and Competences

Contrary to what might be concluded from their non-response during the meetings (i.e. colleagues do not consider collaboration to be a possible solution), teachers express a view on the current situation to which collaboration is central. In their opinion, pupil behaviour can be better managed in the school. But their views on what aspects of collaboration could be improved upon differ. The following quotations illustrate this:

T: We do talk about behaviour, but not like what is acceptable and what isn't. I think that's also something very personal.

DdR: How do you talk about behaviour?

T: If there are many complaints, when many colleagues experience problems, then we talk about it. But about the behaviour, not about the norms, not about when to actually respond. That is left to the colleagues.

DdR: So you don't talk about what is acceptable, and what not? Everybody formulates a personal answer to that, but what then do you talk about?

T: About the problem behaviour, what has happened this time, what were they confronted with this time. But not about how to solve things. In general, it's always the complaints but not, well not is a bit too strongly put, but not about how to solve it.

DdR: Not the solution?

T: Well as a solution we once spoke about using a notebook where the teachers could write down their complaints. But it didn't work because we don't share the same opinions about the kinds of problems to be jotted down. [sl090305interviewteacher]

The teacher spoke about the pupils who are new to the school. The pupils who start attending the Sleutelschool in the course of their school career often start to cause trouble. Their behaviour is often a problem and this issue has been raised in the team. This teacher reflects as follows: We spoke about these kinds of things at a meeting a few months ago. Like, how are we going to respond to problems with behaviour, and what to do if you send somebody out into the corridor? Well, we talked about it and a protocol was cobbled together. It emerged that those pupils who come from other schools are a big problem. Someone remarked: 'presumably the Regenboogschool also has such a protocol, and the last point of its protocol is: send the child to the Sleutelschool'. Which after all is true, many children have first attended the Regenboogschool and are now causing a lot of problems here. [sl200505interviewteacher]

Rules are reinforced when more people complain and raise the issue. But often, and I think that's a pity, you've those rules but they are not strictly applied under normal circumstances, one doesn't stick to them. [sl030205interviewteacher]

The teacher talks about behavioural problems and how difficult they are to manage. Contrary to problems with reading or mathematics, there are no clear-cut solutions for dealing with difficult behaviour. The causes of difficult behaviour can be many, including the teachers' approach and the learning methods. He reflects that he often does not feel confident about how to approach behaviour problems. And then these four rules from the norms and value project do not offer any guidance. He argues: We've those four rules, and they are quite good. They are useful, but of course you've to make them more concrete, as a team and in your group. And in my opinion that's not done well enough, they aren't clear, we don't really try to apply them. Which goes hand in hand with a kind of acceptance of the problems. I mean in terms of 'what did you expect? What do you actually think you can expect from these kinds of children?'. [sl230205interviewteacher]

These fragments indicate that jointly dealing with pupils' behavioural needs is rather complicated. Firstly, talking about behavioural problems is difficult because many practices and circumstances in the school organisation affect the behaviour of pupils: among other things, a lack of understanding about how to deal soundly with behavioural needs; the interweaving of behavioural and learning needs; the teacher approaches; teachers' expectations; and learning methods. Secondly, the problems with pupil behaviour are not stable over time, and the problems are also affected by circumstances beyond the control of the school. Thirdly, teachers have different opinions about the issue and therefore they interpret and translate the school's policies into practice differently. Because many issues need to be addressed, approaches need to be dynamic, and because opinions differ, collaboration is rather difficult. Nevertheless, none of the teachers considers collaboration as impossible or worthless.

Besides lacking a shared vision on current collaboration, all the quotations, apart from the second one, contain elements of being personally and collectively responsible for inadequate collaboration. These elements are similar to the arguments put forward by the head teacher and the deputy head: in the first and final quotation, negative discussions are criticised; in the third quotation the individual teacher who does not apply rules strictly is scrutinised; and in the fourth quotation the teacher criticises the teachers collectively as they do not implement the school organisational structures well.

Whether speaking negatively about pupil behaviour is indeed a problem, turns out to be ambiguous. Particularly those teachers experiencing problems with pupil behaviour also point out the usefulness of this practice: it provides an opportunity to get rid of frustrations. They point out that this practice can be functional for the individual teacher who is struggling in the classroom, but can also be a source of conflict in the team because colleagues may disapprove of the way in which emotions are expressed. One of the teachers who sounded the alarm bells expressed this contradiction as follows:

A colleague said she doesn't want to come to the teachers' room any more because of the negative atmosphere. You know, you talk about it, because you are together and you have to express your feelings, which of course is very much the opposite of the idea "pfff, just a cup of tea for me". [sl170105interviewteacher]

The two teachers who sounded the alarm bells had initially doubted their competences and were therefore reluctant to share their experiences with their colleagues. When they eventually did so, the majority of colleagues responded by endorsing their competences but otherwise only one teacher and later the Physical Education teacher admitted that they too experienced problems. The deputy head and head teacher expressed the perspective that failing to manage pupil behaviour is caused by a lack of teaching competences, and the deputy head pointed out the people who were failing in their tasks. It became clear from the interviews that teachers position themselves and their colleagues in terms of competences and that they know what position they themselves hold:

The teacher took up teaching at a later age, he's been a teacher for four years. Two years ago he experienced difficulties with his class, he was losing control of the pupils' behaviour. Last year things went better and the school management gave him advice and support. But this year he is again struggling to manage. The deputy head considers his situation and remarks: "this year his group looks like a difficult one, but you will see that next year when the group moves on to another teacher, they will be easy to deal with". The teacher says he is struggling to manage but also finds it difficult to talk openly about it. He says: You see, I haven't been teaching for twenty years. This is my fourth year, so I dare to admit that I'm having problems in certain respects, that I'm having difficulties. But, well, I hear things, well maybe better not talk about what happened two years ago. I don't want to have it said of me that 'he's the teacher who can't manage his classes'. Some time ago somebody said to me 'Yes, but I'm not taking my pupils to the head teacher', and I wondered, what kind of a remark that was. [sl150205interviewteacher]

The head teacher introduced the teacher of grade eight to me as follows: 'This is our firm Surinamese teacher'. During the interview this teacher reflects on her position in the team. She does not like the way she is described by her colleagues. She says that she is described as being very strict, and as if pupils can have no fun in her group. Pupils are aware of that view. After several weeks of teaching a new group, she sometimes hears from the pupils 'You are not that strict at all' or they say that they heard she would be rather strict, but that's not how they experience her. She doesn't like the way she's described, as other teachers will say things like, 'Oh, well, she, she never has any problems with the pupils'. She actually wonders why some other teachers have problems with pupil behaviour while she does not. I express my surprise, isn't it nice to be regarded as a good teacher? She replies: No, hearing it time and again is no fun at all. I wonder why that child actually behaves in a difficult way. I don't shout, keep them after school hours all the time, or punish them continuously. But still I hear: 'No, with her they are not annoying', it seems like I'm

the bogeyman at school. Later during the interview she points out several practices that she disapproves of, including the fact that some colleagues accept it if a child acts in an unmotivated way when being tested or they laugh about a child being rude. [sl090305interviewteacher]

Neither the teacher who feels somewhat incompetent nor the teacher who is thought to be competent, consider themselves to be part of the discussions on pupil behaviour. The teacher in the first quotation feels unable to get involved in discussions because it may result in him being positioned as incompetent. The teacher in the second quotation is critical of some of her colleagues' teaching approaches. However, she is unable to express her criticism and to discuss her approach because she is considered to be exceptionally competent, but too strict.

A vicious circle can be seen in the way behavioural needs are dealt with. If teachers experience problems with pupil behaviour they try to solve matters alone for as long as possible. The rule of consulting the management only as a last resort and the threat of being positioned as being incompetent contributes to their behaviour. But when problems continue and sometimes get even worse, teachers become emotionally affected and ask for help from a few colleagues. The frustrations involved in the conversations with these colleagues and the need for confirmation that the problems are not only theirs, fuels negative talk. The negative atmosphere, which gradually develops in the team, may eventually lead to collective discussions. But meanwhile, situations for individual teachers have already escalated and they need immediate, and often ad hoc support. Putting emphasis on social skills instead of cognitive development, suspending pupils, and removing pupils to another class are some examples of these ad hoc solutions. These ad hoc responses may temporarily relieve the burden of individual teachers, but the collective discussions seems less helpful because collaboration on the matter of pupil behaviour is rather complicated and, contrary to the team's aims, problems cannot brought fully under control.

The story of the Physical Education teacher is illustrative of this process. His story serves as an example of how an individual's and a team's abilities to deal with behavioural needs of pupils are affected by the way problems are defined and translated into school organisational structures:

The Physical Education (PE) teacher experiences problems with pupil behaviour. He teaches the highest grades at the Sleutelschool where he works part-time. He also gives PE lessons at other schools. This year he has experienced considerable difficulties with pupil behaviour. At the time of the interview, some individual measures had been taken to bring the situation back under control: a girl has been suspended from his lessons after serious and frequent misbehaviour and some grades have been split up (while normally they would do gym together, the pupils now have gym lessons with half the class). The deputy head explains why, in her opinion, problems arose during physical education lessons. 'This teacher', she says, 'is a good teacher with very interesting, diverse lessons. But he's not strict enough for our kind of children, he doesn't correct children immediately and consistently'.

The teacher himself points out that children at the *Sleutelschool* are difficult to manage during PE lessons and that a few pupils are capable of disrupting lessons completely. In one of the groups, several new pupils attended during the first few months of the school year, and then behaviour got out of hand. He explains that he felt he first had to try to solve the problems alone. The four rules of the norms and value programme were of little use to him; in PE lessons a rule like 'we solve problems together' is too abstract. In the heat of the games these kinds of rules can't really be used. So he tried to solve matters on his own, but he says he messed around because he was not able to solve them. Only then did he tell another teacher that things were not going well and asked whether she recognised the problems, which she did. She too was experiencing some difficulties in her class. Sharing the problems gave rise to more talk, in the corridors and at the end of lessons. They spoke negatively like 'the pupils are a hassle in the class and also in the corridors they misbehave'. But problems continued and the PE teacher felt increasingly frustrated, even to such an extent that he thought about changing jobs. At that point, he contacted the head teacher and together they drew up the solutions as mentioned above. For the time being these solutions did solve matters, but of course, the teacher says, they do not take the problems away. Moreover, he mentions a meeting at which they spoke negatively about pupil behaviour. The deputy head told them to try to stay positive. While the PE teacher acknowledges they were not really helpful to each other by speaking negatively about the pupils, he also points out that the negative views don't just come out of the blue. [sl200505interviewteacher]

6.1.5 Seeking Control: A Team Meeting on Pupil Behaviour

The research findings on pupil behaviour were presented in a document to the school. The document was initially sent to and discussed with the head teacher and deputy head. It emphasised the functioning of the school organisational structures and social relationships and how they may fuel problems with pupil behaviour. The head teacher and deputy head said that they recognised the processes described in the report. However, they did not agree with the analyses that, because of the rule that teachers first should try to sort out matters for themselves, they are not easily accessible for teachers. They argued that if teachers addressed them, they always spend time discussing the problems. But some teachers may not experience the situation in that way because they go to them for every little thing, while others wait far too long before consulting them.

The head teacher and deputy head decided to make that the research report available to the teachers via the intranet and that they would discuss its outcomes at a workshop. They want to spend a morning discussing the topic of pupil behaviour with the teachers. However, the head teacher is somewhat sceptical about these kinds of workshops. He argues that teachers insufficiently benefit from these workshops because they lack an overarching view of the themes addressed, are insufficiently involved, are not dedicated enough to their jobs; and insufficiently take up their responsibilities:

Like the protocol on how do we deal with problems with pupils' behaviour, everybody stresses the importance of talking about it. But when I put a draft protocol on intranet

and ask them for feedback, nobody responds. [sl170605reportdiscussionheadteacher]

In preparation for the meeting they ask me to draw up a few proposals²⁴. They first wish to discuss these proposals in small groups and then to have a collective discussion about the outcomes of the small group discussions. The aim is to develop 'directive statements'. "*Directive statements*", the head teacher says, "*should lead to some kind of sharing, everybody moving in the same direction*". He uses a metaphor of a train moving in a certain direction to further illustrate the use of these kinds of statements: "*If you don't want to go to that destination, you had better get off and find another school to work at*". Later during the conversation he says that they have a lot of those directive statements, but that nothing concrete ever happens with them: the aim of the meeting is just to talk about behaviour for once. He points out a file full of papers. The teachers asked for things such as the discussion groups to talk about single cases of difficult behaviour and the protocol on the successive steps to be taken when a child misbehaves, but nothing is done with them.

The Meeting

The head teacher welcomes the teachers to the first team workshop of the new school year. He briefly talks about the research that I have conducted in the school. *Problems with behaviour*, he continues, *influence the pleasure we have in our work, but negative talk about pupils also plays a role. My father used to say: "when you point at someone, first point at yourself". You should question what you are doing and, at the same time, whether you are doing the same thing as your colleagues. Are we all on the same train? Are we all heading in the same direction? Irrespective of where one is seated and what someone is doing on that train, we want to move in one direction, and that is what this workshop is meant for. What are we doing and what do we want to achieve? We talked about that in the past, but it has not been fully implemented. Think, for example, about the protocol or the idea of discussion groups. Maybe there was not enough time or dedication.* [sl280905observationmeeting]

The head teacher opens the meeting with this introduction. Immediately afterwards, teachers are grouped together, and go to different classrooms for forty minutes to discuss the proposals. They are instructed to formulate 'directive statements' and to present them to each other afterwards. Here are some notes on the discussions that took place in the groups:

24 By mutual agreement the following two propositions are used: 'We are kind and polite at the school', meaning that if you talk negatively about a pupil in the corridors and I do not respond to the negative remark, we both fail in our duties toward the pupil. And "We, teachers and head teacher at the *Sleutelschool*, solve behavioural problems together" [sl280905meetingdocument]. These propositions refer to the norms and values project.

Esther writes down a statement: 'every child is entitled to start with a clean slate'. She argues that children can always develop, no matter what the child's needs are. After all, problem behaviour can take a turn for the better, but she has the impression that some pupils are marked as difficult from the lowest grades onwards. And as a result, every teacher will think right from the first day: 'that child is difficult'. But at this school, the deputy head replies, our children are quite difficult. Immediately, Esther responds, that of course is true, but that is not what she intends to say. Once difficult does not mean always difficult. [sl280905observationmeeting]

Jasmine points out that the children at this school need a lot of structure. Without structure it will turn into chaos. She says: *"that new kind of learning, learning in groups, that will not work because our children are not able to do that"*. Aafke reacts that indeed she also used to think like that, and indeed children still need structure. But she started to work with groups and observed an improvement in the children's motivation. Moreover, her personal frustration decreased, because when she normally used to think: "Oh, now I still have to say this and also this, and that", she can now work with the groups at their own level and pace. She noticed that her own expectations improved and that she offers more learning materials to the pupils. [sl280905observationmeeting]

When I walk in, the teachers barely look at me and they continue their discussion. Helga talks about her experiences with managing pupil behaviour; how hard it was when a colleague responded by saying: 'Oh, I don't have those kinds of problems', and how difficult it was to have somebody observe in her classroom. She felt like giving up teaching, that she was not able to do it. Iris responds that she and Esther were near to tears last year when they told the team they could no longer manage their classes. The response from the others is one of surprise, they hadn't noticed it was so difficult for them. Helga says it's a relief to hear this, to talk about it. She thought she was the only one, but she's not. Moreover, she read in the research report that this problem also occurred three years ago. But then, she reasons, not so much has been done about it. [sl280905observationmeeting]

Several remarks can be made about these discussions. Firstly, the issues addressed cover a variety of topics. The teachers talk, among other things, about: the practice of speaking negatively about pupils; the pros and cons of different teaching approaches; and the involvement of feelings and emotions. Secondly, they address ambiguities in and problems of teaching approaches: tracking difficult pupils can be both problematic and useful, being strict and consistent can take different forms, and why, if they all experience feelings of incompetence, do they not talk about it? Finally, in the last observation, it becomes clear once again how important the positioning of teachers is in terms of their teaching competences for the interactions between the teachers and the way in which individual teachers struggle to manage their classes.

The diversity of discussions and the ambivalences addressed in the small group discussions are, however, not part of the feedback given and the statements presented by each group:

‘Being consistent doesn’t work in the team’ like when a child does something unacceptable we tell the child that next time it behaves like that, the parents will be called. It misbehaves again, but we don’t call the parents. [sl280905observationmeeting]

‘A ‘we-feeling’ is lacking in the team’, which makes it more difficult to support each other and to respond to problems. Talking about misbehaviour currently feels like challenging a colleague’s competences. [sl280905observationmeeting]

‘Adhering to the rules is important, everybody seems to apply their own norms.’ [sl280905observationmeeting]

The instruction to develop directive statements not only seemed to force the groups to simplify their discussions, but it also seemed to force them to stress their responsibility as a team and as individuals for the collaboration in the team. Each of the statements is based on the point of view that when conditions are OK, pupil behaviour will no longer be as challenging as it is currently experienced. The statements contradict the involvement of different ideologies, and the pros and cons of teaching approaches, which, from the teachers’ discussions, proved important when dealing with pupil behaviour.

Maybe the introduction by the head teacher obliged the teachers to develop these kinds of statements, but the teachers simply accept the situation. The head teacher responds to each of the directive statements by reinforcing the responsibility of the teachers: they should tell their colleagues when, in their opinion, they are not applying the school policy well; to stimulate a ‘we-feeling’ they can read through the booklet ‘This is how we behave’; and instead of saying ‘that child is difficult’, it would be better if they said ‘I had difficulties with that child this year’. The head teacher concludes the meeting. He says that pupil behaviour has been discussed in-depth today and that the highlights of the discussion will be written in a report. The report will be accessible via the intranet and the different groups may change or add information to it in order to fully cover their discussions.

6.1.6 Summary and Concluding Remarks on the Sleutelschool

Two teachers at the *Sleutelschool* sounded the alarm bells because they were dissatisfied with pupil behaviour. They felt that they no longer adequately managed pupil behaviour in their classrooms and argued that pupils increasingly behaved in a problematic way. They argued that pupil behaviour had to be dealt with in a different way: the school had to deal with it in a more collective manner, and in a broader perspective in order to cover related problems; for instance, young and inexperienced teachers struggling to manage the challenging behaviour, and pupils without special needs not receiving enough attention. Their appeal sets of developments and interactions in the school organisation. These however proceed in a manner that makes little difference to how problems are currently defined and dealt with.

The two teachers expressed their dissatisfaction at several meetings and after a while other teachers also started to report having problems. Teachers became increasingly dissatisfied about the way behavioural needs were dealt with at the school. It became the main topic of conversation. But then tension also arose between the teachers because some of them disapproved of the negative conversations that were starting to dominate lunch breaks. The head teacher and deputy head put major responsibility on the teachers for the negative developments. The problem, in their opinion, would have remained under control if teachers had taken up their responsibilities. But now that the problems are starting to affect the functioning of the team, they formulate a response that targets the whole school. They already supported some of the teachers on an individual basis, but now they also promise the team to write a memo, to develop a draft solution, and to have some research conducted.

The teachers, head teacher and deputy head share the belief that problems with pupil behaviour result from pupil deficits. Deficits are primarily ascribed to the pupils' home situations and the manner in which the pupils are raised. But deficits are also ascribed to the neighbourhood and the segregated school organisation. The ascribed deficits are, in general, interrelated with a concentration of people from a lower socio-economic and a non-native Dutch background. The ascribed deficits are considered to result in behavioural needs, which explain the pupils' educational disadvantage.

They also share the belief that these problems have to be dealt with by meeting certain conditions. Meeting these conditions would help them regain control over pupil behaviour. Teachers' competences, taking up one's responsibilities, soundly implementing policies, and collaboration are the overarching conditions mentioned. Nevertheless, it becomes clear from the teachers' reflections on collaboration, that implementing these conditions is rather difficult and does not result in full control. Moreover, the experiences of teachers illustrated that it is not simply unsound conditions that cause them to experience problems. Instead, the positions that the teachers, deputy head and head teacher hold in the school organisations and the relationships that have developed between them causes them to deal with pupil behaviour in a problematic manner, which tended to end up in a vicious circle.

A meeting results from this research. And during small group discussions the teachers touch upon matters of having different ideologies, ambiguities of teaching approaches, and of shortcomings in functional approaches. However, these conversations do not result in alternative understandings of problems with pupil behaviour because the meeting has been set-up functionally both in content and form. As far as content is concerned, the meeting fits in with the teachers' request for improved collaboration and the belief that a diversity of practices and opinions does not serve collaboration. Concerning its form, the meeting has to result in statements that expressed some kind of shared course of action and vision. This set-up seems to encourage the teachers to fall back on and express the belief that pupil behaviour is deficient and that they as a team need to meet certain conditions in order to gain control over pupil behaviour. The head teacher uses the opportunity to stress the importance of teachers taking responsibility and of soundly introducing the school organisation's policies.

A final remark needs to be made on the role of the head teacher. His focus on the problem being small and his scepticism about the usefulness of the meeting, are striking. But it must be borne in mind that firstly it was the deputy head who decided, in the head's absence, to put the topic on the school's agenda. Secondly, two experienced teachers sounded the alarm bells. This may have fuelled dissension between him and these two teachers because he could not ignore their appeal because of their status in the team, while he did not share their opinion of how to deal with pupil behaviour, and neither did he approve of their complaints. Finally, he sets up a meeting while doubting its usefulness. Though striking, the development of statements appears to be similar to the statements hanging on the walls around the school, and the other solutions such as the protocol, which had been drawn up in the past. Like the teachers, he continues to approach the issue in a functional manner despite negative experiences from the past.

6.2 Parent Involvement at the *Professor Bakkerschool*

Policy documents of the *Professor Bakkerschool* express the view that contact with parents is important. For example:

Conversations with parents: we find it important to communicate with parents regularly, not only about their own children but also about other topics related to the school. We are receptive to good ideas and suggestions for improvement. But even if you are not fully satisfied about something, we ask you to inform us immediately, so we can jointly try to find a solution to the problem. [schoolguide2004/2005]

Parents are very important partners at our school. Parent involvement in the school is something we need to significantly invest in. Most of the parents of our children have insufficiently mastered the Dutch language. This requires considerable empathy and patience on the part of staff. [schoolplan2003/2007]

Reflecting on the past few years, the deputy head²⁵ argues that contact with parents has improved considerably under the guidance of the former head teacher. She argues that contact with parents deteriorated under previous head teachers and during a period in which there was no head teacher at all. The last head teacher, who took up this function in September 2000 and left in October 2004, in her opinion worked hard to win back parents' trust. Among other things, the supply of information improved, parents were sooner informed if their child was misbehaving or falling behind, and parents were better informed about the children's progress. A few teachers also mention the positive influence of the former head teacher and point out, for example, that parents' attendance at information evenings has improved.

25 The research on parental involvement started in early 2005. The head teacher left in October 2004 and an interim manager has been appointed for the remainder of that school year. The deputy head remains in her position for the 2004-2005 school year, but as of September 2005 she is the interim manager. A regular teacher with remedial teaching duties is appointed as the interim deputy head.

Early in 2005, the deputy head considered further improving parent involvement as a spearhead in the school organisation: it is one of the issues to be addressed and improved upon as part of the Educational Priority Plan²⁶. The Educational Priority Plan (covering the period from September 2001 to June 2005) was developed under the guidance of the former head teacher. He reflected on the development of the programme as follows:

The Educational Priority Plan is not a product of the team: it's my vision that's written down, though I often speak in terms of 'we' when I talk about the development of that plan. I tried to involve the team in the development but they were not very supportive, if not even working against it. I decided to write the plan on my own and to reflect upon and to develop my own perspective. Therefore the plan is more guidance for my own development and my own vision of the school, than for the whole team. I doubt whether the teachers agree with it, or support it. [sl190304conversationheadteacher]

The Educational Priority Plan and the improvements made by the school in the past four years will be evaluated in June 2005. With the head teacher having left in the meantime, the deputy head carries considerable responsibility for the evaluation.

As part of this plan's section on contact with parents, the team recently followed a course on communication with parents who behaving aggressively. Besides this course, the plan sets out a number of other activities that still need to be carried out. Firstly, the teachers of grades three and four have to implement the Walk-In Morning but the deputy head is not sure whether they will actually invite parents, which they are supposed to do. Secondly, as part of the plan, the school re-established the parent council in March 2004, but their activities still need to be extended and it seems that some teachers do not support the initiative. On top of that, the deputy head just decided to enrol the team in an extensive project with the aim of improving contact with parents. Besides the need to further roll out the Educational Priority Plan, a note on a collective team meeting held in January 2005 states that evaluations need to be written because at the end of this school year the school has to account for the Educational Priority Plan to the school governing body.

6.2.1 Perspectives of the Deputy Head and the Role of a Study

Within this context I delivered a report on the Walk-in Morning at the school and speak some more with the deputy head. The report has been delayed and in the past few months, contact with the school decreased somewhat due to the changes in school management and the absence of the deputy head for a few weeks. While speaking with the deputy head, I say I regret that contact had diminished, to which she responds positively and says she would like me to continue doing research on the Walk-in Morning. But as I would like to know more about the interactions in the whole team, I express some doubt about continuing research on the same activity. The deputy head expresses her interest for somewhat broader research into parent involvement, and she refers to the School Educational Plan and the activities still to be improved upon. She says she would like me to speak with the teachers

26 For further information on this plan, see chapter 4, section 4.4.2

about their ideas on parent involvement because she does not have time to speak in-depth with the teachers herself. She considers this kind of information as useful for the development of future activities.

In this first conversation and two more²⁷ that follow, the deputy head expresses her view on parent involvement at the *Professor Bakkerschool*. She reflects on the different forms of contact with parents, of which there are many; among other things, the informal conversations in the playground; the formal conversations during parent evenings; the celebrations for which they ask parents for support; the parent council; and the school advisory body that also includes parent representatives. She also describes how the problems experienced with parent involvement differ from situation to situation: the mothers on the parent council are mainly from Moroccan backgrounds and mothers from other backgrounds do not participate on it; parent evenings are well attended in the higher grades but not in the lower grades, while the situation is precisely the other way round when it comes to informal contact. Then, parents' engagement with school organisational matters is rather limited and they will, for example, not ask critical questions about the teaching methods they use. Moreover, when setting up activities like the parent council or asking for support at celebrations, the parents need to be instructed intensively because many parents from "foreign backgrounds" are unfamiliar with these kinds of structures and activities and do not know what is expected of them.

To explain problems but also the successes with parent involvement the deputy head emphasises the importance of both parents and teachers:

Our parents aren't really critical, they'll never be critical of the teachers' work, they'll never ask about teaching methods or about how things are explained to the children. Which keeps the teachers less keen, and that's a pity. On top of that, when in an exceptional case a parent addresses a teacher, the teacher will say that parent is nagging. [pb150205conversationdeputyhead]

This teacher works hard to keep the parent council going. She's working hard to teach the parents what it means, being a member of the parent council: that you make agreements which you should stick to, for example. <...>. She actively coaches them and, from a certain perspective, you could say she is bringing the parents up. An independently functioning parent council is not a given fact because most parents are from foreign backgrounds. [pb150205conversationdeputyhead]

Teachers will tell you they don't have any expectations of parents, but at the same time they do expect parents to offer their support, for example, when a driver is needed for an outing. On top of that, the teachers act rather carelessly concerning

27 At one of those meetings the deputy head calls in the remedial teacher who supports the parent council and who becomes the interim deputy head the next school year. The deputy head explains that I will conduct some more research on the topic of parent involvement and include the parent council. They then start a conversation about the problems currently experienced by the remedial teacher who runs this council.

parent involvement. Recently at a school outing, there were a lot of parents who came to join the outing and who wanted to help the children. Indeed, it had not been well organised, but some teachers started to tell the parents that there were enough parents and that they could not take part. I really got angry about that, if necessary, too many parents can come along and we'll improvise, but you should never send parents home. [pb080305conversationdeputyhead]

A number of teachers address Dutch parents much more easily than foreign parents. They chat with Dutch parents more easily, while it is just as simple to chat with a foreign mother. But somehow they don't dare to. <...> There are also teachers who hand out small notes because they don't dare to ask anything, and they still grumble that they get little response. Others use the phone and very quickly organise a number of parents. Anyhow, some teachers complain that parents are hardly involved at all, but meanwhile they do not want parents to attend committees: they'll challenge their usefulness. [pb220205conversationheadteacher]

In these four quotations the deputy head puts forward several problem definitions to which she frequently refers. Firstly, she reflects on the skills of parents, which, in her opinion, are a problem because parents lack the skills to be more critical and actively involved in the school organisation. Secondly, she reflects on the effort it requires to get parents involved. Teaching parents the necessary skills is demanding and time consuming. However, as her reflection on the parent council indicates, she does not consider it impossible to get parents more involved, neither as undesirable to spend time and effort on it. Thirdly, she reflects on the role of the teachers. Some of the teachers, in her opinion, are not communicative or active enough, yet others, of whom she seems to disapprove more strongly, behave in a counterproductive way. These teachers, she points out, are openly negative towards the parents and do not support the school's attempts to improve parent involvement. Hence, the deputy head expresses the point of view that parents are, in principle, willing but not always able to become more involved: either because they lack the necessary skills or because of the teachers' attitude.

In the second fragment, the deputy head links the deficits she ascribes to parents (lacking the skills and attitude to become more substantially and independently involved) to their non-native Dutch background. Similarly, in the fourth fragment, she considers some of the problematic attitudes of teachers as being related to parents' non-native Dutch background. But it seems that she thinks that it mainly depends on the teachers' attitudes and efforts whether parents' deficits can be overcome and whether parents indeed do become more involved in the school organisation.

The importance of teachers' attitudes is also frequently stressed in a conversation between the deputy head and the remedial teacher. During this conversation, the deputy head and the remedial teacher tell several anecdotes to underline this importance. The following quotation is illustrative of their reflections:

The remedial teacher refers to a recently organised celebration at which some teachers acted rather carelessly. She says: we agreed that the parent council would serve

lemonade at 10:15. But that morning some teachers said they wanted lemonade earlier and that they would serve it themselves. So the mothers came but then there was nothing for them to do, and some went away very angry and wanted to leave the parent council. I did understand the mothers' reaction; after all it was not an incident. While this example is, in itself, not that important, it was the number of events at which the mothers, in the end, were told they were not welcome to help. So I had a hard time convincing them to stay in the parent council. Besides, I also got the feeling that when I ask whether parents can be of help in one way or another, some of my colleagues think: "There she is again". It means that the functioning of the parent council continues to depend very much on me. For example, like what happened just before the Christmas holidays. I asked the committee responsible for organising the Christmas party, three times whether the parent council could offer their support. But no, that wouldn't be necessary. The teachers would organise the food etc. themselves. I was ill on the day of the Christmas party, and afterwards teachers were very angry and came to me. They were angry because no parents helped with the party. I told them the committee didn't want to, and then they fell silent. *The deputy head responds by warning the teacher: she shouldn't take full responsibility, but continue stressing the responsibility of the teachers themselves.* [pb080305conversationdeputyhead/remedialteacher]

In this anecdote, the attitude of teachers is related to the considerable tension that can develop in the team and between the school organisation and the parents. Firstly, the negative attitudes and careless behaviour of some teachers may alienate parents, which can be seen when parents say they no longer wished to be members of the parent council. Secondly, individual teachers, like the remedial teacher who related the anecdote, who put effort into parent involvement feel little supported by some of their colleagues and feel they are unjustifiably held accountable for parent involvement. Thirdly, tension may arise in the team because some teachers get angry with parents and with colleagues when parents do not offer support, as a result of other teachers' decisions. What is noticeable is that the remedial teacher and deputy head hold those teachers who are negative about parent involvement accountable for this tension. The problems with parent involvement, therefore, seem primarily defined by the school management in terms of negative attitudes of teachers towards parents. These attitudes hinder the remediation of parents' ascribed deficits because these teachers are counterproductive to any attempts made by their colleagues, and they alienate those parents who put an effort into becoming more involved.

Several remarks can be made about the situation surrounding parent involvement at the *Professor Bakkerschool*, as it existed when the research on this topic was initiated. The deputy head has been ascribed – willingly or unwillingly – a position in which she has to stress the importance of parent involvement and has to work towards improving it. Constitutive to this position are several structures and social relationships in the school organisation. Concerning the structures, policy documents available to parents, teachers and others (including myself, but also for example the school inspectorate) emphasise the importance of parent involvement and the team's obligation to make an effort to achieve it. Furthermore, the topic is part of the Educational Priority Plan, and this plan will soon

be evaluated. On top of that, and as part of the roll out of the Educational Priority Plan, materials for the Walk-in Morning in grades three and four have been ordered; the parent council has been re-established; and the deputy head herself enrolled the team in a course on parent involvement.

Concerning the social relationships, the former head teacher achieved significant improvements that are acknowledged and spoken about by parents and teachers. Therefore, while it was difficult, improvements in parent involvement did prove possible. But at the same time, social relationships, particularly between those teachers who put an effort into the topic and those who are less positive, appear to fuel tension in the school organisation. And these tensions, subsequently, have a negative affect on parent involvement. Meanwhile, the deputy head will soon have to account to the school directive board for the improvements achieved in the school organisation.

In this situation, investigating the topic of parent involvement and the teachers' points of view in particular may serve several purposes. It may firstly serve as an extra indication of the school's effort to improve parent involvement. Secondly, it may enhance information about the teachers' individual opinions. This information can be used in two different ways, or combined: on the one hand, the information may serve as a starting point to further develop the school organisation, or on the other hand, it may be used to emphasise some of the teachers' irrational resistance that is preventing the deputy head, and some other teachers, from substantially improving the issue. Pointing out the irrational resistance transfers responsibility to those teachers who are non-cooperative. Thirdly, the study may decrease feelings of frustration among the "more positive" teachers as attention is actually being given to the subject. And finally, it will at least provide some information for the evaluation to be written for the Educational Priority Plan.

6.2.2 A Deadlock: Deficit Parents and a Fragmented Team

With the initiatives of the former head teacher, the improvements achieved over the last four years, and with the roll out of the Educational Priority Plan that is soon to be evaluated, emphasis is increasingly being placed on the importance of investing in parent involvement at the *Professor Bakkerschool*. After having followed a course on communication with parents, organising the Walk-in Morning in grades three and four, and re-establishing the parent council, the deputy head recently enrolled the team in a training course, and gave the go-ahead to participate in research.

The school guide is just one of the documents that emphasises the importance of putting effort into parent involvement. Teachers are asked about their opinions on a statement in this school guide²⁸. Besides being rather diverse, their responses also show that not all of them support the current developments involving parent involvement:

Yes, I agree with it. That's what we are aiming at, so to speak. When I speak for myself, that's what I try to do. I try to be there for the parents. [pb080405interviewteacher]

28 The quotation is: Conversations with parents: we find it important to communicate with parents regularly, not only about their own children but also about other topics that are related to the school. We are receptive to nice ideas and improvements. But also when you are not fully satisfied, we ask you to inform us straightaway in order to jointly try and find a solution. [School-guide2004/2005]

Well 'having a conversation' means that it shouldn't only be about the children. But that's rather difficult with some parents because they only speak about their children. In an ideal situation we'd involve the parents in more issues. Parents can do a lot of work for you, also very practical work like reading with the children. It would be helpful if there were more parents who helped with that, there are only a few at the moment. But you can't really rely on them because they don't turn up every week. [pb150405interviewteacher]

Yes. True. Fine. But what I personally think about that text 'we're receptive to ideas and improvements'? Yes, true, let them come. But they just don't. And I can't change facts. I can't improve it or prevent it. Well in that sense I do agree with that text. [pb200405interviewteacher]

This is just a general text. It may even have been copied from another school handbook, so it doesn't say that much. But as a matter of fact, I don't agree. I don't know how that school handbook came about, it must partly have been copy and paste work. And what it states, well of course we've been speaking about it and in general lines everybody should agree. Otherwise you'll hand out a handbook that has no function at all. But of course I don't agree with everything. But I suppose I'm not the only one, everybody will sometimes disagree. And what it says here? Well fine, actually you can't really disagree with it. [pb200405interviewteacher2]

The teachers' responses to the text in the school handbook show that not all teachers consider parent involvement as realistic and as something about which they can make a difference. Some appear more positive, others as having no or only limited expectations of parent involvement.

Furthermore, the first and final excerpts show that teachers draw distinctions between their own beliefs and those that their colleagues may possibly have. The first quoted teacher clearly draws a distinction between her own efforts and those of others. She says:

Not all colleagues are working on parent involvement. Not all colleagues think it's important and not all colleagues speak respectfully about parents. About them, well, I think like: if you talk about parents in that kind of way, then you won't try to establish contact. [pb080405interviewteacher]

And the fourth quoted teacher points out, he might not agree with the text, but some of his colleagues may do so.

In the second and third excerpts, the teachers reflect differently on the text. They reflect on whether they consider it realistic to hold more substantial conversations with parents and they express opinions about what they consider parents' competences and attitudes to be. Their opinions are somewhat negative: they both say that parents are incapable of becoming fully involved in the way the school handbook states. But whereas the teacher in the second quotation continues his argument by saying that the team should make an effort to improve the situation, the teacher in the third quotation argues that she

does not want to put any effort into parent involvement because it is much easier and more reliable to organise matters with her colleagues.

Teachers frequently addressed these two issues of teachers' opinions and of parents' capacities. The teachers spoke about the team as being polarised. They argued that the team did not share perspectives on the importance of parent involvement and on whether to put effort into it or not. They used to ascribe positions to themselves and their colleagues depending on their beliefs and attitude. Here are some illustrative excerpts:

It's realistic to work on parent involvement but it's unrealistic to expect wonders. We have had a little success with activities for parents, and that's the realistic part. But one shouldn't think that within two or three years, with a pupil population similar to the current one, we'll have a level of parent involvement that meets the level at schools with pupils from native-Dutch backgrounds with highly educated parents. That's simply impossible. But speaking about the success we have achieved, I sometimes hear colleagues say things like 'what does it mean after all?'. But no that's not the way one should look at it. <...> When you're realistic, you should see the developments and the things going well. [pb150405interviewteacher]

I want more support, more parent participation. Like, for instance, with fund-raising, I mean it was a nice activity and the newspaper wrote a good article about it, but in my opinion there were simply not enough parents. <...> And at a certain point in time you start to think, 'Oh, just forget about it'. You'll think 'that's how it is, forget it'. I would like it to be different, but at some point you'll simply accept the situation as it is. <...> I don't know all the opinions of my colleagues, but some might be somewhat more positive and try to organise matters. Not that I'm negative, but I'm realistic: this is how it is and at this moment it's not realistic to get parents more involved. [pb200405interviewteacher1]

Opinions differ, but I am positive. When pupils need extra support, parents do, in my opinion, often ask things such as 'could you please set some extra homework' or they'll say 'I'll arrange for someone who can provide additional support'. In my perspective, that's happening in my grade. But some colleagues have different experiences. Some of them say that homework is never handed in and that at home nobody makes sure the homework is done. But I think it's a matter of how you approach parents and the way in which you maintain contact with parents. In my opinion, parents are highly committed to offer their support when problems arise. [pb260505interviewteacher]

Teachers position themselves and their colleagues by drawing a distinction between being positive and being realistic about parent involvement. None of them say parent involvement is not important, but they question whether effort has to be spent on it and what realistic expectations are.

The teachers ascribe and identify with positions by reflecting on their attitudes and the opinions they express. Taking these interview fragments into consideration and the opinions expressed in them, some teachers indeed, and again, appear more positive about

the possibilities of improving parent involvement, while others seem more negative.

During the interviews the teachers reflect on all kinds of parent involvement. They talk for instance about: the support parents offer during celebrations; the informal conversations hold in the playground; the support parents offer their children; whether parents express concerns about their child or talk with the teacher about problems at home; and, how parents respond to teachers who report problems with the child's progress. The teachers argue that parent involvement not only differs substantially per issue but also that there are considerable differences between the parents:

Contact with parents generally takes place when we invite them, during report evenings. That's when we speak with parents; otherwise you have little contact with them in grade eight. <...> Parents who come on their own initiative, that really is exceptional. The threshold is somewhat higher I think. [pb050405interviewteacher]

Contact with some parents is rather intensive, while I hardly see some of the other parents. That depends on whether parents pick their child up or not. I speak more often with those parents who're more frequently in the playground. I see them more often. <...>. And other parents, you don't see them at all or only once or twice a year at a parent evening. [pb080405interviewteacher]

It's a problem that parents don't come and don't offer their support when we ask them to, when we need them for things like sports days. That really annoys me. But anyway that doesn't really concern my class in particular: it's more a kind of a school problem. Because then, in a certain sense, they are essential because otherwise your activity cannot take place. [pb200405interviewteacher2]

What is noticeable in these fragments is that parent involvement not only takes many forms but also that involvement depends on circumstances. It depends on, among other things, what is expected of the parents (i.e. does it concern their own child or the school organisation as a whole) and on the grade their child is in.

Teachers generally describe parent involvement in negative terms; it is not self-evident and is often a problem. It is the characteristics of parents that explain the problems with parent involvement. The polarisation in the team may merely exacerbate these problems. As the following quotations show, a deficit perspective on parents is noticeable in teachers' argumentations, but their disapproval of the ascribed capacities differs:

Well, in the first place because of language. I mean, some parents simply don't speak the language, and I don't speak theirs, so that makes it rather difficult. [pb080405interviewteacher]

A problem at our school is that parents hardly speak Dutch, which is why they come to school less often. I mean, when you speak Dutch very badly, those people feel ashamed, and that's why they don't come. [pb260505interviewteacher]

There are of course many parents to whom you practically have to explain every single word because some of them hardly speak the language. But there are also Dutch parents whose vocabulary is very limited and who you have to explain many things to. But with some particular parents you can speak much more on an equal footing. That parent will understand immediately. Therefore, you'll say things differently, even in a different tone. There are parents, strictly speaking, to whom you speak as if you're speaking to a child. It simply has to do with these people's baggage, with what's in them. [pb050405interviewteacher]

Some parents aren't interested: they consider education as a matter for the school. You know, that's how other cultures look at it. It's the school's job. The school organises one thing, and at home they organise other things. So concerns are not shared, that's something unknown in other cultures, or at least it's less normal. [pb150405interviewteacher]

In my opinion, when you have children, you are also responsible for them. And that's why I'm sometimes angry with them. There are some of those people of whom you think, you don't have a job, do you work? No? Well then you can come, can't you? And really, you don't have to be afraid: I'll just be nice and welcome you. [pb200405interviewteacher1]

Our parents aren't representative of the average Dutch parent. We've a lot of foreign parents here, Moroccans from the rural areas, where there are a lot of people who aren't educated themselves. We've a lot of 1.9 children²⁹. And that's what I mean by 'our kind of parents', that's different from when you're the child of a doctor or something like that, and if you're born in the Netherlands. We've to manage a lot of conservative parents with little knowledge themselves. That is what I mean by 'our kind of parents'. [pb200405interviewteacher2]

In each of those fragments teachers ascribe deficits to parents, though some of them clearly express themselves much more negatively than others, and in a manner that might be disapproved of. They primarily explain the problems with parent involvement by referring to deficits in parents' fluency in the Dutch language, and their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. Parents are ascribed characteristics such as: not understanding the teacher, being insufficiently interested, not willing to offer support, not being self-assured, and of lacking knowledge about education. These deficit characteristics are considered typical of parents from a non-native Dutch background, and also, though less frequently mentioned, of parents from a lower-class native Dutch background. Teachers also argue that problems

29 The so-called "1.9 pupils" are pupils for whom the school receives additional resources. 1.9 refers to the weighting these pupils are given. Because they are from a non-Western and a low socio-economic backgrounds they have a weighting that is 1.9 times higher than the weighting given to pupils from a Western and middle or higher socio-economic background (the so-called "1.0 pupils"). Significant changes have recently occurred in this weighting system; for a discussion of these changes see chapter three.

with parent involvement increased when more and more pupils from these backgrounds started to attend the *Professor Bakkerschool*.

According to the teachers, the problems with parent involvement have a detrimental effect on teaching and learning processes. For example, because the teacher has little information about how the child behaves at home and about whether it enjoys school; it is becoming more difficult to speak with parents about learning and behavioural needs; parents do not ask the teachers for advice if they are having problems in the private sphere, and that also affect the child's education; parents' methods and expectations cannot be brought in line with those of the school; the parents provide little support, which has a negative impact on the pupils' attitude and educational development; and, the teachers experience extra work pressure because they have to spend time on matters that parents could deal with. Teachers believe that the characteristics of the parents are deficient and that these deficits result in a lack of parent involvement, and this partly explains the pupils' educational disadvantages.

Compared with the opinions expressed by the deputy head and the remedial teacher, teachers seem to have similar opinions. Firstly, they also argue that contact with parents is diverse and depends on the circumstances in which they meet. Secondly, they share the perspective that parents lack skills and knowledge to be straightforwardly involved in the school organisation. The deficits are in general linked to the parents' non-native Dutch backgrounds. Thirdly, they reflect on the team as being polarised and as not working towards a shared goal. This adds to the problems caused by parents' deficits. Teachers are aware of the mutual positioning they engage in and the criteria used to do so. Finally, they are also aware that the existing school organisations' policies are not particularly binding. Some teachers openly express that they do not support them. They openly criticise attempts to put effort into parent involvement and argue they do not really support such initiatives because they expect it will make little difference. Others, like the deputy head, point to colleagues who unlike themselves do not support initiatives that aim to improve parent involvement.

The deputy head emphasises that in order to improve parent involvement, those teachers who are negative about the issue should change their attitudes. But the teachers do not see this as realistic. They point out that they do not speak much about parent involvement and when they occasionally do, they speak with like-minded colleagues in informal settings. If parent involvement is discussed more formally and with the whole team, then it is only practicalities that are addressed. One of the teachers puts it as follows:

Well, we did discuss the topic, because it's part of the Educational Priority Plan. Then we had a workshop and also addressed this issue. Well we did speak about it then, about the fact that we'd to get more parents involved. How are we going to do that? Among other things through the parent council, and two teachers were tasked with that activity. In the light of the Educational Priority Plan we spoke more often about it, but not in terms of 'Do we want this?' but more in terms of 'We have to do this, we have to get more parents involved'. [pb260505interviewteacher]

All the teachers argue that collaboration matters should be left as they are. Some of them explain that the topic does not interest them that much and that they do not want to get involved in it, while others believe that one could discuss the issue at great length, but those teachers who are more negative would never change their behaviour and perspectives. They all advocate accepting the situation. The teachers do, therefore, not appear to be in favour of putting collective effort into parent involvement, albeit for different reasons. However, the deputy head enrolls the team in a programme on parent involvement and obliges the teachers to attend the meetings organised as part of the programme.

6.2.3 Seeking Control: A Team Meeting on Parent Involvement

The research findings on parent involvement are reported to the school. An appointment is made at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year to discuss the research report. The head teacher (who was the deputy head in the last school year) is unable to attend and the report is discussed with the deputy head (who was the remedial teacher in the last school year) and a teacher who became the school's parent-coordinator, a newly established function as part of the "Possibilities of Parent Contact" programme.

Besides asking for some clarification, the deputy head and teacher focus on the descriptions of the polarisation in the team. They say they recognise the descriptions and they found the anecdote about the parent council particularly illustrative. But, though problematic, they are not in a position to change this situation. They just do not understand why some teachers continue working at this school if they find it difficult to contact parents from non-native Dutch backgrounds. Somewhat later, the deputy head says she spoke with the head teacher about the report. The head teacher also recognised the descriptions of the polarisation and said she wanted to work hard on teachers' motivation for working at this school.

The deputy head and teacher point out that they will not actively make use of the report because they are not in a position to change teachers' attitudes. But the report might be useful for the "Possibilities of Parent Contact" programme. The teacher says she will urge the trainer that her role is primarily to increase teachers' enthusiasm for the topic and that she should not enforce too high expectations or too many demands on the team.

The "Possibilities of Parent Contact" programme is a project in which the head teacher enrolled the school in early 2005 (the project will be launched in September 2005). The project aims to improve the school's contact with parents and is offered to schools that serve high numbers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, though schools are free to decide whether to participate or not. The project is subsidised by the municipality and the province. The head teacher explains that she decided to enrol the school because it fits in well with the school development plan and the priority being put on improving parent involvement.

In April 2005, the team is informed about their participation in the project. A memo about the meeting states that they will participate in the project with the aim of "getting more parents into the school". As part of the programme one teacher will be appointed as a parent-coordinator for one day a week, and this coordinator will receive individual support from the project trainers. Furthermore, there will be three collective team training courses.

Because the research report will not be actively used at the school, I decide to attend the first team meeting of the “Possibilities of Parent Contact” programme. The team training takes place after school hours on a Wednesday afternoon and is given by an external trainer. Attendance at the meeting is obligatory for the teachers, and the head teacher and deputy head also attend.

The Meeting

The programme is pre-structured in terms of content and procedure. The aims of the first meeting are presented as follows: “to decide on the basis for a draft vision on cooperation with parents”; “to develop a basis for policy”; and “to explore the opportunities for parental involvement”. To realise these aims, this afternoon the team will: “discuss the current state of affairs at the school”; “formulate points of special interest”; and “develop an idea about how to approach these points”.

The trainer opens the meeting by stressing that the aim of the team meetings is to develop policy that suits the school, and to involve all teachers in the development of that policy. She then asks the teachers about their expectations of the course. Someone whispers at the back of the circle ‘none’, but nearer the front a teacher says she hopes the course will be pleasant, while another teacher says they have to develop a shared vision and a course of action.

After this brief introduction, the trainer says that relationships with parents at a “black school” are different from the relationships with parents at a “white school”. She briefly discusses this matter with the teachers, and concludes by saying that the relationship is different and that the crux is to achieve mutual alignment and communication between their school and the kind of parents they serve. “And that is difficult at a school like this”, she says, “because to what extent are you going to align with the parents and when do you say this is our school and these are our values?”

What is noticeable in this course opening is that the meeting has aims about which the teachers do not necessarily agree. They have to develop an idea of the course of action to be taken, draw up a policy they endorse, and discuss what they expect of parents. The teachers however, as far as these issues are concerned, see themselves to be polarised in two different camps and question the use of collaboration. Furthermore, the trainer draws relationships between problematic parent involvement and the characteristics of parents, in particular those from ethnic minority backgrounds. This view is similar to the opinions univocally expressed by the head teacher and teachers, albeit some expressed themselves more negatively.

The trainer continues and asks rhetorically why parent involvement is important. But a teacher interrupts and says she is not in favour of parent involvement because parents cannot be changed and they are pedagogically irresponsible. Two teachers immediately respond: parents, in their opinion, are not irresponsible but simply unfamiliar with educational materials. And on top of that, a group of parents is simply not interested in school organisation matters. The trainer says that if this is a problem, then the central questions should be why these parents are not interested and how one can make them more interested. The first teacher reacts again by saying she does not consider that to be her task. And besides, she experienced that parent involvement can also be disruptive: parents

from the parent council disturbed her lessons when they walked in to ask where they could find glue and paint. She concludes by saying *"It disrupts your class, really it won't work with these parents"*.

The head teacher joins the discussion and says that this is not a problem of the parents but of the teachers themselves, they had not organised matters well. Again the teacher responds: the organisation takes a lot of time, too much time in her opinion. Moreover, some children feel ashamed of their mothers who do not know what to do and ask these kinds of questions in the classroom. Then the deputy head responds and says: *"That also depends on you, on how you react. When your response is blunt...yes, sure, the child will feel embarrassed"*.

Another teacher joins the discussion and says she thinks parent involvement is useful and she relates one of her own experiences to illustrate her point. The head teacher responds to her positive example and says that it also has something to do with teacher involvement. The teacher mentions another positive experience and ends as follows:

'But I of course also sometimes think; what a pity that this child has this kind of parents'. [pb261005observationmeeting]

Then the interactions progress as follows:

Again another teacher responds and says that whatever happens one should try to maintain as a basic principle that *"every parent wants the best for their child"*. The deputy head sniffs and mumbles: *"why then do they throw their child from the balcony?"*³⁰. The head teacher says that everybody of course sometimes thinks like 'oh no', but one should try to continue to approach parents seriously, because only then will you be able to achieve something. Again another teacher responds and questions why one would not take parents seriously. But he immediately adds that with the mother of Armano he also would say 'forget about it'. Then, another teacher causes some hilarity by telling them about a parent who recently asked her whether she could phone every evening at half past eight to tell the child to go to sleep. [pb261005observationmeeting]

This discussion between the team members takes place during the first hour and a half of the meeting. It seems to allow for the teachers' different opinions to be discussed, opinions both on parents' competences and about whether they themselves should put an effort into parent involvement, or not. Particularly the contributions of the teacher who says that she is not in favour of parent involvement and who expresses her point of view several times seems to initiate this possibility.

However, there are no such kinds of discussions. The trainer, the deputy head and the head teacher emphasise aspects of thinking in terms of solutions, teachers' attitudes, and teachers' responsibilities. And the opinions of the teachers, but also those of the deputy head and head teacher are not particularly clear. Instead of taking sides, the head

30 The media had just extensively reported on such an incident.

teacher, deputy head and teachers, time and again and irrespective of whether they ascribe themselves to either a positive or a more realistic position, emphasise the deficits of parents after the role of the school and the teachers have been covered.

After this first hour and a half, teachers are given assignments to work on in small groups. There is still another hour and a half left, but time is pressing because the trainer is behind schedule and a number of activities still need to be covered. Furthermore, the teachers want a break and some of them say they still have other things to do this afternoon. In short, there is less time and less interest in a discussion in the second half of the meeting.

Working in small groups, the teachers have to talk about how they think that parents experience the contact with the school and about the kinds of functions they ascribe to parents. In the joint session that follows, each group reports that parents are presumably positive about the school because parents can, among other things, easily contact the teachers; they are taken seriously and approached respectfully; and because of the good educational developments of their children. Teachers also ascribe several functions to parents. They expect parents to take part in the parent council and the representative board; offer support with outings and celebrations; and support their children through sound child-raising and help with homework.

After this collective discussion, the teachers are asked to write down a topic they would like to address during the rest of the project. The topics handed in are categorised by the trainer and parent coordinator under the headings: respect, communication, practical issues, improving interest, and joint responsibility. The team is then asked to choose which general themes they would like to discuss in more depth with the aim of developing policy. The team chooses the topics of communication, improving interest, and joint responsibility. Each small group is assigned one topic. They have to discuss that particular topic further, and draw up some ideas about how that particular issue can be improved in the school.

The group addressing the topic of 'improving interest' struggles with the assignment. When they sit down together they immediately start focusing on improving the interest for parent evenings. But a teacher from the higher grades says she does not experience problems with that because many parents do attend. A teacher from the lower grades however says that her class evenings are poorly attended. The opposite, she points out, was however true for the project evening, when many parents attended. After some more reflections on their experiences with parent involvement, the group starts to wonder what 'interest' means. Instead of numbers of parent attendance, does it perhaps mean informing parents well about the school organisation? But this also gives rise to a discussion: should you give parents information about the school in their mother tongue? A teacher disagrees and argues that they should not make any concessions about using Dutch as the language of communication because the parents speak many different languages, and because she wonders what is happening to 'our own nationality'. Another teacher points out that one should ask and inform parents personally and not through letters. But she also notices that this does create a problem in the higher grades because parents do not often come to school. When they return to the plenary meeting, this group has not settled their discussion and has not spoken about their ideas on how to improve situations that involve 'improving interest'.

The groups are asked to present summaries of their conclusions. The teachers present statements such as: “as a team we all have to work in the same way”; “parents have to show an interest in the school, the pupils and the teaching methods”; “parents have to offer to help with activities and celebrations”; “try to get parents involved in positive things”; “compliment parents when, for example, they watch educational television programmes”; and “make them aware of the language courses available and organise focus groups”.

When a teacher questions as to whether the quality of the school is not threatened if parents are asked to think along, the deputy head tells her to keep quiet because ‘it’s way beyond four o’clock’. And when one of the teachers from the group that discussed ‘improving interest’ reports they noticed some problems with the organisation of the parent evening, the head teacher responds by saying: “Yes, we know that and next time we’ll solve it”. Then it is 16:15 and the trainer brings the sessions to an end and asks the teachers to fill in an evaluation form. Some teachers refuse and quickly leave the school building.

After the meeting the head teacher briefly reflects on the session. She is critical of the aim of drawing up policy. She says the meeting has not been practical enough. Teachers are, in her opinion, not interested in these kinds of matters, they prefer to do something practical rather than think about policy.

Worthy of note in the second half of the meeting is that discussions in the small groups are more substantial. The perspective of deficit parents, for example, becomes less self-evident when the group speaking about ‘improving interest’ discusses that their approaches do not suit all situations and reflect on their own role. Furthermore, some ideological views about the use of parents’ mother tongue are also briefly addressed.

But because of the conditions of the exercise and the time schedule, these reflections are not touched upon in the plenary session. Instead, the statements presented strengthen the idea that parent involvement depends on parents’ attitudes, language skills and knowledge and teachers’ positive and supportive attitude.

The reinforcement of these commonalities may cause the deputy head to conclude that the meeting focused too much on policy. However, her appeal for a focus on activities seems to contradict her earlier ideas about the problems in the school organisation. She had primarily defined current problems in terms of teacher expectations and their attitudes, which hindered the implementation and success of activities and were not supportive to the school organisation’s policy on putting effort into parent involvement.

6.2.4 Summary and Concluding Remarks on the Professor Bakkerschool

The improvements in parents’ involvement achieved by the *Professor Bakkerschool* will soon be evaluated as part of the Educational Priority Plan. But there are problems: while some team members put effort into parent involvement, others are less supportive and are sometimes even counterproductive. This leads to tension in the team and between the team and parents. Nevertheless, the former head teacher has proved that it is possible to improve contact despite problems in the team and despite parent deficits, and the deputy head wants to make an effort to further improve parental involvement.

The importance of parental involvement is stressed in school organisational documents, but teachers attach little value to these documents because they either do not force them to work together or do not represent their perspective. The texts provide little guidance for

the teachers' practices: they seem to contact parents in a way that they personally consider appropriate. Furthermore, parental involvement is not a topic of discussion in the team: during meetings the issue is barely touched upon, and teachers only occasionally speak about it with like-minded colleagues.

Teachers endorse the idea that the team is polarised in their views on parental involvement. Some teachers say that they are realistic: parents have deficits and it takes a lot of effort to get them more involved. They argue that it makes sense not to expect too much of parents and not to put too much effort into contact with parents, as there is not much chance of success. Some of their colleagues are, in their opinion, too idealistic. Other teachers however argue the opposite case. They point out that if one's expectations about parental involvement are positive, and you make an effort, parents do become more involved despite their limited capabilities. Some of their colleagues are, in their opinion, too negative about parents and alienate parents with their negative behaviour. Strikingly, a deficit perspective on parents underlies both positions. Parents supposedly lack the necessary skills and knowledge to become soundly involved in the school organisation. Those deficits are interrelated with parents' generally non-native Dutch background.

But whereas the deputy head defines solutions to the polarisation and tension in the team in terms of improving collaboration, teachers do not consider collaboration useful. Those who have ascribed themselves a realistic position argue that collaboration does not have their interest: it will make little difference to the parents' capacities. Those who have ascribed themselves a more positive position consider collaboration of little use because in their opinion those colleagues who are negative will not change their attitude.

In a meeting on parental involvement the teachers are nevertheless expected to collaborate. Collaboration is assumed to result in school organisational policy which the teachers will endorse. Indeed, the teachers collaborate during the meeting: they engage in discussions and do the required exercises. But their interaction is such that the polarised position between them does not surface: they just collaborate from the standpoint that parents have deficits. The exercises, however, shed a somewhat more subtle light on the issue of parental involvement; the diversity of contact, the influence of school organisational structures, and the influence of normative decisions are briefly touched upon. However, they do not appear in the plenary session in which the teachers are supposed to briefly summarise their discussion and present some guidelines for the future. They present some generalities that reiterate commonalities on parental involvement.

6.3 Analysis

The problems that developed in the two school organisations at the time of research and which in general occur more frequently at segregated schools are the focus of this chapter. Teachers at the *Sleutelschool* increasingly reported problems with managing pupil behaviour and a negative atmosphere developed in the team. Teachers reported dissatisfaction and stress, and the school management often had to respond to problems in classrooms on an ad hoc basis. The attempts at the *Professor Bakkerschool* to improve contact with parents would soon be evaluated. But despite having achieved some improvements in their contact with parents, tension and problems had also arisen in the school. Problems emerged because

not all teachers supported the school organisation's policies and their behaviour gave rise to conflict between the teachers, parents reported feelings of not being taken seriously, and to a restriction of the success of activities implemented. This chapter examined the attempts at the *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* to deal with the problems of pupil behaviour and parent involvement.

Pupil Behaviour and Parent Involvement: Common Problems at Segregated Schools

The problems that developed at the two schools are typical of schools attended by high percentages of pupils from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds. At these kinds of schools, the number of pupils who are traumatised, unhappy, anxious or vulnerable is higher than at school in more affluent neighbourhoods. Moreover, these schools serve a minority of children who have severely disturbed behaviour and who regularly struggle to get through a school day smoothly. These problems are emotionally stressful and not very satisfying for teachers, and they give rise to day-to-day management problems (Lupton, 2004, 2005).

Parent involvement at schools in disadvantaged areas tends to be difficult to develop and maintain (see e.g. Maden, 2001; Den Brok et al., 2004), and contact with parents often remains superficial. While parents are asked to help with celebrations and outings etc. they are little involved in issues on the quality of education (Smit, Driessen, Vrieze, Kuijk & Slegers, 2005). Moreover, compared with schools in more affluent neighbourhoods, these schools often enrol in programmes that aim to improve parent involvement, but the effects are generally limited. Teachers' negative expectations of and negative attitudes towards parents from ethnic minority backgrounds and their ignorance of diversity among parents are considered to be important obstructions (Power & Clark, 2000; Lott, 2001; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Smit et al., 2002).

Head teachers and teachers at both schools believe that problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement are caused primarily by deficits among parents. They consider these deficits as characteristics of parents from ethnic minority and lower socio-economic backgrounds and do, to a certain extent, explain the children's educational disadvantage. Normal processes of teaching and learning are disrupted in the schools because of problems with pupil behaviour and the lack of parent involvement. Some teachers at the *Sleutelschool* also focus attention on the influence of segregation along ethnic and socio-economic lines: demographic segregation and segregation between schools in their opinion also cause pupils to behave in a more problematic manner. Numerous studies support the beliefs generally held in the team: relationships between parents' backgrounds, styles of home upbringing and problems of pupil behaviour and parent involvement are generally mentioned (see e.g. Huijberts, Meeus, Oosterwegel & Vollebergh, 2002; Pels, 2002; Driessen & Van Der Slik, 2004; Smit, Driessen, Vrieze, Kuijk & Slegers, 2005).

Seeking Control: Blueprint Solutions

Solutions to the problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement are defined at both schools in terms of implementing the right conditions in the school organisations. Teachers should, among other things, not be too negative about the issues, they should be competent and take responsibility for solving the problems, policies have to be soundly

implemented, and collaboration has to be stimulated. The problems are approached in an instrumental manner: if conditions in the school organisation are right, then problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement can be prevented and normal teaching and learning can take place.

Both schools hold meetings to discuss the topic of pupil behaviour and parent involvement. Despite evident differences between the two schools, the meetings are organised in a rather similar way, and the progress and outcomes of the meetings also show many similarities. The two schools differ firstly in terms of the kinds of problems they are dealing with. Problems with pupil behaviour have a different impact on the daily functioning of the school organisations compared with low parent involvement. While pupil behaviour influences daily teaching and learning practices, parent involvement does not generally directly affect the daily educational practices in the classrooms. Teachers can educate pupils in a relatively undisturbed way even when parents are little involved. These differences presumably affect the commitment of the staff to solve problems and the priority put on these issues in the school organisations.

The two schools also differ in terms of the developments preceding the meetings. Two experienced teachers at the *Sleutelschool* sounded the alarm bell on pupil behaviour, which set off a whole series of developments that eventually result in the meeting. By then, everyone in the team has been affected by the developments and discussions. At the *Professor Bakkerschool* the head teacher initiates the meeting because of a forthcoming evaluation. Up until then, some teachers had withdrawn from putting effort into parent involvement, which was actually identified as causing problems.

Finally, the schools differ because of the somewhat different purposes of the meetings. At the *Sleutelschool* the developments concerning pupil behaviour eventually affect the whole team in a negative manner. Incidents occur more frequently, there is tension between the teachers, and teachers increasingly express feelings of being insufficiently supported. Although the head teacher does not fully approve of its usefulness, the meeting may help solve these problem developments. At the *Professor Bakkerschool* the meeting fits in with the school's policies on parent involvement. Here, the meeting is supposed to contribute to a change of teachers' negative attitudes towards the possibilities of parent involvement. This attitude change has subsequently to diminish the polarisation in the team.

Despite these differences, the meetings progress rather similarly at the two schools. At both meetings, drawing up statements after some discussion is an important exercise and during the discussions the teachers engage in somewhat more substantial reflections. They reflect for example on the pros and cons of different teaching approaches, on the school's policy, and on the variety of elements that matter when dealing with pupil behaviour and parent involvement. Nevertheless, the statements presented and their usefulness appear to be somewhat limited at both schools. The beliefs that parents and pupils have deficits and that they have to compensate for these deficits are again put forward.

The situations at the two schools and the outcomes of the meetings that are not particularly useful, may be explained by the characteristics of the teachers, the head teachers and the school organisations. It appears as if the problems in the schools have accumulated: the teachers' negative attitudes, their lack of support for the school's policy, the negative way in which some of them speak about the topics in question, the fragmentation of the

team at the *Professor Bakkerschool*, the negative atmosphere and the lack of trust to discuss problems at the *Sleutelschool*, the head teacher's apparent unwillingness to solve problems at the *Sleutelschool*, and the head teacher's apparent inability to solve disputes in the team at the *Professor Bakkerschool* all emerged from the data. These kinds of characteristics are generally described in School Effectiveness Research as having a negative effect on the functioning of school organisations, and as being the opposite to characteristics of successful school organisations in disadvantaged areas (see e.g. Maden, 2001; Chapman & Harris, 2004; Muijs et al., 2004).

The study however indicates that although these characteristics are a problem, the assumption that these characteristics explain the problem situations in the schools and the restricted outcomes of the meeting is somewhat simplistic. Doubting the professional status of these teachers, head teachers and school organisations and believing that they fail as professionals which explains the observed problems, is a belief that tends to overlook the processes through which the characteristics result in detrimental effects. Several findings point in this direction. I firstly reflect on the ascription of shortcomings to individual teachers, then to the school organisations and, finally, to the head teachers.

The Role of the Teachers

The teachers in both teams generally consider characteristics such as a negative attitude and a lack of competences as having a negative affect on the school organisation's capacities to solve problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement. The data indicate that instead of the characteristics being a problem as such, interactions become a problem by these characteristics being labelled as deficit characteristics. At the *Sleutelschool*, the head teacher and teachers label themselves and other team members in terms of their competences, the effort they put into solving problems, and their opinions about pupils and parents. Some teachers are subsequently positioned as being fairly incompetent, little committed, or speaking in too negative a manner, while others are deemed more competent, engaged, and positive. Indeed, these kinds of differences do occur: some teachers for example speak more negatively about the pupils and their parents, indicate that they attach little importance to the norms and values project, or do report feeling insufficiently competent.

Similarly, the head teacher and teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* engage in processes of labelling each other in terms of their attitude. They position themselves as either realistic or as positive, depending on their opinions as to whether putting effort into parent involvement is worth the trouble. But at both schools these characteristics do not just simply determine the teachers' behaviour: instead, processes of labelling certain characteristics as deficit characteristics affect the behaviour of and interactions between teachers with different characteristics.

The data gathered at the *Sleutelschool* showed that because of possibly being positioned as an incompetent teacher, teachers are reluctant to talk about their problems with pupil behaviour. In general, they speak only informally about their problems with colleagues who are experiencing similar kinds of problems. This increasing number of negative conversations fuels a negative atmosphere in the team. Interaction at the *Professor Bakkerschool* also depends on how the teachers label themselves and their colleagues. Teachers withdraw from discussions with colleagues who they consider either too negative or too idealistic.

If the teachers do collaborate, they work together with like-minded colleagues, i.e. with colleagues who they consider are in a similar position to the one which they themselves identify with.

But the teachers' behaviour does not only depend on the labelling and positioning of their characteristics. It also depends on their situations and on formal and informal rules of communication. At the *Sleutelschool*, for instance, policy structures such as the norms and values project and the protocol not only proved less supportive to inexperienced teachers who are in general seen as being less competent, but also to a teacher considered to be rather competent but who deals with a class in which pupils with extreme behavioural and learning needs are concentrated, and to the Physical Education teacher whose lessons are different from those in regular groups. At the *Sleutelschool* formal and informal rules on communication also clearly influence the behaviour of teachers with different characteristics. Both teachers with more and teachers with fewer teaching competences feel excluded from discussions, and therefore they tend to withdraw from expressing their concerns and opinions. Furthermore, irrespective of their competences, teachers who experience problems with pupil behaviour "mess around" because of the head teacher's position of being "a last resort" for the teachers.

The Quality of the School Organisations

Besides the characteristics of individual teachers, characteristics of the school organisations may also be regarded as an important explanation for the problem situations in the schools. After all, the atmosphere at the *Sleutelschool* became negative and because of the importance attached to competences, the teachers seem to have little trust in sharing their experiences with colleagues. At the *Professor Bakkerschool* polarisation negatively affects the functioning of the team and the school organisation. It hampers communication and activities. However, the developments observed during the meetings indicate that the influence of these characteristics also depends on the circumstances in which the teams are supposed to interact.

Normally, the teachers at both schools discuss matters of pupil behaviour and parent involvement informally and with like-minded colleagues. However, the meetings put them in a position in which they are required to speak about pupil behaviour and parent involvement in a formal manner and also with colleagues who have different opinions. In this setting, the teachers at the *Sleutelschool* outspokenly address the way they use to speak about pupil behaviour and they question the practice of being positioned in terms of their competences. At the *Professor Bakkerschool* fragmentation does not emerge during the meeting. Instead, time and again, teachers emphasise the belief that parents have deficits and they having to compensate for these deficits.

Characteristics of fragmentation and a negative atmosphere do not satisfactorily explain these interactions, because then one would expect the teachers at the *Sleutelschool* to refuse to discuss matters and to keep quiet about their competences, while teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* presumably would have quarrelled about their opinions. Instead, the interactions seem affected by the way in which the meetings are organised and the expectations placed on the teams.

The team at the *Sleutelschool* has to discuss statements and they have considerable

time for these discussions. At the end of the workshop, little time is left however for collective reflection. At the *Professor Bakkerschool* the team has more opportunity for collective discussions at the beginning of the meeting, while the small discussion groups are assigned general topics and they have less time available for discussion. Both teams discuss the topics of pupil behaviour and parent involvement in a context in which they are supposed to draw up generally shared statements.

During the discussions in small groups the teachers engage in more substantial interactions and express different interests and the necessity of setting priorities, and ideological disputes are touched upon. However, the expectation to formulate statements based on a shared understanding is met by falling back on the perspective that pupil and parent deficits result in problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement and by pointing out the need to remedy these deficits.

The teams bring this perspective somewhat differently to the fore. The teachers at the *Sleutelschool* significantly reduce the complexity of their discussions and they put forward general statements and make general remarks. They however do not object to this practice and the negative atmosphere does not seem to re-emerge. This is presumably because the teachers also consider having common ground on which to base their practices as important, because they do not disapprove of the ideas expressed and the presented statements, and because the discussions in small groups have strengthened their feelings of being represented. Moreover, each time the head teacher stresses his interpretation of the statements and then moves on to the next statement, leaving little opportunity for the teachers to object to or comment on his interpretation.

At the *Professor Bakkerschool* the expectation of formulating common ground is met by continuously emphasising what they have in common, i.e. the perspective that they have to remedy parents' deficits. During the collective sessions, the teachers do not, even though it is possible, get involved in more substantial discussions about their beliefs and the way they cooperate. When opportunities to discuss beliefs do present themselves, they emphasise the importance of functions and responsibilities, put forward more generally accepted beliefs, or they end the discussion by pointing out that there is too little time. None of the team members challenges this, although the teacher who says that parents are pedagogically irresponsible, does make several attempts, but is interrupted. Presumably because it re-emphasises their idea that collaboration makes little sense, they can interpret the statements as they see fit, and because it provides for a way in which the necessity of formulating statements can be met without engaging in discussions on beliefs, which they do not consider to be very useful.

A school's characteristics such as fragmentation and a negative atmosphere influence teaching and learning processes. However, the developments observed during the meetings point out that this influence should be understood in the school's wider context: how these problem situations influence the functioning of the school organisation depends on the expectations placed on the teams (they had to formulate generally shared statements), on structural conditions (such as available materials and time), and on the context-dependent constellation of social relationships between people (for example the teachers were put in a position to discuss matters and the head teacher put an end to any discussion about the statements).

The Role of Leadership

Finally, certain characteristics of the head teachers may also be regarded as important explanations for the problem situations at the schools. Although the teachers did not reflect substantially on the head teachers' roles, deficits might be ascribed anyway. After all, the head teacher at the *Sleutelschool* is rather sceptical about the meeting he has decided to organise. And the head teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* enrolls the team in the meeting with the aim of giving priority to the issue of parent involvement, but after the meeting she is critical of its outcomes. She argues that instead of focusing on policy, putting emphasis on concrete activities would have been more useful. This appears to contradict her earlier reflections: she then argued that concrete activities failed because of the negative attitudes of some of the teachers. It therefore appears as if she lacks an understanding of how to solve disputes in the team. Besides these possible shortcomings of unwillingness and a lack of knowledge, it is also well known that problems in segregated schools cannot be met by introducing blueprints, but need to be solved by taking on a more adaptive approach (Harris & Chapman, 2004; Lupton, 2005; West et al., 2005): the rather similar organisation of the two meetings is at odds with this.

Ascribing shortcomings to the head teachers however, and again, does not really explain their behaviour and their decisions to organise meetings. In order to explain their decisions and behaviour it is important to consider both the social relationships between the teachers and the head teachers and the effects of the emerging problems on the functioning of the school organisations. At the *Sleutelschool*, the two teachers who sounded the alarm bells are seen as competent and experienced teachers. The head teachers can therefore not just resist their call to improve collaboration by positioning them as incompetent. Attention has to be given to their complaints, which, in line with his beliefs, he initially does by offering them individual support. But that approach proves inadequate when other teachers increasingly report problems: the issue is frequently raised and frustrations and dissatisfaction become more widespread in the team. The head teacher now has to pay attention to the whole team, even though he questions its relevance.

At the *Professor Bakkerschool* parent involvement has improved in recent years and the school's policy emphasises the importance of focusing on this topic. This policy however developed under the guidance of the former head teacher who pointed out that it represented his personal vision and not that of the team. The team was not seen as supporting the policy. The deputy head became the new head teacher and she is responsible for the coming evaluation of the school's initiatives to increase parent involvement. She is therefore in a position in which activities need to be further rolled out as part of the policy. But the success of the activities is, at the same time, hampered by some of the teachers' unsupportive attitude. Changing teachers' attitude is however something she and other team members consider to be difficult, but introducing new activities or developing policy without these teachers' support as happened in the past, are not seen as fruitful options. In this situation, she enrolls the team in a substantial meeting facilitated by external trainers. The meeting is part of this training course.

Social relationships between head teachers and teachers not only affect how the meetings go, the meetings are also supposed to intervene in the existing social relationships. As mentioned earlier, the functioning of the *Sleutelschool* is threatened because problems

accumulate and teachers feel increasingly less supported by their colleagues and by current forms of collaboration. The functioning of the *Professor Bakkerschool* is challenged because their efforts and activities would soon be evaluated but not all teachers are supportive. To improve the school's functioning, the meeting at the *Sleutelschool* therefore serves to develop a school's policy whereby teachers feel better represented, while the meeting at the *Professor Bakkerschool* aims to decrease teachers' say over their practices in order to diminish the differences between policy and practice (see Meyer & Scott, 1983; Ball, 1987).

The head teachers' decisions to organise meetings are therefore influenced by existing policy structures in the school organisations and by the behaviour of the teachers. On top of that, their decisions to organise the meetings seem to have been affected by a shared understanding of the improvements of school organisations.

As mentioned earlier, the head teachers and teachers at both schools believe that problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement generally result from deficits ascribed to parents. Their role is to compensate for these deficits and to prevent normal teaching and learning being disrupted. These beliefs are supported by a deficit perspective on parents from ethnic minority backgrounds and by an instrumental approach of school organisations. These perspectives and approaches, as discussed in chapters two and three, dominate current policies on the integration of ethnic minorities and research into educational disadvantage. Albeit critical of these perspectives and approaches, it seems that the head teachers develop the meetings by drawing on these assumptions because there are no alternative understandings.

The head teacher at the *Sleutelschool* had, in the past, introduced several measures to deal better with pupil behaviour. These measures cover a variety of approaches: the norms and value project developed under the guidance of an external trainer; the head teacher and deputy head provided coaching to individual teachers; the team jointly developed a protocol; and a notebook was introduced in each classroom to write down misbehaviour. The meeting is another attempt to deal with the problems, and rather than showing signs of unwillingness, the head teacher's behaviour may be considered as a sign of again having to deal with the issue after several attempts to gain control over it, but apparently without success.

The behaviour of the head teacher at the *Sleutelschool* may then instead be considered as a sign of lacking understanding of how best to deal with pupil behaviour. But neither did the teachers express these kinds of ideas: they are critical about current collaboration but do not present any alternatives. Instead, their views cover many different beliefs and touch upon a variety of problems experienced with pupil behaviour and when jointly dealing with behavioural needs.

Also at the *Professor Bakkerschool* alternative understandings for the idea that through collaboration based on commonly shared beliefs problems with parent involvement could be solved, neither appear to exist. The former head teacher had achieved considerable improvements in contact with parents, but neither prevented some teachers from not supporting these initiatives and developments. Moreover, the teachers do not express ideas about how the situation could be improved in the school organisation. They point out the problem of polarisation, but argue that collaboration makes little sense given the current circumstances. Their views about the issue at stake (like those of the teachers

at the *Sleutelschool*) cover many different beliefs and touch upon a variety of problems experienced with parent involvement.

Given this lack of an alternative, it may be considered a good strategy to enrol the team in an externally facilitated training course. However, the course also departs from the point of view that problems with parent involvement result from the characteristics of parents from non-native Dutch backgrounds, and the course aims to develop policy to which all teachers could adhere.

The data indicate that the common understanding that problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement result from deficits ascribed to parents and that the school's role is to compensate for these deficits is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, head teachers and teachers' reflections on the problems experienced with pupil behaviour and parent involvement show that the problems take many forms and depend on situations. Parent involvement, for example, depends on the children's age and on the kind of involvement expected, and pupil behaviour, among other things, depends on relationships between peers; their individual characteristics; and the educational task they have to carry out. It seems that thinking in terms of solving problems in school organisations by implementing the right conditions tends to overlook both the complexity and context-dependency of the problems experienced with segregated schools.

Secondly, head teachers and teachers share the general idea that both deficit characteristics of parents and problematic conditions of school organisations relate to problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement. Their reflections however show many disputes about both the ascribed characteristics and the ideas about how to solve problems. For example, ideas on sound collaboration differ significantly at the *Sleutelschool*, and at the *Professor Bakkerschool* teachers do not agree on the extent to which they could remedy and be held accountable for problems with parent involvement. The idea of implementing the right conditions in order to solve problems also tends to overlook these kinds of normative disputes and ideological differences that exist between people working in school organisations.

At both schools the behaviour of the head teachers therefore does not just result from a lack of knowledge or a lack of commitment. Though they may not have ideas about how to best solve the problems in the schools, their behaviour is influenced by commonly shared ideas on both the causes of problems, such as low parent involvement levels, and problem behaviour of pupils, and on how school organisations can best solve those problems. It seems that characteristics such as unwillingness or inability, and the head teachers' decisions to introduce meetings are influenced by a combination of social relationships between the teachers and head teachers, the schools' policies, and the generally shared ideas of basing courses of action on commonly shared understandings, and of implementing the right conditions in the school organisations in order to regain control over problems of educational disadvantage.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

Problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement are typical features in segregated schools. The *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* seek to control these problems by

developing conditions generally identified as features of successful school organisations. These conditions should prevent the disruption of normal teaching and learning processes, which the head teachers and teachers assume are caused by deficits of pupils and parents and by deficits among the teachers and in the school teams. Their beliefs and approaches fit in with the general understanding of educational disadvantage and how to best combat in school organisations.

However, as I have tried to make clear in this analysis, these assumptions tend to overlook the interaction in school organisations. I did not intend to argue that the mentioned characteristics of the pupils, parents, teachers, head teachers and the school organisations and the influence of these characteristics on their behaviour and interactions, do not influence the problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement. However, I dispute the fact that these characteristics result in unprofessional behaviour and problematic interactions that simply explain these problems.

Drawing on the presented data, the characteristics of pupils, parents, teachers, head teachers and the school organisation influence behaviour and interactions through the following three interrelated processes: (a) the labelling and positioning of certain characteristics of people; (b) the development of social relationships between teachers and head teachers; and (c) the embedding of their activities in the school's policy, which consists of both discourses and materialised forms (i.e. programmes, informal rules, materials).

The problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement are therefore not the result of deficit characteristics, but the outcome of the three processes mentioned above that ascribe people with different characteristics to certain positions and define relationships between them. This constellation of positions and relationships contributes towards the teachers and head teachers' behaviour and interactions. The idea that deficit characteristics explain educational problems had however a significant impact on the observed developments in the two schools. Through the three mentioned processes, the deficit perspective defined the positions and relationships in a way that not only resulted in the reinforcement of problematic practices in the school organisations, but also tended to maintain itself.

7.

Learning the Language of the School

In the previous chapters I examined interactions between actors with an emphasis on the negotiation and possible change of educational norms. In this final empirical chapter I take a somewhat different approach. I discuss the 'Mother-tongue' Programme which aims to teach the Dutch language to immigrant women and to bring them in line with expectations relating to their participation in their children's education³¹. The programme does not contest educational norms in themselves, but changes occur in the participating women's identities as a result of a change in their knowledge and skills. They learn, so to speak, the language of the school.

This chapter analyses the influence of changes in the women's identities on their ascribed educational positions. These ascribed positions are based on educational norms, and now that the mothers meet these norms more often, the ascribed positions may change accordingly. However, firstly, the data indicate that changes in the women's identities do not simply depend on their participation, but also on the positions they are ascribed in the context of the programme. Secondly, the data demonstrate that despite changes in their identities, the women's positions in the school organisations hardly change at all. The mother-tongue teachers'³² different interpretations and translations of the programme's policy made a difference to changes in the women's identities but not to their positions in the school organisation. This is the outcome of processes in which the role of the school organisation is addressed only in an instrumental manner and in which the participating women are positioned having deficits and are not asked for their opinions.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the policy of the Mother-tongue Programme. Section 7.1 looks at the set-up and aims of the programme. Section 7.2 discusses how the mother-tongue teachers at the *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* translate these policies into lessons, and examines the conditions that influence how the teachers organise the lessons, and the meanings they attach to the programme. Section 7.3 analyses the interactions that take place during the mother-tongue lessons. It focuses on the engagement of the women and on the approaches of the mother-tongue teachers, and

31 The women are not learning their own 'mother tongue' they are learning but a second language – i.e Dutch. The programme is called 'Mother-tongue' because it is lessons for the 'mothers'.

32 The mother-tongue teachers do not teach the women's own mother tongue, but Dutch. See also footnote 31.

discusses the effects of these interactions and approaches on the relationship between the school, the women, and the Mother-tongue Programme. Section 7.4 analyses whether the deficit position ascribed to the participating women becomes subject to negotiation and change. To this end, this section discusses evaluation reports on the Mother-tongue Programme and the reflections of regular teachers, coordinators, mother-tongue teachers and women on the outcomes of the programme. Section 7.5 analyses the positions of the different actors involved in the programme and examines why these positions barely change at all despite developments in the identities of some of the participating women. Section 7.6 draws conclusions on the missed opportunities of the Mother-tongue Programme.

7.1 Policy on the Mother-tongue Programme

As part of policies on immigrants residing in the Netherlands, the municipality in which the two schools are located tasked the Educational Support Services [*Onderwijs Advies*] and the Regional Educational Centre [*Regionaal Onderwijs Centrum*] to develop and coordinate a programme for immigrant women, which resulted in the Mother-tongue Programme, which provides Dutch language lessons for immigrant women. The programme was launched in March 2001 at 'language nurseries' i.e. playgroups that target children aged two and three who are non-native speakers of Dutch. The programme was extended in September 2002 to include the first two years of primary education. From then onwards, women whose children attend the first two grades of primary schools (aged 4-6) working with the Pre- and Early Education Programme *Piramide*³³ can participate in the Mother-tongue Programme. This chapter focuses on the lessons attended by women whose children are enrolled in grades one or two at the *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool*.

The women targeted by the Mother-tongue Programme not only have children attending the first two grades of primary school, but their command of Dutch should not extend beyond a certain level. The programme is meant for women who have a limited knowledge of the Dutch language, or not at all. Before enrolling in the course, the women take a test to assess their Dutch language proficiency. These tests are taken under the supervision of the mother-tongue teachers from the Regional Educational Centre. When the women are accepted on the course, they follow thirty, 2-hour lessons at a cost of € 22,50. Free childcare is provided. If the women also participate in the programme called *Opstap*, participation in the Mother-tongue Programme is free. There is a maximum of 12 women in a group. The women receive a certificate of attendance after 30 lessons and if they have followed at least 80% of the 30 lessons.

The mother-tongue lessons are given by female teachers from the Regional Educational Centre who are trained to teach Dutch to non-native speakers. Female assistants from the Educational Support Services and who have a Moroccan background assist the teachers during the lessons, and, where necessary, they function as translators. The assistant also helps to recruit women for the Mother-tongue Programme, through the *Opstap* programme. *Opstap* is a home-based intervention programme conducted by the municipal Educational Support Services and targets the same group of women. The Mother-tongue Programme

33 Please see chapter five on the Walk-In Morning for more information on this Pre and Early Education Programme.

assistants also work for the *Opstap* programme where they have a similar function.

Schools collaborate in the Mother-tongue Programme in three ways. Firstly, they are asked to appoint a coordinator, who functions as a contact person for the mother-tongue teacher. Secondly, they are asked to help recruit women. The teachers from the primary schools are supposed to draw the programme to the women's attention and women can enrol for the lessons via the school's coordinator. Finally, the schools are asked to arrange for a room where the lessons can be given.

The programme has a threefold objective: firstly, the women's speaking skills have to be improved. Improving speaking skills amounts to the participants' vocabulary being the same as what children learn in grades one and two. The women are encouraged to practice the vocabulary together with their child. Furthermore, the women also learn vocabulary that is accepted in primary schools and important for communication with the schools. It helps them to hold basic conversations with the teachers or others in the school; for example, to inform the teacher (by telephone) that the child is ill; to make an appointment; or to hold basic conversations about the child.

A second objective of the programme is to improve women's involvement in the school. Both their knowledge and attitude are subject to intervention as the following excerpts illustrate:

The participant knows what a school day looks like and what her child learns; the participant knows who works at the school; the participant knows how cooperation between parents and school are stimulated in the *Piramide* method (Walk-in Morning, information about projects, and exercises to be carried out at home); the participant knows how to stimulate the child's language development. [evaluationdocument2001/2002]

The participant dares to enter her child's classroom and to participate in activities like the Walk-in Morning and parents weeks; the participant shows an interest for the school day of her child; the participant increasingly becomes involved in school activities and dares (on an elementary level) to respond if requested, for example, by the teacher; the participant speaks at home with the child about different projects. [evaluationdocument2001/2002]

Moving on to regular language lessons of the Regional Educational Centre is seen as a third and final objective of the programme. This aim is considered important because these regular lessons further enhance women's capabilities to support their children and to participate in Dutch society.

The materials used during the lessons relate to the first two objectives. Two books are used: one entitled '*Piramide*' that covers the themes addressed in grades one and two as part of the *Piramide* programme, and another book entitled: 'My child at primary school: A course on language and parental involvement'. This instruction books covers themes such as: who works at the school; what children do during physical education lessons; the structure of school days in grades one and two; and school reports.

The programme in its current form came to an end in March 2005. The programme

is set to be restructured with more emphasis on integration and citizenship and less on education. The lessons will no longer be given in the school but in community centres.

What is noticeable in the set-up and objectives of the Mother-tongue Programme is that the women who participate are ascribed two positions: firstly, they are ascribed a position as a child-raiser who has to learn how to stimulate the child's language development and who develops an interest for and an understanding of the child's education, and who starts to talk about it at home. Secondly, they are ascribed a position in which they are responsible for their communication with the school. They have to learn the basics of this kind of communication and they have to learn to meet the expectations regarding their involvement that the teachers, the school organisation and the *Piramide* programme have of them. Learning Dutch is not presented as an objective in itself, but serves instead as an instrument to stimulate the women's integration as mothers whose children attend primary school. While aiming to fit the women in with the expectations and practices of the school, the collaboration between the programme and the schools is restricted to practical issues.

7.2 Translating Policy into Practice: Mother-tongue Lessons

Certain criteria for the command of Dutch are set for enrolling in the programme. But these criteria still leave room for considerable differences between the women who enrol in the lessons. The group composition may differ significantly per school. Four to six women attend the mother-tongue lessons at the *Sleutelschool*. The children of these women attend the *Sleutelschool*. All women are from Moroccan backgrounds which makes it possible for the assistant, who is herself from Morocco, to address the women in their mother tongue if necessary. The women's command of the Dutch language differs considerably, but none of them are illiterate, which makes it, according to the mother-tongue teacher, easier to teach the women. She recalls that last year the group was somewhat bigger and five of the women were illiterate. This created problems as the materials were too difficult for these women and they could not keep up with the lessons. The women became passive and did not participate in the lessons, which had a negative influence on the group as a whole. But this year she is very satisfied with the group: two women (who have almost completed the course and whose fluency in the Dutch language is better than that of the other women) are actively engaged and they have a stimulating influence on the other women. This year the atmosphere is good: the women are enthusiastic about the lessons and are focused on learning.

The situation at the *Professor Bakkersschool* is different. Five or six women attend the lessons here. One of the women's children does not attend the *Professor Bakkersschool* but a school nearby. The women are from different backgrounds: one is from Sri-Lanka, another from Turkey, another from Somalia, and the rest are from Morocco. This diversity of linguistic backgrounds means that the assistant, herself with a Moroccan background, is not able to translate for all the women. Furthermore, three women are practically illiterate. The mother-tongue teacher argues that it would be better for these women to enrol first in a course to learn to read and write, but they cannot do this because their husbands will not allow it, and they also have a lot of children to take care of. The assistant explains that the illiterate women with Moroccan backgrounds often say to each other that the learning

materials are too difficult and that they will not remember it all. She also points out that the illiterate women do not often do their homework and fail to understand what is said during the lessons.

Contact with the Schools

Both the *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* have made a room available for the mother-tongue lessons and have appointed a coordinator³⁴. At the *Sleutelschool* a classroom is available to the mother-tongue teacher and at the *Professor Bakkerschool* lessons are given in the staffroom. This staffroom only has a small whiteboard, which the mother-tongue teacher can only use a part of. This makes writing down a lot of vocabulary rather complicated. But otherwise, the mother-tongue teachers are satisfied with the facilities.

At the *Sleutelschool* the deputy head became the coordinator and at the *Professor Bakkerschool* a regular teacher was assigned this task. The two mother-tongue teachers are not really satisfied about their relationship with the coordinators. At the *Sleutelschool* the coordinator has her a day off when the mother-tongue lessons are given. Therefore, the mother-tongue teacher and the coordinator only met at the beginning of the school year and now and then they communicate via e-mail. As a result, the mother-tongue teacher points out, contact with the coordinator is restricted to practical issues only. But with the support of the coordinator she nevertheless arranged for the weekly school newsletter to be available for her lessons, and if she has a question she can ask the coordinator for information via e-mail.

Though contact with the coordinator is formally not expected to extend beyond this level, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* is critical about the limited contact with the coordinator. In her opinion, more contact with the coordinator but also with the teachers could contribute towards the objectives of the Walk-in Morning being better achieved:

[Not knowing the teachers] that's a disadvantage, a real disadvantage. <...>I think it has a considerable advantage to know them. <...> I could for example tell them about the exercises that the mothers have to carry out this week. This week I told the school's caretaker that he could expect some mothers who will ask him what his work involves. So he asked me how many would come. And I said five at most, but most probably less. So, it's pleasant when I can inform them, to just briefly prepare, well prepare...but that they know. <...> Then, they can think about it for a while. And maybe take some time for it, to pay some attention to it. Then it's not like; hey, what kind of a question is that? What's that all about, what's the relevance of that? It's about practicing Dutch; it has to be a functional encounter. [s1111104:interviewmothertongueteacher]

34 The schools' role in the recruitment of women has not been discussed because at the time of the research the programme was in the process of being restructured and therefore no new women were allowed to enrol in the few past months: the coordinators were not supposed to bring the programme under the attention of women whose children newly enrolled in the grades one and two.

At the *Professor Bakkerschool* contact between the coordinator and the mother-tongue teacher was not established. In the opinion of the mother-tongue teacher, the coordinator is not very approachable, and therefore she used to discuss practicalities with the head teacher. But he left the school and though she may address the deputy head with questions, in the deputy head's absence - which is the case at the time of research - there is nobody else to address.

The lack of contact creates problems for the mother-tongue teacher insofar as she struggles to get spare copies of the school's newsletter. But except for this practical matter, the mother-tongue teacher does not consider the lack of contact to have a negative influence on her lessons or the objectives she wishes to achieve:

You know, these mothers bring their children to school every day. So if the teachers want to, they can contact the mothers. It mainly depends on, it's about the mothers who should know more about what's happening in the classroom. It's not about the teacher and what she does. It's about what happens in the classroom and the school as a whole. That the mothers better understand how a school organisation functions. Really, that teacher isn't so important to me. No, it's about the contact between the mothers and their children's class, and what happens at the school with celebrations, parent involvement. [pb170105interviewmothertongueteacher]

Comparing these two quotations, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* appears to target the women in relative isolation from the school: she tries to enhance the women's knowledge and capacities and does not expect the teachers to play a role in that. The teachers may simply benefit from improvements in the women's capacities. The mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* has a different opinion: she argues that the school could play a role in the women's development if the relationship between the programme and the school were more substantial.

The slight differences in the contact of the mother-tongue teachers with the school coordinators and their somewhat different views on the relationship between the school and the Mother-tongue Programme influence the content of the mother-tongue lessons. As mentioned, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* is provided with spare copies of the weekly newsletter, which she incorporated in her lessons for the following reasons:

I thought this [the weekly newsletter] ought to be part of it [the lessons]. The idea [in the programme's set-up] is that everything handed out at school can be discussed during lessons. And the first year, they [the mothers] regularly brought this newsletter with them. But others forgot to bring it. So I thought it would be better if we discussed it systematically, and I asked the coordinator to provide some spare ones each week, so that I can hand them out to the mothers who tend to forget. That is how it went. <...> [By discussing the newsletter] the mothers know when there is a Walk-in Morning, when there is a play. And I don't only encourage them to attend, I also make homework from it <...>. In my opinion, this is one way to improve parent involvement. [sl111004interviewmothertongueteacher]

The newsletter is discussed every week. Emphasis is put on the information that concerns grades one and two, and on information of general importance, but the women also sometimes ask for other topics that concern their children in higher grades to be explained. Furthermore, the mother-tongue teacher uses the newsletter to set homework. During one of the lessons, for example, the newsletter informs parents that the children in grade one are going to the children's farm near the school. The mother-tongue teacher sets homework for those women with children in grade one; they have to ask the teacher whether they are allowed to go along on the excursion.

Besides affecting the content of the mother-tongue lessons, the newsletter also once played a role in the activities organised by the school. At the first lesson that was observed, the weekly newsletter informed parents about open-door lessons in grades one and two: parents are welcome to observe lessons next week on Monday afternoon. The homework set by the mother-tongue teacher is for the course participants to attend.

The following week, on Monday morning, the newsletter for that week is discussed during the mother-tongue lesson. It repeats the message about the open-door lessons but the time-schedule has changed; the lessons are now organised for the Monday morning. The mother-tongue teacher gets confused because this actually means that the open-door lessons are being held at the very same time as her lesson. Two mothers say that the last time-schedule is correct; one of them attended the public lesson until nine o'clock when the mother-tongue lessons started. Another mother had asked the teacher whether she could stay until nine o'clock and then leave to attend the mother-tongue lessons. The teacher responded by saying: "No, that's not possible, we're having lessons too". The mother-tongue teacher gets a little angry and tells the mothers exactly what she thinks. She says she will contact the coordinator. After all, the coordinator knows that the mother-tongue lessons are given on Monday morning, and that she encourages the women to attend these kinds of activities at the school. Therefore, she argues, they should not organise these activities on Monday mornings.

The mother-tongue teacher sent an e-mail to complain, and the coordinator decides to organise a new activity; parents can choose a school day when they would like to observe lessons for about two hours. The class teachers recall that parents were very enthusiastic about this opportunity and made use of it.

Although limited, contact between the coordinator and the mother-tongue teacher, can actually make a difference to contact between the school, the programme and the women. It may first affect the lesson content of the Mother-tongue Programme and then influence the activities carried out by the school organisation and attended by the women. Nevertheless, the influence on the lesson content seems more substantial (discussed in further detail below), while the influence on the routine of the school was more of a coincidence.

Ascribing Meaning to the Programme

The two mother-tongue teachers not only reflect differently on their relationship with the schools, they also ascribe a different meaning to the programme and reflect differently on the group of women for whom the programme is set up. At the *Sleutelschool* the mother-tongue teacher describes the objectives and target group of the programme as follows:

We try to achieve that the mothers address the teacher more easily; that they have the skills to speak to the teacher about problems, progress or whatever. That they know something about the school system, well the school system...that they know what goes on at school, what the child learns at school. And we aim to stimulate their involvement in the school, to have them participate more. The ultimate aim is that they will attend regular language lessons: that's the formal aim. <...> They learn a lot of vocabulary with *Piramide*. And via games, homework, and everything, they'll come to understand that their child learns many Dutch words and that they [the children] won't just simply develop this vocabulary. You know, they speak Moroccan at home and I can't teach the mothers everything about *Piramide*, but they will have to understand things like now the children are learning about that particular theme and maybe I can do something with it too. For example with learning colours, when you're getting your child dressed you can say 'I put this red pair of trousers on'. That you can participate actively, that you can stimulate and motivate your child too. [sl111104interviewmothertongueteacher]

Those mothers whose Dutch language proficiency is very limited and who know very little about the school, that really is the group for whom the course is meant. [sl111104interviewmothertongueteacher]

Whereas the mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* uses the following descriptions:

The part on *Piramide* is the same as the programme for the infants. The themes addressed in the classrooms are also discussed here. Then mothers can help their children at home, if necessary, and they know more about what happens at school. The aim is to link the social environment of the school and those of the mothers better. It's simply pleasant [for the mothers] to be able to talk together, with the child, about the things they do at school. Because, they [the mothers] don't have this habit of going to the children's school like we do in the Netherlands, in Western Europe I mean. For them these are two different worlds and that's what you experience with their involvement. During mother-tongue lessons the mothers say they recognise the songs, their children sing them at home. And here the mothers learn the songs and the words, which enables them to sing together with their children at home. <...> Via the school and the child, they become part of a community: it's some kind of an entrée into Dutch society. <...> For me, that is the most important part of integration: that you are part of a social structure, the social environment of your children, and that you know what happens there. <...> And the second part, learning Dutch, is important because they simply have to learn Dutch. They can't attend school four mornings a week because they often have a lot of young children at home. Here we teach them the basics, and then at least they can manage for themselves. That's the second part of the lesson, the part on mother-tongue. Learning Dutch so that they can manage for themselves at home and at school. Very basic, but it's a start. [pb170105interviewmothertongueteacher]

Well, these mothers are illiterate, they have four children at home and so they can't attend school. Or their husbands won't allow them to go to school. This is the kind of group that attends the Mother-tongue Programme. Others will simply attend school: they'll go to the regular language courses offered at the Regional Education Centre. But these are the mothers who fall between two stools. [pb170105interviewmothertongueteacher]

Both mother-tongue teachers ascribe objectives to the programme that are in line with the three objectives mentioned in policy documents. They mention the relationship between the women and the school and focus on the participation of the women in the school; they describe aims in terms of enhancing women-child interactions; and they formulate aims of stimulating the women's enrolment in regular language lessons. Nevertheless, the two teachers interpret the relationship between the women and the school differently. The former mother-tongue teacher stresses the women's development in the context of the education of their children, while the latter mother-tongue teacher puts an emphasis on the women's development in the context of integration in Dutch society. She considers knowing about the education of their children is a necessary part of the women's integration.

Besides the differences in conditions and the different views of the two mother-tongue teachers about their relationship with the schools as discussed above, they also attach a somewhat different meaning to the programme and the women participating in it. Whereas the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* focuses on Dutch language proficiency in combination with an understanding of Dutch education, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* speaks of a group of mothers that falls between two stools and for whom the programme is something of a last resort in their integration process. While the first perspective might be considered somewhat more in line with the policy of the Mother-tongue Programme, these documents and the forthcoming restructuring of the programme also include certain elements that support the latter perspective on integration.

7.3 Identity Negotiations: Learning the Language of the School

Each week, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* writes down the structure of her lessons on the blackboard. The structure is as follows: (1) names, (2) announcements, (3) vocabulary, (4) newsletter, (5) homework, (6) autumn, and (7) welcome at school. Under point one she tells each woman how many more lessons they can still attend. Under point two, there is time for her, the translator, and the women to make announcements. For example, the women might announce they have to leave early. At point three, difficult vocabulary from the previous lesson is repeated. Homework is then discussed. The teacher then moves on to the *Piramide* instruction book and address the theme of 'autumn (point 6)'. Finally, they work with the instruction book on parental involvement under the heading 'welcome at school'.

During the lessons, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* generally expressed her expectations about the women's behaviour. Besides asking why homework has not been done, she, for example, asks a woman to take her coat off, asks a woman to explain why she

is late and asks a woman not to put her materials in her bag and to take them out again. The women seem aware of the mother-tongue teacher's expectations; among other things they sometimes jokingly stress behaviour that meets the teachers' expectations or imitate the mother-tongue teacher when they support each other.

The mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* writes the date down on the white-board. She does not write down her lesson structure, but it becomes clear from observations that before the coffee break she teaches from the *Piramide* instruction book, and afterwards from the instruction book on parent involvement. During the lessons she did not ask why the women had sometimes not done their homework, why they were late or, for instance, to take their coats off. Compared with the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool*, her lessons are more implicitly structured and she does not express her expectations about the women's involvement. Furthermore, the women did not engage in her lessons as did the women at the *Sleutelschool*.

The two mother-tongue teachers use similar topics in their lessons; for example, they both discuss the school calendar and they teach vocabulary. However their approaches differ as the following excerpts show:

At 9:25, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* moves on to point number three written on the blackboard: vocabulary. On the blackboard she writes down some words discussed last week. Amongst other things, she writes down: sun, fog, thunderstorm, and hail. She asks Sara if she knows what 'thunderstorm' means. Sara answers in her mother tongue to the translator. Meanwhile Miriam, one of the other mothers, is making sounds of thunder. "What Sara said is correct", the translator says. The teacher asks Sara to point to the picture that depicts a thunderstorm. Sara points to it. 'Hail' is then addressed. "What does that mean", the teacher asks. It is quiet for a little while, but then Sara says, "I know, those small balls". "Yes", the teacher answers, "that is correct, those small balls of ice, hail". After having discussed the weather vocabulary, the teacher says: "these are the words your children learn too" and she asks if the children know these words. "Yes, Yusef does", Sara responds, and also Samira's son knows them. "I don't know" Mina responds when she is asked whether her nephew Jamal knows these words. The teacher says that the mothers can easily practice these words with their child: "*you can talk about it when you're walking home; you can ask whether the sun is shining today*". [sl081104observationmothertongue]

At 9:15 the mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* starts the lesson and asks the mothers to open the *Piramide* book at page six, which is on the theme of 'Christmas'. This page was set as homework last week: the mothers were supposed to talk with their child about the pictures on this page. The mother-tongue teacher asks whether the children knew the words and all the mothers reply in the affirmative. The mother-tongue teacher then discusses the pictures one by one and in a way very similar to last week's lesson. The first picture is of a Christmas tree and she asks whether the mothers have Christmas trees at home. One of the mothers responds: "That's what we used to have in Sri Lanka". The rest do not have one, and two mothers wearing a headscarf, say something to each other in their mother-tongue.

The teacher continues by saying: “Maybe, when you have been slightly longer in the Netherlands you will also have Christmas trees in your homes”. The next picture is of a crib and she asks Intisaar to explain what she sees. She responds as she learned last week by saying “Maria and Jesus”. “Very good”, the teacher replies, “you say Isa and we say Jesus”. The mother-tongue teacher then points to the crib in which Jesus is lying, and says this is a bed for babies and that this bed is called a cot. She writes the word cot on the white board, but then says that actually this isn’t a cot but a crib and also writes down that word. Then she points to the star on top of the crib, and asks one of the mothers if she knows what it is. The mother doesn’t know and the assistant tries to help her by making the sound ‘st’ several times. But when the mother still doesn’t know, the assistant says it’s a star. This word is also written down on the white board. The teacher continues and says that a big crib is on view at one of the major churches in the city centre. She suggests that the mothers go there; it’s free and fun for the children. She asks whether the mothers know where this church is. They don’t and she explains how to get there. Once more she stresses they should go there with their children; “*It’s fun. There are dummies and the crib is as big as the room we are sitting in.*” [pb131204observationmothertongue]

The mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* asks the mothers to look at the school-calendar in front of them. She asks the mothers to cross off the days that have gone and suggests they can also do this at home; crossing out the days makes it easier to see what is going to happen at school in the coming days. [sl081104observationmothertongue]

The mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* takes the school calendar from her bag and asks: what’s this? ‘Calendar’, Elisa answers. “Correct”, the teacher responds, “and each of you has the calendar hanging on the wall at home, haven’t you?” [pb061204observationmothertongue]

The first two excerpts show that the teachers teach vocabulary related to different themes. While the teacher at the *Sleutelschool* teaches about the weather, the teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* teaches about Christmas. Both themes cover the same material dealt with by their children, but the latter theme may raise questions as to whether the women, who are mostly from a non-Christian background, are actually interested in learning vocabulary related to this topic. However, the idea that the women might not really be interested in this topic is not considered during these lessons. Instead, the mother-tongue teacher argues that because they live in the Netherlands, the women will presumably develop an interest, which is an argument that reflects her focus on integration.

Furthermore, the women at the *Sleutelschool* are more actively involved in the lessons. They engage by making sounds, describing what they are talking about even if they do not know the word and they use the translator to clarify what they mean. At the *Professor Bakkerschool* the women’s responses are more limited: they give answers to the questions they are asked but are not involved when someone else is asked a question; they do not describe what they mean if they do not know the word; and the translator is not actively used.

On top of that, the general advice given to the women about what to undertake with their children not only seems more useable at the *Sleutelschool*, but it also links up with the vocabulary just discussed. At the *Professor Bakkerschool* this link is not explicitly made and pleasure in the relationship between mother and child is stressed instead. This kind of difference in teaching approaches is also noticeable in the quotations on the school calendar. At the *Sleutelschool* the comments on the calendar and what the women can do with them relate to their involvement in the education of their children, whereas at the *Professor Bakkerschool* the women are just told how they ought to behave without paying attention to the importance of certain behaviour.

Another aspect that returns every lesson is the setting and discussion of homework: the women are supposed to discuss materials with their children and they have to carry out assignments in the school. The following excerpt is representative of how homework is set at the *Sleutelschool*:

On the next page there is a completion exercise. The page is set as homework for three of the mothers. One of them is asked to translate the words into Arabic and the teacher asks for confirmation that she is able to carry out this task. The other mother can write sentences with these words, and the third mother can do the exercise as intended in the book. Then the teacher asks a fourth and newly arrived mother whether she is able to write Arabic, and she is not able to. Whether she can write her name, which she does. The teacher asks her to try to copy those words. Besides this exercise she repeats that two mothers are supposed to ask the teacher whether they can join an outing; which was homework set for them earlier during the lesson. [sl011104observationmothertongue]

And the following excerpt is representative of how homework is set at the *Professor Bakkerschool*:

They move on to page 39 and the mother-tongue teacher sets homework. The mothers have to ask the teachers questions like, how long does the Walk-in Morning last, what time does it start, what time do the pupils work in a circle, what time do they have a bite to eat. "What is a bite to eat?" the mother-tongue teacher asks. "Half past ten", Bilge responds and yawns. When the teacher asks "do you understand what physical education lessons means?", Bilge responds immediately by saying "yes". Then the teacher starts to divide the mothers into pairs: they should not go alone to the teacher but pose the questions in pairs. [pb061204observationmothertongue]

The mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* differentiates when setting homework: she adapts the homework to the abilities and knowledge of the women and she asks the women for confirmation if she is not certain that they have the required skills. At the *Professor Bakkerschool*, the mother-tongue teacher sets homework for all women irrespective of their capacities and knowledge. Actually, one of the women already seems to know what a school day looks like, which becomes clear from her answer 'half past ten' to the question what a bite to eat is. Yet, she too is assigned to another woman to carry out the homework.

The women at the *Sleutelschool* are more likely to be given homework that is relevant to them and which they are able to do, while at the *Professor Bakkerschool* the women are more often given homework that is less tailor-made and sometimes irrelevant. These differences can also be seen in the following fragments from discussions about homework that should have been done:

At 10:25, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* moves on to the instruction book on parent involvement. She says to Samira that homework was set for her; she had to ask who the classroom assistant is in her son's classroom. Samira says she forgot. The mother-tongue teacher emphasises that she would like Samira to ask the teacher for this information, and she adds: "Even if it's difficult, it's important to ask the teacher questions. Making mistakes is part of it". Sara, one of the other mothers, endorses this viewpoint and says: "Really, you should try" – and she continues in her mother tongue. Khadija – the assistant – translates that when Sara didn't attend the mother-tongue lessons she really didn't dare to speak Dutch at all, but since she started attending these lessons she knows she simply has to try and practice, and now she dares to. The mother-tongue teacher confirms this: indeed Sara initially didn't dare to speak Dutch, she didn't dare to make mistakes or ask questions. Then Miriam, another mother, joins the discussion. She adds that she has to do everything herself: "After all", she says, "I don't have a husband who does these things". "Well indeed", the mother-tongue teacher says, "but even if you had a husband, would you depend on him entirely, and not do anything yourself?". Sara responds: "Yes, in the past my husband did everything but now I can do things myself and that's gradually getting better". The mother-tongue teacher says to Samira: "It's scary, but please try". Samira responds in Dutch: "It's not scary, I just forgot" <the group laughs>. [sl151104observationmothertongue]

The mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* moves on to the homework set last week. In pairs the women had to ask the teachers questions about the school day. Naoual and Ikram say they haven't done the homework. The homework is set again for them – next week they should ask the teacher questions. The mother-tongue teacher emphasises the importance of doing so, it's important that they themselves speak with and ask the teacher questions. She briefly practices some sentences the two mothers can use to speak to the teacher. A third mother did the exercise and the mother-tongue teacher corrects her homework. She remarks that presumably the teacher has written down the answers, which the mother confirms. The mother-tongue teacher asks the mother, who has her notebook with the answers in front of her, when exactly the Walk-in Morning is held. It turns out that the mother has difficulty telling the time. The two mothers for whom the homework is set again, tell the translator they also find it difficult to tell the time. When the translator tells the mother-tongue teacher, she promises to bring some extra material next week. [pb131204observationmothertongue].

When comparing these two excerpts, we see several issues as discussed above: the women at the *Sleutelschool* actively participate in the lessons, while the women at the *Professor Bakkerschool* remain quiet; the teacher at the *Sleutelschool* is explicit about her interpretation of the women's behaviour – she did not dare – while the mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* does not express her interpretation; and the teacher at the *Sleutelschool* focuses on why it is important to carry out the activity while the teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* points out that it is important to behave as expected. On top of that, it seems that the teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* found out by chance that the homework is too difficult, whereas the lessons and homework at the *Sleutelschool* are more structurally adapted and re-adapted to the women's capabilities.

There are many reasons for these differences, and they cannot simply be considered the outcome of the different meaning that the teachers' attach to the Mother-tongue Programme, the conditions under which they teach being different, or for instance the different personalities of the mothers. But the interactions during the lessons seem to sort different effects on the relationship between the Mother-tongue Programme, the school organisation and the participating women. Firstly, the women at the *Sleutelschool* seem to be taught in a way that is better aligned to the expectations and particularities of the *Sleutelschool*. They are, for instance, better informed about school-related activities and the homework set for them is better adapted to the school situation and their capacities. Secondly, the women at the *Sleutelschool* are more actively engaged in the lessons and they also intervene in the lessons: they respond to the assumptions of the mother-tongue teacher; they try to support each other, and they ask for information if an issue in the newsletter interests them. The lessons provided at the *Sleutelschool* intervene more significantly in the relationship between the women and the school organisation. On the one hand because it offers more opportunities for the women to adapt to the expectations of the school, and on the other hand because it offers them more opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills they are interested in. The environment at the *Sleutelschool* may change more significantly compared with the environment at the *Professor Bakkerschool*. But as the following section shows, both school organisations are equally indifferent to the women's developments: they do not seem to respond to the women's enrolment in the programme.

7.4 Ascribed Educational Positions: Learning the Language, but not being heard

The evaluation report on the Mother-tongue Programme that covers the period between December 2002 and December 2003 argues that the Mother-tongue Programme turned out to be an activity that is easily accessible for a target group that is generally difficult to come into contact with. Attendance levels are high, and moving on to regular language lessons is satisfactory. The women are interested in these regular lessons, but the most important barrier to their attendance is a lack of childcare facilities.

Attempts to measure the effects of the programme on the involvement of the women in both schools and the education of their children failed: responses to a survey conducted among the mother-tongue teachers, the participating women, and the coordinators were too few for conclusions to be drawn (30%). Nevertheless, the evaluation report argues that the programme does have some effect because the mother-tongue teachers and regular

teachers report they do observe developments among the participating women. They notice that the women's knowledge about the activities at the school improves, and that the women contact the teachers more often. On top of that, the women seem more involved in the education of their children. However, these developments were not observed among those women who had no command of Dutch at all: their involvement in the school did not improve.

The report argues that the teachers at the primary schools observe an improvement in the women's participation in school activities. However, the minutes of a meeting of the mother-tongue teachers held in September 2004 report on problems with the contact between the mother-tongue teachers and the schools: it notes that the regular teachers and coordinators are not always well-informed about the programme and that the involvement of the coordinators is sometimes limited. The limited contact with the school organisation is not a new problem: when the Mother-tongue Programme was launched in September 2002 similar kinds of problems were observed – although the lessons were, by then, held in community centres and not yet in the school itself.

Indeed, there was little information from the regular teachers and the coordinators about the Mother-tongue Programme and the participating women. The regular teachers at the two schools generally consider the women's participation in the Mother-tongue Programme as a sign of their interest in the education of their children. At the *Sleutelschool*, some of the teachers notice that some women improve their command of Dutch but it remains unclear whether they speak about women participating in the Mother-tongue Programme or more generally about women following (regular) language lessons. The coordinator at the *Sleutelschool* says she has noticed that since mothers started attending the Mother-tongue Programme they know more about what activities are organised for them at the school. But she continues by pointing out that the effect was better two years ago when more women attended the mother-tongue lessons. Otherwise they are little engaged in the programme: last year a teacher once provided a lesson for the Mother-tongue Programme but that was not structural collaboration.

The coordinator at the *Professor Bakkerschool* says she does not know who she is supposed to communicate with: in her opinion too many actors are involved in the programme which makes it impossible to establish contact. The former head teacher points out that the teachers did not support the Mother-tongue Programme: it had been difficult to organise a room for the mother-tongue course because the teachers did not approve of making a room available.

Knowledge in the two school organisations about the Mother-tongue Programme and on the effects that it has is limited. But neither do the mother-tongue teachers have a clear understanding of the results. They do not know why the women decided to participate in the programme and they do not have a clear idea of what the women learn from their lessons because they do not speak with them about it. Neither do they speak with the schools about the effects that the programme has.

The mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* says that she does not know why the women attend the lessons, and what they are interested in or what they would like to learn. She just follows the programme and says: "There are so many things that the mothers do not know, you simply have to start somewhere". She points out that the

women seem interested in the lessons and seem to regret that the programme will soon come to an end. She herself observes that women have more self-confidence as a result of the programme: after a while they look more self-confident and they dare to ask more questions. But she does not know whether the regular teachers observe any development in their contact with the women because she has no contact with them.

Similarly, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* does not know why the women chose to enrol in the programme. She explains that during the intake these kinds of questions are not asked, but she thinks the women want to learn the Dutch language and also have the idea they have to become more actively involved with the education of their children. Neither is she sure about what parts of the lessons the women are interested in. It appears to her that the women are somewhat more interested in the things their children learn in the class and in advice about how to get more involved, while they seem less interested in general topics such as the development of the motor system of the children. But she emphasises that these are just her ideas: she has never spoken about their interests with the women. She notices that the women do get something from the lessons: after a while, they are more self-confident and dare to speak in public more often and start asking questions. But she does not know whether the programme has any effect in the contact between the women and the regular teachers because she does not speak with the teachers either.

The Mother-tongue Programme aims to fit the women in with the expectations of the schools and of the educational system, and ascribes the women to the position of child-raisers who need to develop their interest for school activities and to learn how to stimulate the development of their children at home. Furthermore, it holds the participating women responsible for the contact developed with the schools. Reflecting on the understandings of the regular teachers, coordinators and of the mother-tongue teachers on the interests and developments of the women, it is perhaps most striking that they know very little about the women. Little is known about the motivation and interests of the women, and possible developments in the ascribed deficit position remain guesswork. The Mother-tongue Programme is conducted in considerable isolation from the school organisations and the possible developments of the women are not really noticed.

Perspectives of the Participating Women

The participating women were interviewed about how they saw the Mother-tongue Programme. At the *Professor Bakkerschool* a number of problems were encountered in the interviews. Firstly, the command of Dutch of the assistant at the *Professor Bakkerschool* was lower than that of her counterpart at the *Sleutelschool*, which sometimes made it more difficult to understand her translations. Then, the assistant at the *Professor Bakkerschool* tended to answer for the women instead of only translating the questions and answers. Thirdly, the time-schedule of the mother-tongue lessons at the two schools was slightly different which made it possible to interview the women at the *Sleutelschool* more extensively after the lessons, whereas at the *Professor Bakkerschool* the interviews had to be conducted prior to the lessons (when not all the women had arrived and therefore some of them joined the interview halfway through). Fourthly, and similar to the differences observed in the mother-tongue lessons, the women at the *Sleutelschool* engaged more actively in

discussions, whereas the women at the *Professor Bakkerschool* often gave just short answers to the questions and then fell silent again. Fifthly, the women at the *Professor Bakkerschool* for whom the assistant could not translate were difficult to interview. Finally, there was no private room at the *Professor Bakkerschool* where the interviews could be conducted: regular teachers and the mother-tongue teacher walked in and out during the interviews.

Two of the women at the *Professor Bakkerschool* who are both illiterate but one of whom speaks Dutch slightly better, explain that they follow the programme because they want to learn the Dutch language. They want to be able to go to the doctor and to go shopping on their own. The woman from a Turkish background - who is literate and somewhat more fluent in Dutch - also expresses the same motivation for following the course. Only one woman, with a Moroccan background and more fluent in Dutch than the other three women, says that after she had spoken with the assistant she thought it would be a good idea to learn together with her child.

The first two women say that the mother-tongue lessons are of little use to them: they learn a few words but otherwise their command of the language and their contact with the teacher is still limited. The woman with a Turkish background and the woman who is more fluent in Dutch both use the lessons at home in their interaction with their children. For instance, they talk with the child about the pictures in the instruction books and they enjoy doing so. Furthermore, their contact with the regular teacher improved because they are more capable of asking questions. However, they do not talk about these developments with the mother-tongue teacher.

The women at the *Sleutelschool* also enrolled in the Mother-tongue Programme to learn the Dutch language. They want to be able to speak with the doctor, the teacher or others, without the help of their husbands, children or friends. But on top of that, one of the women reflects, having enrolled in the programme, she realised that learning the Dutch language is not only important for her but also for her child. Two other women endorse her argument: the mother-tongue teacher explained to them that learning together with their children is very important. And they also enjoy doing so: the lessons have helped them to develop ideas about what they can do at home to support their children's development. However, the women point out that their abilities are still limited: they can support the youngest children, but when the children grow older and the lesson material becomes more difficult they feel unable to offer support. The lesson material in grade three is already too difficult for them to understand: "I help with the small questions, not with the big questions", one of the women says.

Furthermore, these women's contact with the teacher increased to a certain extent: they now know who to talk to at the school when they have a question. But the women do not talk with the teachers about their enrolment in the Mother-tongue Programme or about the support they give their children. If they have any questions about it, they will ask the mother-tongue teacher for advice.

When talking about their contact with the teachers, one of the women interrupts and remarks that the teachers always say that their children are disadvantaged, but they never give advice about how to support the child at home. In contrast, the mother-tongue teacher often concludes the lessons by giving advice. The other women do not endorse her argument: one of them points out that it depends on the teacher; another says that they do

get advice in the higher grades, but in grade one this kind of advice is less relevant because the children are young; and again, another woman says they may still not understand the teacher well enough. The woman who raised the issue then says she had not experienced this problem herself, whereas a neighbour had done.

Nevertheless the issue is raised again in a second interview. This time the women express their worries more collectively. It is not because they have had negative experiences themselves, but because they often hear that the quality of education at the *Sleutelschool* is poor. While they notice that learning the Dutch language has improved their contact with the teachers, these negative stories worry them. To illustrate her concern, a woman talks of her experiences with a Walk-in Morning she recently attended. During the activity she sat next to native-Dutch woman. The teacher walked past and asked the Dutch mother whether she would like to come and watch the puppet-theatre that had been organised for the children. The teacher did not invite her. The woman points out that in the past she would not have been able to understand this conversation, but now that she does, she feels upset that the teacher did not invite her. Not being invited did not stop her from attending because during the mother-tongue lessons they talked about the activity and she knew they were welcome. However, she wonders why the teacher did not invite her, and she worries whether this might be an indication that the teacher pays less attention to her son. But she does not dare raise the matter because she is afraid it may have negative consequences for her son.

The women enrol in the mother-tongue lessons because they want to learn Dutch. From the outset, the link with the education of the children and the school organisation is not self-evident. It seems that the women start to focus on their role as child-raisers when they are explicitly addressed in that way during the mother-tongue lessons. When reflecting on their identity as child-raisers, the women report that they are now more involved in interaction with their children and the teachers. But given their reflections about the contact with the teachers it remains doubtful whether the teachers pay much attention to the women's developments.

7.5 Analysis

This chapter discussed the Mother-tongue Programme, which provides Dutch language lessons to women whose children are enrolled in the first two grades of primary education at schools that use the *Piramide* programme. The main objectives of the programme are to enhance the women's involvement in the education of their children and to improve their contact with the school by teaching them the Dutch language, and to have them enrol in regular Dutch language courses.

The *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* are not formally responsible for the programme. But the relationship between the programme and the primary schools is twofold: firstly, there is a direct relationship because the schools are supposed to provide a room where the lessons can be held, and a coordinator with whom the mother-tongue teachers maintain contact. Secondly, there is an indirect relationship because the programme intervenes in the constitution of the school organisation; it affects communication between the schools and a group of women that is generally difficult to access by improving the

women's knowledge, skills and attitude.

The aim of this chapter was to study whether changes in the women's identities result in changes in the ascribed positions of the actors involved. In this section I first analyse the ascribed and positioned identities of the school organisations, the mother-tongue teachers, and those of the participating women. I then go on to examine whether changes occurred in the ascribed position of the different actors as a result of the Mother-tongue Programme.

Positions Ascribed to Schools, Mother-tongue Teachers, and Participating Women

The role of schools in the Mother-tongue Programme is purely a practical one. Besides not having any formal responsibility for the programme, schools are only supposed to make a room available and appoint a coordinator. Their role in the educational participation of women generally considered as difficult to communicate with is not addressed. It appears that the programme is based on the assumption that the women's and their children's position in the educational system will improve by teaching the women the Dutch language, by helping them know more about education, and facilitating a sound attitude regarding their involvement in the school organisation and the education of their children. Evaluation reports mention some problems about this minor role of the school: contact between the mother-tongue teachers and the school organisations is superficial and limited, and the regular teachers and coordinators know little about the programme and the women who participate. The data indicated that these situations continued to exist.

In addition to individual differences in, for example, teaching experience and teaching approaches, the positions of the mother-tongue teachers depend on how they interpret the programme's policy and on how they translate the programme into concrete lesson material. As far as the mother-tongue teachers' interpretations of the programme are concerned, the programme's policy was found to be hybrid (Blackmore, 1995; Tomlinson, 2003). The programme developed in the contexts of both the educational system and policies on immigrants, and several objectives are set out in the policy documents. The aim of the programme is to teach the women the Dutch language, introduce them to the *Piramide* project, and help them develop an attitude suited to general involvement in the school organisation. The policy being hybrid leaves room for individual teachers to interpret, scrutinise and change the policies as they see fit. They are able to attach different meanings to the programme, which, as the data indicate, is something they obviously did. The mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* stresses the development of the women in the context of the educational system, while the mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* emphasises the women's integration.

Despite these different interpretations of the programme's policy, both mother-tongue teachers endorse the point of view that the mothers have to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes. They argue that the participating women lack the knowledge, skills and attitude to support their children appropriately and to be involved in the school organisation. They generally seem to interpret the behaviour of the mothers (for instance, their not asking questions and not doing their homework) as a sign of not being self-assured. This point of view is in line with the Mother-tongue Programme in which women from a non-Dutch background and with a low command of the Dutch language are ascribed to deficit positions: they have to learn how to stimulate the child's language development;

how to soundly communicate with the school; and to meet expectations regarding their involvement in the school organisation. Learning the Dutch language is considered an important means for achieving this objective.

Although being supportive to the deficit-position ascribed to the participating women, the two mother-tongue teachers again put the emphasis somewhat differently. The teacher at the *Sleutelschool* ascribes these deficits by focusing on the women's language proficiencies and their knowledge of the Dutch educational system, while the teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* argues that these deficits result from the large families these women have, and from their husbands who do not allow them to go to school to study.

Changes in the Ascribed Positions

Concerning the translation of the programme into concrete structures, the data first indicated that personal decisions do matter. The two mother-tongue teachers structure their lessons differently, with a different approach to learning materials, and they engage in different interactions with the women. Secondly, the data indicated that circumstances over which the mother-tongue teachers have little control affect the lessons: the group composition (in terms of both the women's literacy level and their linguistic backgrounds), the translator's mother tongue, the room at their disposal, and the teachers' contact with the coordinator, all had an influence.

The differences in both the meaning attached by the mother-tongue teachers to the programme and the structural conditions, affect the positions of the mother-tongue teachers and the lessons they provide. Despite the Mother-tongue Programme target group being narrowly defined and despite the apparently simple requests to make a room available and appoint a coordinator, differences are observed between the two schools. The mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* teaches a fairly homogeneous group and has slightly more contact with the school's coordinator. Therefore, it is easier for the mother-tongue teacher at this school to design a course that meets the needs and competences of the participating women, the translator is more able to help her, she has better access to school materials, and, albeit incidentally, she can express her dissatisfaction about some of the school's activities. As a result, the mother-tongue teacher at the *Sleutelschool* holds a position in which her interactions with the women are more substantial. Nevertheless, and similar to the mother-tongue teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool*, her position in relation to the school is a fairly isolated one.

The data indicated that the differences in the lessons have implications for the negotiation of the ascribed and positioned identities of the participating women. At both schools however the participating women have to negotiate ascribed deficits.

The women have no formal opportunities to negotiate the ascribed and positioned identities. They are not asked why they participate, what topics they are interested in, or what their experiences with their involvement in the school organisation and the child's education are. However, due to the differences in the lessons, the women at the *Sleutelschool* have somewhat more informal opportunities to negotiate the ascribed and positioned identities. This position results from a combination of situations, including the fact that the mother-tongue teacher at this school is somewhat more explicit about what she expects of the women and her interpretation of the women's behaviour; the group-

dynamics are different (the women at the *Sleutelschool* are more actively engaged in the lessons and engage in more substantial communication with each other and the mother-tongue teacher); and the school's newsletter is discussed every week. As a result of these social and materialised positions, the mothers at the *Sleutelschool* are in a better position to negotiate the ascribed deficits: on the one hand, by meeting expectations more easily and by being better informed and, on the other hand, by refuting incorrect interpretations of their behaviour.

Nevertheless, at both schools the positions of the women in the school organisations seem to change little. This is the outcome of the positions of and the relationships between the actors involved. The regular teachers and coordinators being positioned in an instrumental manner work within the framework of the programme's policy, but they lack knowledge about the programme and are not really involved in it. Despite indications being given that this position was a problem, it does not change. On the one hand, because the evaluation reports seem to make little difference to the programme's policy and the way in which it is carried out. And, on the other hand, because, if they wish to, the individual mother-tongue teachers are not in a position to change this situation. Practical and hierarchical structures hamper them. The women are, in turn, neither in a position to express their ideas about and experiences with the school. Nobody asks for their opinions and the women do not express them.

The lack of change in the ascribed position of the women can be regarded as a missed opportunity. Nevertheless, while the school organisation seems to maintain its contact with these women as it is, some of the participating women do change. These changes, in the most positive scenario, may at some point in time result in the women being able to re-position themselves in the school organisation by participating in the school's activities and by seeking contact with the teachers. But in the worst case scenario, it may alienate those women who put an effort into communicating with the schools but whose attempts are not acknowledged.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

The Mother-tongue Programme illustrated an attempt to teach women from a non-native Dutch background and with a low command of the Dutch language, the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary to meet educational norms for their participation in the education of their children. Unlike in the former two empirical chapters, I did not analyse whether there were any shifts in these norms. Instead, I examined whether meeting the norms resulted in the ascription of different positions to these women.

The data indicated that the women's identities changed. These changes do not solely depend on the individual women, but also on the way in which they are positioned in the lessons. Processes of policy translation, relationships between the coordinators, regular teachers, and the mother-tongue teachers, and the interactions between the mother-tongue teachers and the women also contributed to the developments in the women's identities.

The data also indicated that the ascribed deficit positions of the women barely changed at all. Their attempts to learn the language of the school and to meet educational norms are hardly acknowledged and responded to by the school organisations. This outcome resulted

from interactions between the schools, the mother-tongue teachers, and the women, which are based on a deficit perspective on the women and an instrumental approach on the part of the school organisations.

8.

Unintended Outcomes of Policy and Educational Practice: the Reproductive Outcome of Deficit Discourse in Segregated Schools

We have seen an important change in integration policies in Western countries in recent years. Issues of social cohesion and citizenship are high on the political and research agendas, and a shift to assimilationism took place in a number of countries, including the Netherlands (Snel & Scholten, 2005; Ghorashi, 2006; Vasta, 2007). Espousing a preference for Dutch norms and values, promoting integration, and dismantling segregation, are all illustrations of the changed tone and focus of the integration debate (Snel & Scholten, 2005).

The changing politics of multiculturalism have consequences for the educational institute. Ideas on how best to deal with cultural diversity in the educational system, and ideas about how education should contribute to the multicultural society have changed. Combating segregation, combating a lack of integration, and working on pupils' citizenship are increasingly considered to be the responsibility of schools, and measures have been introduced accordingly. A governance approach and a decentralisation of responsibilities are advocated for schools to adapt their practices to local circumstances and to deal with societal and political priorities.

It is important in this climate to engage in reasoned debate about the responsibilities placed on the receiving country and on the immigrants (Duyvendak, 2006). As far as the educational system is concerned, questions should be raised about the possibility and desirability of reforming the system towards one of cultural diversity and, vice versa, whether immigrant pupils and parents can and should be expected to assimilate into the system. Bearing in mind that segregated schools are confronted the most with societal problems, while little is known about what actually happens at these schools, this dissertation contributes to this debate by studying the relationship between teachers and parents at segregated schools and interrelating this relationship with the institutional context.

I set out in this concluding chapter to discuss how daily practice in segregated schools interrelates with integration and educational policy. This chapter first demonstrates that the interaction between teachers and parents allows for educational disadvantage to be combated, but the reproduction of educational positions tends to be the most significant outcome. The reinforcement of educational disadvantage should be understood in the context of dynamics in the school organisation and of policy. The prominent use of deficit discourse in this institutional context is an important explanation for the reinforcing

mechanisms that are to be found in daily practice.

Secondly, the chapter puts forward an alternative conceptualisation of educational disadvantage. This alternative is based on insights gained in the study, yet more information about the dynamics in segregated schools is necessary to develop this conceptualisation further. To this end, the chapter also gives an indication of a number of possible directions for future research, and the challenges that need to be considered.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: sections 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 summarise the main points of the study's theoretical points of departure, the research questions and methodological approach, and its empirical evidence. Secondly, this chapter answers the two research questions in sections 8.4 and 8.5. Section 8.4 focuses on the level of interaction between teachers and parents, and section 8.5 examines interaction in the context of school organisational dynamics and policy. Thirdly, general conclusions are drawn in section 8.6. This section discusses the necessity to find an alternative for deficit discourse, and proposes an alternative conceptualisation of educational disadvantage. Finally, section 8.7, discusses possible directions for future research.

8.1 Theoretical Points of Departure

The theoretical framework of this dissertation developed from the argument that, although differences in socialisation styles and family circumstances are linked to educational disadvantage, neither the deficit perspective that certain socialisation styles prepare children less for education, nor the perspective that the educational system offers fewer opportunities for children from certain backgrounds, satisfactorily explain educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils. I argued that these perspectives do not really explain how socialisation styles and educational disadvantage interrelate because the agency of persons is primarily understood in terms of deficit remediation and not in terms of interaction, and because the context-dependent judgments on socialisation and educational practices are not taken into consideration.

An alternative view on educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils developed in the theoretical discussion in chapter two. This view came about by interrelating theories on the interaction between individuals in schools with theories on policy translation processes and with theories on school organisations. The following theoretical points of departure were formulated.

Interaction between Individuals

At the level of interaction between individuals, teachers, parents and pupils are conceived of as negotiating identities. This negotiation process takes place through the daily curriculum. The curriculum consists of decisions about what is worth teaching and how best to organise the teaching and learning processes. These decisions do not represent children and parents equally, but instead tell them what identities are worth considering and which not. The language of instruction is a clear example of this, but decisions about, for example, the use of particular learning strategies and the representation of certain forms of cohabitation in learning materials also tell the pupils and parents something about the value of their home practices and circumstances for educational processes.

Through their experience with the daily curriculum, pupils and parents respond to these hierarchical identity reflections in the curriculum. For example, they use the language of instruction, remain silent when expected to co-operate with peers, do not participate in certain activities, or accept the advice of the teacher about how to best support a child at home. The teacher observes and interprets this behaviour and uses these interpretations to further organise the daily curriculum.

The teacher's observation and interpretation of behaviour is based on beliefs about teaching and learning processes, and on assumed characteristics of socially constructed groups. These beliefs are referred to as pedagogic and cultural norms respectively, and together they form educational norms. The use of pedagogic norms results in the ascription of educational identities to pupils and parents, such as, for example 'the disruptive pupil' or 'the malfunctioning family'. Drawing on cultural norms, teachers ascribe pupils and parents to collective backgrounds, such as 'the immigrant pupil' or 'the Moroccan parent'.

Though in principle these identity ascriptions are unrelated, a relationship is established through a re-contextualisation of social identities in the educational context. Teachers have beliefs about how characteristics of groups are related to educational attainment. For example, the teacher might consider an assumed orientation of the immigrant pupil on both the home-culture and the school-culture as detrimental to learning processes. As a result, ascribed educational identities and assumed social identities are interrelated in the teacher's organisation of the daily curriculum. And because pupils and parents subsequently respond to the daily curriculum, which is then again interpreted by the teacher to further organise the curriculum etc., identity ascriptions and valuations are conceived of as being negotiated in daily educational processes.

When taking these negotiation processes and the underlying educational norms into account, combating educational disadvantage can result from two processes. Firstly, when actors develop identities that are acknowledged as meeting the educational norms, or secondly, when educational norms are changed in a way that alternative identities are seen as valuable to the educational process and become included in educational practice. Instead of focusing on either socialisation styles or on educational opportunities to explain educational disadvantage, this dissertation places educational norms and the change and reproduction of them as the main focus for understanding educational disadvantage.

Compared with meeting norms on an individual basis, changing educational norms would seem to allow for more substantial - i.e. group-based - improvements to educational disadvantage (Ball, 1990; Fullan, 1991). But although educational norms are considered the subject of negotiation and therefore interaction between individual people includes the potential to combat educational disadvantage, a change of educational norms does not often result from it. Instead, the interaction between individual people merely tends to reproduce educational disadvantage.

This tendency, as was examined, relates to the process of ascribing and positioning identities. The identities that can be ascribed and identified with are restricted and, in interaction, identities are the subject of selective observation and interpretation. The role and functioning of identity labels in negotiation processes was further examined at the policy level.

Policy Processes

Drawing on theories of policy translation processes, identity labels (such as “disadvantaged pupil”) are not conceived of as merely stating who is the subject of policy intervention, but as ascribing people to educational positions and defining relationships between them. Because these labels refer to common understandings and provide for a shared course of action, the labels, and what they refer to, are not often critically reflected upon. As a result, discussing the identity labels and their underlying educational norms is difficult to achieve.

But even if common understandings become the subject of discussion, it is difficult to change educational norms. This results from the translation of identity labels (and their definition of intervention subjects) into educational measures. These measures do not support alternative understandings and practices. Therefore, normalisation of actors identified as in need of intervention is what is more often aimed at, rather than adapting educational norms to better suit the characteristics and circumstances of the actors who fall behind.

Despite this tendency to function reproductively, the identity labels used in policy leave room for a change of educational norms. This results from policy that includes multiple strands and open-ends and which is not always fully coherent: exactly what identity labels refer to is not fully determined. Therefore, the actors who translate policy into practice interpret, scrutinise, adapt or may even change policy and its underpinning norms.

Though the theoretical reflection on policy processes further enhances understandings of the functioning of identity labels and their underlying educational norms, it still fails to explain how these labels work on the individual actors’ agency in interaction. Therefore, a third and final theoretical approach is incorporated in the theoretical framework, i.e. on the functioning of school organisations.

Dynamics in School Organisations

Head teachers and teachers in school organisations engage in discussion to translate policy into practice. In order to achieve a change of educational norms, routines and assumptions, roles and responsibilities need to be changed (Fullan, 1991; Day, 1999). Theories on school organisational change and on the educational institute point out that, in order to understand these kinds of changes, it is important to examine staff members’ subjective meanings and the hierarchical structures between the staff members. The functioning of subjective meanings and hierarchical structures in school organisations is referred to as ‘the micro-politics of the school organisation’.

The micro-political approach of school organisations firstly covers the topic of subjective meanings. It points out that education serves multiple purposes that cannot be reconciled. Therefore, teachers and head teachers engage in discussion about the meaning of education and the organisation of their practices. However, these disputes contradict the need of a school organisation to develop shared visions. Such kinds of shared visions are necessary for the head teachers and teachers to feel represented and to develop a shared course of action.

Managing this ambiguity might be achieved by developing policy that is multi-interpretable. But this practice creates imbalances in another respect. For a school’s

functioning to be legitimised, its policy and practices need to be acknowledged by external others, such as parents and the school inspectorate. This necessity means that the interpretation of policy in the school organisation must be restricted. A school organisation's policy necessarily enforces certain subjective meanings on the teachers and, to a certain extent, closes off teaching practices that are based on alternative interpretations.

The micro-political approach secondly covers the topic of hierarchical structures in school organisations. In schools, teachers have autonomy over their daily practices, while the head teacher is in the formal position of managing the organisation. Because of the necessity to maintain feelings of representation and social cohesion (i.e. to maintain the schools' internal stability), the head teacher has to allow teachers to have a say in policy matters. But at the same time, the head teacher also has to maintain the school's legitimacy by adopting certain policy and developing externally legitimised practices. Therefore, the teachers' autonomy is also, of necessity, constrained: the head teacher decides who has a say on what topics, and what the legitimised forms of communication are.

This theoretical exploration of school organisations contributed to the view that policy sets outer limits but does not determine identity negotiation processes. This influence is brought about via dynamics and developments in the school organisation. In order to have its practices legitimised, the school adopts policy and its underpinning educational norms. But to maintain the school's internal stability, the school organisation also engages in processes of interpreting and changing policy and its underpinning norms.

With the aim of studying the daily practices at segregated schools, this theoretical exploration pointed out the importance of taking these schools' policy contexts into consideration. Not only because policy affects the daily practices of these schools, but also because it is an element in the functioning of segregated schools: it defines educational norms and the relationship between segregated schools and their local environment. Chapter three continued the theoretical exploration by discussing integration and educational policy.

Integration and Educational Policy: Positioning Immigrant Parents and Segregated Schools and Defining Relations between Them.

Integration policy in the Netherlands is increasingly emphasising the importance of immigrants' participation in Dutch society, and assimilation with its norms and values. Segregation in schools and neighbourhoods is seen as an important obstacle to achieve these aims, and emphasis is put on the necessity to dismantle immigrant concentrations. Furthermore, the responsibility of the individual immigrant to become part of Dutch society is emphasised. The adage should no longer be the furnishing of provisions and measures, but the stimulation of initiatives by individuals or organisations. The introduction of compulsory citizenship programmes and discussions on the undesirability of multiple nationalities are just two examples of the changing discourse in the Netherlands.

Educational policy is significantly imprinted by these changes in integration policy, but also consists of education-specific developments. Chapter three discussed changes in education policy since the 1980s and elaborated on the measures introduced since 2002. In brief, this discussion points out that general education policy emphasises the importance of collaboration between parents and school organisations. Collaboration is considered a

precondition for a school organisation to deliver high quality education.

As part of policy on educational disadvantage, the high quality of segregated schools is defined in terms of stimulating citizenship, combating segregation, and combating educational disadvantage among young children. But the identities ascribed to immigrant parents and to segregated schools in this policy seem to define relationships between them in such a way that building up a context-specific and interactive relationship is rather difficult. It leaves out the reality of both the conditions under which staff at segregated schools work and the problems that immigrant parents face when participating in the educational system. This means that both school staff and immigrant parents are vulnerable to criticism.

8.2 Research Questions and Methodological Approach

The theoretical exploration in chapter two and the policy exploration in chapter three raised questions as to whether educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils can be explained in a different way, and whether current educational policy actually enhances practices in segregated school organisations that combat immigrant pupils' educational disadvantage. Two research questions are formulated in chapter four: firstly, how parents and teachers in segregated primary schools co-operatively attempt to combat educational disadvantage and, secondly, how dynamics in segregated primary schools and policy translation processes influence the interactions between teachers and parents.

The expectation is that the study will find that teachers and parents do not simply engage in processes of mutual adapting and in that way improve both the parents' resources and their access to education. Instead, they are expected to engage in complex interaction which, albeit leaving room to combat educational disadvantage, actually tends to reproduce it.

Furthermore, the study expects that the interaction between parents and teachers should be understood in its institutional context. Policy and dynamics in school organisations are conceived of as not just influencing interaction between teachers and parents: instead, the assumption is that interaction, school dynamics, and policy interrelate in a way that they affect each other, but also form an element in each others functioning.

A qualitative research approach is used to answer the research questions. This approach facilitates the study of dynamics in school organisations (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002) and an examination of the interaction between actors in the institutional context (Yin, 1994). Data were generated at two segregated schools, the bulk of which involved three activities at each school. The comparative component of this set-up allows for the development of a theory on educational disadvantage that is applicable beyond the research sites (Yin, 1994; Steward, 1998), whereas the focus on concrete activities enhances an understanding of how actors construct meaning of their complex daily experiences with education (Bauman, 1996).

Data were collected at two schools over a period of one-and-a-half years (between January 2004 and June 2005). The schools (the *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool*) are located in the same municipality in a medium-sized town in the Netherlands. They are public primary schools, and over 70% of their pupil populations are of ethnic minority

backgrounds. After an introductory phase at each school, the Walk-in Morning activity and the Mother-tongue lessons are studied in depth at both schools. Furthermore, the issues of pupil behaviour and parent involvement were examined at the *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* respectively.

Interviews, conversations (held and overheard), observations, participant observations, and document analysis were all methods used to gather data. Head teachers, deputy heads, teachers, and parents were the most important informants; however, many other people are included in the study.

8.3 Empirical Evidence

The Walk-in Morning activity, a topic of concern for the schools (pupil behaviour at the *Sleutelschool* and parent involvement at the *Professor Bakkerschool*), and the Mother-tongue programme generated most of the data presented in this dissertation. The data on these topics are presented in chapters five, six and seven respectively. This section summarises the main findings.

The Walk-in Morning

The Walk-in Morning activity is organised for parents with children in grades one and two. The parents are allowed to enter the classroom in the morning and to play with their child for about 20 minutes. The activity is part of the pre and elementary education *Piramide* programme and is described in the handbook as a parent activity. Its formal aim is to improve contact between teachers and parents and to improve parents' interactions with their children, but the activity also targets the pupils.

The *Piramide* programme leaves room for interpretation and scrutiny, but the teams neither discuss its content, nor reflect on its usefulness given previous experiences, teachers' expectations, and the existing situations in the schools. They only discuss practical matters, and they present the activity as a "parent activity" with the general aim of working on deficit remediation: parents' involvement in the education of their children and their communication with the teachers are the subject of intervention.

The teachers start organising the activity on the basis of a number of practical resources, and while gaining experience with the activity, the teachers individually further interpret, scrutinise, and adapt the activity. Reflecting on this implementation process, teachers discuss the underlying deficit perspective. They reflect on the complexity of interactions that take place during the Walk-in Morning, and they become critical of their own role, the materials they use, and the assumptions about parents' capacities. These reflections include some potentiality to combat educational disadvantage because the deficit ascribed to parents may no longer be considered as inherent to the parents, but as related to the expectations teachers have of the parents and as dependent on the activities carried out by the school. The reflections include the potential to restructure the activity in such a way that it better fits those parents who, at the moment, hardly seem to benefit from it at all.

To deal with the shortcomings of the Walk-in Morning, teachers, however, do not make substantial changes, or after some experimentation with an alternative organisation, they go back to organising the Walk-in Morning as advised. Some limit their communication

with the parents, others confront parents with their expectations, and again others focus instead on pupils. As a result of these changes, the aim of deficit remediation is not achieved. Teachers legitimise this outcome by again putting forward the perspective that parents are deficient.

The head teacher and deputy head acknowledge that objectives have not (yet) been met, but they stress the importance of continuing the activity. In order to continue, they simply aim to reduce the teachers' burden by introducing a number of practical measures, or they simply accept the teachers' limited contact with parents. Hence, in order for the activity to continue, its limitations are accepted.

Parents attend the Walk-in Morning because they can show an interest in their son or daughter's education, learn more about the materials used in class, motivate their child, encourage their child to complete an exercise, or simply because the child enjoys them being in the class. If they mention characteristics such as not being familiar with the materials or having a limited command of the Dutch language, they do not, unlike the teachers, construct these characteristics as shortcomings that obstruct their participation. Instead, they explain that, for example, the child explains the materials, or that the tasks do not require a good command of the Dutch language.

However, teachers do not acknowledge parents' efforts to meet their shared educational norms. They selectively observe and interpret parents' behaviour and withdraw from communication. Some parents express their dissatisfaction with this situation but continue to attend for the sake of their child. Other parents are less critical of the teachers and simply focus on the importance of them being there for their child.

Pupil Behaviour and Parent Involvement

Pupil behaviour and parent involvement are topics of concern at the *Sleutelschool* and the *Professor Bakkerschool* respectively. At the *Sleutelschool*, problems with pupil behaviour in some classes had given rise to dissatisfaction in the team, and at the *Professor Bakkerschool* the non-cooperative attitude of some teachers to work on parent involvement became a problem because the school's achievement was soon to be evaluated. Despite the teams' efforts to get to grips with these problems, their attempts make little difference to the existing practices.

Teachers and head teachers explain that problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement result from external causes. Parent deficits are primarily conceived of as important explanations for both problems. But other issues such as segregated schools and demographic trends are also considered. On a general level, they also share the idea that teachers are supposed to remediate for deficits and that school organisations have to introduce success factors, such as a good collaboration between teachers and well-implemented policy.

But teachers' and head teachers' interpretations of these common understandings differ significantly. They reflect differently on why parents' deficit characteristics result in problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement, and on how the schools are supposed to deal with these problems. Moreover, it seems that the problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement do not result, as the teams collectively assume, from them not working soundly on deficit remediation, but they are instead the outcome of

far more complex interaction processes, social relationships and policy structures in the schools.

Meetings are arranged at both schools to solve the problems that have arisen in the team. The meetings result from different developments and serve different purposes in the schools. At the *Sleutelschool* the head teacher is practically forced by teachers to arrange a meeting, and the aim of the meeting is to diminish teachers' frustrations, whereas at the *Professor Bakkerschool* the head teacher obliges the teachers to attend the meeting with the aim of increasing the teachers' adoption of the school's policy. Nevertheless, the meetings at the two schools are organised in a fairly similar way: there is time for discussion in small groups, and at the end of the meeting the teachers are to come up with a number of shared statements.

The meetings progress in a similar fashion at the two schools. In small groups, teachers discuss the pros and cons of certain approaches, the differences per grade and possible shortcomings of teaching methods. These reflections include the potential to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the problems experienced with pupil behaviour and parent involvement because the perspective that parents and pupils are deficient and the idea of working on deficit remediation fails to satisfactorily explain the topics the teachers address. Their own roles, the school organisation and a diversity of situations also have to be examined.

But this potential does not develop during the meetings. The teachers accept the necessity to formulate shared statements, which not only leads them to simplify their discussions, but also to put forward the deficit perspective on pupils and parents and the idea that they work on deficit remediation. This perspective, after all, is generally accepted by them.

Mother-tongue Lessons

The Mother-tongue Programme provides Dutch language courses to women with children in grades one and two and who have a limited command of the Dutch language, or none at all. The programme is conducted by and under the auspices of the school advisory service and the regional educational centre. The schools have no formal responsibility for the programme, but they are asked to provide a room and to assign a coordinator. Moreover, the lessons interfere in the schools' relationship with the women who are generally considered as difficult to get into contact with: the women are taught Dutch vocabulary that is the same as the language learned by their children at school, and during the lessons they are also encouraged to participate in the schools' activities.

The programme develops in the contexts of both the educational system and policies on immigrants, and several objectives are set out in the policy documents. The aim of the programme is to teach the Dutch language to the women, to introduce them to the *Piramide* project, and to help them develop an attitude suited to general involvement in the school organisation. Because it is a somewhat hybrid policy, there is room for individual teachers to interpret, scrutinise and change the policies as they see fit.

The translation of the programme into daily practice is shaped differently at the two schools as it depends on numerous different issues and circumstances. Meaning constructions of the Mother-tongue teachers, the group composition, the relationship

between the Mother-tongue teacher and the school coordinator, and teaching approaches, are all elements that influence how policy is put into practice. Comparing the lessons, the women at the *Sleutelschool* seem better able to meet expectations: they develop the expected knowledge, skills and attitude in their interaction with their sons or daughters and with the school organisation, and they become more fluent in Dutch.

However, the schools fail to observe these identity developments and to re-position the women accordingly. The fact that the school is only tasked with practical matters, that the women are not asked for their opinions and experiences, and that limitations of the programme are not solved, all influence this outcome.

8.4 Teacher-Parent Interaction and the Production of Educational Disadvantage

Despite many differences between the Walk-in Morning activity, the issues of pupil behaviour and parent involvement, and the Mother-tongue Programme, a similar pattern is observed in each dataset. A deficit perspective on parents and pupils underpins the policy on the Walk-in Morning and Mother-tongue Programmes: characteristics of parents and pupils from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds are considered to prepare and support the development of children less well compared with children from a native Dutch and middle-class background. This deficit-perspective is generally accepted by teachers and head teachers. Teachers and head teachers also see parent and pupil deficits as the main explanation for the problems they experience with pupil behaviour and parent involvement.

Despite teachers and head teachers' attempts to remediate for the ascribed deficits, the data indicate that the dynamics and developments in the schools result in the ascribed deficits and the disadvantaged positions being reinforced. However, the potential to combat educational disadvantage is also observed in the school and topic-dependent developments. This potential consists either of the educational norms being met by parents, or the educational norms becoming the subject of teachers' criticism. In order to answer the first research question on how parents and teachers in segregated school organisations co-operatively try to combat educational disadvantage, this section discusses this pattern.

Ascribing and Positioning Parent and Pupil Identities: The Teachers

As said, each dataset departs from a deficit perspective on parents: not only does this perspective appear prominently in policy on the Walk-in Morning and the Mother-tongue Programmes, but teachers and head teachers also endorse this perspective to legitimise the Walk-in Morning and to explain problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement. Teachers and head teachers ascribe a deficit identity to parents and pupils and position them as disadvantaged on the basis of the following beliefs.

Teachers and head teachers believe that parents' child-raising styles and their involvement in education relate to pupils' educational positions. Parents who, for example, motivate their child, speak Dutch at home, show an interest in their child's education, work together with the child on educational tasks, and who have knowledge about educational materials, are seen as stimulating the child's educational development. But in general, teachers and head teachers consider that the child-raising styles and engagement of their

parents do not meet those kinds of standards. The parents would fall short of soundly stimulating the child's development and of soundly engaging in the child's education.

These shortcomings, in teachers and head teachers' opinion, explain the pupils' educational disadvantage. Parents' lack of empathy for the child's experiences with education, the little support they offer to the child to master educational tasks, the absence or inappropriate stimulation of the child, parents' lack of communication with the school due to which child-raising approaches are not well tuned and information on the child is lost, and parents' incorrect expectations of their children's capabilities, are all elements that cause the children's cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development to remain behind.

Teachers and head teachers use a significant variety of pedagogic norms in their daily practice to assess the appropriateness of parents' child-raising styles and their engagement in the school. Observations and interpretations of parents' behaviour such as: not speaking the Dutch language, whispering answers out loud, not valuing play, not attending certain activities, being unable to read aloud, being unable to do handiwork or jigsaws, failing to guide the child, lacking authority, not understanding the teacher, not being self-assured, and being insufficiently interested in school materials are all seen as characteristics of "deficit parents".

Teachers and head teachers similarly ascribe deficits to pupils. They consider characteristics such as fighting, not knowing how to behave in an accepted way, running in the corridors, being rude to adults, denying responsibility in conflicts, not being obedient, not trying to complete tasks, and attracting the teacher's attention in a negative way, as characteristics of "deficit pupils". These characteristics would explain pupils' educational disadvantage because they disrupt the teaching and learning processes: for example, the teacher is less able to maintain order in the class, some pupils do not receive sufficient attention because of their disruptive classmates, co-operation between the pupils is disturbed, the teachers' pleasure in their work is negatively affected, and the work is emotionally demanding.

Besides categorising pupils and parents on the basis of their beliefs about teaching and learning processes – the pedagogic norms, teachers and head teachers also categorise parents and pupils on the basis of assumed characteristics of their social backgrounds. Different from the pedagogic norms, however, teachers and head teachers are not always explicit about these kinds of cultural norms. Teachers at the *Sleutelschool* for instance do not refer to these kinds of norms when they talk about the Walk-in Morning, while the teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* do. That cultural norms nevertheless do play a role in their practices even if teachers do not openly talk about them, became clear from observations and from general and informal conversations with them.

Teachers and head teachers refer the most often to parents' non-Dutch linguistic background and their command of Dutch. Many parents, in their opinion, do not speak the Dutch language fluently. They interrelate this characteristic with a problematic educational position: i.e. with problems of low parent involvement and miscommunication between them and the parents. Not speaking Dutch fluently would, for example, cause parents to feel uncertain, not to understand the teacher, to speak their mother tongue in the class, and to engage less in enjoyable and satisfactory contact with the teacher.

Furthermore, teachers and head teachers refer to parents' non-native Dutch background, which they do by using terms such as 'foreign parents', 'migrants' [*alloctonen*], 'conservative parents', 'traditional parents', and 'parents who are almost Dutch'. This ascribed identity is also interrelated with problematic characteristics; immigrant parents would more frequently have different opinions about education; they lack an understanding of the importance of parent involvement; would be less reliable to make appointments with, less capable of participating on school boards and councils, and feel less at ease in the school and class.

Finally, some teachers touch upon parents' socio-economic backgrounds. Compared with the linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they however do so less frequently. One teacher refers to 'parents from lower class backgrounds', most others refer to 'parents who are not highly educated'. This ascribed identity is also interrelated with problems and a position of educational disadvantages: these parents are seen to lack an understanding of how to soundly stimulate their children's development, they disrupt procedures in the class, communicate in a somewhat rude manner with teachers, have difficulty understanding the teachers, and also lack information about the educational system.

Two remarks need to be made about the educational norms that teachers and head teachers formulate. Firstly, there are differences between the individual teachers. While some of them state rather forcefully that parents are deficient, other teachers are more hesitant to ascribe an identity to parents as such. For instance, they also make critical comments about the attempts made by the team and their willingness to involve parents. Therefore, while all teachers generally share and express the perspective that parents are to some extent deficient, the individual teachers differ significantly as to whether they emphasise and contextualise the ascribed deficits.

Secondly, when teachers and head teachers talk about pupil behaviour they use somewhat different cultural norms compared with when they talk about parent involvement. When speaking about pupil behaviour, they refer more often to socio-economic backgrounds and less to linguistic backgrounds, and they also talk more frequently about the characteristics of the neighbourhood and the educational system. They reflect on problematic characteristics such as segregation, growing up in impoverished and unsafe conditions, and the absence of children who speak Dutch as their mother tongue. The teachers' reflections on pupil behaviour are somewhat more diverse than those on parent involvement, and therefore the use of cultural norms and the ascription of an identity not only differs per school and teacher, but also per topic.

Ascribing and Positioning Parent Identities: The Parents

Parents positively interrelate their behaviour with the educational positions of their children. In the context of the Walk-in Morning they talk in particular about the importance of being engaged in their son's or daughter's education. They consider it important to: among other things, show the child their interest in education, motivate the child, stimulate the child to complete tasks, and to know about the child's daily activities. In the context of the Mother-tongue Programme, some women do not express pedagogic beliefs, but just appreciate the course as a means to learn the Dutch language. However, other women who follow these lessons express pedagogic beliefs similar to those expressed in the context of the Walk-in Morning. They point out that they became aware of their role in the child's

education because of the mother-tongue teacher who had emphasised it and explained why participation is important.

In general, parents consider their attendance at the Walk-in Morning activity and the Mother-tongue lessons as a sign of their competences and willingness to support their child. They positively value their identity in the context of the daily curriculum. If they mention issues such as not being familiar with the materials or having a low command of the Dutch language, they do not see themselves as having deficits. Instead, they point out the ways they deal with these situations (the child for example explains the materials); why in their opinion it is not a problem (fluency in Dutch was not a prerequisite for them being at a Walk-in Morning); and talk about how they try to meet norms (they try to improve their command of Dutch by attending language lessons). Moreover, when parents behave in a manner the teachers disapprove of (as happened with the mother who looked through her son's exercise books), the parents tend to attach value to their behaviour similar to what the teacher wishes them to achieve.

Occasionally, parents express feelings of failing to support their children well. However, to explain this incapability they do not consider themselves to be deficient, but instead they point out the teacher's responsibility. They consider it the teacher's task to appropriately inform them and to take their particular situation into consideration.

Parents, like the teachers, do not always refer to cultural norms. If they do, they refer to their immigrant background. They use labels such as 'foreign' and 'migrant' [*allochtoon*] or refer to their country of origin such as 'Morocco', 'Turkey', or 'Surinam'. They also refer to this background by talking about the school as being 'a black school' and 'a school attended only by foreigners'. They link this immigrant background with a problematic position such as being excluded from having a say in the school organisation; teachers having low expectations of them and their children; fewer opportunities for their children to succeed; and being badly informed by the teachers.

Ascribing and Positioning Parent Identities: Negotiating Judgments

The opinions of head teachers, teachers, and parents about the parent identities that matter for educational position are fairly similar. It is generally considered important that parents support their child and engage in its education. But their opinions on whether parents meet those pedagogic norms differ. Head teachers and teachers ascribe deficits to parents, whereas the parents generally see themselves as competent. Head teachers and teachers use very detailed norms to interpret parents' behaviour observed during activities such as the Walk-in Morning and to position them as deficit. Parents consider themselves to be competent on the basis of more generally formulated norms, and they wish to show their competences and willingness by attending the Walk-in Morning and Mother-tongue lessons.

Furthermore, teachers ascribe and parents take up the identity of not being (native) Dutch. However, they reflect differently on the relationship between this ascribed identity and the educational positions of parents and children. Teachers interrelate parents' non-native Dutch backgrounds with failing to meet pedagogic norms on knowledge, skills and attitudes. In their opinion, it prevents the parents from meeting pedagogic norms. Parents, however, interrelate an immigrant background with practices in school organisations that

exclude them from access to information and support. They consider this as detrimental to their children's success and their ability to monitor and support the child.

The organisation of and participation in programmes such as the Walk-in Morning and the Mother-tongue Programme therefore give rise to two kinds of identity negotiations. Firstly, parents attend to show their competences and willingness to support their children's educational career. Teachers, however, seem to interpret parents' behaviour during these kinds of activities as a sign of shortcomings that (still) need to be improved. Secondly, if parents and teachers do agree that parents, for whatever reason, fail to support the child well, whether this incapacity of immigrant parents results from deficit characteristics or from excluding mechanisms is subject to negotiation.

Potentiality in Interaction to combat Educational Disadvantage

Combating educational disadvantage can result from two processes: either by identity negotiation that results in educational norms being met, or by identity negotiation that results in a change of educational norms such that ascribed deficient identities are judged positively. In this study both kinds of possibilities appear.

Some parents who attend the Walk-in Morning and who participate in the Mother-tongue lessons develop the expected identities – they meet teachers' pedagogic norms. These parents, for example, talk about buying games for the child similar to those used in class, having started to play with their child at home in a way they were not really familiar with, learning the Dutch language, attending school activities more frequently, asking the teachers questions, and of having become more familiar with the materials used in class. These identity developments may all be seen as a potentiality to combat educational disadvantage: norms on sound parent involvement are increasingly met.

A potentiality to combat educational disadvantage also develops as the result of teachers' critical reflection on educational practice. This potentiality can develop in different ways: for example, as the result of teachers' individual interpretations of daily practice (as in the case with the Walk-in Morning), or as the result of joint, formal discussions on a topic (as in the case with the problems experienced with pupil behaviour and parent involvement). But generally speaking, teachers become critical of activities and the underlying educational norms when they reflect on their practical experiences with daily teaching. In these reflections they, for example, link low and dwindling numbers of attendance with the fact that materials are rather boring; they argue that the time schedule is a problem for employed parents and for parents who follow morning language courses; and consider the materials unsuitable for illiterate parents. In a similar way, problems with pupil behaviour are, in their reflections, interrelated with the pros and cons of certain teaching approaches, the support offered to inexperienced teachers, and with incidental concentrations of pupils with extreme behavioural and learning needs. Finally, the teachers discuss problems with parent involvement and communication in the context of, among other things, decisions on the language of communication, their own attitude, and contradictory expectations and approaches. These reflections may all be seen as including a potentiality to combat educational disadvantage because the deficit perspective that the teachers tend to endorse does not satisfactorily explain these observations and experiences.

Therefore, the educational norms used to position parents and pupils as problematic and disadvantaged may become subject to change.

Reinforcement of the Ascribed Deficit Identity and Disadvantaged Positions

The observed potentiality to combat educational disadvantage is, however, not sustained and does not develop further. The accomplishments of parents to meet educational norms are, in general, not observed by the teachers. The attempts of the women to learn the Dutch language and to participate in school activities as part of their Mother-tongue lessons, is a striking example of this. But also in the context of the Walk-in Morning, teachers only see a few individual parents as meeting the norms of sound engagement. In line with the findings of other scholars (see e.g. Singh, 1993; Appiah, 1994a; Youdell, 2003; Archer & Francis, 2005), selective observation and interpretation, and withdrawing from more substantial communication with the parents means that the parents' identity developments go unacknowledged in this context.

Neither do the reflections on activities result in a change of educational norms. Instead, teachers and head teachers accept and legitimise the limitations of their activities by reverting back to the deficit identity ascribed to parents and pupils, and by expressing feelings of powerlessness to change parents and pupils' disadvantaged position. They formulate courses of action by focusing on practical changes to existing practices and leave the underlying assumptions intact; and they formulate multi-interpretable policy which continues to depart from a deficit perspective. Exactly what the problems are, is not fully determined and the deficit perspective on immigrant parents and pupils is nevertheless accepted because it is commonly shared and supported by existing measures in the school organisation and the programmes the staff implemented.

The disappearance of a potentiality to combat educational disadvantage may be considered as the outcome of teachers' negative beliefs about immigrant parents and as not soundly working on deficit remediation. Indeed, other scholars have also found similar negative expectations among teachers about immigrant parents and indicated the problems they cause in the communication with parents (see e.g. Power & Clark, 2000; Smit et al., 2002; Booijnk, 2007).

This study also points in this direction if only the perceptions of parents and teachers and the interaction between them are taken into consideration. However, the following section shows that though a problem, the mutual, negative views of teachers and immigrant parents cannot just be blamed on them. Their views are interrelated with the constellation of the school organisations and the policy contexts in which they interact. In general, and contrary to the assumption that teachers' negative expectations form the core of the problem, teachers do not set out to discriminate against immigrant parents. On the contrary, most of them work hard to develop contact and to combat educational disadvantage. The lack of success and the reinforcing outcomes have to be understood as the unintended outcomes of their efforts.

8.5 Combating Educational Disadvantage in Segregated Schools and the Impact of Deficit Discourse

The second research question examines how dynamics in segregated school organisations and policy translation processes influence the interaction between teachers and parents. Clearly, the dynamics at the two segregated schools and how they put policy into practice differ substantially and, as a result, the interaction that occurs between parents and teachers is different. Nevertheless, interaction between parents and teachers at both schools follows a similar pattern and results in the reinforcement of a deficit perspective on immigrant parents. This pattern is explained in this section by examining the similarities that appear in the micro-politics and policy processes across the different datasets and the two schools.

Micro-Politics: The Position of Parents

The parents at the two schools hold different positions: for example, the parents at the *Sleutelschool* are, in general, not involved in school activities: they are well informed about the Walk-in Morning, and the Mother-tongue lessons have a more substantial impact on their knowledge and attitude about parent involvement. Parents at the *Professor Bakkerschool* are frequently asked to participate in school activities, they have little information about the Walk-in Morning; and the Mother-tongue lessons do not have any clear effect on most of the participating women.

But irrespective of these differences, parents have a restricted say at both schools, and in the Walk-in Morning programme as well as in the Mother-tongue programme. Their interests, beliefs, and experiences are not enquired about and are not considered when organising the activities. Only during the Mother-tongue lessons at the *Sleutelschool* do the women have a little more influence on the course of the lessons: however, their influence does not extend beyond gaining some additional information or changing the Mother-tongue teacher's interpretation of their behaviour. The general belief that the parents are in need of support seems to have excluded them from involvement in the organisation and improvement of the schools' activities.

To explain the outcome of parent-teacher interaction, it is important to take this position of parents and parents' relationship with teachers into consideration. Parents attach meaning to the activities and they express ideas about how to make use of them to the benefit of their son or daughter. Moreover, some of them also have ideas about how to improve the activities. But they have few opportunities to explain themselves to the teachers and to share their thoughts with them because their communication is limited. Parents' restricted say over the daily practices significantly diminishes the possibility to negotiate ascribed identities and to change relationships with the teachers.

Micro-Politics: the Position of Teachers

The ascription of a deficit identity to parents has consequences for the position of teachers and their relationship with parents: in policy handbooks, but also by the head teachers and some parents, teachers are ascribed an identity of being professionals working on deficit remediation. Assumed characteristics of such professionals are, among other things, holding high expectations of parents and pupils; taking responsibility for putting policy

into sound practice; collaborating with colleagues in a positive and productive way; and being competent to deal with the challenges their environment poses. In short, teachers are expected to successfully manage their class and their relationships with parents, pupils, and colleagues.

Teachers themselves also identify with this identity, but at the same time they notice that, in daily practice, they are often unable to gain the desired control. They experience that the success of the activities depends, among other things, on the responses of parents, unforeseen circumstances, the available materials, time-schedules, communication rules, and, on the behaviour of their colleagues. Instead of just managing activities successfully, their success depends very much on other people and on the contexts in which they work.

Teachers' individual and collective reflections on their practices seem to develop from the discrepancy between daily experiences and the idea of successfully working on deficit remediation. It is then that a potentiality to change existing educational norms develops. But meanwhile, teachers also endorse the general understanding of them successfully managing teaching and learning processes. From that point of view, they have to account for limited success and to formulate an idea of how to solve problems with pupil behaviour and parent involvement.

Teachers account for their limited success and formulated a course of action by reverting to the deficit perspective on parents and pupils, which allows them to hold parents responsible for problems they are supposed to control. The deficit perspective furthermore offers the team a shared course of action despite teachers having different opinions and despite situations being highly complex and dynamic. Reverting back to the ascribed deficit identity therefore allows teachers to meet the expectations that are placed on them and which they also set for themselves. This process, however, eventually leaves the norms on which they base their practices unaddressed: a potentiality to combat educational disadvantage by changing educational norms again disappears.

Micro-Politics: Hierarchical Structures and Ideological Disputes between Teachers and Head Teachers in the School Organisation

A final element that requires consideration in the reinforcing outcome of interaction, are the micro-politics between teachers and head teachers. The hierarchical relationships and the discussions between teachers and head teacher differ in many respects between the two schools. But in terms of the effects that these relationships have, there are many similarities between the schools and the datasets.

In each dataset and at both schools, the teachers and head teachers initially consider the role of the school only from a practical point of view. The idea is that approved conditions or conditions that are generally considered to be a problem, need to be realised or improved upon respectively: the Walk-in Morning needs to be implemented, decisions need to be taken about the time schedule, materials need to be made available, teachers' expectations should be high, the teachers have to collaborate well, and a coordinator has to be appointed for the Mother-tongue programme etc.

These ideas and how they are put into practice are the occasion for micro-politics: it sparks off a discussion between teachers and head teachers. Discussions about the usefulness

of the materials, about how to collaborate effectively, and whether teachers are realistic or idealistic about parent involvement, are all examples of these kinds of discussions. Underpinning these discussions is the question about how best to shape the relationship between the school and its environment. The teams reflect on, among other things, the pros and cons of their approaches, on normative decisions, on limitations in dealing with diversity, and on problems beyond their control.

Meanwhile, teachers and head teachers aim to develop a shared vision and to legitimise their practices. But it seems that ideas of how to deal with those subtleties and morality amidst the need to develop shared values and adopt policy are lacking. The hierarchical relationships between staff members tend to function in such a way that the teams eventually make some practical changes to be able to cope better with the observed problems, but they fail to change their practices more substantially. As a result, the way in which they currently shape the school's relationship with the environment continues to exist and it seems that the teams accept the limitations of their existing practices.

In the analysis of each dataset I paid attention to possible, alternative explanations for these developments. The idea that problematic characteristics of the two schools may explain the observed developments seemed particularly promising. After all, characteristics such as team fragmentation, tension among teachers, low teacher expectations, a lack of trust, and problems with leadership, are, in general, causing problems in the functioning of schools (see e.g. Henchey, 2001; Maden, 2001; Chapman & Harris, 2004; Muijs et al., 2004). But even though those characteristics influence and play a role in the observed developments, they do not explain them. In order to explain the observed micro-politics and the outcomes of interaction it was necessary to consider the policy contexts of the two schools.

Micro-Politics and Policy based on Deficit Discourse

The ascription of a deficit identity to parents and pupils appears prominently in programmes and daily practices. But these programmes and practices also include other discourses on parents and pupils and are open to multiple interpretations. I discussed that policy on the Walk-in Morning and the Mother-tongue programmes is hybrid: it includes multiple strands of meaning constructions, guidelines are somewhat ambiguous, the aims are multiple, and advice on the organisation is open ended. Similarly, the reflections of teachers and head teachers on the issues of pupil behaviour and parent involvement are not univocal. Beyond the ideas they generally share – i.e. about a deficit parent and pupil identity, they formulate a significant diversity of opinions.

This feature of policy plays an important role in the appearance of a potentiality to combat educational disadvantage. It allows for the engagement in processes of interpreting, criticising and changing policy. The data indicate that teachers and head teachers do so in particular when they notice that the deficit approach of parents and pupils does not offer them a sound basis for successful practices. Before putting policy into practice, and if no problems are experienced in their daily practice, teachers and head teachers simply tend to endorse the deficit perspective and focus on its practical realisation. In such situations, policy is barely reflected upon. Interpretation and scrutiny only develop after problems are encountered.

Despite everyday problems forming the main incentive to an interpretation and change of policy, the observed potentiality does not develop any further. On the contrary, despite daily problems not being solved, the teachers and head teachers revert back to the deficit perspective. Four characteristics of policy that is based on deficit discourse seem to explain these developments.

First, while critical of the deficit approach, it seems that head teachers and teachers have no alternative ideas about what the causes of the problems encountered might be. They frequently talk about feelings of powerlessness when they touch upon the different opinions of teachers and upon the many different characteristics of immigrant parents and pupils. As a result of this lack of alternatives, the deficit perspective may be criticised but not replaced (see also Thrupp, Mansell, Hawksworth & Harold, 2003).

Secondly, the deficit discourse tends to normalise the problems experienced in segregated schools. The deficit perspective addresses the role of the school from a practical point of view: they have to gain control of the deficits to facilitate normal teaching and learning. If problems occur in the school, they can either be transferred to the parents, or the schools can be held accountable. But even if the schools are held accountable, a relationship with parents' deficits can be established: e.g. low teacher expectations result from ongoing negative experiences with deficit parents; and teachers' inability to gain control over pupil behaviour results from the deficit pupils who are difficult to deal with. Moreover, as immigrant parents are not in a position to express their ideas, teachers and head teachers are not confronted with parents' criticism. They are therefore not made aware of how problems may not be related to assumed parent deficits.

Thirdly, a shared course of action is a necessary condition for school organisations to function. The deficit perspective on parents and pupils offers this. On a general level, teachers and head teachers tend to agree on the correctness of this perspective. Moreover, and as mentioned in point one, there seems to be no shared alternative. Therefore, the deficit perspective is a logical start when teams are expected to formulate a shared course of action and to develop practices from a shared point of view.

Fourthly, materials, timetables, and human resources all play a role in the disappearance of the possibility of combating educational disadvantage by changing educational norms. Schools have restricted access to time and human resources. Therefore, they, for example, have to consider whether: focusing on a relatively small group of women who learn the Dutch language in the Mother-tongue programme; discussing complex topics of parent involvement and pupil behaviour at length; and engaging in discussions that may delegitimise activities they are obliged to implement, are, in fact, worth the investment. The schools have to set priorities. Given the fact that many challenges confront segregated schools on a daily basis, it is not self-evident that they will extensively invest in reflection on and discussion about the deficit perspective. Particularly not given the fact that no alternative perspectives are immediately available; that the perspective is generally shared, and that the assumed deficits form an important explanation for the problems experienced.

To conclude, the micro-politics of the school organisations and the interactions between teachers and parents in each dataset function in such a way that existing beliefs and ascribed deficit positions are eventually maintained. Seen from that perspective, the micro-

politics and interactions tend to function reproductively. Nevertheless, the constellations of the two school organisations also change as a result of the activities. After all, and among other things, mothers learn the Dutch language, the teams draw up statements, and parents gain access to the classes. Therefore, the interactions also change, albeit to a minor extent, the school organisations.

Furthermore, head teachers, teachers and parents do not passively accept their situation, but actively aim to make a difference to it. They aim in each activity to combat educational disadvantage, even though some of them appear to be more engaged than others. Not only do teachers and head teachers aim to bring immigrant parents and pupils in line with educational norms, and not only do parents try to meet these norms, but in each activity the form and content of educational practice is also challenged. However, these efforts tend not to combat educational disadvantage as eventually it is only the practical realisation of activities that changes, while the underlying assumptions are left unchallenged (Fullan, 1991; Popkewitz, 2000). Despite some improvements, little substantial difference is made to the existing positions of immigrant parents and pupils.

The influence of deficit-discourse based policy on micro-politics in school organisations and on interaction between teachers and parents should, therefore, not be understood as simply reproducing educational disadvantage or as determining the behaviour of head teachers, teachers, parents, and pupils. Yet policy that explains immigrant pupils' educational disadvantage by ascribing deficits to them that also includes some open ends, ambiguities, and multiple strands, goes a long way towards explaining the fact that reproduction tends to be a significant outcome of interaction.

8.6 General Conclusions: Good Intentions, Reinforcing Outcomes

The central argument to this dissertation is that the educational disadvantage of immigrant children is not simply the product of characteristics of pupils and parents from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds. The study examined how educational disadvantage may be produced in interaction between teachers and parents in segregated school organisations, and how the interaction and its outcomes are affected by school organisational dynamics and policy. Before turning to the general conclusions of this study, a few comments should be made on the generalisation of the empirical evidence.

Generalisation

Data for this study were generated at two schools and primarily involve three activities/developments at each of those schools. Significant diversity exists between the school organisations as well as between the activities. These differences exist despite both schools being public, primary and segregated schools located in disadvantaged areas of the same municipality, and despite the policy contexts of the Walk-in Morning activity and Mother-tongue Programme being similar at the two schools.

The descriptions of the two schools and the images resulting from them are by no means representative of other segregated primary schools in the Netherlands. The many differences between these two, seemingly similar schools, tend to indicate that the characteristics of and processes in schools serving many disadvantaged pupils depend on

their situations and are highly unstable (see also Maden, 2001; Harris & Chapman, 2004; Lupton, 2004; West et al., 2005). Other segregated schools and their relationships with the local environment will have their own specific features and internal developments, and in that respect differ from the two schools studied here.

The purpose of this dissertation is, however, not to say something about trends or factors in school organisations affecting educational disadvantage, but to explore and further the understanding of mechanisms in school organisations that relate to educational disadvantage of immigrant pupils and parents. The aim is to develop an understanding of these mechanisms that can be generalised to other research sites (Yin, 1994; Steward, 1998).

The development of such a theory requires being at the research site for a longer period of time and for it to be revisited (Steward, 1998). The present study covers a one-and-a-half year period, and the activities were studied at various intervals. A comparative component also adds to the development of a theory that can be generalised. If different cases support the same theory but do not support an equally plausible rival theory, analytical generalisation of a theory may be claimed (Yin, 1994). Therefore, the study was set up in a way that the activities examined could be compared across the two schools as well as within each school. Moreover, attention was given when analysing each dataset to the explanatory impact of a deficit perspective.

The patterns examined in each dataset were strikingly similar: there were similarities between the two schools and between the different activities. The interaction between teachers and parents tended to follow a similar pattern and similarities were found in the way in which interaction, micro-politics and policy interrelate. The deficit perspective on immigrant pupils and parents did not explain these patterns and interrelationships, but formed instead a decisive element in the appearance of the patterns and relationships.

Given the dominance of the deficit perspective on immigrant parents and pupils in integration and educational policy in the Netherlands, it is likely that this discourse is also prominent in practices at other segregated schools. The observed patterns and interrelationships are therefore likely to appear at schools not included in the study. The following general conclusions can, despite many differences between the features of segregated schools, presumably be generalised to them.

The Deficit Perspective Reconsidered

The deficit perspective assumes that pupils and parents from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds bring particular characteristics with them to school. This dissertation shows that parents and pupils do indeed bring different characteristics with them to school. Parents, for instance, differ in terms of their participation in the labour market, fluency in the Dutch language, literacy and knowledge of the education system. Pupils differ, among other things, in their educational needs, the situations in which they grow up, and their relationships with peers. This diversity of characteristics challenges segregated schools considerably as they, like the two schools studied, have to find ways to deal with it. They are confronted with, among other things, extreme behavioural problems and learning needs, low parent involvement, a high staff and pupil turnover, threats of closure, and emotionally stressful work. It has a deep impact on their daily functioning and

on their stability (Overmaat & Ledoux, 2002; Lupton, 2004, 2005; Jungbluth, 2006).

Labelling the pupils and parents as deficit is, however, disputable. First, and in accordance with the findings of other scholars (e.g. Nelissen & Bilgin, 1995; Lott, 2001; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Ramirez, 2003), parents from ethnic minority and lower socio-economic backgrounds do have certain competences. Among other things, they have ideas about their role in education that are quite similar to those of the teachers; they have ideas about how to make proper use of the activities offered to them; and they participate with the aim of improving their own and their children's educational positions. They are also critical about the school organisations. However, these competences tend to be overlooked because the deficit perspective focuses on immigrants' lack of conformity (Rath, 1991) and reduces ethnic minority groups to "disadvantaged groups" whose members are considered to be inactive, incapable and in need of support (Ghorashi, 2006).

Secondly, the study shows that teachers and head teachers use detailed educational norms covering a broad variety of topics to judge parents and pupils' capabilities. Teachers and head teachers do not always agree on the extent to which a particular norm is relevant, neither on what causes parents and pupils to diverge from the norm. Moreover, the norms they use depend on the situations in which parents, pupils and teachers meet.

This finding raises questions about the evident call for immigrants' assimilation into Dutch society. If norms are multiple, contestable, and changeable, it becomes unclear what immigrants are actually expected to assimilate into. The question that then arises, is what constitutes Dutch identity (Verkuyten, 2006a). But on top of that, the norms may also be changed in a way that those who define them see fit. The question then arises whether immigrant parents and pupils can ever be "really Dutch" (Ghorashi, 2006) if there is a possibility that the norms immigrants are supposed to meet can always be changed.

The non-acknowledgement of competences and the non-existence of clearly defined educational norms are problematic aspects of the deficit discourse, in particular because of the growing emphasis on assimilation in integration policy. The call for assimilation may alienate ethnic minorities and break down social cohesion if assimilation is a prerequisite for immigrants' social participation, but can, at the same time, be denied on the basis of multiple, detailed and contestable norms. Such problematic implications of a call for assimilation may occur in particular if ethnic minorities are excluded from having a say on issues that have their interest and that influence their children's position in society, which education clearly does. Several scholars have questioned the effects of the policy shift to assimilationism on inter group relationships (e.g. Ghorashi, 2006; Gowricharn, 2006; Verkuyten, 2006b; WRR, 2007).

An Alternative Conceptualisation of Educational Disadvantage

Given these disputable aspects of the deficit perspective, it might appear favourable to stress the competences of pupils and parents from ethnic minority backgrounds. Theories on social justice in education support this perspective. Realising social justice in and through education requires the recognition of differences among pupils and parents, and a change of pedagogic practices to cater for these differences (Rizvi, 1998). Instead of bringing pupils and parents in line with existing norms in the educational system, the argument goes that educational norms should be adapted in a way that diversity among pupils and

parents is recognised and valued (Heath, 1985; Lareau, 2003).

This perspective is however criticised for being naïve and romantic: it ignores the economic challenges that confront education (Gillborn, 2001; Tomlinson, 2003; Apple, 2004). Education does not only serve aims of social justice but also of qualifying and selecting pupils and allocating them to positions in society. Hence, pupils and their parents are hierarchically positioned in and through the educational system. To enhance the inclusion of immigrant pupils and parents in education and in society more in general, it is therefore important to take the tension between the aims of social justice and economic competency into consideration. This is particularly important in a globalising world where cultural diversity and economic competency are both becoming increasingly pronounced.

The prevailing opinion is that the tension between the aims of social justice and economic competency are reconcilable through the principle of 'meritocracy', i.e. by selecting and allocating pupils from diverse backgrounds only on the basis of individual characteristics of intellectual capacity and application. Educational norms, in this perspective, should only involve individual differences. Besides the discussion about whether these kinds of norms can in fact be developed, whether meritocracy does indeed exist in education is still heavily disputed.

There are two perspectives on meritocracy: firstly, meritocracy is realised by providing all pupils with equal starting positions after which they are supposed to compete for hierarchical educational positions (also referred to as a liberal approach to educational disadvantage), and secondly, meritocracy is achieved by giving pupils a level playing field that offers them equal opportunities to achieve similar educational outcomes (also referred to as a socialist approach to educational disadvantage) (Pels, 2003). However, both perspectives are not without their problems. The idea of providing equal starting positions tends to overlook the decisions on educational processes that are linked to certain collective backgrounds (Dronkers, 2007), whereas the idea of levelling the playing field tends to ignore the fact that inequality is an inevitable outcome of education and that the unequal outcomes still robustly correlate with socio-economic and immigrant status (Pels, 2003). Therefore, the problem with meritocracy would seem to be not just the fact that it has been little achieved, but also that the underlying assumption is itself a problem: the impact of collective backgrounds on educational outcomes cannot be undone.

Staying with the idea of meritocracy not only seems to restrict opportunities to combat educational disadvantage, but it also tends to undermine itself. It is precisely the assumption that the influence of collective backgrounds can be undone and the subsequent ignorance of socio-cultural norms and processes, which ultimately holds pupils responsible for their educational success or failure (Elchardus, 2002). In an educational system that has selection as one of its major aims and that produces background-related outcomes, but in which educational disadvantage is explained in terms of individual merit (i.e. educational norms are assumed to be based on principles of meritocracy), the phenomenon of "deficit pupils" is the result. The disadvantages of these pupils, albeit related to their collective backgrounds, tend to be legitimised. It is becoming generally accepted that some differences between pupils are taken less into consideration than other differences, and that pupils who differ from the mainstream fall behind (Gowricharn, 2006). Therefore, the ideal of

meritocracy actually results in what it aims to combat³⁵.

Seen from this perspective, educational disadvantage results from setting educational norms that differentiate between certain group-based characteristics. By denying the group-based forms of selection, economic competency for all (i.e. social justice) is not achieved. The idea that educational norms only concern the individual characteristics of pupils reinforces the existence of educational disadvantage.

It is precisely this mechanism that this study has found. It shows that at segregated schools educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils and parents results from interaction based on deficit norms. Policy and practice based on the deficit perspective tend to reinforce or even bring about what they aim to combat: a relationship between ethnic minority backgrounds and educational disadvantage. If institutional discrimination is defined in terms of judging policy not only on its intention but also on its outcomes (Gillborn, 2001; Vasta, 2007), this dissertation points in the direction of the existence of institutional discrimination in the Dutch educational system. It seems that educational inequality along ethnic lines is sustained through the translation of policy in everyday practices that systematically fail to address the role of background-related educational norms in the relationship between segregated schools and their environment, and between teachers and immigrant parents in particular.

As long as educational norms are not adapted to the existence of different groups and their specific needs and competencies, the aims of social justice and economic competency cannot be reconciled. However, adapting educational norms to different needs does not mean that educational standards of teaching should be abandoned, but that, on the contrary, an effort should be made to reach these standards for different groups by dealing with diversity in the educational system³⁶.

8.7 Directions and Prospects for Future Research

At the end of this dissertation I would like to indicate a number of possible directions for future research and reflect on some issues that will need to be considered. Educational disadvantage, I argued, can be conceptualised as the outcome of interaction between

35 This starts the discussion as to whether the ideal of meritocracy should be abolished altogether (as Elchardus (2002) proposes), or whether meritocracy should be aimed at in a more dynamic manner and process-like approach (as Pels (2003) and Dronkers (2007) argue). I take up this discussion in the next section.

36 Indeed, this implies, as Dronkers (2007) argues, that the current practice of monitoring a school's quality in terms of "added-value" instead of demanding similar outcomes for all schools irrespective of their environmental conditions, is problematic. I argue, however, that for this latter quality-requirement to be realistic, there is a need - besides compensating for unequal conditions by making additional resources available, higher salaries for the teachers etc., as Dronkers proposes - to adapt core teaching and learning processes. This should not - and again in line with Dronkers' line of argumentation - be realised by increasing government control over these processes (which would actually restrict the possibilities of adapting), but by strictly enforcing quality standards of learned knowledge and skills. It is important in this quality-monitoring process that schools are not just judged by considering their mean-scores, but also by considering the variance in scores achieved among pupils from different backgrounds. This would tell us whether all pupils have benefited, and not just some of them.

certain institutional norms and a diversity in needs and competencies. This dissertation shows that the use of deficit norms tends to reproduce, and may even produce, educational disadvantage. Replacing the deficit discourse is necessary and attention should be paid to how to adapt educational norms to the existence of different groups and their specific needs and competencies, while maintaining educational standards of teaching.

To further develop this conceptualisation of educational disadvantage, it is necessary to generate more information on the diversity in needs and competencies of immigrant pupils and parents and how this diversity interacts with institutional norms. This information should first consider the details of immigrant pupils' and parents' positions in school organisations and their interactions with teachers. In this dissertation I have, for example, paid little attention to possible differences in the interaction between teachers and parents from, for instance, Moroccan, Turkish or Somali backgrounds, but also between teachers and immigrant mothers and fathers, between teachers and immigrant parents who are employed and those who are not, etc.

Secondly, the details of the cultural norms underpinning interaction also need further investigation. I only paid attention in this dissertation to the general labels used, and did not examine the fact that, for example, parents sometimes refer to their Moroccan background, while at other times they use more general labels, such as 'foreigner'. Similarly, a teacher referred to a parent's Indonesian background in interaction with the parent, while in an interview she would only draw distinctions between parents who are native speakers of Dutch and those who are not. These kinds of subtleties of the cultural norms were not examined. On top of that, I did not pay attention to how to cultural norms sometimes refer to a complexity of background characteristics. Teachers, for example, position individual parents by referring to language proficiency, gender, and a non-native Dutch background.

Taking these details into consideration is important for a further examination of the different effects that institutional norms have among immigrant pupils from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In particular, it provides for a better understanding of the negotiation process of positioned identities. These insights may subsequently further understanding of why some groups, such as pupils from a Turkish or a Moroccan background, remain further behind than pupils from other, for example Surinamese, backgrounds; why the improvement of the educational position of pupils from Surinamese backgrounds has stagnated; and why the arrear of pupils from an Antillean background is, again, becoming wider.

Gathering detailed information about interaction and the use of cultural norms in particular is, however, methodologically difficult. Chapter four pointed out that when conducting research on these kinds of details one has to remain aware of the local appliance of generally shared understandings (Bauman, 1996). Focusing explicitly on the details of cultural norms may cause the interviewees to simply recall shared understandings, while, when focusing on their daily practice and interaction it becomes more difficult to examine these details. Hence, gaining an insight into the details of the cultural norms that underpin interaction requires a careful methodological approach, and, even then, gaining an insight into these details is not guaranteed. Moreover, if information is generated on the details of cultural norms, it remains to be seen whether this information can be used to explain group-based outcomes.

Future research will also have to deal with the following dilemma. Taking the

competences and needs of immigrant parents and pupils into consideration is difficult for practical reasons. In the theoretical framework of this study I discussed that there is, firstly, significant diversity both within and between groups of parents and pupils (Van Der Hoek, 1994; Coenen, 2001; Pels, 2001). Secondly, successful school organisations in disadvantaged areas develop practices that are context-specific and highly unstable (Maden, 2001, Harris & Chapman, 2004; Lupton, 2004; West et al., 2005). And finally, interaction between individual actors can take multiple forms about which little can be said in advance (McFadden, 1995; Davidson, 1996). Due to this tremendous diversity in educational practice, investigating different competences and needs and how they interact with institutional norms is a practically ambiguous proposition. It would seem to be almost impossible to produce understandings that do not overlook some of the differences between immigrant groups and the details of institutional norms. The aim of changing educational processes in such a way that all pupils reach standards in teaching will, therefore, always be based on understandings that take some group-related differences between pupils less into consideration, than others.

However, striving towards teaching approaches that are fully adapted to the competences and needs of individual pupils is also a problem from a theoretical point of view. Aiming for, what is called, a 'colour-blind approach' does not support those pupils and parents for whom their background characteristics are negatively related to their educational positions and their position in society in general (Carens, 2000). Neither is it justifiable in multicultural societies where diversity is a political right because in these kinds of societies both a person's individuality and collectiveness have to be acknowledged (Appiah, 1994b; Fase, 1997). Such an approach would eventually result in the denial of group-based processes, and fall into a trap similar to the one of the principle of meritocracy (as discussed in section 8.6).

Future research, therefore, must consider the needs and competences of immigrant parents and pupils at individual and group levels, and it needs to challenge educational norms as well as re-formulate them. This task implies the acceptance of not being able to fully combat educational disadvantage related to pupils' social backgrounds. Departing from the proposed alternative understanding of educational disadvantage, future studies are confronted with the challenge to approach situations and processes in school organisations from a more interactive, heterogeneous and contextualised perspective. But they are also tasked with taking tensions inherent to the educational system into consideration, in particular those that result from restrictions on dealing with diversity. As a result, understandings of educational disadvantage will need to be continually adapted on the basis of growing insights into the group effects that particular understandings have.

Instead of proposing the "right way forward", future studies will need to investigate their own interrelatedness with educational policy and practice. It has to ascertain for whom interventions based on certain understandings have positive effects, and for whom they do not. This investigation should not give rise to the idea that those pupils and parents who do not fully benefit from interventions, should be addressed by means of additional, compensatory interventions. The deficit approach then appears yet again. Instead, such investigations should continue the line of argument that, depending on the assumptions on which daily educational practice is based, certain groups of actors are positioned in such

a way that they engage in interaction that tends to reproduce educational disadvantage. It is the conceptions held by education that need to be adapted.

This also means that future research will be balanced on a knife edge. After all, research has to adopt a position in order to provide for directions on how to combat educational disadvantage. Moreover, whether research findings are recognised and accepted also depends on policy discourse and on financial-research structures (Duyvendak, 2006). Future research cannot avoid having to fit in, to a certain extent, with common understandings, thereby restricting its possibilities to investigate them critically.

Current integration and educational policy seem little inclined to take these ambiguities into consideration and to stimulate a more comprehensive and adaptive research approach to educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils. It evidently focuses on assimilation of immigrants, emphasises effectiveness, and stresses the responsibilities of immigrant parents and segregated schools, while de-contextualising education and home upbringing practices. This situation does not augur well for a hopeful start to more successfully combating educational disadvantage among immigrant pupils, and in segregated school organisations.

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Appendix 1.

Fieldwork: Overview of the Generated Data

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in intervals at two primary schools. Data were gathered at each school over a period of one and a half years. This appendix presents information about the amount of data gathered at each school during the different research stages. Information on the stages of data collection, on the data collection methods, and on the selection of respondents is included in section 4.3.2.

Introductory Phase

During the introductory phase I was at the *Sleutelschool* for 13 days during normal working hours from 8:15am to 3:30pm. I conducted two to three hour observations in 11 classes. I also observed 4 activities organised for parents (varying from a Christmas photo exhibition to language lessons), and observed 3 team meetings. I was also taken on a stroll through the school's neighbourhood by a support staff member who lived in the vicinity of the school, and I was invited by teachers to join an outing with their classes. One afternoon, I observed six formal conversations between a grade eight teacher and individual parents and their child. The parents and pupils were informed in these conversations about the school's advice for the child's level of secondary education. I also interviewed the head teacher and school advisor [*intern begeleider*]³⁷ about the school for about an hour each. And finally, the following documents were gathered: the 2003-2007 school plan; the weekly newsletters, the 2002 and 2004 inspectorate reports; and an analysis of the neighbourhood's social problems which was written in 2003 by local welfare organisations.

I was at the *Professor Bakkerschool* for 12 days during the introductory phase. Working days generally started at 8:00am and ended around 3:00pm, but several activities were also undertaken in the evenings. I observed 9 classes. The observations lasted either 3 hours (half school days) or 6 hours (whole school days). I also observed 3 team meetings and 2 parent activities, and I interviewed a project coordinator. This project involved after-school activities for children in the neighbourhood, and as part of this project weekly activities were organised for the pupils of the *Professor Bakkerschool* during lunchbreaks. I also shadowed the head teacher for one day and observed 3 meetings on a neighbourhood development plan. Part of this plan was to develop the *Professor Bakkerschool* into a community school and the meetings were attended by the head teacher, two staff members and two parents. Two extensive conversations about the school were held with the head teacher during the introductory phase. These conversations lasted about 60 minutes each. Finally, the following documents were gathered: the 2003-2007 school plan; the 2004 and

37 The school advisor generally has two main tasks: first, to test children individually and, if necessary, to support their being placed in special education; and secondly, to support the development of the school staff.

2005 activity plan developed as part of the educational opportunity plan; the 2000 and 2003 (and later the 2005) inspectorate reports; the municipal's public education data monitor on the *Professor Bakkerschool*; and a research report by an organisational consultancy centre. This report was delivered in 2001 and covered the school's future in the light of the school's dwindling pupil numbers and management problems.

The activities during the introductory phases were arranged differently at the two schools. The head teacher at the *Sleutelschool* expected me, after a brief introduction, to make my own arrangements with the teachers and to join the activities I was interested in. The teachers generally welcomed me in their classes and also invited me to join outings and meetings. The head teacher at the *Professor Bakkerschool* arranged most of the observations for me, and only in his absence did I organise a few class observations myself. The head teacher did not approve of me observing two grades because of recent staff changes, and the high number of pupils with acute needs in these classes. He considered my presence during lessons to be too demanding for the teachers involved. Some teachers at the *Professor Bakkerschool* asked me to help them during lessons, and one of them invited me to participate in a parent activity she had organised.

Finally, some general information about the municipality was gathered during the introductory phase. This included documents on the municipality's 2002-2006 Educational Disadvantage Plan [*Gemeentelijk Onderwijsachterstanden Plan – GOA*]; the municipality's monitor of its neighbourhoods including information about rented housing, criminality, unemployment levels etc. per neighbourhood; and the municipality's 2001 activity plan for its Educational Opportunity Plan [*onderwijskansenplan*] in primary education.

Walk-in Morning Activity

Five of the seven teachers at the *Sleutelschool* involved in the Walk-in Morning were interviewed. The interviews took between 30 and 80 minutes. One of the four classroom assistants was spoken to extensively, but none of them were actually interviewed. The classroom assistants had little contact with parents during the Walk-in Mornings: they focused instead on the children or on practicalities. The deputy head coordinated the Walk-in Morning: she was interviewed once (for about one hour) and I had two conversations with her. Eighteen interviews lasting between 15 and 100 minutes were conducted with parents. Fifteen Walk-in Mornings, which lasted 25 minutes, were observed. Information on the Walk-in Morning was also gathered by analysing documents, including: two general school documents that gave some information about the Walk-in Morning, weekly newsletters covering the Walk-in Morning; and documents that specifically concerned the Walk-in Morning, i.e. a document setting out the aims of the Walk-in Morning, and how it was organized (written prior to its official start in October 2003); an evaluation report on the Walk-in Morning (19-11-2003); and the minutes (dated 17-11-2004) of a meeting during which visits to the Walk-in Mornings at other schools were discussed). Research findings were reported to the deputy head, and discussed in a session taking an hour and a half. This discussion was followed up in a workshop, lasting 85 minutes, with all the teachers of grades one and two. Teachers discussed the research findings with me in this workshop.

Six teachers (grades one to three) organised the Walk-in Morning at the *Professor Bakkerschool*. Each of them was interviewed for 45 to 75 minutes. There was one classroom

assistant at the *Professor Bakkerschool* who actively, albeit irregularly, participated in the Walk-in Morning and interpreted for those parents whose Dutch was not fluent. She was also interviewed. There was a change of management during the research: the former head teacher was interviewed twice for 60 minutes about the Walk-in Morning (once during the research and once to discuss the research report on the Walk-in Morning), the newly-appointed head teacher was interviewed for an hour to discuss the research outcomes. Seven observations of the Walk-in Mornings, which lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, were carried out. Nine parent-interviews were conducted, lasting between 15 and 60 minutes. The school had no separate documents on the Walk-in Morning, but information about the activity was included in two general school documents. These two documents were analysed.

The new head teacher decided to hold a meeting to discuss the research report with the teachers involved. However, instead of focusing on the research findings, she decided to use the report as a starting point to discuss the practicalities of the Walk-in Morning in grades three and four (i.e. how to invite parents, the time-schedule, the materials to be used etc.). It emerged during the interviews with the former and the new head teachers and during the one-hour meeting on the Walk-in Morning, that neither the head teachers nor the teachers had read the research report. As a result, the interviews with the head teachers were more general, whereas the meeting - as the new head teacher had proposed - focused on the practical organization of the Walk-in Morning.

Topics on Pupil Behaviour and Parent Involvement

Research on the issue of pupil behaviour was conducted at the *Sleutelschool*. When preparing for the research, a conversation of 75 minutes was held with the deputy head. Thereafter, nine interviews, lasting between 50 and 90 minutes, were conducted with teachers and the head teacher was interviewed for one hour. The deputy head was also interviewed for an hour and a half. The following documents were gathered: the minutes of team meetings in which the issue of pupil behaviour was addressed and in which my research was announced (08-12-2004 and 12-01-2005 respectively), and the minutes of a workshop held prior to the introduction of the norms and value project (15-03-2002). The school's webpage was also browsed for the topic of pupil behaviour; it included information about the launching of the norms and value project, the four rules on manners, the logbook where notes about pupils' disruptive behaviour were jotted down, and the method for the socio-emotional development of pupils.

The research on the topic of pupil behaviour resulted in a report, which was discussed with the deputy head and head teacher. During this one-hour meeting they decided to follow up the report with a team workshop. I was asked to co-prepare this meeting, which led to another conversation with the head teacher and school advisor of 75 minutes. The team meeting lasted one hour and 45 minutes, during which I mainly observed the teachers' discussions and the plenary sessions.

Parent involvement was studied at the *Professor Bakkerschool*. Three conversations - of 30, 60, and 75 minutes respectively - were held with the head teacher prior to the teacher interviews. The deputy head joined the last 15 minutes of the third conversation. The deputy head was also interviewed separately on her activities with the parent

council. This interview lasted 50 minutes. Seven teachers were interviewed on the topic of parent involvement. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The mothers on the parent council were also spoken with for one hour. However, the deputy head joined the conversation and took control of the topics addressed and she often guided the mothers' answers. The following three documents were included in the analysis: the school's educational opportunity plan and specifically those passages covering the activities on parent involvement, the parents' school guide, and the minutes of a team discussion about the output of the school's educational opportunity plan. Finally, the school's webpage was also browsed. It included information about the school identity, the school's relationship with the neighbourhood, and what was expected of parents.

The interview findings were reported to the school and discussed with the deputy head and the school's "parent coordinator". They decided not to use the report any further. The head teacher invited me to a team training session on parent involvement. I observed and participated in this three-hour meeting.

Mother-tongue Programme

The Mother-tongue teachers were interviewed at both schools. The interview at the *Sleutelschool* lasted one and a half hours, and at the *Professor Bakkerschool* it lasted 50 minutes. At each school I observed three two-hour lessons. And, with some help from the assistant, I also interviewed the women who participated in the programme. The assistants interpreted when necessary. Two group interviews were conducted at the *Sleutelschool*. All six women who regularly attended the lessons, participated at least once in the interviews. The interviews lasted between 45 and 50 minutes. Three interviews were held with the women at the *Professor Bakkerschool*. These interviews were conducted prior to the lessons and lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. In total, 4 out of 7 women were interviewed. As described in section 7.4 the differences in the interview settings had a significant effect on the data-gathering process.

Data were also obtained by analysing several documents about the programme: course materials, recruitment flyers, the 2001, 2002 and 2003 evaluation reports, notes of a meeting held on 24-09-2004 in which the Mother-tongue teachers were asked about their experiences at the start of the new school year, and a preliminary set-up of the restructured programme (to be implemented around March 2005) were examined. Conversations on the Mother-tongue programme were held with the head teachers, deputy heads, teachers and programme coordinators at the *Sleutelschool* and *Professor Bakkerschool*.

Samenvatting

Achterstand als draaimolen: Onderwijsbeleid en integratie op gesegregeerde scholen³⁸

Het integratiebeleid van westerse landen is de laatste jaren aan sterke verandering onderhevig. Vraagstukken van sociale cohesie in de samenleving en van burgerschapsvorming onder migranten staan hoog op de politieke agenda. In een groot aantal landen waaronder Nederland, ligt de nadruk op het bevorderen van assimilatie van migranten. Het uitdragen van Nederlandse waarden en normen, het bestrijden van segregatie en inburgeringscursussen zijn hiervan enkele voorbeelden (Snel & Scholten, 2005; Ghorashi, 2006; Vasta, 2007).

De veranderingen in het integratiebeleid en de visies op de multiculturele samenleving die daaraan ten grondslag liggen, hebben consequenties voor het onderwijssysteem. Zowel ideeën over hoe er met culturele diversiteit in het onderwijs dient te worden omgegaan, als ideeën over de bijdrage van het onderwijs aan de vormgeving van de multiculturele samenleving, veranderen. De laatste jaren ligt in het onderwijsbeleid de nadruk op het bestrijden van segregatie tussen scholen, het leren van de Nederlandse taal en het stimuleren van burgerschapsvorming van leerlingen. De verantwoordelijkheid voor de realisatie van deze doelen wordt door de overheid in toenemende mate bij de scholen gelegd. Decentralisatie van verantwoordelijkheden en een “governance” aansturing van de actoren in het onderwijsveld dragen hier aan bij. De overheid veronderstelt dat scholen het beste weten hoe zij hun alledaagse praktijk kunnen aanpassen aan de lokale omstandigheden en in kunnen spelen op maatschappelijke en politieke prioriteiten.

In deze maatschappelijke context is het belangrijk om een gebalanceerde discussie te voeren over de verantwoordelijkheden die gelegd worden bij de ontvangende samenleving en bij de allochtonen³⁹ (Duyvendak, 2006). Voor het onderwijs leidt dit tot vragen over de mogelijkheid en wenselijkheid om het systeem aan te passen aan culturele diversiteit en - visa versa - om te verlangen dat allochtone leerlingen en hun ouders zich aanpassen aan het bestaande systeem.

Onderwijsachterstand en gesegregeerde scholen

Dit proefschrift is gebaseerd op de visie dat de huidige verklaring van onderwijsachterstand onder allochtone leerlingen wellicht te beperkt is. Socialisatieprocessen in allochtone

38 In Nederland worden gesegregeerde scholen ook wel aangeduid met de term ‘zwarte scholen’. In mijn dissertatie en deze samenvatting prefereer ik het gebruik van de term ‘gesegregeerde scholen’. Zie voor een toelichting hoofdstuk 1, voetnoot 4.

39 Het begrippenpaar ‘autochtoon’ – ‘allochtoon’ is in Nederland gangbaar taalgebruik. Hoewel deze termen op zich discutabel zijn, sluit ik in deze samenvatting aan bij dit taalgebruik ter bevordering van het leesgemak.

gezinnen worden als één van de belangrijkste verklaringen van onderwijsachterstand onder allochtone leerlingen gezien (Leseman & Van Den Boom, 1999; De Graaf, De Graaf & Kraaykamp, 2000; Leseman, 2001; Tesser & Iedema, 2001; Driessen & Doesborgh, 2003; Gesthuizen, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2005). De gezinssituatie zou zich kenmerken door een deficit; aangenomen wordt dat de opvoedingsstijlen en praktijken in allochtone gezinnen minder goed voorbereiden op de schoolloopbaan en deze ook minder ondersteunen. De tekortkomingen komen tot uiting in gedrag, onder andere in een: autoritaire opvoedingsstijl, beperkte beheersing van de Nederlandse taal en een lage participatie van ouders in schoolactiviteiten (Pels, 2000; Driessen, 2001; Meijnen, 2003; Eldering, 2005). Naast deze deficit-visie op socialisatieprocessen in allochtone gezinnen, wordt een deel van de oorzaak van onderwijsachterstand onder allochtone leerlingen ook gezocht in het onderwijssysteem. Het onderwijssysteem zou minder goed aansluiten bij leerlingen die opgroeien in achterstandssituaties en hun minder kansen bieden (Dronkers, 2007).

Hoewel opvoedingsstijlen en onderwijsstructuren samenhangen met onderwijsachterstand, betoog ik dat er nog onvoldoende zicht is op de processen waardoor die samenhang tot stand komt en blijft voortbestaan. Ten eerste blijkt uit diepte-studies naar opvoedingsstijlen (Van Der Hoek, 1994; Coenen, 2001; Pels & De Haan, 2003) en naar de praktijk op scholen die gesitueerd zijn in achterstandswijken (Maden, 2001; Lupton, 2004, 2005; West, Ainscow & Stanford, 2005) dat opvoedings- en onderwijspraktijken in onderlinge samenhang en interactie vormkrijgen. Ten tweede blijkt eveneens uit deze studies, dat de oordelen over de geschiktheid van opvoedings- en onderwijspraktijken op normen zijn gebaseerd. Het oordeel over bijvoorbeeld een deficit in opvoedingsstijl hangt af van welke sociaal-culturele omstandigheden al dan niet worden meegenomen in de beoordeling. Ten derde blijkt uit studies onder succesvolle allochtone leerlingen (Crul, 2000; Hustinx and Meijnen, 2001; Van Der Veen, 2001) en succesvolle gesegregeerde scholen (Proudford & Baker, 1995; Overmaat & Ledoux, 2002; Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004) dat leerkrachten, ouders en leerlingen een actieve rol spelen in de behaalde onderwijsresultaten. Zij ondergaan de negatieve invloed van achtergrondkenmerken van leerlingen op onderwijsposities niet passief en zij zijn niet slechts bezig met het compenseren voor veronderstelde tekorten en verminderde kansen. In plaats daarvan spelen leerkrachten, ouders en leerlingen op elkaar in en slagen zij er soms in de relatie tussen onderwijsachterstand en een lage sociaal-economische en etnische minderheids status te doorbreken. Doorgaans hebben hun inspanningen echter weinig effect: de onderwijsachterstand van allochtone leerlingen blijft hardnekkig bestaan. Deze drie inzichten wijzen erop dat onderwijsachterstand niet eenvoudigweg de accumulatie is van een deficit in de opvoeding en van verminderde kansen in het onderwijs. Onderwijsachterstand van allochtone leerlingen lijkt in een meer complex en een norm-afhankelijk proces tot stand te komen dan deze perspectieven veronderstellen.

In *hoofdstuk twee* wordt een alternatieve visie op het tot stand komen van onderwijsachterstand onder allochtone leerlingen ontwikkeld. Ik ontwikkel deze kijk door een drietal dimensies met elkaar te verbinden: (a) identiteitsonderhandelingen tussen leerkrachten, ouders en leerlingen die rondom het alledaagse curriculum plaatsvinden, (b) processen van beleidsvorming en -implementatie in schoolorganisaties, en (c) micro-politiek in schoolteams. Deze theoretische discussie laat zien dat de beleidscontext van scholen van

invloed is op de interacties tussen leerkrachten onderling en tussen leerkrachten, ouders en leerlingen. Om te begrijpen hoe onderwijsachterstanden onder allochtone leerlingen tot stand komen, is het van belang te bestuderen hoe de beleidscontext de alledaagse interacties in schoolorganisaties beïnvloedt.

In *hoofdstuk drie* bespreek ik veranderingen in het integratie- en onderwijsbeleid en ik analyseer hoe deze veranderingen mogelijk uitwerken op de relatie tussen schoolorganisaties, leerlingen en ouders. Gesegregeerde scholen staan momenteel in het brandpunt van de maatschappelijke en politieke belangstelling, maar de kennis over de alledaagse gang van zaken in deze scholen is beperkt en weinig eenduidig (Meijnen, 2003). De overheid verwacht van gesegregeerde scholen dat zij samenwerken met allochtone ouders in de strijd tegen onderwijsachterstand. Ik laat echter zien dat het onderliggend discours en de beleidsinterventies weleens een tegengesteld effect zouden kunnen hebben.

In *hoofdstuk vier* worden de focus, doelstellingen, onderzoeksvragen en de methodologische benadering van mijn studie gepresenteerd. De studie richt zich op de alledaagse interactie tussen teamleden onderling en tussen leerkrachten en ouders op gesegregeerde scholen. Ik analyseer deze interacties in de context van de schoolorganisatie en van het onderwijs- en integratiebeleid. Ik beoog zowel de kennis van gesegregeerde scholen te vergroten als te bestuderen of de onderwijsachterstand onder allochtone leerlingen op een andere wijze dan via een deficit-benadering kan worden verklaard. Met de verkregen inzichten wil ik een bijdrage leveren aan het huidige integratiedebat waarin de verantwoordelijkheden van individuen om te assimileren worden benadrukt en waarin onderwijs als een belangrijk integratie bevorderend instrument wordt gezien.

De volgende twee onderzoeksvragen staan centraal in deze dissertatie:

- (1) Hoe proberen ouders en leerkrachten op gesegregeerde basisscholen gezamenlijk onderwijsachterstanden te bestrijden?
- (2) Welke rol spelen processen van beleid in de organisatie van de scholen en in de interacties tussen leerkrachten en ouders?

Om deze vragen te beantwoorden heb ik een meervoudige en ingebedde case-studie uitgevoerd. Er is onderzoek gedaan op twee vergelijkbare openbare basisscholen die beide een hoog percentage allochtone leerlingen hebben (meer dan 70%). Op beide scholen zijn drie activiteiten in detail bestudeerd. De basisscholen, die gesitueerd zijn in een middelgrote stad in Nederland, worden aan het eind van hoofdstuk vier geïntroduceerd.

In de empirische *hoofdstukken vijf, zes en zeven* worden de onderzoeksgegevens die betrekking hebben op de drie activiteiten gepresenteerd en geanalyseerd. Achtereenvolgens worden besproken: de activiteit spelinloop, een onderwerp waarmee de scholen ten tijde van het onderzoek problemen ervaren (leerlinggedrag op de *Sleutelschool* en ouderbetrokkenheid op de *Professor Bakkerschool*), en een taal cursus Nederlands voor moeders.

Hoofdstuk vijf gaat over de activiteit "spelinloop". Deze activiteit is onderdeel van het Voor- en Vroegschoolse Educatie (VVE) programma "Piramide". De spelinloop heeft onder andere tot doel de relatie tussen leerkrachten en ouders en tussen ouders en hun kinderen te verbeteren. De activiteit wordt georganiseerd voor ouders met kinderen in groep één en twee: 's ochtends mogen zij dertig minuten met hun kind spelen in de klas. In dit hoofdstuk

bespreek ik de veronderstellingen die ten grondslag liggen aan het VVE-beleid, aan het Piramide programma en aan de spelinloop, en ik analyseer hoe de beide schoolteams de spelinloop realiseren in de praktijk. Tevens bespreek ik de ervaringen van de ouders met en hun visies op de spelinloop.

In *hoofdstuk zes* bespreek ik twee onderwerpen die op het moment van onderzoek speelden op de scholen. Het bespreken van dergelijke onderwerpen biedt de mogelijkheid om de micro-politiek in schoolorganisaties in detail te bestuderen: interacties tussen leerkrachten onderling en tussen leerkrachten en het schoolmanagement staan centraal in dit hoofdstuk. De *Sleutelschool* had problemen met een toenemende ontevredenheid in het team over leerlinggedrag, en de *Professor Bakkerschool* probeerde een uitweg te vinden uit de problemen in het team die een verdere verbetering van de contacten tussen leerkrachten en ouders verhinderde. Dit hoofdstuk gaat in op de visies van de leerkrachten en het schoolmanagement op de gerezen problemen en hun pogingen oplossingen te formuleren.

Hoofdstuk zeven bespreekt een taalcursus Nederlands die wordt aangeboden aan moeders met kinderen in groep één en twee. Het Regionaal Opleidingen Centrum en de onderwijsadviesdienst zijn verantwoordelijk voor het programma en zij verzorgen de lessen op de beide scholen. Een belangrijk doel van de taalcursus is om de ouderbetrokkenheid onder moeders die het Nederlands niet of nauwelijks machtig zijn te stimuleren. Deze moeders worden doorgaans gezien als een zeer moeilijk bereikbare groep. De analyse van de gegevens laat zien dat het programma de scholen de kans biedt om contact op te bouwen met deze moeders, maar dat dit niet gebeurt.

Hoofdstuk acht sluit dit proefschrift af met de beantwoording van de onderzoeksvragen. Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat de opvatting dat er sprake is van een opvoedings-deficit onder allochtone ouders stevig geworteld is in de alledaagse praktijk van gesegregeerde basisscholen. Volgens de leerkrachten is dit deficit een belangrijke oorzaak van de problemen die zij ervaren zoals een aanvangsachterstand, gedragsproblemen en een beperkte ouderbetrokkenheid. Het veronderstelde deficit wordt door de leerkrachten doorgaans in verband gebracht met de allochtone achtergrond van de ouders. De opvatting dat er sprake is van een opvoedings-deficit vormt een dominante leidraad in de activiteiten die de schoolteams opzetten en de interacties die zij aangaan met ouders. Het onderzoek laat zien dat de activiteiten en interacties die gebaseerd zijn op een vermeend opvoedings-deficit, uiteindelijk onderwijsachterstand niet of nauwelijks bestrijden.

De dominantie van de deficit-benadering in gesegregeerde scholen is echter niet eenvoudigweg het resultaat van bijvoorbeeld een gebrek aan inzet en rationaliteit of opzettelijke discriminatie onder de leerkrachten. Leerkrachten onderkennen problemen die gepaard gaan met een deficit-benadering. Dat zij desondanks deze benadering prominent stellen in hun werk dient te worden begrepen in de context van de schoolorganisatie en het beleid dat zij implementeren.

In de schoolorganisatie leidt een deficit-visie op allochtone ouders en hun kinderen ertoe dat ouders weinig inspraak hebben. Er wordt voorbij gegaan aan hun ervaringen, competenties en inspanningen. Bovendien wordt in de deficit-visie weinig structurele aandacht besteed aan hoe het gedrag van ouders en leerlingen beïnvloed wordt door het gedrag van leerkrachten en de opzet van activiteiten. In plaats daarvan worden leerkrachten verondersteld succesvol te compenseren voor de veronderstelde tekortkomingen onder

leerlingen en ouders. Er wordt voorbij gegaan aan de vraag of het krijgen van volledige controle over de deficiënties reëel is.

Leerkrachten en het schoolmanagement spreken kritisch over deze problemen van een deficit-benadering. Zij brengen deze problemen echter niet vaak in verband met de deficit-benadering als zodanig, maar spreken over kenmerken van “zwakke schoolorganisaties”. De studie laat zien dat hoewel kenmerken als lage verwachtingen, fragmentatie in de teams en een gebrek aan vertrouwen tussen leerkrachten onderling een rol spelen in het functioneren van de scholen, zij niet het beperkte succes van de inspanningen van leerkrachten en ouders verklaren. Hun beperkte succes blijkt het resultaat van onderwijsbeleid waarin de deficit-visie op alloctonen domineert. Dergelijk beleid resulteert in een onderwijspraktijk die uiteindelijk juist in stand houdt en legitimeert wat zij beoogt te bestrijden, namelijk onderwijsachterstand van alloctone leerlingen.

Ik betoog dat het ontwikkelen van een alternatieve benadering van onderwijsachterstand noodzakelijk is om onderwijsachterstand onder alloctone leerlingen te bestrijden. Een dergelijke benadering zou in moeten gaan op het spanningsveld tussen het aanpassen van normen in onderwijsprocessen aan de diversiteit onder leerlingen en het vasthouden aan standaarden van onderwijskwaliteit. Het meritocratisch ideaal waarbij gestreefd wordt leerlingen uitsluitend te selecteren op basis van individuele kenmerken is hiertoe niet geschikt. De meritocratische benadering van onderwijsongelijkheid houdt uiteindelijk het individu verantwoordelijk voor de uitkomsten van een systeem waarin collectieve achtergronden inherent een rol spelen.

Ik beargumenteer, aan het einde van hoofdstuk acht, dat onderwijsachterstand langs sociaal-culturele lijnen een niet volledig controleerbaar en uitroeibaar fenomeen, maar een inherente eigenschap is van het onderwijssysteem. Om onderwijsachterstand zo veel mogelijk te voorkomen en te beheersen lijkt een procesmatige benadering van onderwijsachterstand het meest geschikt. In een dergelijke benadering wordt continu ingespeeld op de ambiguïteiten die inherent zijn aan het onderwijssysteem. Dergelijke ambiguïteiten bevinden zich zowel op het snijvlak van beleid en praktijk als in de onderwijspraktijk waarin de mogelijkheden om in te spelen op diversiteit niet onuitputtelijk zijn. Het huidige politieke en maatschappelijke klimaat vormt echter een weinig hoopvolle omgeving voor een meer open en flexibele benadering van onderwijsachterstand.

Curriculum Vitae

Dieneke de Ruiter was born on 14 March 1978 in Leiden. In 1996 she completed her secondary education at Het Vlietland College in Leiden. In 1997 she embarked on her study of Pedagogic Sciences at the University of Leiden, specialising in the field of Educational Sciences. Her studies included a seven month field trip to South Africa, where she was involved with the major curriculum reform of the post-apartheid era. This reform aroused her interest in the issue of multiculturalism in education. On her return to the Netherlands, she further specialised in cultural diversity and the challenges this poses to educational systems, and schools in particular. Her master's thesis examined teacher expectations about immigrant children and their influence on curriculum decisions. She was awarded her Master's degree in 2003. That same year, she was appointed as a PhD student to work in the Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science at Utrecht University. Dieneke de Ruiter currently works for The Netherlands Council for Social Development (*Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling*).

