

# What's the problem? Investigation of Dutch policy statements in search of causes of stagnating citizenship education

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**Anneke Meester-van Laar**

VIAA University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

**GD Bertram-Troost**

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**J Hoogland**

University of Twente, The Netherlands

**DJ de Ruyter**

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands

## Abstract

Based on the findings of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement notes in 2010 that the development of citizenship education is stagnating. In response to this stagnation, some countries, including the Netherlands, are tempted to act more prescriptively in matters of citizenship education. Prior to and in the interest of the search for a solution, we think it is first and foremost important to gain insight into the extent to which the Dutch policy on citizenship education itself contributes to the stagnation. Reconstruction of the policy theory (as a part of document analysis) is used as a method to analyse the various policy statements. Our analysis demonstrates that there are sufficient indications to state that what the Dutch government wants and why is unclear and that there are specific normative beliefs underlying the policy which may conflict with beliefs of the implementers. We assume that the indicators found are not conducive to enable or motivate school leaders to implement the policy as desired by the government.

## Keywords

citizenship, education, policy, policy theory

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## Corresponding author:

Anneke Meester-van Laar, Research Group Formative Education, VIAA University of Applied Sciences, Postbus 10030, 8000 GA Zwolle, The Netherlands.

Email: vanlaaranneke@hotmail.com

## Introduction

Citizenship is high on the agenda of education systems in Europe. An important element of the debate about citizenship concerns issues raised by social plurality, including issues of religious and cultural diversity (Jackson, 2003). Whether influenced primarily by these concerns, by fears of youth's disengagement from political processes or by political change in former communist countries, citizenship education has emerged either as a discrete curriculum subject or as a dimension of the wider school curriculum (Paludan and Prinds, 1999). In almost all European countries, civic education or citizenship education was introduced in the early years of the 21st century (Maslowski et al., 2012). The extent to which countries express their values in education legislation has a marked influence on the definition of, and approach to, citizenship education (Kerr, 1999). The Netherlands, like Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, is grouped by Le Métails (1997) in the category of countries with a minimal degree of detail in which national values are expressed or prescribed in education legislation. Kerr (1999) demonstrates that the degree of reference to values in education legislation corresponds to one of the major philosophical and practical tensions countries face in approaching citizenship education, namely the extent to which it is possible to identify, agree with, and articulate the values and dispositions that underpin citizenship.

Kerr (1999) highlights the very common assertion that, in response to the challenges and uncertainties in the modern world, many countries with a formal 'values-neutral' approach are tending towards a more explicit approach, to prevent that citizenship education becomes 'a "catch-all" for many related topics and aspects and that this lack of focus made it a lower status, low priority area in schools'. This movement is also visible in the Netherlands. Since 2006, Dutch primary schools are obligated by law to promote active citizenship and social integration. Yet, based on the idea of liberal neutrality and the principle of freedom of education according to which the Dutch government should stay aloof from policies based on secondary values, the mission to promote active citizenship and social integration does not regulate how schools should promote active citizenship and social integration, but only ensures that they focus their education on it. Based on findings of the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (20 April 2011), the State Secretary of Education notes at the end of 2013, and again 3 years later, that the development of citizenship education is stagnating. While almost all schools offer activities around citizenship, the Inspectorate states that too little progress has been made towards an explicated curriculum, with concrete goals and corresponding content. A third of all primary schools have no explicit vision on citizenship, while the presence or absence of an explicit vision on citizenship education appears to be a major factor in the extent to which citizenship education develops (Onderwijsraad, 2012). In response to this finding, the State Secretary intends to refine the core objectives of the policy.

Prior to, and in the interest of, a solution for the observation that the desired development does not take place, we believe it is necessary and helpful to first gain insight into possible causes of the stagnation. The observations of the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (see the annual report of 20 April 2011 and subsequent reports) show that the stagnation-problem could be interpreted as a lack in compliance with the policy by those responsible for the management of citizenship education in the school, such as school leaders. Comparison of different studies (Mastenbroek and Versluis, 2014) shows that there are three explanations for the fact that citizens or institutions do not behave in accordance with the policy adopted by the government: (1) they have made an instrumental cost-benefit analysis and decide that compliance with the policy brings too many burdens (instrumental explanation), (2) they do not know or understand the policy (cognitive explanation) and (3) they disagree with the policy on normative beliefs (normative explanation). This article aims to understand if and how the policy on citizenship education itself explains the observed stagnation. Consequently, practical reasons such as lack of time by the intended implementers of the policy are

outside our scope. The research mainly focuses on gaining insight into the extent to which the Dutch policy contains indicators pointing towards the last two explanations: what can be said about the clarity of the policy (explanation 2) and what about the normative beliefs underlying the policy (explanation 3)? In this article, the central question is, to what extent does the Dutch policy on citizenship education itself give rise to the stagnation in the development of citizenship education? Reconstruction of the policy theory is used as a method to analyse the various policy statements (Hoogerwerf, 1992). We assume that an answer to the central question will help to understand why the development of citizenship education does not proceed as expected, and may also aid reflection on what is needed. Despite its focus on the Dutch situation, the study has international relevance given its universally applicable methodological approach of the stagnation-problem.

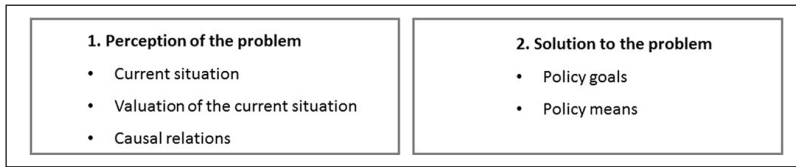
After providing an outline of the method used to analyse the Dutch policy on citizenship education, various elements of the Dutch policy are described for an overview of the clarity and the normative foundations of the policy. Based on the results, the central question is answered and some points of discussion and implications for further research are added.

## Method

Policies can be analysed and evaluated in various ways. In this study, we make a distinction between the analysis of the outside and the inside of the policy, following Hoogerwerf and Leeuw (Hoogerwerf, 1990; Tirion, 2014). They assume that behind the visible exterior of the policy – the structure consisting of objectives, resources and timetables – all kinds of assumptions and beliefs are hidden. Together, these assumptions form the ‘inside’ of the policy. This less visible set of assumptions on which the policy is based is called the policy theory (Hoogerwerf, 1984; Tirion, 2014). In this study, reconstruction of the policy theory is used as a method to analyse the Dutch policy on citizenship education. According to Leeuw (2003), one of the strengths of this reconstruction approach is its use of argumentational analysis that helps to validate the reconstruction process. In addition, he emphasizes that the accompanying diagrammatic presentation of the underlying theory is helpful in the dialogue with stakeholders.

In order to draw conclusions about the inside of the policy, it is necessary to have an overview of the outside of the policy: the policy field including all the central elements and processes. To gain insight into these central elements and their mutual relations, we conducted a document analysis. The analysis involved all statements concerning the content of and the rationale for the Dutch policy on citizenship education in 21 documents (see Appendix 1) written by the Dutch government, signed or pronounced by Ministers or State Secretaries of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, from 2005 to 2015. First of all, all statements in the selected documents were coded on the basis of three categories: observations (the policymaker says something about the state of affairs), causal relations (the policymaker says something about the cause of a certain state of affairs) and final relations (the policymaker says something about the desired goals and necessary means and/or the relation between them). Within each category, the dominant elements were distilled, clustered and/or brought into relation with each other on the basis of the relationships between the elements that were explicitly mentioned in the policy text (Van de Graaf and Hoppe, 1996); see section ‘Results section A’.

On the basis of the described exterior, we were able to gain insight into the inside of the policy, also known as the policy theory. The policy theory shows why – according to the policymaker – a particular policy area requires a certain action (Van de Graaf, 1988; Van de Bressers and Hoogerwerf, 1991; Van der Graaf and Hoppe, 1996). Bacchi (2009) stresses the importance of exposing this policy theory, by arguing that all policies are based on a problem *representation*: ‘problems are endogenous – created within – rather than exogenous – existing outside the policy-making process’



**Figure 1.** Two areas on which the policymaker made statements.

(Bacchi, 2009: 11). According to Bacchi, defining something as a problem has major consequences, since another observation of the policy issue would reveal other solutions. Winter (2014) and Tirion (2014) demonstrate that, in practice, a policy is often a sum of various views and interests that are presented as a cohesive conglomerate in the different policy documents. It frequently appears that the policy theory is not made (sufficiently) explicit by the policymaker. In order to gain insight into the ‘inside’ of the policy, it is therefore necessary to make a reconstruction of the theory afterwards. Tirion (2014) emphasizes that there is no general recipe for the research into the ‘inside’ of the policy. In this study, we followed the first steps of Hoogerwerf and Herweijer (1985, 2014), by describing if and how the core elements and the relationships between them are (normatively) substantiated by the policymaker. In addition, we give an outline of which assumptions and beliefs appear to have been leading, both with respect to the definition of the problem and the suggested solution as for choices with regard to the approach of the problem (see section ‘Results section B’). This procedure is in line with the first part of the ‘What’s the problem-method’ developed by Bacchi (1999), which is directed to uncover the ‘problem’ and the assumptions underlying it.

## Results

### *Results section A: the visible exterior of the policy*

In this first results section, we describe which elements are central to the policy according to the policymaker, and how these elements are related (causal and final) to each other. Since the term ‘policy’ can be defined as ‘an answer to a problem’ (Hoogerwerf and Herweijer, 1985), we distinguish two areas in which the policymaker made statements, namely statements concerning ‘the problem’ and statements concerning ‘the answer’ (see Figure 1). What is seen as ‘the problem’ (the problem perception) is the result of two interacting processes, namely a process of observing and identifying a situation – including related causal mechanisms – and a process of appreciating the situation. What is seen as ‘the answer’ (the solution to the problem) appears from the goals that the policymaker wants to achieve and the means he wants to use to promote the achievement of these goals.

#### *Perception of the problem*

*The current situation.* In the analysed documents, different situations and processes are presented as grounds for the policymaker to develop policy on citizenship education. The situations or processes perceived by the policymaker are analysed and clustered into the following seven categories, see Table 1 (the number behind the observation refers to the associated document, see Appendix 1):

*Valuation of the current situation.* Some descriptions of the situations and processes perceived by the policymaker show a clear (negative) valuation. For other observations it is less clear how

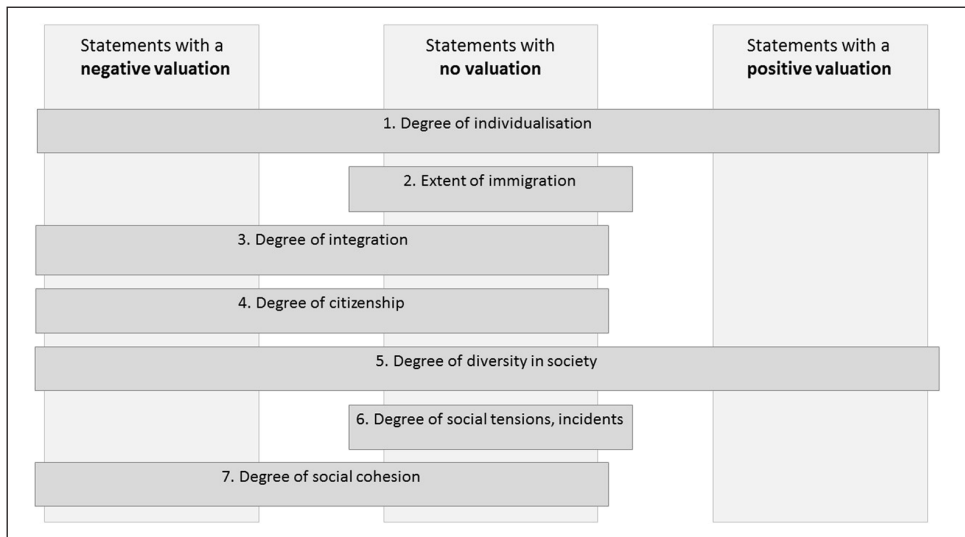
**Table 1.** Situations and processes, observed by the policymaker, presented as grounds to develop policy on citizenship education.

Category	Observations
Degree of ...	Statements (quotes) from the analysed documents
1. Individualization	<p>There are increasing signs that <i>the limit of individual freedom of citizens is reached</i> (Document 4)</p> <p>Individualisation in many areas of society (Document 5)</p> <p>More and more people embrace the motto <i>'Together for our own'</i> (Document 8)</p> <p>Increased individual freedom of choice (Document 8)</p>
2. Immigration	Demographic trends by an increase in the number of immigrants in (large) cities (Document 4)
3. Integration	<p>Arrival of large groups of immigrants (Document 8)</p> <p>The issues of the <i>(slow)</i> integration of some immigrant groups (Document 4)</p> <p>Many parents and children with a minority ethnic background are not rooted in the citizenship traditions and practices (Document 5)</p> <p>Many parents and children with an immigrant background are unfamiliar with the traditions and practices of citizenship in Dutch society (Document 6)</p> <p><i>Non-successful</i> upbringing to integrated citizenship (when children at Islamic and strictly Christian schools are told that it's not good to be friends with people who are not religious) (Document 8)</p>
4. Citizenship	<p>Citizens take <i>insufficient</i> personal responsibility for community interests (Document 4)</p> <p>Citizenship duties and citizenship skills are no longer at high position in the ranking of educational and learning objectives (Document 5)</p>
5. Diversity in society	<p>Citizenship duties and skills are <i>sidelined</i> (Document No 6)</p> <p>A society characterized by ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism (Document 4)</p> <p>A society characterized by ethnic, cultural, social and religious pluralism (Document No 5)</p> <p>Diversity in society (Document 7)</p> <p>Diversity in the context of peers, and the diversity of religions, ethnicities and cultures, beliefs, lifestyles and habits (Document No 7)</p>

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Category	Observations
Degree of ...	Statements (quotes) from the analysed documents
	<p>We, as The Netherlands, are <i>champion</i> diversity (Document 8)</p> <p>Diversity is not unknown to us, but it has increased dramatically in recent decades (Document 8)</p> <p>The presence of citizens (or institutions like Islamic and strictly Christian schools) who adhere to and disseminate beliefs that conflict with the basic values of freedom and equality – in particular when it comes to dealing with other faiths, gender equality and homosexuality (Document 8)</p>
	<p>A society with a lot of diversity and dynamics (Document 13)</p> <p>Our dynamic and pluralistic society (Document 13)</p>
	<p>A society like ours with all the diversity of beliefs and cultures (Document 16)</p> <p>The cultural and ideological diversity present in Dutch society, can also be recognized in education (Document 16)</p>
6. Social tensions and incidents	<p>The presence of students with extremist ideas (Document 16)</p> <p>The promotion of active citizenship can evoke tension in daily practice in Islamic and Christian schools, seen from the worldview that underlies these schools. The likelihood that this tension occurs is greatest in these schools (Document 9)</p> <p>Tensions that occur in society, nationally and internationally, have an impact on schools and institutions (Document 16)</p> <p>Current social tensions and incidents that touch on the basic values of our democratic constitution (Document 16)</p>
7. Social cohesion	<p>Some people turn from our society and use violence (Document 18)</p> <p>The social fabric has a <i>lack</i> of firmness (Document No 5)</p> <p>The feeling that <i>strengthening</i> social cohesion is needed (Document 5)</p> <p><i>Unease</i> about decreasing social cohesion and reduction of mutual trust (Document 5)</p> <p>Decreased engagement between citizens and between citizens and government (Document 6)</p> <p>The question is who we really are, what binds us together (Document 8)</p>

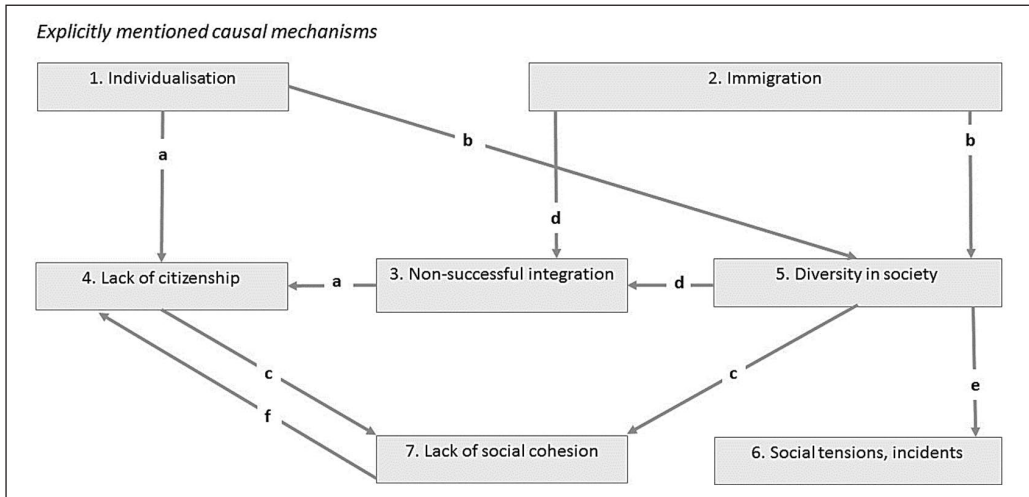


**Figure 2.** Valuation of the observed situation by the policymaker.

the government appreciates the situation, either because an explicit valuation is missing or because valuations seem to be ambivalent. An explicitly negative valuation emerges in three of the seven above listed categories: the policymaker indicates that there is a lack in the degree of citizenship (4) and social cohesion (7), and that the integration process (3) is not successful. It is obvious that, for the policymaker, these situations do not conform to the ‘desired level’ and so are perceived as a problem. The policymaker makes on paper no distinction between the seriousness of the problems (e.g. between the main problem and miscellaneous problems).

The process of individualization (1) is not valued explicitly as a problem, since the policymaker describes the process especially in terms of increasing personal freedom of choice. However, the process is not necessarily positively appreciated by the policymaker. In one statement, the policymaker indicates that individualization should not increase. In addition, in most cases the process of individualization is negatively valued because of its negative effect on the degree of citizenship. So, when individualization is negatively valued, it is mostly because of its contribution to one of the three explicitly identified ‘problems’ as mentioned above. This is also true in some cases for statements concerning the degree of immigration (2) and the degree of diversity in society (5). The (high level of) immigration of ethnic minorities (2) is not appreciated by the policymaker because this weakens the solidity of the social fabric, and the policymaker expresses a negative opinion on the adherence to and dissemination of some non-liberal orthodox views (5), because this obstructs upbringing to integrated citizenship. However, with respect to category 5 (the degree of diversity in society) the policymaker seems to be mainly neutral or even positive rather than negative. The observed situation of a ‘diverse society’ is largely described as given without any negative rating. The policymaker seems to believe that the diverse society is what it is and we should learn to live in/with it. Diversity and plurality as a characteristic of Dutch society seem to be even hailed with a certain pride in one case: ‘We, as the Netherlands, are champion diversity!’. When it comes to category 6 (the degree of social tensions and incidents), it is not very surprising that an explicit negative valuation is missing, for incidents (in particular incidents of violence) are necessarily undesirable for the majority of people. However, it remains unclear whether the observed social tensions are taken for granted or are considered undesirable. Figure 2 shows a graphical overview of how the seven themes are discussed by the policymaker in the analysed policy documents.





**Figure 3.** Reconstruction of explicit mentioned causal mechanisms

*Causal relations.* In the various policy documents there are several explicit statements in which the above observed situations and processes are causally related. The following is a paraphrased description of explicitly mentioned causal relations (the number behind the assumed causal relation refers to the associated document, see Appendix 1):

- a The observation that citizenship rights and duties have been sidelined and that citizenship formation is no longer taken for granted is due to two social developments, namely individualization in many areas of society and the unfamiliarity of immigrants with Dutch traditions and customs (Document 5).
- b The increased variety and diversity is a result of both the arrival of large groups of immigrants (who are not rooted in Dutch traditions and customs), and the increase of individual freedom of choice (Document 8).
- c The decline of social cohesion is due to a lack of citizenship traditions and customs (Document 5) and to the adherence to orthodox beliefs (when it comes to dealing with other faiths) or extremist ideas (Document 16). Adherence to and dissemination of these views ensures that integrated citizenship formation fails, and/or ensures poor bonding of youth to our society.
- d The arrival of large groups of immigrants leads to the presence of a group of people who are not rooted in Dutch traditions and customs (Document 5). The adherence to and dissemination of some non-liberal orthodox views obstructs upbringing to integrated citizenship (Document 8).
- e Social tensions and incidents of violence in society and schools are a result of both orthodox beliefs which conflict with our basic values (when it comes to homosexuality and gender equality) (Document 8), and cultural and religious diversity in society and schools (Document 16).
- f As a result of the decreased engagement between citizens and between citizens and government, the duties and rights that are a part of good citizenship have faded (Document 6).

The total of explicitly mentioned causal mechanisms is reconstructed in Figure 3. The figure shows causal relationships by means of arrows between the seven observed situations and processes. The letters ‘a’ to ‘f’ refer to the formulations of presumed causal relations above.



It is notable that the supposed causal relation between elements 5 and 3 (arrow d) and between elements 5 and 6 (arrow e) has not so much to do with the degree of diversity in society in the sense of variegation or variety of views or backgrounds. Essentially, it has to do with the content of certain views and the extent to which it differs from the standard, interpreted as a certain degree of orthodoxy. In section ‘Results section B’ we come back to this observation.

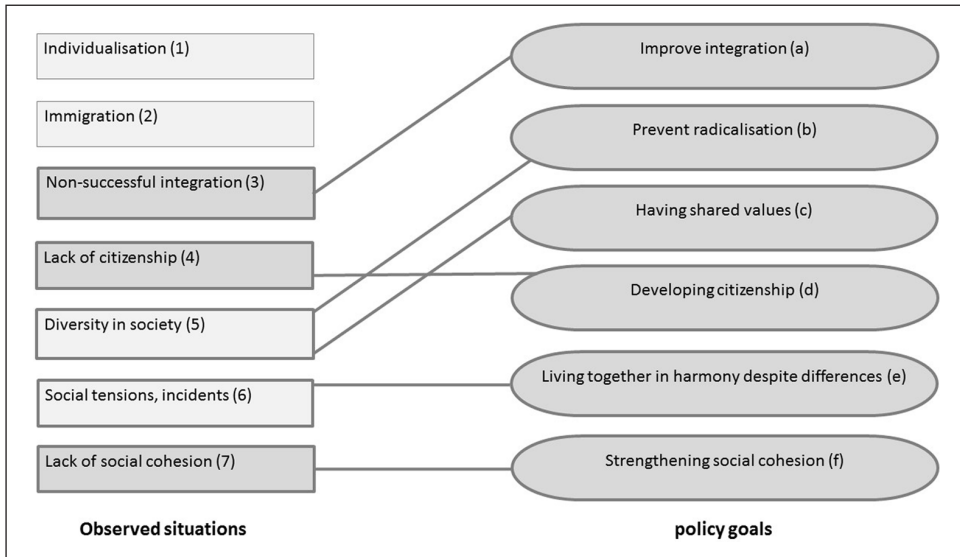
*Solution to the problem.* Analysis of the various policy statements shows that explicit statements regarding the desired (ideal) situation are missing. We can still get a picture of the desired situation by mapping the various policy goals presented by the policymaker. These objectives give an indication of the situation that the policymaker aims to achieve with the policy. Within the *coding*-category ‘final relations’ (see section ‘Method’), the goals that the policymaker wants to achieve are distilled, based on guiding questions as: what is the role of education; what does the policymaker want to achieve or promote; where is the policy aimed at; what development or contribution has the policymaker in mind? On the basis of similarity, the various policy goals are clustered into the following six categories (the numbers behind the policy goals refer to the associated documents, see Appendix 1):

1. Improve integration: to accustom immigrants to Dutch society, improve integration, prevent disintegration (Documents 4 and 5)
2. Prevent radicalization: preventing extremist or radical ideas, prevent radicalization, less susceptible to radical ideas (Documents 5, 15, 16 and 17)
3. Promoting the sharing of values: adherence to the core values of our constitutional democracy, having shared values, internalization of core values or ground rules (Documents 8, 13, 16, 18 and 21)
4. Developing citizenship: developing citizenship skills and attitudes, able to participate fully in society, preserving democracy (Documents 1, 5, 8, 12, 16, 17 and 21)
5. Living together in harmony despite differences: can live together in a pluralistic and dynamic society, living together in harmony despite differences, can form a balanced judgment on conflicting rights (Documents 5, 8, 13 and 16)
6. Strengthening social cohesion: strengthen mutual commitment, connect (young) people to society, connect different groups, strengthening social cohesion, having a common perspective on social contribution, committed to community concerns (Documents 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 16 and 18).

The policymaker expects that these policy goals will be achieved by use of various means. These policy means and the assumed final relations<sup>1</sup> will be discussed in section ‘Results section B’, provided that they contribute to a better view on the criteria the policymaker uses to appreciate observed or expected situations.

### *Results section B – the inside of the policy*

In this second results section, we portray the inside of the policy by describing all kinds of assumptions and beliefs that are hidden behind the visible exterior of the policy, as presented in section ‘Results section A’. We describe how the core elements and the relationships between them are (normatively) substantiated by the policymaker and which assumptions and beliefs appear to have been leading. For this purpose we examined (1) to what extent statements within the coding-category ‘observations’ (see section ‘Method’) contain arguments to classify a particular observed situation as undesirable and (2) to what extent statements within the coding-category ‘final relations’ (see section ‘Method’) contain arguments to classify a particular policy goal as desirable.



**Figure 4.** Relation between the six policy goals and the seven ‘problematic’ situations and processes observed by the policymaker.

*Definition of problem and suggested solution.* As described in the first result section, three social situations, namely the degree of integration (3), the degree of citizenship (4) and the degree of social cohesion (7), do not meet the levels desired by the policymaker. Although these situations are explicitly considered as ‘undesirable’, it seems that the policy is aimed at tackling more than these three situations. In an effort to connect the six policy goals to the observed situations and processes (see Figure 4), it appears that the policy approach focuses on at least two other observed situations, namely the degree of diversity in society (5) and social tensions and incidents (6). This implies that these two observed situations are not necessarily considered by the policymaker as established facts and that diversity is not necessarily considered to be positive, as suggested by the policymaker in the outlined current situation.

Analysis shows that the policymaker is mostly not explicit about the criteria she uses to appreciate the observed (problematic) situations or suggested solutions. Which criterion the policymaker uses can, however, in some cases be deduced from how the used concepts are defined and applied, and from the means that are presented as necessary to achieve a certain policy goal. Since the policy goals seem to be aimed at tackling five of the observed situations listed above, we investigated with respect to these five cases on what basis they are regarded as (un)desirable.

*Criteria for (non)successful integration (3).* The current integration process is evaluated by the policymaker as unsuccessful, and one of the policy goals is to improve integration. To gain insight into the criteria the policymaker applies to appreciate the process as successful or not, we looked at how the policymaker defines the concept of integration. Based on various policy statements (see Documents 4, 5, 6 and 16), we can conclude that the concept of integration is seen by the policymaker primarily as a one-sided activity: it is primarily a task of the immigrant to integrate. According to the policymaker, slow integration only concerns the unfamiliarity of foreign citizens with Dutch traditions and customs, not vice versa. Although ‘meeting’ between students of different origins – as an important means to good citizenship in a diverse society – suggests that action is required

from all the involved, this tool appears to be focused on the integration of the group of outsiders which is defined as non-integrated. With regard to the host society, unfamiliarity with non-Dutch traditions and customs is in fact not invoked as a cause for a lack of citizenship.

Although some attention is paid to maintaining one's own identity, the concept of integration mainly refers to a certain degree of adaptation. An analysis of the various statements show that, according to the policymaker, adaptation has to do with familiarity with Dutch traditions and customs, knowledge and acceptance of citizenship rights and duties, internalization of basic values, and no adherence to 'unwanted orthodox or radical' views.

*Criteria for citizenship at a sufficient level (4).* The observed degree of citizenship is not valued positively by the policymaker and one of the policy goals is to develop citizenship skills and attitudes. Analysis of the policy statements shows that the policymaker expects that participation in social practice areas, the development of knowledge of pluralism and democracy and the development of certain skills such as responsibility or critical thinking, will result in the achievement of a sufficient degree of citizenship (see Appendix 2, Table 2). Yet it remains unclear to which level these participation, knowledge and skills should be developed to achieve the desired goal. Consequently, the criteria on which the degree of citizenship is evaluated by the policymaker remain implicit.

*Criteria for (not) appreciating diversity in society (5).* As mentioned before, with regard to the degree of diversity in society explicit negative valuation is missing. However, in an effort to connect the six policy goals to the observed situations and processes (see Figure 4) it appears that the policy approach is also aimed at tackling the observed degree of diversity in society. The policy turns out to be not (only) aimed at maintaining or learning to deal with the observed plural situation, but also at changing it. To gain insight into which criteria the policymaker applies to appreciate the (degree of) diversity in society, we examined the vision of the policymaker on diversity, on the adherence of orthodox beliefs or extremist ideas, and on living together in a pluralistic society. As mentioned earlier (Results section A – *causal relations*), it is noticeable that not the variety of views but the *content* of certain views is seen as a cause for unsuccessful integration and social tensions and incidents. Thus, when it comes to integration and social tensions, it seems that the extent to which certain views differ from the standard, interpreted as a certain degree of orthodoxy, determine how 'diversity' is appreciated by the policymaker.

While there is a lot of attention for skills to participate in a dialogue or discussion as a means to learn to live together in a pluralistic society, there is also a lot of attention for the necessity of clear boundaries regarding attitudes and behaviour. A solid understanding of 'the' rules, which is more or less equated with internalization of the basic values that underlie Dutch society, is required to live together in harmony despite differences. In addition, dialogue is not only seen as a means of achieving harmony, but also as a means to prevent the development of radical views. The conversation about fundamental values is seen as a means to minimize the breeding ground for radical ideas. Thus, on one hand the policy seems to be focused on learning how to deal with differences and, on the other hand, on narrowing differences with its focus on shared values and the prevention of radical ideas. The policymaker seems to opt for a combination, since she emphasizes that 'education has an important role in the transmission of values', while stressing at the same time that 'every individual in a democracy is free to choose whether or not to be guided by these shared values' (Analysis Document 13).

With regard to the policy goal 'prevention of radical ideas', it is noteworthy that the analysed documents hardly ever explicitly state what is meant by 'radical'. Just in one case the policymaker becomes more concrete when she speaks about 'radical or extreme views about the perception of

ideologies that are contrary to the core values of our democratic society' (Document 5). Apparently the core values are 'the standard' from which radical views differ. In one case (Document 8) the policymaker suggests that especially views within Islamic and Orthodox Christian ideas are at odds with these basic values, in particular when it comes to dealing with other faiths, homosexuality or gender equality. In all other cases it seems that the policymaker wants to give the impression that she does not have in mind any specific ideas or group of people, as shown by a generalization as 'radicalization (...) whether in the field of religion, animal rights or a political belief' (Document 20). However, in most cases, obviously adherence to Islamic extremist ideas is meant, as demonstrated by references to, for example, 'the occurrences in Paris and Copenhagen' or 'young people who (want to) travel to Iraq or Syria'.

Critical reflection skills (among other skills) are seen as an important means to connect young people who cause social tensions or incidents – as a consequence of the adherence to orthodox or radical views – with society. So, it seems that the policymaker presupposes that young people who learn to think critically and reflect on their own and others' ideas will develop less orthodox or radical views. Apparently, adherence to orthodox or radical views is seen by the policymaker primarily as a result of a heteronomous lifestyle, including a lack of critical reflection skills, which should be developed in education in the direction of an autonomous critical lifestyle. It is striking that the policymaker seems to promote an independent lifestyle as a remedy for poor social bonding, while the increase in individual freedom (the process of individualization) is seen as an important indirect cause of the decline of social cohesion. This suggests that adherence to values and beliefs on the authority of others is not necessarily rejected by the policymaker, but only when it comes to orthodox or radical views. Radicalization is reprehensible, according to the policymaker, since both the (sense of) security and the social cohesion is at stake.

*Criteria for the valuation of social tensions and incidents (6).* As mentioned before, with regard to the degree of social tensions and incidents an explicit negative valuation is missing. However, in an effort to connect the six policy goals to the observed situations and processes (see Figure 4), it appears that the policy approach is also aimed at tackling the observed degree of social tensions and incidents. When the policy objective 'living together in harmony despite differences' is directed to tackle this observed situation, we can assume that, according to the policymaker, these tensions (1) arise between people with different backgrounds or beliefs, (2) arise when citizens are not sufficiently able to live together, and (3) are undesirable. However, the criteria on which these tensions are evaluated as undesirable remain implicit.

*Criteria for social cohesion at a sufficient level (7).* The current degree of social cohesion is evaluated by the policymaker as insufficient and one of the policy goals is to strengthen social cohesion. To gain insight into which criteria the policymaker applies to appreciate the strength, we examined how the policymaker defines the concept of social cohesion. Analysis of the policy statements indicates that the policymaker sees social cohesion undoubtedly as something positive. A decline of social cohesion is negatively valued while enhancing and strengthening social cohesion is one of the main objectives of the policy. It is unclear what effect of social cohesion the policymaker expects, as the strengthening of social cohesion is defined only as a final goal without explicitly mentioned causal or final relations with other policy objectives.

Indicators explicitly mentioned by the policymaker to determine the degree of social cohesion are the extent to which citizens pursue their own interests, give expression to mutual involvement and have confidence in each other and the government. The latter indicator corresponds largely to one of the two mentioned indicators that Hays and Kogl (2007) distinguish, namely 'harmonious relations and mutual trust' and 'openness for expressing criticism and peaceful conflict resolution'.

In the policy statements both situations arise, though they do not have the same status or function. The importance of space for open conversation, discussion, debate and dialogue is mentioned several times in the policy documents, but especially as a means to an end (prevention of extremist ideas, strengthening social cohesion) rather than as a characteristic of the policy objective. Harmonious relations, by contrast, are explicitly mentioned as a policy objective and can thus be regarded as an indicator of the situation desired by the policymaker.

## Conclusion

The aim of this article is to gain insight into the extent to which the Dutch policy on citizenship education itself contributes to the stagnation in the development of citizenship education. Our analysis of the policy statements leads to the conclusion that both a cognitive and a normative explanation underlie this stagnation.

The description and analysis of the exterior of the policy (section 'Results section A') provide an overview of the clarity of the policy: whether one or different problems gave rise to the policy, whether the policy approach is aimed at the explicitly indicated policy problem and to what extent the policy goals are additional or conflicting. With regard to the situation that gave rise to the development of the policy, it can be concluded that it is unclear what the core problem is. It is also unclear how the policymaker positions herself to the observed diversity in society. Given the wide variety of objectives and the fact that the policy objectives are partly aimed at situations that are not considered by the policymaker as problematic, statements of the policymaker about tackling the undesirable situation can also provide a lack of clarity. In addition, how objectives focused on learning to deal with differences can be combined with objectives focused on narrowing differences, is unclear. These results suggest that what the policymaker wants with its policy and why is not always clear. Listed 'indicators of a lack of clarity' can give sufficient ground for implementers of the policy not to implement the policy in the way as it is desired by the policymaker.

The description and analysis of the inside of the policy (section 'Results section B') provide an overview of the normative beliefs underlying the policy by identifying which criteria the government uses to appreciate existing or expected situations. The results give reason to conclude that the criteria used by the policymaker to appreciate the existing or desired situations are hardly explicated or substantiated. Yet, important indicators which seem to be leading for the policymaker to consider certain situations to be problematic or desirable, have to do with adaptation (concerning integration), the adherence to liberal values (concerning diversity), harmonious relationships (concerning social cohesion), and specific knowledge and skills (concerning citizenship). It is quite possible that the implementers of the policy, like school leaders or school boards who are responsible for the management of citizenship education in the school, do not recognize themselves in the way the above-mentioned situations are considered as problematic or undesirable. They could use another definition of the core concepts, other criteria or could have a different conception of the good life. This may result in tensions in the implementation of the policy and unwillingness or inability to implement the policy as desired by the policymaker.

In conclusion, there are sufficient indications to state that what the government wants and why is unclear and that there are specific normative beliefs underlying the policy. Thus, our findings give reason to conclude that the Dutch policy on citizenship education itself has contributed to the observed stagnation of the development of citizenship education. To determine the causes of the stagnation in its entirety, follow-up research is needed to investigate visions and motives of school leaders and school boards that are responsible for the management of citizenship education in the school. We assume that the indicators found are not conducive to motivate or enable them to behave in accordance with the policy adopted by the government.

Finally, this article deliberately did not discuss the broader debate about the balance between the ‘public’ and ‘private’ dimensions of citizenship, although the theme resounds clearly in the background. The study is limited to the analysis of policy documents. However, the insights of this study give reason to continue this debate and to investigate further to what extent the criteria used by the government are neutral with respect to private conceptions of the good life. It is striking that, in particular, with regard to the degree of diversity in society, the policymaker has difficulty in taking a stand. It is an intriguing question as to what extent this finding is related to the assertion of Mellink (2013) that the Dutch motto ‘be who you are’ in practice (largely) amounts to ‘be like us’. Or, as Van der Burg (2010) notes, that the policymaker apparently wants to combine the factually incompatible characteristics of both liberal (or progressive) and republican liberalism.

### Authors’ Note

J Hoogland is also affiliated to Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands. DJ de Ruyter is also affiliated to University of Humanistic Studies Utrecht, The Netherlands.

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### Notes

1. See Appendix 2.
2. These keywords are obviously typed in Dutch.

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## Appendix I

### Data selection

The documents listed below are collected by the researcher through the central government website ([www.rijksoverheid.nl](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl)). Within the webpage of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science the researcher searched (within the period between 1 January 2005 and 18 March 2015) for documents with a combination of the following keywords: ‘active citizenship social inclusion primary education’.<sup>2</sup> The 149 hits are substantively screened and selected for relevance. A document is assessed as irrelevant if: it is merely an announcement of a reaction, advice or intention; it involves no more than a reference in the margin to the particular law on education; the contents concerns only secondary or higher education; it is a report or advice of third parties (Education Council, Inspectorate of Education). The remaining 21 relevant documents are in chronological order:

1. Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (2004). Citizenship – made in Europe: living together starts at school. Den Haag: OCW.
2. Kabinetsreactie – onderwijsraadadvies Europees Burgerschap, 2 November 2004
3. Koers po – ruimte voor scholen, 2004
4. Onderwijs, Integratie en Burgerschap – 23 April 2004
5. MOCW 2005 – wijziging wet PO
6. Toezichtkader actief burgerschap en sociale integratie – 2006
7. Kamervragen en toelichting op toezichtkader – 2006
8. Speech staatssecretaris Dijkma bij de kwaliteitsconferentie Po in Maarssen, 18 November 2009
9. Reactie staatssecretaris Dijkma op Kamervragen SGP, 3 December 2009
10. Korte reactie minister op Advies Onderwijsraad over burgerschap – 27 August 2012
11. 28 augustus 2012, Bijsterveld – Antwoord op de Schriftelijke vragen van de Kamerleden Van Dijk en Smits ‘Gebrek aan burgerschap bij jongeren’



12. Kamerbrief 28 augustus 2012 – Burgerschap in het onderwijs
13. Kamerbrief Staatssecretaris Dekker – 2013
14. Kamerbrief Staatssecretaris Dekker, 16 December 2013 – Burgerschap in het onderwijs
15. Kamerbrief – 7 juli 2014 – Verzoek inzake toezeggingen burgerschap in het onderwijs
16. Kamerbrief Bussemaker en Dekker – 2015 – versterking burgerschapsvorming
17. Kamerstuk maart 2015 – radicalisering veiligheid onderwijs
18. Toespraak minister Bussemaker tijdens EU-bijeenkomst, 17 March 2015
19. 29 April 2015 – Betreft Voortgang versterking burgerschapsvorming in het onderwijs
20. 16 maart 2015, Brief minister / staatssecretaris- De rol van het onderwijs in de aanpak van radicalisering, 29754 - 305
21. Paris, Tuesday 17 March 2015 – Declaration EU

## Appendix 2

### Final relations

In the analysed documents, various means are described to achieve different policy goals. These means can be categorized under the following headings:

1. *Core values*: internalizing basic values, developing a firm understanding of ‘the’ rules
2. *Practice area*: meeting between immigrants and natives, collaboration; interaction with others, meeting diversity, experiencing diversity
3. *Dialogue*: open discussion, debate, discussion with clear boundaries, enter into conversation about fundamental values
4. *Skills*: being critical (critical thinking, critical reflection, emancipated, open-minded, able to relativize one’s own and other people’s opinion), being responsible and committed to community interests, being capable of dialogue and cooperation, able to empathize with orientations of the other
5. *Knowledge*: knowledge of pluralism (knowledge and understanding of each other’s cultures and backgrounds), knowledge of democracy (democratic principles, the rule of law)
6. *Trust*: willingness to trust each other (despite differences in background or interests)
7. *Critical teacher*: a teacher who has critical attention to and dares to take a stand against radical or extreme views or ideologies that are contrary to the core values of *our* democratic society

The policymaker expects that the use of the above means will result in the achievement of the following policy goals (see Table 2):

**Table 2.** Final relations: the relation between goals and means explicit established in the policy text.

Policy means	Core values	Practice area	Dialogue	Skills	Knowledge	Trust	Critical teacher
Improve integration	X						
Prevent radicalization			X	X			X
Promoting the sharing of values	X			X	X		
Developing citizenship		X		X	X		
Living together in harmony despite differences	X			X	X		X
Strengthening social cohesion	X	X	X	X		X	X