

## Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

# The Netherlands case study report 2 Homework Guidance for Children from Minority Ethnic Groups

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The EPASI project is a programme of analysis of educational programmes in fourteen European countries, designed to address various forms of social inequality. The project analysis was conducted in the period 2007 – 2009. This report is part of the overall project, details of which are at <http://www.epasi.eu>.

The analysis is intended to be used within the overall framework of the EPASI programme.

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The EPASI project was conducted by the following institutions:

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## Homework Guidance for Children from Minority Ethnic Groups

### 1. Description

Country	The Netherlands
Title	<i>Homework guidance for children from minority ethnic groups</i>
Funded by	Protestantse Diaconie
Action implemented by	Amsterdams Centrum Buitenlanders (ACB, Amsterdam Centre for Foreigners)
Partners	Protestantse Diaconie
Cost	One pupil/year: €2,000
Where did it operate? Local, regional, national ...	Amsterdam city part Zeeburg
Target group (theme, or other)	Pupils between 12 and 17 and their families from allochtoneous origin
Theme (of 7 strands)	Ethnic minorities
Duration from	2004
to	?

### ***1.1 Rationale for action***

Especially children from ethnic minorities have language and learning problems. Research has shown that of all ethnic minorities Turkish and Moroccan youngsters' results are the worst. Half of the pupils of ethnic minorities go to school without a starter qualification<sup>1</sup>. The largest part of these pupils are Turkish or Moroccan. They are not only the largest group of pupils who drop out, but they are also overrepresented on the lower levels of preparatory secondary professional education (VMBO). They also experience more social and emotional problems and they fail more often on final examinations. The process of getting behind starts already in primary school. But the primary schools have insufficient means to deal with these problems.

This problem can be explained by the lack of integration. People have a negative image of pupils from ethnic minorities and this undermines integration.

The underachievement of Turkish and Moroccan pupils was the reason to set up the project.

### ***1.2 What are the aims of home and homework guidance?***

The two most important aims of the project are:

- help pupils with learning to learn;
- help pupils improve their social skills.

Another aim is also reached with this project:

- familiarise pupils with other cultures.

This can help pupils get rid of their negative image which in turn is good for integration.

The project also tries to get parents more involved in the school.

### ***1.3 How do home and homework guidance work?***

The project offers two forms of guidance: home guidance and homework guidance. Both forms of guidance are given once a week for two hours. Both forms are aimed at developing two types of skills: improving skills to gather more knowledge and improving social skills. The difference between the two forms of guidance is the way that guidance is administered.

In homework guidance a group of 4 children is tutored by a student at school or at another location. The emphasis is on knowledge. In home guidance one mentor (or family coach) guides one pupil at home. The emphasis is on motivation.

The project also wants to involve the parents so that they take up their responsibility for the learning achievements of their children. The project tries to get parents to become more involved at school as well. The mentor who comes to the house of the pupil gives information to the parents. The mentor is of the same gender and ethnicity as the parent.

### ***1.4 How are home and homework guidance organised?***

The people that are involved in the project are active in education. The commission consists of representative from the ACB (Centre for Foreigners, Amsterdam), a project co-ordinator, the Protestant Deacon, a representative from a VMBO-school and a representative from SKC (Foundation for Knowledge and Social Cohesion). Their tasks are the following:

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<sup>1</sup> A starter qualification is proof that one fulfilled a basic professional education in secondary professional education or a higher general further education (HAVO) or a preparatory scientific education (VWO).

- the representative from the ACB (senior consultant): he steers the project and makes applications for funding. Every three months he reports to the directors of ACB. He is of Moroccan origin
- The project co-ordinator: he has to plan a meeting every three months, he has to employ mentors and give feedback to the senior consultant. He also determines for which form of guidance pupils are eligible. He is of Turkish origin.
- The representative from the Protestant Deacon: he is responsible for the contacts between the guidance commission and the other sponsors. He is of Dutch origin.
- The representative of the school: he makes a selection of pupils who would benefit from participating in the project. He also is responsible for the accommodation. He is of Dutch origin.
- The representative from SKC: he is a professional in developing mentor projects. The goal is that the SKC will eventually take over the project. He is of Moroccan origin.

Nine mentors for home guidance were chosen by the project co-ordinator. The mentors are still studying themselves. They are from the same ethnicity as the families they have to coach. The reason is that it is easier for the parents to see someone from the same origin as a bridge between them and school. Mentors from the same origin are accepted more easily and a trusting relationship can be built.

The mentors visit the families and help parents with practical arrangements. If necessary the mentors refer the parents to other instances.

The mentor also has to motivate the pupil. The goals of this guidance are better results, more insight in future professional opportunities and a successful flow-through to further education so that a fitting job can be found. In guidance there is work on competences such as learning to learn and social skills. Students that give homework guidance, tutor four children once a week after school. This guidance is very intensive.

## **2. Results and Recommendations**

The effectiveness of this project is measured in several ways: the school results of the pupils are taken into account but also the way the families experienced the project.

The evaluation was made by using topic interviews and an analysis of documentation material and observations.

The five members of the commission, the mentors and one student per mentor, and a group of students that got homework guidance were interviewed. Parents were not interviewed but mentors were asked about parent participation.

Findings:

- Pupils (eight were interviewed) that had home guidance:
  - Two have successfully completed their final exams.
  - Five went to the next year.
  - One dropped out.
  - Three do not need the guidance any more. They feel competent enough and mastered the learning to learn skills.
  - The other pupils would benefit from and would like to have follow-up guidance.
  - The social skills of one pupil with problem behaviour have improved.

- Pupils that had homework guidance:
  - One pupil from the Wellant College was interviewed. She was very discouraged and did not want the guidance. For her it was an obligation. Her results improved but according to her it was because she simply worked harder. Homework guidance took place in school and she did not like to be there
  - Four pupils from other schools got guidance at another location. All pupils got better results. They are happy that guidance did not take place within their school but at another location. All pupils want to continue with the guidance.
- Homework guidance works better when the guidance takes place at another location than the school. The guidance should also be adapted to the amount of homework they have.
- All pupils were referred to the guidance by someone else so it was not entirely their own choice to participate. It would be better if they were informed, for example, at an information night at school, about the project.
- Mentors:
  - Mentors did not get any training which means that they were free to fill in the guidance but this can also lead to insecurity. Mentors would like more guidelines and training.
  - Mentors value the work they do personally. For them it is an enrichment.
- Mentors need more training for guiding pupils and their families.
- Feedback about their functioning is also necessary.
- Mentors did not always contact the school of the pupil. Co-operation however is necessary because the mentor can be a 'bridge' between school and family.
- Parents:
  - Pupils and mentors said that involvement increased. Most of the times the father is better at speaking Dutch and the father goes to parents' nights.
  - Parents are mostly surprised by the visits by the mentor. So they should be better informed. The school would be the ideal way to inform parents about the project.
- Parents should be better informed.
- The commission:
  - The representative from the VMBO school:
    - He feels that he is obliged to help pupils. So the preventative function of the project was a reason to participate. He is only sorry that the target group is so limited.
  - ACB:
    - He does not want to exclude pupils from other origins from participating to the project.
    - The project depends on funding/sponsors, so they have to ensure a certain level of quality.
  - The project co-ordinator:
    - The goal is to transfer the project to another organisation if it is successful.
    - If the project is transferred the target group can be broadened.
  - SKC:
    - He is positive about the project.
  - Protestan Deacon:
    - Because mentors receive a volunteer salary the project is expensive. Maybe it is possible to work with apprentices.
- The target group should be broadened, this is possible if the project is transferred.
- To lower the costs working with apprentices should be considered.