4 Practices in Rotterdam

Rotterdam can be described as a prototypical industrial city, extended around a port that attracted massive internal migration in the early nineteenth century. As a working-class city characterised by low educational and income levels, Rotterdam has been historically concerned with education (Gemeente Rotterdam 2004, 2006). Consequently, education has traditionally been prioritised in Rotterdam’s political agenda, something fitting the philosophy of the local coalitions with the constant presence of the Labour Party.

Rotterdam is also eminently a migrant city. With a 37% non-autochthonous population in 2005, the city scores more than three times higher than the national average (10%) (CBS 2005). Rotterdam is the city with the second highest concentration of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, a figure aggravated by the so-called ‘white flight’, the desertion of the city by the white Dutch middle classes between the 1960s and the 1990s. As ethnic minorities score worse in all education and labour market indicators, they have become a specific target for the city’s educational policies. For example, unemployment among young ethnic minorities in Rotterdam is double that of their autochthonous Dutch peers.

The main ethnic groups in the city are Surinamese (8.8%), Turkish (7.5%), Moroccan (6%) and Antillean (3.4%) (CBS 2005). Other significant communities are the Cape Verdean (2.5%) and the umbrella category: ‘Southern Europeans’, which includes Spanish, Greeks and Portuguese (3%; although since 2007, this last category has disappeared from the municipal statistics and has been merged with that of ‘EU citizens’). We must keep in mind that a large share of these citizens of migrant origin has Dutch nationality, particularly the Antillean population. This figure reflects the non-native population: persons born abroad and their descendents.

1 Rotterdam does worse than the Dutch average in overall indicators for education and labour participation. The population with low levels of education is predominant (39% in 2004), although over the years there has been an increase in the overall educational level (see Table 8). The level of unemployment in Rotterdam (9.7% in 2006, CBS) is higher than in the other Dutch large cities.
2 Since 1974 the Labour Party (PvdA) has been present in all local governments, except for the period 2002-2006.
3 In 2010 the non-autochthonous population in Rotterdam reached 48% of total population, while the national average was 11% (CBS 2009).
4 Interviews with civil servants of the City Council of Rotterdam: W. Tuijnman, H. Van Onna, G. Oude Engberink.
5 According to the CBS, 26% of non-Western allochtonen between 15 and 24 years are unemployed (CBS 2005), while a study conducted by the SCP suggests 40% (Dagevos 2006).
According to educational statistics for the year 2003–2004, in Rotterdam there were 14,112 students of ethnic minority origin in secondary education (Gemeente Rotterdam 2004). That represents 40.5% of the total student population in secondary education. Students who were born abroad and migrated to the Netherlands between the ages of twelve and sixteen are a more limited group. In 2003–2004 Rotterdam registered an inflow of 808 newcomers of secondary school age, out of which around 200 actually attended reception programmes. The success of the programme in reach-

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6 Interview with E. Meijers, education department of Rotterdam, Newcomer Students division.
Based on the available research, we can expect the ethnic composition of reception students roughly to reflect the characteristic ethno-cultural mosaic of Rotterdam. According to a survey of reception students, the 580 students following the reception programme in 2003-2004 were predominantly Moroccan (10%) and Turkish (10%), and the rest originated from different developing countries in Asia and Africa – up to 60 different nationalities (CED 2005). The under-representation of students from Suriname and the Dutch Antilles, who explicitly became the target, could possibly be explained by the high percentage (31%) of non responses in this study.

In order to respond to the challenge of newcomer students in secondary education, Rotterdam has adopted a clear-cut model of parallel reception. Four schools in the city offer full-time reception courses, keeping newcomer students in a separate programme for an average of two years. The four schools have a common curriculum for the reception courses and use common textbooks. Registration and distribution of students among the schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>1-10-2012</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>3,585</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>3,216</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antillean</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU nationalities</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-Western ethnicities</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Dutch</td>
<td>22,985</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33,389</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration with data from Municipality of Rotterdam (Department of Education)/pronexus.

Table 7  Ethnic composition of 12-15 y.o. students in Rotterdam, per 1-10-2012

Of the 526 registered by the municipal office, only 320 were inscribed in an ISK centre (61%). Of the 189 pupils of Antillean origin, only 45 were registered (51%). The general reach is improving gradually: 88.4% in 2004 (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2004); 90% in 2006-2007 (CED 2007).

This first evaluation of the reception programme’s outcomes for secondary education in Rotterdam (CED-Groep 2005) presents a high level of non-response in many issues (around 40%). The method of data collection – letting reception schools distribute the questionnaire themselves – has probably influenced this result.

Interview with E. Meijers, education department of Rotterdam, Newcomer Students division.
is managed by the local authority. An office within the municipal education department is in charge of registering all newcomer students arriving in the city and assigning them to a school. A semi-private institution, the CED, provides pedagogical advice to schools, supporting them in the implementation of the priority policy, reception, and teaching of Dutch as a second language.10

The distribution of work among the four schools also follows a distinct pattern. The four schools encompass higher (Rembrandt) as well as lower tracks of secondary education (Vermeer, Escher, and Van Gogh). Two of them are located in the southern part of the city and two in the north. Two of them are public schools, under the management of the public board of governors (BOOR), and two of them are semi-private, members of the Protestant group of schools LMC.11 The main criterion used for the distribution of newcomer pupils into schools is the type of education (lower or higher tracks) to which they are expected to transfer later, and the proximity to the family’s residence is considered only when possible. Although newcomer students are not distributed between schools based on their public or Protestant orientation, the local authority has granted reception functions to these two large and powerful school companies (BOOR and LMC) and not to others. This is a clear legacy of the pillarisation era, still persisting in the Dutch education system,12 and follows the logic of equality in the distribution of public resources among the social-religious pillars.13

The goal of the reception programme ‘ISK’ (Internationale Schakelklassen) is established by the municipal regulation as ‘to prepare the pupil, as well as possible and as soon as possible, to be transferred to regular education.’14 Formally, policy regulation at the national level defines a newcomer pupil as one who: 1) does not have Dutch nationality, 2) has lived in the country for less than a year, and 3) has legal status. Informally, the STER programme,

10 The CED was originally a small unit in the Municipal Education Department. Later on it became an external unit, but was still supported by the City Council to a great extent. In 2005 the CED was privatised, becoming a private provider of educational services.
11 Escher school does not have a Protestant orientation but rather a ‘specific pedagogic line’ (in Dutch: ‘speciaal bijzonder’). Van Gogh school has a Protestant orientation (interview with coordinator of reception of Escher school and sector director of Rembrandt school).
12 No Catholic pillar (RVKO), however, is currently represented. In 2003 the municipality was considering the proposal of the CVO group of schools to establish another reception centre, although this never took place. Interview with E. Meijer, education department of Rotterdam, Newcomer Students division.
13 Interview with member of the City Council and vice-leader of the PvdA, J. Kriens (in Dutch ‘lid van gemeenteraad en vice-fractievoorzitter’). Interview with ex-coordinator of reception at Rembrandt.
created from the bottom-up, establishes the content of the reception policy in terms of curriculum and teaching methodology. The STER programme in particular establishes that beginners must start learning the Dutch language alone; once their Dutch has become advanced, they are introduced to the rest of the subjects. Rotterdam’s local authority also stipulates its objectives in municipal regulations valid for an academic course.\textsuperscript{15}

Local policies for educational reception generally follow the minuscule national policy frame, and the periodic national regulations that stipulate the conditions to allocate funds for reception. However, some aspects of the national scheme are modified, such as the target group, which in Rotterdam includes Antillean and Aruban pupils. Since 2004-2005 Rotterdam’s authorities have subsidised Antillean/Aruban newcomers, who are excluded from the target group at a national level because they have a Dutch passport (Gemeente Rotterdam 2006: 63). This served to institutionalise the \textit{de facto} inclusion of these students by schools in Rotterdam in reception programmes. Schools justify this by saying that the Dutch language level of Surinamese and Antilleans is usually very weak. Municipal money plays an essential role in reformulating national policy to local needs, which has often been the result of bottom-up initiatives by schools.

Rotterdam has also modified the ‘counting dates’ for the allocation of state funds. Since funds are allocated per eligible student, the state establishes specific dates for inspectors to visit schools to count the number of students attending at that time. Initially, the count date was 1 October, but schools complained about having to pay upfront the costs of newcomer students who arrived later during the school year. In 2003, a new national regulation was set which established three counting dates instead of one: 1 October (for students arriving during the August/November period), 1 February (for the previous December/March period), and 1 June (for the April/July period). This gave more flexibility to schools, though they continued to complain because subsidies are granted \textit{a posteriori}. The Municipality of Rotterdam has offered to provide the schools with the money to be received from the Ministry of Education to support them at their own risk. To that end, the local administration funds schools, based on the number of attending students on 1 June, for the period between August and November, on 1 October, for the period between December and March, and on 1 February, for the period between April and July.\textsuperscript{16}


In Table 8 we can see the budgets that reception departments have at their disposal, that is, additional funds provided by the public authorities specifically earmarked for educational reception. Newcomer students are entitled to CUMI funds, in a 1.9 proportion, from the national treasury, because they belong to ethnic minorities. Moreover, the Ministry of Education grants specific funds for newcomer students’ reception. Annually, schools collect €4,212, allocated every four months, per each newcomer student who complies with the requirements set by national regulations. The total annual amount depends on the number of students enrolled in the school on the counting dates. The municipal budget also contributes to reception education. Most subsidies come from the Municipal budget for Equal Opportunities Educational Policy (ROAP) – like the budget for Antillean students, estimated at a maximum of €500,000 – or additional funds for illiterate students (established in 2005-2006), which come from the Urban Policy budget (Stedelijke Gemeente Rotterdam, Regeling Leeroplichtige Nieuwkomers Rotterdam 2004-2005, 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of subsidy</th>
<th>Incomes</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National funds:</td>
<td>4,212 per year per pupil (=1,404 euros per counting date, paid out three times)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Additional funding for (first) educational reception of newcomers in obligatory education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal funds:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban policy</td>
<td>590,000</td>
<td>590,000</td>
<td>Central in-take, monitoring, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban policy</td>
<td>227,000</td>
<td>227,000</td>
<td>Newcomers older than 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotterdam’s plan against educational disadvantage (ROAP)*</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>Antillean pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotterdam’s plan against educational disadvantage (ROAP)</td>
<td>506,000</td>
<td>506,000</td>
<td>Counselling from the CED advisory group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General affairs (Algemene Dienst)</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>Costs of personnel Municipal Department of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Beleidsnotitie leeroplichtige nieuwkomers in Rotterdam. 1 augustus 2005 t/m 31 juli 2006.

* This municipal budget comes fundamentally from the national fund to tackle social exclusion among Antilleans: school drop-out rate, criminality, etc. Bestuurlijk arrangement Antilliaanse risicojongeren 2005 – 2008.
Still more overhead expenses are covered by municipal funds: central registration and admission tests of newcomer pupils, pedagogical advising, housing, monitoring and research, and so forth. We can roughly estimate an annual subsidy of € 500,000 received by each reception school in the city for newcomer pupils, excluding extra financial support for the illiterate.\textsuperscript{18}

Since the 2006-2007 school year, this budget has been constrained in two ways. On the one hand, CUMI funds have been replaced by the Leerplusarrangement VO, which according to the informants has meant a decrease in funding of about 50\%.\textsuperscript{19} On the other hand, there has been diminished municipal responsibility for Educational Equal Opportunities (see chapter 4). The elimination of the ROAP budget for fighting educational disadvantage in Rotterdam is reflected in the considerable reduction of funds destined for Antillean newcomers and to CED group consultancy (€ 150,000 and € 200,000 respectively, whereas the former year, each received around € 500,000). Funding for urban policy was also greatly reduced. All in all, the budget for educational reception in Rotterdam is facing a considerable decrease.

The decline in the inflow of newcomers has also aggravated this situation, although the national subsidy for the reception of newcomer students has remained untouched. Figures indicate that the number of newcomer children arriving in the municipality has decreased dramatically since 2000. Arrivals dropped from 1,000 to around half that number in a five-year period. Hence, the local authority of Rotterdam is considering the possibility of limiting the number of schools that provide reception. Other large cities concentrate newcomer students in two schools (Amsterdam, The Hague) or even in one (Utrecht). In the 2006-2007 school year, the CED group conducted a study on the future of reception in Rotterdam. Three scenarios were foreseen: a transformation towards a mixed model of reception, a reduction in the number of schools providing reception, and the suppression of the centralised model of reception leaving each school in charge of reception of its own newcomers. So far no change has been made in any of these directions, probably because since 2008, schools have been receiving growing numbers of Eastern European students, which is reversing this tendency.

\textsuperscript{18} As to the schools selected in this research in 2004, that would mean around € 463,320 for Vermeer school (110 pupils), and € 568,620 for Rembrandt school (135 pupils). These figures are purely an estimate and most likely overestimate the actual budget since not all these students were eligible for the subsidies.

\textsuperscript{19} Interview with sector director of Vermeer school.
Up to this point, we have been describing the background to educational reception in the city of Rotterdam. In my study I selected two high schools, one providing reception training for students with low skill levels (Vermeer) and another providing reception for highly-skilled students (Rembrandt). Let us now see how each of the schools selected puts in practice reception for foreign youngsters. As I mentioned before, I will organise the description of the data in five reception phases, each entailing different tasks (according to the definition of reception used by practitioners): 1) enrolment of students, 2) clustering in classes, 3) curriculum and methodology, 4) schedule-making, and 5) evaluation of pupils and their transfer to regular education.

### 4.1 Johannes Vermeer school

Vermeer is a public secondary school covering a wide range of educational tracks, from Preparatory Vocational Education (VMBO) to Senior General Education (HAVO) and University Preparatory Education (VWO). Vermeer is the result of a fusion between two schools, Olympus college and OSG Hugo de Groot, the first a school with a bad reputation that offered vocational education and the latter a school with a solid name that offered higher-level education. In August 2000, the two schools decided to join forces, becoming the largest school on the southern side of town, with roughly

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20 These figures include children from Suriname and the Dutch Antilles.
21 The names of schools and informants have been replaced with pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.
22 Olympus used to be graded in annual reports as one of the worst schools in the country. See for instance, ‘De beste en de slechtste middelbare scholen van Nederland’, Trouw, 25 October 1996.
1,800 students.\textsuperscript{23} In fact, the resulting school still maintains a sharp divide between the two partners, as the spatial distribution of students – lower tracks of education in the old Olympus school buildings, higher tracks in the Hugo de Groot – perpetuates the specific characteristics of the old schools.

Being a public school, Vermeer is fully subsidised with public funds. Since 1998, it has been managed by the BOOR board of directors, like other public schools in Rotterdam.\textsuperscript{24} The Vermeer school is located in the district of Charlois, a working-class area on the southern side of the Maas River. Charlois is one of the districts with higher concentrations of ethnic minorities (45.1\% in 2005, COS 2006) in Rotterdam. In 2004-2005 the school had an estimated 1,700 students, of which 120 attended ISK reception training. Over 90\% of the total student body are first or second-generation migrants, representing an archetypal ‘black school’.\textsuperscript{25}

The former Olympus college already had a reception department supported by the local authorities. Informants report that 25 years ago, early foreign students ‘who couldn’t speak any Dutch’ arrived at Olympus school. There were only five or six students and they were simply placed in a regular class. Teachers complained (‘S.O.S. This doesn’t work!’, Interview with coordinator of reception), and in response, the school hired two teachers to teach Dutch to the newcomers. This improvised reception applied a mixed model in which newcomer students received some hours of Dutch training in the day while attending regular classes for subjects such as sports or drawing.\textsuperscript{26}

Currently, Vermeer offers parallel reception training (ISK) for newcomer pupils who scored poorly on the municipal intake test. These pupils are expected to transfer later on to low or medium-low tracks in secondary education. The school offers medium-high tracks as well, but normally newcomer students do not transfer to this type of education.\textsuperscript{27} Reception teaching stands alone as an independent department with about twenty

\textsuperscript{23} Interview with the sector director of Vermeer school.

\textsuperscript{24} In this year, the Municipality of Rotterdam decided to create a professional management body to run all public schools in the city. Since 1 January 2008, the board of directors ‘BOOR’ has been an independent foundation.

\textsuperscript{25} In Dutch, ‘zwarte school’. Generally, the term refers to schools with a majority of non-Western ‘allochtoon’ students, i.e. either first or second-generation migrants from developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; the Central Bureau for Statistics considers black schools to be those with 60\% or more students from ethnic minorities (CBS 2003: 72). (For other authors, this is considered to be 50\%).

\textsuperscript{26} Interview with coordinator of reception department of Vermeer school.

\textsuperscript{27} As an exception, in the present course a group of students is expected by the teachers to score high enough in the final tests to transfer to higher tracks (MAVO-HAVO).
teachers located in a separate section of the building. In addition, the school has a separate reception department for students aged over fifteen, with a different team of teachers and different leadership. Youngsters aged fifteen and older attend this 15+ department, where they follow a different teaching method from that of their younger counterparts (see below). The 15+ reception department is situated in a different building, in the former Hugo de Groot school.

In the 2004-2005 academic year, 120 newcomer students attending ISK training at Vermeer, distributed over six groups. The ISK department shares the building with lower tracks of education in the general programme, which the majority of ethnic minority students within the school attend. Classrooms belonging to the reception department are situated in the right wing of the building, and are spread along the corridor in three floors. Despite this symbolic boundary, newcomer students can meet their native peers in the shared yard and canteen during their free time. The atmosphere in the ISK department is friendlier and safer than the other side of the building, which is described by teachers as ‘tough’. This seems to perpetuate Olympus school’s old style, the reputation of which was not exactly ‘heavenly’, but rather marked by insecurity and violence. The building housing the higher education tracks, which used to be Hugo de Groot school, has a slightly lower average of minority students and seems to be quieter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study year</th>
<th>Number of newcomer students</th>
<th>Major ethnic groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Antillean (29), Chinese (12), Moroccan (10), Turkish (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Antillean (13), Moroccan (12), Turkish (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Moroccan (23), Antillean (11), Turkish (9), Surinamese (8), Chinese (8), Cape Verdean (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Antillean (9), Surinamese (9), Pakistani (9), Turkish (8), Moroccan (7), Chinese (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Moroccan (11), Turkish (10), Pakistani (9), Antillean (8), Surinamese (6), Iraki (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Turkish (8), Polish (6), Chinese (6), Moroccan (5), Bulgarian (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>Antillean (17), Bulgarian (14), Polish (13), Portuguese (9), Moroccan (8), Turkish (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: administration of the reception department, Vermeer school.
In 2005-2006, the number of students in the reception department at Vermeer decreased to 91 students. This development is congruent with the declining trend observed in the arrivals of young migrants to the city (since the early 2000s), also observed in other ISK schools. In the case of the Vermeer school’s reception department, a falling trend was observed until 2006, when it reversed. The figures in Table 13 show the number of students in the department by the end of the school year. Before 2005 there was a 10-15 student variation between the beginning and the end of the year. In recent years, the number of students arriving throughout the school year has increased remarkably. In 2006-2007, the department had 60 students at the beginning of the year, while by the end the number had grown to 97, a difference of 37 students.

The student body of Vermeer has traditionally included large groups of Moroccan, Turkish, Antillean, and Surinamese students, roughly reflecting the dominant ethnic groups in the city of Rotterdam. Small but constant presence of students from Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and Thailand. As a result of the inclusion of Eastern European countries in the European Union, the number of Eastern European students has grown remarkably in recent years, particularly Bulgarians and Polish. In the 2008-2009 school year, Bulgarians and Polish represented 14% and 13% respectively, and represented the second and third largest national groups in the ISK department.

It is also worth mentioning that the reception department in Vermeer has a significant group of students with illegal status: an average of ten students in the 2002-2009 period, with around seventeen illegal students in some years (2008-2009). The number of illegal students is higher at the beginning of the year; some of them manage to regulate their residence status after some time. The illiterate also comprise a large share of reception students in the school.

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28 This table shows the ethnic origins of students, thus not necessarily their nationality or place of birth, but rather the ethnic origins of their parents.

29 ‘Of the total of 86 pupils in October, 30 were not registered by the municipality. Now, ten of them have a regular status’ (In Dutch: zijn wel in orde gekomen). Interview with reception coordinator, 7 November 2008.
The motto of the school, ‘Rich in colours, rich in opportunities’ (in Dutch kleurrijk, kansrijk),\textsuperscript{30} truly reflects the intentions of the teachers working in the Vermeer reception department, who are involved in seizing genuine opportunities for pupils. In the opinion of the vice-principal, the objective to be pursued for this sort of student is that they obtain a basic diploma (certificate) so that ‘nobody is left outside the door.’\textsuperscript{31} This crusade means facing disadvantages ‘both in terms of ethnicity and social conditions’ in order to help students reach their real capacity. The general treatment of newcomer students could be described as maternal, as it intends ‘to give them a lot of attention and care.’\textsuperscript{32} Teachers deliberately try not to be tough, and give several opportunities ‘if they think that there is more in there.’\textsuperscript{33} The underlying belief is that each person is born with specific talents and potential that emerge under favourable conditions.

The reception team at Vermeer is composed of young, motivated and committed teachers. The head of the reception department, Irene, is the necessary starting point in this story. This white, middle-class Dutch woman in her forties leads the department firmly and with indefatigable enthusiasm. Always energetic and full of ideas in the meetings, Irene is doggedly searching for funds and policy resources to ground new initiatives and solutions. The core team comprises twenty teachers, ten of them permanently working for the ISK department, while eight of them also teach in other school departments. Yet the majority of them teach most of their

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Number of students with illegal residence status and illiterate students at Vermeer school reception department}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\hline
Number of pupils & 115 & 78 & 120 & 91 & 97 & 86 & 123 \\
Students with irregular status & 2 & 6 & 10 & 14 & 14 & 12 & 17 \\
Illiterate & 12 & 9 & 26 & 11 & 19 & 9 & 22 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Source: administration of the reception department, Vermeer school.

\textsuperscript{30} Bernardette Naelissen, ‘Dat negatieve beeld van onderwijs, daar krijg ik vlekken van’, Rotterdam's Dagblad, 28 October 2000.
\textsuperscript{31} Interview with sector director of Vermeer. Several departments fall within his section, including the ISK and ISK for 15+. He is thus the direct supervisor of Irene and above him there is only the principal.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
hours in the reception section, and there are only two or three teachers who teach a specific subject in the reception section, such as Physical Education. The composition of the team is relatively diverse, although the teachers are predominantly white, middle-class, and Dutch; only three of the ten teachers have a different ethno-cultural background. Women also outweigh men in a ratio of ten to seven.

Almost all the teachers in the team have a Dutch as a Second Language (NT2) specialisation in addition to their major. However, when selecting new personnel, the manager considers that having an open and flexible attitude is more important than the objective qualifications. ‘All of us have explicitly chosen to work in the ISK department’ explains the coordinator, suggesting that the team of the ISK department is highly motivated. Teachers are expected to be ‘oriented to the individual’ and to have the ability ‘to differentiate between different levels of skills’ (CED 2008: 11).

4.1.1 Registration of pupils

In Rotterdam, as in other Dutch cities, the municipal Department of Education is in charge of distributing all incoming students between the schools that deliver reception. The regulation of the enrolment of immigrant children by local authorities contrasts sharply with the free-market system that operates for autochthonous children. Generally, parents are entitled to choose a school for their children freely, according to the constitutional principle of freedom of education. However, when a foreign student arrives in the city, he or she is assigned to one of the four schools in the city providing reception education according to his or her ability and level of schooling.

The procedure for enrolling a newcomer student is the following: the potential student is sent to the municipal enrolment office, where he or she is given a non-verbal RAVEN test of intelligence and a mathematics test in order to measure his or her skills. Based on the outcomes of these tests, the student is assigned to one of the reception schools. The main criterion of distribution is the student’s skill level. The assumption is that students with different IQ levels correspond to different educational tracks, as holds for the rest of the Dutch educational system.

34 In the Netherlands there is not an official qualification such as Dutch as a Second Language teacher at the level of secondary education, nor a specific reception (ISK) teacher certification (interview with the reception coordinator).
35 Interview with the reception coordinator.
The distribution of students among the four schools which offer reception in the city is done by the Newcomers Working Group (BWN), a committee comprised of municipal officers, school boards of reception schools, and the educational consulting group CED. As I explained before, only one school provides reception for newcomers expected to transfer to higher tracks of secondary education, while the other three provide education for students directed to lower tracks (Vermeer among them). Within this system, parents have limited decision power:

Sometimes parents say very emphatically ‘I would like my son or daughter to go to one of the four schools’; in that case their preference prevails, in principle. Unless the school of their choice is Rembrandt, which is only for HAVO-VWO levels. And if based on the results from the admission test ... they see that the student is not capable of doing much, in terms of intelligence or educational background, then he or she is too weak for the HAVO-VWO scope. Then he doesn't go to [that school]. Even if the parents say ‘I want my child to go to Rembrandt’. Because the [Max] Rembrandt can say, ‘No, it is not possible because he is too weak’ (Interview with coordinator, Vermeer school).

In principle, schools simply admit those youngsters assigned to them by the BWN committee. In practice, schools further refine the previous selection process in two ways: within each school, by applying their own internal selection procedures, or between schools, by correcting the external distribution of pupils within the city. The core idea behind these practices is that the reception education aims to transfer newcomer pupils to the educational track that best suits their skills level. This means that the goal of the programme is further interpreted by practitioners in light of the selective principles of the Dutch educational system.

Vermeer gives an admission test to incoming pupils to evaluate their level of education. The school’s intake test determines more precisely the students’ level of Dutch whether or not they are illiterate, in order to place them in the right class within the reception department. The school bureaucrats at Vermeer justify this additional filtering of new students by affirming an educational philosophy similar to that fostered by the local authorities. Yet they question the accuracy of the intake test given by the municipal office. For instance, informants from Vermeer claim that the municipal Department of Education tends to underestimate the skill level of potential students, mostly in cases of illiteracy. Having undetected semi-illiterate or illiterate students within ordinary groups hinders the learning process
of that student and of the whole group. According to reception workers’ opinion, an adequate selection of students is not only ‘fair’ – corresponding with social standards of merit – but also facilitates the work of reception workers. As the reception department at Vermeer school says:

[For the municipal office] ‘If they [students] can write down their name they are not illiterate’. To illustrate her words, the coordinator shows me the intake exam of one girl who the municipal office has classified as non-illiterate. It seems that she has attended primary education in her country of origin, but ‘she has learnt Arabic, therefore she does not write the Latin alphabet acceptably. She writes from right to left, she cannot write some sounds,’ says the informant. In addition to this very poor Dutch test, she has failed the mathematics one (Vermeer school field diary, p. 11).

The intake test at Vermeer also serves to compensate the distribution of pupils among schools when necessary. If it is found that the skill level of a potential student does not correspond to the type of education provided by Vermeer school, the pupil will be directly transferred to another reception school that better fits his/her abilities. For this procedure schools do not rely on the formal channel (via the municipal office of reception), but rather deal with the issue directly amongst themselves. All reception schools claim to cooperate actively in redirecting students to the ‘right place’.

And if a student who has been sent to Escher [school], a 12-13 year old student who wanted to study in Escher … and it happens that he or she cannot read and write well enough, then the colleague from Escher would call [me]: ‘Listen, this does not work. Can this student go back to your school?’ So we are in contact with each other. … At least, if we see that somebody is not placed adequately at this school then we send him or her to another one (Interview with Vermeer school’s coordinator).

The reception team at Vermeer filters incoming students with informal practices of gate-keeping. Such practices become particularly evident in those categories of students excluded from the official policy’s target, such as students coming from the Dutch Antilles or undocumented students. Antilleans are not eligible for national financial means for reception; however, since 2005, the local authority of Rotterdam has provided funds for the reception of these students. Even before this local subsidy was granted, Antilleans were being systematically included in reception classes at Vermeer.
The department coordinator reports that being a public school, they are not free to reject any student who knocks at their door. In fact, the practices observed confirm this rule. Illegal students are present in Vermeer school in a slightly higher proportion than in Rembrandt school, although this probably has to do with the educational profile of migrants. Annually, Vermeer has an average of ten students with irregular legal status (for the period 2002-2009), although, as the coordinator suggests, ‘this does not coincide with what we experience [because] at the moment of enrolment there are many more and this number falls throughout the year.’\textsuperscript{36} The department coordinator must do her best to reduce the number of students who are not covered by public funds. The normal procedure is to address the parents of those students with irregular status, who are not registered in the municipal system, and urge them to regularise their legal situation. This procedure sometimes works when it is just a mere bureaucratic matter. Some files, for instance, lack a document that confirms the child’s date of arrival in the Netherlands, and the school sends a reminder to the parents to complete this.\textsuperscript{37} However, the solution in the case of students residing illegally in the country without a residence permit is difficult. Irene handles these cases with the resignation of acknowledging an undeniable fact, and does not bother the undocumented families too much by demanding that they fulfil impossible requirements. An example of this attitude is observed in the following excerpt from my field notes, in which the department’s coordinator and the secretary are checking to see if the new students have provided all the required documents in order to apply for funds:

Secretary: Student X has no passport.
Coordinator: We must call her parents.
Secretary: That is not going to work.
Coordinator [exchanging an understanding glance with her colleague]: Yes, because they are illegal. Then we will not get anything from them (Field notes Vermeer, p. 12).

Vermeer school also admits illiterate students in its reception department, while the other ISK schools do not. Unlike illegal students, illiterate students have been entitled to funds provided by the local authority since 2005, and thus are considered part of the policy’s official target group. However, these

\textsuperscript{36} Email from the reception coordinator, Vermeer school.
\textsuperscript{37} The school needs to prove that the student has lived in the country for a period of less than a year in order to be entitled to the subsidies. Field notes Vermeer school, p. 12.
students are not welcome in other schools because their teaching requires additional expenses. As we will see below, the schools feel that ordinary reception procedures are not sufficient. Children with psychological problems and children with sight or hearing impairments are also considered more problematic by schools because they stay in reception classes for much longer. These children would otherwise be sent to a special education school, but because they do not speak Dutch they are redirected to reception schools. As a consequence, Vermeer’s reception department is full of these ‘unwanted’ students, as a teacher of the illiterate group remarked to two civil servants from the Ministry who visited the school:

Coordinator: We also have here [in the illiterate group] children with psychological problems.
Visitor: Aren’t they in special education?
Coordinator: No, they don’t want them because they don’t speak any Dutch. There’s a little bit of everything here [in Dutch, *van alles en nog wat*] ... students who cannot see, who cannot hear, ... But if we try to send a pupil to a special institution, the procedure takes so long ... It takes at least a year, and in the meanwhile he or she stays here.
Teacher: It is sad to say it but all the ‘debris’ of the education [system] is here. We are the filter and all the ‘trash’ stays here (Field notes Vermeer, p. 16).

4.1.2 Clustering in classes

Besides cooperating in the re-distribution of pupils among schools, Vermeer also applies filters within its own walls. In particular, clustering pupils in classes implies a selection process that responds to various patterns. Vermeer’s reception department has grouping strategies that strive to create homogeneous groups of students primarily according to their Dutch language skills. Other criteria considered are the group size, age, ethnicity, gender and so forth. The essential objective is to form teaching units that gather pupils with a Dutch level that is as similar as possible, but with the greatest diversity possible in terms of ethnicity and gender in order to obtain balanced groups.

In 2005-2006 the Vermeer school’s reception department had seven classes: three for beginners (1SK, 1SE, 1SG), one for illiterate students (1SL),

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38 Research has shown that tracking policies can actually integrate a school population or, on the contrary, they can re-segregate a desegregated school (Hallinan & Williams 1989).
and three for advanced students (1SA, 1SC, 2SA). The maximum number of students per class was fifteen for beginners and twenty for advanced groups, as established by the school. On average, classes usually have between ten and fifteen students.

Vermeer school openly admits to tracking students according to their level in the Dutch language. As for the rest of the subjects, students are put together in two big multi-level groups to do autonomous learning. Practitioners try to maximise homogeneity in their distribution decisions, as it is supposed to facilitate the teachers’ work. This is reflected in the following conversation between teachers in their team meeting:

A: Can we pass pupil X to another group? I have a group with a difference between four and nine points.
B: And I [have] one [group with a difference] between four and six.
C: [Ironically] And I have one with a difference between one and a hundred! (Field notes of Vermeer school, p. 9).

The procedure for arranging student groups unfolds in the following way. All students, whether they are newcomers or pupils who were enrolled in the previous academic year in reception education, are given an intake test on the first day of school. Immediately afterwards, teachers hold a meeting to distribute students into classes. Homogeneous groups of students are established according to their scores. Irene, the reception department coordinator, opens the meeting announcing the general rules: the total number of students (so far) and available teachers, hence, number of classes that can be created. As she stands by the blackboard she reminds the teachers that there has been a reduction in the number of groups, from eight to six this year, due to cutbacks: ‘We start off with 78 students, thus an average of thirteen per class.’ Irene then divides the blackboard into six columns, headed by the group’s name and its mentor. A teacher reads out the scores attained by students in the intake test, and Irene copies them on to the blackboard, assigning students to one or another column-group according to their test grade.

Z: What is the norm? I have a lot of difficulty with that.

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39 In the labelling of classes, the number (1, 2) indicates the year of reception, the ‘s’ is standard for ‘reception’ (schakel), and the letter designates the level, A being the highest and Z the lowest.
40 Interview with the reception coordinator.
Irene: In the intake test a maximum of 71%, 60 points. If you score 71% then you have to go directly to HAVO (Field notes, Vermeer school, p. 6).

Once the classes are organised by language level, teachers discuss the resulting distribution according to other criteria such as the size of the classes, the age of pupils, the proportion of students with bad behaviour in the group, and the gender composition.

C: I have three girls and five boys.
Z: In my group there are a couple of young men [in Dutch mannetjes] who are really ‘macho’.
X: In my opinion, ISC all together doesn’t make for a nice group: chaotic, naughty boys (Field notes, Vermeer school, p. 6).

Regarding the groups’ size, they try to distribute work among teachers in a balanced way. Teachers make an effort to send some students from the larger groups to the smaller ones. In doing so, criteria are assessed in a more flexible way:

X: Is it reasonable for two students to continue with Zebra who have already done it three times?
Z: How old are they?
Irene: They are thirteen years old. In principle, they could go to the first course [in Dutch eerste klas].
J: But they have stagnated [not made any progress].
Z: They are children with special needs [in Dutch zorg-kinderen], in their own way (Field notes, Vermeer school, p. 6).

The distribution of groups resulting from this process is not fixed for the rest of the year, nor is the teachers’ judgement of the skill level of the students. Vermeer school also follows variations in pupils’ performance by applying constant evaluation and by constantly reconsidering ‘if the first prognosis that we have done is correct.’ In addition, evaluation meetings are held monthly to analyse how each individual student is progressing and to reorganise groups accordingly. They also speak about it constantly at the staffroom (‘He is too weak [for my class]’, ‘Pass him to me’) and if necessary

41 Interview with the reception coordinator, Vermeer school.
42 Ibid.
they arrange something between evaluations. Groups are reorganised so as to keep students constantly at an adequate level of Dutch learning.

[At the end of the meeting] all the teachers write down the final distribution of classes and pupils. The coordinator explains that these groups are not fixed, and that they are subject to modifications as new pupils continue arriving throughout the academic year. ‘There are two groups that will very likely remain like this, X and Y, because they are quite homogeneous and also because they have many pupils’ [thirteen and fifteen pupils respectively] (Field notes, Vermeer school, p.7).

The clustering strategy at Vermeer results from a stronger emphasis on the teaching of the Dutch language than on other subjects. Consequently a Dutch textbook is used as a measuring stick for pupils. The topics in the book, called Zebra, are organised in an increasing gradation of difficulty, and the book is therefore used at Vermeer school to determine periodically which chapters a student has fully mastered and which not. The following excerpt from the field diary deals with the teachers’ meeting at the beginning of the year; after clustering pupils according to their levels, teachers assign the teaching material to be used with each group.

Coordinator: This group starts [the book] at chapter 16. This [group] at chapter 25 ...
Teacher 1: But pupil 1 has only done up to chapter 14.
Coordinator: Look, even if she had only done up to chapter 11, she has got a good grade, and therefore she can start at chapter 16 (Field notes, Vermeer, p. 6).

4.1.3 Curriculum, methodology and teaching

In theory, the principle of freedom of education within the Dutch educational system leaves schools autonomy to define their curriculum. According to informants at Vermeer, this relative autonomy is broader for reception education, since there are no specific educational requirements established for ISK education.

Thus, there are exam requirements for the whole of Dutch education, or requirements which the schools must fulfil, but in principle every school chooses how to do it: which book you choose, which subject you set up, or when you do it. ... There are schools that give more hours of Dutch,
but also because there are no legal requirements for the ISK reception programme (Interview with the reception coordinator, Vermeer school).

However, despite what informants believe, reception education in Rotterdam is considerably regulated, certainly more so than other forms of Dutch education. Regulation follows the mode of _governing by curriculum_ (Fase 1994) via the STER programme (1993). The STER programme standardised the curriculum and methodology of first reception classes in Rotterdam. The CED consulting group set up the main pedagogical lines, which follow a three-step process of teaching Dutch as a second language. In the first stage, pupils learn the basics of the Dutch language in order to communicate. In the second stage, they acquire an extension of the basic linguistic skills and begin to learn school-specific language. The third stage emphasises mastering school language and achieving the necessary level in all the subjects in order to transfer to regular education (Ritchers 2003). The CED group also designed the basic teaching materials for reception teaching (Zebra, Nieuwe Buren and Hyppo). In 2000, the ‘Zebra’ teaching method was introduced for children aged twelve to sixteen years old. ‘Hyppo’ was then introduced in 2003 for pupils who found the ‘Zebra’ book too difficult. Finally, the ‘Nieuwe Buren’ book was introduced for the group of fifteen-year-olds and over.

The Vermeer School essentially follows the STER guidelines. The STER agreement established a different methodological approach for the first and second years of the reception trajectory. Teaching during the first year of reception focuses on Dutch as a second language and applying the Delft Method, which tries to emulate how mother tongues are naturally learned: intensively, inductively, in context, without translation, by association, and by use and repetition (Montens & Sciarone 1984). The idea is that after a short introductory phase of exclusive language teaching the student is introduced to other subjects as much as possible. Thus second-year education involves more attention to content subjects other than Dutch.

In the Vermeer school, in accordance with STER’s semi-official goals, students receive more hours of Dutch in the first year than in the second year (fourteen vs. twelve hours per week). First-year teachers very often back up their explanations with visual aids such as drawings and pictures and use mimicking and dramatisation (theatre) in their lessons. Teachers may translate some words to other languages (English, Chinese, and French) for beginners. First-year teaching responds more to the classical concept of

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43 See chapter 3.
teaching, in the sense that the teacher provides an explanation to all of the students. However, the lessons’ interactive aspect and the way of teaching in situation and context differ greatly from classical methods in which students are expected to listen passively and repeat.

Lessons in this first year are intensive not only because of the number of hours spent; they also follow a scheme of language submersion (Vila 1999) and use a small frame of reference. Vermeer’s teachers take as their point of departure the notion that the pupils’ mother tongues are an obstacle to the development of a second language, and therefore they try to minimise the interferences which the mother tongues may cause. They consider it a drawback that students speak their first tongue at home or with other students of the same origin. Teachers also share the view that summer vacations mean a backward step for newcomer pupils, especially if they travel back to their countries of origin. Also, relationships among peers of the same origin and language are considered detrimental to the aims of the policy. These assumptions have to do with the perspective of linguistic submersion as the necessary and sufficient condition to learn a second language, which implies keeping the first language unused or used very little during the learning period.44 As we see in this conversation between the coordinator and a teacher at Vermeer’s reception department:

Coordinator [to Pupil X]: Good morning, X, how is it going? [The coordinator and another teacher are standing by the door of the High School greeting each and every student coming in. It is the first day after the summer holidays].
Pupil X: … [He gives a short answer in Chinese and turns around, annoyed].
Teacher [to the coordinator lowering the voice]: Pfff, he is doing badly! He has lost ground over the summer vacation.
Coordinator [to the teacher]: Yes, we have to separate him from the other two Chinese pupils who he hangs around with (Field diary of Vermeer school, p. 1).

As a result, pupils are constantly bombarded with the message of using Dutch outside the school. ‘You have to watch Dutch TV!’ was a chant repeated by

44 The alternative to this system would be linguistic immersion, based on the hypothesis of linguistic interdependence (Cummins 1989). Linguistic immersion starts off from the appreciation of the mother tongue and the idea that any process of learning a new language would be done on the basis of the primary language experience.
teachers during my fieldwork. As a rule, Vermeer school does not allow any languages other than Dutch at school. Pupils are also clustered strategically in order to avoid large concentrations of pupils with the same mother tongue, particularly among those who show more difficulties in learning Dutch. Also, the team tries to break down the tendency of some ethnic groups to stick together, isolating themselves from the rest, such as Antilleans, who ‘are a big group [in the school] who simply look for each other’ (Field notes, p. 16). On the other hand, friendship between pupils with different mother tongues is encouraged because it ostensibly obliges them to use Dutch. The strategy is ‘to spread them out as much as possible’ because ‘if there are only two [of the same background] in a group they make more friends with other nationalities, and speak more Dutch’ (Field notes, p. 16). All of these practices imply pressure on the pupils to substitute the first language with the second, instead of letting them coexist and reinforce each other.

In the first year the reference framework of pupils is very much centred on their mentor teacher and the spatial context of the classroom. In the Netherlands teachers habitually have their own classrooms where they keep their books and equipment; this space is also personalised with photos, posters or pupils’ assignments on the walls. Teaching practices in Vermeer school tend to support this overprotected and small, confined environment. Some practitioners defend the positive effects of small-scale learning environments for recently-arrived migrant children. The small scale and the continuities of the first year of reception also favour stronger emotional links with the teacher as well as students’ self-confidence. Many informants consider it crucial for pupils’ development and integration in the new country of residence.

In the second year of reception, on the other hand, pupils normally have many more subjects and teachers, and they even have to move from one classroom to another almost every hour. Within this more diversified frame of reference students are less protected: they do not have fixed places within one classroom and are expected to find their way more autonomously in the large building that the reception and the VMBO departments share.

In the Vermeer school the emphasis lies on teaching the Dutch language during the second year as well. Besides Dutch, the schedule only includes autonomous study time, sports, technology and mentor lessons (guidance counselling). The tendency to prioritise the Dutch language is becoming stronger, as other subjects have been gradually relegated to a more residual

45 Autonomous study time includes three subjects: current affairs, a theoretical assignment and a practical.
place since 2002. Such practices collide with the prevailing discourse in Vermeer school, which interprets newcomers’ problems as broader than a mere issue of language disadvantage. The coordinator of the reception department in this school emphasises that newcomer pupils have to face multiple and multifaceted problems, such as illiteracy, illegal status, war traumas, economic difficulties and discrimination.

In line with this growing emphasis on teaching Dutch, the reception team of Vermeer has launched a new initiative, the so-called LINC or ‘Learning in New Contexts’, to teach other subjects besides Dutch language with self-learning methodologies. The idea is to gather two groups of students (26 to 30 students) in a big classroom to do assignments of their own choice under the supervision of two teachers. This means all the other subjects are limited to this free-choice working time twice a week. Pupils have a whole folder of exercises for all the subjects (from mathematics to natural sciences), which they have to fulfil every trimester. Students work autonomously and have to decide when to do what. In theory, students get assignments that fit their own individual level according to child-centred pedagogy. In the LINC method, the strategy shifts from homogeneous groups that follow a single curriculum to heterogeneous groups with an individualised curriculum.

Irene, the coordinator of the department, is very proud of the LINC project, which has been initiated and promoted by the team with a great deal of voluntary work. Irene explains that the teachers collected the necessary furniture and computers for the classroom in a way made ‘the rest of teachers in the school [in other departments] think that we are crazy.’ According to Irene they had to help themselves because ‘the school manager and the board of governors have little interest in the ISK department.’

The motivating idea was that the ISK teaching scheme was too ‘structured’, and modern teaching methodologies could promote the development of students’ creativity, autonomy and critical thinking. Besides, this child-oriented activity is supposed to be very favourable for newcomer pupils, spurring their motivation, concentration, and progress. According to Irene, most students ‘love’ this way of working.

46 Since 2006-2007 the LINC has brought together three groups of pupils (CED 2008), which suggests that there is increased pressure to reduce personnel.
47 Interview with the reception coordinator, Vermeer school.
48 Field notes of Vermeer school, p. 15.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
Coordinator: ‘These students do not read newspapers, do not watch the [TV] news, do not read books, they are not up to current affairs.’ ‘Therefore, we invented the LINC class.’ Irene says that in it students *have to* express their own opinions and interests, decide what they will be doing at each moment, and use their own creativity. They must watch the news; connect mathematics to everyday life and to the things that happen everyday. This motivates them much more: to work two hours a day like this. ... Also, students who disturb the class a lot in conventional lessons, moving and distracting others all the time ... suddenly disappear here, they concentrate on their task and do not bother anybody (Field notes from Vermeer school, p. 17).

Despite the enthusiasm and high expectations of teachers, putting the LINC scheme into practice entailed difficulties. Teachers help pupils with their questions about assignments, but the high teacher/student ratio in the LINC class does not allow teachers to give extra attention to those with more learning difficulties. Indeed, the teachers' function there is more of a surveillance task; i.e., keeping order in the large group of students and trying to keep them silent and disciplined.52

Teacher: Where are you going? [To pupil 1, who is walking around in the classroom.]
Pupil 1: I was going to ask A for a pen.
Teacher: Get your pen and go and stay in your place. You keep running around and bothering other people.
Pupil 2: Sir!
Pupil 1: But I need a pen, Sir!
Teacher: What did you do with your pen? Where is your stuff?
Pupil 2: Sir! I have a question.
Teacher [to pupil 2]: 2, would you like to wait, I'm talking to 1.
Teacher [To the coordinator, who just entered the room and approached]: I have sent X, Y, and Z away. They are impossible! On top of not working in their team, they bother those who are doing the job. They will have to work individually instead of in teams for two weeks (Field diary of Vermeer school, p. 11).

52 This practice apparently resembles that of busyness (Sharp and Green 1973), but in fact serves quite different functions.
Another problem with the implementation of the LINC scheme is that teachers lack the expertise to help students with all of their assignments. For example, the English teacher cannot always help students who are doing mathematics. This shortcoming was recognised by some practitioners. During a team meeting a teacher expressed her concerns about the difficulties of putting the LINC ideal into practice:

[During the team meeting] Teacher J. poses a question outside the agenda. According to her, in ‘the big class’, some teachers correct exercises with lax criteria, not sticking to the aptitude standards previously agreed.

C: It is a matter of how you interpret things.

J: No. Some colleagues leave these pupils ‘guessing’. This is not well implemented. It is not well finished. Together we have defined some criteria and now ... If the question is a difference of interpretation then it is something else (Field diary, Vermeer school, p. 16).

4.1.4 Schedule-making and personnel

In principle, staff policies are the responsibility of the schools’ boards of governors. Both Vermeer school and Rembrandt school are run by the same board, BOOR, a professional management external to the municipal administration, that runs all the publicly-owned schools in the city of Rotterdam. Coordinators of the reception departments are not in charge of hiring or dismissing teachers, but nevertheless they are asked (by the sector-director) to provide an informed opinion and this, according to the informants, proves to be influential in the final decision. Coordinators hold similar advisory roles at both Vermeer and Rembrandt schools, and also at the other two reception schools under the LMC board management:

Coordinator: Then the board says ‘We have so many [e.g. ten] people. OK, who should we place there [on that subject]? What do you think about it?’ Yes, the final decision is made by the board, but they ask you who you want to keep in your team. It is not always easy, it is not always nice. But it happens (Interview with the coordinator of Escher school).

Moreover, the distribution of tasks among hired teachers is defined to a great extent by the department’s coordinator. The distribution of work is largely set according to the schedule of lessons. The general procedure for distributing work and designing a schedule is well depicted in the
following excerpt from an interview. The coordinator of Vermeer school demonstrates that it primarily involves an exercise of curriculum-making: which subjects to include must be determined according to the criteria of the reception department’s general objectives. Then, the available personnel are distributed between the classes and subjects. The final step is to fit this work distribution into a feasible schedule, which implies distributing time among participants.

Coordinator: Is there enough of a relationship between Dutch and other subjects? ... And afterwards I am going to look at which people want which groups, although that has to be done by the board. And then I can distribute the persons among the classes, the lessons. Thus, the distribution of hours per teacher and per class (Interview with reception coordinator of Vermeer school).

The reception department coordinator is therefore entitled to introduce changes in the curriculum. Modifications that imply adjusting the number of teachers (or the number of students) need to be confirmed by the board. In Vermeer school, curriculum modifications are normally discussed in teachers’ meetings and decision-making is quite participatory. Even when the decision depends on the coordinator, teachers also participate by providing feedback.

Vermeer school has been strongly affected by the cutbacks in recent years. Under these circumstances, the coordinator has been asked by the board to make the department more efficient. The management of the school has decided to reduce the team by 5-6 teachers and ‘still more will follow.’53 Irene, the coordinator, has to figure out how to reorganise the work in order to accomplish the same with less staff. Common measures for achieving this are reducing the number of subjects, cutting down the number of groups, increasing the ratio of students to teachers, or limiting the overall number of students. The coordinator has decided to reduce the number of groups from eight in 2004-2005 to six in 2005-2006, but also to curb the number of available places for newcomer students in her department.

Coordinator: ... because we must cut back, we must reduce the number of classes to six ...

53 Interview with the reception coordinator, Vermeer school.
Researcher: Thus, two fewer classes. Does this mean that the groups have to become larger?
Coordinator: No, not necessarily. We might admit fewer pupils during the school year. If we begin in October with 90 pupils and end up having 110, that means twenty began school after October. Then we will have to say to the municipality: ‘Sorry, we are full’ .... I have made a proposal for the team to do that. And then we will try to look at how we can adapt the schedule (Interview with Vermeer’s reception coordinator).

The LINC initiative described in the previous section, which gathers two groups of students to do assignments in a number of subjects on their own, can be understood as a strategy to reduce personnel. Such teaching methodology allows the number of teachers and teaching hours to be reduced without affecting the variety of subjects that students receive. This is presumably applauded by the school’s board. In the words of the school’s coordinator: ‘from now on we won’t have separate mathematics and English lessons any more’ (Field notes, Vermeer school, p. 17). Students at Vermeer still get some mathematics and English.

Another point of friction concerns maintaining a separate class for illiterate students. As mentioned above, Vermeer school had been offering reception to illiterate students for several years, but did not receive additional financial support from the local government until the school year prior to the research (2004-2005) (ROM 2006: 93). Teaching illiterate students is time- and personnel-intensive. The reception coordinator and teachers understand that keeping illiterate students together with other newcomers hinders the progress of both the illiterate and their peers. Teachers were not able to offer enough attention to the illiterate within an ordinary reception class, so the team decided to set them apart. The illiterate class requires a lower teacher-to-student ratio, and students are expected to stay there for a longer period. In former years, the illiterate comprised a group of fourteen students on average, taught by two teachers. In the last two school years, the number of illiterate students decreased to around four, under the minimum required level to be entitled to subsidies (ROM 2006: 93). The coordinator was caught between the pragmatic logic of keeping the special class for illiterates and the pressure from the managers and board of governors to raise sufficient funds to make the initiative if not self-supporting, then at least reasonably efficient.

The coordinator searched for opportunities in national regulations and in informal negotiations with the local authorities. In a team meeting, the coordinator and teachers of the reception department discussed the
possibility of including an illiteracy-level class for the coming academic year (2005-2006). Apparently, they did not have enough illiterate students to be entitled to municipal subsidies, which set a minimum of ten. Based on Vermeer’s school admission test results, only eight students happened to be fully or semi-illiterate. It could be reasonably expected that the group would eventually reach or even surpass the minimum threshold, as more new students generally arrive throughout the school year. Yet likely as it seemed, as one teacher remarked, it could still take a while: ‘Until there are ten [illiterate students], they will be sitting at home and waiting’ (Fieldwork diary, Vermeer school, p. 4). Teachers were in favour of starting the year with the illiterate class, in spite of the insufficient number of pupils. The coordinator, on the other hand, preferred first to study carefully the constantly changing regulations in order to fully understand the conditions for the subsidy. She wanted to avoid confrontations with the board.54

The coordinator speaks about the ‘Nota Nieuwkomers’ regarding the illiterate.
Coordinator: The ‘Nota’ has been approved, but what are its consequences? I want to start a group of illiterate students, but I want to have the guarantee of getting funds.
Teacher: Didn’t the municipal Department of Education grant them already?
Coordinator: Before the vacation, the municipality subsidised an illiterate class with a minimum of two pupils. Now, I don’t know. Therefore, I am not speaking with G. [the sector director] (Field notes, Vermeer school, p. 8).

4.1.5 Evaluation and transfer

Another task for which reception practitioners are responsible is evaluation and the transfer of pupils to regular education. School bureaucrats play two interrelated roles at this point: the transfer function, which is strictu sensu the goal of the ISK reception training, and the selection function. Teachers and coordinators not only have to determine whether students have achieved a sufficient knowledge of Dutch (and eventually other content

54 Throughout the 2005-2006 school year, illiterate students continued arriving, and thus it was feasible for the school to obtain municipal subsidies for a special class for illiterates. In 2006-2007, there was no problem reaching the figures, as in November illiterates already comprised seventeen, actually surpassing the ideal teacher/student ratio. In 2007-2008, on the contrary, the inflow of illiterate students dropped again to three students at the beginning of the year, and gradually increased to nine.
subjects) in order to be transferred to mainstream secondary education; they also have to filter pupils towards further education, determining the type of secondary education they will go to afterwards. This additional task has to be implemented by the ISK department because newcomer pupils are introduced in the education system directly via the ISK and have therefore missed the standard selection mechanisms applied by schools at the end of primary education. As a result, the transitional ISK training has to provide newcomer students not only with proficiency in Dutch in order to be able to continue with regular classes, but also an individualised ‘recommendation’ or placement in a secondary education track.

Neither of the two functions is centralised or clearly specified. There is no central standardised exam for admitting newcomer students into regular education, nor is there a curriculum that establishes the content to be learnt by pupils in order to be transferred. In addition, newcomer pupils transfer to secondary education in a rather unusual way, as they do not take a Cito-test or get a ‘recommendation’ from a primary school. This poses problems, as schools enrolling the newcomer students after completion of their ISK trajectory require standard documents, which newcomers lack. That is why quite often newcomer students simply continue in the schools where they have done their reception training.

Reception schools develop their own mechanisms for assessment which are based mostly on written or oral tests, evaluation meetings held by the reception team, and daily observation of pupils in the classroom (CED 2009). In Vermeer school students do not get graded reports. Written tests are periodically done, but serve as an element of information for teachers. At the end of each chapter in the Zebra book, students take the Zebra test. Besides this, they periodically take some standardised tests: the ‘Cito NT2’ to measure improvement in the Dutch language and the ‘Tempo Test Rekenen’ for mathematics.

The team holds periodic assessment and evaluation meetings to discuss the progress of students and possibly to rearrange them to ensure internally uniform groups. Constant adaptations are necessary because students do not progress at a comparable pace. After being placed in approximate levels, by the end of the first year pupils are assigned to a definite track. This final selection of students is done after approximately a year of reception training, sometimes somewhat earlier, because by then ‘each student’s capabilities’ have become clearer.

55 Interview with the reception coordinator, Vermeer school.
Transfer of pupils to ordinary secondary education is normally done after two school years of reception education in the department. Students are assigned to years\textsuperscript{56} that correspond to their age, but also to their skills as assessed by the reception team. Although there is an average stay in the reception department, the reception period does not have a time limit. Students remain at the department ‘as long as it is meaningful or until a connection is found with ordinary secondary education’ (CED 2007: 12). In fact, the reception trajectory is usually not prolonged beyond two years, unless students manifest specific problems. Practitioners believe that the longer the stay in reception training, the less time the student will have to attend secondary education and obtain a certificate.

Applying the same line of argumentation, the team of teachers at Vermeer school understands that students who are fifteen years old and older do not have enough time to do both a reception trajectory and continue in regular secondary education. That is the reason why there is a separate reception department for 15+ in Vermeer school, which teaches Dutch to older students while orienting them towards ROC vocational education.\textsuperscript{57} Other transfer alternatives are discarded on the grounds that these students are ‘too old’ and will have ‘no desire’ (in Dutch, \textit{geen zin in}) to pursue other forms of education. Giving an HAVO or VWO intelligence level assessment to fifteen-year-olds and over is ‘meaningless’, since after the reception trajectory the student will be too old to be admitted to ordinary secondary education.

Older students are therefore offered fewer opportunities, a fact that practitioners from all the reception schools in Rotterdam acknowledged. In Escher school, for instance, the coordinator explained to incoming students that:

‘If you are sixteen and you still have to study for an additional four or five years to obtain a VMBO diploma, then you will be 21, and you don’t belong here [at the ISK department, with peers between twelve and fifteen years

\textsuperscript{56} As different school systems use different terms to refer to the annual progression of students through the successive levels of education, I should clarify that in this study I follow the British usage, using the term ‘year’ (i.e. 1st year, 2nd year) to refer to what in other systems may be referred to as ‘grades’, ‘forms’, ‘promotions’, etc.

\textsuperscript{57} Reception schools in Rotterdam have signed a contract with the independent educational centres known as ROCs (regional education centres) in order to allow immigrant students who are fifteen years old and over to obtain an educational certificate. ROCs provide basic vocational education (MBO) and adult education.
old’. I explain it and they understand it immediately (Interview with the Escher school coordinator).

In the case of illiterate students, by contrast, the duration of the reception is much longer. In this case, the reception team at Vermeer is quite flexible. Similarly, there is another category of pupils that deserves a special preferential treatment. Last year, the reception department started an initiative to create a special class in order to extend the reception period of a group of highly talented pupils assessed as being eligible for the HAVO level.58

And if we think that we have a group of good students who are not ready to go to general [education] yet and who could have more Dutch [training] in order to improve their chances of being placed in HAVO or VWO, then we still keep them for Dutch … And then they also get [Dutch] grammar because they have not had it before. And we are going to prepare that group a little for a HAVO class … We have made a HAVO-3 class [third year HAVO], in which there are pupils who we think could pass the HAVO exam, but who still have not had everything [all required subjects] yet … And eventually they will go afterwards to a HAVO 4 or HAVO 5 class, if possible (Interview with the Vermeer coordinator).

According to the coordinator’s records, most of the students continue their education in the lower tracks of secondary education. In 2004-2005, six students transferred to higher education tracks (two to University Preparatory Education and four to Senior General Education), fourteen to Vocational Education (MBO), four to the third course of Junior Vocational Training (VMBO), and eight to the lowest form of vocational education, PRO (praktijkschool). The remaining 21 students transferred to the school’s 15+ department to continue their reception trajectory and subsequently move to ROC vocational education. The evaluation of the reception outcomes in twenty schools in the Netherlands carried out by the CED group in 2007 came to comparable conclusions, as 45% of the total number of reception students were transferred to Medium Vocational Education (MBO), 20% to Junior General Education (MAVO, presently called VMBO TL), and 21% to Senior General Education (HAVO) (CED 2007).

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58 This pilot initiative apparently continued in subsequent years (interview with the coordinator of reception, November 2008).
Rembrandt high school is located in inner-city Rotterdam, between the neighbourhoods of Oude Westen (Centrum district) and Middelland (Delfshaven district). Specialised in the higher tracks of secondary education, Rembrandt offers Junior General Education (MAVO), Senior General Education (HAVO) and University Preparatory Education (VWO). The school also belongs to the public network managed by the BOOR board of governors.

Rembrandt school was one of the first schools to deliver special training for recently arrived immigrant youngsters in the city of Rotterdam. The history of reception in this school dates from 1973, with the entrance of a number of foreign students who hardly spoke Dutch. The school decided to establish a transition class oriented to higher tracks. The year before that, the Ministry of Education and Science allocated funds for reception classes, but only for lower tracks of education (LBO). Rembrandt requested the extension of that funding for higher forms of education. The Ministry honoured the application and in August 1973 the reception department of the school opened its doors with 58 students with nine different nationalities (Philipsen 1982).
Rembrandt school has around 1,900 pupils, 150 of them in the ISK department (2004-2005). The school is divided into three different sections: a regular one, a bilingual English-Dutch one, and an international one.\(^5\) The student body attending each section differs in their socio-economic and ethnic composition. That is why the vice-principal defines the school as a ‘mixed school’ that ranges from ‘super-white’ to ‘tar black’.\(^6\)

Chinese and Turkish students made up the two largest communities of the ISK department during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years, followed by Cape Verdeans and Portuguese. To a lesser extent, Moroccans and Pakistanis are also significant groups. This coincides with the traditional profile of the Rembrandt ISK, which in the period already had a majority of Chinese and Turkish students, as well as large groups of Spanish and Portuguese (Phillipsen 1982: 56). In that period there was also a large group coming from the former Yugoslavia (Phillipsen 1982: 56). The student body of the ISK department reflects in broad lines the ethnic composition of the area, as Oude Westen and Middelland have traditionally had a concentration of immigrants from the Mediterranean area (Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish and Moroccan) (Phillipsen 1982: 2). In recent years, the school has also received a considerable number of Eastern European students (eleven in 2008, 26 in 2009), predominantly Polish.\(^6\)

According to the vice-principal of the school, the school has a reputation for ‘quality’ and ‘strictness’, as students must work hard.\(^6\) He emphasises a second aspect as well: the ‘quietness, order, and regularity’ in the school, as he intends to disassociate his school from the bad reputation usually linked to ‘black schools’.\(^5\) This, however, goes beyond mere rhetoric. Rembrandt has been able to make a strength out of its concentration of newcomer pupils (a \textit{weakness}), which it emphasises in its public image.\(^6\) The settlement of pupils arriving through family reunion has allowed the school to specialise in the teaching of Dutch as a second language. Thanks to that expertise, the

\(^\text{59}\) International schools are meant for the children of expatriates who will stay in the country only for a couple of years. To facilitate the continuation of their studies when they move, students can follow either a curriculum specially designed for international schools (such as the International Baccalaureate) or a national curriculum from the country of origin (British International School, Lycée Français, etc.).

\(^\text{60}\) Interview with sector director at the Rembrandt school.

\(^\text{61}\) Interview with coordinator of reception at Rembrandt.

\(^\text{62}\) Interview with sector director at Rembrandt school. ISK education falls under his responsibility, among other departments. Above him there is only one person, the principal (manager of the whole school group).

\(^\text{63}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{64}\) Interview with J. Kriens, PvdA member of the City Council.
school opened a new department – Bilingual Training – in which education is given in Dutch and English, and is oriented to high-income pupils. In this way, the initial ‘bad’ image of a black school was transformed into a reputation of quality and expertise in language training.

In 1982, the school decided to change its approach regarding students and educational quality. Before, its guiding idea had been that ‘everybody must have a chance’, so the school was lenient with the selection conditions of students in the admission process. The downside was that 35% of the students could not continue after the first year because the level was too high for them. The school decided that this ‘was not fair’, so they tried to ‘find another formula to create opportunities’. The alternative was to have stricter admission criteria, but to make an effort to ensure those admitted could stay. The determinant requisite for admission was an evaluation by the primary school indicating that the student was fit for the higher streams of education. According to the vice-principal, this decision was strategic, as initially the school became smaller, but subsequently, ‘the quality of education in the school has improved very much’, and its prestige has led to a considerable student population growth in the last ten years, from 1,000 pupils to 1,900.

The vice-principal of Rembrandt seems to have made a strong imprint on the general character of the school. He combines efficient management

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Table 12  Number and nationality of newcomer students in Rembrandt School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School year</th>
<th>Number of newcomer students</th>
<th>Prevalent nationalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>Chinese, Turkish, Cape Verdean/ Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Chinese, Turkish, Pakistani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>112 (*)</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>96 (*)</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Chinese: 29, Cape Verdean: 17, Turkish: 7 Portuguese: 6, Moroccan: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>Polish: 19, Chinese: 17, Turkish: 13 Moroccan: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>95 (*)</td>
<td>Polish: 12 Chinese: 11 Turkish: 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: School register and CED, 2007 (Toekomstverkenning ISK). Number of students for 2006-07 and 2007-08 comes from the CED report, as the school records were lost due to a computer virus. Figures with (*) correspond to October/November, thus may grow throughout the school year.

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65 Interview with sector director, Rembrantd school.
66 Ibid.
with strong advocacy of equal opportunities among underprivileged students. Despite the demanding entrance criteria, the vice-principal proudly declares that his school is open to any student, providing that he or she is highly-skilled. ‘All pupils who come with a good recommendation from the primary school are accepted. Regardless of colour, regardless of their culture.’ In particular, he makes a strong case for illegal students who are admitted to the school thanks to his explicit personal choice:

Researcher: Mr. X has told me that there are no subsidies for illegal students, but that you have to admit them anyhow.
Principal: No, we do not have to. But I want that to happen. There are schools in Rotterdam who say ‘no, we don’t do it’.
Researcher: But can public schools do that?
Principal: Yes. ... Yes. It’s just that we say ‘we do it’ [admit them]. ‘We want that’. How I do it [how I solve it] is my secret (Interview with vice-principal at Rembrandt).

The meritocratic vision of equality conveyed by the principal is also shared by teachers at Rembrandt. However, in this version of meritocracy a person’s social position corresponds to his or her innate capacity, while the merit component plays a minor role. Everybody deserves to occupy a position in society that corresponds to his or her intelligence and talents. In the Dutch model of meritocracy enacted by the highly selective education system, the social order becomes naturalised. Since the ability of each student is taken as a given, the social structure and social inequalities tend to be reproduced. A child can only ‘perform’ if he or she is placed in the ‘right place’ and if he or she gets an adequate education for his or her abilities. Everything functions to fulfil this self-fulfilling prophecy: highly talented students must get more ‘stimulus’ (in Dutch, prikkels). Less skilled students ‘can achieve less’ so teachers demand less from them. Being in the right place ensures that students can ‘learn well’ but also that the teachers can ‘teach well’.

67 Interview with sector director, Rembrandt school.
68 Young’s definition of meritocracy conceives it as a sum of talent (intelligence) and merit (effort) (1958). The Dutch version of meritocracy comes closer to what Marris (2006) calls ‘meritocracy obsessed with intelligence testing’ which he distinguishes from ‘capitalist meritocracy’, which does not pretend to evaluate people’s intrinsic worth, only the market value of their skills.
69 Interview with ex-coordinator of reception at Rembrandt.
70 The role of teachers’ expectations of students’ achievements has been much studied in the literature. For a review see Good (1987) or Jussim & Eccles (1992).
Within this framework, teachers promote equality of opportunities for newcomer students by helping them to compensate for specific disadvantages that prevent them from reaching the position that corresponds to their talents. In the opinion of the teachers at Rembrandt, the fundamental obstacle that newcomer students encounter is their lack of Dutch. Teachers believe that newcomer children have to be treated with care and patience, and must be supported in order to reach their potential. Yet as part of the Dutch education system, students are confronted with an intrinsic tension: they are oriented towards competitiveness, the need to prove their potential and show what they ‘are able to do’; at the same time, they are impelled to a certain passivity as the bottom-line is the external determinacy of their lives and the immutability of the system. As one of the informants puts it, ‘honestly, sir/madam, not everybody can score high’, therefore students can best reach their optimum level by accepting their limitations.71

The teachers in the reception department at Rembrandt also need to be mentioned. The department has a diverse team of teachers with a high rate of permanence and thus a great number of them have many years of experience in the department. A remarkable number of men work in the department, almost 40% of the total staff, although women still represent the majority. Dutch natives are also predominant, though around 30% of the team has a different ethnic origin. Only one of the teachers has a background in Dutch as a Second Language, while the rest are specialists in various disciplines.

Willem, the head of the reception department, leads the team with the indispensable assistance of the department’s secretary, Azize, the real touchstone of the whole administration. This white middle-class Dutch man with a dry sense of humour took on this role recently, although he had been teaching Chemistry in Rembrandt school for eight years. Willem is a man of action, but somehow absent-minded, so he makes a better teacher than manager. He accepted the job of running the department because he ‘wanted to be a team-leader and in the past he had just been a teacher.’72 Next year he turns 65 and he will enjoy his ‘well-deserved retirement’ after 36 years of teaching. Coordinating the reception department is a beautiful job but ‘is very tiring’, he says. ‘When it’s 7 a.m. and the alarm clock goes off, I don’t feel up to it’.73

71 Interview with reception coordinator at Escher.
72 Interview with reception coordinator at Rembrandt.
73 Ibid.
Before Willem, Kees, a younger Dutchman, was in charge of the department’s coordination. Kees was and still is extremely committed to the education of newcomer children, and decided to resign from his coordinator position due to differences of opinion with the school management. The rest of the teachers are also quite committed to their work and contribute with voluntary work when necessary. At the moment, an ex-teacher works as a volunteer at the department. The department has many trainees (5-10 a year) who are students of Dutch as a Second Language (NT2). New teachers are often ex-trainees who have already worked in the department.

4.2.1 Registration of pupils

In practice, newcomer pupils’ registration at Rembrandt does not contradict the official philosophy followed by the city department, but it does take it further. In this selection process the reception department acts as a gatekeeper by giving access to certain categories of students and not to others. We already described above how at Rembrandt school the main admission criterion is the students’ perceived potential for higher forms of education. The reception department at Rembrandt enrols students who score between 1 and 3+ on the RAVEN test. Rembrandt school, just like Vermeer, applies additional filters to determine the skill level of the incoming student as accurately as possible. Rembrandt takes the evaluation done by city officials as an adequate reference, so new students do not have to take another intake test in order to be admitted to the school. They must, however, undergo an intake meeting.

The intake meeting has at least three different functions. The ex-coordinator and the department’s secretary meet together with the parents and the potential student. They start by asking a set of routine questions to acquire basic data about the child and family. At the same time, the school bureaucrats provide the parents with information about the educational system in the Netherlands, its basic rules and conditions. Finally, the meeting works as an informal test for the students, to corroborate the assessment done by the municipal registration office. The reception coordinator bases his assessment largely on ‘his experience and ability to judge.’ Since this experience-based knowledge is difficult to transmit, Kees, the former

74 According to the ex-coordinator of reception, they do not give an intake exam to all incoming students because they ‘don’t have the money or the time’.

75 Interview with ex-coordinator of reception at Rembrandt.
coordinator at Rembrandt, continues to be in charge of this task and assists the new coordinator.

Kees: In what grade were the children in Lithuania?
Mother: In the third and fourth years.
Kees: Do they speak English?
Mother: Yes, they do.
Then Kees asks the girls some questions in English (Field notes of Rembrandt school, p. 3).

In the example above, we see how Kees, the ex-coordinator of reception, uses the intake meeting to confirm the girls’ scores on the municipal test. He determined that in view of the girls’ country of origin, their previous schooling and their English skills, their level was probably high enough to place them in second year of reception in a HAVO-VWO class. In this sense, the intake interview plays a selective function analogous to that of the intake test at Vermeer.

If, at any point, they detect that a student does not have the necessary skills level for MAVO, HAVO or VWO, the school redirects them to other reception schools teaching MAVO levels or below. Willem, the department’s coordinator, actively cooperates in redirecting students to their ‘right place’, whenever the skill level of pupils does not correspond to the type of education provided by Rembrandt.

Besides those students who are deemed to belong in lower tracks of education, other categories of students are filtered at the school’s gates. Older students, the so-called 16+, with a high score on the RAVEN intake test (3+) are not accepted by the school and are redirected to a vocational education centre (ROC). The reason is that ‘older students who enter ISK must fulfil stricter requirements in order to be able to transfer to ordinary secondary education’ (CED 2010: 5).

Undocumented students make up another awkward category. In principle, we saw that the school policy as defined by the vice-principal promotes unrestricted admission of illegal students into the reception trajectory. The reception department registered some 5-7 children with irregular legal situations in the country during the 2005-2006 school year. Yet it seems the current coordinator at Rembrandt makes it less easy for these students to access the school. He claims to be annoyed by the complications that these students pose for him, and complains about the fact that the municipal Department of Education ‘sends them [illegal students] to us. And then we
have the problem’. In the following excerpt taken from the field diary, we can see how the coordinator deals with this in practice:

The coordinator is in his office doing paperwork for new students’ registrations. He makes a phone call to a father of one of the pupils. It seems that the father does not want to register his child in the municipality ‘because a paper is required from the housing company’. ‘Then I cannot register your child, sir’, replies the coordinator (Field notes Rembrandt, p. 8).

The coordinator explains that he needs to put some pressure on these parents, because it represents ‘a lot of money’ and thus hassle with his bosses: ‘if out of 130 students you have five illegal ones, that is a lot of money. It is almost a 4% shortage.’ After urging them to comply with the requisites, some cases get regularised because their status is not illegal but simply irregular (‘a problem with documents’). However, at the end of the day these tactics of administrative attrition do not work to deter access because these illegal children are, in fact, already attending Rembrandt school. The reception department is not going to expel a student who is present in the classrooms because he or she lacks a residence permit or other documents, because his right to education prevails and therefore, ‘you cannot reject him’.

4.2.2 Clustering in classes

The procedure for clustering students in classes is similar to that seen at Vermeer. The coordinator sorts students into classes following two rules. Rembrandt establishes a maximum of sixteen students in beginner classes and 22 for advanced classes. National regulations establish that students must receive 32 hours of lessons per week. ‘For instance,’ coordinator Willem explains, ‘if I have 80 pupils, then I can create five classrooms.’ After setting up the number of classrooms, the next step is to appoint teachers to each group and, if necessary, hire new ones:

Coordinator: This year in IST, a beginner class, there are eighteen pupils; I consider that too many. So I discussed it with the financial director and I may start a new class, because there is money for that. Last year we did quite well and that is why there is money. But now I need a new Dutch

76 Interview with coordinator of reception
77 Ibid.
78 Interview with ex-coordinator of reception.
teacher, so I’m busy with applications. And I don’t have a classroom yet. I also need other teachers, for English, history, geography and biology (Interview with the coordinator of reception at Rembrandt).

In Rembrandt school students are grouped by age and expected educational level. In the 2005-2006 school year, students were clustered in ten groups, seven for beginners and three for advanced. Separate beginner classes are set up for twelve, fourteen, and sixteen-year-old students. Within the same age group different classes are created for those who have just arrived to the Netherlands and those who have lived there for some time. In the beginner classes, Rembrandt strives to build groups of students that are as homogeneous as possible.

For advanced groups, however, creating homogeneous groups is an impossible mission. This task would require combining student groups according to their age or grade and their skills level. Rembrandt’s approach is to form advanced groups based on students’ age, on the expectation that they will join their same-age peers when they are transferred to general education. The school has three different advanced classes for students who transfer into the first, second and third years of ordinary education, but these classes adopt a brugklas model and therefore combine students channelled towards different levels of education (MAVO/HAVO/VWO).

Advanced classes with mixed levels pose additional challenges for teaching. Normally, beginner classes are made up of students of one – similar – level, which allows teachers to aim their explanations, assignments and expectations in a single direction. Because advanced classes in Rembrandt house students of two or three different levels, the teaching method needs to be adapted. Teachers cannot teach their lessons in a ‘classical’ way, that is, lecturing while the students listen. Rembrandt has solved this by reducing classical teaching to short moments of general explanation; the rest of the time students work autonomously – the so-called ‘Free Choice Work Time’ or KWT (see next section).

The intrinsic contradictions of this differentiated reception model, which strives to place students in their corresponding tracks for secondary education, have increased with the changes in the inflow of newcomers in the past years. As we have seen, the trend towards falling numbers of arrivals

79 In Dutch, doorstromers.
80 CED 2007, interview with Rembrandt’s reception coordinator.
81 In Dutch, keuzewerktijd.
82 Internal document from a team meeting, Rembrandt.
has been reversed, and now inflow has again reached the levels seen in the early and mid-2000s. Moreover, students enrol throughout the school year, which poses a problem for the school because it begins the year with quite a different number of students from that at the end of the school year. This variation ‘has always been like that, but now it is very extreme’.83 The coordinator Willem concedes that ‘at this point I don’t know how to handle it anymore’.84 In fact, the team took several steps to explore possible solutions for the most consistent pitfalls within their model of reception:

Although this table reflects a steady number of classes, with a modal value of eight classes, we must keep in mind that the figure varies from the beginning to the end of the year. In 2006 there were seven classes at the beginning, and later an extra class was created (CED 2007: 5). Data for 2007 and 2008 refer to the beginning of the year, hence it is reasonable to expect an increase in the number of pupils and classes by the end of the year.

4.2.3 Curriculum, methodology and teaching

Rembrandt’s reception curriculum has a distinctive feature. Unlike the other three reception schools in Rotterdam, which are mainly focused on teaching the Dutch language, Rembrandt puts as much emphasis on content subjects as on language training. In the second year of reception, students are taught the same curriculum as their peers in ordinary education – i.e., the same subjects, with the same exams and requirements – but

83 Interview with reception coordinator at Rembrandt, November 2008. (In Dutch ‘... weet ik niet meer hoe het moet.’)
84 Ibid.

Table 13 Evolution of the number of classes in Rembrandt school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School year</th>
<th>Number of classes</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>112 (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>6 (*)</td>
<td>96 (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>8 (*)</td>
<td>130 (*)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: school administration, and CED (2007). Figures with a (*) were computed early in the school year, normally in November.
with additional Dutch lessons. In this school, the goal of the reception training is to provide students with all the necessary tools to follow the sort of education that corresponds to their level of intelligence. The Dutch language is a necessary tool, but it is not sufficient; the students must also be prepared in all the areas taught in regular education in order to facilitate their future transfer.85 This is reflected in the curriculum. In Rembrandt beginners follow eight subjects besides Dutch and self-study hours (sport, drama, music, art, geography, mathematics, and ‘health care and welfare’). Advanced students have between ten – in the case of younger students transferring to the first year of regular education – to fourteen subjects (in the second and third years), besides the Dutch language and self-study hours (the so-called ‘autonomous working time’).

The importance granted to subjects requires a methodology suited to the school’s clustering arrangement. We just explained that in Rembrandt the teaching method needs to be adapted to multilevel advanced classes. The main strategy is to apply child-centred methodologies by which students are stimulated to work independently. This means keeping the teacher’s explanations to the whole class short and suitable for the lowest level of the pupils. Also, students within the same classroom have different textbooks and assignments according to their level. In fact, this methodology of self-learning or KWT coincides with the goals pursued by the ‘Second Phase’ policy,86 which explicitly says that ‘an independent way of learning is more suitable to the way of working in higher [tracks] of education’ (Regeling nadere vooropleidingeisen hoger onderwijs 1998, 1998).

However, the emphasis on content other than Dutch clashes with tendencies to make reception education more efficient. The cutbacks in public resources in recent years and the reduction in the inflow of newcomers have had a serious impact on the budgets of ISK departments. Coordinators are under a lot of pressure to reduce costs. Keeping a broad range of subjects and maintaining a large team both face increasing resistance from the school board, which claims that the real goal of the ISK programme is just teaching Dutch.87 This is reflected in several ways in the Rembrandt’s reception curriculum and teaching methodology. In line with general trends in Dutch education, Willem says he is considering new solutions to organise things

85 Interview with the ex-coordinator of reception.
86 The ‘Second Phase’ refers to the last years of secondary education in the higher tracks, HAVO and VWO. Specifically it runs from the fourth year until the final exam. Since 1998 the law has established that teaching in this Second Phase must promote autonomous ways of working among students and that different subjects must be interconnected.
87 Internal document of a team meeting, Rembrandt.
'independently from the system of content lessons' (in Dutch Leerstof klas systeem). The enactment of the Second Phase policy also involves subjects under broader overarching categories, like General Natural Sciences (ANW) or Cultural and Artistic Forms (CKV).

Geography or history, that doesn't matter, we give them social sciences or natural sciences. But that is a development that you see not only here but also in ordinary education (Interview with the reception coordinator at Rembrandt).

At the same time, to avoid playing down the importance of subjects, the coordinator tries to give more room to Dutch within content subjects. If Dutch is introduced as an indirect goal within content subjects then there is no justification for substituting hours of geography, for example, with more hours of Dutch. The department has organised several seminars for the teachers on so-called Subject Oriented Language Teaching (from now on SOLT), known in Dutch as Vakgericht taalonderwijs. The bottom-line of this methodology is that ‘every lesson is a language lesson’, and teachers can work on the pupils’ Dutch skills at the same time as teaching the subject’s contents. SOLT starts off with students with a general basic knowledge of Dutch, who are able to follow lessons in Dutch. The main goal of this method is to focus explicitly on the extension of students’ vocabulary in Dutch within each specific academic subject. For instance, during a lesson observed in the fieldwork, the Chemistry teacher devoted some time to explain the new terms introduced, such as ‘solution’ (oplossing), ‘suspension’ (suspensie) or ‘test tube’ (reageerbuis).

SOLT mainly responds to the relevance given at Rembrandt to the acquisition of specific vocabulary to facilitate the transition to ordinary education. Providing specific vocabulary for different subject areas implies improving the specific language for the school context, what Cummins calls ‘cognitive academic language proficiency’ (CALP), which needs to be distinguished from the ‘basic interpersonal communicative skills’ (BICS) (Cummins 1979, Cummins & Swain 1986). In addition, the application of SOLT can be used to justify the reduction of hours of Dutch teaching and the maintenance of hours of other subjects. Some teachers, however, are reluctant to use this methodology in their lessons.88

88 Field notes, Rembrandt, team meeting.
4.2.4 Schedule-making and personnel

Just as in the Vermeer school, staffing policies at Rembrandt are the responsibility of the board of governors, BOOR. For personnel reductions or extensions in the reception department, the coordinator is asked to provide an informed opinion. Formally, the reception department coordinator is part of the school’s management and thus takes part in the decision-making to a certain extent.\(^8^9\) The final decision, however, is made by his superiors, the sector director and the principal. Interviews with the present coordinator, Willem, and his predecessor, Kees, reveal the limited influence that they exert on the final result. Within the school as a whole, the ISK department has a modest place, probably because of its size but also because reception education is not a top priority.\(^9^0\) Reception education is by definition costly and personnel-intensive, and the cutbacks of recent years have exacerbated this. For the board of governors, BOOR, which was created precisely to introduce a managerial approach to the administration of public schools, the search for efficiency is fundamental. Reception departments are constantly caught between the need to comply with efficiency goals and the educational goal of helping disadvantaged students.

As seen above, how groups are made is determined by the resources available. The resources determine the number of clusters that can be created, and therefore the ratio of pupils per teacher. However, schools tend to have agreements regarding the maximum acceptable number of students per class/teacher. At Rembrandt, cutbacks have not been translated into larger classes. According to the informants, the board is not explicitly pushing to expand classes beyond their limit; however, indirectly it does by not approving the creation of new classes with fewer than a certain number of students. As teachers do not want to keep students at home on a waiting list, oversized classes are not so rare. If students continue arriving throughout the school year they are placed in the existing classes, as defined in August. Eventually, when classes surpass the established limits of sixteen and 22, the reception coordinator solicits the creation of a new class. After the beginning of the school year it is always a hassle to form a new class, as seen in the following exchange:

The coordinator had to negotiate with the financial department. ‘I told them, “I need a new class”, and they said “It’s not possible; there is no

90 Ibid.
money”. “Well”, I said, “then look for it better. Because I need a new class. I have twenty new pupils”. And I added, “You spend too much money [on other things]. Try to arrange it.”

‘You know, if they need [to hire] a new teacher they will have to find it [the money]. Last year it worked fine because classes X, Y, Z had few pupils, 12 pupils more or less’.

‘What if your request is left unheard?’, asks the researcher. ‘Then we have a problem,’ replies the coordinator (Field notes at Rembrandt, p. 7).

Furthermore, several ways of working at Rembrandt are in fact strategies to curtail expenses. For instance, combining several subjects can be interpreted as a strategy to reduce staff. Likewise, the introduction of the SOLT scheme, which tries to make a language lesson out of every lesson, can be seen in the same light. Finally, the department only has six teachers of Dutch, but these are sufficient, since self-study hours (KWT) ‘can be used for [teaching Dutch to] a large number of pupils with just three teachers’.91

In fact, the coordinator is trapped between the manager’s and the educator’s perspective. As coordinator, ‘your goal is to keep your children for only two years in the ISK’, otherwise costs increase greatly. But at the same time, the reception coordinator is moved to achieve the educational goals of reception, therefore ‘you keep offering chances’ to students.92

As long as teachers are making an effort, [the coordinator expects] the management to understand the fact that sometimes it may last longer. And also [the coordinator] expects teachers to accept that sometimes the coordinator or team-leader must say, ‘it is taking too long with this pupil. Is his level perhaps not good enough? Is it too difficult for him or her? Would [sending him/her] to another school be a solution?’ (Interview with reception ex-coordinator at Rembrandt).

4.2.5 Evaluation and transfer

When asked about the goals of educational reception, the ex-coordinator of reception at Rembrandt rephrased the general goal of the programme as, ‘to transfer the students [to ordinary education] as fast as possible, as well as possible, to the level at which they belong’.93 In fact, as we have seen,

91  Field diary at Rembrandt, p. 10.
92  Interview with ex-coordinator of reception at Rembrandt.
93  Interview with ex-coordinator of reception at Rembrandt, p. 4.
educators in the reception department at Rembrandt consider transfer to the correct level a priority, although this sometimes clashes with the managerial goal of limiting the reception trajectory to no longer than two school years.

According to the STER pedagogical model, the length of the reception process may vary depending on pupils’ level of intelligence. While lower-track pupils are expected to stay in the process of reception for at least two years, the most skilled ones are expected to finish their trajectory in just a year. These estimations are based on fifteen hours of intensive language training per week. The experience of Rembrandt is exactly the opposite: higher tracks need longer reception periods (Philipsen 1982: 52). There is a broad consensus now with regard to this direct relationship between time and level (i.e. higher level, longer reception time). Practitioners consider that students with high potential need more time to reveal all their potential. This means that highly talented students learn the ‘basic interpersonal communicative skills’ (BICS) relatively quickly, but in order to acquire the required level of ‘cognitive academic language proficiency’ (CALP) (Cummins 1989) for higher tracks of education, they need more time than their peers in Junior Vocational Education. The duration of the reception trajectory constitutes a permanent source of tension between the coordinator and the school managers:

That is the discussion with the financial director: he wants to have students at the ISK for 1.5 years and I want [to keep them in] for three years (Interview with the coordinator of reception at Rembrandt).

At Rembrandt’s department of general education the final selection of students is done relatively late, in their third year, while in the first two years they are mixed in a ‘bridge class’ (MAVO-HAVO-VWO). In the reception department at Rembrandt, teachers also establish the level of students relatively late, as they consider it quite difficult to determine the level of newcomer students with accuracy. After two years of reception trajectory, students are transferred to the grade corresponding to their age. Nevertheless, informants report that the transfer to regular education is problematic because pupils still fall behind in the Dutch language. These contradictions have been aggravated by the Second Phase policy

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94 Interview with M. Zweekhorst, from the CED-group.
95 One could also argue, however, that VMBO students simply need more time to learn the CALPs for higher tracks. They are transferred too soon to regular education, having learnt the BICS, which does not give them enough time to learn the CALPs. See page 96.
96 Interview with sector director in Rembrandt.
in combination with the model of reception at Rembrandt. The reception team has noticed that:

Since the ‘Second Phase’ was implemented [in our school] the transition from ISK to ordinary [education] has become more complicated. The ‘Second Phase’ requires students [to know] more Dutch ... There are enough students in the ISK [department] with HAVO/VWO potential. The transition works really with lots of difficulties; pupils need more time (Internal document, team meeting, reception department at Rembrandt, p. 1).

The required level of Dutch poses a big problem, as exams and textbooks in subjects like mathematics now include a lot of text. Willem and his colleagues think that this development is particularly detrimental for students of Junior General Education (MAVO), since HAVO and VWO students manage themselves better.

The problem is the MAVO students who transfer [from ISK] to Rembrandt’s ordinary education. We have a dilemma because we have to transfer them prematurely because there is no money to keep them in ISK, but their level of Dutch is still too low. In terms of intelligence they have no problem. Mr. J. [a MAVO teacher at the regular education department] complains because they are not doing well. They cannot finish MAVO [education]. It is a problem with MAVO pupils only; HAVO pupils don’t have any problems (Interview with coordinator at Rembrandt).

Consequently, the reception team is studying ways to improve MAVO pupils’ opportunities, by ‘giving them more Dutch’. Kees, the ex-coordinator of reception, came up with a proposal that seems to offer a win-win situation. Comparable to the Masterclass initiative at Vermeer school, Rembrandt proposed an extension of a third year of reception to a group of students with high potential (MAVO level, young age, already in the country for a longer period). However, students in this class would receive nine hours of Dutch instead of eleven, which is the amount they receive in reception education; this way the class would comply with the required number of hours of subjects for a regular MAVO course. It would also be the size of a regular class, thus 22 pupils instead of sixteen. ‘It would be an ordinary second-year MAVO class’, says the coordinator Willem, only it would be taught by the reception team with special attention to improving the students’ future chances. Thus, it would imply teaching under the much cheaper parameters of regular education.
Unfortunately, the proposal was refused by the board. Rembrandt’s reception team has been trying for over two years to get the management to accept the plan. They are annoyed because ‘[we] have attempted to implement this proposal for the past two years. We have been talking about it for too much time, we’ve been considering and weighing for too long and no decision has been made’. In a renewed attempt, the reception team discussed in a meeting the proposal and the strategy to follow. In the document preparing the meeting the objections of the management and the counterarguments of the ISK coordinator were put like this:

The objections of the management were double-sided, pedagogical and financial. Pedagogically, the direction defends the ISK-character of the education. Dutch is what students must learn. ... Financially, the ISK is too expensive and this step makes it even more expensive. The former funds for ISK were based on a reception trajectory of 1.5 years ... The transformation of the class ISZ [second-year reception for MAVO level] into I2Z [post-reception MAVO-level] extends the duration of ISK from the present two years to yet another year (Internal document, team meeting, reception department of Rembrandt).

However, later on, the document defends the counterarguments of the ISK coordinator: ‘This proposal attempts to solve, in a “financially neutral” way, the present objections that make us stick to the present schedule/curriculum’. According to the coordinator of ISK, the management board does not realise that the proposal does not simply mean prolonging one year of reception for the ISZ class under another name (I2Z); it also means launching an ordinary MAVO class within the reception department:

The implementation of I2Z is a budget cut. ISZ is a beginner class and has a maximum of sixteen students. I2Z is a second-year class, so there are openings for 22 students (Internal document, team meeting, reception department of Rembrandt).

4.3 Other schools that provide reception in Rotterdam

Besides the Vermeer and Rembrandt schools, two other secondary schools provide reception for newcomer students in Rotterdam: the Escher and Van Gogh schools. This section offers a general overview of their reception style as context for the school cases under study. As the Escher and Van Gogh
schools were not selected as main observation units in the present research and no ethnographic observation was carried out there, information in this section is based on interviews and secondary reports.

As mentioned earlier, all four reception schools in Rotterdam present in broad lines a similar interpretation of the ISK programme. This is clear in the development of parallel courses for reception, i.e. full-time reception courses that keep newcomer students separated from their native peers. Moreover, all schools follow a similar teaching methodology (the STER method) and teaching material.

Despite this general agreement, schools present significant differences in three aspects. First, the duration of the reception trajectory varies per school. In three of the schools (Vermeer, Rembrandt and Escher), the reception trajectory of newcomer students takes two years on average, while the Van Gogh school strictly limits the trajectory to one year, in accordance with the subsidised period for reception.97

97 Interviews with M. Zweeckhorst, advisory institute CED-group, with E. Meijer, Education department, Municipality of Rotterdam, and with schools’ coordinators of reception.
Second, the subjects taught in the reception courses differ among schools. Currently, schools are increasingly reducing their reception curricula to teaching language; only the Rembrandt school appears to be resisting this trend, or doing so more vehemently than the others. In line with this trend, reception training at the Escher school focuses primarily on the teaching of Dutch as a second language, although some other subjects are still introduced besides Dutch (English, biology, chemistry, physics, etc.), particularly in the second year of reception. Van Gogh’s choice of pure language training, on the other hand, constitutes an a priori choice, which predates recent cutbacks and developments at higher political levels.

Finally, a last element of divergence among schools is the transfer of pupils to regular education. Again, a distinctive transfer style is most evident in the Van Gogh school, where all students are automatically transferred after their year of reception training into a ‘bridge class’ (brugklas). From there, they have to follow Junior Vocational Education (VMBO) fully from the very beginning. On the contrary, the other three schools transfer newcomer students according to their age and skills level, into the first, second or third year of the various tracks of ordinary education (e.g. MBO 2 or VMBO 3). This all indicates that Van Gogh presents the most divergent reception style of all Rotterdam’s schools, while Escher’s reception style occupies a more intermediate position in the criteria of differentiation.

School variations in these three aspects are the result of discretionary practices. According to a differentiated reception model, schools have adopted different types of reception training (language-only vs. other subjects) to match the characteristics of their student bodies (low-skilled vs. high-skilled). Informants from all schools agree that highly talented students, such as those attending Rembrandt school, should receive broader reception training with more content subjects in order to transfer to higher educational tracks, while less talented students do not need to be so well prepared for their transfer to lower tracks. Differences thus relate to the assumptions that teachers make about the ‘educability’ of low-skilled vs. high-skilled newcomer students. Besides this, evidence indicates that the current tendency to limit reception training to pure language teaching is a result of the pressure from boards of governors to make reception more efficient.

98 Interview with reception coordinator, Escher school.
99 For a definition of a ‘bridge class,’ see chapter 3.
100 Interview with M. Zweekhorst, advisory institute CED-group.
Flexibility in the duration of reception trajectory also indicates a discretional way of applying the ISK programme’s rules. While Escher school leniently applies the procedures related to the duration of reception trajectories of newcomer students, Van Gogh school tends instead to follow the policy to the letter so as to avoid financial penalisations. Moreover, informants from the Escher school say they are also flexible in their admission criteria for categories of students not complying with the conditions for receiving subsidies (students with an irregular status, students living outside the municipality, etc.). This discretional adaptation of norms has to do primarily with professional ethics: informants from Escher justify these practices by their understanding of what the reception of newcomers should be like. Van Gogh also applies discretional practices, but these are rather intended to adapt reception goals to available resources or other organisational constraints. Paradoxically, although both schools are run by the same board of governors (LMC), they present different degrees of leniency or compliance with ISK requirements.

The interviews also show a remarkable similarity in the concerns that reception staff from different schools voice about their jobs, the implementation of policies, and the reception of newcomer students. The concerns from Escher and Van Gogh informants coincide to a great extent with what was described in detail by professionals from the Vermeer and Rembrandt schools.

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Table 14  Reception style of Rotterdam schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Duration of parallel reception</th>
<th>Escher, Vermeer &amp; Rembrandt schools</th>
<th>Van Gogh school</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two school years average</td>
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<td>One school year average</td>
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<tr>
<th>b. Reception goals</th>
<th>Rembrandt school</th>
<th>Van Gogh school, and to a lesser extent Vermeer &amp; Escher schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language as a tool for socio-economic integration (other subjects besides language)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language as a goal in itself (mainly language teaching)</td>
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<th>c. Transfer</th>
<th>Escher, Vermeer, Rembrandt schools</th>
<th>Van Gogh school</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To the year of secondary education corresponding to his/ her age (&amp; to the track according to student’s level)</td>
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<tr>
<td>To the ‘bridge class’ (brugklas)</td>
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101 Interview with reception coordinator, Escher school.
102 Ibid.