RESEARCH ARTICLE

Tensions experienced by teachers of Dutch culturally diverse senior secondary vocational education and training: An exploratory study

Kennedy Tielman[1] [ORCID] | **Renate Wesselink**[2] | **Perry den Brok**[2]

[1]Fontys Teacher Education Institute, Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

[2]Education and Learning Sciences, Wageningen University and Research, Wageningen, The Netherlands

Correspondence
Kennedy Tielman, Fontys Teacher Education Institute, Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, The Netherlands.
Email: k.tielman@fontys.nl

Abstract

Senior secondary vocational education and training (SSVET) is highly culturally diverse, with a majority of students having an immigrant background. Teachers in culturally diverse classes are more often confronted with tensions in their daily practice and they are uncertain of how to manage these tensions. This exploratory study investigated what value-based tensions teachers encountered when teaching in culturally diverse SSVET classes. Furthermore, the reported tensions by teachers were examined in terms of (inadequate) knowledge, skills and (hindering) attitudes as a possible cause to deal effectively with the experienced tensions. We collected interview data from 16 SSVET teachers from five schools, each with more than 60% of students with immigrant backgrounds. The results showed that most of the value-based tensions that the SSVET teachers encountered were related to the intercultural loaded values *diversity* and *respect*. Next to tensions related to values also found in prior research, teachers additionally reported tensions with regard to *professional ethics & stance* of students, which seems unique to SSVET. Most experienced tensions were perceived as being caused by self-reported lack of skills. Less often, teachers experienced

a shortage of knowledge or hindering attitudes when faced with these tensions in culturally diverse SSVET classes.

The main purpose of this study is to explore value-based tensions teachers encounter in culturally diverse senior secondary vocational education and training (SSVET). Similar to the rest of Europe, Dutch education is becoming more culturally diverse. From 2010 to 2019, first- or second-generation immigrants living in the Netherlands increased from 3.4 to 4 million, now equal to around 23% of the total population (CBS StatLine, 2019). Due to the increase of cultural diversity[1] many school classes are culturally diverse with not only a wide variety of ethnic groups and religions but also great variation within some ethnic groups in the second and third generation of students (Crul et al., 2016). Immigrant students in the Netherlands originate from Morroco, Turkey, Surinam and the former Dutch Antilles, and smaller groups from countries in Asia (e.g. China, Afghanistan), Afrika (e.g. Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea), Eastern Europe (Poland) and former Yugoslavia and Syria (CBS StatLine, 2019). In the Netherlands there is a tendency (also by the government) to distinguish between the Dutch mainstream population and the (mainly) immigrant minority population, although the last group is not always clear-cut (Gorashi, 2006). In this study we refer – following the Dutch ministry of education – to this group as immigrant students, referring to students who have at least one (grand)parent that was not born in the Netherlands.

Before we continue, first some notes about the Dutch educational system as a tracked system (Nuffic, 2011). There are three types of secondary education schools: (1) preparatory secondary vocational education, (2) senior general secondary education, and (3) pre-university education. Preparatory secondary vocational education has a duration of four years and leads on to SSVET. SSVET prepares students for work or subsequent study programs (Nuffic, 2011) and is divided into four training levels, varying from qualification level 1, i.e., assistant training (duration of 1 year), to qualification level 4, i.e., management training or specialist training (duration from 3 to 4 years). SSVET is the largest educational track in The Netherlands with more than 500,000 students enrolled (CBS StatLine, 2018) and as such very important and close connected to the labor market; learning in schools and the labour market are in many instances integrated. Immigrant students are more likely to attend this type of education and form up to 80% of the student population in some large cities (CBS StatLine, 2018). Reports regularly appear in the newspapers with regard to SSVET immigrant students concerning their poor school achievements, difficulties with acquiring internship placements and their vulnerable employment position after graduation (SEO rapport, 2020). There is also anxiety about the incompatibility of norms and values in culturally diverse schools (Radstake, 2009) as (mostly) mainstream teachers and especially the immigrant students are trying to find a new understanding of each other's perspectives (de Jong, 2014; Zijlstra et al., 2013). Cultural diversity in Dutch SSVET and its effects on the educational process is definitely subject to debate, while internationally there is a serious lack of research into it in SSVET (Evans, 2019; Mulder & Roelofs, 2011, 2013).

Many studies on cultural diverse classes have taken place within other educational context than SSVET or on a very different student population than in The Netherlands (e.g. Banks, 2004; Gay, 2000). Academics reported that teachers of culturally diverse classes are often confronted with challenging situations for which they feel not competent to cope with (Banks & McGee Banks, 2004; den Brok & Levy, 2005; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Tielman et al., 2012). With this increased 'cultural mismatch' (Cockrell et al., 1999; Vedder & Horenczyk, 2006) in classes,

it is an even greater challenge for teachers to connect with the socio-cultural background of all their students (Carter & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Teachers are often not well prepared to deal with the increase of cultural diversity in their classes (Banks & McGee Banks, 2004; Gay, 2000; Hollins & Guzman, 2005). They need to have or strengthen their multicultural teaching competences[2] (Severiens et al., 2014). In order to strengthen the multicultural competence of SSVET teachers, first we need to learn more about their context and gain insight into tensions they face. The growing cultural diversity in general education is reflected in tensions (Hooijsma, 2020) and teachers feel hindered by their own values and beliefs (Leeman, 2003) that conflict with those of their students. Because of the vocational context of SSVET, teachers may experience those tensions differently.

This article aims to explore value-based tensions teachers encounter in culturally diverse SSVET. Due to this specific approach, other (potentially more positive) experiences of teachers with multicultural classes fall outside the scope of this article. The next section seeks to specify value-based tensions within the context of vocational education. Subsequently, the results of an exploratory study in Dutch SSVET are presented to explore value-based tensions by teachers. Finally, the results are discussed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In culturally diverse classes, one of the challenges teachers are confronted with is that of value-based interactions with students, which can create extra tensions for teachers because of differences in the variety of views and value orientations in these classes (Burbules & Bruce, 2001; Leeman, 2006; Radstake, 2009; Versteegt, 2010). The professional practice of teachers is value driven and rich in moral dilemmas as students and teachers bring different perspectives and values to the classroom, which interact with each other in every lesson (Bruner, 1996; Leeman, 2006; Veugelers & Kat, 2001). As part of their moral and socialization task, teachers want to influence the values of students (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). Teachers of culturally diverse classes are confronted with many different value orientations and, taking into account their own orientations, must ensure that all students can cooperate with each other and respect each other's different orientations (Tielman et al., 2012; Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). Besides the opportunity for students to practice their social skills for participating in the culturally diverse society, this process also creates value-based tensions for teachers (Leeman, 2006; Radstake, 2009; Versteegt, 2010). Students are also searching and therefore they sometimes go over their own values or challenge values and norms of others. Teachers sometimes find themselves in a struggle between their own values and changing value systems in society on the one hand, and at the same time their wish to let students develop their own value orientations. On the other hand, teachers struggle with the discrepancy with their students about values such as respect, justice and solidarity (Leeman, 2006; Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). Full awareness and conscious reflection is needed by teachers of these classes of what is at stake in such a context. Misrecognition of habitus (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977) leads to tension.

"Values are judgements based on a notion of what is good and what is bad; they refer to concepts of a 'just life" (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003, p. 379). Despite the significant rise in diversity in recent years, there is hardly empirical research on teachers' experiences on value-based tensions in culturally diverse classes in general (Radstake, 2009), let alone in SSVET specifically. In this study, value-based tensions in SSVET are seen as the teacher's internal struggle between, on the one hand, his/her own beliefs, norms and values and, on the other hand, the professional

requirements of the profession versus the student's culturally formed beliefs and perspectives on norms and values. This study focuses on these value-based tensions that teachers experience in the culturally diverse classroom, which in many cases are based on their search between their own norms and values and the large and rich variety of norms and values of the diverse student population. Determining the specific values of the teachers is not in itself a goal of this study, and the study focuses on tensions related to diversity of the diverse cultural group as a whole, and does not focus on tensions or beliefs of teachers related to specific subgroups of students.

Leeman (2003, 2006) conducted an interview study on secondary-school teachers and their dilemmas in culturally diverse classes. She highlighted tense situations in which four values were threatened, namely: *diversity & communality*, *respect for school and teacher*, *justice*, and *personal autonomy*. This article further refers to these value-based tensions as Leeman's tensions. The first Leeman's tension is about the balance between *diversity & communality* in terms of differences and similarities related to the ethno-cultural background of students. The teachers in her study were generally concerned about the balance between *diversity* and *communality* in their classes and do see cultural differences between students, but emphasize similarities. The second tension involves *respect* for school and teacher, which was particularly at risk when students broke school rules or did not want to accept the teacher's authority. When it comes to *justice*, the third tension, teachers experience tensions especially when confronted with students as negotiators in giving marks for a test and sometimes when confronted with unfair accusations of discrimination by students. Justice is also threatened when students make discriminatory remarks about someone's physical appearance or cultural background. The fourth tension Leeman (2006) identified is *personal autonomy*. According to teachers in her research, tensions between a personal critical stance and group loyalty play a role during highly emotional discussions with students on, for example, politically sensitive topics or religious education. The eleven teachers in Leeman's study (2006) reported a total of 41 tense situations between teachers and students. All teachers in her study reported on *respect* and *diversity & communality*. Furthermore, most, though not all, lecturers reported *personal autonomy* and *justice* related tensions. A quantified set of statements, however, was not reported in her study. Radstake (2009) confirmed the four value-based tensions identified by Leeman (2006); however, she did not use the same categories but reported on tensions as a result of diversity and religion, and tensions as a result of open classroom situations. Over 70% of the teachers in her study reported tensions related to diversity and religion. Both studies were conducted in general education. To our best knowledge, no previous research has been conducted on teachers' experiences on value-based tense situations in culturally diverse SSVET classes while these teachers may experience more or other tensions because of the specific vocational context.

Dutch SSVET is not only diverse in terms of the cultural background of the student population, but also in terms of their type and level of prior education, age, career ambition, socioeconomic status and family composition (De Bruijn, 2006), all factors that can influence values. In addition, compared to secondary education, Dutch SSVET shows high diversity in study programs (950 programs at four different levels in two learning pathways), training and roles of the teachers and their way of working. Because of this diversity, both in student characteristics and character of Dutch SSVET, teaching in SSVET is a highly demanding job (Hofland & Westerhuis, 2017) in a very complex teaching practice of competence-based education in which education and labour market are strongly interrelated.

SSVET teachers trains students to become competent professionals who must be able to link their knowledge, skills, attitudes and professional identity relevant to a particular professional

situation to personality traits and to use them in an integrated way in order to be able to act appropriately in a professional situation (Krüger, 2004). The development of professional knowledge and skills has been argued to be easier to teach compared to professional attitude, because in professional attitudes underlying personality traits and new values and norms associated with the profession are being linked (Bergenhenegouwen et al., 2002). Coaching or mentoring of professional attitudes of SSVET students leads to teachers coming close to students′ personalities, which can trigger additional tensions teachers have to cope with. In the highly cultural diverse context of the Dutch SSVET with different perspectives and values orientations among students and teachers, the chances that value-based tensions may emerge for teachers are even higher.

Given those major differences in type of education between general education and the vocational context of SSVET, the value-based tensions, as identified by Leeman (2006), could be expressed and distributed differently. Moreover, value-based tensions also can arise with regard to moral values that are profession related (professional ethics) in the classroom and during internship where these values acquire their significance within a vocational context (Veugelers, 1995; Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). We choose Leeman's tensions as a framework to investigate and map the potential value-based tensions experienced by SSVET teachers in their culturally diverse classes, as defined in Appendix A. We seek to what extent this framework holds in SSVET by exploring whether Leeman's tensions are mentioned as tense situations by teachers in Dutch culturally diverse SSVET and whether additional tensions exist because of the specific vocational context. Identifying those value-based tensions is one goal of the present study. We, however, want to go one step further and, as a second goal, formulate the reported tensions by teachers in terms of (inadequate) knowledge, skills and (hindering) attitudes as part of their multicultural competencies to effectively cope with the experienced tensions.

With the insights of this study we will add to the knowledge base on the experiences of teachers with tense situations in culturally diverse classes in general and specifically for the vocational context of SSVET education and contribute to the development of theory on tensions in culturally diverse education. With regard to the practical relevance of this study, the awareness of value-based tensions can contribute to intercultural sensitivity of teachers, which is seen as a necessary basis for the development of the required competences for teaching in culturally diverse classes (Caena, 2014; Leeman, 2003, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Furthermore, the value-based tensions described in this study may be used by teacher educators to prepare beginning teacher for the teaching practice of culturally diverse SSVET as the study also collects data on the perceived knowledge, skills and attitudes to handle the tensions.

Therefore, our research question is:

> What tensions do teachers report to experience in culturally diverse SSVET classes, and how can these tensions be formulated in terms of (inadequate) knowledge, skills and (hindering) attitudes?

This research question is being studied by looking on the one hand to the previous categories of tensions as found by Leeman (2006), on the other hand by determining if there are other tensions reported as well.

METHODS

Context

The Dutch education system encompasses separate school for SSVET, a four-year school-based program at level 4 of the European Qualification Framework. SSVET prepares students for work or secondary education at four different qualification levels by means of different courses (Nuffic, 2011). Dutch SSVET is more culturally diverse than higher and university education (CBS StatLine, 2018).

Procedure

Owing to the exploratory character of this study into value-based tensions, a qualitative research method has been chosen at this stage. Semi-structured interviews are a useful way to explore the breadth of the subject, in this case value-based tensions in SSVET. Sixteen teachers from five SSVET schools, situated in large and medium-sized cities in the west and south of the Netherlands, were selected to participate in this study. The student population of these schools ranged from 60% to 80% of immigrant students. The teachers were invited by the first author to take part in a semi-structured interview. All interviews took place at the school of that particular teacher. Each interview took approximately 45 min. Interviewees were asked for permission to audio record the interview. All interviews were conducted by the first author. The 16 teachers were selected from a group of 25 teachers who voluntarily attended a professional development programme for SSVET teachers organised by a teacher training institute in the southern part of The Netherlands. The selected teachers wanted to improve their classroom management, based on their experience and/or particular interest in the topic of teaching in culturally diverse SSVET. Paccione (2000) shows that experience with cultural diversity is important for teachers' intercultural sensitivity, they have more experience with intercultural dilemmas (Leeman, 2006). By making this selection, we wanted to identify a spectrum of value-based tensions experienced by SSVET teachers and their potential shortcomings in teaching culturally diverse classes. As a result of the focus on tensions, other (potentially more positive) experiences of teachers will not be reflected.

Participants

The number of teachers per school ranged from one to eight. A majority of the teachers were female (56%). The teachers had a mean age of 49.5 years (SD = 8.8) and an average work experience of 18.8 years (SD = 11.8). In terms of cultural background, three of the 16 teachers identified themselves as a teacher with an immigrant background (two with a Moroccan background and one with a Turkish background). All other teachers in our research were of native Dutch origin.

Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were conducted on value-based tensions teachers encounter in SSVET classes. All interviews began with the interviewer explaining the reason for the interview.

Subsequently, the interviewer described the research objectives, the structure of the interview, and the expected duration of the interview. All respondents were asked for consent regarding audio recording the interview, and their anonymity was emphasised. Finally, the interviewer thanked respondents for their willingness to cooperate and gave them the opportunity to ask questions.

The semi-structured interview consisted of two parts. The first part featured questions regarding the teachers' background, age and work. In the second part, teachers were asked about tensions they encountered in teaching culturally diverse SSVET classes. The teachers were urged to think of specific culturally diverse classes that they were teaching at that time. In this second part of the interview, the first question asked in all interviews was: "What do you find challenging while teaching in a culturally diverse class?" Clarifying questions then included, for example, "Which tensions play a role in your culturally diverse classes?" "To what extent did the cultural background of the students play a role in the tensions you mentioned?" and "How did you experience these tensions and how did you tackle them?"

Analysis

The interviews were transcribed *ad verbum* from the voice recordings, to prevent interpretation bias. The interviews were analysed both deductively and inductively. Deductively, the data were analysed in an iterative process of moving back and forth between the sensitising concepts *diversity & communality, respect, justice, and personal autonomy* (Leeman, 2006). Additionally, teachers' "knowledge," "skills," and "attitude" were used as sub-categories for each of the main concepts. So, for each of Leeman's tensions, we coded whether the teacher reported inadequate skills or knowledge, or hindering attitudes, while experiencing the reported tense situation. More specifically, "inadequate skills" was used to refer to when the teacher mentioned not being able *to handle* a given tense situation. "Inadequate knowledge" refers to when the teacher mentioned not *knowing* how to deal with the tense situation. "Hindering attitudes" refer to those *beliefs or convictions* that hindered the teacher from understanding the given tense situation or acting upon it.

Concepts that were not covered by any of the concepts mentioned were investigated inductively with a dedicated focus on new value-based tensions that emerged from the data for the specific context of teaching culturally diverse SSVET. Appendix A reflects the description of tense situations studied in our analysis. This coding framework is based on the aforementioned Leeman (2006) concepts and is elaborated on the basis of interview statements, which were classified in themes and codified.

The transcripts were coded using Atlas Ti (version 8.3.0). The first step of the qualitative data analysis included segmentation of the data files. Utterances were marked as separate segments using the principle of *turn topic* or *occurrence*. A segment was defined as one or a sequence of sentences relating to one specific occurrence or topic. Subsequently, the first and second researcher independently coded two interviews using the coding framework and the subcategories "knowledge," "skills," and "attitude" as defined above. Afterwards, the two researchers discussed differences and reached agreement about the classifications of statements, and the coding was adjusted to match the outcome of this discussion. In order to check the inter-rater reliability of the coding used, we established Cohen's kappa (Cohen, 1960) for 23% of the coded statements. Cohen's kappa was 0.76, which means sufficient agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Because we

were also interested in how frequently the teachers reported the various value-based tensions, the statements were not only interpreted qualitatively, but their frequency was also determined.

RESULTS

In the first part of the results section, we describe the value-based tensions encountered by teachers and categorised as the four intercultural tensions raised by Leeman (2006), i.e., *diversity & communality, respect, justice, and personal autonomy*, and how teachers experienced the reported tense situation in terms of inadequate skills or knowledge, or hindering attitudes. Additionally, in the second part of the results section, we examine whether teachers mentioned other tensions that could not be categorised as one of Leeman's tensions.

Section 1: Leeman's tensions

Table 1 displays the number of tensions corresponding to Leeman's tensions and the number of teachers that reported on these tensions.

As shown in Table 1, we were able to categorise 129 of the 178 *value-based tensions* mentioned according to Leeman's tensions (2006). The 49 *other tensions* mentioned could not be cover by Leeman's tensions and will be presented in the second part of the results section. Of Leeman's (2006) four tensions, teachers mentioned the most value-based tensions in accordance with *diversity & communality* 93 times, followed respectively by *respect* 23 times,

TABLE 1 Number of reported Leeman's tensions and number of teachers per tension

Leeman's tensions	Number of tensions	Number of teachers
Diversity & communality	93	13
Diversity & communality-skills	53	13
Diversity & communality-knowledge	26	12
Diversity & communality-attitude	14	6
Respect	23	8
Respect-skills	18	8
Respect-knowledge	4	2
Respect-attitude	1	1
Justice	9	6
Justice-skills	8	6
Justice-knowledge	0	0
Justice-attitude	1	1
Personal autonomy	4	3
Personal autonomy-skills	3	3
Personal autonomy-knowledge	0	0
Personal autonomy-attitude	1	1

justice 9 times and *personal autonomy* 4 times. Although not all schools were represented by the same number of teachers, the teachers of all schools reported about the largest categories of *diversity & commonality* and *respect* to approximately the same extent. For the least reported value-based tensions, justice and *personal autonomy*, the schools with the most participants reported these more often. In general, most of the value-based tensions teachers encountered can be sub-categorised as situations in which the teacher experienced inadequate skills to handle the specific tension. Inadequate knowledge and hindering attitudes were less often mentioned by teachers when faced with tensions in their culturally diverse SSVET classes. Of the 16 teachers that were interviewed, 13 teachers in general reported tensions with students in teaching culturally diverse classes. Three teachers, all with immigrant backgrounds, did not report tensions within their culturally diverse classes. We will show the most prominent tensions that were identified below, illustrated with some examples.

Diversity & communality

The value-based tensions in this field were manifested by teachers especially as a concern of how to cope with group differences in terms of ethno-cultural background. The teachers focused mainly on the differences between students and not on the similarities. The reported tense situations could especially be sub-categorised as inadequate skills because the teachers were not able to handle the concerning tense situations in a satisfactory way. For example, a teacher described how difficult it was for her to discuss some topics like homosexuality because of the cultural diversity of her class. She reported that especially the students with a Muslim background react differently on these topics than ethnic Dutch students. She wanted to be able to address these tense situations in a better way. In the meantime, she preferred to avoid this type of discussions because of the very strong reactions and violent behaviour of some students. She felt uncomfortable with, according to her, irrational and narrow-minded opinions of her students and the unwillingness to listen to arguments of the others. Eight teachers indicated that giving feedback to immigrant students sometimes created a tense atmosphere, as students sometimes did not accept well-intended feedback and often feel more offended than ethnic Dutch students. Violation of honour was reported by some teachers as a possible explanation for how these students sometimes react to feedback. The struggle with giving feedback teachers reported were both in the field of coaching and mentoring as task-related feedback. These examples of coaching on attitude show that teachers came very close to students' personalities leading to value-based tensions.

Some reported tense situations concerning *diversity & communality* could also be sub-categorised as inadequate knowledge or hindering attitudes. A teacher reported that a lack of knowledge about the different cultural backgrounds of her students sometimes caused tense situations for her with which she cannot cope. She illustrated this related to internship for hospitality industry where a female student claims not being allowed to do internships in the evening by religion. A few teachers also mentioned struggle with their own ideology, values and norms, against the perspective on values of some of their students. They wondered to what extent they

should adapt their attitude towards a culturally diverse class with sometimes other values, standards and principles.

Respect

Far less than diversity & communality, but still more than half of the teachers, mentioned value-based tensions that could be coded as Leeman's tension *respect*. Reported tense situations about respect mostly involved disrespect towards female teachers and school rules, although to a lesser extent disrespectful interaction between students and authority problems in the class were also mentioned. All female teachers reported tense situations with regard to *respect* that could be sub-categorised as inadequate skills expressing their inability to address this. Especially teachers of the older generation mentioned some troubles regarding the rude behaviour of immigrant students, often referring to Moroccan-Dutch students. For example, a female teacher, 59 years old, indicated that she did not have sufficient skills to deal with situations in which she felt she was treated disrespectfully or in which she was specifically viewed as a female teacher. She not only wanted tools to deal with such behaviour of students, but also for her own fierce reaction to those situations. Three out of the 13 teachers reported tense situations related to disrespectful interaction between students. According to the teachers some students sometimes express themselves contemptuously towards native Dutch female students in the class and let them do all the work, for instance, during collaborative learning activities. With regard to disrespectful behaviour towards school rules by the students, four teachers indicated tense situations regarding truancy, arriving on time, school stance, and language used at school. A teacher reported a lack of knowledge about the meaning of respect in other cultures and how she struggled with her own values and norms by describing a situation where a student never looked at her during coach conversations when she wanted to. She doubted whether to accept that or to adhere to her own principles of looking at each other in a conversation.

Justice

When asked about tense situations in teaching culturally diverse SSVET classes, about half of the teachers mentioned tense situations between teachers and students in the category of Leeman's tension *justice*. Tense situations were about whether or not the teacher acts fairly, according to the students, when assessing students' work or evaluating students' behaviour. The teachers mostly mentioned tense situations that can be sub-categorised as inadequate skills when confronted with the disruptive behaviour of some students and the discussion that followed. Generally, teachers reported their struggle with students trying to negotiate their bad grades with them, sometimes arguing that the teacher may have made a mistake. According to the teachers, some of these students were actually more concerned with the results than with correcting their mistakes and honour would play a major role in this. One teacher commented on the fact that some immigrant students feel discriminated during their internship and her struggle with her own ideology in this. She felt dissatisfied with their inability to deal with this and even became emotional in reporting his because it goes completely against her principles. The teachers in this study did not mention tensions according to justice that can be categorised as inadequate knowledge.

Personal autonomy

Results have shown that three of the 13 teachers mentioned tense situations that can be categorised as examples of Leeman's tension *personal autonomy*. There were not many stories from teachers about individual students who, in the teachers' opinion, chose loyalty to the group rather than acting more autonomously in their decisions that causes tensions for teachers. Three tense situations that the teachers reported related to personal autonomy could be sub-categorised as in-adequate skills. One teacher described a situation involving not succeeding in steering a student towards a different internship than his group of peers. This student had a lot of capacities but chose to do an internship with his peer group at a call centre-like company. Despite the fact that, according to her, such a step could determine the students' future career, she did not dare speak to him individually because she felt she had to justify herself towards the whole peer group.

Section 2: Other tensions

One of the main interests in this study was whether additional tensions exist because of the specific vocational context of SSVET with regard to the framework of Leeman's tensions. Concepts that did not fit Leeman's categories were therefore inductively explored with a special focus on themes that emerge from the data. We identified tense situations that involved discussions between teachers and students regarding work ethics or stance during school and internships. Those value-based tensions were categorised as professional *ethics & stance*.

Professional ethics & stance

Table 2 displays the number of these tense situations that emerged from the data and the number of teachers that reported on these value-based tensions.

As shown in Table 2, we were able to categorise 36 of the 178 mentioned tense situations as *professional ethics & Stance*. Five teachers reported tense situations that were categorised as *professional ethics & stance*. All teachers mentioned tense situations than can be sub-categorised as inadequate skills and one of these teachers reported also inadequate knowledge when faced with tense situations regarding *professional ethics & stance*. Hindering attitudes were not mentioned by the teachers. Three teachers reported tense situations with students with regard to discussing topics, punctuality and showing initiative or asserting themselves. The way students dealt with authority and professional standards also caused tension among teachers.

TABLE 2 Number of reported tense situations on professional ethics & stance and number of teachers, who mentioned the tension

Other tensions	Number of tensions	Number of teachers
Professional ethics & stance	36	5
Professional ethics & stance-skills	35	5
Professional ethics & stance-knowledge	1	1
Professional ethics & stance-attitude	0	0

One teacher of SSVET social studies expressed that she felt she had inadequate skills in teaching immigrant students to be more open about their feelings, a very important skill for their future career as social workers. According to her, there was a big difference in openness between Dutch students and immigrant students. The latter often struggled with their feelings and found it difficult to express themselves. She was concerned that these students, who in her opinion often refused to adapt and open up more, would be confronted in professional practice with complex situations and feelings that they would not understand. She struggled with teaching them to be more open. Another teacher complained about students' work stance and how hard it was to work on that and prepare them for the labour market. He illustrated this by portraying an immigrant student who always behaved informally and arrived without any hurry. He said that if this student would work at a bank while fifteen people were waiting at the counter, he never would make it there. He wondered to what extent these students could adjust their pace and their way of thinking. In his opinion, certain mentalities would not work in a 'typical' Dutch company. He often discussed with the students that such ways of conduct would be problematic in their future profession, but found that his effort did not work. One teacher mentioned a tense situation that could be sub-categorised as a lack of knowledge, e.g. about how to deal with non-assertive work attitudes of students during internships. He gave an example of students that during their internship in a supermarket told that they had nothing else to do but fill courses. They never told the internship supervisor that they could do more, like unload a cargo, maybe even clear some cabinets. The teacher could not understand this work stance of students and wanted to know how to encourage them to come up with their own proposals and show more initiative. Hence, he felt a need to know much more about the link between culture and work attitude.

Professional ethics & stance, was after *diversity & communality* and *respect* the most reported tension.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to contribute to existing knowledge regarding teaching in culturally diverse schools, with a specific focus on SSVET, as Dutch SSVET is a major provider of education and hosts the largest set of cultures. By means of exploratory interview data from 16 teachers in culturally diverse SSVET, we answered the research question: What tensions do teachers report to experience in culturally diverse SSVET classes, and how can these tensions be formulated in terms of (inadequate) knowledge, skills and (hindering) attitudes?

In the current study, tensions between teachers and students on *diversity and communality*, *respect*, *justice* and *personal autonomy* as identified by Leeman (2006) could be confirmed. The teachers in this study reported more and additional tensions. We identified '*professional ethics & stance*'as a new theme specific to the SSVET context. Furthermore, the thirteen teachers in this study reported a higher number of tensions (i.e. 129) than the eleven teachers in Leeman's study (i.e. 41). With regard to the distribution of the tensions, teachers in this study mentioned by far the most tensions related to *diversity & communality*, followed by somewhat lower numbers related to *respect*. Tensions related to *justice* and *personal autonomy* were also mentioned, but only occasionally. In Leeman's study *diversity & communality* and *respect* were also mentioned most, but overall differences in the number of tensions between the four categories were much smaller.

The value-based tensions reported by teachers in this study when coaching students on their professional attitudes showed that what teachers and the future profession expect in terms of values and norms may conflict with underlying personality traits of students.

The ability of students to deal with criticism and receive feedback is a cause for concern. Just like in Van Middelkoop et al. (2017), teachers in this research experienced great tension about how to deal with giving feedback, especially to immigrant students. This may have to do with finding a balance between the Dutch, individualistic culture and the collectivistic cultures of most immigrant students. Such cultures are more sensitive to loss of face, honour, group interest and relationships (Hofstede, 2011) and are less focused on individual interests, personal growth, independence and competence. For the effectiveness of feedback, the pedagogical climate in a classroom and a good relationship of trust between teacher and students are also very important (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wubbels et al., 2006). Teachers in this research are concerned about making contact with their students, one of the competences with which teachers in culturally diverse classes often struggle (Derriks et al., 2001; Leeman, 2006). This finding leads us to conclude that if teachers invested more in creating a relationship of trust with their students, their feedback could have a more positive effect. Striving for a relationship of trust with the students and a pleasant social climate in the culturally diverse classroom results in less tension for the teachers (Radstake, 2009).

Remarkably, in contrast to the study by Leeman (2006), in which teachers put more emphasis on the similarities between students rather than on cultural differences, teachers in this study did not report on *communality*. Similarities between students were not mentioned. Value-based tensions in the field of *diversity & communality* were manifested by the SSVET teachers especially as a struggle with certain group differences in their culturally diverse classes. This finding raises the question of why teachers in this study appear to be more focused on the differences than similarities between students. There may be various reasons for this, SSVET is much more diverse in nature and student population than secondary general education (Hofland & Westerhuis, 2017) which may make SSVET teachers more aware of and sensitive to these differences. Furthermore, many teachers struggle with differentiation and therefore also with doing so on the basis of cultural background of students (Maulana et al., 2020). Finally, many teachers are not or hardly prepared during their teacher training or professional development for dealing with culturally diverse classes (Leeman, 2006).

Most experienced tensions by teachers in this study were caused by a self-perceived lack of skills. Less often, teachers experienced a shortage of knowledge or hindering attitudes when faced with tensions in culturally diverse SSVET classes. The tensions for which teachers expressed lack of skills to teach immigrant students, such as punctuality, integrity, dealing with authority and professional standards, are important aspects of *professional ethics & stance* according to the professionals. Seen from a different perspective, these students also do internships in some Dutch companies that have diversity high on their agenda. The question then is to what extent these students should completely adapt to Dutch professional ethics and stance and whether these professional codes are also subject to change, because it is also appreciated (or should be appreciated) if the students remain partly themselves.

Although this was not the focus of our article, there is also something to be said about the nature of the statements made by the teachers in our study. One might wonder if certain statements of the teachers that they ascribe to cultural differences are not of a more general nature and sometimes projected by teachers, whereby they perhaps racialize the normal behaviour of the students (Avis et al., 2017; Chadderton & Wischmann, 2014). For example, teachers indicated that feeling insulted when receiving well-intentioned feedback and being more concerned with results than with correcting examination mistakes that honour was a possible explanation for the behaviour of immigrant students. In a follow-up study, teachers may be presented with this type of interpretations to unravel the probably thin line between racialisation and normal behaviour.

INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF
Training and
Development

With this study we were able to illustrate some value-based tensions teachers of culturally diverse classes encounter and we formulated these tensions in terms of (lack of) knowledge, skills and attitudes. The study yielded some tensions specifically for the vocational context of SSVET education.

Implications for research and practice

Obviously, the findings in the present study were based on a small, purposely sampled group of teachers, which as such was not per se representative of the larger population of SSVET teachers. However, with the tensions identified in this study, we can draw up a questionnaire to obtain a broader picture of the tense situations experienced by SSVET teachers throughout the country, as well as how they assess their knowledge, skills and attitudes in this area and their deficiencies in terms of multicultural competences. A questionnaire also offers the opportunity to further explore our new finding in the field of professional ethics and stance. The information obtained can be useful for strengthening the multicultural competence of SSVET teachers and may uncover more SSVET-specific tension per training area. Furthermore, taking the ethnic background of teachers as a personal characteristic in this questionnaire will also provide more insight into the tensions experienced by immigrant teachers, as in this study three teachers with immigrant backgrounds reported not to experience tensions in their culturally diverse classes. In a follow-up study, it would be also valuable to further investigate the origins and consequences of the teachers' tensions and to include the pupils' perspective on these value-based tensions.

While in the Netherlands we are still struggling a bit with cultural diversity in schools, highly culturally diverse London is called an "Education Powerhouse". The success is in part due to the immigrant students themselves who are generally very ambitious and positive and find education very important to get ahead in life rather than a specific policy (Franceschelli & Keating, 2018). So, another suggestion for further research is to investigate what solutions teachers do have for the tensions they experience and to investigate whether and to what extent communality plays a role in their solutions or whether only diversity in this value is at stake. This suggestion will also contribute to the knowledge base of a non-deficit approach to culturally diverse teaching (Dolby, 2012) exploring good practices of all SSVET teachers. Another opportunity is to approach value-based tensions not only from the negative connotation they have, but also to view them as positive learning moments for teachers. Further research with this specific focus may be valuable and, in addition, asking teachers more neutrally about their experiences when it comes to their perceptions and not just about tensions, might uncover a different set of competencies. Future studies could also include questions and information about the composition of the class, to find out which students the teachers are talking about specifically in relation to tensions they experience, thereby taking more consideration for the cultural diversity in the class.

In this study, some issues in the field of intercultural communication were also manifested in teachers' stories about experiencing, understanding, and interpreting differences in communication with students. As this falls outside the scope of this study, we have not analysed these results further. This finding also provides opportunities for further research.

The results of this study enable schools to take into account value-based tensions experienced by SSVET teachers. Teachers can conduct class discussions with students on the subject about incompatibility of norms and values with the aim of breaking through cultural boundaries (Gay, 2010), which benefits social cohesion, and also prepare students for their functioning in

the culturally diverse society creating mutual understanding (Banks, 2001; Radstake & Leeman, 2010; Schuitema et al., 2017).

For teacher education, the outcome of this study can be useful in further developing competence frameworks for dealing with diversity in classes in general (Siarova & Tudjman, 2018), including awareness of diversity issues as one of the areas of competence for teachers of culturally diverse classes (Caena, 2014; OECD, 2017). Teacher educators and mentors in schools can use these value-based tensions as 'study material' to help (student) teachers become aware of value-based tensions and to help them reflect on their own values, norms and beliefs and the differences with their students. During professional development programmes teachers can be assisted by teacher educators to transfer the lived experiences with value-based tensions into meaningful learning moments (Pillen et al., 2013).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID
Kennedy Tielman https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3271-8773

ENDNOTES
[1] Cultural diversity includes not only ethnicity, but also gender, social class, religion, language, cultural traditions, character, learning style and so on, but we limit ourselves in this contribution to ethnic diversity.

[2] Spanierman et al. (2011) defines multicultural teaching competency as an iterative process in which teachers continuously (a) explore their attitudes and beliefs about multicultural issues, (b) increase their understanding of specific populations, and (c) examine the impact this awareness and knowledge has on what and how they teach as well as how they interact with students and their families (p. 444).

REFERENCES

Avis, J., Orr, K., & Warmington, P. (2017). Race and vocational education and training in England. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *69*(3), 292–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2017.1289551

Banks, J. A. (2001). Citizenship education and diversity: Implications for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *52*, 5–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052001002

Banks, J. A. (2004). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In J. A. Banks & C. A. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research of multicultural education* (pp. 3–29). Jossey-Bass.

Banks, J. A., & McGee Banks, C. (2004). *Handbook of research on multicultural education*. Jossey-Bass.

Bergenhenegouwen, G. J., Mooijman, E. A. M., & Tillema, H. H. (2002). *Strategisch opleiden en leren in organisaties*. Centraal Boekhuis.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press.

Burbeles, N. C., & Bruce, B. C. (2001). Theory and research on teaching as dialogue. In Richardson, V (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp.1102–1121). American Educational Research Association.

Caena, F. (2014). Initial teacher education in Europe: An overview of policy issues. Prepared for European Commission based on Eurydice data.

Carter, P. L., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). Teaching diverse learners. In D. H. Gitomer & C. A. Bell (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (5th ed., pp. 593–637). American Educational Research Association.

CBS Statline. (2018). *MBO; deelnemers, opleidingsrichting in detail en sector, leerweg, niveau*. http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/

CBS Statline. (2019). *Bevolking; kerncijfers*. http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/

Chadderton, C., & Wischmann, A. (2014). Racialised norms in apprenticeship systems in England and Germany. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, *66*(3), 330–347. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2014.917693

Cockrell, K. S., Placier, P. L., Cockrell, D. H., & Middleton, J. N. (1999). Coming to terms with "diversity" and "multiculturalism" in teacher education: Learning about students, changing out practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *15*(4), 351–366.

Cohen, J. (1960). A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *20*(1), 37–46.

Crul, M., Güngör, U., & Lelie, Z. (2016). Superdiverse schoolklassen: Een nieuwe uitdaging voor docenten. In R. Fukkink & R. Oostdam (Eds.), *Onderwijs en opvoeding in een stedelijke context. Van startbekwaam naar stadsbekwaam*. Coutinho.

De Bruijn, E. (2006). *Adaptief beroepsonderwijs: Leren en opleiden in transitie*. Universiteit Utrecht.

De Jong, M. (2014). *Diversiteit in het hoger onderwijs—over allochtoon en autochtoon*. Noordhoff.

Den Brok, P., & Levy, J. (2005). Teacher–student relationships in multicultural classes: Reviewing the past, preparing the future. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *43*, 72–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2006.03.007

Derriks, M., Ledoux, G., Overmaat, M., & Van Eck, E. (2001). *Omgaan met verschillen, competenties van leerkrachten en schoolleiders*. Universiteit van Amsterdam.

Dolby, N. (2012). *Rethinking multicultural education for the next generation: The new empathy and social justice*. Routledge.

Evans, K. (2019). The challenges VET faces through its intersection with social class, gender, ethnicity, and race. In D. Guile & L. Unwin (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of vocational education and training* (pp. 455–477). Wiley.

Franceschelli, M., & Keating, A. (2018). Imagining the future in the neoliberal era: Young people's optimism and their faith in hard work. *Young*, *26*(4S), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308817742287

Gay, G. (Ed.) (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Gay, G. (2010). Classroom practices for teaching diversity: An example from Washington State. In T. Burns & V. Shadoina-Gersing (Eds.), *Educating teachers for diversity. Meeting the challenge* (pp. 257–287). OECD.

Gorashi, H. (2006). Paradoxen van culturele erkenning—management van diversiteit in Nieuw Nederland. *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, *9*(4), 42–53.

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, *77*(1), 81–112. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487

Hofland, A., & Westerhuis, A. (2017). *De achtergrond van verschillen tussen studenten op mbo-niveau 3 en 4*. ECBO.

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, *2*(1). http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/orpc/vol2/iss1/8

Hollins, E., & Guzman, M. T. (2005). Research on preparing teachers for diverse populations. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 477–548). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Hooijsma, M. (2020). *Clashrooms: Interethnic peer relationships in schools*. Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

Krüger, M. L. (2004). *Felix-notitie: Competentiegericht opleiden op het ILO*. ILO/UvA.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). New directions in multicultural education: Complexities boundaries and critical race theory. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education*. Jossey-Bass.

Landis, J. R., & Koch, G. G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, *33*(1), 159–174. https://doi.org/10.2307/2529310

Leeman, Y. A. M. (2003). De pedagogische opdracht in een multi-etnische context: Docentendilemma's. *Pedagogische Studien*, *80*(6), 468–484.

Leeman, Y. A. M. (2006). Teaching in ethnically diverse schools: Teachers' professionalism. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *29*(3), 341–356. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760600795171

Maulana, R., Smale-Jacobse, A., Helms-Lorenz, M., Chun, S., & Lee, O. (2020). Measuring differentiated instruction in The Netherlands and South Korea: Factor structure equivalence, correlates, and complexity level. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *35*(4), 881–909. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-019-00446-4

Mulder, M., & Roelofs, E. (2011). *A critical review of vocational education and training research and suggestions for the research agenda*. Wageningen University.

Mulder, M., & Roelofs, E. (2013). *A critical review of vocational education and training research in 2012 and suggestions for the research agenda*. Wageningen University.

Nuffic. (2011, January). *Education system The Netherlands* (2nd ed.) version 5, July 2018. Author.

OECD (2017). *Trends shaping education 2017 spotlight © OECD*. http://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/

Paccione, A. V. (2000). Developing a commitment to multicultural education. *Teachers College Record*, *102*, 980–1005. https://doi.org/10.1111/0161-4681.00089

Pillen, M., Beijaard, D., & den Brok, P. (2013). Professional identity tensions of beginning teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *19*(6), 660–678. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2013.827455

Radstake, H. (2009). *Teaching in diversity: Teachers and pupils about tense situations in ethnically heterogeneous classes*. University of Amsterdam, SCO-Kohnstamm Institute.

Radstake, H. & Leeman, Y. (2010). Guiding discussions in the class about ethnic diversity. *Intercultural Education*, *21*, 429–442.

Schuitema, J., Radstake, H., van de Pol, J. & Veugelers, W. (2017). Guiding classroom discussions for democratic citizenship. *Educational Studies*, *44*, 377–407.

SEO Economisch Onderzoek. (2020). *De overgang van het mbo naar de arbeidsmarkt. De positie van jongeren met een migratieachtergrond belicht*. rapport nr. 2020-05.

Severiens, S., Wolff, R., & van Herpen, S. (2014). Teaching for diversity: A literature overview and an analysis of the curriculum of a teacher training college. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *37*(3), 295–311.

Siarova, H., & Tudjman, T. (2018). *SIRIUS policy brief: Developing teachers' capacity to deal with diversity*. Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI) and Risbo.

Spanierman, L. B., Oh, E., Heppner, P. P., Neville, H. A., Mobley, M., Wright, C. V., Dillon, F. R., & Navarro, R. (2011). The multicultural teaching competency scale: Development and initial validation. *Urban Education*, *46*(3), 440–464. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085910377442

Tielman, K., den Brok, P., Bolhuis, S., & Vallejo, B. (2012). Collaborative learning in multicultural classrooms: A case study of Dutch senior secondary vocational education. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *64*(1), 103–118. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2011.622448

Van Middelkoop, D., Ballafkih, H., & Meerman, M. (2017). Understanding diversity: A Dutch case study on teachers' attitudes towards their diverse student population. *Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training*, *9*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40461-016-0045-9

Vedder, P., & Horenczyk, G. (2006). Acculturation and the School Context. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 419–438). Cambridge University Press.

Versteegt, I. (2010). *Diversiteit in de klas: perspectieven van de leerkracht*. Universiteit Utrecht.

Veugelers, W. (1995). Values education related to labor. In C. Wulf (Ed.), *Education in Europe. An intercultural task* (pp. 220–225). Waxman.

Veugelers, W., & De Kat, E. (2001). The pedagogical task of upper secondary education. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA, April.

Veugelers, W., & Vedder, P. H. (2003). Values in teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *9*(4), 377–389. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354060032000097262

Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *53*(1), 20–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053001003

Wubbels, T., den Brok, P. J., Veldman, I., & van Tartwijk, J. (2006). Teacher interpersonal competence for Dutch secondary multicultural classrooms. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *12*(4), 407–433.

Zijlstra, W., Hendril, A., Ahlam, A., & Mary, T. W. (2013). *Generiek is Divers—Sturen Op Studiesucces in Een Grootstedelijke Context*. http://universonline.nl/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/RapportG5evaluatie2013.pdf

APPENDIX A

This table reflects the code descriptions of value-based tensions built on concepts by Leeman (2006), and it was elaborated based on interview statements, which were inductively classified into themes and codified.

Code	Code description
Diversity & communality	Tensions in the field of 'diversity and communality' are manifested in teachers stories about differences and similarities' (e.g. in terms of ethno-cultural background): in which areas exist similarities between groups and to what extend can the group differences be taken into account?
Respect	Tensions in the field of respect are manifested in teachers stories whether or not the students are respectful to other students or the teacher and whether or not they follow the (school) rules
Justice	Tensions in the field of justice are manifested in teachers stories about discussions between teachers and students whether or not the teacher in his/her judgements, according to the students, act fair or honestly or not when assessing students' work and in sanction to correct students' behavior
Personal autonomy	Tensions in the field of personal autonomy are manifested in teachers stories around awkward situations in which individual students choose loyalty to the group while, in the view of the teacher, they could have been more autonomous in their decisions or choices they made
Professional ethics & stance	Tensions reported by teachers regarding 'professional ethics & stance' involved discussions between teachers and students about the appropriate professional behavior during school and internships