

Learning to live together

The Education Council would like to see a greater appreciation of the contributions schools make to social cohesion. Society needs to help schools do this. It is advisable that the entire education sector adopts 'citizenship' as a guideline.

20 December 2002

Schools already do a lot on social responsibilities. What more could they do to improve social cohesion? And how can society better support schools in doing this? In this exploratory report, the Education Council puts these questions to various parties in society, both inside and outside of the education community. The aim of this is to enable formulation of a recommendation on this subject.

How can society help schools?

Schools already have many social responsibilities. But these only yield maximum benefit if parents, the local neighbourhood and community organisations help out too. How can this participation be encouraged? Through the parent council, the participation council or through the school's governing body? The Education Council also calls for attention for safety in and around schools, as well as for the prevention of further segregation within education, for example as a result of local housing policies.

How can schools give shape to their social responsibilities?

Do schools and universities only prepare their pupils and students for the world of work, or also to be 'good citizens'? Subjects such as history and social studies could give 'citizenship' a boost among pupils, but are currently not doing so. What is citizenship exactly? Should it be a separate subject, or could the right stimulus be provided by the environment, the learning climate at school? In connection with segregation, are school governing bodies prepared to accept a fixed number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds? How can the skills of teachers in the area of morals and social learning goals be strengthened?

Results of the exploratory study

The Education Council has discussed these issues with people directly involved in the education system, and with representatives of school networks (including community organisations and the police service). Discussions were also held with officials responsible for education in the large cities, with the Association of Netherlands Municipalities and with various professional organisations for the education sector. The insight obtained from these discussions formed the building blocks for the advice set out in *Education and Citizenship* (2003).