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**Categorization, Decolonization and Implicit Norm Creation:**

**The Diversity of Inclusive Education.**

**Focusing on the Perspectives of Students and Staff Members of Leiden University  
on Inclusive Education (Policies).**

**Master Thesis  
Sharon de Jong  
S0715999**



**Master  
Global Economy  
and Culture**

**Faculty of  
Social Sciences**

**Dep. Cultural  
Anthropology and  
Development  
Sociology**

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**Supervisor: dr. I. Boog  
Second reader: drs. M.A. Postma**

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## **Abstract**

This research frames Leiden University's current position on inclusive education and discerns how contemporary inclusive education policies could be improved with respect to the experiences and ideas of students, teachers and staff members. Besides, subdomains were explored in order to place inclusive education in light of contemporary societal, educational and individual tendencies.

First, a literature review is conducted on the theoretical background of the concept 'inclusive education'. Second, the paradoxical issue of categorizing social groups in an inclusive educational context is addressed, in which feelings of connectedness are imperative. Third, the range of possibilities students can be diverse in is evaluated in order to grasp what inclusive education policies should focus on. Fourth, participant observation is conducted within a social activist group that aims for decolonizing society, in order to represent current feelings of not being included and being unequally treated within society and educational settings. Fifth, semi-structured interviews are conducted with students, teachers and staff members of Leiden University to evaluate current experiences and ideas on inclusive education (policies).

## **1. Introducing Inclusive Education Policies at Leiden University, Striving for Equal Opportunities in Education**

‘Inclusive education’ – a promising concept derived from earlier debates concerning diversity related policies in educational settings – conveys a sense of hope (Van Lier 2015, 47-50; Avermaet and Sierens 2012, 22-26; Blok 2004, 13). Due to the problems with the term ‘diversity’, wherein the differences between individuals and groups are emphasized, Leiden University has recently shifted its focus from ‘diversity policies’ to ‘inclusive education’ policies. However, despite the change in terminology, diversity policies and inclusive education policies share a common goal. According to the Diversity Office of Leiden University (DOLU), the concept of inclusive education became framed as an educational environment in which all employees and students feel included and have equal opportunities. These policies apply especially to members of often vulnerable social groups, such as individuals of a non-Western social cultural background, members of the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or other) community, women and individuals having physical or mental challenges.

Yankelovich (2005, B6-B9) states that the small inflow and outflow in educational settings of students of vulnerable societal position, should be seen as one of the most important problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, this issue relates to many interrelated aspects. For example, such students do not bring upon arrival to Leiden the same package of knowledge, formal codes, informal codes, social networks, mother tongues, domestic expectations, or parental support. Therefore, it is important for universities to map societal, educational and individual contexts from which many vulnerable students originate, and determine how these are interrelated.

This research contributes to the development of an elaborated knowledge framework with regard to the interrelated societal, educational and individual contexts from which vulnerable students originate. Furthermore, this research strengthens existing academic literature on the topic, enhancing future inclusive education processes. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the active contribution of the university itself in the process of developing inclusive education. Traa (2012, 36) states that the fundamental idea of inclusive education policies should not so much focus on societal groups, but rather on the chances and possibilities that are offered to individuals by the organization.

The aim of this research is to investigate Leiden University’s current position on inclusive education, and to discern how contemporary inclusive education policies could be improved with

respect to the experiences and ideas of students, teachers, and staff members. Before answering this question, however, certain subdomains must be explored in order to place inclusive education in light of contemporary societal, educational and individual tendencies.

Chapter 2 will describe the method used in this research. Chapter 3 provides a theoretical framework with regard to perspectives on the concept of equal opportunities in education. Chapter 4 addresses whether categorizing students based on their social cultural background contributes to a practice of inclusive education. Chapter 5 will relate to inclusive education by using a broader contemporary societal tendency called 'decolonization'. Chapter 6 divides students', teachers', and staff members' ideas and experiences of inclusive education into nine topics. These personal accounts, used in conjunction with a comprehensive analysis of education-based literature, lead to several implications for Leiden University's role in providing inclusive education. In order to conclude in chapter 7 by answering the central question of this research.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Field of Research**

The field of research started to be created in cooperation with the Diversity Office of Leiden University (DOLU). The DOLU aims for developing an 'inclusive education environment' by increasing the diversity of students and teachers, by better supervision of students with a non-Western migrant background, and students with mental or physical challenges. It further aims to improve the prospects for women in executive academic positions. These advances are made in order to increase opportunities for students and staff members to develop their talents, irrespective their gender, ethnicity, age, sexual predilection, mental or physical challenges, as well as societal, cultural or ideological background.

In cooperation with the DOLU, I created my field of research through my own active participation in several focus groups across two faculties. These focus groups consisted of non-Western students, from varying social cultural backgrounds. In addition to these focus groups I expanded my field of research and addressed other students, teachers and staff members with a variety of social cultural backgrounds within several faculties of Leiden University. Therefore, interviews took place at several faculties at Leiden University, or in cafes. During my fieldwork I decided to expand my field of research even further, by becoming a member of a social activist group

called 'University of Color' (UoC). This organisation aims for the 'decolonization' of universities; a sentiment strongly related to current trends of inclusiveness in other educational settings. By becoming a member of the social activist group, I had the opportunity to perform participant observation during weekly meetings in Amsterdam that lasted at least 4 hours. Besides, I helped with preparing the joint dinners prior to the meetings.

As a result of joining the dinners and meetings, I had the possibility to connect to students that had not intrinsically felt the urge to share their experiences with me related to not feeling included or being unequally treated within the university community. Besides, during those conversations I did not use parts of the interview. The content of the interview was clearly related to ideas that students deserve equal chances within educational settings, irrespective their social cultural background. As a result of which interviewees may have been put in a 'victim role' while asking for possible unpleasant experiences related to not feeling included or being unequally treated within the university community.

Besides, Berreman (2012, 163) states that it is 'methodologically unsound' to be transparent on your hypotheses and specific interests to your participants. Becoming a member of University of Color provided a situation in which my specific interests were not clear. As a result of which 'interviewees' had more space to share the experiences they found worthwhile to share.

At last, I also attended a focus group not organized by the DOLU and attended a large seminar in Amsterdam concerning the topic of diversity and inclusive education policies at universities.

## **2.2. Procedure**

After rigorous ethnographic methodology training in January 2016, and with permission from the Diversity Coordinator of the DOLU, I began to collect data for my research by stepping into several focus groups the coordinator had organized in order to record and to collect data on inclusive education. Towards the end of this program I invited all students to participate in semi-structured interviews concerning inclusive education.

In cooperation with the Diversity Coordinator of the DOLU, I created an e-mail to be dispersed among students, teachers and staff members (see Appendix 1.1, 1.2). The email detailed the main goals of the DOLU, and I invited them to anonymously describe their experiences and ideas relating to inclusive education at Leiden University. An adjusted e-mail was sent to the students I had already

met in the focus group. During my interviews I asked the interviewees whether they knew students, teachers or staff members of Leiden University that would also be interested in an interview; through this 'snowball effect' I was able to find even more participants.

While interviewing students, teachers and staff members I became aware of the social activist group 'University of Color' (UoC) as it was repeatedly introduced within conversations. After I sought contact with UoC, I began participating in their weekly 'decolonial school' sessions. During these meetings I observed and made notes. Furthermore, I participated in a large seminar in Amsterdam, a separate focus group at Leiden University, and I approached chairs of student organizations.

My fieldwork ended in March 2016. During my three months of fieldwork I had been very aware of my position as Western, female student of Leiden University who was not mentally or physically challenged. Besides, I had been aware of the possibility that my interviewees may have been reserved with regard to some subjects given my social cultural background. Nevertheless, I have tried to be as kind and open-minded as possible towards every subject in order to create a safe environment for the interviewees. In chapter 5, I will elaborate further on UoC and my position in conducting research. Informants' anonymity and confidentiality had been guaranteed at the beginning of every interview, and the interviewees were told that they could ask to stop the voice-recorder any time they wished to halt or terminate the interview, which happened occasionally.

### **2.3. Participants**

Due to the main message of the DULO 'to include all students and staff members within the university community despite social cultural background, sexual predilection, gender and physical or mental challenges', I started to focus on all students and staff members of Leiden University. I aimed for a broad range of perspectives on inclusive education (policies) at Leiden University. As a result of which I included students and staff members with a broad diversity in study, age, function, gender, social cultural background, sexual predilection and having – or not having – a mental or physical challenge.

Moreover, I wanted to include members of social groups that were in a potentially vulnerable societal position, such as individuals having a non-Western social cultural background, members of the LGBTQ+ community, women or individuals having physical or mental challenges. In order to evaluate whether specific patterns of needs could be found in relation to functioning within the



educational setting and being (or not being) member of a potentially vulnerable social group. Due to my guarantee of anonymity for participants, I will not go into detail with regard to the personal details of interviewees. Nevertheless, I will create a general image concerning the research population.

#### 2.3.a. Students

The distribution of student interviewees was somewhat skewed, because most of the students I had interviewed had a non-Western background. However, some students had a Western background, were member of the LGBTQ+ community, or had mental or physical challenges. Some students were hypothetically categorized in more than one social group. I had interviewed nine students and the interviews varied from one hour to more than two hours. The students were studying at four different faculties of Leiden University.

Furthermore, I attended three different focus groups, of which two were organized by the DULO and one by a student platform collaborating with the university. The focus groups varied from four students to 17 students. The students varied in social cultural backgrounds and were studying at several faculties.

#### 2.3.b. Teachers

I interviewed six members of the teaching staff concerning their ideas and experiences with regard to inclusive education. These teachers were all staff members of the same faculty but taught different subjects within it. The teachers varied both in function and years of experience.

#### 2.3.c. Staff Members

I have interviewed six staff members concerning their ideas and experiences related to inclusive education. These staff members were all operative at different departments of Leiden University even though two of them worked together. Three of them actively spoke about knowing each other by working on an interdepartmental level.

### **2.4. Research Methods**

During my research, students, teachers and staff members of Leiden University were involved in semi-structured interviews. The reason for this is twofold. First, a semi-structured way of interviewing offered the possibility to build some rapport with the interviewees (Bernard 2006, 213),

which seemed necessary with regard to the sensitivity of this topic. Second, this way of interviewing enabled me to dive into themes that seemed important for the interviewees with regard to inclusive education. Participant observation was only performed during the meetings of UoC.

The following subchapters will clarify the concepts that were explored during the semi-structured interviews and the questions that were used in order to operationalize these concepts. The answers to these questions contributed to answering the central question of this research: 'What is Leiden University's current position on inclusive education, and how could contemporary inclusive education policies be improved with respect to the experiences and ideas of students, teachers, and staff members?'

#### 2.4.a. Semi-Structured Interviews for Students

The first concept that was explored during the semi-structured interviews, was the 'social cultural background' of students. According to Gupta and Ferguson (1997, 35) the term social cultural background cannot be understood in terms of one place or culture and therefore should rather be seen in the light of the connections between various spaces, places and cultures. Hence, the social-cultural background of the students were mapped by asking which people or groups of people play important roles in the students' lives. Moreover, the students were asked to what extent they feel connected to these people. Which is based on the idea of Brubaker and Cooper (2000, 19-20), that the understanding of an individual's ideas towards race, religion or ethnicity should be understood by terms as commonality, connectedness and groupness.

Moreover, the students were asked about their ideas related to the concept of 'study success', and the ideas of important people in their lives on study success. Students were asked when they would be successful in education? What an ideal educational environment would be? And, what would be limiting factors within an educational environment? Besides, students were asked whether their environment had clear ideas on study success? And, to what extent the student feels influenced by these ideas?

After mapping the concepts of 'social cultural background' and 'study success', the focus shifted towards students' experiences of 'inclusive education' at Leiden University. Students were asked about the approach of teachers, the contact with other students and the ways of being taught. Furthermore, students were asked whether they feel at home, acknowledged and valued within the university community? In addition, students were asked to evaluate the current inclusiveness in

education at Leiden University and to propose ideas on how inclusive education could improve for them at Leiden University. An overview of the questions is presented in appendix 2.1.

The exploration of the concepts 'social cultural background' and 'inclusive education' enabled me to evaluate whether specific patterns of students' needs could be found with regard to functioning within the educational setting and being (or not being) member of potentially vulnerable social groups. Furthermore, the concept of 'study success' was explored to evaluate whether (groups) of students pursued similar goals within education. Knowledge that is related to students' educational goals may improve the development and adjustment of inclusive education (policies). The answers to the questions gave many insights with regard to the current position of Leiden University on inclusive education and to discern how current inclusive education could be improved.

#### 2.4.b. Semi-Structured Interviews for Teachers and Staff Members

During the interviews with teachers and staff members the concept of 'inclusive education' was explored. First, teachers and staff members were asked about their experiences with regard to inclusive education. For example, teachers and staff members were asked how they approach the diverse student population, what they think about the contact between students and to what extent they feel at home, acknowledged and valued within the university community.

Second, I focused on the evaluation of teachers and staff members related to inclusiveness in education at Leiden University. Teachers and staff members were for example asked to evaluate and propose ideas on how inclusive education could be improved within their faculty, with regard to the facilities or teachers' approaches to students.

At last, I focused on the perceptions of teachers and staff members in general, with regard to inclusive education policies and what they considered necessary to create an inclusive education environment. Teachers and staff members were for example asked what students need in order to feel safe and acknowledged. Besides, they were asked whether they had perspectives on relations between social cultural background and study success. An overview of the questions is presented in appendix 2.2.

The perspectives of teachers and staff members on inclusive education at Leiden University were compared with the perspectives of students. As a result of which potential differences in perspectives could be revealed. It is crucial that a potential gap between perspectives is recognized in order to successfully create and adjust inclusive education (policies). This is based on the idea that

the faculty has to be aware of its 'own perceptions' related to diversity and what these are based on, before diversity climates could be successfully adapted in order to support students (Valentine et al. 2012, 191). Moreover, this knowledge is important for teachers and staff members in starting dialogues between students, parents and educational organizations, which could serve as a base for raising questions or discussing difficulties related to diversity and how to overcome these (Steunpunt Diversiteit en Leren 2007, ii).

#### 2.4.c. Participant Observation

Participant observation was only conducted during the meetings of UoC. Notes have been made during and after those meetings and were related to my observations and interpretations regarding what members said and discussed during the meetings and presentations. Besides, notes were made with regard to the information that was spread by their website and the literature in their weekly sent e-mails. Participant observation within the UoC community contributed to an even broader insight with regard to societal concepts that play important roles in the development of inclusive education environments.

#### 2.5. Data Analysis

After the data collection, the analyzing phase started and consisted of two global phases. The first phase consisted of data reduction. After transcribing the interviews, the conversation notes and observational notes, the data could be reduced by coding the fragments that were relevant for the research questions. The coding procedure is based on an elaborated coding system (appendix 3.1). The second phase started after coding the interviews, the conversation notes and the observational notes. This phase consisted of analyzing the codes in order to find patterns and relationships that elucidated the current experiences of students, teachers and staff members concerning inclusive education, mainly at Leiden University.

### **3. Diminishing the Reproduction of Inequality in Education: A Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1. Equal Educational Opportunities, more than Equal Treatment**

The first article of the Dutch constitution states the following: *“All people living in the Netherlands, will be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination with regard to religion, philosophy, political opinion, race, gender or at any other ground, is not permitted”*. In relation to providing equal opportunities in education this stresses an important issue. As stated in the introduction, students bring in different kinds of knowledge, formal codes, informal codes, networks they are part of, languages spoken at home, tasks performed at home and the parental support they receive. Which influences the students’ contexts and therefore the positions of students in educational settings. Opportunities for students are molded in a web of societal, local and individual circumstances and on the other hand, the attempt of the educational setting to create equal opportunities for students. Because students differ on all kinds of levels, providing the same amount of support to all students by the educational setting, which is called equal treatment, would not be sufficient in providing equal opportunities.

According to Severiens et al. (2007, 8-9) some students already start their educational path with insufficient ‘capital’ regarding their parents’ education, lower support offered by family and friends, lacking a good place to study and the necessity to work in order to pay for his or her own study. Nevertheless there are many other specific factors inside and outside the educational setting that may cause inequality in educational opportunities.

According to Coleman (1966, 3-4) some of these factors are tangible, such as the kind of curriculums and academic practices. Some of them are less tangible, such as the characteristics of the teachers, for example their educational experiences, verbal competences and attitudes. And, some of them are student related, such as the students’ socioeconomic backgrounds, the educational level of their parents and their attitudes and aspirations. It is clear that creating equal educational opportunities is related to many factors that are student and education related. What implicates that the operationalization of developing an inclusive education environment has to be dynamic and shifting within the field that is created between the spheres of on one hand, carefully weighing the individual students’ needs and on the other hand, the conceivable organizational efforts that can be applied to those individuals.

Joos, Ernalsteen and Engels (2010, 3) state that developing equal chances for children and youth is dependent on a) which of them are vulnerable b) on which specific level and, c) in which specific context. In accordance with the former Jaspers (2003, 2) states that equal opportunities policies in education should be seen as a general concept to point out a variety of means that are mobilized for initiatives that aim for reducing school failure. Nevertheless, Nash (2004, 361) points out how critical sociologists even abandon the idea of equality in educational opportunities as it serves the myth that equality is possible in an unequal society. Some of these critical sociologists offered an alternative called 'possibilism', which demands schools to create equal 'outcomes' despite students' social cultural backgrounds (Nash 2004, 361). However, in my opinion the concept of 'equality in educational opportunities' is indeed questionable, because equality in opportunities will seldom be reached due to the versatility and dynamics of individuals' social cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, the concept is important and useful as a catalysator to keep focusing on and striving for equal opportunities within society and education. Whether or not this goal is achievable, feelings of not being included and unequally treated should always be contested.

In addition to the former, developing equal opportunities for students should be seen in a broad multi-level (global – national – social groups – individual) perspective that also includes and varies on socially constructed ideas about being successful in education. Even in the case of equal opportunities policies being specified and carefully weighed per individuals' needs and the conceivable organizational efforts that can be applied to those cases, there is still no guarantee that the student will 'succeed' in the socially constructed way the specific policy aims for. Which is due to the variety of socially constructed ideas on how to be 'successful' in education.

According to Jaspers (2003, 4) failure in educational settings cannot only be assigned to the functioning of the teacher or the student, as both of them are participating in a culture (or cultures) in which categories as 'failing' or 'succeeding' are constructed and reproduced. 'Failing' and 'passing' within an educational setting are both based on certain normative ideas about which competences students should possess in order to be successful. By broadening the range of perspectives on equal opportunities for students, the normative ideas with regard to the competences students should possess in order to be successful in education have to be critically assessed.

In line with this broadened view and the role of society in creating equal opportunities in education, Ainscow et al. (2012, 14) add that backlog and discrimination in educational settings could only be reduced when using a local approach in interaction with various sectors. Indeed, arrears and

discrimination do not begin and do not end within the educational setting. Unequal opportunities in education are part of broader tendencies. Therefore, contesting unequal treatment in education is only the start of a process of improvement.

### **3.2. A Timeline of Equal Opportunities Policies in Education**

Musschenga and Koster (2011, 3-4) argue that the focus on diversity in education became noticeable in the second half of the 20<sup>st</sup> century. The fact that fewer women and children from lower classes participated in higher education became morally unjust as a result of which equality and justice had to be encouraged. Nowadays due to the same reasons students with an international and/or non-Western background are encouraged to enter higher education as a result of which the religious, ideological and cultural diversity in education increases, and through which the diversity of learning styles expands (Musschenga and Koster 2011, 3-4). Van Oenen (cited in Meijnen et al. 1997) subdivided several periods of policies regarding educational arrears.

The first period started after the Second World War and focused on renewal and recovery of education. Oenen (as cited in Meijnen et al. 1997) describes how the second period started in the sixties with a contradiction in educational approaches in both primary and secondary education. On one hand, compensation programs were developed that relied on the 'deficit hypothesis' which is based on the idea that children with a lower social economic status have arrears in their language use that have to be improved to become successful in school and society. On the other hand, the 'activating' approach relied on the 'differentiation hypothesis' based on the idea that competences of children from a lower social economic status were not 'less' but 'different', and therefore those children needed a different approach (Oenen as cited in Meijnen et al. 1997).

The third period started at 1970, when the amount of children with a migrant background in educational settings increased (Oenen as cited in Meijnen et al. 1997). In this period Dors (1974) pleaded for an integrated and transcultural approach in education. For example, national history in secondary education had to be replaced by global history in order to enhance the students' understanding of other cultures (Dors, 1974). At the same time the educational expert Kloosterman (as cited in de Hartogh 1987, 54) pleaded for education that acknowledged every individual participating in it, which meant taking into account both individual and group differences, as well as helping individuals in becoming full members of the diverse society. The Dutch Inspectorate of Education (1997, 17) already underlined in the seventies that many factors influencing the

educational arrears of students were outside the responsibility of the educational setting. As a result of which the cooperation between educational settings and welfare organizations was encouraged.

In the first half of the eighties a societal tendency became noticeable that opposed discrimination, racism and ethnocentrism, which seeped through in educational related ideas (de Hartogh 1987, 45). Cultural recognition was strived for in order to create space for cultural differences, nevertheless ideas differed on how these cultural differences could be acknowledged best (de Hartogh 1987, 45).

Blok (2004, 19) argues that right before the term inclusive education became popular in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the term 'adaptive education' was used to explain a similar tendency. Adaptive education became operationalized in a range of activities, that varied from interactive ways of reading aloud in class to broader school improvement projects on the level of particular groups or the organization (Blok 2004, 19). Even though perspectives on adaptive education were mainly used in primary education and were somewhat varied in the analyzed studies, they mainly focused on forms of 'convergent differentiation'. According to Kerpel (2016, 1) the 'differentiation approach' in education is about the adjustment of the educational setting to the variety of students' needs. Which could be done in a 'convergent' way, through subdividing students in groups based on the similarity of their difficulties. Or, in a way that adjusts situations to specific individual needs.

After emphasizing the role of the student in the development of equal opportunities and the ways in which the educational setting could adjust to the variety of students' needs, the dynamics of the organization have to be enlightened too.

### **3.3. Inclusive Education: Shifting Focus from Students to the Organization**

Shifting from whom to put focus on to what to put focus on, this chapter will elaborate on the importance of the role of the university in the creation of inclusive education. The university has a dynamic role in adapting to students' needs, because those needs and the social environments in which they originate, are subject to constant change. Traa (2012, 36) states that the concept of 'diversity policies' initially focuses on the organization of the university, which should continuously (re)think how it can create the most advantageous circumstances for a diverse group of people. In my opinion Booth and Ainscow (2002, 2-11) provide an elaborated model of strategies on how to create these most advantageous circumstances for a diverse group of people.



Booth and Ainscow (2002, 2-11) describe concrete strategies on how inclusive educational systems are able to diminish the reproduction of inequality. For example, by seeing the diversity of students as source for stimulating the learning process. Moreover, by adjusting policies, learning materials, curriculums and other practices to mirror the diversity of the students. Furthermore, by making all students feel welcome despite background and by stimulating and maintaining relationships between the school and communities. Besides, by recognizing that inclusive education is part of an inclusive society and therefore also contributes to an inclusive society.

However, in addition to the view of Traa (2012, 36) and Booth and Ainscow (2002, 2-11), applying new strategies in order to create advantageous circumstances for a diverse group of people, should not mean applying static strategies. Instead, strategies have to be applied that are able to adapt to contemporary tendencies and therefore adapt to the changing needs of society and students. For example, in relation to the strategy of Booth and Ainscow (2002, 2-11) of making all students feel welcome, the focus on which social groups may need extra attention changes over time. For instance, within a few years the focus will probably shift towards the many Syrian refugees entering the Dutch education system. With regard to their social cultural background, these Syrian refugees may probably be in need of some extra help or specific approaches within the educational environments in order to come along and feel welcome.

In addition to the argument that the university should have a dynamic and adjusting role towards societal and contemporary tendencies, I want to emphasize that creating inclusive education has its consequences for society. In relation to the strategy of Booth and Ainscow (2002, 2-11), which focuses on the contribution of educational settings to an inclusive society, in my opinion the university not only contributes to an inclusive society, but is as 'learning environment' an important example and learning school for youth on how to act inclusive and create inclusive environments. The learning environments of universities will implicitly and explicitly pass on ideas and practices of inclusiveness to students who will (re)use this knowledge and practices in other environments and therefore in society.

In addition to the former, Avermaet and Sierens (2010, 16) state that in education students are being prepared to be part of a diverse, polyphonous, complex and global society. Furthermore, they are being taught to be active and critical citizens in a democratic society (Avermaet and Sierens 2010, 16). As a result of which education contributes to a pluralistic and inclusive democraton (Avermaet and Sierens 2010, 16). The former strongly suggests that the positive consequences

related to the development of inclusive education policies focusing on declining inequality in education, will not end in education, but will continue to have its impact on many layers in society.

#### **4. Categorizing People: Helpful in Including or in Excluding?**

##### **Discussing the Categorical Approach of Inclusive Education**

Although the focus shifted from 'diversity' to a more 'inclusive' concept, a paradoxical question arises on why people working with the concept of 'inclusive education', so strongly focus on categorizing people as 'non-Western', as members of the 'LGBTQ+' community, as 'women', as 'mentally challenged' or 'physically challenged'. Related to the former, Topping and Maloney (2005, 31) state that equal opportunities policies that focus on the diversity of students is 'inclusive education' in the broadest sense. Fransen and Frederix (2000, 167) emphasize that inclusive education is generally about the idea that as much students – having specific needs – as possible should be able to follow regular education. In addition, Avermaet and Sierens (2010, 17) state, that this is necessary because regular educational settings provide better chances for students to develop their talents and to improve social integration. As a result of the former statements it is understandable that inclusive education policies indeed pay attention to potentially vulnerable social groups, not only in order to evaluate what specific support they need most to keep them included, but also because keeping them included enhances other opportunities.

Nevertheless, categorizing students in social groups, based on one (or more) social characteristic(s), carries the risk of disseminating the idea that these criteria are always relevant. Therefore this issue should be further discussed. The first subchapter (4.1) will focus on the categorization of socially constructed groups, because social groups cannot be mistaken for fixed, bordered and static due to the versatility and variability of individuals' social cultural backgrounds. The second subchapter (4.2) will dive into the matter of why inclusive education policies nowadays mainly focus on students with a non-Western social cultural background, as possibly vulnerable social group. The third subchapter (4.3) expands the categorical range of possibly vulnerable social groups and the final subchapter (4.4) critically evaluates the categorization of these social groups in the development of inclusive education policies.

#### **4.1. The Versatility of Individuals' Social Cultural Background in Socially Constructed Groups**

Much is written about 'cultures' or 'social-cultural backgrounds'. Morris, Chiu and Liu (2015, 631) state, that when trying to understand how social cultural backgrounds influence ideas, feelings and behaviors, one should focus on a 'polycultural framework' of interactions. In this framework relationships are not categorical, but partial and plural. Social and cultural traditions are not independent, but interactive systems and individuals are influenced by multiple cultures and therefore cultures even influence each other (Morris, Chiu and Liu 2015, 631). Consistent with this, Marshall and Woollet (2002, 120) emphasize that it is outdated to easily differentiate cultures or social groups. Instead, sociocultural identities and identifications should be seen as plural (Marshall and Woollet 2002, 120). Bovenkerk (2009, 20) gives an example of this, as he states that children of immigrants in the Netherlands are entangled in the Dutch culture while going to a Dutch school. Therefore they cannot be defined as from 'indigenous' cultures. However they are still approached and defined as 'immigrants' adapting to this 'new' country while constructing their own culture or ethnicity. Briefly worded, the construction of an individual's social cultural background is versatile, plural and subject to change. Besides, human actions continuously influence this dynamic framework of interrelated social cultural influences. Therefore, cultures or social cultural backgrounds cannot be clearly distinguished. As a result of which influences of cultures or social cultural backgrounds on the ideas, feelings and behaviors of students cannot be clearly distinguished too.

In addition to the former, Gupta and Ferguson (1997, 35) stated already in 1997 that the term 'social cultural background' cannot be understood in terms of one place, culture or social identity only. Cultures or social cultural backgrounds should rather be seen in the light of the connections between various spaces, places and cultures (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 35). Global relations are formed on base of relations between various localities, and therefore 'local identities' are influenced by many other localities (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 14). According to Gupta and Ferguson (1997, 37), the former has created a transnational public sphere which has diminished a strong sense of community or locality by people. On the other hand, Anderson (1983) states that as a consequence of globalization and the idea of displaced social groups, people could actually feel an urge to cluster while following a joint idea of an imagined homeland, place or community. In line with this, Gupta and Ferguson (1997, 39) agree that indeterminate localities and places lead to a greater need to distinguish places by their distinct cultures and ethnicities (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 39). Nevertheless, when focusing on a certain locality it is important to take into account that by doing

so, the locality is opposed to or set apart from other localities (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 13), which should be done very carefully considering the interconnectedness of spaces, places and cultures.

#### **4.2. Why Focusing on Students with a Non-Western Background?**

While conducting research on how inclusive education policies could be developed or improved, a special focus from the Diversity Office of Leiden University (DOLU) goes to students of a non-Western descent or Islamic background. In order to understand why students with a non-Western descent or Islamic background are associated with a possibly vulnerable position in education, it is important to first sketch a broader societal image.

Shadid (2008) emphasizes, that public inclusive policies should be developed that aim for 1) creating unity in diversity, 2) avoiding ethnisation and culturalisation, 3) rejecting the anti-Islamic discourse and 4) disputing arrears and discrimination. Related to his ideology, this chapter will elaborate on the topics of a lacking notion of 'commonality' and 'us' in the contemporary society, the risk of culturalisation, the significant relationships found between having a non-Western descent and lower study performances, media, and the roles those factors play for students having a non-Western descent. Which seems imperative knowledge in the development of inclusive education.

First, as stated before, when students enter education they do not only bring in individual packages of knowledge, (in)formal codes, networks and other aspects related to their social cultural background, they have also already been put in a certain minority or majority position by others in society. Shadid (2008, 3) stresses that when being an individual with a Muslim or immigrant background, both in general and in politics you are not seen as indissolubly interconnected with the Dutch society. Therefore Shadid (2008, 3) states that public inclusive policies should be developed that aim for creating unity in diversity, for example by redefining 'us'. Because 'us' and 'them' are too often used in integration debates, as a result of which a boundary between 'us' and 'them' has been constructed. In addition to the former statement, Hoffman (2013, 13) states that an inclusive approach is about including others in one's thinking and performing. In other words, a notion of 'us' in which space is created for differences.

In order to create an inclusive approach, Hoffman (2013, 13) introduces the principles of 'acknowledged equality' and 'acknowledged diversity' as imperative. The principle of 'acknowledged equality' refers to a notion of initially feeling connected to other individuals. Instead of an implicit tendency to initially focus on descent or differences (Hoffman 2013, 13). Additionally, the principle

of 'acknowledged diversity' refers to the impossibility to treat people equally without taking into account individual and group differences, that could relate to facets as ethnicity, religion, social economic status etcetera (Hoffman 2013, 13). The former statements suggest that having a non-Western migrant background may refer to have been categorized by others in society, as 'them'. However, the boundary that is created between 'us' and 'them' within society and therefore within educational settings, completely contradicts the development of inclusive education. Because in the development of inclusive education, feelings of commonality, connectedness and groupness in which space is created for differences, are imperative. Therefore it is important to redefine 'us' in educational settings in a way that clearly includes all students and staff members.

Second, students are not only put in a certain social position by others, they are also approached – by others – on the base of characteristics related to being member of a social group. For example, in the case of the DOLU explicitly inviting students with a non-Western descent to join their focus groups in order to discuss how Leiden University can improve on inclusive education. However, when doing so there is a risk of culturalising. Moreover, Shadid (2008, 3) states that inclusive policies should aim for – avoiding ethnisation and culturalisation – of groups, because nowadays labels as 'the Islamic identity' are overexposed resulting in other characteristics of a person's social life being underexposed.

Avermaet and Sierens (2010, 2) describe a 'culturalising approach' in a way that takes cultural differences between social groups in society as most important part in the relationship between those groups. In addition to the former, Hoffman (2015, 5-11) enumerates the risks of a culturalising approach, namely 1) 'locking people up' in their own culture by approaching culture as a static and homogenous system, 2) communicative behavior being clarified by ethnic, religious or national backgrounds, 3) behavior being unequivocally explained, 4) individuals being mistaken as representative of 'their' culture, 5) facilitating generalizing, stereotyping and schematically thinking of 'us' and 'them', and 6) denying the uniqueness of individuals and the way they express their cultural and religious backgrounds.

However, an adequate approach of students by teachers could be fostered by increasing the teachers' knowledge of students' culture, beliefs, social economic status and/or migrant history (Hoffman 2015, 5). Summed up, students are categorized not only in education, but also in society as having a non-Western descent or an Islamic background. By doing so there is a risk of culturalising, which focuses on the differences between social groups and therefore enhances for example

schematically thinking of 'us' and 'them'. Which means that culturalising leads to the opposite of inclusive education. Nevertheless, categorizing without culturalising could be helpful in adequately approaching students.

Third, related to Shadid's (2008, 5) points of rejecting anti-Islamic discourse and disputing arrears and discrimination, he introduced an important note by emphasizing that societal problems as criminality or school falling-out are not only referable to religion or ethnicity related characteristics. However, instead these problems are often related to poverty (Shadid 2008, 5). It is important to take these underlying variables into account, because earlier research has resulted in 'just' statements about the positive relationship between students with a migrant background and higher risks of school drop-out and underperforming in higher education (Crul and Wolf, 2002; Van Craen and Almaci 2005, 215-217; Rieffe and Ravesloot 2015, 1).

Every student has its own complex model of interacting factors that relates to their school performances or dropout, which cannot be visibly caught in one relationship. For example, Van Craen and Almaci (2005, 218) found other variables next to poverty explaining school drop-out. He stated that students with a migrant background have also shorter, alternative and more problematic former education related to 'autochthonous' students. As a result of which students with a migrant background start primary education later than children with no migrant background. Besides, Van Craen and Almaci (2005, 221) argue that another reason for a higher percentage of dropout in students with a non-Western migrant background, is related to language knowledge. Often the level of speaking Dutch seems to be proficient, but is nevertheless adjusted to functional and practical usage (Van Craen and Almaci 2005, 221). Therefore a deeper understanding of the Dutch language and giving meaning to abstract concepts can be difficult (Van Craen and Almaci 2005, 221). In short, students with a non-Western descent or Islamic background have been (significantly) related to a higher possibility of lower study performances and school dropout. Therefore this relationship is useful for the DOLU. Nevertheless, the factors 'culture' or 'social cultural background' cannot predict this outcome, because many other underlying and interrelated factors strongly contribute to this relationship and therefore should not be underestimated.

Fourth, the role of the media is important in creating a broader understanding on how to create inclusive education. Images about social groups, mainly about minority social groups, are formed through media. Shadid (2008, 5) emphasizes how upbringing, education and media play substantial roles in forming negative images related to the 'anti-islamic discourse'. In the hindmost

decennia the Islam is unjustly overexposed in the news, while linked to negative messages. As a result of which images related to having a Muslim background are influenced. It is inevitable that individuals (students) with an Islamic background are negatively influenced by this as they do not recognize themselves in these images, and as they may feel excluded and put aside from an 'apparent normative' society. Even though educational settings cannot control media channels, they are influenced by the expressions of these media channels. It is important to take into account that students may also be negatively influenced by the negative image-forming that originates from media messages.

In short, there is a reasonable chance when having a non-Western descent or Islamic background, you have encountered difficulties related to feeling positioned within a minority group, culturalisation, negative influences from media and in relation to all former, discrimination. These difficulties may lead to enhanced feelings of not being included in educational environments, and therefore should be taken seriously in order to create inclusive education. By mainly including non-Western students in focus groups, as done by the Diversity Office, diversity is implicitly and unjustly principally explained by cultural and religious aspects. However, next to cultural and religious diversity, diversity could be related to a broad range of social, mental and physical characteristics. The following chapter will elaborate further on this topic, starting with Musschenga and Koster (2011, 3-4) who appropriately focus on other forms of social diversity.

### **4.3. Expanding the Categorical Range of Socially Constructed Groups**

The diversity of students in an educational setting is related to far more aspects than ethnic, cultural or religious ones. For example, Musschenga and Koster (2011, 3-4) state that the diversity in a university setting can refer to characteristics of social groups or of the organization, through which religious and ideological, ethnic, cultural, social-economic, gender and 'learning styles' diversity could be distinguished. In my opinion the ways students can be diverse in are numerous, maybe even uncountable. However an important question here is: where do we stop analyzing the possibilities students can be diverse in, in order to categorize them in groups to gather general knowledge on how the university can develop or improve their inclusive education policies? This question has to be answered by other questions, such as: what is the value for the educational setting in categorizing students based on certain social, mental or physical characteristics? What social groups are at risk to have lower educational performances or to drop out, as these groups are one of the university's main priorities? Besides, are there any contemporary negative local, regional, national or global tendencies playing a role in the need to categorize students in groups?

According to West and Fenstermacher (1995, 9), many societal categories encounter social economic disadvantages, excluding, discrimination and prejudices. Even though inclusive education is about including all students, some students need some extra attention in order to be kept 'included'. Anyhow, it is very clear that certain social groups as women, people with a dark skin color, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and disabled people, do experience disadvantages related to stereotyping and discrimination (Michielsens et al., 2003). This happens both explicitly and implicitly. For example, an illusion of tolerance arises when people openly do want to allocate equal chances for homosexuals and bisexuals, however prejudices that were beforehand not recognized by the person can resurface in certain cases (Steunpunt Gelijkekansenbeleid 2003, 41). To show how common this 'illusion of tolerance' is in daily life, Borghs and Hintjes (2000) use the example of how people mostly assume that everybody is heterosexual. As a result of which heterosexuality seems the 'norm' and homosexuality and bisexuality seems not. Besides, once again media and news messages related to homosexuality and bisexuality are mostly brought in relation with problems (Steunpunt Gelijkekansenbeleid 2003, 44). As a result of which the image-forming of this social group is negatively affected too.

In short, it is understandable why the DOLU approaches students based on certain possibly vulnerable social identities. Statistical relationships have rendered that being part of a social group that shares the characteristic of having a non-Western descent, Islamic background, being LGBTQ+, woman, or being physically or mentally challenged, possibly predicts stigmatization, discrimination and not feeling included or put aside from an apparent 'normative' society. These negatives influences may have its consequences on (not) feeling included and on educational performances. However, the categorization of students will provide teachers and staff members with certain knowledge of students' cultures, beliefs or migrant history, as a result of which they can be approached more adequately.

#### **4.4. Evaluating the Categorical Range of Socially Constructed Groups**

The former subchapters have elaborated on the categorization of students in social groups. However, there is more to be said in this debate. As stated earlier, the diversity of students reaches further than the social group they are part of. Only an individual approach emphasizes the uniqueness of all aspects of a single person, even though recognizable as member of a group (Avermaet and Sierens 2010, 3). Besides, categorizing students overlooks other social identities and the interconnectedness between those social identities. Moreover, Avermaet and Sierens (2010, 3) fairly



contribute to this debate by stating that not all members of the categorized group do experience problems or arrears in the same way, or to the same extent. Besides, specific causes of problems or arrears may not be identical for all individuals in a social group (Avermaet and Sierens 2010, 3).

However, there are some additional effects of strongly focusing on disadvantaged social groups, that paradoxically hinder the development of inclusive education. As stated before, categorizing students based on a social identity, may also lead to too much focus on differences between students through which culturalisation originates, which hinders the process of developing inclusive education. Furthermore, when categorizing students in possibly vulnerable social groups, automatically a counterpart of a 'promising' or 'norm' group is created, for example students with a non-Western background versus students with a Western background or being mentally challenged versus not being mentally challenged (Avermaet and Sierens 2010, 3).

In addition to the former, Gent (Stad in Werking 2003, 10) describes the risk of how 'including' can start meaning 'synchronizing'. Whereby disadvantaged groups are being appraised with regard to their arrears towards the norm group and not so much by their own competences and qualities. Moreover, by approaching students as members of a vulnerable social group, their limited study results and behaviors could be unjustly attributed to being member of that social group, through which stigmatization of that social group is unjustly reinforced. Which means that categorizing students in order to better understand their needs may lead to a vicious circle in which unjustly too much focus is put on certain social groups in relation to limited study performances. This tendency could be explained by the 'confirmation bias', which is used in psychological literature and defined as understanding and interpreting evidence in light of already existing knowledge, beliefs and hypotheses (Nickerson 1998, 175).

From a broader societal perspective, Ghorashi (2006, 42) states that categorizing is our human nature and that the dominant discourse in the Netherlands related to migrants, has always been categorical. Moreover, this discourse should be understood in a historical context in which 'pillarization' played an important role (Ghorashi, 42). Pillarization meant polarization, and differences between pillars were central to this period. Individuals with an Islamic migrant background were seen as 'third pillar', next to Catholics and Protestants (Ghorashi 2006, 43). Although the pillarization is mainly out of focus, according to Ghorashi (2006, 43) still a broader societal effect seeps through into the contemporary ways of thinking. These ways of thinking presume cultural and ethnical differences between people, because people are hardly seen apart

from their cultural background. Ghorashi (2006, 45) pleads for more space for culture, but at the same time criticizes categorical thinking. She explains how people should be aware of their categorizing nature, nevertheless it should by no means mean dichotomizing and preliminary excluding others, which requires a shift in thinking.

Hacking (2005, 104) argues that in relation to categorization, it is difficult to say whether there are uniform 'real kind' differences through which groups could be distinguished. For example, how can Muslims be distinguished from Christians except by their faith? Hacking (2005, 104) explains that there is a uniform 'real kind' difference between groups, when it is true in every individual of one group and not true in every individual of the other group. Hacking (2005, 109) also offers an alternative on how to describe relations between specific characteristics of a social group and outcomes for an individual. Hacking (2005, 105) stresses that statistical relationships can be described as 1) being statistically significant, in case of two comparable populations being significantly different, 2) statistically meaningful, when there is some understanding about the causes that generate the significant relationship and 3) statistically useful, when the significant relationship can be used as indicator in practical concerns.

In my opinion the third option of Hacking (2005, 105) grasps exactly what needs to be grasped in this discussion. In this chapter we have mainly elaborated on the disadvantages of categorizing, summed up: stigmatizing, dichotomizing, culturalisation, overlooking other social identities, overlooking the interconnectedness between them and other underlying variables, because the construction of a social-cultural background is incredibly versatile and constantly changing. Nevertheless, literature proves the statistical relationships between disadvantaged social groups and study performances. In addition, knowledge of cultures, beliefs or migrant histories of students is helpful in adequately approaching students. However, social groups are not significantly different and statistical relationships between possibly vulnerable social groups and study performances cannot provide a broad image of all interacting causes generating the significant relationship. But important here is, the relationship is useful as an indicator for practical implications in order to develop inclusive education.

Elaborating further on inclusive education, students' needs and social categorization, in the following chapter (5) a tendency will be described that involves students, teachers and staff members of several universities in the Netherlands who feel discriminated, or sympathize with those who feel discriminated by a normative group that is white, able, male and heterosexual. As a result of which

those individuals started gathering in the social activist group University of Color (UoC), aiming for decolonization within universities and (broader) in society. Weekly 'decolonial school' meetings were organized which aimed for creating a safe place in which knowledge, ideas and experiences surrounding this topic could be shared. The perspectives from the members of UoC will be outlined in the following chapter.

### **5. Inclusive Education? Decolonization!**

*"Here we have another answer to the 'first question', about the pervasive tendency to regard people of different races as essentially different kinds of people. That tendency is produced by the imperial imperative, the instinct of empires to classify people in order to control, exploit, dominate, and enslave. The racial concepts of the Western world are as contingent as those of the Persian Empire, but both are the products of the same imperative (Hacking 2005, 114)."*

In my search for input with regard to inclusive education I encountered UoC, which originated out of a group students and teachers of the University of Amsterdam and other sympathizers who occupied the 'Maagdenhuis' in 2015. They had pleaded for a democratically chosen executive board and other forms of democratization and decentralization of the university. Members of UoC further elaborated on this ideology by stating that democratization and decentralization of universities is only possible, when first decolonizing society and universities. As a result of which UoC developed a 'decolonial school' for three months from March till June 2016, which I attended and consisted of weekly meetings, weekly literature and the possibility to join a weekly diner before those meetings. The first semester of this school aimed at building a sustainable activist community and providing its members a basic understanding of intersectional decolonization.

*"The program is meant for those that are interested in being part of social movements, activism and want to participate in the ongoing global struggle that aims to decolonize not just the University, but also the imperialist white-supremacist capitalist ableist hetero-patriarchy. We also aim to adapt the program in such a way that it suits people's specific needs and abilities." (Website, University of Color)*

UoC interested me and related to this topic, because many students, teachers and staff members of various universities were participating in the decolonial school. Evidently, they had a shared and clear opinion about society in general, and universities specifically; decolonizing the 'imperialist white-supremacist capitalist ableist heteropatriarchy'. I had no idea what to expect,

because I did not clearly understand the concepts. The meetings took place in an old, boarded up building in Amsterdam, full of paintings, graffiti and slogans. A guy I had met there told me the place was also used for other meetings of activist groups and weekly parties were organized for members of the 'LGBTQ+ community'. I wrote down the slogan 'Be free from party-ness, do not vote' and remember myself realizing that I always thought I lived in a 'free', democratic country as I could decide myself what political party I would vote for within a range of options from conservative to progressive. The slogan made me aware of having only the freedom to choose between imposed options, which isn't as free as I previously was aware of. This is an example of how these meetings continuously kept surprising me on how the usual for me could be so unusual for others.

A glossary was provided to explain the concepts related to 'decolonizing the imperialist white-supremacist capitalist ableist hetero-patriarchy'. First, UoC explained decolonization by using a quote of Harsha Walia (2013):

*"Decolonization is more than a struggle against power and control; it is the imagining and generation of alternative institutions and relations. Decolonization is a dual form of resistance that is responsive to dismantling current systems of colonial empire and systemic hierarchies, while also prefiguring societies based on equity, mutual aid, and self-determination. Undoing the physical and conceptual orderings of border imperialism requires a fundamental reorientation of ourselves, our movements, and our communities to think and act with intentionality, creativity, militancy, humility, and above all a deep sense of responsibility and reciprocity. This paradigm shift is what I would call decolonization."*

Second, UoC explained the 'White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy by a quote of Warsame and Sno (2014).

*"To show how white supremacy is part of a larger system of oppression of the Black, African-American feminist Bell Hooks developed the term 'white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy'. With this term she is emphasizing the cultural, economic and military domination of white nations (and specifically the United States) over the rest of the world (imperialism), the ideology of white supremacy that legitimizes this, the economic structures which make this profitable (capitalism) and the ideology that prescribes the dominance of the white cisgender man over the rest of society (patriarchy)".*

Third, 'ableism' was defined in the following way.

*"The way physical, psychological, and social barriers bar people with disabilities from fully accessing and participating in political, legal, economic, educational, health-care, and social institutions. Here,*

*we define disability as having bodies and minds that work in different ways than what is considered 'normal' or 'functional' or 'sane' by society" (University of Color).*

Fourth, the concept 'heterosexism' was defined as:

*"Heterosexuality and only heterosexuality is being seen as natural, normal, superior, and required" (University of Color).*

Clearly a movement among Dutch students, teachers and sympathizers had started that opposed cultural, economic and military domination by white nations of the rest of the world. Which prescribed the idea of the white cisgender (sexual identity corresponds with biological gender) and heterosexual man as dominant over the rest of society. According to this movement, current systems of colonial empires and systemic hierarchies have to be dismantled. I had not heard before about colonization still seeping through in our society. However, during an earlier debate concerning the topic 'diversity in education' which I had attended, the chair of UoC asked the Chief Diversity Officer of the 'Vrije Universiteit' of Amsterdam the following.

*"When developing criteria for how the university should be more diverse, will that be done in conversation with parties that are organized out of diverse social cultural backgrounds? I mean not talking over them, but talking with them? When I look around in this conference room I see a very white room, even though we're talking about diversity".*

The discussion about diversity in education seemed too white for him, which immediately made me question how I could ever clearly understand the diversity of perspectives on inclusive education, especially from a 'white' and 'able' perspective. Most members of the movement experienced the 'imperialist white-supremacist capitalist ableist hetero-patriarchy' harming their position. On the contrary, in my position I had never even heard of those concepts, which simply meant that through being white, able, heterosexual, even though a woman, I had not felt disadvantaged or deviated from a certain 'norm', which in itself proves this 'norm'. Simultaneously that meant that I had and still have a lack of knowledge surrounding this topic, surrounding these feelings of not being included, which clearly negatively affects so many people.

Bourdieu (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 81-82) argued that the habitus is a socialized form of subjectivity. Related to the arguments in the former alinea, rationality is not only confined by a confined amount of information, but is also confined because the human mind is socially confined and socially constructed, therefore people are being limited by the 'boundaries of their mind' as

Bourdieu quoted from Marx (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 81-82). Nevertheless people have the ability to become conscious about being limited by the boundaries of the system of categories that formed them (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 81-82). Bourdieu also emphasized the dubious relationships between habitus and sustainable and transferrable systems of schemes of perception, valuing and actions originating from the institution of the social in bodies or in biological individuals (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 81-82). This is an exact example of how I formerly was – and still am – limited by the ‘boundaries of my mind’ regarding to this topic. Because my ideas are socially constructed and therefore confined by these dubious relationships between my habitus and the transferred systems of schemes of perception, valuing and actions, originating from the institutions of the social in individuals or groups of people I am related to. Nevertheless, as those systems of schemes of perception, valuing and actions are transferrable, this research played a very important role in shifting the boundaries of my socially constructed mind.

In relation to the former and with regard to becoming aware of students feeling deviant from an ‘imperialist white-supremacist capitalist ableist hetero-patriarchy’, I became aware of a certain contemporary tendency at universities. Both the chair of UoC argued that discussions concerning diversity are too white, and students with a diversity of social cultural backgrounds stated that the staff of the university is also too white. Therefore, there is a great possibility that staff members are limited by the socially constructed boundaries of their minds, and therefore lack important knowledge concerning students feeling not being included in an ‘imperialist white-supremacist capitalist ableist hetero-patriarchy’. This lack of knowledge unintentionally means a lack of understanding. Which could be underlined by the following statements. The first statement is from a female student with a ‘white’ and Western social cultural background. The second statement is from a female staff member, in conversation with a colleague with probably a ‘white’ and Western social cultural background.

*“I don’t see teachers discriminating, especially because so many women work at the university. In principle, women are also a disadvantaged group. For example in classes about interculturality the focus is put on nuances in cultures, through which cultures are actually acknowledged at the university. Besides, teachers do ask: Does anyone has a different opinion? Please come and meet me in the break. Which seems very sensitive.”*

*“A teacher once asked me: ‘Aren’t we already inclusive? I mean, we teach a lot about languages and cultures isn’t it?’ Well I think that is something completely different...”*

The former examples show that when you do not experience being in a disadvantaged position, there is a great possibility you are not aware of the consequences of being in a disadvantaged position. As a result of which an – unintentional – lack of knowledge and understanding is created by white, able, cisgender and heterosexual students, teachers and staff members. In line with this, Bobo (2001, 280-282) states that some white people in the United States of America even argue that discrimination on the basis of race does not occur at all, or have the idea that the issue of racism is already largely solved. Others think that people will always have prejudices and that an enormous progression has been made in addressing intolerance by public policies (Hawley 2007, 251). Besides, the white female student states that in classes about interculturality the focus is put on nuances (differences) in culture and from her perspective this acknowledges cultures. On the other hand this may also be a culturalising approach as the focus is on ‘nuances’ between cultures, instead of commonalities.

In line with the former tendency, I discovered another tendency while sharing stories and experiences during my visits at UoC. I became aware of a tendency that is clearly related to ‘inclusiveness’. Namely, ‘the power of representation’ and how internalized images are continuously reinforced through many channels. During a meeting of UoC, Saskia Bonjour, an assistant professor in Gender and Politics of the University of Amsterdam, presented and emphasized the power of representation. Bonjour (2016, 1-5) stated that the power of representation is about the following.

*“There is not one power one has and the other not, but for example colonizers were not able to think out of their boxes, just like the colonized.”*

Over decades images are internalized. According to Bonjour (2016, 1-5) it is important to see yourself through your own eyes. However, even seeing through your ‘own eyes’ is not an independent view, because your representations are indissolubly interconnected with the representations that are explicitly and implicitly imposed on you within the context of your social cultural background.

In addition to the former, Bonjour (2016, 1-5) emphasizes how through many channels, ‘the West’ is most often imagined as progressive and the ‘non West’ is most often imagined as backward. An example Bonjour (2016, 1-5) gives is that when entering ‘Africa’ in the google search bar, you will find many pictures that are empty. You will see only nature, no people and if you see people, they most often look like they haven’t changed in ages. Furthermore, the colonized in stories are rendered as moving from backward to civilized with help from the colonizers, who were most often Europeans

and rendered as civilized. The colonized were presented as lagging behind as a result of which the colonial rule became 'justified', to help the colonized to move faster. It represents the idea that before the Europeans came, things did not change for many years (Bonjour 2016, 1-5). These images are already taught and internalized at a very young age, for example through internet, magazines and our own educational system. Consciousness seems extremely important related to the power of representation and subsequently the forming of implicit norms. Nevertheless Morley (1992, 125-127) emphasizes in line with Bonjours' (2016, 1-5) 'seeing through your own eyes', that the active participation of the viewing subject in the construction of meaning should not be underestimated. Moreover, according to Inda and Rosaldo (2008, 20-21) cultures clearly move into other directions than from 'West to the rest' in forms of food, religion, music and knowledge.

After diving into the tendencies of image forming, the following chapter will contribute to the topic of 'inclusive education' by elaborating on current ideas and experiences of students, teachers and staff members at Leiden University.

## **6. Inclusive Education: Implications based on Experiences and Ideas of Students, Teachers and Staff Members at Leiden University**

### **6.1.a. The Diversity of Staff Members**

During my fieldwork I found a remarkable pattern of students, teachers and staff members stating that Leiden University's student population, staff members, teachers and teaching materials are not considered diverse enough. In this subchapter visions on the diversity of staff members will be put forward by students, teachers and staff members. First, a male student with a migrant background from a non-Western country stated:

*"To be completely honest, I studied in Amsterdam and I think Leiden University is very traditional. I think Leiden is focused on tradition and is persistent in doing so. I mean concerning the staff, who do we hire and who do we give opportunities to develop? I have to be careful with my words, but what I've seen concerning becoming a professor with a non-Western social cultural background, there is a certain level, if you want to exceed that level, you'll get hindered. I believe there is a glass ceiling for people with a migrant history and that is just racism."*

A female student being member of the LGBTQ+ community related to the diversity of staff members in the following way:



*“When creating inclusive education, you have to start making it possible for (all) students to talk about (all) their problems. I mean, you have to make sure that teachers do not immediately judge (from their perspectives). They have to take the time to think about your problems before judging”.*

Shifting from students’ visions with regard to the diversity of teachers and staff members towards the visions of teachers and staff members themselves, a male teacher and staff member with a non-Western background stated the following:

*“It is the responsibility of the university to position allochthonous individuals in higher positions to function as role model for other allochthonous individuals. So that they can think: I can achieve that too. Take the example of Obama who was chosen as president. That gave an enormous boost to the black community. Because that was possible. They were underclass, however when you do your very best, there is a possibility that you can become president of the United States. The same happens when you position people from allochthonous backgrounds in higher positions. However, the only way to do that is via preferential treatment. As a result of that you can stimulate others to do their best.... Moreover, people from ‘outside’ have different perspectives and together with what you learn here, you can create something new, which is enrichment and innovation!”*

In addition to the former a female staff member with a Western background stated: *“The context is important for students. Are teachers role models? Does the student has the feeling, I can pour my heart out by my teachers. It is important that someone sees something in you or keeps an eye on you. For example sometimes even approaches you and say things like: I think you might like this subject, look I brought you an article!..... If you want to be a good teacher then you have to be conscious about the diversity of students. You cannot be a good teacher if you don’t know who your students are. Then you just don’t know enough. Often there is awkwardness and a lack of knowledge with regard to students with challenges. On the other hand some people say: to what extent do we keep approaching students? That are discussions. (Me: where do you draw that line?) That is not a question we should ask the teachers individually. Instead that is a debate we should all have and international insights should be part of that.”*

With regard to the diversity of teacher and staff members’ approaches towards students, several teachers at Leiden University related in their interviews to this topic. A male teacher and staff member with a Western background stated:

*"I think in relation to inclusive education policies it is important to focus on target groups, because you cannot develop policies that focus on individuals. Which means people should inventorise which common challenges are present in order to create general policies. That does not mean that every person in the target group has a backlog, however the chance is present that there is a backlog. The execution of policies is only possible when understanding that you're not working with target groups, however with individual students. Important for the teacher: teaching is always adaptive. Furthermore, 'common' policies provide grip when focusing on individuals and what they may need. Do not beforehand approach individual students as part of a target group, only use the information when certain students need specific support at specific moments. In practice people should use 'target groups' as less as possible."*

A female teacher and staff member with a Western background stated with regard to being sensitive towards individual students' needs:

*"I had a student in my workgroup and Dutch was not her mother tongue. I did not notice that during the workgroups, she spoke Dutch well. However sometimes it went too fast for her or she did not understand everything, so she told me that already in the beginning of the course. Then I said to her, please you can always tell me when it is going too fast or when there is anything else. When you don't understand it all and need extra explanation, come to me after class. However, she didn't need that, she was very serious and worked hard."*

In relation to the former I asked another female teacher and staff member with a Western background at Leiden University whether being sensitive towards the individual students' needs meant she had to do a lot of extra work? She answered:

*"No it is such a small effort for me, but the effect is that the student can function in the workgroup".*

In relation to that I became curious whether all teachers and staff members have the skills to be conscious and sensitive enough to see the specific individual needs students have? The male teacher and staff member with Western background added to this:

*"No, but that is not necessary. It are just people. However my experience is that not only teachers, but everybody can learn a lot related to this."*

Two other (not previously mentioned) female teachers and staff members with a Western background, that I had spoken together, stated:

*“As teacher you have certain cognitive capabilities that allow you to learn some important manners.*

Her female colleague with a Western background related to this by stating:

*“Yes, but you have to be made conscious about the importance of those manners.”*

The importance of being conscious about students’ background and possible related individual needs, was emphasized often during my interviews. A female staff member with a non-Western background stated the following:

*“There can be a cultural gap between home and the university. For example, some students with a non-Western background have a norm of ‘modestness’. You have to be modest, do not ask too much, do not always take the initiative, do not speak in front of a group, that is all unmannered. Then opposite expectations can originate between students and teachers. The teacher wants students that show themselves and take initiative. Besides, the students will be evaluated through the eyes of the teacher and this may influence his or her grades”*

#### **6.1.b. Implications with regard to the Diversity of Staff Members**

As presented in subchapter 6.1.a. both students, teachers and staff members state that the population of teachers and staff members is not diverse enough. When teachers and staff members do not reflect the contemporary diversity in society this may most probably has some consequences in education. First, a lack in the variety of how students are approached. Second, a lack of proper role models for students and third, an implicit ‘normative’ image creation with regard to which people are most likely to reach certain positions within universities. As stated in chapter 5, an increasing diversity of social cultural backgrounds of staff members and teachers would contribute to a broader range of diverse ‘socially constructed minds’. Therefore enhances the possibility to create role models and to better understand and guide the diverse student population.

In consensus with one of my interviewees, the university as organization bears a great responsibility in creating an inclusive environment in which the diversity of society is reflected in the teacher and staff member population. However, to start creating a more diverse teacher and staff member population, the university has to be aware of its current contribution towards a not so diverse teacher and staff population. Following the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework of Schneider (1987, 437) personalities – which are the dynamic and organized wholes of the persons’

characteristics – of the organization determine the nature of the organization. First, people who think they have similar personalities with regard to people working for the organization are more often attracted to the organization (attraction). Second, those people are more often hired (selection). And third, people who think their type of personality differs from most other people within the organization do more often leave the organization (attrition) (Schneider 1987, 437).

The following example may prevent the former tendency. At every start of a new application procedure all involved employees should be made aware (beforehand) about their implicit, but active, contribution to determine the nature of the organization. Besides the enriching outcomes of enhancing the diversity of the employee population should be mapped. That could be done by an informed and trained human resources employee that will shortly meet with the employees involved in the application procedure.

### **6.2.a. The Diversity of Teaching Materials**

Concerning studies and teaching materials, students stated that many courses are from a Eurocentric perspective. For example, a female student with a non-Western migrant background stated:

*“I’ll be honest, I changed studies, because I did a very Eurocentric study. I wanted to know more about the Middle East and went studying Middle East Studies. Moreover, through doing this study I realized I can contribute to a broad scientific discussion in which I can be myself. I know (in research) there is space for me, for my vision.”*

A male student with a migrant background stated in line with this:

*“While studying philosophy there isn’t much space for Eastern philosophy, it is just not that much addressed. Which means that backgrounds do play a role, as I am interested in that.”*

A female student being member of the LGBTQ+ community added to the topic of teaching materials:

*“Talking about our teaching materials? Everybody is heterosexual and white. And it’s always about middle class people. I encounter these issues with grammatical exercises for the languages that I study. Okay, maybe not everybody is Western in the exercises for my non-Western language study, nevertheless they are all heterosexual, all very cisgender.”*

### **6.2.b. Implications with regard to the Diversity of Teaching Materials**

Many interviewees emphasized how books, exercises, and other teaching materials often depart from a Western, middle class and heterosexual perspective and – depending on the kind of study – are mostly written by white, Western, male authors. Therefore the contemporary diversity of people seems by far not represented in the teaching materials. Which could be partially understood in light of history and how the focus on diversity in the broadest sense became noticeable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Musschenga and Koster 2011, 3-4). Yet many literature dates from before. Which however does not mean that the university cannot change in this. This topic became only noticeable to me during this research, which strongly implicates that coming from a Western, middle class, heterosexual position means you may have a blind spot related to the teaching materials not being so diverse. Again, knowledge raises consciousness, which is important in creating an inclusive education environment.

A lot of progress can be made with regard to diversifying the content of books and assignments, by questioning whether it reflects the contemporary diversity of perspectives? However this should be questioned by people departing from a broad range of societal cultural backgrounds. Otherwise the issue becomes self-perpetuating. I believe many of these issues are self-perpetuating by lack of knowledge and consciousness. Moreover, the diversity of the authors should be critically assessed as well. The benefit is two folded. Authors also function as role models and therefore diversifying the social cultural backgrounds of authors provides an image that all students, despite social cultural background, are able to fulfill any kind of job position. In addition, diversifying the social cultural background of authors and their content contributes to diversifying the range of perspectives which hopefully counteracts norm creation.

### **6.3.a. Student Population and Culture**

With regard to the student population of Leiden University, many statements were made. A male student with a Western background and some mental challenges stated:

*“In relation to student councils, many students with mental and physical challenges do never stand for election. Which means, as the university is guided by these councils, they miss a diversity of perspectives.”*

In relation to the former this student also stated:

*“It would be great when the negativity related to the stigma of my mental challenge disappears. There are so many things I actually can do or even be good at.”*

According to two female students with a non-Western migrant background, a specific point on which progression could be made concerning inclusiveness in the Leiden University community is related to the ‘culture’ of drinking:

*“Leiden University is known for its ‘whiteness’ as a result of which less students with a non-Western social cultural background enroll. Besides, it is always about drinks and alcohol. You won’t get invited in weekends, because it is mostly an activity related to drinks and alcohol.”*

In accordance with this, another female student with a non-Western social cultural background stated:

*“Student unions are very ‘Leids’ even though they endorse trying to include everybody, when organizing activities they are mostly related to evenings and drinking. Of course it is not all about alcohol, but as a result of that people are participating less and therefore they’ll lose the non-drinking students.”*

With regard to the diversity of a population in general, and a student population in specific, a male teacher and staff member with a non-Western background stated the following:

*“When a country decides to become a migrant country, than all institutions have a responsibility to contribute to the adaption, the inclusion of the minorities in our society... However, the majority dominates the minority, always. Not only in terms of migration, but also in other situations. It is animal instinct to mark your borders and to not allow people in. Unless something happens, then you allow people. People are the same. Everybody has determined his or her own boundaries in which he or she won’t allow others. Only when you have to do with a migrant society in which nobody is the majority, like America, no one can say that you are not an American or less American than the other. It is about thinking that you have different norms and values and about protecting the self.”*

Concerning the student population a female staff member with a Western background stated the following:

*“The university clones itself, people that work somewhere hire people that look like them. It is the same with students. The university prepares itself for the student population that was here historically, what kind of supervision they need and what activities they’d like for connection. However nowadays groups of students enter with for example a migrant background, nevertheless the university has not grown with this tendency and therefore needs to catch up.”*

With regard to the former, a staff member with a non-Western descent spoke on behalf of students:

*“ What students seek for is connection, a place for them at the university.”*

### **6.3.b. Implications with regard to Student Population and Culture**

Inclusiveness should seep through in all layers of the university and therefore also in student councils. As a result of which student councils can be a representative example of the student population and therefore disseminate a greater diversity of students’ perspectives and inclusiveness. There should be space for all kind of personalities within the university councils, nevertheless as stated earlier a persistent tendency is visible in which similar personalities attract each other, are sooner selected and dissimilar personalities are therefore sooner excluded (Scheinder, 1987). A concrete contribution to an inclusive education environment could be reached by informing students involved in the selection procedure of student council members about their implicit, but active, contribution to determine the nature of the council. Again the enriching outcomes of enhancing the diversity in the student council should also be clearly mapped.

A segregation is noticeable between students who do drink alcohol and students who don’t, which often involves Muslim students who do not drink on the basis of religious conviction. Instead of losing the ‘non-drinking’ students, it seems there should be put a strong focus on activities that are easily accessible for all students. In agreement with one of the interviewees, all students seek for connection. Moreover, feeling connected is imperative for inclusive education. The data did not offer elaborated information for alternative ways to include all students in activities. Nevertheless, I would invite the university to poll the ways in which a diversity of students would like to gather. For example by short digital questionnaires. The university could motivate a variety of students to fill in this questionnaire by offering small budgets to the students with the best ideas in order to accomplish them.

An important step in becoming inclusive is reducing the stigma's related to most disadvantaged groups in education. Even though this actually requires a broader societal approach, because perspectives are continuously fed by sources outside the university, for example by the media or extreme right-wing politicians. Nevertheless the university should take responsibility in creating an environment which focusses on commonalities between and possibilities of students. Rather than focusing on differences and inability. As a result of which stigma's start crumbling down. With regard to the former, in my opinion an important role is played by the teacher in daily workgroups. Constructively seeking manners to teach students that are diverse in the broadest sense, will represent inclusiveness and will most probably be incorporated in the behavior of students too. In order to accomplish this, it is important for the teacher to gain knowledge and create consciousness with regard to the diversity of students in the broadest sense.

#### **6.4.a. Inconsiderate Use of Language and Implicit Norm Creation**

Explicit norms are easily created through conscious use of language. Nevertheless, implicit norms – not always intentionally – can also be created through inconsiderate use of language. This occurs on all kind of levels, ranging from broader societal levels to specific educational levels, which can be subdivided in many levels from policy makers to students.

A female student with a non-Western migrant background stated how '9/11' was a turning point in her life because of how the media framed Muslims. Henceforth she felt she had to justify herself for having a Muslim background:

*"I remember being a child, '9/11' was a turning point in my life, before I never had to justify myself for anything, now I felt I had to. Before, I never had the feeling I was different, or at least not essentially different. Nevertheless, how the media framed the attack, you're going to believe it. You're too young to understand this sketched image is not a representation of you. When you're getting older, you start realizing that. I felt addressed by the media because they created an image about 'the Muslims' and 'the Arabs', I mean I have that background, nevertheless they tried to create an image that wasn't right."*

In accordance with the former statement, the following female student addressed how as being a Muslim, she is often approached by other students in a culturalising way. As a result of which



a feeling of 'otherness' is created from a certain normative group. Which opposes feelings of being included.

*"In class they asked me 'Let's ask the Muslim?'. I thought how am I going to answer this, I am visibly a Muslim, that is the problem. Therefore you are being addressed. I do not only get those questions from students, but also from teachers, 'What do you think about it?'. The emphasis on 'What do YOU think about it?' feels so stigmatizing. Most of the questions I get are about my kerchief and being a Muslim. Nevertheless I am so much more than that. Another example, students asked me 'What is a symbol of terrorism and extremism for you?' I can handle that from students, but it gets problematic when it comes from teachers. In the former case the teacher luckily immediately said: 'No! We cannot do that.' I never thought about the teacher solving a problem like this. The way she brought it, she said 'We cannot point our fingers and make somebody responsible to say what Muslims think about it'. Then it was finished. I was so happy the teacher took the responsibility. I do understand those questions, but enough is enough. I am tired of being continuously appointed to explain. I am so much more than only a Muslim."*

Another specific example of how norms are implicitly created is emphasized by a female student being member of the LGBTQ+ community:

*"Within a group we are aiming for a gender neutral toilet at the university for years. They promised us to do that, nevertheless it hasn't happened yet. What did they do? They installed another women toilet at our faculty! That hurts. Talking about gender neutrality, the only way to enroll yourself at this university is as female or as male. The point is some people do not identify themselves this way. These binary options, they are everywhere! Also when you are receiving a survey, the first question is: Are you a male or female?"*

In another specific case, related to implicit norm creation, a student encountered a situation in which the teacher acted and spoke inconsiderate:

*"I wanted to do research on non-binary gender identification and my teacher just said 'That is not possible, it doesn't exist'. I felt so dumbfounded. I had no clue how to react. He even stated 'Give me an example of somebody like that', and I said 'Well, that is me!'. I literally said that and then I heard the 'ooohh' of my classmates."*

Later in our conversation the student once again emphasized how used he is to being denied in his identity, for example in educational settings:

*“You get used to being denied in your identity. For example, a teacher kept calling me by using a female pronoun. I had asked before whether he would approach me by using a male pronoun. At a certain point I went to him after class and asked him again to be considerate about that, because it is very difficult for me. I felt really bad that time, so I had to cry. Not even that loud, I could still talk, nevertheless I cried. One week later I received a message I had to visit my tutor, because I had acted hysterically during class. That is just not true, I even came after class, when everybody was gone, because I didn’t want to condemn him in front of other students. Later my tutor said ‘You cannot ask people to approach you with a male pronoun, because you don’t look like that, so you can’t expect that’. That is so hard, you feel so small, not respected.”*

Many teachers and staff members were asked how to approach students in an inclusive way, without using inconsiderate language and contributing to implicit norm creation. A female teacher and staff member with a Western background stated the following:

*“The fiftieth blond girl with blue eyes her opinion in a workgroup can be as different as any other opinion. Despite of the subject. So when you are, as a teacher, curious about certain cultural aspects in a workgroup related to the topic, you can ask that. You can ask your students for example, does religion play a role in this? Are you for example religious? How is this for you? Then you won’t approach a student as representing a whole group, but just as an individual. You can do it even broader: religion can play a role in this, who has experience with that?”*

Another female staff member with a Western background related to this topic:

*“It is about sensitivity, how can you ask a question? How can you respond to a certain group? I propose that in the BKO (Basic Qualification in Education) some requirements related to intercultural competences should be registered. (Me: And what would that specifically be?). Well to understand that we come from different backgrounds, we have our own baggage, but also learning to be sensitive when talking about this subject. When can I ask a question? When not? How do I take care of the integration within the group? For example, international students have let me know that in breaks people start talking Dutch again and the internationals feel excluded then. Moreover, when groups have to be formed, the Dutch students always know to find each other. As a teacher you should say: We all mix! That kind of skills do I mean.”*

Related to the subject of implicit norm creation by inconsiderate use of language, I asked teachers, staff members and myself whether being cultural sensitive was an abstract concept? Which

means something else in different cases? A female staff member with a Western background answered:

*“I don’t agree. I think being cultural sensitive is being sensitive in general, in communication. I think you could incorporate this into behaviors. Such as asking questions, listening, summarizing. That is an example of how you connect to others. You can ask others: would you like to contribute to this? Without saying: do you want to contribute as a Muslim? Translating it into behaviors is important so that it doesn’t have to be vague and abstract.”*

#### **6.4.b. Implications with regard to Inconsiderate Use of Language and Implicit Norm Creation**

In light of ‘cultural sensitivity’ the following is crucial. As stated earlier, Bourdieu quoted from Marx (in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 81-82) that a person’s rationality is not only confined by a confined amount of information, the human mind is also socially confined, socially constructed and therefore people are being limited by the ‘boundaries of their mind’. In relation to this Bonjour (2016, 1-5) emphasized the power of representation and how images are so easily internalized, even though *“there is not one power one has and the other not”*. However people are not always able to think out of the box. In addition to this Bonjour (2016, 1-5) stated that it is important to see yourself through your own eyes. Hence, at the same time that is the crux. ‘Your own eyes’ are not independent and they are indissolubly interconnected with and originate within your social cultural context.

Therefore inconsiderate use of language and norm creation is often implicit, due to a lack of knowledge and originating from your ‘own socially constructed mind’. Let not the pot call the kettle black, everyone is involved. However, at the same time we should not underestimate the effect of this on students in an already vulnerable societal position. Both students, teachers and staff members should better be informed with regard to the diversity of perspectives within our contemporary society and within schools. Moreover, hearing concrete examples (such as in 6.4.a.) of how inconsiderate use of language leads to unconstructive norm creation, may enhance sensitivity towards others. In line with one of the interviewees, the topic is present-day and relevant. Therefore a course to enhance teachers’ intercultural and ‘all inclusive’ competences should be an obligatory part of the basic qualification in education. Furthermore, the topic deserves a small basic role within workgroups as it enriches the perceptions of both teachers and students. Courses for teachers are already implemented, however as will be stated in subchapter 6.6.b. it is on a small-scale level and improvements can be made with regard to the communication.

### 6.5.a. Students, Study Advisors and Study Coordinators

Many students of Leiden University I have spoken with, felt restricted in help-seeking. A student explained how the procedure worked for her while seeking help for mental challenges:

*“First you have to contact your study coordinator, you also need a testimony of a doctor or psychologist, you have to get that first. When having that you’ll go to Plexus (student affairs) and on the basis of that they confirm in a testimony that they have your documents which prove your problems. Subsequently these documents go to the examination committee, together with the story of the student coordinator and then they’ll pass a judgement. If you don’t know that, it takes time to unravel it. Besides, every new semester, when starting new courses, you have to do this all over again. The only thing that remains in the system is that I need some extra time during exams related to a physical complaint. It is always like that, physical complains are taken more seriously.”*

In line with the former, a female student facing chronic physical challenges stated:

*“Every semester, every course, you are dependent of someone else. After two years I found my study advisor prepared to send an e-mail to all teachers of new courses to inform them about my condition. Nevertheless, the point is that study advisors and teachers do not have the authority to decide everything and therefore I am continuously dependent on the time and effort they want to put in me (in unraveling my case). In addition to the former, there is not much space to shift deadlines. Coordinators pass on the deadlines to teachers and therefore teachers don’t have the idea they can change them in individual cases. Nobody knows who has real authority. It would have really helped me when study advisors or deans were given the power to discard me from my attendance duty, as my physical condition not always allows me to attend. Moreover, a system in which the dean provides a testimony that states the specific consequences of my individual situation, which I can show to all teachers of new courses, would have helped me a lot. Furthermore, taping lectures and workgroups would enhance my chances to pass my study enormously.”*

A male student with a mental challenge stated:

*“When you have a problem, the university is reactive, not pro-active. Furthermore, the aim of their help is to make you perform like the norm again. Flip-the-classroom would provide more space for students’ individual processes.”*

In addition to these broader statements on how the prolixity and non-transparency of policies negatively affected these students and their process of help seeking, students also specifically pointed at study advisors and coordinators. For example a female student with a mental challenge stated:

*"I am worried about the lack of willingness to listen by teachers and coordinators. Sometimes they just do not take you seriously, they think they know best and that is not always the case. Sometimes they do, just not always."*

In another meeting, the same student stated:

*"The ideal study coordinator is approachable, listens without judging, thinks with you, has no blueprint of how a person should be, reads between the lines and does not put pressure on students because of them costing money when lagging behind."*

With regard to the 'social workers' within the university a male teacher and staff member with a Western background stated the following:

*"I think that study coordinators, the psychologists, the people from the pop corner should be role models in getting educated with regard to consciousness, sensitivity and courses related to the diversity of social cultural backgrounds."*

A female staff member with a Western background stated the following:

*"For study advisors the organization has developed a professionalizing project. In collaboration with the study advisors the main question was: what do study advisors need for extra education to improve their competences? Furthermore, the university also focuses on study accompaniment. However, that is difficult, because we have so many students. I do not say the study supervision is flawless, but we do a lot. Our main focus is students and study advisors. Students can contact our social workers with all kinds of questions with regard to their right position, finances, complaints, conflicts, study competences, personal problems and the transition to the labor market. Student psychologists have the responsibility over the study competences and personal problems. The university has also student deans, student psychologists and study selection and career counsellors. Moreover, the university focuses on students with a functional challenge and the university has an international student advisor."*

In addition to social work a female staff member with a non-Western background stated:

*“The pop corner is very approachable for all students, this makes it easier for students to seek help.”*

#### **6.5.b. Implications with regard to Students, Study Advisors and Study Coordinators**

Being in a vulnerable position, for example by being mentally or physically challenged, often means that you do not have a lot of energy left to seek help. A smooth process of providing help by the university would help these students considerably. Based on the former experiences, this process could be enhanced by simplifying it. One way of doing this is by being very transparent in policies about who has the authority to do what. Moreover, in an era of many digital possibilities it should be feasible to create an online application within the regular system, that offers all staff members and teachers that are involved with the student, access to relevant information of the student. As a result of which teachers could gain information more easily and therefore may act more actively instead of passively following students’ requests.

#### **6.6.a. Communication**

Within the university a strong pattern was recognized concerning the communication between faculties and within faculties, between departments and within departments, towards students and the other way around.

##### **6.6.a.1. Communication Between and Within Faculties**

With regard to the communication of courses for teachers about internationalization and inclusive education, a male staff member with a Western background stated:

*“We have created courses for teachers to learn how to be cultural sensitive, but nobody ever shows up”.*

Later in an interview with a female teacher with a Western background, she told me:

*“I think it’s a good idea to join once a half year a course with regard to the diversity of students or to join a ‘food for thought meeting’ about this subject”.*

I had asked the male staff member how these courses were promoted and whether teachers were directly approached. In answer to that he stated:

*"No we cannot do that directly. (Me: that would probably work!). A few times a year in the university newsletter we are able to advertise. In my time we had flyers, but they stopped with that because it took a lot of work and profits were too small."*

The male staff member added with regard to the developed courses:

*"Becoming conscious with regard to this topic depends on what faculties want. It depends on how faculties want to approach this topic. Therefore you see differences between faculties. Differences in whether and to what extent the faculties are interested in this topic... Leiden is very decentralized. Every faculty is its own world. It is very difficult in Leiden to steer from a central point towards all faculties. They find it too difficult here. So some put more attention to it than others. What I miss is for example that the university says: We are going to focus on internationalizing. Which means this and that."*

Another female staff member with a Western background stated in relation to the former:

*"The thought behind inclusive education policies of Leiden University is that it is effective. There are a few things that we know of, they are effective. For example you need support, exclusive support from the top. Well that is settled and done here. Besides we have to work with evidence based measures and we cannot speak in terms of guilt. Moreover, we have to have a positive approach. People have to start working with the policies themselves, the organization has to be decentralised and centralised. In the centre we need a group that supervises it all. However in all faculties, the groups within the faculties have to feel owners of the problems. Furthermore, it is important that we approach this systematically and integral... The university has a problem. How can the university give more support and baggage to students? How can we change the institutions in order to become inclusive? We have to train teachers and provide tailored support... There is a lot of expertise and knowhow and there is a lot of support and an amazing team with regard to the diversity office. However there is little time to bring out all that we do."*

#### 6.6.a.2. Communication Between and Within Departments

With regard to communication within the departments a female teacher and staff member with a Western descent stated:

*“There should be more attention for how teachers teach in the broadest sense. There is not much guidance on how PhD-students teach. How you teach is dependent of the amount of guidance and feedback you get from your supervisor. This is my experience. There are some courses, but why are they not obligatory for everybody who teaches? That won’t do any harm.”*

Another example is provided by a male social worker with a Western background:

*“ Students with a functional challenge first visit deans and after that they are sent to study advisors, who will see them on a more regular base. And that is an important point, the involved study advisor has to inform teachers about the student. This does not always happen. I understand that, when the study advisor emails a teacher and he or she is very busy, they may forget that. It would be important to make for example a note of students’ conditions for teachers in Usis.”*

#### 6.6.a.3. Communication towards Students and the Other Way Around

First a male student with a non-Western social cultural background stated how he normally wouldn’t talk to the university about his ideas related to the topic of inclusive education:

*“Okay, I said okay to this because I wanted to say some things. But if someone like me starts saying things like this, it just starts looking like, like I am a ‘conspiracy theory thinker’. Of course we are not. Or people start answering ‘This is how people like you feel’. And I just don’t want that.”*

Second, students have stated how communication from the university and affiliated initiatives towards students could be improved. I recognized a bottleneck in communication myself. For example a representative of a student initiative that aims for connecting international students with Dutch students stated:

*“We organize activities for international and Dutch students in order to create social cohesion”.*

A few days later I asked international students in a focus group whether they knew this initiative and they had never heard of it. Therefore it seems in this case, that communication could be improved in order to reach all international students to feel more welcome and connected to the Leiden community.



### 6.6.b. Implications with regard to Communication

It seems like there are some bottlenecks in communication which undermine the effectiveness of inclusive education policies. A female staff member stated both:

*“In the center we need a group that supervises it all.”* And,

*“inclusive education policies depart from a centralized and decentralized point of view”.*

Which sounds a bit paradoxical. In the case of a low attendance rate in courses for intercultural and internationalizing competences, I agree with the male staff member interviewee that a centralized power is imperative. Of course faculties can move (decentralized) within the boundaries of the imposed inclusive education policies in order to implement them in their specific context. However a central power (centralized) that not only overlooks, but also repeatedly evaluates the policies and their impacts on a faculty, departmental or individual level, is imperative for the right execution and further development of policies. Short lines from the central point (Diversity Office of Leiden University, DOLU) are necessary in order to monitor and spread knowledge and enhance consciousness when it is needed and policies seem unsuccessful.

Shifting to student-level it seems that starting to be open about how you as a student may not feel included in the Leiden community, at the same time feels like emphasizing an us-them culture. In becoming an inclusive educational environment, another role is assigned for the university to spread the idea that students have the possibility to speak openly to teachers, study advisors, coordinators, deans, psychologists and other staff members about experiences, feelings and ideas. Being inclusive also means being open to a wide range of diverse experiences, feelings and ideas and taking the time to listen and support the student. Expanding the amount of pop-corners, in which all students can ‘pop in’ to talk with somebody, seems an effective and easy accessible way to accomplish these goals.

Furthermore, the findings implicate that the communication from student initiatives and organizations that aim for connecting students, could be improved. Transparency and good communication towards the students may be enhanced by providing a small basic package when students start their study in which a broad spectrum of ways, initiatives and organizations from both within and outside Leiden University are presented.

### 6.7.a. Transition from High-School to University

A pattern was recognized related to students experiencing difficulties in the transition from high-school to university. First, studying was not as common for some students as it was for other students. This had for example to do with the social and environmental factors the student grew up in. A female student with a non-Western migrant background stated:

*“For me university was an abstract phenomenon, I knew I wanted to go there, but I had no idea about what it contained and who roamed there. Bringing a visit to the university while still being in high-school would’ve helped me in understanding what it was and that I could be capable of doing that. Moreover, in my community the university is only for certain occupations, for example you want to become a lawyer or a doctor, which are the occupations that have the highest statuses. I think it would be interesting to tell pupils what the university is all about, that the university has many options for you.”*

Second, while analyzing my data a few students stated they had experienced difficulties during the transition from high-school to university as a consequence of a changing daily structure from very structured to problematically little structured. Respectively a male student with a Finnish background and a male student with a Dutch background stated the following:

*“In Finland you have enormous help during high school, everybody is watching you, after graduating high-school you fall into a black hole.”* And, *“for so long it has gone so well, I was good in studying and in high-school they provided a lot of structure. Nevertheless those things have changed at the university.”*

Third, students indicated that they had difficulties with being included in the community of Leiden University from the first day onwards. A male student with a non-Western background stated:

*“At the first day, they tell you a story about your study, however they should tell us Leiden has a certain culture, many sororities etcetera. Nevertheless, when you do not drink, that is still a problem.”*

Subsequently during this focus group the chair addressed the issue of networking. Related to that a male respondent with a non-Western background stated:

*“Well students do network, it is just in their own community. In the beginning you feel pressured to find a group of people, and in some people I found recognition, people who looked like me related to my appearance. Back then that felt right. Until I noticed that because of that we started to put*

*ourselves in a certain position, we became a cultural minority. I shot myself in the foot. Other classmates started being members of sororities, what was it that their student lives were so different from mine?"*

The chair subsequently asked:

*"Should we mix students with each other earlier?"*

And in answer to that, the students emphasized the importance of sharing information regarding university life with pupils of high-schools. In addition, the following option was offered.

*"I know a place where they do 'Japanese tables', which is about pitching a story about yourself to someone else in a very short time, both sitting around a small table. After you both pitched, one of the two changes table. This is done over and over again, and enables you to get to know lots of people in just one hour."*

#### **6.7.b. Implications with regard to the Transition from High-School to University**

As stated earlier by Ainscow et al. (2012, 14), backlog and discrimination in educational settings could be reduced when using a local approach that is based on interactions between various sectors. The former examples emphasize the importance of a cooperation between high-schools and universities in order to include students from the beginning. For many students I spoke with, the transition from high-school to university was not flawless. Providing information on high-schools may be necessary to include more pupils. Not only the ones who are in the position of being informed already by their social environment about possibilities related to studying, but also the pupils that are not familiar with universities can be motivated to enroll for higher education.

Furthermore, information that is better adjusted to the temporary needs of students may prepare students better for the transition from high-school to university. For example, students could be better informed with regard to the decline in structure and by providing knowledge concerning the 'Leidse' student culture and ways to socially integrate. A better preparation may reduce their possible fall. At last, related to social integration, one way of diminishing the feeling of not being included is by offering ways to feel included. For example, by providing these 'Japanese tables' or similar 'speed-dating' activities for all students in which students are stimulated to interact with other students, a feeling of being included may be enhanced. Moreover, it facilitates further interaction, because the students already been in conversations with other students.

### 6.8.a. Transition from University to Labor Market

Another pattern is recognized in the transition from students with a migrant social cultural background from the university towards the labor market. For example, a student with a non-Western migrant background stated:

*“When you have ambitions and a non-Western background, you have to be even more special to be accepted. For example, my sister is always asked ‘Where do you come from?’. When she answers a Dutch village you hear them thinking ‘But where do your parents come from?’. Moreover, when you look at big commercial companies in the Netherlands, you barely see colored people. Of course colored people are able to outshine, but one way or the other they think your social cultural background gives you some cultural baggage. Maybe they think you have a loyalty problem and that you’re not loyal to the Netherlands. I have the feeling they choose for certainty and that is the Dutch person”.*

In line with this, a student with a non-Dutch Western social cultural background stated:

*“Three times the lady who interviewed me started about the fact that I did not come from the Netherlands. I had a certain feeling about that and combined with her facial expression I knew it was important for her. I believe she rather had a Dutch girl, or maybe a Turkish or Moroccan girl, nevertheless someone similar to the target group. In another interview it was no problem at all and subsequently they hired me. Sometimes people just search for the right people, maybe when they are similar to the clients?”.*

Another female student with a non-Western background stated:

*“When having an interview at the ‘Zuid as’ (corporate heart of the Netherlands) you start with a 3-0 backlog. And if you’re busy at home too for your family, you just lag behind.”*

Another female student with a non-Western background stated:

*“What job you’ll get, in this society you’ll just always have an exceptional position.”*

One male student with a non-Western social cultural background stated how he could have been helped by courses focusing on acquiring the social skills he needs in job or internship interviews:

*“When I did interviews for internships, they did not go well. I missed social skills and experiences on my curriculum. Somehow other students knew what they had to do, they were developing opportunities from the beginning.”*

Related to the transition from university to the labor market a male teacher and staff member with a Western background emphasized the importance of inclusive education within education:

*“Adaptive and inclusive education applies to everybody. Even you and me as born in the Netherlands. And we all have to experience it and we have to see that it is going very well due to inclusive education. If people come from an inclusive education environment and are educated in this inclusive environment. Then later they will find that way more obvious to apply and integrate that in their own lives. Those people will start companies and they will find it obvious to apply that in their business.”*

Another female staff member with a Western background added to the former:

*“In the transition from the university to the labor market, we all know there is stone-hard discrimination. Even already with regard to internships. That is a kind of racism that unfortunately does not decline, but even becomes more aggressive. Worldwide developments and a gouvernement that does not adequately addresses this issue are causes... These causes are related to politics. Racism and xenophobia is expressed by populists and it is not contested. You need someone in this that says: Everyone is included in the Netherlands and we will not tolerate this kind of language. However most often due to electoral reasons this does not happen. However that is a signal towards society, that people are allowed to be racists. Well that is the problem now and therefore Leiden University tries to collaborate with companies to change that.”*

#### **6.8.b. Implications with regard to the Transition from University to Labor Market**

The former once again proves the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework, stating that people with similarities in the personal sphere are more often attracted to organizations (attraction), subsequently those people are more often hired (selection) and besides, people with dissimilarities in the personal sphere do more often leave the organization (attrition) (Schneider 1987, 437). Knowing that this transition is problematic for many students with non-Western or other migrant social cultural backgrounds, the university indeed should take responsibility for its students in developing policies that aim for informing and stimulating the labor market in hiring (graduated) students with a great diversity in social cultural backgrounds by focusing on the enrichment it has for the company.

Studulski (2002, 41) argued that providing equal opportunities is about enabling students to fully participate in society. This could be enhanced by stimulating students' relevant social competences, such as self-confidence, a clear sight on possibilities and building social networks. Furthermore, by increasing their participation experiences, such as consumptive, organization and directing experiences (Studulski 2002, 41). Courses with regard to enhancing students' competences that are needed within network events and job applications are optionally provided by Leiden University. In my opinion a more active approach of the university may have a bigger effect on a greater group of students that aims for feeling fully competent to start the transition from university to the labor market. A concrete example could be that courses are not offered optionally once in a while, but rather an annual obligatory course for all students focusing on knowledge, practice and competences that are important for students to network and find internships and work, is added to the curriculum.

The view of Studulski (2002, 41) may implicate that the pattern of students who experience difficulties in finding internships or jobs may be related to a lack of competences that are needed to fully participate in society. However, this is not the case. This is not about a lack of competences, this is only about a lack of knowledge, consciousness and practicing skills of some students that are related to greater chances at a successful transition. Nevertheless, discrimination should not be underestimated and therefore active communication between the university and the labor market is imperative.

#### **6.9.a. Contemporary Educational Wishes**

A final pattern could be found regarding the wish of several students to adjust the forms of education to contemporary tendency's. For example a male Dutch student with a mental challenge stated the following:

*"How I would be motivated more? Well create more interactive forms of education. For example: If I would like to build a car, what knowledge do I need to do that? There is already a bit more interaction between student and teachers and 'demand-driven' education is increasing. Nevertheless, I think students will be more motivated when for example a quiz – with the corresponding technology – will be held after we have read the papers. Furthermore, because of that the teacher will also be able to easily evaluate how the information was processed by the students. Our contemporary form of education seems a bit boring and old-fashioned. Teachers can also start providing movies on YouTube*

or 'flip the classroom'. Moreover, more group and interactive work would better prepare us for the labor market".

In line with the former, another temporary international male student stated the following:

*"In my study there is so much focus on scientific research. I have a grant, but when I will go back to my country, I don't feel I have learned enough practical competences here. I need a more practical approach now to find a job somewhere else in the future."*

With regard to contemporary educational wishes a female teacher and staff member with a Western descent stated the following:

*"In America you can open doors from a distance. With regard to recording lectures, I remember a girl that was in an electric wheelchair and she could not enter many classrooms. In that sort of cases it is an important question whether lectures should be recorded more often? Not per se for everybody, but for a certain group."*

In addition to the topic of wheelchairs and lecturing tapes, a social worker and staff member stated:

*"Previously students within a wheelchair had to follow the lectures from the sides of the lecture rooms. So they had to watch skew and they were very visible for everybody. Now we decided to take away a set of standard chairs. That are little things. (Me: Did every faculty do that?) Well that is always the question, but I hear positive sounds... Taping lectures is a very desired facility for people with an attention disorder, dyslexia or for people with a chronic illness who cannot always come to the university. People with dyslexia or ADHD may like a lot of visual stimuli, graphs or movies in lectures. However, autistic students and visually impaired do not like that. So sometimes there are conflicting interests."*

#### **6.9.b. Implications with regard to Contemporary Educational Wishes**

In short, there is a group of students that wishes for a demand-driven, practical approach of education, more group work and an increase of interaction between students and between students and teachers. These wishes are positively related to feeling equipped enough to function in society after graduating. Moreover, as a result of inclusive education policies aiming for including as much students as possible, irrespective their social cultural background in the broadest sense, the learning styles of students keep diversifying too. Nowadays more students than ever before are able to study and most of them will not find a job as a researcher. Therefore it is important to also aim for practical

competences. Nevertheless, a field of tension arises here as on the one hand the university has the responsibility to protect its scientific values, and on the other hand the university aims for being inclusive.

Furthermore, providing taped lectures on a standard basis for the group of students that is not always in the position to follow lectures, may greatly enhance their chances to succeed their study. As a result of which these students are kept included in the university.

### **7. Concluding on Inclusive Education at Leiden University**

The aim of this research is to investigate Leiden University's current position on inclusive education, and to discern how contemporary inclusive education policies could be improved with respect to the experiences and ideas of students, teachers, and staff members. To answer this question, inclusive education was also placed in light of contemporary societal, educational and individual tendencies. The main findings of chapter 3, 4, 5 and 6 will be integrated below in order to answer the central question of this research.

The literature study in chapter 3 reveals that the development of inclusive education for students at Leiden University has to be evaluated in a broad multi-level (global – national – social groups – individual) scope, that also includes the varying socially constructed ideas on how to be successful in education. In the process of developing inclusive education, Leiden University bears a responsibility in (re)considering whether the socially constructed ideas on how to be successful in education of students and staff members do correspond.

As elaborated on in chapter 4, in developing inclusive education the Diversity Office of Leiden University (DULO) mainly focuses on students with a non-Western descent as being in a possible vulnerable position. However, it is unjust to principally explain diversity by cultural and religious aspects. Diversity of students is meant in the broadest sense of the word. Nevertheless, it should not be underestimated that having a non-Western descent, being member of the LGBTQ+ community or having physical and mental challenges, means there is a reasonable chance the student encounters difficulties related to feeling positioned in a minority group, culturalisation, negative influences from media and in relation to all former, discrimination.

Moreover, when focusing on a certain social group it is important to take into account that by doing so, the social group is opposed to or set apart from other social groups, which should be



done very carefully and as little as possible considering the interconnectedness of spaces, places and cultures (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 35). Furthermore, it is important that Leiden University in general, and the DULO in specific, are aware of several tendencies that arise when strongly focusing on possible disadvantaged social groups, that paradoxically hinder the development of inclusive education. First, when categorizing students in possibly vulnerable social groups automatically and implicitly a counterpart of a 'promising' or 'norm' group is created, for example students with a non-Western background versus students with a Western background or being mentally challenged versus not being mentally challenged (Avermaet and Sierens 2010, 3).

In addition to the former, Gent (Stad in Werking 2003, 10) stressed the risk of how 'including' can start meaning 'synchronizing', whereby disadvantaged groups are being appraised with regard to their arrears towards the norm group and not so much by their own competences and qualities. Moreover, by approaching students as members of a vulnerable social group, limited study results and behaviors could be unjustly attributed to being member of that social group, through which stigmatization of that social group is unjustly reinforced. These former tendencies may enhance feelings of not being included. Therefore Leiden University should have a clear idea on whether it is aiming for stimulating possible vulnerable students to start functioning in – their socially constructed perspective on – a successful way, or focusing on students' specific needs?

On the basis of the literature in chapter 3, the operationalization of inclusive education policies should be dynamic and shifting within the field that is created between the spheres of on the one hand, carefully weighing individual students' needs and on the other hand, the conceivable organizational efforts that can be applied to those individuals. However, inclusive education policies should be based on research and knowledge with regard to contemporary possible vulnerable social groups and the contemporary experiences of students. Besides, staff members and teachers should be stimulated to become conscious and sensitive in order to adaptively guide students. Ultimately, the inclusive learning environment of the university will implicitly and explicitly pass on ideas and practices of inclusiveness to students who will (re)use this knowledge and practices in other environments and therefore in society.

As stated in chapter 4, in practice this means that an adequate approach of students by teachers is fostered by increasing the teachers' knowledge of students' culture, beliefs, social economic status and/or migrant history (Hoffman 2015, 5). Knowledge with regard to the significant

relationships between possible social disadvantaged groups and school performances, is useful (not always true) as indicator for practical implications in order to develop inclusive education.

Nevertheless, as elaborated on in chapter 5, the current approaches of staff members and teachers to any topic relevant for inclusive education, are 'through their own eyes'. Which means their approach is developed between the boundaries of their socially constructed minds. Following the ideas and experiences of students, teachers and staff members in chapter 6, the teacher and staff member population at Leiden University is not diverse enough. Therefore 'through their own eyes' means that students and the topic of inclusive education are approached in a way that is not diverse enough yet.

This could be an unconscious and self-perpetuating process. When you do not experience being in a disadvantaged position, there is a great possibility you are not aware of the consequences of being in a disadvantaged position. As a result of which an – unintentional – lack of knowledge and understanding is created by white, able, cisgender and heterosexual students, teachers and staff members. Unless and until knowledge, consciousness and sensitivity related to this subject, of teachers, staff members and students will be increased. The former is related to the power of representation that also derives from the age of colonialism. According to University of Color (UoC), preliminary decolonization of our society and educational settings has to occur in order to get rid of the powerful (unconscious) representations that impedes us from developing equal educational opportunities and inclusive education.

Following the patterns in the data (chapter 6), Leiden University could improve on several topics with regard to developing an inclusive education environment. The implications that are considered relate to enhancing knowledge and consciousness of students, teachers and staff members on the following topics: 1) the diversity of staff members, 2) teaching materials, 3) the student population and its culture, 4) the inconsiderate use of language and norm creation, 5) study advisors and study coordinators, 6) the transition from high school to university, 7) the transition from university to the labor market, 8) the communication on and between several levels of the university and 9) the contemporary educational wishes. The topics related to the diversity of teachers and staff members, inconsiderate use of language and implicit norm creation and communication, were represented the most. The implications and recommendations are specified in chapter 6.

Current policies of Leiden University and other 'Randstad' universities (appendix 4.1) show how many initiatives have already been focused on or implemented, in order to improve an inclusive

education environment. Nevertheless, Zijlstra et al. (2013) stated that previous policies were poorly evaluated as a result of being too generic and being pointed at increasing study success for all students, in order to not discriminate. Inclusive education policies should not be generic or static, however should provide space in order to be adaptive to students' dynamic needs. Inclusive education policies should provide possibilities. Nevertheless, staff members and teachers are responsible for executing those somewhat general policies in a conscious, sensitive and specific way. The need for an adaptive approach by teachers and staff members is emphasized by the continuously changing needs of society and students.

Critical sociologists abandon the idea of developing equality in educational opportunities as it serves the myth that equality is possible in an unequal society (Nash 2004, 361). In my opinion the concept of 'equality in educational opportunities' is indeed questionable, because equality in opportunities will seldom be reached due to the versatility and dynamics of individuals' social cultural backgrounds. Agreeing or disagreeing, that does not change that developing an inclusive education environment should be seen as a process in which a lot has been done and still a lot improvements can be made.

The process of inclusive education moves and it moves into the right direction. A lack of inclusiveness is not related to a lack of competences. Instead, it is related to a lack of knowledge, consciousness and practicing skills. Furthermore, this kind of research provides a clear example on how the DOLU could repeat to monitor and evaluate the process of inclusive education. Therefore, the centralized point of view will be enhanced. On the basis of that, adjustments to inclusive education policies can be done. On the road of progression everybody is included.

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## 10. Appendices

### Appendix 1.1. E-mail for inviting students of Leiden University to participate in this research.

Beste student,

Vorige week hebben wij elkaar gezien tijdens de Focusgroep op het Lipsius. Deze focusgroep is opgezet om het diversiteit/inclusiviteit beleid binnen de Universiteit Leiden op poten te zetten. Een beleid dat zich meer gaat richten op het zich welkom, erkend en gerespecteerd voelen van alle studenten. Ik hoop dat jullie, net als wij, tevreden terugkijken op ons groepsgesprek.

Janita heeft jullie toen ook al laten weten dat we graag ook individuele gesprekken willen voeren, om op een aantal zaken dieper in te kunnen gaan. Jullie lieten weten daarvoor open te staan. Vandaar nu mijn berichtje. Voor alle zekerheid wil ik nog even zeggen dat alle informatie vertrouwelijk wordt behandeld.

Jouw visie en expertise als student is ontzettend waardevol voor dit onderzoek. Mocht je tijd vrij willen maken, dan hoor ik dat ontzettend graag van je. Je kunt dit mij per mail laten weten. Het interview zal ongeveer een uur duren en kan plaatsvinden op de universiteit, of elders. Dat is aan jou. Ik hoop dat je jouw stem wilt laten horen!

Vriendelijke groet, ook namens Janita,  
Sharon de Jong

**Appendix 1.2. E-mail for inviting teachers and staff members of Leiden University to participate in this research.**

Geachte heer, mevrouw,

Graag vraag ik uw aandacht voor het volgende. Zoals u weet beschikt de Universiteit Leiden sinds een paar jaar over een Diversity Office. Inzet hierbij is het gezamenlijk werken aan een inclusieve leer- en werkomgeving. In opdracht van dit Office werk ik – masterstudente Culturele Antropologie en Ontwikkelings sociologie – onder leiding van Janita Ravesloot mee aan een kwalitatief onderzoek onder studenten met een niet-westerse achtergrond. Zij worden via focusgesprekken uitgedaagd om mee te denken over een inclusieve leeromgeving.

Naast focusgesprekken met studenten is het ook de bedoeling dat ervaringsdeskundigen en experts op dit gebied worden geïnterviewd om hun visie op de inclusieve leeromgeving te horen. Ik heb uw naam door gekregen als een van deze experts. De input van de studenten, en de bijdragen van de experts worden vertaald naar beleidsadviezen voor het Diversity Office en het College van Bestuur.

Zou u op korte termijn tijd vrij willen maken om met mij van gedachten te wisselen over deze thematiek? Uw visie en uw expertise als medewerker en daardoor als deskundige zou ontzettend waardevol zijn voor dit onderzoek. Tijdens dit interview hoop ik onder andere de volgende onderwerpen met u te kunnen bespreken:

- Welke uitdagingen moeten wij oplossen, als Leidse faculteit, om een inclusieve leeromgeving vorm te kunnen geven? Wat betekent dat voor staf en organisatie? Wat zijn best practices? Wat is taaiere problematiek? Wat is nodig om all inclusive te kunnen worden?

Ik hoor ontzettend graag van u of dit mogelijk is en zo ja, wanneer wij eventueel een afspraak kunnen maken.

Met vriendelijke groet,  
Sharon de Jong

## **Appendix 2.1. Topic list for interviewing students.**

### Sociaal culturele achtergrond

- Mensen/ groepen die een belangrijke rol spelen in het leven van de student
  - Ouders, - familie, - vrienden, - studie, - religie, - woonomgeving
- Mate van verbondenheid met deze mensen/groepen

### Studiesucces

- Eigen ideeën over onderwijs en studiesucces
  - Wanneer succesvol in onderwijs/ succesvolle student
  - Wat zou een ideale onderwijsomgeving zijn voor student
  - Belemmerende factoren in een onderwijsomgeving voor student
- Ideeën van belangrijke mensen/ groepen uit de omgeving van student over onderwijs en studiesucces
  - Zijn er duidelijke ideeën vanuit omgeving student over onderwijs/ studiesucces
  - In welke mate worden deze ideeën benoemd
  - In welke mate wordt de student beïnvloed door deze ideeën

### Inclusief onderwijs

- Huidige beleving inclusiviteit van het huidige onderwijs binnen de faculteit of Universiteit Leiden
  - Beleving van benadering docenten
  - Beleving van contact met/tussen studenten
  - Beleving van het zich thuis voelen/ erkend en gewaardeerd voelen
- Evaluatie inclusiviteit van het huidige onderwijs binnen de faculteit of Universiteit Leiden
  - Evaluatie + verbeterpunten faculteit of in het algemeen
  - Evaluatie + verbeterpunten faciliteiten
  - Evaluatie + verbeterpunten benadering docenten/ studenten
  - Evaluatie + verbeterpunten manier van onderwijzen
- Benodigdheden voor een inclusieve leeromgeving binnen Universiteit Leiden
  - Wanneer presteert student binnen Universiteit Leiden op zijn/haar best
  - Wat nodig voor student om zich prettig en veilig te voelen
  - Wat is nodig voor de student om zich erkend te voelen

## **Appendix 2.2. Topic list for interviewing teachers and staff members.**

### Inclusief onderwijs

- Huidige beleving inclusiviteit van het huidige onderwijs binnen de faculteit of Universiteit Leiden
  - Beleving van benadering docenten
  - Beleving van contact met/ tussen studenten
  - Beleving van het zich thuis voelen/ erkend en gewaardeerd voelen door studenten
- Evaluatie inclusiviteit van het huidige onderwijs binnen de faculteit of de Universiteit Leiden
  - Evaluatie + verbeterpunten in het algemeen
  - Evaluatie + verbeterpunten faciliteiten
  - Evaluatie + verbeterpunten benadering docenten/ studenten
  - Evaluatie + verbeterpunten manier van onderwijzen
- Benodigheden voor een inclusieve leeromgeving binnen de Universiteit Leiden
  - Wanneer presteren studenten binnen Universiteit Leiden op hun best
  - Wat is nodig voor studenten om zich prettig en veilig te voelen
  - Wat is nodig voor studenten om zich erkend te voelen
  - Opvatting beleidsmedewerker over relatie tussen sociaal culturele achtergrond en studiesucces

### Appendix 3.1. Coding system.

Code	Uitleg
<b>Comm</b>	De communicatie
- comm tussen beleid en stud met div cul	De communicatie tussen beleid en studenten met diverse culturele achtergronden
- comm tussen initiatieven en stud met div cul	De communicatie tussen initiatieven (stud en beleid) en studenten met diverse culturele achtergronden
<b>Cultsens</b>	Cultuursensitiviteit
- cultsens niet	Geen cultuursensitiviteit
- cultsens act drink	Cultuursensitiviteit gerelateerd aan activiteiten en drinken
- cultsens studiemateriaal	Cultuursensitiviteit gerelateerd aan studiemateriaal
- cultsens overgang arbeidsmarkt	Cultuursensitiviteit gerelateerd aan de overgang van de uni naar de arbeidsmarkt
<b>hulp zoek</b>	Belangrijk met betrekking tot het zoeken van hulp door studenten
- hulp zoek good practices	Belangrijk met betrekking tot het zoeken van hulp door studenten, good practices
- hulp zoek bad practices	Belangrijk met betrekking tot het zoeken van hulp door studenten, bad practices
<b>incl ond</b>	Het creëren van inclusief onderwijs
- incl ond good practice	Het creëren van inclusief onderwijs, wat zijn good practices/ hoe het zou moeten zijn/ wat moet er nog gebeuren
- incl ond good practice docent	Het creëren van inclusief onderwijs, good practices bij docenten/ hoe het zou moeten zijn/ wat moet er nog gebeuren
- incl ond bad practice docent	Het creëren van inclusief onderwijs, bad practices bij docenten/ hoe het niet zou moeten zijn/ wat er niet moet gebeuren
- incl ond stud prob	Het creëren van inclusief onderwijs bij studenten met problemen
- incl ond overgang naar uni	Het creëren van inclusief onderwijs bij de overgang van de middelbare school naar de universiteit
- incl ond vanuit instituut	Het creëren van inclusief onderwijs binnen het instituut Universiteit Leiden
<b>Norm</b>	Het creëren van normen, onbewust of bewust
- norm taal	Het creëren van normen, onbewust of bewust door gebruik van taal
- norm image	Interne ideeën en images bepalen de norm
- norm image media	Interne ideeën en images bepalen de norm en kunnen beïnvloed worden door de media
- norm image oriëntalisme	Interne ideeën en images bepalen de norm vanuit oriëntalisme
- norm uiterlijk	Het creëren van normen gerelateerd aan uiterlijke kenmerken
<b>Popcorner</b>	Evaluaties met betrekking tot de popcorner
<b>profess studieloopbaan</b>	De professionalisering van medewerkers van de studieloopbaanbegeleiding
<b>profess sa en co</b>	De professionalisering van studieadviseurs en coördinatoren
- profess sa en co stud	De professionalisering van studieadviseurs en coördinatoren vanuit visie student
- profess sa en co beleid	De professionalisering van studieadviseurs en coördinatoren vanuit beleid
<b>Scriptie</b>	Dit is een belangrijk punt in de scriptie
<b>soc cul acht</b>	Belangrijk met betrekking tot de sociaal culturele achtergrond
- soc cul acht consequenties	Belangrijk met betrekking tot de sociaal culturele achtergrond en de consequenties die hieruit voortkomen
- soc cul acht stud suc	Belangrijk met betrekking tot de sociaal culturele achtergrond en studie succes

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stud suc

Belangrijk met betrekking tot studiesucces

- stud suc niet westers soc cul  
acht

Belangrijk met betrekking tot studiesucces bij studenten met een niet westerse sociaal  
culturele achtergrond

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#### **Appendix 4.1. Current Inclusive Education Policies at (other) 'Randstad' Universities**

The strategic agenda for higher education 2015-2025 as proposed by the ministry of Education, Culture and Science aims, among others, for increasing 1) accessibility, 2) talent development for all students, 3) diversity, 4) study success, 5) the progress of students within the educational hierarchy, 6) rich learning environments and, 7) creating a stronger connection between the university and the labor market. The 'Randstad' universities (in the west of the Netherlands) contribute to the development of inclusive education in their own ways. However, a collaboration has been set up between the Free University of Amsterdam, Leiden University and the Erasmus University of Rotterdam in order to share knowledge on positive actions, as a result of which processes can be improved. The 'Randstad' universities in collaboration with Utrecht University have earlier received a subsidy from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in order to develop activities to enhance the study success of students with a non-Western background (often being first generation students) in order to reduce dropout (Bussemaker, Crul, Van Dijk and Essen, 2011). However, according to Zijlstra et al. (2013) an important reason for poor evaluations was the fact that policies were too generic, being pointed at increasing study success for all students, instead of students with a non-Western social cultural background. In addition, Zijlstra et al. (2013) argue that often generic policies are deployed due to a principle of equality, because organizations do not want to favor or disadvantage certain social groups.

##### **7.1. Policy of 'Universiteit Leiden' (Leiden University)**

Leiden University has an elaborated 'plan of action' with regard to diversity and inclusive education for the period from 2014 till 2016. The plan of action firstly focuses on employees and aims for a diversity expert in a job application commission, open application procedures, searching committees that will search for candidates outside the regular channels and additional initiatives on guiding employees by mentors and evaluations. Second, the plan focuses on creating an easy accessible tailored form of guidance for students that seek support (which is called the 'pop-corner') and by creating a mentor-tutor system. Third, additional facilities are developed such as diverse ambassadors representing the community at introduction days, a diversity of activities within introduction weeks and rewarding initiatives of students aiming for increasing the connection between students. Fourth, while focusing on academic research, the university wants to analyze the balance in gender with regard to research proposals. On the basis of this analysis, stimulating policies may be created.

Fifth, at the level of the organization, trainings, workshops and events will be executed to support knowledge exchange and expertise concerning diversity. Moreover, the success of international research programs will be enhanced and a list of diversity experts will be created. Sixth, in relation to study success, a questionnaire will be developed for dropout students on the basis of which a plan of action could be developed. Furthermore, advice will be collected with regard to anti-discrimination programs and anti-bullying programs in order to provide them when necessary. Besides, an agenda of supporting and connecting activities will be created and provided. Seventh, initiatives will be measured, monitored and evaluated. Eighth, within the university focus groups will be held with students and outside the university contact will be increased with other universities and educational organizations. Ninth, the accessibility of the university and feeling safe has to be increased. And tenth, the representation of the university will be improved. Nevertheless, a general evaluation of this plan of action is not provided yet.

## **7.2. Policy of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Free University Amsterdam)**

With regard to inclusive education policies, the strategy of the Free University of Amsterdam (Vrije Universiteit, 2016) focuses on the evaluation of the factors that enhance or slow down the process of inclusive education. Furthermore, the focus is put on better preparing students in becoming aware of the diversity aspects in their branches. Moreover, community service will be provided in the curriculum in order to teach students to include a broad range of perspectives. Besides, the focus is increased on dealing with staff related diversity. Diversity will be continuously evaluated by scientific research, PhD projects and graduating projects.

A few projects have already been started. First, in relation to community service (CS), pilots have been executed in the schoolyear 2015-2016 at several departments focusing on 1) using research and theoretical perspectives in societal dilemma's, 2) social and care internships, 3) mentor roles, and 4) entrepreneurship and advising societal partners. Second, a project has started focusing on the improvement of diversity related competences of teachers and students. Third, a diversity scan is executed at the Free University at three departments and central services. Fourth, activities are organized to connect students with a diversity of social cultural backgrounds. Fifth, students have organized debates with regard to the topic and other projects are being prepared, focusing on integration at the labor market, stimulating the diversity of PhD's and to include a diversity component in introduction days (Vrije Universiteit, 2016).



### **7.3. Policy of the Universiteit van Amsterdam (University of Amsterdam)**

With regard to inclusive education policies, the strategy of the University of Amsterdam (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2013) mainly focuses on internationalizing, because it is evaluated as important for education, research and valorization. Their internationalizing strategies aim for 1) preparing students for a global labor market, 2) attracting international top talent, 2) strengthening the profile of the University of Amsterdam in the academic world and 4) strengthening the international identity.

Projects with regard to internationalizing focus on international classes, in which English is spoken, perspectives come from global positions and students learn to interact with a diversity of people. Besides, students are being stimulated to follow exchange programs that correspond with the curriculum of the University of Amsterdam. Second, the focus is put on international research projects that share data, knowledge and infrastructures. Third, the focus is put on an international organization, in which the university stimulates teachers and students to be internationally oriented and to acquire international competences to create an inclusive environment. Fourth, international talents are attracted by providing scholarships. And fifth, there is a focus on international networks as a result of which mobility of students can be improved (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2013).

### **7.4. Policy of the Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam (Erasmus University Rotterdam)**

Strategies with regard to inclusive education of the Erasmus University Rotterdam (2016) focus on internationalizing and diversity. The Erasmus University focuses on international networks and interdisciplinary collaboration. Besides, the university focuses on the preparation and guidance of international staff members working at the Erasmus University. Other points of attention are the male-female ratios and attracting new employees from all over the world. To improve the female position, initiatives point at careers, networking, monitoring facts and figures, and at creating consciousness and visibility. The university strives for a diverse staffing in order to increase the diversity of perspectives, cultures, knowledge and experiences as a result of which innovation and creativity in education and research could be increased. Besides, the university focuses on equal chances in which all students are feeling welcome and are able to outshine (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2016).

Projects are developed that focus on improving study success of students with a non-Western social cultural background, stimulating excellence by implementing an honors program and increasing diversity of curriculums by providing extra minors. In order to enhance study success, the university developed a pre-academic development program, which is a summer school of 4 days through which 300 first generation students (around 150 students with a non-Western social cultural background) are being prepared on social, academic and theoretical level in order to make a good start. Besides, the university researches whether small-scale education indeed protects students with a non-Western social cultural background from arrears and dropping out (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2016).