

Summary

Integration policy of the central Dutch government investigated: a synthesis of results from evaluation and monitoring research, 2003-2006

Background

Since the early 1990s, an increasing amount of effort has been spent on collecting scientific and statistical information on the position of people of non-Dutch origin in Dutch society. Despite these studies, still relatively little is known about whether government initiatives and measures are actually contributing towards participation and integration of people of non-Dutch origin. At the end of the 1990s, the Netherlands Court of Audit [*Algemene Rekenkamer*] determined that the integration policy of the central Dutch government lacked sufficient substantiation: the intended aims of many of the policy measures were not only unclearly formulated and difficult to test, but the central government (for which read the "specialist" Ministries) had also arranged only for a partial evaluation of these measures or had only announced its intention for such an evaluation (The Dutch House of Representatives, 1998-1999, 26426, no. 2). A few years later, the researchers who conducted a study on the instructions of the Dutch Temporary Committee for Research into Integration Policy (the "Blok Committee") also concluded that the effectiveness of the integration policy had hardly been investigated and the quality of existing studies was poor. It also appeared that there was no causal connection between the goals, instruments, indicators and results of the integration policy. The response by the Dutch government of the day to the report of the Blok Committee underlined the importance of the policy having clear goals that are measurable, in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of integration policy.

A research synthesis is a methodology for discovering, evaluating, collating and synthesising the 'evidence' regarding the effects of policy as shown by research. This research synthesis has been carried out in order to gain an insight into the quality of the recently implemented evaluation and monitoring research, to establish the underlying assumptions of the policy measures in the area of integration policy, and to establish whether these measures work effectively or not.

Research questions and method

The following research questions are answered in the current report:

- 1 Which evaluation and monitoring research has been carried out in recent years *through the assignment of or financed by the central Dutch government* in the field of the integration of people of non-Dutch origin?

- 2 What is the (methodological) quality of the evaluation research/monitors we have selected?
- 3 What does this evaluation research tell us about the assumed mechanisms underlying the integration policy in the areas of investigation?
- 4 Which knowledge does this evaluation research supply regarding the question what the results/effects of the evaluated policy are?
 - 4a. do the mechanisms behind the interventions/programmes work as anticipated or are there other unexpected or unforeseen mechanisms at work?
 - 4b. does this evaluation research show that the interventions/programmes are effective, and if so, under which circumstances?

In order to answer the first research question, we have listed the evaluation and monitoring research which was published in the period between 1 January 2003 and 1 March 2006 and which were conducted through the assignment of or financed by the central Dutch government.

The second research question (regarding the quality of recent evaluation research and monitors) is answered on the basis of the quality of reporting and on the basis of (international) methodological criteria. The latter relate primarily to validity and reliability.

The third research question aims at tracing the assumptions applied by policymakers who formulated or introduced a particular policy measure in order to achieve specific purposes. In order to deal with this research question, we first examined whether the following questions had been answered in the investigated evaluation research: what were the aims of the measure; which means were applied to achieve these aims; and what were the expected outcome (intended effects)? We also checked to see whether in these studies the presumed *context* – i.e. the conditions under which a policy intervention would work – had been clearly mapped out or not. We have then enquired *how*, or put differently, *through which mechanisms*, the policy measure or policy programme is assumed to operate.

Results

On listing the relevant research, we came across 16 evaluation research and 20 monitors. These evaluation studies relate to the following areas: labour market participation, education, use of/access to healthcare services, media, integration programmes, naturalisation and finally, criminality. During the discussion of the results we have allocated these studies to the following fields: socio-economic integration, socio-cultural integration, integration programme's and naturalisation, and combating criminality.

An analysis of these studies produced the following results:

Quality of evaluation research

- The quality of reporting is generally high. The aim of the research, the research problem and the research questions are clearly defined. The authors also provide a clear description of the research design. In most cases reporting also

includes a description of the research period, the sample size and the dependent and independent variables.

- In nearly every case, the research questions and research methods are consistent with the aim of the research and the questions raised.
- Researchers frequently apply a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- All evaluations are ex-post evaluations.
- Researchers frequently use different sources (and sometimes different methods) in order to answer *the same* research question. This benefits the internal reliability of the research.
- The internal reliability of evaluation studies based on qualitative methods (primarily interviews), as inferred from the authors' reporting, leaves much to be desired in comparison to the quantitative studies. Almost none of the research reports contain any information on aspects such as inter-researcher reliability, methods of analysing the interviews, standardisation of the interview situation, etc. In addition, the respondents were not selected with a view to variation of the content of the results (content representation). This shortcoming is compensated, to a certain extent with the fact that a significant proportion of all parties in question were interviewed in these studies.
- Not all of the research results are susceptible to generalisation. Researchers however often address the question as to how representative their results are, and sometimes express doubts about this aspect. In a few cases, no mention of the generalisation aspect is made in the report.
- Little use was made of validated, standardised measurement instruments (conceptual validity).
- With the exception of one study, it is *not possible* to ascribe the results to the the specific policy measures/programmes being evaluated. In other words: on the basis of these research studies it is impossible *to answer the question as to whether the policy measure/programme under evaluation is or has been effective or not*.
- With a few exceptions, the studies focus on the implementation of the policy interventions (the criterion "programme integrity"). In some cases, the evaluation was premature, because the intervention had not yet been fully implemented at the time of the research.
- Only a small proportion of the studies devote attention to the "theory" underlying the interventions/programmes under evaluation. In cases where this do happen, the authors often limit themselves to a description of the basic principles of the policy. There is little or no elaboration of the assumed mechanisms underlying the interventions/programmes. A confrontation of these mechanisms with the actual working of these interventions/programmes is also lacking.

Quality of monitors

- In the reports, the quality of reporting regarding the purpose of the monitor is generally high, but there is often a lack of an explicit description of the aim, problem definition or research questions;
- Source of data is diverse, with frequent use of (national) registers, or primary and secondary survey data;
- Recently, in addition to the well-known 'big-four' (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and those from Antilles/Aruba) monitors more often report on

smaller immigrant populations that arrived in the Netherlands over the more recent years.

- the bulk of the monitors are aimed at updating the progress in the social position of people of non-Dutch origin in the Dutch society. This is also an important justification ground for monitors. A limited number of the monitors analyse – in depth – the link between the trends/progress in the social position of people of non-Dutch origin and the policies that have been implemented.

Assumed mechanisms underlying the policy interventions/programmes

An analysis of the evaluation studies shows that the following institutional mechanisms form the basis of the policy interventions/programmes in the various fields of integration policy:

- raising employer awareness, and imposing obligations on them;
- structural changes in companies' employment policy;
- active recruitment of employees of non-Dutch origin;
- process control and information exchange;
- cooperation between organisations, or an organisational chain approach;
- cooperation between professionals/employers/care providers.

It is also assumed that patients of non-Dutch origin (must) manage to find and use primary care facilities, such as occupational healthcare (Arbozorg) and home care for terminal patients when they are in need of these facilities. The assumption is that the way in which the supply of these facilities is organised guarantees access to them.

In addition, various interventions/programs assume that the following social mechanisms should promote the social integration of people of non-Dutch origin:

- mentoring/intensive guidance;
- catching up with the language delay or intensive use of the Dutch language;
- a substantive alignment between employment and education;
- an integral approach that simultaneously tackles a range of barriers against participation;
- transfer of knowledge/access to information concerning the Dutch society, cultural differences and the fundamental Dutch standards and values;
- social contacts with the environment;
- supporting and cooperating with parents.

The actual working of the assumed mechanisms

How the above mentioned assumed mechanisms actually work is only sporadically analysed in the research we have studied. When any "failure" of interventions is mentioned, it is frequently explained by "bottlenecks" in policy processes, characteristics of the target group and situational factors. The results that *are* achieved are also attributed to these types of factors. Bottlenecks have to do with budgetary problems, insufficient expertise on the part of staff or stakeholders, poor cooperation between the (chain) partners, specific limitations within the target group (for example absence of language skills), as well as absence of motivation and socio-psychological problems among youngsters. Other bottlenecks include the target group's lack of knowledge concerning the regulations or a specific facility where it has been assumed that it is in fact accessible "to everyone". The evaluation study on occupational health care, for example, shows that a lack of trust, negative perception and the feeling of a negative approach hamper proper

communication between company doctors and ill employees, and thus, also the use of health care.

Results of interventions/programmes

Nearly all of the evaluation research studies we have studied, due to their inadequate design, are incapable of establishing whether the results of the policy intervention can *actually* be attributed to that intervention. Statements on effectiveness are primarily based on the opinions of interviewees. This is the reason why we talk about the "results" of the programmes instead of the "effects":

- the Dutch Act to Stimulate Employment among Minorities (de Wet Samen) introduced a compulsory registration of the ethnicity of the employees but did not have any concrete results in terms of creating an equal labour-market position for ethnic minorities; only 9% of those interviewed thought that the Act had been "effective";
- only a small proportion (28%) of the agreements that had been made or ought to have been made within the context of the Dutch Major Enterprises Framework Covenant (Raamconvenant Grote Ondernemingen) had in fact been completed at the time of the evaluation; other targets had only been partially achieved;
- in the context of the programme entitled "Dutch Stimulus Projects for Groups of non-Dutch origin" (Stimuleringsprojecten Allochtone Groepen), it appeared that projects had more success in achieving their influx targets (involving unemployed youth of non-Dutch origin in the projects) than their output targets (providing assistance towards education and employment);
- at the time of the evaluation, only 6% to 13% of asylum seekers were making use of the scheme under which the sectors where asylum seekers could perform paid work has been extended (the Dutch Aliens Employment Act – Wet Arbeid Vreemdelingen);
- in some cases, at the time of the evaluation research, there were still 'teething troubles' in the implementation of the programmes which actually ought to have been confined to the preparatory phases (Dutch Dual Projects – Duale Projecten);
- according to the authors, mentoring appears to be a successful instrument for achieving concrete progress in the performances and in the social-emotional development of pupils (the Dutch National Support Programme for Mentoring – Landelijk Ondersteuning Programma Mentoring);
- specific facilities for primary health care are not always easily accessible to target groups of non-Dutch origin (findings from the following studies: Home Care for Terminal Turkish and Moroccan Patients; Occupational Health Care for employees of non-Dutch origin);
- the number of applications for naturalisation declined by more than 75% following the introduction of the naturalisation test (in the period between the introduction of the test and the evaluation in 2004);
- course participants and lecturers all reacted positively to the orientation programme for spiritual clerics;
- youngsters who have been exposed to tougher police interventions commit fewer serious offences but do not give up criminal conduct altogether;
- there was a support base for multicultural local television among the well known 'big-four' groups of non-Dutch origin;

- according to the results of the only evaluation study where one can speak of ‘effectiveness’, treatment by the institutions of mental healthcare leads to a reduction of somatic complaints, symptoms of fear and post-traumatic stress syndrome among asylum seekers and refugees.

Concluding comments

It is noteworthy that a significant proportion of the policy interventions, described in the evaluation research we have investigated, are not aimed at changing the behaviour among the target groups, namely persons of non-Dutch origin. In these cases the interventions are aimed at:

- professionals, employers and care providers working with these groups
- improving the cooperation between the stakeholders, and
- improving the implementation of the programmes.

It appears that the government policy (implicitly) assumes that these measures will somehow also have an impact on the target groups and their behaviour, and will bring about the desired changes in attitude and behaviour in this way. The mechanisms that should bring about this change get little attention.

We recommend that those devising and implementing integration policy should give more substance to their assumptions on how to influence behaviour among target groups (of non-Dutch origin). As far as possible these assumptions should be “put under the microscope” prior to the introduction of the policy, in other words, they should be examined in the light of existing (social scientific) knowledge. It would also be desirable for the central Dutch government to pay more attention to the quality of the design of the evaluations when issuing its assignments. As far as monitoring is concerned, we consider that streamlining this type of research is desirable.