Teachers' multicultural attitudes and perceptions of school policy and school climate in relation to burnout

Anneke Dubbeld
Open University of The Netherlands

Natascha De Hoog
Open University of The Netherlands

Perry Den Brok
Wageningen University and Research Centre

Maarten F. de Laat
University of Wollongong, mdelaat@uow.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers

Part of the Education Commons, and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
Dubbeld, Anneke; De Hoog, Natascha; Den Brok, Perry; and de Laat, Maarten F., "Teachers’ multicultural attitudes and perceptions of school policy and school climate in relation to burnout" (2019). Faculty of Social Sciences - Papers. 4232.
https://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers/4232

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
Teachers' multicultural attitudes and perceptions of school policy and school climate in relation to burnout

Abstract
There is a growing number of ethnically and culturally diverse students in Dutch junior vocational high schools. This article examines teachers' multicultural attitudes, their perceptions of cultural diversity related to school policy and school climate, and the chance of general and diversity-related burnout. The present research also characterises teachers in terms of their multicultural attitudes and perceptions of school policy and climate through cluster analysis. Results are based on questionnaire data of 120 teachers, working at five locations of a multicultural junior vocational high school in a highly urbanised part of the Netherlands. Correlational, regression, and variance analyses indicated that the highest levels of general and diversity-related burnout were found among teachers categorised as assimilationist in attitude and who perceived their school as pluralistic. Teachers could be divided into three types of profiles: (1) relative assimilative attitude, (2) no pronounced assimilative attitude, and (3) moderate assimilative attitude. Teachers with the second profile showed the highest chance for burnout.

Disciplines
Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

This journal article is available at Research Online: https://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers/4232
Teachers’ multicultural attitudes and perceptions of school policy and school climate in relation to burnout

Anneke Dubbeld, Natascha de Hoog, Perry den Brok & Maarten de Laat

To cite this article: Anneke Dubbeld, Natascha de Hoog, Perry den Brok & Maarten de Laat (2019): Teachers’ multicultural attitudes and perceptions of school policy and school climate in relation to burnout, Intercultural Education, DOI: 10.1080/14675986.2018.1538042

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2018.1538042

© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Published online: 11 Jan 2019.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 78

View Crossmark data
Teachers’ multicultural attitudes and perceptions of school policy and school climate in relation to burnout

Anneke Dubbeld\textsuperscript{a}, Natascha de Hoog\textsuperscript{b}, Perry den Brok\textsuperscript{c} and Maarten de Laat\textsuperscript{d}

\textsuperscript{a}Welten Institute, Open University of the Netherlands, Heerlen, the Netherlands; \textsuperscript{b}Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Open University of the Netherlands, Heerlen, the Netherlands; \textsuperscript{c}Education and Learning Sciences, Wageningen University and Research, Wageningen, the Netherlands; \textsuperscript{d}Learning, Teaching & Curriculum, University of Wollongong NSW, Wollongong, Australia

**ABSTRACT**

There is a growing number of ethnically and culturally diverse students in Dutch junior vocational high schools. This article examines teachers’ multicultural attitudes, their perceptions of cultural diversity related to school policy and school climate, and the chance of general and diversity-related burnout. The present research also characterises teachers in terms of their multicultural attitudes and perceptions of school policy and climate through cluster analysis. Results are based on questionnaire data of 120 teachers, working at five locations of a multicultural junior vocational high school in a highly urbanised part of the Netherlands. Correlational, regression, and variance analyses indicated that the highest levels of general and diversity-related burnout were found among teachers categorised as assimilationist in attitude and who perceived their school as pluralistic. Teachers could be divided into three types of profiles: (1) relative assimilative attitude, (2) no pronounced assimilative attitude, and (3) moderate assimilative attitude. Teachers with the second profile showed the highest chance for burnout.

**ARTICLE HISTORY**

Received 17 May 2017
Accepted 21 December 2017

**KEYWORDS**

Multiculturalism; teachers’ attitudes; general and diversity-related burnout; ethnic diversity; ethnic pluralism; assimilationist

**Introduction**

As the Western world becomes more culturally and ethnically diverse, so does its classrooms. More than ever, teachers and students encounter ethnic and cultural diversity in their classrooms. This trend is strongly linked to immigration, which represents steadily growing globalisation and increasing mobility of people, also within the European Union (Banting and Kymlicka 2004; Castles and Miller 2003; Entzinger and Van der Meer 2004; Hofstede 1991; Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel 2012; Scheffer 2014). In 2015, approximately four million of the 17 million residing in the Netherlands were either first or second-generation immigrants (CBS 2015). Approximately 2.7 of these four million had their roots in non-western countries, mostly Morocco, Turkey,
Surinam, and the Dutch Antilles, Eastern Europe (former Balkan States), the Middle East, and African countries. The four largest cities are home to 45% of the nation’s immigrants (CBS 2015). Consequently, multicultural classrooms have become the ‘standard’ classroom. Multicultural classrooms are characterised by diversity in ethnicity, religion, mother tongue, and cultural traditions (Banks and McGee Banks 2004; Ben-Peretz, Eilam, and Yankelevitch, 2006; Vedder 2006).

Teaching is a challenging and stressful job (Vedder, Horenczyk, and Liebkind 2007). Teachers face great demands on their energy and personal skills, sometimes with the risk of burnout. Burnout is described as a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity (Maslach and Jackson 1986). Travers and Cooper found in their research in the U.K. (1993) that teachers suffered from higher levels of stress than the average population and persons who also worked in client-related professions such as medical doctors, nurses, and hospital staff. Dutch figures point in the same direction (CBS 2015). According to the Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS 2015), the burnout rate for Dutch teachers in 2015 was 18%, which was higher than for any other profession. The highest rate of 21% burnout was found at urban junior vocational high schools (AOB 2015; Arbo Unie 2015; CBS 2015; DUO 2014; van Daalen 2010), which also happen to have the highest numbers of culturally and ethnically diverse classrooms. The majority of immigrant students in the Netherlands attend junior vocational education (CBS 2015). The over-representation of ethnically diverse students in junior vocational high schools seems to be associated with teacher burnout rates (AOB 2015; Arbo Unie 2015; CBS 2015; DUO 2014). Teacher burnout is affected by many different factors, including teachers’ attitudes and expectations (Horenczyk and Tatar 2002; Vanheule and Verhaeghe 2004). The present study examines the possible link between cultural diversity and teacher burnout by examining the role of teachers’ multicultural attitudes, as well as their multicultural perceptions of school policy and school climate. In particular, the focus is on whether a (mis)match between teacher multicultural attitudes and their perceptions of school policy influences chance for burnout in teachers.

Though many teachers have grown up in a culturally diverse society, teachers are often not well prepared to deal with ethnic and cultural diversity in their classroom (Banks and McGee Banks 2004; Wubbels et al. 2006), which may lead to stress and burnout. The increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in schools and classrooms weighs heavily on teachers, and the reality of the educational setting at present is one of increasing ‘cultural mismatch’ (Cockrell et al. 1999) between teachers, students, and parents (Shor 2005; Tatar and Horenczyk 2003; Vedder and Horenczyk 2006). This affects teachers working with immigrant students and makes teachers less able to face the
challenges posed by multicultural contexts. Lucas (1997) discussed the mismatch between teaching styles developed for – and successfully implemented with – native-born children and those necessary for immigrant students, and classroom difficulties related to the students’ lack of basic knowledge about how the school functions. The results of this mismatch are, according to Lucas (1997), immigrant students performing worse in academic tasks than non-immigrants and showing behavioural problems in class. It is, thus, imperative to address the complex and intricate challenges that teachers face who work with culturally and ethnically diverse student populations. All these ‘acculturative stressors’ may negatively affect the personal and professional well-being of teachers. An effect of this can be ‘diversity-related burnout’ (Tatar and Horenczyk 2003) among teachers. Diversity-related burnout is a distinct construct that reflects the negative impact of daily coping with cultural and ethnically diverse students. This type of burnout has been shown to be related to the degree of cultural heterogeneity of the school and to the teacher’s own views toward multiculturalism (Dubbeld et al. 2017; Tatar and Horenczyk 2003).

Although much research has been conducted on teachers’ burnout (AOB 2015; van Horn, Schaufeli, and Enzmann 2001), there is a lack of literature that focuses on teachers’ perceptions and attitudes of multiculturalism at ethnically diverse (junior vocational) high schools in relation to burnout (Bowen 2005; Dubbeld et al. 2017; Prick 2006; van Daalen 2010; Vink 2010). Research has shown that the perceptions and attitudes of teachers have a significant influence on the social atmosphere of the school and attitudes of the students (Banks 2004b; Vedder 2006).

Teachers bring their own cultural attitudes, values, hopes, and beliefs to the classroom (Banks 2004a). Knowledge and attitudes are closely interrelated, and both are likely to affect classroom practice (Banks 2004a; den Brok, Bergen, and Brekelmans 2006). As indicated by Vollmer (2000), teachers’ perceptions and attitudes have a strong impact on the classroom’s educational and social climate. In particular, beliefs about inclusivity and heterogeneity in classrooms are one of the greatest predictors of teaching effectiveness (Stanovitch and Jordan 1998). Often, teachers are unaware of their ideological assumptions, which have been ‘naturalized’ to such an extent that they are seen as part of the ‘common sense’. Among teachers who work with immigrant students, these ideological assumptions include societal beliefs regarding newcomers’ acculturation and the role of the school in this process.

According to Reichers and Schneider (1990), school climate is widely defined as the shared perception of ‘the way things are around here’. More specifically, school climate is the shared perception of organisational policies and procedures, both formal and informal. These shared perceptions and attitudes of organisational policies, practices, and procedures enable individuals to make sense of ambiguous and conflicting organisational cues. Hoy
and Miskal (2005) define school climate as ‘the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behaviour of people’. This definition, which establishes school social climate as one of the key characteristics that distinguishes different schools from another, clearly identifies school climate as a critical variable to consider in the current study. Galloway et al. (1982) suggested that teacher burnout may be mediated by school organisation and school climate despite objectively unfavourable conditions. It may well be that school climate and organisational culture within schools has an effect on the levels of burnout that teachers experience (Horenczyk and Ben-Shalom 2001; Horenczyk and Tatar 2002).

An exploratory study in the Netherlands examined teachers’ attitudes regarding multicultural classrooms (Wubbels et al. 2006). These focus groups showed that teaching in multicultural classrooms requires specific competences in creating positive teacher–student relations and achieving student engagement. Teachers’ positive attitudes toward multicultural students facilitate inclusion in a mainstream setting because positive attitudes are closely and positively related to motivation to work with and to teach ethnically diverse students (Kalyava, Gojkovic, and Tsakiris 2007). Thus, positive beliefs toward inclusiveness are one of the key factors in facilitating the process of teaching and student learning. In contrast, negative beliefs and prejudice can have a detrimental effect on the school environment (Agirdag, Loobuyck, and Van Houtte 2012; Bakari 2003; Eisikovits 2008; Vollmer 2000), and consequently affect teachers’ stress levels and well-being.

According to Banks (2004b), teachers should be aware of the major ideologies related to ethnic pluralism and be able to examine their own philosophical positions. The two major positions he distinguishes are the cultural pluralist ideology and the assimilationist ideology (Banks 2004a). The pluralist ideology is useful because it informs us about the importance of culture and ethnicity within society. The assimilationist ideology argues that the school should socialise youth, so they will be effective participants within the common culture and will develop commitments to its basic values and ideologies. In schools with an assimilationist orientation, the task of integrating immigrants is usually seen as marginal, and no major structural or pedagogical changes are considered necessary. Schools that adopt a pluralistic philosophy place much importance on the education of their immigrant students (Gillborn and Ladson-Billings 2004; Joshee 2004; Luchtenberg 2004; Partington 1998).

Historically, schools in Western societies have had assimilation rather than pluralism as their major goal (Banks 2004b; Gordon 1975). An assimilationist conception of citizenship existed in most Western democratic nation-states. Even though recently (Entzinger and Van der Meer 2004; Hofstede 1991; Scheffer 2014) Dutch society has become increasingly pluralistic, both culturally and ethnically, for a long time an assimilationist conception of citizenship and education existed in the Netherlands (Berry et al. 2006; Gordon 1975;
Penninx et al. (1999). The students were expected to acquire the dominant culture of the school and society, but the school neither legitimised nor assimilated parts of the students’ cultures. In general, a pluralistic stance by teachers is likely more conducive to the adaptation of their immigrant students (Horenczyk and Ben-Shalom 2001; Rumberger and Palardy 2005; Vedder, Horenczyk, and Liebkind 2007), as well as contributes to a positive school climate (Agirdag et al. 2012; Bakari 2003; Kalyava, Gokovic, and Tsakiris 2007; Stanovitch and Jordan 1998). However, in some cases immigrant students who behave in line with the assimilative viewpoint will adjust better when their teachers and other educational agents also hold assimilationist expectations (Horenczyk and Tatar 2002; Vedder, Horenczyk, and Liebkind 2007).

Research has shown there is often a difference between teachers’ multicultural attitudes in school and towards society at large. A study by Horenczyk and Tatar (2002) showed that teacher attitudes were highly assimilationist in the school context, whereas attitudes dealing with immigrants in the wider society were predominantly pluralistic. Although multicultural rhetoric is gaining ground in educational discourse, actual educational practices in many immigrant-receiving societies suggest that schools continue to seek to assimilate immigrant students into the societal mainstream (Olneck 1995). Many teachers working in multicultural classes are unable to move away from their own assimilationist attitudes and teaching styles (Berry and Kalin 1995; Eisikovits 2008; McInemey et al. 2001), which will likely have a negative effect on the school environment for both students and teachers. By holding on to an ideology that can have an aversive effect on a multicultural classroom, teachers might be causing themselves a lot of additional work stress. Teachers’ attitudes and perceptions toward school policy and school climate should be a central focus in research to understand teachers’ perceptions and attitudes vis-à-vis ethnic and cultural diverse students. School policy and school climate provide an identity for its members and generate commitment to the school organisation (Greenberg and Baron 2000).

**The current study**

There is little empirical research focussing on the factors that may lead to (diversity-related) burnout in multicultural classrooms. The present study took place at ethnically and culturally diverse junior vocational high schools in the Netherlands. The burnout rate at this type of schools is a dramatically high 21% (AOB 2015; Arbo Unie 2015; CBS 2015; DUO 2014). This study focuses on teachers’ multicultural attitudes, perceptions of school policy, and school climate in relation to general and diversity-related burnout. In particular, the focus was on whether a (mis)match between teacher multicultural attitudes and their perceptions of school policy influenced burnout in teachers. Only two studies could be identified that addressed some of these concepts...
(Dubbeld et al. 2017; Horenczyk and Tatar 2002). In particular, the study by Tatar and Horenczyk (2003) in Israel suggested that teachers working in multicultural schools can experience types of stress that add to regular teacher stress. They found the highest level of diversity-related burnout among teachers categorised as assimilationist and who work in schools that they perceive as assimilationist. Those teachers who embraced multiculturalism more strongly reported fewer feelings of stress when teaching in ethnically diverse classrooms (Horenczyk and Tatar 2002; Vedder and Horenczyk 2006).

The following research questions were investigated: Is there an association between general and diversity-related burnout and teachers’ multicultural attitudes and perceptions toward school policy and school climate? If so, to what degree? Are there combinations of teachers’ multicultural attitudes and perceptions that are more or less beneficial (to blame) for general or diversity-related burnout?

**Method**

**Participants and procedure**

Respondents completed a self-report questionnaire consisting of four major parts, each including several sections. The questionnaire was distributed among 200 teachers working in five multicultural junior vocational high schools (VMBO) in a highly urbanised western part of the Netherlands. Dutch junior vocational education (VMBO) prepares students for intermediate vocational education, but it does not qualify them for a profession. The intermediate vocational training that follows after the VMBO can prepare students for a wide array of professions, educated at the so-called secondary vocational high school (MBO). The instructions stated that the questionnaire aimed to map teachers’ perceptions and impact of daily teaching in ethnically diverse classes in the Netherlands.

In total, 120 teachers completed the questionnaire (response rate 60%). Sixty-one female teachers (50.8%) and 59 male teachers (49.2%). The average age of the teachers was 43.07 years ($SD = 10.14$), ranging from 22 to 64 years old. The mean number of years of teaching experience was 14.96 ($SD = 10.76$), ranging from 1 to 40. The majority of teachers (98 or 82%) were born in the Netherlands, and 22 of the teachers (18%) were non-native born.

**Instruments**

The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The survey began with questions about teachers’ background characteristics, namely age, gender, education, years of teaching experience, school subject, country of birth, and teachers’ religion.
**Multicultural teacher attitudes**

The second section measured teachers’ attitudes toward multiculturalism, using the ‘Multicultural Ideology Scale’, developed by Berry and Kalin (1995) and translated to Dutch general and educational context using translation and back translation (Dubbeld 2007). This scale measured teachers’ attitudes toward multiculturalism and consisted of six items describing potential characteristics of teachers’ attitude toward multiculturalism. Respondents indicated their agreement with each statement on a four-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree). The instrument consisted of two subscales, pluralistic ideology (two items; Cronbach’s alpha = .78, for example, ‘We have to help immigrants from various countries of origin to retain their own cultural background’) and assimilationist ideology (four items; Cronbach’s alpha = .65, for example, ‘It is best for the Netherlands when immigrants distance themselves as quickly as possible from their cultural background’).

The third section included teachers’ perceptions of the school’s multicultural policy and school climate, which were primarily based on the ‘Perceived Multicultural School Climate Questionnaire’ (Greenberg and Baron 2000; Horenczyk and Tatar 2002) and the MEOCS (Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey’s used in the USA and Canadian Army; Landis, Dansby, and Tallarigo 1996). The original questionnaires were translated to the Dutch general and educational context using translation and back translation (Dubbeld 2007). The questionnaire examined teachers’ perceptions at three levels: (A) perceptions of school policy, (B) perceptions of school climate for students, and (C) perceptions of school climate for teachers.

(A) **Pluralistic school policy** – This part consisted of five possible situations encountered by teachers at their school with regard to multiculturalism. For example, ‘My school values students’ diverse cultural backgrounds’ Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.75. Teachers estimated the extent to which each of these situations were likely to occur in their school on a four-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree). The higher the score, the more pluralistic teachers perceived their school to be.

(B) **Cross-cultural interactions between students** – This part consisted of a list of three statements related to the perceived integration and interaction of students of different ethnic backgrounds. Teachers indicated the extent to which they believed students of different ethnic and cultural background interacted, both during and after class. An example of a statement was ‘Native and non-native students spend time with each other during breaks’. Answers were on a four-point scale from 1 (‘totally disagree’) to 4 (totally agree). Cronbach’s alpha was 0.84. The higher the score, the more different students were perceived to interact with each other.

(C) **Teachers’ openness to diversity** – This part consisted of two statements reflecting how teachers at the school handled diversity: ‘Teachers at this school take students’ cultural background into account’ and ‘Teachers at this school
discipline native students less often than non-native students for the same misbehaviour. Teachers indicated the extent to which they agreed with these statements on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (definitely agree). Cronbach’s alpha was 0.79. The higher the score, the more open to diversity teachers were perceived to be.

General and diversity-related burnout

The fourth part of the survey consisted of scales for general and diversity-related burnout developed by Tatar and Horenczyk (2003). The section consisted of a list of eight items describing potential characteristics of teachers’ burnout. The items were adapted from a modified Hebrew version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach and Jackson 1986) and were also used in a study by Israeli teachers (Tatar and Horenczyk 2003). The questionnaire was adapted to the Dutch general and educational context using translation and back translation (Dubbeld 2007). All items were formulated on four-point Likert scales, with a response format ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree). One sample of the five items for general burnout is: ‘I feel that working closely with students causes a great deal of tension’. Three items dealt with the potential characteristics of teachers’ diversity-related burnout. A sample item was: ‘Daily working with immigrant students frustrates me’. The reliability of the two scales was good; Cronbach’s alpha was 0.77 for the general burnout scale, and 0.75 for the diversity-related burnout scale.

Statistical analyses

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 19) was used to analyse the data. First, descriptive analyses were carried out. This included computing mean scores and standard deviations for each of the scales of the questionnaire. Subsequently, to answer the research questions, correlations between background characteristics, perceptions, and burnout were computed. To test the research questions, two multiple regression analyses with assimilative and pluralistic attitudes and perceptions of school policy and school climate as predictors and general burnout and diversity-related burnout as dependent variables, respectively, were performed. The backward method was used to only identify the strongest predictors of burnout.

Subsequently, a cluster analysis was conducted to create clusters with the five predictors as variables. In cluster analysis, respondents are assigned to groups (clusters) based on a set of variables or objects so that the respondents in the same cluster are more similar to each other than to those in other clusters (Tan, Steinbach, and Kumar, 2005). In the current study, cluster analysis was used to identify groups of teachers (profiles) who showed different
patterns of scores across the five predictors. Hierarchical clustering with squared Euclidian distances was used to ensure that profiles were optimally different from each other. Ward’s method (2001) was selected to make sure that teachers within the profile were optimally similar. Solutions with two to six clusters were tested in the search for the optimal number of profiles. For each of the cluster solutions, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to establish the amounts of variance explained by the solution(s) and to determine whether the profiles were significantly different from each other. The optimal number of profiles was determined to be three. Solutions with fewer than three profiles explained considerably lower amounts of variance in each of the five variables. More than three profiles explained more variance in teachers’ scores, but these solutions had few respondents in some profiles and, moreover, in the three cluster solution, each of the profiles was still interpretable, whereas this was much harder in solutions with more clusters. The three profiles will be discussed in the results section. In addition, ANOVAs was conducted to test whether the three clusters of teachers differed in terms of general and diversity-related burnout. All tests were conducted at the 95% confidence level; with a sample of 120 the margin of error was 8.92.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 1 provides the means and standard deviations for all the variables in this study. The overall means for general and diversity-related burnout were just below the midpoint of the scale, both scales scored around 2 (on a scale from 1 to 4). The standard deviations of both scales were moderate, which means that there were some differences between teachers.

The scale of pluralistic attitudes had a mean of $M = 2.60$ ($SD = 0.57$), which was higher than the mean of assimilative attitudes $M = 1.85$ ($SD = 0.50$), and both were around the midpoint of the scale. This means there was a variety of attitudes among teachers, but on average attitudes were more pluralistic than they were assimilationist. The scale of pluralistic school policy had a mean of $M = 3.07$ ($SD = 0.41$), implying that on average teachers perceived their school to be rather

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General burnout</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity-related burnout</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilative attitudes</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralistic attitudes</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralistic school policy</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural interactions between students</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ openness to diversity</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The items of all scales were scored on a four-point scale.
pluralistic. Cross-cultural interaction between students had a mean of $M = 2.39$ ($SD = 0.61$), which is just above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that teachers perceived that students of different ethnic backgrounds interacted somewhat with each other. Finally, the scale of teachers’ openness to diversity had a mean of $M = 3.16$ ($SD = 0.58$), which means that on average teachers were perceived by their colleagues to be rather open to diversity.

Correlations were computed to explore relationships between teachers’ multicultural attitudes and perceptions towards school policy and school climate and their burnout scores (see Table 2). Results indicated a positive relationship between assimilative attitudes and both forms of burnout, however, there was no statistically significant relationship between teachers’ pluralistic attitudes and both burnouts. The more teachers’ attitudes were assimilative, the higher their score on both burnouts. Teachers’ perceptions of school policy, cross-cultural interactions between students, and teachers’ openness to diversity all correlated negatively with both burnouts. More specifically, the more pluralistic teachers perceived their school to be, the more they perceived different students to interact, and the more they perceived their fellow teachers to be very open to students’ different cultural backgrounds, the lower their burnout scores were.

**General burnout, diversity-related burnout, and teachers’ perceptions of school policy and school climate**

To examine which attitudes or perceptions of school policy and climate variables best predict burnout and diversity-related burnout, two regression analyses were performed using the backward method (see Tables 3 and 4). The results of the regression analysis for general burnout showed that, initially when all variables were included in the analysis ($R^2 = .16$), only assimilative attitude was a significant predictor of general burnout, $\beta = .25$, $p < .01$. In the final model ($R^2 = .15$), three variables were significant predictors of general burnout, namely assimilative attitude, $\beta = .20$, $p < .05$, pluralistic school policy, $\beta = −.20$, $p < .05$, and cross-cultural interactions between students, $\beta = −.18$, $p < .05$. Thus, the less assimilative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Correlations between all main variables (N = 120)*.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity-related burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilative attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralistic attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralistic school policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural interactions between students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ openness to diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.52***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−0.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−0.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pearson correlations for all variables; **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
teachers’ attitudes were, the more they perceived the school to be pluralistic, and the more they perceived different students to interact, the lower their general burnout scores were.

The results of the regression analysis for diversity-related burnout showed a slightly different picture. In the model with all predictors ($R^2 = .18$), just as with general burnout, only assimilative attitude was a significant predictor, $\beta = .33$, $p < .001$. However, in the final model ($R^2 = .17$), three variables were included, but only two were statistically significant, namely, assimilative attitude, $\beta = .29$, $p < .001$, and cross-cultural interactions between students, $\beta = -.18$, $p < .05$. Thus, the less assimilative teachers’ attitudes and the more they perceived students with different ethnic backgrounds to interact, the lower their diversity-related burnout scores were.
Cluster analysis findings

Subsequently, based on the questionnaire data, a cluster analysis was conducted to create clusters with the five predictors as variables. Three clusters of teachers were identified, so that the respondents in the same cluster are more similar to each other than those in other clusters.

As shown in Table 5, there were three substantial groups of teachers that could be labelled as followed: (1) Relative assimilative attitude, (2) No pronounced assimilative attitude, (3) Moderate assimilative attitude. In cluster 1, teachers showed relatively high assimilative attitudes, but they saw their school as rather pluralistic. They seemed to view teachers as rather tolerant of student diversity, but they perceived the interaction between students as average. In cluster 2, teachers showed no really pronounced attitudes, yet their perceptions of the school were rather pluralistic, and especially the school climate was perceived as open to diversity with much student interaction. In cluster 3, teachers held the least assimilative attitudes, they perceived their school as rather pluralistic, but when it came to climate they perceived the lowest level of interaction between different students, though they did think fellow teachers were very open to student diversity.

Additional analyses of variance were conducted to test whether teachers from the three clusters differed with respect to their general and diversity-related burnout scores (see Figure 1). The clusters of teachers differed both on general burnout, $F(2,117) = 7.37$, $p < .001$, as well as on diversity-related burnout scores, $F(2,117) = 12.03$, $p < .001$. Teachers from cluster 2 had higher general burnout scores ($M = 2.15$, $SD = .50$) than teachers from cluster 3 ($M = 1.73$, $SD = .46$). The same difference was found for diversity-related burnout scores ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .50$ and $M = 2.00$, $SD = .43$ for cluster 2 and cluster 3 teachers, respectively). In addition, teachers from cluster 1 scored lower ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .45$) on diversity-related burnout than teachers from cluster 2 ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .50$).

Table 5. Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) scores by clusters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (n = 42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilative attitudes</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18 (0.42)</td>
<td>1.80 (0.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralistic attitudes</td>
<td>2.07 (0.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralistic school policy</td>
<td>2.92 (0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural interaction std.</td>
<td>2.31 (0.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers openness to div.</td>
<td>2.89 (0.61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001
Discussion

The research described in this article aimed to answer the questions whether there is an association between general and diversity-related burnout and teachers’ multicultural attitudes and perceptions toward school policy and school climate? If so, to what degree? Are there combinations of teachers’ attitudes and perceptions that are more or less beneficial for general or diversity-related burnout? The results reported in this paper showed that the more assimilative teachers’ attitudes were and the less they perceived school policy and school climate as pluralistic, the higher general and diversity-related burnout scores, and vice versa. The less assimilative teachers’ attitudes were and the more they perceived different students to interact, the lower their general burnout scores.

Regarding diversity-related burnout, the results were different; the less assimilative teachers’ attitudes were, and the more they perceived students with different backgrounds to interact, the lower their diversity-related burnout scores. It was shown that the highest level of burnout was present in teachers who held assimilationist attitudes and worked in schools that they perceived as having a policy of pluralism. The less assimilative teachers’ attitudes were, the more they perceived the school to be pluralistic. It cannot be ruled out that the effect is actually in the opposite direction, with teachers with burnout developing and adopting assimilationist attitudes as a result of their unsuccessful attempt to implement a more pluralistic approach. The assimilationist strategy can be perceived by the burnout teacher as an easier and more efficient way to deal with culturally and ethnically diverse classes. Teachers’ attitudes and perceptions in school are influenced by aspects of
school organisation and school policy as it relates to cultural and ethnic diversity (Banks 2004a; Horenczyk and Tatar 2002; Vedder, Horenczyk, and Liebkind 2007). Most teachers are socialised within society-schools and teacher education institutions with mainstream-centric norms, teachers therefore likely embrace an assimilationist stance and view pluralistic ideologies as radical (Banks 2004b; Eldering 2002; Eisikovits 2008). According to Eisikovits (2008), many teachers working in multicultural classes are unable to move away from their own assimilationist stance and teaching habits, while others do not know how to deal with immigrant students showing some degree of seclusionism. In an absence of systematic training, teachers rely heavily on personal experience as a source of knowledge.

The study also investigated what distinct profiles of attitudes and perceptions teachers have and how these profiles are associated with general and diversity-related burnout. This analysis revealed three distinct and substantial profiles, labelled as ‘a relative assimilative attitude’, ‘no pronounced assimilative attitude’, and ‘moderate assimilative attitude’. The findings enhance our understanding of different ways in which general and diversity-related burnout can be experienced. There were important and meaningful differences in teachers’ attitudes. The findings indicated that the highest levels of assimilationist attitudes among teachers who saw their school as rather pluralistic were found in profile one and three. As for profile two, teachers showed no pronounced assimilative or pluralistic attitudes. The results showed that when teachers did not have a clear, outspoken assimilationist or pluralistic attitude they were more susceptible for general and diversity-related burnout. The highest levels of both burnouts were found among teachers categorised as assimilationist and who work in schools perceived by them to be pluralistic. Likewise pluralistic teachers who work in what they perceive as pluralistic settings showed the lowest degrees of both burnouts. Thus, it seems that a pluralistic attitude is a necessary condition for the prevention of both burnouts.

Limitations and implications

Overall, the findings of this study provided some useful insights with respect to teachers’ attitudes and perceptions toward school policy and school climate in relation to general and diversity-related burnout. The current study had some limitations that should be mentioned, which might have implications for further research. A first limitation concerned the selective sample of the study; the current study only focused on teachers working at ethnically diverse vocational high schools in the highly urbanised Western part of the Netherlands. Second, the study included self-report measures. The use of the questionnaire seemed to be the only way to reach a large group of teachers to profile their attitudes and perceptions, but at the same time it implied that no
in-depth information was gained about the nature and impact of burnout that was experienced.

The further development and refinement of specific scales for investigating teachers’ profiles is necessary. This kind of information might be helpful for further describing and interpreting the profiles. It is recommended the present research design be extended with other methodological strategies, including qualitative techniques and longitudinal studies, that would shed light on more complex relationships between the variables, in addition to exposing the meanings of each of these for teachers, the students, students’ parents, and the school organisation. In-depth interviews with teachers would be especially interesting for further research.

This research may contribute to better understanding of the complex and often conflictual role that teachers need to develop and perform when working in multicultural classrooms. This understanding can help them face challenges associated with ethnically and culturally diverse classes. This can be done by identifying teachers with high levels of general and diversity-related burnout to provide them with the necessary assistance, and determining the factors which contribute to general and diversity-related burnout, both at the level of teacher-student and teacher-class interactions, as well as at school policy level (Tatar and Horenczyk 2003; Vedder 2006).

The results of this study should be taken as an indication that all is not well in the teaching profession in the Netherlands. Efforts are needed to change the attitudes and perceptions of teachers, so that the school evolves into an institution that cherishes cultural and ethnic diversity as a resource for development and learning, also for teachers (Vedder and Horenczyk 2006). Within this context, multicultural teacher training is important to prepare teachers for their role in ethnically diverse classes. Effective teacher education programmes should help teachers explore and clarify their own ethnic and cultural identities and develop more positive attitudes toward other racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. To change the role of the school from being a cultural transmitter into being a cultural transformer, the approach of teachers and schools needs to change (Banks 2004a). To succeed in this, in turn, multicultural teacher training will have to take on a more important role (Vedder 2006).

Providing learning opportunities for the school staff to learn how to organise differentiation practices within a whole class is absolutely necessary to prevent them from becoming entangled in vicious circles leading to more stress and burnout. Increased attention to the expectations of teachers regarding their immigrant students is also necessary. Determination and support of policy makers is required to provide schools and teachers with the necessary means to cope with arising challenges, and gain more insight in such challenges by studying these topics in depth. Although this study was carried out
in the Netherlands, the aforementioned implications may also be applicable for teachers who work with ethnic diverse students elsewhere.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**Notes on contributors**

**Anneke Dubbeld** is a Ph.D. student of the Welten Institute, at the Open University of the Netherlands. She is working on a project about teachers’ multicultural attitudes in relation to general burnout and diversity-related burnout, among teachers working in urban junior vocational high schools in the Netherlands and with cultural heterogeneous classes in the Dutch context.

**Natascha de Hoog** is an assistant professor of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the Open University of the Netherlands, where she teaches research methods. Her research interests include topics such as attitudes & behaviour change, social identity, communication & affect, and health behaviour.

**Perry den Brok** is full professor and chair of the Education & Learning Sciences group at Wageningen University and Research. His research interests include learning environments, science education, teacher learning and professional development, interpersonal relationships in education and multicultural education. He also acts as teacher educator and is involved in educational innovation projects, both at the level of secondary as well as higher education.

**Maarten de Laat** is director of the Learning, Teaching & Curriculum division at the University of Wollongong. His research concentrates on social learning, networked learning relationships and use of digital technologies to design and facilitate, learning and innovation student-centred online learning environments.

**References**


McInemey, V., D. M. McInemey, M. Cincotta, P. Totaro, and D. Williams. 2001. *Teachers Attitudes To, and Beliefs About, Multicultural Education: Have There Been Changes over the Last Twenty Years?* Australia: University of Western Sydney.


