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- including a translation of one of the sources named above without quotation marks or footnotes;
- paraphrasing (parts of) the texts listed above without proper references: paraphrasing must be marked as such, by expressly mentioning the original author in the text or in a footnote, so that you do not give the impression that it is your own idea;
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- submitting work done previously by the student without reference to the original paper, and presenting it as original work done in the context of the course, without the express permission of the course lecturer;
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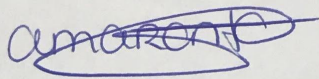
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Teaching Citizenship from a feminist perspective

The course Citizenship at the MBO school
Albeda College, Rotterdam, as a case
study.

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on how citizenship education can benefit from Third Wave Feminist pedagogy, with the Citizenship course at the MBO school *Albeda College* -Rotterdam- as a case study. The aim of the thesis is to be a tool in designing the plans for improving the Citizenship course at *Albeda College*. To answer the research question a critical analysis of three Citizenship manuals (*Schokland*, *De maatschappij dat ben jij* and *Nu Burgerschap*) has been carried out and interviews with Citizenship teachers and the Executive Board of *Albeda College* have been conducted. The thesis concentrates on three components of citizenship education: the curriculum, the teaching practice and the class environment. The analysis of the curriculum shows that the manuals do not sufficiently stimulate students to deconstruct processes of social injustice, while displaying a definition of citizenship that does not correspond to the diverse student population of *Albeda College*. The theory of safe spaces can help teachers with creating an atmosphere in class where students and teachers feel encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences through memory work. My advice is to let teachers design their classes together with the students, while keeping the theories of safe spaces and memory work in mind.

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1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the research topic:

Young people form the society of tomorrow. To give young people the best possible equipment for the future, MBO courses do (because of their pedagogical and didactic responsibility) not only focus on the development of professional knowledge and skills, but also on the development of citizenship skills.¹

This is how the document *Citizenship Agenda 2017-2021* starts. This document is published by The MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and describes the investigation into the quality of the course as well as an advice on how to improve it. Citizenship is an obligatory course that is taught to all students who attend a MBO school with the purpose of providing the knowledge and skills that will help them become active and responsible citizens. The last few years the course has been the subject of multiple investigations and has been criticized for its quality.² The MBO Council stated that the Citizenship course in its current form does not sufficiently stimulate students to adopt a critical attitude. Because of the variety of manuals, not every student is taught how to become a citizen in the same way. During my internship at *Albeda College* in 2017, I performed a research on what the students' opinion was regarding one of the methods used (*Schokland*) for the Citizenship course. Through a survey and focus groups I tried to map to what extent the students felt represented in and could identify with the curriculum. The fifty students expressed their dissatisfaction with the inclusiveness of the curriculum. In the interviews I conducted, teachers have indicated that they do not incorporate certain (sensitive) subjects in the curriculum, because of their lack of knowledge on the subjects and the fear of causing tension in the classroom. In this thesis I will examine how Third Wave Feminist pedagogy can be a tool in improving the Citizenship course.

¹ The MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2016): 5.

² Ibid: 6.

1.2 Research question and aim of the thesis:

This thesis focuses on how citizenship education can benefit from Third Wave Feminist pedagogy, with the Citizenship course at the MBO school *Albeda College* -Rotterdam- as a case study. The research question is: “How can the improvement of the Citizenship course at *Albeda College* benefit from feminist pedagogy content?”

To answer the research question this thesis concentrates on three components of citizenship education: the curriculum, the teaching practice and the class environment. I have chosen to incorporate all three components, because they are intertwined. The MBO Council and *Albeda College* provide the teachers with freedom in how to design their classes. They can choose if they would like to use a manual for the course and which subjects to discuss, as long as they incorporate subjects from all four dimensions of the Citizenship course. The course is divided in four components (themes) which are called dimensions: the social dimension, the economic dimension, the political-legal dimension and the dimension vital citizenship. When the class environment or the teaching practice are not satisfactory, teachers might choose to neglect certain subjects which they define as sensitive or complex. The used manuals also influence how the course takes shape and how the teacher discusses subjects in class. All three components influence each other and the quality of the course.

The aim of the thesis is to be a tool in designing the plans for improving the Citizenship course at *Albeda College*. Because of the bad evaluation the course received from the MBO Council in 2017, *Albeda College* aspires to improve the quality by developing new requirements for the Citizenship course.

1.3 The structure of the thesis:

This thesis is divided in an introduction (which is the first chapter), five chapters and a conclusion. In the second chapter I will elaborate on what kind of institution *Albeda College* is and how the course Citizenship can be defined. The third chapter revolves around the curriculum and starts with comparing the definition of critical thinking used by the MBO Council to the definition used by feminist and social researchers such as Johnson (2010). I will analyse the manuals used for the Citizenship from a Third Wave Feminist perspective, which means that I will focus on three points: how is social injustice discussed, how is a ‘good’ citizen defined and how does the manual stimulate students to adapt a critical attitude. Last, I will show how teachers design their classes and their own material.

In the fourth chapter I will illustrate the atmosphere in class during the course on Citizenship by comparing the ideal version described by the Executive Board to the atmosphere the teachers described in the interviews. Afterwards I will describe the debate about the notion of 'safe spaces' and demonstrate how the Citizenship course can benefit from the creation of such spaces in the classroom.

The fifth and last chapter revolves around how the teacher practice in the course can benefit from using memory work in class. I will first explain the notion of 'memory work' and its place in feminist research. Afterwards I will demonstrate how memory work as a feminist tool can help discuss sensitive topics from the curriculum in the Citizenship class.

1.4 Method, methodology and literature:

My research method for this thesis consists of a combination of literature study, analysis of manuals and semi-structured interviews. The thesis is tailored to meet limitations of scale, timing and resources. In order to constitute a concrete research subject, some elements, such as student perspective, are left out. I chose to focus on the teacher's perspective, because their behaviour has a big influence on the class environment and the teaching practice. Apart from that, the teacher has the freedom to design the curriculum and the course. For those reasons I chose to specify my advice on the teachers and the Executive Board. The thesis will only focus on how the school currently shapes the course and which measures need to be taken to solve the problem as described in the thesis.

My research will be supported by interviews with two members of the Executive Board of *Albeda College* as well as multiple teachers who differ in cultural background, sex and age. *Albeda College* is one of the biggest MBO schools in the Rijnmond region of the Dutch province of South-Holland (it has 20.000 students) and has multiple locations in Rotterdam, Spijkenisse, Vlaardingen, Oude-Tonge, Hellevoetsluis and other cities. The school has nine different departments (called 'branches' in Dutch) which offer multiple educational programs. The school offers 120 educational programs in total and every educational program is obliged to teach the Citizenship to its students for at least one year. The Executive Board could not give me the exact number of Citizenship teachers, but they explained that the number would be around 150 teachers.

Because of privacy, I was unable to obtain a list of contact details. Instead Gonda Pisters, staff director Education & Quality at *Albeda College*, sent out an email I wrote explaining the nature of my research. Teachers who were interested in helping with the research could respond to my email address. Teachers who responded were passionate about the course, which influences my research. Conducting the interviews proved to be more difficult than I expected, since only seven teachers reacted to my email.

After I spoke with the Educational Leaders of every department, who then assigned teachers to help with the research, I was able to conduct interviews with 17 teachers. For four departments I spoke with two teachers and for three departments I spoke with three teachers. Each interview was conducted individually and had a length between 45 to 75 minutes. These interviews were open-ended and semi-structured, which means that I prepared a list of specific questions but ended up following the direction that the conversations took. Free interaction between the researcher and the interviewee can be beneficial to the quality of the interview, when talking about the latter's experience, because it includes opportunities for clarification and discussion. The interviewees can express their ideas and thoughts in their own words. I recorded all the interviews and guaranteed that the names used would be fictional, which created a safer space and left more room for informal conversation which led to a true dialogue instead of an interrogation. The interviews were conducted between November 2017 and February 2017. Because the Executive Board is aware of when I spoke with which teacher, and can therefore know which pseudonym I used for which teacher, I will not include the dates of the interviews in the bibliography.

Apart from the interviews, the thesis also consists of a literature study on Third Wave Feminist pedagogy. Third Wave Feminism is most often "defined by the refusal of a singular feminism and demonstrates an awareness of different ways of doing feminism and being a feminist"³ and that is also the definition I will use in this thesis. Third Wave Feminism can be linked to the Citizenship course because of the emphasis on critical thinking. Professor of Politics Mary G. Dietz stated in 1987 that one of the main elements of feminism is the idea that context is all. What she meant by this is that for the past decades feminists have committed their time and energy to critically analyse and deconstruct power relations and explore how these relations influence our beliefs and thoughts.⁴

³ Gronold, Hipfl, Pederson (ed.) (2009): 9.

⁴ Dietz (1987).

In 2016 the MBO Council published a document called *Guidance Critical Thinking Ability* which states that it is important for students to become aware of how they think, because their thoughts are influenced by their environment.⁵ This perception seems to be in line with the feminist notion that a person's thoughts and beliefs are shaped by their social position in society and their whole surroundings. The MBO Council considers it necessary that students learn how to critically analyse given knowledge as well as their own way of thinking.

Because of the connection between Third Wave Feminism and the Citizenship course, I chose to incorporate three theories in this thesis: critical thinking, safe space and memory work. For all three theories I will use multiple authors to describe the debate on the subject in the academic field and to illustrate multiple perspectives. Afterwards I will describe which definition I use in my analysis of the Citizenship course.

My research is designed especially for *Albeda College* and the outcome only applies to this MBO school. That can make it the thesis less interesting for other institutions, but it also means that the research is specific enough to be used in improving the course.

⁵ MBO Council (2016): 3.

2. The context of the course

In this chapter I will first clarify what kind of institution *Albeda College* is. Afterwards I will explain how the course Citizenship takes shape at *Albeda College*, why it is an obligatory course and what critique it received. I will then use the *Qualification File* (2007) and *Citizenship Agenda* (2017) from the MBO Council to show what the students are expected to learn through the course and which requirements are set for the design of the classes.

2.1 What kind of institution is *Albeda College*?

All children in the Netherlands are legally obliged to visit elementary school from the age of four to twelve. What high school they attend afterwards, depends on the advice given by teachers and on their test scores. There are three types of high school: Pre-vocational Education or Lower General Secondary Education (VMBO), Higher General Secondary Education (HAVO) and Pre-University Education (VWO). Each level of high school prepares the students for a different type of higher education. Students who finished VMBO can go to Senior Secondary Vocational Education, also known as MBO. Students who finished HAVO can go to Universities of Applied Sciences, also known as HBO and they can also attend MBO. Students who successfully finished VWO can attend these two types of higher education as well as Research Universities, also known as WO. It is also possible for students to transfer to a higher level of high school education, which takes two additional years.

The educational programs one can follow at an MBO school are mostly more practice-oriented and will train the student for a specific profession, such as secretary or chef. *Albeda College* is one of the biggest MBO schools in the Rijnmond region of the Dutch province of South-Holland and calls itself a “Regional Training Institute for senior secondary vocational education (MBO) and adult education”⁶ on its website. It has multiple locations in Rotterdam, Spijkenisse, Vlaardingen, Oude-Tonge, Hellevoetsluis and other cities. The school has nine different departments (called ‘branches’ in Dutch), as can be seen in Figure 1, which offer multiple educational programs.

⁶ <https://www.albeda.nl/over> (3-4-2018)



Figure 1. *Albeda College's* departments.

2.2 What is Citizenship?

In MBO Citizenship is sometimes taught as part of the course 'Career and Citizenship'⁷ or as part of 'Career orientation',⁸ but also as an individual course which is just called 'Citizenship.' The career part of the course focuses on employability and personal development. In my research I will only focus on the citizenship part of the course.

In 2008 the Dutch government decided that it is obligatory for MBO schools to teach at least one year of Citizenship in every educational program in every department. The reasoning behind this decision is that VMBO students do not gain enough knowledge on how to be active participants in society in their four years of high school, as opposed to HAVO and VWO students who already followed the obligatory course 'Social Studies'⁹ in their five or six years of high school. Even though Citizenship and 'Social Studies' cannot be defined as exactly the same course, they do both discuss elements of Dutch society such as laws, politics and religion. The MBO Council describes it as follows:

The citizenship component prepares the MBO students for full participation in society and a well-functioning in their profession. The skills, attitudes and knowledge that go with it are described in four dimensions of citizenship: the political-legal dimension, the economic dimension, the social dimension and the dimension of vital citizenship.¹⁰

⁷ 'Loopbaan en Burgerschap' in Dutch

⁸ LOB or 'Loopbaanoriëntatie' in Dutch

⁹ 'Maatschappijleer' in Dutch

¹⁰ The MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2016): 5.

2.3 The course under inspection:

In November of 2016 two members of the House of Representatives—Michel Rog and Mohammed Mohandis— proposed a law that would make it compulsory for MBO schools to incorporate ‘Social Studies’ in their curriculum. The schools were not thrilled by this idea, since they are already obliged to teach the Citizenship course. The politicians criticized the quality of the Citizenship course, because the teachers in charge of the course do not need to be specifically qualified to teach the course. Citizenship teachers only need to obtain a *Didactic Pedagogical Certificate*, but are not required to have a background in social studies.¹¹ Even though this law was never approved by the House of Representatives, it led to much criticism about how MBO schools conceive and teach the course.

Each school can decide for itself which manual to use and how to organise and manage the course. Minister of Education Jet Bussemaker, who is critical about the freedom every school gets in designing the Citizenship course, stated in July 2016 that she wanted to make sure every MBO school incorporates the competence of critical and responsible thinking in their curriculum. Bussemaker explained that she finds it important that students know how to deal with conflicting opinions:

In some MBO schools, citizenship classes are already part of the regular curriculum, but schools are free in the way in which they provide the course. The new law must therefore ensure an unambiguous course in critical and responsible thinking that is the same in all MBO schools.¹²

Although this law never passed, it shows the need for homogenisation of the Citizenship course. Later that year in December 2016, the Inspection of Education published a report that stated that even though the Citizenship course meets the statutory assignment, there is a need for further development. For the report two hundred schools completed questionnaires and inspectors visited sixty-seven elementary, secondary and MBO schools. The conclusion reads: “It would seem sensible to clarify the Citizenship [course] task and, more precisely, to determine what is expected of schools.”¹³

¹¹ Nationale Onderwijsgids (23-02-2016) 'Mbo'ers moeten verplicht les krijgen in burgerschap'.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Inspection of Education (December 2016): 8.

Because of that report, State Secretary Sander Dekker (Education, VVD) wanted to tighten the law on the curriculum of the course on Citizenship. Dekker:

Important topics that need to be learned are common traditions, culture and language. Students have to practice to make decisions in a democratic way and develop a moral compass.¹⁴

Even though these are just a few examples of researches that have been conducted on the quality of the Citizenship course, they illustrate the debate on the nature of the course.

2.4 What kind of citizen should the course teach them to be?

In 2007 the Dutch government and the Steering Committee Competence-oriented Vocational Education¹⁵ published a document called *Learning, Career and Citizenship*¹⁶ in which they clarified the expectations for the Citizenship course. The document stated the following about Dutch citizenship:

The dynamic and multicultural Dutch society places high demands on its citizens and residents. The description of citizenship expresses these requirements in a guiding framework based on dimensions, tasks and competences. [...] Citizenship concerns the willingness and ability to be part of a community and to make an active contribution.¹⁷

The word that keeps coming back in every document on the Citizenship course is 'active.' Apparently the Dutch government think it is important for citizens to not just be a passive member of society, but to also want to change society in a positive way. Apart from that, it is also clearly stated that the Netherlands are a multicultural country where citizens need to be able to co-exist with people with different beliefs and values. To become active citizens, students need to learn how to be critical consumers, how to behave at social events and how to take care of their own—physical and mental—health.¹⁸ Students need to be able to understand different opinions and views on subjects, collect and compare information and “then form their own opinion based on the collected information and personal considerations, while taking into account their own interests and the interests of others.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Vasterman, Juliette (7-2-2017) 'Beetje aanmodderen met 'burgerschap' mag niet meer.'

¹⁵ Stuurgroep Competentiegericht Beroepsonderwijs in Dutch.

¹⁶ The document is called *Leren, Loopbaan en Burgerschap* in Dutch.

¹⁷ Gemeenschappelijk procesmanagement Competentiegericht (2007): 5.

¹⁸ Ibid: 6.

¹⁹ Ibid: 9.

The Citizenship course does not have one particular manual that every MBO school is obliged to use. Instead, the Dutch government has designed four dimensions (which can be seen as components of the course) that are required to be part of the curriculum, together with a list of competences every student needs to acquire during the Citizenship course. Even though critical thinking is often named as one of the key competences students need to acquire in the course, it only focuses on developing a critical attitude as a consumer. The course should teach a student to “compare his own wishes and possibilities with his financial leeway, necessary conditions and choices that influence the financial situation in the longer term.”²⁰ According to this quote, learning how to be a critical and self-reflective member of Dutch society was in 2007 connected to the economic dimension. How have the requirements for the Citizenship course changed over the last decade?

The MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science published a new document in 2017 called the *Citizenship Agenda* in which they explain how they expect the course Citizenship to change from 2017 to 2021. In their introduction they state the following:

Citizenship education has received a lot of attention in recent years. The reasons for that include the major changes in society, the increasing influence of social media, (inter)national events that evoke discussions and the increasing tension in neighbourhoods. How do young people deal with the turbulence of this time and with the sometimes contradictory truths?²¹ They acknowledge that the course has received critique on not transforming students into active citizens, which they want to change by improving the course. The purpose of the *Citizenship Agenda* is to assist MBO schools in designing a Citizenship course that corresponds to the diversity of the student population.²² The first thing that becomes clear when comparing the two documents (2007 and 2017) is that the definitions and the goals of the four dimensions are broadened. The political-legal dimension now should also incorporate a conversation about “[...] recognizing the basic values of our society, dealing with value dilemmas (such as sexual diversity) and thinking of these basic values in forming an opinion and acting on it.”²³

²⁰ Gemeenschappelijk procesmanagement Competentiegericht (2007): 11.

²¹ The MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2016): 5.

²² Ibid: 5.

²³ Ibid: 7.

The MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science stated in the *Citizenship Agenda* (2017) that subjects as religious radicalisation and sexting ought to be incorporated in the social dimension. In order to sharpen the curriculum, which should make it less complicated for teachers to design their own classes, the document divides the four dimensions in multiple themes.²⁴ The social dimension focusses on teaching students to appreciate the cultural variety of the Netherlands. The *Citizenship Agenda* encourages taking field trips, such as visiting a museum or interacting with refugees and local artists, as a way of showing students multiple perspectives. The dimension health has been replaced by the dimension vital citizenship, which now also includes topics like teen pregnancies, STD's and drugs.²⁵ Many topics that I, as a feminist, find important (such as non-consensual sex and the notion of diversity) have been added to the description of the course.

The *Citizenship Agenda* (2017) stated that because of the variety in manuals, the Citizenship course does not meet the social expectations for citizenship education.²⁶ In the following chapter I will elaborate on how the three manuals used at *Albeda College* influence the courses perception of citizenship.

²⁴ The MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2016): 15.

²⁵ Ibid: 7.

²⁶ Ibid: 9.

3: The curriculum

In this chapter I will analyse the manuals used for the Citizenship course at *Albeda College* from a Third Wave Feminist perspective. I will start with defining what Third Wave Feminism is. Afterwards I will discuss *Albeda College's* policy on the teaching manuals for the course. Then I will examine each manual separately and include the teachers' opinions about the manuals. I will end this chapter by describing the Citizenship classes of teachers who have created their own manuals and/or use their own materials. **Critical thinking.**

3.1 What is Third Wave Feminism?

Feminists have long recognized as imperative the task of seeking out, defining, and criticizing the complex reality that governs the ways we think, the values we hold, and the relationships we share, especially with regard to gender. Context is all, then feminism in its various guises is committed to uncovering what is all around us and to revealing the power relations that constitute the creatures we become.²⁷

Professor of Politics Mary G. Dietz stated in 1987 that one of the main elements of feminism is the idea that context is all. What she meant by this is that for the past decades feminists have committed their time and energy to critically analyse and deconstruct power relations and explore how these relations influence our beliefs and thoughts. Because of the focus on context, Dietz states that the personal is the political in feminism. In this chapter I will show how this idea plays a role in feminist pedagogy and how it can be linked to citizenship education.

The focus on researching the relation between processes of power and our social and cultural position is essential in Third Wave Feminism. Given that it is risky to pinpoint a definition of Third Wave Feminism, since inclusiveness is one of its key elements, I will explain the term by showing its history. Third Wave Feminisms originally emerged in the 1990s at a time where "feminism [was] a given, and the idea of gender equality [was] taken for granted"²⁸. The term First Wave Feminism emerged in publications of Naomi Wolf (1993) and Rebecca Walker (1992), who both defined the term differently.

²⁷ Dietz (1987): 1.

²⁸ Rasmusson (2003): 431.

Wolf “argued for a postfeminist version of liberal feminism”²⁹ in her publication *Fire with Fire* (1993) where she described politics, female empowerment and women's sexual liberation. Postfeminism can be characterized by its critique on and its attempt to distance itself from Second Wave Feminism. Walker (1992) on the other hand positioned herself opposite from postfeminism by explaining that the Third Wave will continue the fight for equality the Second Wave started. Third Wave Feminism is most often “defined by the refusal of a singular feminism and demonstrates an awareness of different ways of doing feminism and being a feminist”³⁰ and that is also the definition I will use in this thesis. The notion of sisterhood that was a central concept in Second Wave Feminism has also been problematized by Third Wave Feminists. “It was no longer seen as acceptable for ‘white’ feminists to claim to be speaking for all women.”³¹ By assuming that all women have the same oppressor, namely men, and therefore suffer from the same injustice, they neglected the complexity of social injustice. The feminist lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality in 1989 to show that elements such as gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity are always interrelated and therefore cannot be researched separately. These axes of inequality influence the way in which gender receives form and content. Crenshaw’s notion of intersectionality has been used to demonstrate that not all women experience the same oppression. Even though all women are oppressed in a patriarchal society, people like women of colour, women of lower classes and lesbians face multiple layers of oppression caused not only by men, but also by other women.³² Because of the multiple feminisms, Third Wave Feminists are not a homogeneous group. I will use several theories linked to feminist pedagogy (such as critical thinking, safe spaces and memory work) in my analysis of the Citizenship course at *Albeda College*.

3.2 Teaching Citizenship with different manuals:

“We have over 20.000 students so I am proud that for the most part everything runs smoothly,” Ron, Chairman of the Executive Board, states. By this he means that there have not been many confrontations these last years that can be linked to discrimination, but he does not take into account that discrimination is not always displayed as a confrontation and that discrimination in a subtle form may not be noticed by the Executive Board.

²⁹ Gronold et al. (2009): 9.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Lofstdottir & Hipfl (ed.) (2012): 9.

³² Crenshaw (1995).

Albeda College uses three different manuals for the Citizenship course, which means that the content of the course can differ per educational program. This variety in approach was also one of the points of criticism in the *Citizenship Agenda* of 2017. How does *Albeda College* respond to this critique? Anky:

We are trying to give the teachers more freedom and we cannot do that by deciding that every teacher needs to use the same manual. [...] Working with these many different manuals can be very confusing and inconvenient for students who transfer from one program to another. Besides that, I think it is not necessary to use books for this course, because it only costs our students a lot of money and the information is always outdated.

Anky and Ron share the opinion that it would be better for the quality of the course if there would be more unity in the methodology of the course, but they are cautious with making decisions as the Executive Board because they believe that the teachers in charge of the course are more aware of the students' needs and expectations of the course.

As I explained in first chapter, the Dutch government has punctualized in the law that the course Citizenship is divided in four components which are called dimensions, which each Dutch MBO school needs to incorporate in their curriculum. The dimensions are the political-legal dimension, the economic dimension, the social dimension and the dimension of vital citizenship. Many manuals for this course have been designed, but *Albeda College* uses three of them, namely *Schokland* from the publisher Deviant, *De maatschappij dat ben jij*³³ from the publisher Codename Future and *Nu Burgerschap*³⁴ from the publisher Noordhoff. In the following paragraphs I will review these manuals from a Third Wave Feminist perspective and connect the incorporated information to feminist pedagogy on citizenship education. I will link this information to the interviews with the teachers in order to create a well-rounded image of the classes in which these methods are used. I will focus on four points in my analysis, namely:

1. How is a 'good' citizen defined in the manual?
2. How are subjects linked to social injustice discussed in the manual?
3. How is critical thinking defined and stimulated through the manual?

In the next paragraph I will elaborate more on the debate on citizenship education surrounding those three points of analysis.

³³ Which can be translated as "You are the society".

³⁴ Which can be translated as "Citizenship now".

3.3 The debate on citizenship education:

A powerful narrative through which citizenship education is imagined involves the transformation of students into an engaged citizenry despite differences of race, class, culture, gender, etc.³⁵

Social scientists Tupper, Cappello and Sevigny (2010) stated that the purpose of citizenship courses taught in American high schools is to transform students into engaged citizens of society. This is also the case for the Citizenship course at *Albeda College*. Tupper et al. argue that the definition of a 'good' citizen used in the courses does not reflect the different social positions of the students. Lister (1997) illustrates how false universalism in citizenship is suggested where the "white, heterosexual, non-disabled male"³⁶ is the norm. If citizenship education presumes that in order to become good citizens students have to conform to this norm, how can it adequately discuss and deconstruct processes of social injustice? Both articles argue that the concept of citizenship is formed by power relations and therefore do not represent all students.

One of the competences students need to acquire during the Citizenship course is critical thinking. In 2016 the MBO Council published a document called *Guidance Critical Thinking Ability*³⁷, which was designed to help teachers with incorporating this competence in their Citizenship curriculum. Johnson (2010) stated that critical thinking is gaining an increasing role in citizenship education and therefore influences the definition of a 'good' citizen:

Further demands have been placed on citizenship curricula around the world by the expectation that they encourage citizens to be "critical". The promotion of forms of critical citizenship reflects the longstanding attempts by societies to address what Tyack and Cuban (1995) describe as one of the perennial dilemmas of schooling, namely the desire on the one hand to ensure an obedient populace and on the other hand to ensure that citizens are creative and critical.³⁸

Tyack and Cuban (1995) declare that there seems to be a certain contradiction in teaching students critical thinking in a setting that is designed to transform students into an obedient and uniform group.

³⁵ Tupper et al. (2010): 336.

³⁶ Lister (1997): 66.

³⁷ This is my translation. The original name of the document is *Handreiking Kritische Denkvaardigheden*.

³⁸ Johnson (2010): 2.

I do not agree with the idea that schools do automatically transform students into non-critical human beings, but I believe that when the teaching practice and the curriculum stimulate a critical attitude, students can learn how to deconstruct their way of thinking. The word critical can have a variety of definitions which can influence the use of the word. The MBO Council separates three components of critical thinking, namely the judging of information (1), adopting a different perspective (2) and reflecting on one's own thoughts (3). The document states that it is important for students to become aware of how they think, because their thoughts are influenced by their environment.³⁹ This line of thought seems to be in line with the feminist notion that a person's thoughts and beliefs are shaped by their social position in society and their whole surroundings. The MBO Council considers it necessary that students learn how to critically analyse given knowledge as well as their own way of thinking. But how do they define critical thinking?

According to the document courage and stamina are necessary in order to maintain a critical attitude.⁴⁰ A student needs to be courageous to express her own opinion even when it differs from the norm, and she needs to have stamina in order to learn critical thinking. Learning how to critically reflect on subjects does take effort and time, and in that way it takes stamina, because it means that a student needs to deconstruct processes and power relations. Students with a critical attitude should according to the document be aware that they do not possess all the knowledge and that their ideas and thoughts are shaped by their upbringing and their environment.⁴¹

The document states that (according to Kohlberg) at the average age of 18 years old, a shift takes place from self-oriented thinking to thinking in a broader context of justice, fairness and equality.⁴² Critical thinking seems to be intertwined with a moral judgement, but this relationship is not discussed in greater detail. Kohlberg's statement is generalizing student behaviour and I do not agree with the idea that adults (older than the age of 18) are automatically capable of thinking in a broader moral context. Thinking critically, which should incorporate thinking in a moral context, is an attitude students can only obtain through intensive training.

³⁹ MBO Council (2016): 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid: 7.

⁴¹ Ibid: 6.

⁴² Ibid: 8.

According to Johnson there has been a debate about the role of developing a “moralistic (focusing on values) or ideological (focusing on power) concern”⁴³ in critical thinking. Multiple academics, such as Lipman (2003), share the opinion that critical thinking can be defined as “being able to reach ‘sound’ conclusions”⁴⁴ and therefore does not include a moral category. Martin (1992), as one of the few academics who does not share that belief, argues that “critical thinking is founded in moral perspectives and should be motivated by concerns for a more just and humane world”⁴⁵. The concept of critical thinking that the MBO Council uses in their document seems to be in sync with Martin’s (1992) beliefs, but does the manual *Schokland* effectively transform students into critical and morally responsible citizens?

3.4 The manual *Schokland* published by Deviant:

The book starts with an introduction chapter which focuses on the definition of freedom, rights and rules, and laws. The first part briefly states that freedom (defined as being able to decide what to do and what not to do) is not always a given right, and it refers to World War II for illustration.⁴⁶ The book suggests that every citizen in the Netherlands nowadays experiences freedom, when in reality there are still many citizens whose perception differs from the norm and who are limited in deciding how to shape their lives. This is also illustrated in the assignments attached to the chapter, where the student is asked to give three examples which show that there is a lot of freedom in the Netherlands as well as three examples which show that citizens in other countries experience less freedom. The student is not given the opportunity to explore the complexity of the notion of freedom and is not stimulated to take different social positions into account. The structure of the questions and the choice for certain words will guide the student’s answer into a particular direction in which the Dutch society is presented as free.

The social dimension of the manual (as one of four components of Citizenship) is divided in four chapters: culture and identity, multicultural society, safety, and media. These chapters discuss culture, subcultures, religion, identity, behaviour that differs from the norm, refugees, integration, woman emancipation and domestic/sexual abuse.

⁴³ Johnson (2010): 4.

⁴⁴ Lipman (2003).

⁴⁵ Johnson (2010): 4.

⁴⁶ Dorresteyn et al. (2017): 11.

These concepts are an essential part of Dutch society and therefore it is crucial to incorporate them in the curriculum, which *Schokland* does. The book does however only mention those concepts very briefly, without further analysing them. The assignments also do not require students to critically think about the relations between multiple cultures in Dutch society or about the role of gender in domestic and sexual abuse. The subjects are briefly mentioned, without acknowledging their complexity. The manual does incorporate issues that are linked to social injustice such as the impact of the Dutch colonial past on today's society, but due to the amount of information and the limited time for the course, students and teachers are not given the opportunity to elaborate and critically analyse certain situations. The knowledge about racism and emancipation (it is not clear who's emancipation) is tested by questions such as "What is racism" and "What are stereotypes?"⁴⁷. Even though these are questions that can help open a conversation about social injustice, they can hardly be described as stimulating a student's critical thinking ability. Apart from that, only by taking the time to openly discuss and hopefully deconstruct processes of social injustice in society, change can happen.

Cora, one of the teachers who uses the manual in class, is glad the manual integrates enough information about the different dimensions (components) of Citizenship, but she would prefer it if the book analysed certain topics more instead of merely mentioning them. Cora:

Even though it is good that the method offers enough theory, it makes the students very passive, which means that I have to come up with extra assignments in order to make the information more interesting.

As a teacher Cora recognizes the importance of actively engaging with the theories in order to absorb the information, which is something the manual does not stimulate students to do. Emma, another teacher, states that she finds the question and assignments in the book not challenging enough:

Making it that easy ridicules the students' intelligence. The manual gives the students information and then asks simple questions about it, which is not the right way to deal with the complexity of citizenship.

The manual seems to transform a student into a citizen who possess a lot of knowledge, but is not able to critically reflect on it and/or use it to actively improve Dutch society. It also does not contain assignments that stimulate students to reflect on their own experiences.

⁴⁷ Brunen et al. (2016): 58.

Gender and the nature/nurture debate are not mentioned at all in the manual, while they could be integrated in the chapter on identity and conflicting roles. The part about behaviour that differs from the norm mentions Rosa Parks, but does not give motive for a deeper analysis of the subject. It describes her situation in a very simplistic way and only in a few sentences. When talking about the norm and behaviour that differs from it, the manual uses examples from the past and makes no comment about present day behaviour. It would have been an opportunity to explore masculine and feminine behaviour and how certain people such as Kathoey⁴⁸ in Thailand differ from those norms. Feminism (as a 20th-century phenomenon) is mentioned in a few sentences in the legal-political dimension when discussing women's right to vote, but the word feminism itself is not used. There are also no assignments attached to this subject, even though the decision of who has the right to vote and who does not shapes the citizens' view on politics. In the context of critical thinking it would have been a good opportunity to analyse the discourse behind the decision to let women vote. Democracy and dictatorship are mentioned from a Eurocentric point of view, which means that it focuses on the violation of human rights in third world countries, but does not discuss, for example, the treatment of transgenders in the United States.

The economic dimension describes concepts about the working field, employees' rights and critical consuming. It mentions how ideal images are outlined in advertisements and how celebrities are used to sell products. It does not mention the consequences this has on people's behaviour and self-esteem or how a person can learn to decode these myths. The dimension of vital citizenship integrates living a healthy lifestyle, taking drugs and other stimulants, and discusses physical and mental health problems. It does incorporate sexuality, the place of addicts in societies and stigma around psychological problems. Everything is touched upon, but not discussed in depth.

The book does not define the word citizen anywhere in the book, which means that *Schokland's* notion of a "good" citizen needs to be found in the choice of subjects and assignments incorporated in the manual. When analysing the manual's choice to discuss certain subjects more extensively than others, the following definition of a Dutch citizen can be established:

A Dutch citizen experiences freedom, possesses a lot of knowledge on how the Dutch society works in terms of rights and laws, and lives a healthy (defined as not having physical and mental problems, and not taking drugs or other stimulants) lifestyle.

⁴⁸ Male-to-female transgenders in Thailand. Kathoey is often seen as a third gender.

A Dutch citizen is not required to be aware of how gender, class and other axes shape their worldview and the way they live. A Dutch citizen needs to be tolerant (which is defined as not interfering with other people's way of living) towards other cultures and beliefs, but she does not have the responsibility to fight social injustice. The manual does not teach a student how to become aware of processes of social injustice in the Netherlands, since it assumes that the Netherlands are a righteous country. Not all students will be able to identify their experiences and visions for the future with this definition of a citizen.⁴⁹ Because of the focus on theory and the lack of assignments that stimulate critical thinking, multiple teachers already decided not to use *Schokland* as a manual for the course.

3.5 The manual *De maatschappij dat ben jij* published by Codename Future:

Because the manual is designed in 2017, which is after the MBO Council published the document about critical thinking, it is the only manual that includes a chapter which focuses on the importance on critical thinking. The manual also refers to video's students can watch on their phone by scanning a QR code. It asks students to read a sentence such as "How much would you give to rescue five monkeys from someone's garden where they are being abused?"⁵⁰ and then think about what information they need to have to be able to accurately answer the question. For one they need to know if they need to pay in money or give something else. Even though this is a good way to show students the importance of critical thinking, it is a missed opportunity if the competence is not linked to problems of social injustice.

The manual mentions the nature/nurture debate, but focuses solely on personality traits and outer appearances, and does not mention the role of gender in this debate. It is the only manual that mentions gender and defines it as "the social and cultural identity which belongs to a sex"⁵¹. Even though this is the most common definition of gender, there are (feminist) academics such as Judith Butler who question the distinction between sex and gender. The manual describes sex as follows:

Are you a man or a woman? That makes quite the difference. Biologically, but also socially and psychologically men and women differ. We, consciously or unconsciously, treat men and women differently.⁵²

⁴⁹ Tupper, Cappello, Seigny (2010): 358.

⁵⁰ Gameren & Boendermaker (2017): 14.

⁵¹ Ibid: 57.

⁵² Ibid.

The first thing I noticed about this quote is the distinction between men and women. Those are the only two options given, so a student may feel like she needs to identify as either a man or a woman. The manual does not present more information on these two identities and does not stimulate the student to question if these are indeed the only two options and if it is necessary to identify as one or the other. The second thing I noticed is that the manual also states that men and women differ biologically, socially and psychologically without further explaining this statement. Is it possible that men differ as much or even more from each other than they do from people who identify themselves as women? Even if men and women do differ, is that difference biological or can it be culturally constructed? These are questions that should be incorporated in the manual when talking about sex and gender. Apart from that, the manual uses 'we' to describe a certain group, but who is this 'we'? By saying 'we' treat men and women differently, the manual seems to suggest that every person does this. Or maybe there are some people who are not part of this 'we' and who do not believe in treating a person differently because of her gender. The manual also does not elaborate more on how 'we' treat men and women differently and why 'we' do that. This could have been an opportunity to critically analyse thoughts regarding gender and behaviour linked to these thoughts.

Multiple teachers have indicated in the interviews that they think the manual should incorporate more theory and less assignments. Danny is not very pleased with the method:

I would like to see that the book takes topics more seriously and offers more theory. It is so concise that you may as well not offer the subjects at all, because this way you do not do them justice. You have to find a lot of information yourself in order to make the class more all-round and simply better. I do not mind doing that, but then I might as well not use the book at all.

Danny would prefer not using a manual at all, but designing his own assignments with the requirement for critical thinking in mind.

When discussing diversity and discrimination, the manual states that "The Netherlands is internationally known to be an open and tolerant country". The assignment linked to this subject is to explain if the student considers herself to be tolerant. By stating that the Netherlands is a tolerant country, the student is more likely inclined to answer that she does consider herself to be tolerant because she is part of Dutch society.

It also does not stimulate the student to critically analyse to who Dutch society is tolerant and who it is not. Is being tolerant enough or should a 'good' citizen also try to create equal opportunities for every member of society? This is not discussed in the manual.

In the manual every dimension (component of the Citizenship course) includes a portfolio assignment which should take up two to three hours to compose and needs to be done individually. For every portfolio assignment the manual explains which part of critical thinking as described by the MBO Council (gathering and judging information, adopting a different perspective or reflecting on one's own thoughts) is focused on. For the social dimension the student needs to adopt a different perspective by asking an elderly person about their values and comparing them to their own. Critical thinking is incorporated more advantageously in this manual than it is in the other two manuals used for the Citizenship course.

Because of the large amount of assignments and the relatively small amount of theory, it can be questioned if students are handed enough background on a certain subject to effectively engage with it. Apart from that, the assignments (including the portfolio one) are to be performed individually, while opening a conversation about discourses in thinking could be more beneficial for developing a critical attitude. The manual mainly focuses on exploring the student's identity, which is something the other manuals do not do. The assignments are linked to current events and incorporate different forms of technology and media. It also incorporates feminist issues such as sexism (by analysing an advertisement for children's toys that shows a girl playing with a toy vacuum cleaner accompanied by the phrase "I want to do it like mommy"⁵³), that the other manuals neglect. The manual does however incorporate certain discourses in the text without critically reflecting on them.

Teacher Diana doubts if the ideals set for the course are too high: "Honestly, I do not think this method helps the students become active and responsible members of society, but I am also not sure if the course is able to do that at all." The relationship between theory and assignments seems to be a complex issue for many teachers, because of the minimal amount of time teachers have to teach the course. Is it even possible to transform students into active and responsible citizens? It depends on the used definition of a citizen, but it might be possible when the right subjects (including social injustice) are discussed and the right teaching tools are used to stimulate students to think critically.

⁵³ Gamenen & Boendermaker (2017): 69.

De maatschappij dat ben jij tries to transform a student into a citizen who is aware of her own identity. She can perform a critical media analysis and analyse her stream of thoughts, but not think critically about processes of social injustice. She treats men and women differently and is aware what gender is on a superficial level, but does not question its role in society.

3.6 The method *Nu Burgerschap* published by Noordhoff:

Nu Burgerschap is defined as a workbook, which means it only contains small bits of theory and a great amount of assignments. Just as *Schokland*, this manual also does not describe a definition of the word citizen, but every dimension does start with a short story which can be linked to what it means to be a citizen.

You are almost never alone. Your whole life you have people surrounding you. You need to obey rules, show respect to other beliefs and cultures[,] and you need to take other people into consideration. You are part of groups and of the society. How do you deal with others? And who are you personally?⁵⁴

This quote, which is linked to the social dimension, focuses on the need to be able to live together with other people. The three characteristics named for a citizen are obeying the rules, respecting other beliefs and taking other people into consideration. The contradiction between demanding that a citizen obeys the rules while wanting her to be critical Tyack and Cuban (1995) mentioned, can also be found in this quote. Even though the manual does not mention critical thinking specifically, students are required to acquire this competence during this course. The manual however seems to focus more on transforming students into tolerant and obedient members of society. The manual tries to transform students into such citizens by making them reflect on their own personality and incorporating knowledge on different (sub)cultures. The assignments make the student elaborate more on subjects than the other manuals do, but critically reflecting on their own stream of thoughts is not explored sufficiently enough.

The theoretical part of the manual has a length of between a third of a page and a whole page, and it has two or three pages of assignments attached to it. Students will, for example, read a bit about traditional scarification (receiving six horizontal scars on the forehead to mark the transition from being a boy to manhood) in the South Sudanese Nuer tribe.

⁵⁴ Dorresteijn et al. (2016): 7.

Attached are a few questions regarding which values you can extract from the story, but no further reflection on the subject of the perception of masculinity in different cultures is encouraged. The questions are namely meant to test the knowledge and to apply it to certain cases.

The questions the book uses are clear and use many examples, but they unfortunately hardly trigger a student to critically discuss her own experiences and thoughts in a group. In the dimension 'vital citizenship,' sexuality is more extensively discussed than in the other manuals. The manual for example states that it is important to be true to yourself sexually and to discover your own values and preferences. It integrates homosexuality as well as sexuality and religion, and proposes multiple case studies to illustrate the problems some people face. Even though those subjects are defined properly and talked about in detail, the book does not cover all aspects of sexuality.⁵⁵ Some students may identify with the used definition of sexuality, but sexuality can be more complex for other students. Concepts as pansexuality and asexuality are not discussed in the manual. People who consider themselves to be gender fluid may also not consider themselves gay, straight or bisexual. Gender is also not mentioned once in the manual, even though gender and sexuality (together with other axes such as class and ethnicity) are linked to a person's social position, which influences their thoughts. The MBO Council wishes for students to critically reflect on their way of thinking, but how will they be able to do that without acknowledging the influence of gender on their perception of identity?

One assignment in the book is attached to a story of a woman who says she is attracted to men, but liked it when she 'accidentally' kissed a female friend and is now wondering whether she is gay. The student can choose between two dilemma's the writer of the story faces: 1) The writer is homosexual, but does not want to be out of the closet. 2) The writer liked kissing a girl, even though she is attracted to boys. These defined dilemmas are very narrow and do not give the student space to elaborate more on the subject of sexuality and kissing. There are women who like kissing girls, but would not like to have sex with them. There are women who automatically think they like men, because of the heterosexual matrix of society. There are women who are bisexual. Apart from that, a person's sexual preference can change throughout their lives.

⁵⁵ Köhnen, Schilt & Zwart (2014): 227.

Even though it is good that the manual wants to illustrate the concept of sexuality by using cases like this, the attached questions should be more reflective in order to stimulate critical thinking.

The manual also discusses STDs and contraceptives in an extended way. Unwanted pregnancy and abortion are discussed in a nuanced way and also integrate a man's perspective in the matter. Questions like "What if the man wants an abortion but the woman does not?" are discussed, together with teen pregnancy. Sexual limits (no means no) and sexual harassment and abuse are incorporated and discussed more elaborately than in the other manuals. Even though feminism is not mentioned at all in the manual, some teachers decide to incorporate it in their curriculum anyways. Annouska:

I certainly consider myself a feminist and I show that in my classes, by discussing 'feminist' topics such as women emancipation and sexism. In addition, I also try to be an example of a strong, independent woman for my students by being open about how I conduct my private life. These topics hardly occur in the method. I discuss [these topics] myself, because I consider myself competent enough because of my background in social studies.

When talking about feminism, Annouska solely mentioned topics related to notion of womanhood, such as sexism. She did not incorporate subjects such as sexuality or cultural diversity in her definition of feminism. What is also noteworthy is that she links feminism to being a strong and independent woman. From my Third Wave Feminist perspective I do not automatically link being a feminist to independence, because that would mean that being dependent (emotionally, financially etc.) would mean that a person could not be a feminist. Can a person really be independent or do we always rely on other people in some way? For me, feminism is about equality which can perhaps only be achieved by critically reflecting on processes of social injustice with the hope of changing them. However, it can be seen as a positive note that Annouska tries to incorporate feminist issues in the curriculum, since the manual neglects some.

Another teacher, Gabriëlle, realizes that she is using the method less and less because of the lack of stimulation of critical thinking. In order to make up for the superficiality of the questions, she has developed assignments in the form of a portfolio that are in-depth and broadening in nature. The assignments force students to spend more time reflecting on one particular subject which is only briefly mentioned in the manual.

The citizen the manual wants to transform a student into, can be defined as follows: “A citizen is a person with a healthy mind and body, who obeys rules and shows respect to other cultures⁵⁶, who earns and spends money, and who influences Dutch politics”.

The manual seems to assume that every person earns and spends money⁵⁷, which excludes people who receive social security payments and people who try not to take part in the capitalist system. It also defines a good citizen as someone with a healthy body and mind⁵⁸ and states that every citizen should be able to influence how the Netherlands is governed⁵⁹.

3.7 Teachers adopting their own method:

In the previous paragraphs I discussed the three manuals used by teachers of different departments at *Albeda College*. Each teacher has his or her own reasons for picking one of these methods and using each method has its own advantages and its own flaws. Therefore there are some teachers who decided to use their own material in class. The advantage of using their own material can be that a definition of citizen is used that is more inclusive and more adapted to the lives of the students in that Citizenship class, since the students can decide together with the teacher which subjects to discuss.

One of the teachers who uses his own material is Piet, who produced his own teaching manual for Citizenship for the publisher Noordhoff. His manual focuses on news items and can be used as a six-page-long weekly additional attachment for the method *Nu Burgerschap*. Every attachment ends with a cartoon and a quiz about the news items of that week. Piet:

I find it very important that every citizen knows what happens in the world, because you gain so much more general knowledge if you follow the news. I believe that when you lack this knowledge, you will become less successful in life.

Piet decided to only use this additional attachment in his class, because it focuses more on current event than the *Nu Burgerschap* manual does. He does not believe in using one of the existing methods, because he does not think that they help the students achieve the goal to become active and responsible citizens. By focusing on the development of a critical attitude, he feels that the engagement with current events is lost.

⁵⁶ Köhnen, Schilt & Zwart (2014): 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid: 63.

⁵⁸ Ibid: 197.

⁵⁹ Ibid: 117.

I do not agree with this statement, because critical analysis can be used as a tool to discuss current events in depth instead of merely mentioning them in class. Piet made it his goal to keep students as well informed as possible on the events happening in the world around them. He hopes that by doing so, he is giving them the tools to discuss the events with friends and family, which then could lead to a critical analysis. I am not confident that discussing news items in the Citizenship class will lead to students having critical conversations in their private life, because the students need to learn how to have a critical conversation first. Apart from that, Piet may transform the students into citizens who possess a lot of knowledge of world events, but are not able to engage with that knowledge in a critical way. Will the course then not pass over its purpose of preparing students to participate in a rather complex society? Piet consciously chose to incorporate critical thinking in his curriculum in its minimal form. Piet:

Discussion is often used as a tool to make students think critically, but the moment you turn a course into a discussion course, you see that the interest in the subject decreases a bit every week. I believe that before a person is able to discuss a topic properly, she needs to have gained enough knowledge about the subject.

Even though I admire his goal of teaching students as much about Dutch society as possible, I am under the impression that by discussing and deconstructing processes that occur in Dutch society, students obtain most of the important information needed about that subject. Even though Piet has faith in his method of discussing news items, he does not believe that the ideals set for Citizenship can be achieved with only one hour of class a week.

Another teacher who uses his own method is Erdem:

Because a lot of teachers stick to one manual, their classes are shallow and the course does not correspond with current social problems. Citizenship always depends on topicality and therefore it is best if every teacher would discuss the same themes but not use a ready-made manual.

The Citizenship course should prepare students to participate in Dutch society and in my opinion society is something that never has a fixed identity but constantly changes. Therefore it would be better to discuss subjects that play a role in current events as well as students' lives in class instead of solely learning facts and making assignments about how the Dutch society operates. Apart from the critique on the outdatedness of Citizenship manuals, Erdem also thinks that topics as gender and diversity are not discussed properly in those methods.

Erdem:

In most manuals diversity is discussed very superficially, without any self-reflection. They define diversity as treating each other with respect, but the problem of participating in a diverse society is not analysed properly. Citizenship is more than just the rules of conduct. I also discuss virginity before marriage, the role of the government in diversity, homosexuality, terrorism and so on. I trust myself in discussing this properly, because I have gained enough knowledge of the topics.

Erdem states that “citizenship is more than just the rules of conduct”. By this he means that being a ‘good’ citizen is often defined as learning how to live in one society together with people who might have different opinions and beliefs than you do, but the role of citizenship is more complex than that. There are many processes and power relations that shape the way our society operates which should be discussed properly in the Citizenship course. Erdem considers himself competent in doing this, because he believes that he has gained enough knowledge on subjects intertwined with this notion of citizenship through his education in social studies and self-study. Not possessing enough knowledge on certain subjects was also one of the arguments given by teachers for deciding to not incorporate particular sensitive subjects in their curriculum. Erdem even offered to design workshops for the other teachers where he could provide them with information about the subjects. He stated that because he took a minor on gender studies more than a decade ago, he possesses the required knowledge to incorporate gender issues in his class. Gender studies, as many other fields of science, changes rapidly everyday which could mean that the knowledge he gained through that course, might not work in relation with current events anymore. In my conclusion I will give an advice on how the dilemma of not obtaining sufficient information on sensitive subjects that are related to social injustice may be reduced.

Teachers Clara and Tamara do not believe in using a manual for the course as well.

Clara:

We deliberately chose not to use a manual, because want to make the themes more alive for the students, so that is why we will for example visit museums or theatre productions instead of solely learning about certain topics in books.

Clara feels that students can not learn how to be active citizens by learning about Dutch society from a book. They should experience things instead of passively absorbing information in class.

Together with the students, Clara and Tamara brainstorm about which subject they would like to discuss and which of the four dimensions and which of the required competences can go together with that subject. In a year they spent four whole days, one day per dimension, on Citizenship. This is a different approach to the course than most other educational programs at *Albeda College* have, which teaches the course one or more hours per week. For each dimension they choose one subject; that way they can discuss that subject more elaborately and analyse the issue more in depth. Tamara:

For this course you need to create a dynamic program that connects with the students' interests and questions. The disadvantage of ready-made manuals is that you cannot respond to the students' needs. When a course is badly evaluated, school boards often think it helps to write down every aspect of the curriculum, but that only makes the course worse. The teachers are the starting point; they should know how to shape their classes properly. When you need to discuss every topic, the school thinks it has covered every theme, when in reality it has not hit one critical note.

Tamara emphasizes the importance of responding to current events, which other teachers also noted, and the importance of working together with the students to design the curriculum. She believes that teachers need to obtain (even) more freedom in creating their classes, because that is the only way the quality of the course will be improved. I agree that it will be better for the quality of the discussed knowledge to focus on critically analysing one subject instead of briefly mentioning multiple subjects.

Even though the manuals touch upon subjects intertwined with feminism and social injustice, they do not sufficiently stimulate students to engage with the material in a critical manner. What is missing from a feminist perspective is the analysis of personal experiences and the inclusion of the complexity of gender, sexuality and other subjects linked to social injustice. The subjects are not discussed in a nuanced way and gender is not mentioned in two manuals at all. *De maatschappij dat ben jij* is also the only manual that incorporates critical discourse analysis, but does not stimulate the student to use it on processes of social injustice. The manuals offer a Eurocentric worldview which displays certain discourses as the truth and neglects other perspectives.

A 'good' citizen is healthy (physically and mentally), experiences freedom, obeys rules and laws, and is actively involved in Dutch politics and in the capitalistic system. She can perform a critical media analysis and analyse her own stream of thoughts, but she is not required to be aware of how gender, class and other axes shape her worldview. At last, she is tolerant (which is defined as not interfering with other people's way of living) towards other cultures and beliefs, but she is not an active advocate for change.

Not all students will be able to identify their experiences and visions for the future with this definition of a citizen. Therefore the Third Wave Feminist definition of a citizen would most likely try to incorporate multiple perspectives by omitting the focus on active participation of the capitalistic system and Dutch politics, since they are influenced by power relations. Most importantly, the feminist notion of citizenship is intertwined with morality, meaning that a good citizen is not merely tolerant towards people with other thoughts and beliefs, but is aware that Dutch society is formed by processes of injustice. A good citizen will be an active advocate for change with the hope of making Dutch society more inclusive.

The Citizenship course needs to learn students how to become such citizens. In the next chapters I will analyse how feminist pedagogy can help improve the class environment and teaching practice in order to stimulate students to develop a critical attitude.

4. Class environment

In this chapter I will illustrate the atmosphere in class during the course on Citizenship and the relationship between the students and the teacher. First I will explain how the Executive Board would like the atmosphere in class to be, then I will compare that ideal version to the atmosphere the teachers described in the interviews. Last I will explain the debate about the notion of 'safe spaces' and demonstrate how the Citizenship course can benefit from the creation of such spaces in the classroom.

4.1 The atmosphere in the Citizenship class:

Ron, Chairman of the Executive Board, believes that it is necessary to discuss topics such as feminism, homophobia and racism in the Citizenship course, but he acknowledges that it can be difficult for teachers to discuss those in class. Ron explains:

It can be very confronting for a teacher to talk about sex and sexuality, because a lot of Dutch people (which could include the teacher as well) never learned to talk about it openly. Sex may be a topic that some people talk about in the private sphere, but it definitely is not a topic that is often discussed in the public sphere. It is often categorized as an awkward subject and as a professional [teacher] you need to know how to discuss such delicate subjects properly.

What is striking about the quote above is that Ron mentions sex and sexuality in the same sentence, without further elaborating on the difference between these two concepts. Later in the quote when talking about the need for a delicate way of discussing the subject, he only mentions the word sex and leaves out sexuality. Even though the two concepts are linked to each other, they cannot be defined as similar. As I displayed in chapter three, sex and sexuality are both part of the Citizenship curriculum, but it differs per manual how elaborately the substance is reviewed. In my experience most Dutch people indeed feel uncomfortable talking about sex openly, because it is often seen as something private which should not be discussed in public. Therefore it can be challenging for teachers and students to break through that barrier and have an open dialogue about the subject in class. I am not under the impression that a conversation about sexuality is perceived with the same carefulness as discussing sex is. The fact that we expect non-heterosexual people to come out of the closet and display their sexuality, can be seen as a sign that the conversation about sexuality does have a more prominent place in the public sphere than sex does.

The analysis in chapter four showed us that the manuals used by the Citizenship teachers do however have a tendency to solely mention homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality and leave out other aspects of sexuality. Ron stated that in order to be able to talk about a sensitive subject like sexuality extensively in the Citizenship class, a safe space is required. He could however not further define the nature of such a safe space.

Anky, also a member of the Executive Board, believes every topic should be discussed in class, however controversial it may be:

I find it very strange that some teachers decide not to talk about topics like Black Piet or sexual preference because they do not want to cause any tension in the group. I know it can be challenging, but it is part of your job to know how to handle those situations.

Anky does not believe that tension in class is wrong per se, as long as the teacher manages to convert a tense atmosphere into a fruitful conversation. Where Ron explained that teachers may also have difficulty discussing certain topics on a personal level, Anky did not mention how a teacher's background and personal beliefs can shape their teaching practice and curriculum. Even though she classifies handling tension in class as part of a teacher's job, *Albeda College* does not offer teachers help on how to do that. Assuming that teachers have the knowledge and skills to create a productive and safe learning environment, can be harmful for the quality of the course when teachers do not meet that standard. Teachers stated in the conducted interviews that they do not feel supported in learning how to create the finest atmosphere in class. Because the teachers do not feel that they can discuss the problems they face with creating the right atmosphere with their team, they sometimes choose to neglect the subject.

Ron and Anky as members of The Executive Board agree that every Citizenship teacher should be able to talk about sensitive subjects such as racism and sexuality in class, but that they might not possess the right tools to discuss them. In reality a lot of teachers do not feel comfortable enough with the material and/or with the atmosphere in class to lead discussions about these subjects. Even teachers who have been in charge of the Citizenship course for years, explained in the interviews that they find it difficult to incorporate sensitive topics in their curriculum. Because of the freedom the teachers get in designing their classes, they are not obliged to do so.

Therefore some teachers decide to neglect subjects like the Black Piet discussion and the me-too movement and even when they do discuss it, they suffer from inability to act due to fear⁶⁰. Even Piet, a Citizenship teacher who has been teaching the course for over a decade, notices that the effort he puts in discussing sensitive subjects decreases. Even though he feels like he needs to talk about controversial topics like homosexuality in his class, he does find it difficult sometimes. Piet:

A lot of students have never learned to think for themselves and discover their own opinion on topics. I've always fought to make them think more openly about certain topics and it is starting to tire me out, because I do not feel that I can change that group of students with insights on other perspectives [...] friends and family have a much bigger influence on their behaviour than I have.

After years of trying to change someone's mind, Piet notices that he is giving up. It could be that changing the students their minds should not be the goal of the course, but helping students gain access to and become critical of their own knowledge should be the ambition. The atmosphere in class can influence how Piet perceives the quality of the course, but there could also be more issues involved which have to be solved in a different way.

Multiple teachers have indicated that they sometimes do not discuss a subject, because they do not feel confident enough talking about it due to their lack of knowledge of the subject. There seems to be a multiplicity of factors that cause teachers to not incorporate certain subjects in the curriculum, where the lack of a safe space is merely one of them. In this thesis I will however only focus on how the theory of safe spaces could help teachers discuss sensitive subjects in class.

The fear of causing tension is another reason that was mentioned by multiple teachers have indicated that they do not feel confident in discussing the subjects in class.

Isabella:

When I taught a culturally diverse group I avoided topics like Black Piet, because discussing it only led to a lot of yelling. It was always a struggle to talk about certain subjects, so in the end I just did not talk about it anymore.

Isabella considers it more difficult to discuss certain topics in a culturally diverse group than in a culturally homogeneous group.

⁶⁰ This is called 'handelingsverlegenheid' in Dutch. It can be defined as: "[handelingsverlegenheid] arises from the inability to act adequately and originates from hesitations on the part of the professional herself."
<http://www.encyclo.nl/begrip/handelingsverlegenheid>

This could originate from the fact that diverse groups often contain more students who have experienced discrimination themselves and who perhaps react more emotional to the subjects than students who have not explicitly experienced discrimination and/or feel like they can conform to the (implicit) norm⁶¹ of our society. The fact that Isabella is a white woman who does not feel like she experienced discrimination herself, might also play a role in her decision to neglect certain subjects due to the lack of interest. In the interviews she stated that she finds subjects as drug use and money management more important to discuss in the Citizenship course than subjects as discrimination. It could be that because of the lack of knowledge about safe spaces, Isabella does not succeed to create one herself, which leads to the omission of particular subjects.

More than half of the teachers I spoke with, admitted they sometimes neglected a subject they defined as sensitive or difficult in order to maintain a relaxed atmosphere in class. They were afraid that the tension would grow and that they as a teacher would not be able to handle it properly. Even the teachers who did discuss sensitive topics in class, did not always feel confident in the way they approached them. Teachers have also indicated through the interviews that they believe the atmosphere in class could be improved by establishing a strong relationship with the students. That can be achieved by meeting in more informal places and taking time to get to know their family and their (cultural) background. Apart from establishing honest relationships and possessing enough knowledge about the discussed subjects, the creation of a safe space could also be beneficial to the quality of the curriculum.

4.2 How can safe spaces be defined by feminist pedagogy?

What is a safe space? That is the question many theorists have tried to answer and even though their explanations may differ in some degree, there is an overall consensus about the purpose of safe spaces.

⁶¹ In our Western society the norm is often white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, middle-class and male. Tupper et al. (2010): 336.

Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens (2013), who invented the notion of brave spaces as a replacement for safe spaces, define the purpose of safe spaces as follows:

We often describe [...] environments as safe spaces, terminology we hope will be reassuring for participants who feel anxious about sharing their thoughts and feelings regarding these sensitive and controversial issues.⁶²

Safe spaces are thus created to ensure a feeling of security and freedom with the hope of encouraging student participation in class.

The used definition of the word 'safe' influences the perception of the classroom as a safe space. The Oxford Dictionary displays five definitions of the word 'safe' of which three are interconnected with the concept of safe spaces. The first is "Uninjured; with no harm done", the second is "(of a place) affording security or protection" and the third definition that can be used is "Not likely to cause or lead to harm or injury; not involving danger or risk"⁶³. Later in this chapter I will elaborate more on how mentioning risk taking in the last definition, can be seen as problematic in relation to the creation of a safe space in class.

Safety has been one of the key elements in feminist pedagogy, partly because of the personal involvement many students experience whilst discussing sensitive subjects. A lot has been written about a feminist classroom, which coordinator of Women's Studies Jeannie Ludlow defines as follows:

Ideally, the feminist classroom is an ideal space free from physical threat in which participants might explore together issues of social injustice, free from judgment or verbal intimidation, and confident in the group members' honesty and shared values.⁶⁴

Gaining a feeling of safety and security can thus be seen as one of the requirements for discussing sensitive topics that relate to social injustice in class. According to Garcia and Van Soest (1997) creating a safe space is essential when opening a dialogue about social injustice and diversity in class: "the learning process will be stymied if students do not feel sufficiently 'safe' to openly discuss their experiences and feelings".⁶⁵

Even though every article on safe spaces states that a secure and safe feeling is beneficial to the student participation in class, not much research has been done to prove this statement.⁶⁶

⁶² Arao & Clemens (2013): 135.

⁶³ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/safe> (5-8-2018)

⁶⁴ Ludlow (2004): 43.

⁶⁵ Garcia & Van Soest (1997): 121.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Drama and performance studies teacher Mary Ann Hunter (2008) declares that cultivating a safe space is more “generating questions such as: how are participants invited to collaborate in the production of safe creative spaces that allow them to measure their own level of risk?”⁶⁷ than about prescribing conditions of such a space. She defines the creation of a safe space as a process, with taking risks as an outcome. The Oxford Dictionary defined the state of being safe as “not involving danger or risk”, but Hunter refutes that notion by stating that taking risks is necessary in talking about social injustice.⁶⁸ Even though her research focused specifically on drama education, it can also apply to other forms of education where safe spaces are required.

Holley and Steiner (2005) also define a safe space as one which “allows students to feel secure enough to take risks, honestly express their views, and explore their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours”.⁶⁹ In this description of safe spaces, the definition of the word ‘safe’ as “(of a place) affording security or protection” reappears. At the same time, Holley and Steiner define that state of feeling secure as a condition for taking risks, while the Oxford Dictionary described being safe as “not involving danger or risk”. There seems to be a contradiction in Holly and Steiner’s definition of safe spaces, because the concepts of being safe and taking risks can be defined as inherently opposite. Risk taking is mentioned as an essential element of discussion in a safe classroom by multiple academics, but there has been a debate in the academic field of feminist pedagogy about the role of risk taking in classrooms that are defined as safe spaces.

4.3 The debate on the role of ‘safe spaces’ in classrooms:

The question asked by many theorists is if safety can be an appropriate expectation for an honest dialogue about social injustice. Below I will give an overview of the most common criticisms in the debate on safe spaces.

The point of criticism that is mainly expressed from non-feminist locations is that the idea of creating safe spaces does not collide with the idea of an academic classroom. This is linked to the common thought that rationality, in contrast to emotion, should be the main element of classes.

⁶⁷ Hunter (2008): 19.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Holley & Steiner (2005): 50.

According to Dr. Jeannie Ludlow, Coordinator of Women's Studies at the Eastern Illinois University, "this advice reflects a common critique that the feminist classroom is more 'therapeutic' than 'intellectual'".⁷⁰ Ludlow's quote also reveals the alleged contradiction between a feminist classroom and an academic or intellectual classroom.

Marketing professor Robert Boostrom criticizes the notion of safe spaces in classrooms in his article "Safe Spaces': Reflections on an Educational Metaphor" (1998) when he claims that students are pampered⁷¹, conflict is ruled out by teachers and "bland acceptance of all opinions and behaviours"⁷² is the main element of the learning process.

Boostrom (1998) created the notion of a brave space; a place where bravery is required, because he believes that learning about social injustice means taking risks and giving up a former condition of privilege.⁷³ Boostrom assumes that students cannot be critical enough in safe spaces to deconstruct power relations. Ludlow (2004) invented another replacement, namely that of the contested space which includes room for conflict.⁷⁴

In a safe space classroom, we might strive for an environment that is free from domination or authority. In a contested space classroom, we know that no space is free from domination, so we examine the effects of power and privilege in our classroom environment.⁷⁵

Ludlow and Boostrom both agree that an environment free from domination is impossible to achieve, since the power relations of society will also play a role in the classroom. According to Boostrom, depicting a classroom as a safe space leads to an atmosphere where assessment of another student's work is perceived as "evil" .

In my perception, which is shaped by Third Wave Feminism, it is relevant to include individual life experience in the curriculum and let emotion be part of the class, instead of only focusing on rationality as is often the case in academic spheres and classrooms. Especially when opening a dialogue about sensitive subjects, because the processes of social injustice cannot be deconstructed by focusing solely on the theoretical side. To encourage students to express their emotions, it is necessary to create a safe environment, which does not mean that students are not allowed to express their critical notes, as Boostrom described. Social injustice is personal for many people, because it does not only shape their way of thinking, but their whole lives.

⁷⁰ Ludlow (2004): 43.

⁷¹ Boostrom (2010): 398.

⁷² Ibid: 407.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ludlow (2004): 47.

⁷⁵ Ibid: 49.

Therefore incorporating and showing emotion in class should not be seen as less intellectual or effective as focusing on theories and facts. Apart from that, Third Wave feminists (including myself) often do not consider defining a certain type of knowledge as being 'objectively rational' to be accurate, since according to the theory of *situated knowledges* every person's knowledge is a product of their thoughts, beliefs and place in society.⁷⁶ Conforming to this theory, there is in fact no contradiction between intellectual/academic and therapeutic/emotional. In the next chapter I will elaborate more on how incorporating passion and affectivity in the teaching practice through the use of memory work when addressing the issue of social injustice, can be beneficial for the quality of the Citizenship course.

Another point of criticism that also comes from feminist locations, is that safety means something different for everyone, which raises the question if it is possible to create a safe space for a large group of students. Barret (2010) argues that "A second line of criticism levelled at the safe classroom centres on the impossibility of safety for students, particularly racially, socially, and economically marginalized students, in the classroom context."⁷⁷ This would mean that students who are part of target or marginalized groups, could never truly participate in the notion of safe spaces, because the power relations and processes of privilege and social injustice that form their social position outside of the classroom, also play a role inside the classroom.⁷⁸ Because of that, those students can never completely be safe.

Coherent with this idea, is the critique Arao and Clemens (2013) expressed that insisting on calling a classroom a safe space, could be a way of telling members of target groups how to react to their injustice in class, in order to conform to the idea of 'safety' proclaimed by members of dominant groups.⁷⁹ Safety is in this quote defined as a product invented by privileged students, which means that proclaiming a classroom as a safe space can lead to silencing marginalized students, in order to maintain a comfortable atmosphere for privileged students. I understand the essence of this critique, since trying to create or maintain a certain atmosphere in class can ensure that marginalized students cannot express their satisfaction or emotion, which is necessary in discussing social injustice.

⁷⁶ Haraway (1988).

⁷⁷ Barret (2010): 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Arao & Clemens (2013): 140.

The conditions for creating a safe space are so diverse, that this point of criticism does not apply to every safe classroom. Using the word safe space to describe a classroom does not necessarily mean that there is no room for confrontation or emotion.

Barret (2010) states that marginalized students can never feel safe because they live in a world which is inherently unsafe for them⁸⁰. My critique is that Barret may be generalizing by placing marginalized students in a victimized position. Despite the fact that it can be extremely difficult to deconstruct power relations and processes of social injustice in class, this does not necessarily mean that students can never feel safe enough to openly express their thoughts and beliefs. Safety does however have a unique meaning to every person which is connected to power relations. Adrienne Rich (1986) described the two connotations of safety as follows:

Those for whom safety means “rest from persecution or harassment” are, by definition, persecuted or harassed, lacking privilege. Those for whom safety means “armored [sic] and concluded,” however, are likely privileged [...] ⁸¹

It can be difficult to find a balance between the two definitions whilst creating a space free from harassment where there is also room for free thinking and freedom of speech. Even though these are the two most used connotations of safety, the definitions of the word might be more varied than that. Even when safety means something else to every student, the maintenance of a single definition in the classroom that is composed with and by the students could be beneficial for the creation of a safe space.

According to bell hooks safety is a privilege that students from target groups do not obtain in their everyday lives. hooks argues that a course about social injustice should prepare students for a society that is not always safe, which cannot be done in a safe classroom. The course should prepare students to take risks and voice their opinion in an unsafe atmosphere which is similar to the society outside of the classroom.⁸² hooks’ opinion also ties in with the debate about the role of risk taking in safe classrooms. Her notion of risk taking does however not only apply to marginalized students, but also to privileged students and teachers who need to participate in unsafe moments.

⁸⁰ Barret (2010): 7.

⁸¹ Rich (1986): 206.

⁸² hooks (1994): 44.

In those moments there should be “some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches”⁸³. What certain academics who criticized the notion of safe spaces have in common, is the idea that discussing social injustice in class is always combined with moments of pain, for both the marginalized and the privileged students. When the goal of the class is to make every person feel safe and secure, the conversation may never reach the level needed to fight social injustice. Apart from that, it can be difficult to measure whether every student truly feels safe, because it is linked to their own perception of safety. Do students who participate in class automatically feel psychologically safe and do students who do not participate feel unsafe? All these criticisms show that the concept of a safe space is complex and is not always sufficiently explored in classrooms.

For the specific situation of the Citizenship course, I will use a definition of a safe space that is linked to several of the theories discussed above. I agree with the critique that it is not possible to make every student feel safe (which every student can define differently) while discussing sensitive subjects linked to feminism and social injustice in the Citizenship class. Making everyone feel safe should not be the goal of the course either. It is most likely going to be difficult for privileged students to deconstruct their own way of thinking, just as it can be difficult for marginalized students to express their thoughts on and experiences with social injustice. Using the theory of safe spaces to create a secure atmosphere can be rewarding for the quality of the course, as long as the criticisms are also incorporated. The power relations of society will also play a role in the Citizenship classroom. Therefore I would suggest to combine elements of the safe space, the brave space and the contested space in order to create an atmosphere that is the most beneficial for the course. In this place every participant, including the teacher herself, tries to create a space which feels safe for as many students as possible. The notion of a safe space is then defined as “a place where you can express your experiences and thoughts without the fear of being attacked for it”. This does however not mean that there is no room for confrontation, because confrontation is needed to deconstruct processes of social injustice. Change almost never happens without a fight, but we can try to fight together instead of fighting each other. Even in a safe space there will still be moments of tension in the Citizenship class, because the students (and the teacher) need to learn how to react to each other, but the amount of moments could decrease.

⁸³ hooks (1994): 43.

4.4 How can the atmosphere in class benefit from creating a safe space?

In the beginning of this chapter the Executive Board and the teachers in charge of the Citizenship course expressed their thoughts on how the atmosphere in class influences their teaching practice and their decision to neglect certain sensitive subjects. The Executive Board stated in chapter three that every teacher should incorporate sensitive subjects in the Citizenship curriculum, because it is their job to teach students how to become active and responsible members of society. The interviews showed that in reality, many teachers choose not to discuss certain subjects. Almost all teachers explained that they do not always feel comfortable discussing sensitive subjects, because they are afraid of the tension it could cause. Apart from that some of them felt they did not possess enough knowledge of the subjects to open a dialogue. The creation of safe spaces might not help with the lack of knowledge some teachers have on certain subjects, but it could be beneficial for discussing sensitive matters and helping teachers in handling tension in class adequately. The creation of an open and safe atmosphere in class through the techniques of safe spaces could improve a teacher's competence in discussing sensitive objects, because it could decrease the fear of causing tension.

In chapter three I illustrated the debate on the purpose of citizenship education, which was defined by Tupper et al. (2010) as transforming “students into an engaged citizenry despite differences of race, class, culture, gender, etc.”⁸⁴

In order to become an engaged and active citizen, the MBO Council stated that it is important for students to become aware of how they think, because their thoughts are influenced by their environment.⁸⁵ To be able to develop a critical attitude, a student needs to be courageous to express her own opinion even when it differs from the norm, and she needs to have stamina in order to learn critical thinking. The creation of a safe space could make it easier for students to express their thoughts and share their experiences and feelings. The concept of critical thinking that the MBO Council uses, seems to be in sync with Martin's (1992) belief that “critical thinking is founded in moral perspectives and should be motivated by concerns for a more just and humane world”⁸⁶. When a safe atmosphere builds up teachers' confidence, they will hopefully incorporate all subjects in their curriculum, even the ones that can be described as sensitive.

⁸⁴ Tupper, Cappello and Sevigny (2010): 336.

⁸⁵ MBO Council (2016): 3.

⁸⁶ Johnson (2010): 4.

Discussing these subjects will not only increase the quality of the Citizenship course, but it can also help with achieving the purpose of the course, namely teaching students how to become (morally) responsible and active citizens who attempt to make the world a more humane and righteous place. The creation of a safe space in class has the potential to improve the quality of the course, the teacher competence and the student development.

4.5 How can a safe space be created in the Citizenship class?

One activity that could help this process is the making of a Students' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, which means that the class should define what a safe space is. The teacher should seek involvement from the students in the creation of these ground rules in order to create the document as a unity. Ground rules that are incorporated in this bill most often are "agree to disagree", "challenge by choice" and "don't take things personally". These rules have been criticized for not encouraging students to participate when confrontation is necessary.⁸⁷ It is possible that students will use the phrase "agree to disagree" to end a conversation, while it is important to keep discussing certain subjects and listen to each other's opinion in order to fight social injustice. I would therefore suggest replacing that ground rule by the rule of "when the tension gets too high, you can indicate that you need a break". The rule of not taking things personally is also a troubling, because social injustice is personal for many people. It is however important to remain civil during a discussion, while at the same time been giving the opportunity to explain your point of view on a personal level. Emotion and experience ought to be part of the conversation.

Even though many articles have been written on the subject, it can still be challenging to create a safe or good space. Establishing certain ground rules can help with defining the meaning of safe for every student and teacher, while at the same time keeping the purpose of the course in mind. The purpose is preparing students to become active and responsible citizens of Dutch society, which in my opinion also means fighting social injustice and creating an improved society for the next generations. In order to create a safe learning environment, the teacher needs to be perceived by students as non-judgemental and/or unbiased.⁸⁸ This can be a difficult task for a teacher which calls for a lot self-reflection. The most important thing in creating a safe space is open communication between the students themselves and the teacher on how to be critical, yet righteous.

⁸⁷ Arao & Clemens (2013): 143.

⁸⁸ Holly & Steiner (2005): 58.

5. Teaching practice

In this chapter I will first explain the notion of ‘memory work’ and its place in feminist research. Afterwards I will demonstrate how memory work as a feminist tool can help discuss sensitive topics from the curriculum in the Citizenship class.

5.1 Memory work as a feminist tool:

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how the notion of a safe space can be used to improve the quality of the course, the teacher competence and student development. In order to discuss sensitive subject in safe classrooms, it can be necessary to include personal life experiences and emotions in the curriculum. Memory work, a social constructionist and feminist research method which can be used as a teaching practice, does exactly that.

A group of German academic feminists (Haug et al.) introduced memory work as a feminist method in the end of 1970’s in their research on the sexualization of women’s bodies and normative “femininity”.⁸⁹ The research displayed how memory work can be used to visualize how experiences interact with social context. Memory work focuses on describing a certain memory or experience in order to explore and possibly deconstruct discourses and processes of ideology. Haug et al. illustrated how the method can be used “to make the process itself the object of discussion, how we work our way through and into ideology”⁹⁰. The purpose of memory work is to let a person think about how her thoughts and beliefs are shaped by certain discourses by critically analysing them. The analysis takes shape in the form of conversations by asking questions like “When did you feel angry/sad/frustrated?”, “Why did you feel like that?” and “Do you think someone else may have felt the same?”.⁹¹ Participants are asked to write their memories or experiences down in the third person in order to create distance from the narrator which supposedly leads to more detailed description of the event. The supposition that a person knows more about herself than she assumes has an important part in the use of memory work.⁹²

⁸⁹ Haug et al. (1987): 33-72.

⁹⁰ Ibid: 41.

⁹¹ Haug (n.d.): 3.

⁹² Ibid.

A number of feminist researchers used memory work in order to gain a different kind of knowledge than 'traditional' research offers. Most of the researches exploring memory work focus on the categories 'woman' and 'femininity', but there have also been cases where the feminist tool is used to describe 'whiteness' and 'racialization', such as Berg's (2008) study on *innvandrerkvinne* (ethnic minority woman) and whiteness.⁹³

Memory work has been criticized for resembling therapy in some ways, because of its focus on experiences students (and teachers) had in daily life. Therapy in this sentence has a negative connotation, since it supposedly collides with the academic sphere of the classroom.⁹⁴ Mulinari described it as follows:

The division between theory and experience-based work is a well-known division [...] in which theoretical work is seen as 'abstract and rational and male' and experience is represented as 'practical and emotional and female.'⁹⁵

The division between theory and experience-based work is gendered, since the academic sphere -including the classroom- is seen as male, while the experience-based sphere is conceived as female. The relation between these two spheres is hierarchical; the male sphere (rationality) is defined as superior to the female sphere (emotion and experience).

This assumptive division and hierarchy between theoretical work and experience work can be harmful when teaching sensitive subjects like gender, because these subjects are subtly embedded in our everyday life, which makes them harder to deconstruct. The subjects are intertwined with a person's personal life and experiences. Therefore it would be necessary to incorporate experience and emotion in the curriculum. My analysis of the manuals used for the Citizenship course at *Albeda College* showed that only one manual incorporated critical assignments about experiences, but these assignments were not linked to deconstructing processes of social injustice. Apart from that, teachers were not required to take part in analysing their experiences, while feminist pedagogy believes that teachers can also be seen as participants. Every person already possesses knowledge on how power relations and discourses work, but they need to learn how to use the right tools to gain access to this knowledge. Memory work can be used to draw a connection between social/feminist theory and personal experiences.

⁹³ Berg (2008).

⁹⁴ Gronold et al. (2009): 84.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

It produces a different kind of knowledge which is based on everyday life. It is however important to remember that, as Berg (2008) stated: “memories are present-day interpretations of past events and not a cunning way of exposing truth”.⁹⁶ Those memories linked to a particular theme or subject can occur at any time, but sometimes they need to be triggered and require active thinking which can be emotionally tiring. It could be difficult to write memories during class hours, because sometimes memories occur at different times. For the Citizenship class memory work could be used in two variants: one is to give the writing as an assignment which you can collectively discuss in class, the other is to give the students time during class to write memories which gives the teacher the chance to help them in the process. It could be possible to use memory work in both variants multiple times and discuss which works better for the students. Using memory work as a tool for discussing sensitive subjects works best when it is done in a long period of time, maybe throughout the year while working on different themes.

The MBO Council published a document called *Guidance Critical Thinking Ability* in 2016 where they stressed the importance for students to develop a critical attitude. The document states that it is important for students to become aware of how they think, because their thoughts are influenced by their environment.⁹⁷ Memory work could help teachers and students develop this critical attitude when it is used as a tool to reflect on discourses that influence(d) their experiences.

5.2 The requirements for using memory work as a tool in class:

In order to use memory work in class, a teacher needs to be competent in gender-sensitive teaching. How can gender-sensitive teaching be defined? Roof (2007) stated: “What is clear is that feminist research in general believes in the power of critique and inquiry to change materially the structures of culture and the lives of individuals”⁹⁸. The emphasis on critical thinking is intertwined with the feminist idea that discourses and power relations influence a person’s social position and way of thinking, as I discussed in chapter three. This believe in the power of critique that plays a part in feminist research, also has a significant role in feminist or gender sensitive teaching.

⁹⁶ Berg (2008): 218.

⁹⁷ MBO Council (2016): 3.

⁹⁸ Roof (2007): 426.

Before a teacher is able to accomplish gender sensitive teaching, she first needs to reflect on her own self-perception and recognize her own prejudices, internalized standards and categorizations.⁹⁹ Therefore a teacher can be considered as a participant in class. She should be open to learning from her students as well, since every person is able to deconstruct discourses and processes in a unique way. It is necessary that a teacher is aware of the way she is influenced herself, in order to be able to teach students how to perform a critical discourse analysis. One of the Citizenship teachers admitted that there had been certain moments where he decided not to address a topic in class. Danny:

I did skip some statements about homosexuality in a debate, because I had a boy in my class who I thought was gay. I wanted him to feel safe and I did not want to make him uncomfortable. Maybe that is a bit cowardly of me, because it would have also been the perfect opportunity to discuss the topic, but I found it more important that the boy felt secure.

Danny believed that his student was gay, because of a certain type of behaviour the student showed which Danny considered to be 'feminine'. He did not further define the nature of this behaviour. Apparently Danny saw a connection between homosexuality and 'feminine' behaviour, but he did not critically analyse this connection. Could it be that he linked the two together because of stereotypes he saw in media? Are certain types of behaviour not considered 'masculine' enough for a man, which automatically means the student must be gay, because homosexual people are considered to be more 'feminine' than 'masculine'? It would have been an opportunity to discuss normative gender roles and sexuality in class and stimulate students to critically think about their own perceptions, if Danny would have tried to deconstruct his own line of thoughts.

Secondly, a teacher needs to be aware of the different needs of the students and should be competent in responding to them. Gronold et al. explained:

Gender sensitive teaching means: respond to the needs of all participants and create learning spaces that do not discount gender and that allow all the participants to develop their gender competences.¹⁰⁰

She needs to incorporate multiple perspectives in the curriculum to display the complexity of subjects. When using memory work as a teaching tool, the hierarchy between the teacher and her students becomes less evident, because of the belief that every person could and should adopt a critical attitude towards processes in society.

⁹⁹ Gronold, Hipfl, Pederson (ed.) (2009): 130.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

The students already possess knowledge in the form of experiences, the teacher can give them the tools to gain access to that knowledge and to interact with it critically. Therefore it is important that teachers learn to listen to their students and assist them in deconstructing their memories and thoughts.

Thirdly, it is very important to create a safe learning space where gender/feminist topics can be discussed properly. In the previous chapter I elaborated on the notion of safe spaces and illustrated how a safe space can be created in the Citizenship class.

As the previous chapter on class environment and safe spaces shows, the majority of the teachers in charge of the Citizenship course at *Albeda College* did not feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics because they were frightened of creating a tensed atmosphere and they did not feel like they possessed the right tools to discuss those subjects properly. In this chapter I want to demonstrate how teachers could benefit from incorporating memory work into their teaching practice.

5.3 Memory work in the Citizenship course.

None of the teachers in charge of the Citizenship course at *Albeda College* has tried using memory work as a tool. Most of the teachers discussed sensitive topics through statements in a debate or did not incorporate subjects they feared would cause tension in class in their curriculum at all.

There are three requirements for using memory work in class. The first is that the teacher needs to be aware of how her own experiences and thoughts are influenced by power relations and ideologies. She should be able to recognize her own internalized standards and prejudices. In order to develop and maintain a critical attitude, a person never finishes deconstructing discourses and processes, because she gains new experiences every day. Therefore teachers need to participate in memory work together with the students. I am not under the impression that all teachers in charge of the Citizenship course are aware of how their own position is shaped, but if they are open to learning from students and will critically engage with the material, they can use memory work as a tool to develop a critical attitude together with the students.

The second requirement for using memory work in class is that teachers need respond to the different needs of students. My analysis in chapter three showed that the Citizenship manuals are written from a Eurocentric perspective and neglect other perspectives. Teachers indicated in the interviews that they do try to incorporate multiple perspectives in their curriculum. Therefore I believe that most teachers are aware of the needs of their students, but they need to continue discussing it with the students. The third requirement is the creation of a safe learning space, which is not always achieved in the Citizenship class. In the previous chapter I elaborated more on how safe spaces can be created and how it can be beneficial for the quality of the course.

Teachers have indicated that they neglect certain subjects in class because they are afraid discussing them will cause tension. The creation of a safe space in class could help decrease this problem, but it is not sufficient. The goal of using memory work as a tool to discuss sensitive subjects, is to make students and teachers aware how their memories were socially constructed and influenced by power relations and processes of ideology. Learning how to deconstruct normative thinking will stimulate the developing of critical attitude. The participant needs to write in “as much detail as possible recalling what people said, what they were wearing, where you were, the time of day, smells, even if it does not seem that important to [the participant at that time].¹⁰¹ Even though these details may not seem relevant to the participant, they could reveal certain patterns. By first focusing on self-reflection (writing down and analysing their own memory) and then discussing and analysing the experiences in class, the participants become aware of multiple perspectives connected to one subject. They may also gain insight into how these perspectives have been formed.

By using memory work, teachers can discuss sensitive topics in a more nuanced and personal way. In the previous section of this chapter I analysed a statement teacher Danny made about why he decided not to discuss homosexuality in class. Danny assumed that one of this male students was gay, because of ‘feminine’ behaviour he showed. The *Citizenship Agenda 2017-2021* stated that gender and sexuality should both be incorporated in the social dimension of the Citizenship course. In chapter three I showed that gender was only briefly mentioned in one manual, but students were not stimulated to critically analyse gender roles. Memory work could be used in class to encourage students and teachers to think about their prejudices and internalized standards, and reflect on how they are formed.

¹⁰¹ Purohit & Walsch (2003):

It is possible that some students are already aware of discourses surrounding gender, which means that they could use their analysis in class to illustrate how these discourses influenced their way of thinking. At the same time, they can become aware of other perspectives by listening to the experiences written by fellow students and the teacher. The TED Talk *Why am I so gay?*¹⁰² by Thomas Lloyd, which focuses on how 'feminine' behaviour is connected to his sexuality, can be used to open the conversation on gender roles in class.

The use of memory work can be beneficial for the student (and teacher) development, the teacher practice and the quality of the curriculum.

¹⁰² Lloyd, Thomas (2014). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1foLW8h54> (10-8-2018)

7: Conclusion

This thesis has focused on how the Citizenship course is taught at the MBO school *Albeda College* in Rotterdam. It described the structure and purpose of the Citizenship course as well as the criticism it received from the MBO Council and the teachers in charge of the course. I researched whether concepts and theories from feminist pedagogy could be used to improve the criticisms of the course by analysing the used manuals, the class environment and the teaching practice. The *Citizenship Agenda 2017-2021* showed that the current design of the Citizenship course at many MBO schools, including *Albeda College*, does not guarantee the required quality. This thesis has the potential to be a tool in designing the plans for improving the course at *Albeda College*.

At a school like *Albeda College*, where the group of students is as diverse as the population of Rotterdam itself, students should learn the importance of self-reflection and critical thinking. That many different opinions and beliefs in one room can cause problems between the students mutually and the students and the teachers, if they do not have a safe space to explore those thoughts. Teachers have indicated that not feeling confident about their knowledge on certain subjects, is one of the reasons they sometimes choose to not incorporate a subject in their curriculum. Therefore my advice for *Albeda College* would be to organize an event (which can last multiple days) once a year where teachers can follow lectures on critical thinking and sensitive subjects linked to Third Wave Feminism such as sexuality, gender and racism. These lectures can be given by university teachers (from gender studies, cultural studies or social studies) who are specialized in the subjects. *Albeda College* can also provide training for teachers on how to use memory work in class and how to create a safe space.

The thesis firstly has shown that the ready-made manuals for the Citizenship course do not sufficiently encourage students to critically reflect on complex topics and on their own way of thinking, while the MBO Council named the development of a critical attitude as one of the main goals of the course. Secondly, the manuals only pay little attention to the processes of social injustice and does not stimulate students to deconstruct them. Thirdly, the manuals maintain a definition of citizenship that is very narrow and does not correspond to the diverse student population of *Albeda College*.

Therefore my advice is to provide the teachers with the freedom to design their classes together with their students, without a manual, so that the course responds to the students' needs. This advice connects to the Executive Board's statement that the use of manuals is not necessary for the Citizenship course, because it costs the students money and the information in the manual is always outdated. It also corresponds to the Executive Board's resolution to provide teachers with more freedom of choice. My advice does however collide with the request for a methodological unity in the *Citizenship Agenda 2017-2021* (2017) published by the MBO Council. The teachers who already work with their own material stated that they are frightened that because of the bad evaluation by the MBO Council, *Albeda College* will decide to write down every aspect of the curriculum in order to include all subjects. The starting point of the course should not be to provide the student with as much information as possible, but to transform her into an critical and engaged citizen. Therefore I do not believe that the use of one manual can solve the problems the teachers face, while providing them the freedom to design their classes together with the students possibly can.

Subjects connected to Third Wave Feminism and social injustice can be discussed in class through the use of memory work, because the feminist tool offers the opportunity to elaborate more on and critically analyse a subject. Teachers could use memory work to help students gain access to the knowledge already within them. Because emotion and experience are an essential part of memory work, it is important that students acquire a feeling of security and freedom, especially at a school with such a diverse student population as *Albeda College*. The theory of safe (and brave) spaces can help teachers with creating such an atmosphere, by developing a Students' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities amongst other things. This may also decrease the problem that teachers choose not to discuss certain topics because of the fear of causing tension in class, while the Executive Board stated that every teacher should incorporate sensitive topics in their curriculum. The Citizenship class should be a place where power relations and processes of social injustice are critically analysed by students who are not afraid to take risks in an environment which is as safe as possible.

My research only focused on a few criticisms expressed by the teachers and is influenced by my own position as a feminist and a researcher. In a follow-up research the students' perspective on the quality of Citizenship could be explored in order to illustrate the problem more extensively, but that subject is for another time and another place.

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