

Teachers self-perceived multicultural competence and their experience of culturally laden value-based tensions in Senior Secondary Vocational Education

K. Tielman, R. Wesselink, P. den Brok en F. Hirzalla

Abstract

During the last decades there has been an enormous increase in the number of students with different cultural backgrounds in schools in The Netherlands, as in many Western countries. School teachers are required to have the competences to handle such cultural differences. The present study collected data on these variables via a self-report questionnaire administered to teachers of culturally diverse Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Training (SSVET) schools. In total, 898 teachers from 20 SSVET schools completed the survey. Teachers experienced tensions from relatively limited to fairly frequent. Regarding their competencies, teachers attributed themselves a positive attitude towards multicultural education, perceived to have some degree of multicultural teaching skills and perceived their degree of multicultural education knowledge neutral. Teachers' self-perceived multicultural knowledge, attitudes and skills had varied associations with the different experienced value-based tensions. Whereas the degree of self-perceived skill showed a positive relationship with most experienced tensions, attitudes and knowledge showed a negative relationship. These results suggest that perceiving to have more skills leads to experiencing more tensions. Teachers in the lower levels of SSVET, younger teachers, teachers in schools with a larger population of teachers from migrant backgrounds, teachers with more training and teachers in need of training experienced more tensions. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: cultural diversity, tensions, values, multicultural teaching competence, vocational education

1 Introduction

Globalization has broadened the cultural spectrum in Western countries where many people live in culturally diverse communities. In addition to opportunities that cultural diversity offers, each country also struggles in its own way to accommodate cultural diversity, which is sometimes fertile ground for tensions. Schools face challenges in preparing their students for these communities (Eurydice, 2012; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007) and in dealing with differences in socio-cultural backgrounds teachers experience tensions (Ben-Peretz & Assunção Flores, 2018; Coronel & Gómez-Hurtado, 2015; Tielman, den Brok, Bolhuis, & Vallejo, 2012).

Dutch Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Training (SSVET) is highly culturally diverse. In some large and medium-sized cities in the Netherlands, it is common that a majority of sometimes more than 80% of students in SSVET schools are from immigrant backgrounds (CBS StatLine, 2018). Teachers of culturally diverse classrooms often feel overwhelmed by the growing cultural, socio-economic and other diversity of their students (Crul, Güngör, & Lily, 2016) and indicate that they feel unprepared for teaching students with culturally diverse backgrounds (Banks & McGee Banks, 2004; den Brok & Levy, 2005; Spanierman, Oh, Heppner, Neville, Mobley, Wright, & Navarro, 2011). They have concerns about the incompatibility of norms and values between themselves as teachers and their students and amongst students, so-called value-based tensions (Radstake, 2009). We consider value-based tensions in SSVET as teachers' internal struggles between, on the one hand, their own beliefs, norms and values and, on the other hand, the professional requirements of the profession versus the students' different beliefs and

perspectives on norms and values (Tielman, Wesselink, & den Brok, 2021).

Special attention has been called for cultural diversity in SSVET schools, with specific emphasis on dealing with tensions based on values and norms (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2019; Radstake, 2009). Therefore, it is important for SSVET teachers to have or acquire multicultural teaching competences with special attention to dealing with value-based tensions in the classroom (Tielman et al., 2021). *'Multicultural teaching competence means that teachers continually (a) explore their own attitudes and beliefs about multicultural issues, (b) increase their understanding of specific population groups, and (c) investigate the impact of this awareness and knowledge on what and how they teach and how they interact with students and their families'* (Spanierman et al., 2011 pg. 444).

Very limited research has been done into the association between multicultural teaching competence and teachers' value-based tensions in culturally diverse classrooms, and if such research was done at all, it was carried out mainly in primary and general secondary education (e.g. Leeman, 2006; Versteegt, 2010; Radstake, 2009), rather than SSVET. Three reasons magnify the importance of this research in SSVET. First, students with an immigrant background comprise a significant proportion of the student population of SSVET in the Netherlands, even more so than in general education (CBS StatLine, 2018). These students and teachers bring different perspectives and values to the classroom, which interact with each other in every lesson and often create value-based tensions (Bruner, 1996; Leeman, 2006; Veugelers & Kat, 2001). Second, value-based tensions SSVET-teachers experience in the vocational education context are different from those of teachers of primary- and general secondary school (Tielman et al., 2021). Students in SSVET are trained for and in close association with a profession with also its own specific professional ethics (de Bruijn, Billett, & Onstenk, 2017). These values are further shaped within a vocational context and may conflict with underlying personality traits of

students and therefore create additional value-based tensions for teachers (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003; Veugelers, 1995). Third, in addition to the cultural diversity in the student population, Dutch SSVET is characterized by a diversity in tracks, such as nursing or plant design. Teaching in the different tracks and at the four different levels in SSVET¹ requires a specific approach from teachers, who may experience value-based tensions differently (Groenveld & Steensel, 2009). Overall, these unique SSVET characteristics make it challenging to address cultural diversity and increase the importance of understanding and dealing with value-based tensions (cf. Cochran-Smith, 1995; Leeman, 2003, 2006; Radstake, 2009). It is largely unknown, though, how value-based tensions influence teacher performance in culturally diverse SSVET. This is the central problem statement studied in the present study.

Starting point for this study are four value-based tensions, namely those related to diversity and communality, respect, justice and personal autonomy identified by Radstake (2009) and Leeman (2006). These tensions were established originally in qualitative studies among general education teachers in which the vocational component was not included. These four tensions were complemented with a fifth tension related to professional ethics and stance specifically for the SSVET context based on a prior study conducted by authors (Tielman et al., 2021). These five value-based tensions are described in Table 1.

The exploratory study by Tielman et al. (2021) gave insight into the range of value-based tensions teachers encountered teaching culturally diverse SSVET classes. The results showed that most of the value-based tensions that the SSVET teachers encountered were related to the intercultural loaden values *diversity* and *respect*. Teachers additionally reported tensions with regards to *professional ethics and stance* of students, which seems unique to SSVET. Compared to Leeman's (2006) study in general education, teachers in the exploratory study in SSVET experienced about three times more tension. Interviews showed that most experienced tensions by

Table 1.
Value-based tensions

Value-based tensions	Description of the tension
Diversity and Communitality	How to cope with group differences in terms of ethno-cultural background. The tension is that teachers mainly focus on the differences between students and not on the similarities.
Respect	Involves disrespect of students towards female teachers and school rules, disrespectful interaction between students and authority problems in the class.
Professional ethics and stance	Tensions or different values of teacher compared to students in coaching students on their professional attitudes and work ethics with regard to punctuality, integrity, dealing with authority and professional standards.
Justice	Tensions related to whether or not the teacher acts fairly, according to the students, when assessing students' work or evaluating students' behavior.
Personal Autonomy	Tensions, often occurring with individual students who, in the teachers' opinion, choose loyalty to the group rather than acting more autonomously in their decisions.

teachers in our own exploratory study (Tielman et al., 2021) were caused by a self-perceived lack of skills. Less often, teachers experienced a shortage of knowledge or hindering attitudes when faced with tensions in culturally diverse SSVET classes. The findings in the exploratory study were based on a small, purposely sampled group of teachers, which as such was not per se representative for the larger population of SSVET teachers. Further confirmation is needed with a larger population of teachers. Therefore, we conducted a larger, quantitative study, which is reported in this article. Furthermore, we wanted to explore the magnitude of occurrence of the tension with regards to professional ethics and stance, which is specific to SSVET and takes shape during professional activities at school and internships in companies (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003; Veugelers, 1995). Previous research in general education indicated that experiencing tensions may have to do with teacher competences or components of these competences (e.g. Carter & Darling-Hammond, 2016; Gay & Howard, 2000; Leeman, 2006) or the lack of these

competences. Therefore, in the present study we want to examine how SSVET teachers assess their knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding the value-based tensions they experience in order to determine their shortcomings in multicultural teaching competences and see whether there is a relationship between these shortcomings and tensions signaled. The information obtained can be useful for strengthening the multicultural teaching competence of SSVET teachers with respect to awareness of diversity issues and may uncover more SSVET-specific tensions. Teachers in SSVET are very diverse in background, prior education, and position, even more so than teachers in general education (Orr, 2019). Possibly, their experiences with value-based tensions are different and distinct from those in general secondary education (e.g. Leeman, 2006; Radstake, 2009).

The aim of our research is to validate prior established value-based tensions experienced by teachers teaching in culturally diverse SSVET classes and the extent to which their background characteristics (age, teaching

experience, ethnic background, gender, teaching diploma, training received, training need, qualification level and diversity in teacher population level) and knowledge, skills and attitudes reported by them are related to the degree to which they experience these tensions. With these insights we will add to the knowledge base on the experiences of teachers with tense situations in culturally diverse classes in general and specifically for the vocational context of SSVET education and help them to appreciate the differences more instead of experiencing tensions.

This article first presents the theoretical background of this study, followed by a description of the study methodology and finally the results, the discussion and conclusion.

2 Theoretical background

SSVET teachers train students to become competent professionals who must be able to link their knowledge, skills, attitudes and to use them in an integrated way in order to be able to act appropriately in a professional situation (Baartman & de Bruijn, 2011; Krüger, 2004; Wesselink, Dekker-Groen, Biemans, & Mulder, 2010). Reflection and dialogue in the confrontation between external demands and images of the professional practice on the one hand, and personal ideas and perspectives of the students on the other hand, form the core of learning in vocational education (Glaudé, van den Berg, Verbeek, & de Bruijn, 2011).

2.1 Teachers' multicultural Knowledge, Skills and Attitude

Teachers' experiences of tensions in culturally diverse classes may be related to their multicultural teaching competence, which – in this case – might be reflected in a lack of knowledge, skills and/or hindering attitude. When it comes to tensions in culturally diverse classes, teachers should be able to communicate effectively and behave appropriately based on their multicultural knowledge, skills and attitudes (Banks, 2004; Deardorff, 2006; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings,

1995). Effectiveness refers here to 'the achievement of valued objectives', being able to coordinate behavior (verbal and nonverbal) and adapt to the expectations of a given situation (Deardorff, 2006; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Appropriateness reflects civility and is defined as "the avoidance of violating social or interpersonal norms, rules, or expectations" (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p.7) considering what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a certain context (Deardorff, 2006)

Multicultural knowledge and understanding related to cultural differences are essentials of multicultural teaching competence (Washington, 2003), as is knowledge of the influence of cultural factors on behaviour and forms of communication in culturally diverse classes. Gay (2010) stated that teachers should take into account the differences in cultural knowledge, experiences and frames of reference of their students and also have knowledge of the norms and values of other cultures (Gay, 2002). Teachers often lack these knowledge (Taylor & Sobel, 2001; Capella-Santana, 2003) and fail to see that cultural differences are present or important (Sleeter, 2008; Vervaet, 2018).

Various levels of multicultural teaching skills (i.e., personal, classroom, and school) are needed for comprehensive culturally diverse education (Deardorff, 2009; Derriks, Ledoux, Overmaat, & Van Eck, 2002, Taylor & Quintana, 2003). Wubbels, den Brok, Veldman, and van Tartwijk (2006) revealed that teachers in culturally diverse classes need to have excellent interpersonal competence skills and their teaching should focus on attention, commitment and be good at monitoring and managing behaviour and creating a positive teacher-student relationship. Teachers who have social and communicative skills are aware of their own feelings and are able to deal with them when assessing tense situations in culturally diverse classes (Deardorff, 2009). In addition to the didactic and pedagogical skills (Gay, 2002), teachers also need to be more aware of and sensitive to cultural differences and how these issues affect how they are addressed

and how they are received (Bakari, 2003).

Multicultural attitudes reflect teachers' awareness of, comfort with, and sensitivity to issues of cultural diversity (Ponterotto, Baluch, Greig, & Rivera, 1998). Brown (2004) identified teacher multicultural attitudes regarding being aware of diversity within ethnic groups, values and norms, student background, authority issues, and the multitude of factors involved in culturally diverse classes. A favorable attitude involves being open to other perspectives, seeking learning opportunities about other cultures, but at the same time being aware of one's own perspectives and sensitive to others' points of view (Gay, 2002; Pastori, Mangiatordi, Ereky-Stevens, & Slot, 2018; Santamaria, 2009).

With the growth of cultural diversity in classrooms, there is a need to restructure teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about cultural diversity (Gay, 2013), but very little is known about this (Vedder & Horenczyk, 2006), and even less in the specific context of SSVET. Previous studies on components of competence have been conducted mainly in primary and secondary education. In a small scale exploratory study in Dutch SSVET, Tielman et al. (2021) reported that most experienced value-based tensions by teachers were caused by lack of skills to address the tensions. Less often, teachers experienced a shortage of knowledge or hindering attitudes when faced with value-based tensions. To strengthen teachers' multicultural competence, it is important to know how teachers' multicultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes are related to their perceived values-based tensions.

2.2 Teachers' personal and context characteristics in relation to tensions

Some studies in homogeneous classes with regard to background characteristics of teachers point to a positive relationship between teaching experience and being able to meet tensions (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007), conversely, other studies (Anderson, 2010; Strickland, 2018), show that teaching experience could not be used to determine teachers' ability to address tensions in

culturally diverse classes. On the other hand, Paccione (2000) showed that specific experience with culturally diverse classes is important for teachers' cultural sensitivity. These experienced teachers are likely to have more experience in dealing with culturally tense situations (Leeman, 2006). Since in Dutch SSVET age and teaching experience are not always inherent to each other, as many teachers become teachers later in their career, both aspects should be considered. In the Netherlands, Radstake (2009) examined whether value-based tensions experienced by teachers in culturally diverse general secondary education were related to their personal and contextual characteristics. She reported no differences between teachers based on age, gender or teaching experience. Tielman et al. (2021) reported that especially older SSVET teachers mentioned tensions regarding the rude behavior of students with an immigrant background. In the same study they noted that female teachers in particular reported tense situations related to disrespect. They also indicated that teachers with migration backgrounds did not report any tensions within their culturally diverse SSVET classes. This is remarkable and not much is known about performance of teachers with a migration background in the Dutch context. Confirming research can be found internationally in other types of education (e.g. Dewilde, 2013; Economou, 2020; Schmidt & Schneider, 2016), but the positive effects of teachers with migration backgrounds on immigrant students has also been contradicted in some studies (e.g. Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, Stanat, & Kunter, 2011; Rotter & Timpe, 2016). Kern, Roehrig, and Wattam (2012) emphasized that teachers with a migration background, like teachers without such a background, also need to learn to provide students with immigrant backgrounds with the most appropriate educational environment. Moreover, Mantel (2020) reported differences in the sensitivity of teachers with a migration background in dealing with cultural diversity in schools in urban areas compared to rural areas. Given that hardly any research has been done on teachers with a migration background in the

Table 2.
Background and context characteristics

		%	Years	SD
<i>Gender</i>	Female	58		
	Male	41		
	Unknown	1		
<i>Ethnic background</i>	Native	51		
	Immigrant ²	49		
<i>Age</i>			44.3	12.5
<i>Teaching experience</i>			11.3	9.95
<i>Teachers employment by city size(inhabitants)</i>				
	> 300.000	27		
	>100.000 and < 300.000	63		
	> 100.000	10		
<i>Teaching certification</i>				
	Teacher training program	44		
	Different or no certification	56		
<i>Training multicultural education</i>				
	Training received	62		
	Need for (more) training	51		

Dutch SSVET context and that clear and unequivocal findings on the effects of background characteristics such as age, prior education and teaching experience are still lacking, the question is whether these characteristics influence the experience of tensions. In the lower qualification levels of the Dutch SSVET, the student population is more diverse than in the higher levels, with very different initial education levels and background characteristics (Lesterhuis, 2010). Because the different levels within the Dutch SSVET differ in their population diversity and require teachers with different training and qualities (Groeneveld & Van Steensel, 2009; Lesterhuis, 2010), this study also takes into account the different qualification levels in education, training followed and training needs of teachers and examines how these influence the experience of tension.

Research questions

Our research questions are:

1. To what extent do SSVET teachers experience the five culturally loaden value-

based tensions (e.g. tensions related to diversity and communality, respect, justice, personal autonomy and professional ethics and stance) that were found in prior studies?

2. To what extent are teachers' self-perceived multicultural knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the value-based tensions they experience?

3. To what extent are teacher demographics and context characteristics (age, teaching experience, ethnic background(native), gender, teaching diploma, training received, training need, qualification level and diversity in teacher population level) related to the value-based tensions they experience?

3 Methodology

3.1 Participants

Data for this study were collected using a self-report questionnaire distributed to teachers of SSVET schools in The Netherlands. Participants for the study were acquired by approaching schools within the research team's

professional networks, organizations representing the interests of teachers in SSVET, and professional journals to gain support for the study. They were informed of their voluntary participation and the confidentiality of treating their data. The survey was administered via Qualtrics. Three teachers completed a draft questionnaire to ascertain whether they could sufficiently recognize the tensions. This was the case and no changes were deemed necessary. Of the 898 teachers from 20 different SSVET schools who participated in the survey, a varying number were used in the various analyses, since not everyone answered all questions. The missing responses were mainly at the end of the questionnaire. Table 2 describes the distribution of all background and context characteristics.

3.2 Measurements

Dependent variables: value-based tensions

We used a scale developed by Radstake (2009) consisting of 20 situations based on value-based tensions with respect to *respect, justice, personal autonomy* and *diversity and communality*, which was originally developed for teachers teaching culturally diverse classes in general education (Leeman, 2006). There was no reliability reported for this scale in her study (Radstake, 2009). From this scale, we selected thirteen situations between teachers and students or between students themselves. The situations were about equally distributed over the types of tensions. Respondents used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being “almost never occurs” to 5 being “almost always occurs” to rate how often they had experienced the respective value-based tensions. Each of the four constructs was subjected to reliability analysis. For *respect* (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .65$, N of items = 3), an example item was ‘one or more students do not respect my opinion as a teacher’. For the *justice* scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .65$, N of items = 3), a sample item was: ‘one or more students accuse me of discrimination’. Concerning *personal autonomy* (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .66$, N of items = 3), an example item was ‘one or more students refuse to tell me the truth because they do not want to betray the person who did something’.

With regard to the value-based tension *diversity and communality* (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .72$, N of items = 4) a sample item was: ‘one or more students do not want me to interfere with the content of a dispute in class’.

Our previous study in SSVET (Tielman et al., 2021) identified *professional ethics and stance* as an additional fifth value-based tension that teachers can encounter teaching culturally diverse SSVET classrooms. In order to construct items that were indicative for value-based tensions that SSVET teachers could experience with respect to *professional ethics and stance*, we additionally conducted two focus groups in two different departments of a culturally diverse SSVET school in the Southern part of The Netherlands. The teachers were selected by the team coordinators because of their experience and particular interest in the topic of professional ethics and stance of SSVET-students. In the focus groups, we collected experiences of teachers with tensions in the field of *professional ethics and stance* from which potentially important elements for the research could be derived. Statements about professional ethics and stance were classified in themes that seemed to be recurrent and emerged from the data. These themes were formulated as items for a *professional ethics and stance* scale and discussed with two senior researchers. One example of the ten items was “one or more students have difficulty carrying out certain professional tasks towards a specific target group because of their cultural background/beliefs”. Another example is “one or more students have difficulty showing professional behavior in the professional context (such as taking the initiative, daring to ask questions, arriving on time, use of language, appropriate distance/nearness to third parties)” (see Appendix). The items form a reliable scale according to a Principal Components Analysis and Cronbach’s $\alpha = .85$ (N of items = 10).

Independent variables: knowledge, skills and attitudes

In this survey study we wanted to assess teachers’ knowledge, skills and attitudes as well. We used a questionnaire that consisted

of a scale with ten items on multicultural educational skills [Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$; Spanierman et al., 2011], six items of multicultural knowledge about education [Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.78$; Spanierman et al., 2011] and 20 items about attitudes towards cultural diversity [Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$; Ponterotto et al., 1998]. We adapted the questionnaire to the Dutch SSVET context by translating all questions to Dutch and including only items that apply to this context. The items were formulated on a five-point Likert scale with a response format ranging from 1 being "totally disagree" to 5 meaning "totally agree". The first scale, *multicultural skills*, comprised nine items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$, N of items = 9). One example of an item for multicultural skills was "I often include examples of the experiences and perspectives of racial and ethnic groups during my classroom lessons". The second scale, *multicultural knowledge*, comprised six items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$, N of items = 6). A sample item is "I am knowledgeable of how experiences of various ethnic minority groups may affect students' learning". The third scale, *multicultural attitude*, comprised eight items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$, N of items = 8). One example of the items for multicultural attitude is "To be an effective teacher, one needs to be aware of cultural differences present in the classroom". All three scales, *multicultural skills*, *knowledge* and *attitude* had very good internal consistency (cf. Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Teacher and context background variables

These variables were included in the analysis as follows. Age was measured as the teachers' ages in years when they completed the questionnaire. Teachers' gender was coded as 0 = female and 1 = male. For the migration background of teachers a dichotomous variable (0 = migration background and 1 = native) was constructed. Teaching experience was measured by the number of years respondents had been working as a teacher, including the year in which the questionnaire was answered. For the variables teacher diploma and SSVET qualification level, dichotomous variables were constructed, respectively (0 = pedagogical

didactic certificate or other and 1 = teacher training diploma full-time/part-time and 0 = qualification levels 1, 2, 3 and 1 = qualification level 4). Training received was coded as 1 = yes and 0 = no. Based on Amitai (2021) and Sincer (2020) who used the Herfindahl Index (Putnam, 2007) to determine ethnic diversity in schools, we adopted this index to determine the ethnic diversity in the teacher population per school. The formula to calculate this homogeneity index, which considers the number and size of the different ethnic groups, is as follows: (Putnam, 2007). Following Sincer (2021), we subtracted this index from 1 to determine the degree of heterogeneity. An index of zero indicates an entirely homogenous teacher population and an index of 1 corresponds to a fully diverse teacher population. In line with Amitai, Vervaet, & Van Houtte (2020), the ethnicity of the whole team of school teachers was assessed by the place of birth of their maternal grandmother (Timmerman, Vanderwaeren, & Crul, 2003). If the teachers' maternal grandmothers were born in Western Europe, they were considered to be native teachers and others as teachers from a migration background (Timmerman, Hermans, & Hoornaert, 2002). The following eight groups were constructed: Western European, Turkish, Moroccan, Former Dutch Colonies, Mid- and South east European, Middle Eastern, Asian and others. On average, schools had a teacher divers population score of .239 (SD=.184). The school with the lowest diversity in teacher population scored zero on the index and the school which had the most diverse teacher population scored 0.68. For the analysis a dichotomous variable were constructed: 0 = schools with less diverse teacher population ($M < .239$) and 1 = school with more diverse teacher population ($M > .239$).

3.3 Analyses

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics of all above variables were determined. The mean and standard deviation were used to report experienced value-based tensions by teachers. In addition, we determined the extent to which the variance on teachers' experience of tensions

could be explained by differences in schools using a variance analysis with school number as explanatory variable.

In order to answer research questions two and three, we first analysed the bivariate correlations between the dependent variables (*diversity and communality, respect, justice, personal autonomy and professional ethics and stance*) and the independent competence variables (*skills, attitude and knowledge*) and teacher and context background variables (*age, teaching experience, ethnic background(native), gender, teaching diploma, training received, training need, qualification level and diversity in teacher population level*).

Subsequently, we also conducted multiple regressions for all dependent variables entering the independent competence variables and teacher and context background variables into the regression models jointly. With these stepwise regression analyses, we examine which variables from the combination of competence aspects and teacher and context background variables matter per dependent variable (i.e. tensions).

4 Results

4.1 Extent of experienced value-based tensions by teachers (Research question 1)

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of

the variables involved in the study.

The means and standard deviation of the experienced value-based tensions by teachers indicated that tensions with respect to *professional ethics and stance* were experienced the most ($M = 2.56$; $SD = 0.63$) followed by *respect* ($M = 2.23$; $SD = 0.74$), *diversity and communality* ($M = 2.14$; $SD = 0.67$), *personal autonomy* ($M = 1.76$; $SD = 0.70$) and *justice* ($M = 1.72$; $SD = 0.63$). Based on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, these results indicate that tensions in the areas of *professional ethics and stance, respect, and diversity and communality* are relatively common, and *personal autonomy and justice* are relatively rare.

The extent to which the different schools affect the variance in teachers' perceived value-based tensions (e.g. the extent of school-related differences in tensions) lies between 6 and 11 percent, which can be indicated as average (Cohen, 1988). *Personal autonomy* ($\eta^2 = .109$) shows the largest differences between schools followed by *justice* ($\eta^2 = .092$), *diversity and communality* ($\eta^2 = .080$), *respect* ($\eta^2 = .068$), and *professional ethics and stance* ($\eta^2 = .065$) respectively, all categorized as average (Cohen, 1988). Thereby, *professional ethics and stance* is the least affected by school differences (6.5%), suggesting that differences in experience of tensions are mainly due to teacher differences.

Table 3.
Descriptives of the dependent and independent variables

Variables	N	Means (Scale 1-5)*	SD
<i>Dependent variables - tensions</i>			
Professional Ethics and Stance	623	2.56	0.63
Respect	701	2.23	0.74
Diversity and Communality	701	2.14	0.67
Personal Autonomy	701	1.76	0.70
Justice	701	1.72	0.63
<i>Independent variables – competence elements</i>			
Knowledge			
Skills	561	3.02	0.95
Attitude	592	3.45	0.84
	547	4.07	0.74

**(scale ranging from 1 being "very few" to 5 being "very much")*

4.2 Extent of self-perceived multicultural knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the value-based tensions (Research question 2)

Table 4 (see next page) mentions the bivariate correlations between all variables. Multicultural *skills* had a significant correlation with the value-based tensions *professional ethics and stance* ($r=.198$, sig $p<.01$), *personal autonomy* ($r=.130$, sig $p<.01$), and *diversity and communality* ($r=.111$, sig $p<.01$). The more multicultural skills teachers reported to have, the more value-based tensions teachers experienced with respect to professional ethics and stance, personal autonomy and diversity and communality. Between multicultural *attitude* and *professional ethics and stance* the correlation was $r=.152$ (sig $p<.001$), meaning that the more multicultural *attitude* teachers reported to have, the more value-based tensions teachers experienced with respect to *professional ethics and stance*. All correlations were small.

Next, we determined the partial correlations of the perceived value-based tensions by stepwise linear regression with all independent competence variables and the teacher and context background variables combined.

Compared to the bivariate correlations the positive relationship between multicultural *skills* and *professional ethics and stance* increased and decreased for *diversity and communality*. Multicultural *skills* became positively correlated with *respect*. The more multicultural skills teachers reported to have, the more value-based tensions teachers experienced with regard to *professional ethics and stance* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .183$, SE= .038 $p<.001$), *diversity and communality* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .121$, SE= .041 $p<.05$), and *respect* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .116$, SE= .046, $p<.05$) (see Table 5).

In comparison with the bivariate correlation multicultural *knowledge* became negatively related with *respect*, *professional ethics and stance*, *justice* and *diversity and communality*. The less multicultural *knowledge* teachers reported to have, the

more value-based tensions teachers experienced with regard to *respect* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.175$, SE= .041 $p<.01$), *professional ethics and stance* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.162$, SE= .034 $p<.01$), *justice* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.116$, SE= .030 $p<.01$), and *diversity and communality* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.104$, SE= .056 $p<.01$).

Multicultural attitude showed no longer a significant correlation with *professional ethics and stance* but became negatively significant to *diversity and communality*. The less positive the attitude, the more value-based tensions they experienced with regard to *diversity and communality* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.171$, SE= .037 $p<.01$).

4.3 Extent to which teacher demographics and context characteristics relate to the value-based tensions teachers experienced (Research question 3)

First, we determined the raw bivariate correlations (see Table 4). *Gender* had a positive correlation with the value-based tensions *diversity and communality* ($r=.113$, sig $p<.01$). Male teachers experienced more value-based tensions on *diversity and communality*. *Age* had a negative correlation with *professional ethics and stance* ($r=-.079$, sig $p<.05$), meaning that younger teachers experienced more value-based tensions in this field. *Qualification level* was negatively related to *professional ethics and stance* ($r=.169$, sig $p<.01$), *justice* ($r=-.114$, sig $p<.01$), and *personal autonomy* ($r=-.091$, sig $p<.05$). Teachers experienced more value-based tensions in these areas in the lower levels of SSVET. *Diversity in teacher population* had a positive correlation with the value-based tensions *justice* ($r=.076$, sig $p<.05$), meaning that teachers in schools with more diverse teacher population experienced more tensions in this field. *Training received* had a positive correlation with all value-based tensions, *professional ethics and stance* ($r=.179$, sig $p<.01$), *diversity and communality* ($r=.109$, sig $p<.01$), *respect* ($r=.088$, sig $p<.05$), *justice* ($r=.078$, sig $p<.05$), and *personal autonomy* ($r=.104$, sig $p<.01$). Teachers that received training experienced

Table 4.
Bivariate correlations between all involved variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
1 Diversity and Community	--																	
2 Respect	.696**	--																
3 Justice	.603**	.629**	--															
4 Personal Autonomy	.630**	.625**	.674**	--														
5 Professional Ethics and Stance	.624**	.637**	.534**	.549**	--													
6 Skills	.111**	.063	.048	.130**	.198**	--												
7 Attitude	.080	.039	.023	.079	.152**	.645**	--											
8 Knowledge	-.033	-.047	-.049	.032	.026	.553**	.401**	--										
9 Gender	.113**	.048	.018	.049	.067	.194**	.229**	.099*	--									
10 Native	.004	-.005	.003	.009	-.002	-.142**	-.089*	-.183**	.093	--								
11 Teaching experience	.038	-.041	.022	.060	-.040	.043	.075	.106*	-.019	.121**	--							
12 Age	-.013	.009	.005	-.016	-.079*	.039	.007	.088*	-.073*	.103**	.673**	--						
13 Teaching diploma	-.001	.001	.024	.023	-.008	.066	.067	.082	.007	.158**	.136**	.019	--					
14 Qualification level	-.044	-.048	-.114**	-.091*	-.169**	-.158**	-.130**	-.120**	-.102**	.248**	.037	.012	.162**	--				
15 Diversity teacher population	.054	.045	.076*	.049	.057	.051	.138**	.052	.113**	.080*	.082*	-.060	.067*	.116**	--			
16 Training received	.109**	.088*	.078*	.104**	.179**	.241**	.215**	.343**	.108**	.023	.182**	.154**	.112**	-.086*	.117**	--		
17 Training need	.151**	.135**	.169**	.117**	.168**	.151**	.262**	-.088*	.169**	.298**	.125**	-.160**	.104**	.170**	.145**	.072*	--	

* = $p < 0.05$

** = $p < 0.01$

value-based tensions in all fields more than teachers without training. *Training need* had also a positive correlation with all value-based tensions *justice* ($r=.169$, sig $p<.01$), *professional ethics and stance* ($r=.168$, sig $p<.01$), *diversity and communality* ($r=.151$, sig $p<.01$) *personal autonomy* ($r=.117$, sig $p<.01$) and *respect* ($r=.135$, sig $p<.05$). Teachers who indicated a need for training experienced more value-based tension in all fields more than teachers without a need for training.

Next, we determined the partial correlations of the perceived value-based tensions by stepwise linear regression with all independent competence variables and the teacher and context background variables

combined. *Age* remained negatively related to *professional ethics and stance* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.175$, SE= .041 $p<.01$) (see Table 5). Compared to the bivariate correlations the significant negative relationship between *qualification level* and *professional ethics and stance* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.153$, SE= .054 $p<.001$) increased and decreased for *justice* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.089$, SE= .057 $p<.05$). The significant correlation with *personal autonomy* (standardized coefficient $\beta = -.153$, SE= .064 $p<.05$) remained negative. In comparison with the bivariate correlation *diversity in teacher population* remained positive related with *justice* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .091$, SE= .058 $p<.05$) and

Table 5. Overview of the extent of relation between experienced value-based tensions and involved variables.

Variables		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
<i>Independent variables</i>	Skills	.121* (.041)	.116* (.046)			.183*** (.038)
	Attitude	-.171** (.037)				
	Knowledge	-.104* (0.56)	-.175** (.041)	-.116* (.030)		-.162** (.034)
<i>Teacher and context background</i>	Diversity teacher population	.091* (.058)		.092* (.056)		
	Gender Native					
	Teaching experience					
	Age					-.095* (.002)
	Teaching diploma Qualification level			-.089* (.057)	-.109* (.064)	-.153*** (.054)
	Training received	.123** (.041)	.148** (.069)	.120** (.060)	.126** (.064)	.195*** (.057)
	Training need	.092* (.060)		.153*** (.056)		.088* (.055)

Variables:

1. Diversity and Communality
2. Respect
3. Justice
4. Personal Autonomy
5. Professional ethics and stance

* = $p < 0.05$

** = $p < 0.01$

*** = $p < 0.001$

(Coefficients Std. Error)

became positive related to *diversity and communality* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .092$, $SE = .056$ $p < .05$). *Training received* remained positively related to all value-based tensions, *professional ethics and stance* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .195$, $SE = .057$ $p < .001$), *respect* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .148$, $SE = .069$ $p < .01$), *personal autonomy* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .126$, $SE = .064$ $p < .01$), *diversity and communality* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .123$, $SE = .041$ $p < .01$), and *justice* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .120$, $SE = .060$ $p < .01$). The positive correlation increased for *professional ethics and stance*, *respect* and *justice*. The positive correlation between *training need* and *justice* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .153$, $SE = .056$ $p < .001$) increased and decreased for *diversity and communality* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .092$, $SE = .060$ $p < .05$) and *professional ethics and stance* (standardized coefficient $\beta = .088$, $SE = .055$ $p < .05$).

Competence elements and teacher and context background variables are interrelated when it comes to experience of value-based tensions. All correlations were small.

5 Discussion and conclusion

This survey study aimed to establish which value-based tensions were experienced by teachers teaching culturally diverse SSVET classrooms and to identify competence elements and teacher background characteristics which might influence these value-based tensions. We showed that value-based tensions were most often experienced in the areas of professional ethics and stance, followed by respect, diversity and communality, personal autonomy, and justice, respectively. On average, tensions related to professional ethics and stance, respect, and diversity and communality were experienced relatively common, and personal autonomy and justice were experienced relatively rare. Research based on intercultural relations in culturally diverse primary and secondary schools reported that tensions or escalation did not occur structurally (Radstake, 2009; Roede, Karsten, & Leeman, 2008; Stichting

Voorbeeld, 2005). These studies did not focus specifically on SSVET, nor did they examine tensions relating to professional ethics and stance, but the overall picture is that tensions did not dominate or even hinder performance.

Professional ethics and stance as a specific value-based tension for SSVET, as prior established by Tielman et al. (2021) occurred most frequently with the smallest explanatory variance on difference by schools. It also appeared to be the only value-based tension statistically significantly associated with all three competence elements knowledge, skills and attitude of teachers in SSVET. We argue that teachers face these value-based tensions as a conflict over norms, values, beliefs and standards between teacher, students on the one hand and the labor market with its own specific requirements for professional ethics and attitudes as a third party on the other. With the increasingly culturally diverse society, the whole value system between all involved is under pressure. Teachers in SSVET, in their culturally diverse classes, are confronted with a wide variety of beliefs and value orientations with which they must be able to deal (Banks, 2004; Leeman, 2006; Veugelers & Kat, 2001), the students must accept each other despite all the differences and be able to cooperate with each other, and the labor market which is eager to stick to their professional standards while bringing in different kinds of workers. These findings confirm the importance of all three elements of multicultural teaching competence in regard to professional ethics and stance of teachers who teach culturally diverse SSVET.

In this study multicultural knowledge was found to be negatively related to the value-based tensions diversity and communality, respect, justice, and professional ethics and stance. The more multicultural knowledge teachers reported to have, the less tensions they experienced. A lack of multicultural knowledge in culturally diverse classes (Capella-Santana, 2003; Chouari, 2016; Taylor & Sobel, 2001) implies that teachers also have less knowledge of values and norms of other cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2002) and explains why these teachers experienced more value-based tensions. On the other

hand, teachers with more multicultural knowledge thus experienced fewer value-based tensions because of their understanding but also perhaps because they know that certain tensions are logical (Henze, Katz, & Norte, 2000; Washington, 2003). It is worth noting, that interacting with students in culturally diverse classes is important for the amount of multicultural knowledge teachers have (Spanierman et al., 2011; Taylor & Sobel, 2001) and to be able to see that cultural differences are present or important (Sleeter, 2008; Vervaet, 2018).

In our exploratory study (Tielman et al., 2021), SSVET teachers reported that most experienced value-based tensions were caused by a lack of skills, and less frequently they experienced a deficiency when confronted with these tensions due to a lack of knowledge. Conversely, multicultural skills in this study turned out to be positively related to the value-based tensions professional ethics and stance, diversity and communality and respect, respectively. The more multicultural skills, the more tensions teachers experienced in these fields. This is remarkable and inconsistent with our previous exploratory study and the literature that states that teachers who have multicultural skills tend to do better in culturally diverse classrooms (Deardorff, 2009, Taylor & Quintana, 2003; Paccione, 2000). One possible explanation is that teachers with more multicultural skills may be more aware of and sensitive to tensions and more likely to recognize them. On the other hand, these teachers may be more daring to experiment in their classes and may experience tensions in the process. Further research is needed to verify to what degree these speculations hold up.

Multicultural attitude was scored highest by the teachers in this study. This competency element had a positive raw correlation with professional ethics and stance and a significant negative correlation with diversity and communality. It is possible that teachers with a positive attitude who are more culturally sensitive experience tensions differently than less sensitive teachers (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Villegas & Lucas,

2002). Perhaps they see cultural diversity in their classes as an educational resource and regard these tensions as normal in their teaching context. Therefore, they may not associate these situations with tensions or consider them problematic (e.g. Henze, Katz & Norte, 2000), but they are sensitive to them and can name these tensions. On the other hand, the extent to which teachers value students from culturally diverse backgrounds by being culturally sensitive appears to be relevant to experiencing fewer tensions related to diversity (Radstake, 2009). The significant correlation between multicultural attitude and professional ethics and stance disappeared when taking all competence elements and background and context variables into account. Perhaps multicultural knowledge and skills are more important and presumably go hand in hand with certain attitudes.

This study also showed that some background and context characteristics correlated with teachers' experience of value-based tensions. Despite their level of competence, younger teachers in this study experienced more tension on professional ethics and stance, while in the exploratory study (Tielman et al., 2021) older teachers reported more tensions on diversity. Beginning teachers experience more tensions anyway (Meijer, 2011; Pillen, 2013), maybe because of limited preparation for multicultural classes in teacher education programs (Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

In the lowest SSVET qualification levels teachers experienced more value-based tensions in the field of professional ethics and stance, personal autonomy and justice. This difference may be due to the fact that the different qualification levels of SSVET require a wider scope of actions from teachers (Groeneveld & Van Steensel, 2009; Lesterhuis, 2010). Moreover, the student population in the lower levels of Dutch SSVET is even more diverse than the higher levels with very different starting educational levels and background characteristics (Lesterhuis, 2010). As a result, teachers at lower levels face more tension to cope with. Furthermore, in this study, we found no

statistically significant differences between teachers with a migration background and teachers without such background in their experiencing of value-based tensions. However, in schools with more diversity in teacher population, mostly located in urban areas, teachers experienced more value-based tensions with respect to justice, personal autonomy and diversity and communality. In those schools, teaching diversity appears to involve teaching students social skills to deal with the 'other', rather than just meeting the 'other', where the diversity of students' backgrounds is sometimes used as a resource to facilitate discussions on diversity-related issues (Sincer, 2021). The tensions that arise in this way might impact the experience of tensions by teachers, who may also recognize these tensions more easily. Remarkably, teachers that received training experienced all value-based tensions more than teachers who did not. Perhaps these teachers are more aware of tensions because they have had earlier training, making them more sensitive (Leeman, 2006). At the same time, the present study also showed that teachers indicating more need for training experienced more tensions on justice, diversity and communality and professional ethics and stance. The need for training can be seen as the reciprocity of competency, which has to do with self-efficacy, finding oneself unable to cope with these tensions. It is remarkable that teachers in this study with more multicultural skills, experienced more tension and that at the same time the training courses also evoked more tension. This may indicate that the training focused more on skills and less on knowledge of, for example, the different cultural backgrounds. After all, the teachers in this study with less knowledge also experience more tension.

5.1 Implications for research and practice

With the insights of this study we added to the knowledge base on the experiences of teachers with tense situations in culturally diverse classes in general and specifically for the vocational context of education. Additionally, the data show that the various factors interact, which adds to existing

research, as most prior studies in this field examined separate tensions or personal and context characteristics. However, we relied solely on self-report data; it remains unclear to what extent reported multicultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes actually translate into teacher performance. Classroom observations are needed for this purpose and also intercept possible socially desirable responses to the survey. In doing so, it is important to take into account not only the teacher's behavior, but also the teacher's intentions or considerations (Theeuwes, Saab, Denessen, & Admiraal, 2019). The results of this study show that the competence elements and personal and background variables are interrelated, so that there is not always a clear and distinctive picture on which teachers can be supported when it comes to value-based tensions. For future research, it might be very helpful describing and interpreting profiles of SSVET teachers with regards to value-based tensions they experience (cf. Pillen, den Brok & Beijaard, 2013). Teacher educators may benefit from the identified difference between young and older SSVET teachers in experiencing tensions and would gain from future research focusing on novice teachers in terms of value-based tensions in culturally diverse classrooms as part of their professional identity development (Meijer, 2011; Pillen, 2013; Theelen, 2021). Moreover, profiles can be very useful tools to stimulate reflection, especially when they are accompanied by powerful labels that can help to make novice teachers' associations with experienced tensions explicit (cf. Rickards, den Brok, & Fisher, 2005; Pillen, 2013).

This study has shown that competence matters when it comes to experiencing tension; knowledge helps, skills hinder. It is possible that skills make certain tensions explicit. The reported tensions occur in SSVET and have a specific character; professional ethics and stance is the most experienced tension. For teacher education the information obtained can be useful for strengthening the multicultural teaching competence of teachers in general and SSVET teachers in particular. The findings of this study may be useful in further developing

competence frameworks for dealing with diversity in classrooms (Siarova & Tudjman, 2018). Such competence frameworks can inform teacher education programmes and consequently may help remedy the lack of preparation (novice) teachers experience (Gay & Howard, 2000). Moreover, it can contribute to building awareness of diversity issues recognizing which student behavior is linked to cultural values and norms and realizing that adaptations at this level is not evident, and sometimes even inappropriate (Arnesen, Allan, & Simonsen, 2010). The developed questionnaire can be completed by (student) teachers in order to get insight in their own tensions and competencies. During professional development programs teachers can be assisted by teacher educators to transfer the lived experiences with value-based tensions into meaningful learning moments. These skills are taught more thoroughly when they are practice-related (Gay, 2000) and help teachers to grow (Meijer, 2011).

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes

¹The Dutch education system is a track system with three types of secondary schools: (1) preparatory secondary vocational education, (2) intermediate general secondary education, and (3) preparatory scientific education. For SSVET, there are separate schools based on a four-year school-based program at level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework (European Commission, 2008), where students are prepared for work or further education and social participation. The SSVET is divided into four levels of training, ranging from qualification level 1, the assistant training (duration of 1 year), to qualification level 4, the management training or specialist training (duration of 3 to 4 years). The SSVET distinguishes two types of learning paths, the school-based and the work-based learning pathway with a total of

735 educational qualifications (MBO Raad, 2022; Nuffic, 2011).

²In this study we refer to this group as immigrant teachers, referring to teachers who have at least one parent or grandparent who was not born in the Netherlands.

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Auteurs

Kennedy Tielman is lerarenopleider bij de Tilburgse lerarenopleiding van Fontys Hogescholen en promovendus bij de leerstoelgroep Onderwijs- en Leerwetenschappen van de Wageningen University and Research (WUR). Zijn promotieonderzoek richt zich op het lesgeven in cultureel diverse mbo in Nederland.

Renate Wesselink is als universitair hoofddocent verbonden aan de leerstoelgroep Onderwijs- en Leerwetenschappen van de Wageningen University and Research (WUR).

Perry den Brok is hoogleraar en voorzitter van de leerstoelgroep Onderwijs & Leerwetenschappen van de Wageningen University and Research (WUR). **Fadi Hirzalla** is als universitair docent verbonden aan de Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences van de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam (EUR). *Correspondentieadres*: Kennedy Tielman, Fontys Lerarenopleiding Tilburg, Professor Goossenslaan 1, 5022 DM Tilburg; E-mail: k.tielman@fontys.nl

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Samenvatting

Multiculturele competenties en waardengeladen spanningen: zelfpercepties van docenten in het middelbaar beroepsonderwijs

In de afgelopen decennia is het aantal studenten met verschillende culturele achtergronden op scholen in Nederland, in het bijzonder in het middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (MBO), enorm toegenomen. Van docenten wordt verwacht dat zij beschikken over competenties om met dergelijke culturele verschillen om te gaan, maar docenten geven aan niet goed voorbereid te zijn en ervaren spanningen. In deze studie zijn gegevens verzameld via een vragenlijst die werd afgenomen bij 898 docenten uit 20 verschillende mbo-scholen. De docenten ervoeren verschillende soorten waardengeladen spanningen van relatief beperkt tot vrij frequent. Wat hun competenties betreft, schreven de docenten zichzelf een positieve houding toe tegenover hun multiculturele klas, vonden ze dat ze over een zekere mate van multiculturele vaardigheden beschikten en vonden ze hun kennis van hun multiculturele klas van gemiddeld niveau. De zelfperceptie van multiculturele kennis, attitudes en vaardigheden van de docenten hing op verschillende manieren samen met de verschillende ervaren spanningen. Terwijl de mate van zelf ingeschatte vaardigheden een positieve relatie vertoonde met bijna alle ervaren spanningen, vertoonden attitude en kennis een negatieve relatie. Docenten in de lagere niveaus van het mbo, jongere docenten en docenten in scholen met een grotere populatie docenten met een migrantenachtergrond ervoeren meer spanningen. Dit gold ook voor docenten die meer training hadden gehad en docenten met grotere behoefte aan training. Implicaties en suggesties voor toekomstig onderzoek worden verder besproken in dit artikel.

Kernwoorden: culturele diversiteit; spanningen; normen en waarden; multiculturele onderwijscompetentie; middelbaar beroepsonderwijs

Appendix

Professional Ethics and Stance Scale.

The following statements deal with situations related to the professional component (school and/or internship) in the training. This appendix presents the English translation of the Netherlands version of the statements and responses used in this study.

All statements used the following response alternatives to indicate to what extent teachers agree or disagree:

- o The situation hardly ever occurs (1)
- o The situation rarely occurs (2)
- o The situation sometimes occurs/not occurs (3)
- o The situation occurs frequently (4)
- o The situation almost always occurs (5)

Q1. One or more students experience working with vocational authenticity learning tasks/simulations at school as cumbersome.

Q2. One or more students have difficulty displaying professional behaviour in the professional context (such as taking initiative, daring to ask questions, arriving on time, use of language, appropriate distance/proximity to third parties).

Q3. One or more students have difficulty performing certain professional tasks towards a specific target group because of their background/beliefs.

Q4. One or more students have difficulty with certain regulations in professional situations (man versus woman, professional clothing, safety aspects).

Q5. One or more students have difficulty dealing with authority in the workplace.

Q6. One or more students find it difficult to show that they are unable to do or do not know something.

Q7. One or more students find it difficult to discuss the professional code/standards.

Q8. One or more students have difficulty receiving feedback from their supervisors on their professional attitude.

Q9. One or more students have difficulty finding an internship.

Q10. With one or more students, as a teacher, I have difficulty cooperating with the internship supervisor at the internship workplace.