

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS : AGENDA FOR 2010
“The Pupil Captivated, the School Unfettered”

CONTENTS

1. Foreword and structure	2
2. Secondary education of tomorrow	4
2.1. The pupil captivated, the school unfettered	4
2.2. Developments in society and in and around the school	6
2.3. The task before us: new answers to new challenges	8
2.3.1. Challenges for secondary education	8
2.3.2. The task of the school	8
2.3.3. From teaching to learning.....	9
2.3.4. Choosing diversity and professionalism	9
2.3.5. Education is people work	10
2.3.6. Specific points for attention.....	11
2.3.7. New relationships	11
3. Agenda for 2010: the pupil captivated, the school unfettered	13
3.1. The pupil captivated.....	14
3.1.1. Continuing to learn: continual learning lines	14
3.1.2. Dealing with differences.....	16
3.1.3. Learning can take place anywhere.....	19
3.1.4. Examinations: proof of personal ability	19
3.2. The school unfettered	21
3.2.1. A personal face in the programme and in the structure.....	21
3.2.2. Social commission: collaboration for the pupil.....	22
3.2.3. Staff: the link between learning and the pupil.....	23
3.2.4. Funding as the basis	23
3.2.5. More freedom and a boost for VMBO and employment-oriented training	24
3.3. Development as fixed value: the school innovates itself	25
3.3.1. Innovation strategy.....	26
3.3.2. Spearheads for innovation	28
3.3.3. Teaching time and development time	29
4. Modern administrative relationships.....	31
4.1. National government: frameworks, conditions and inspection.....	31
4.2. The school: open in good governance.....	32
4.3. Limiting bureaucracy: shared responsibility	34
4.4. Need for an organised education sector	34
4.5. The Inspectorate of Education	35
4.6. Municipality and province	36
4.7. Trade and industry, knowledge centres and other institutions	36
4.8. Modern legislation for modern administrative relationships.....	37
5. Conclusion	38

APPENDICES

1. List of abbreviations

1. Foreword and structure

This paper is titled *Secondary Education in the Netherlands: Agenda for 2010: "The pupil captivated, the school unfettered"*. This document sets out the vision of the government Cabinet for the future of secondary education. The primary message here is that the pupil is the centre of focus. This pupil must be able to develop his potential as fully as possible and earn the highest academic degree that his potential permits. The goal is to prepare young people as well as possible for living in our society so that they can play a full role in it.

Secondary Education in the Netherlands: Agenda for 2010 came to be written in an interactive process. Representatives of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science held many discussions with pupils, parents, teachers and other education personnel, school heads and school board members. I took part in a great many of these discussions. We also consulted with the organisations for administration and management, School Managers in Secondary Education, trade organisations and the administrative representatives of parents and pupils on the Pupil-Parent Board. In addition we discussed specific subjects in greater detail with experts and other parties involved in in-depth discussions and other gatherings.

The results of the interactive process are the most important source for the long-term policy. I strive to establish policy that reflects practical realities in education. That is why I listen carefully to what is said regarding bottlenecks, wishes and possible solutions and directions to take. Based on what I hear, I determine the direction we must go in the years to come.

The most remarkable thing about the discussions we held was the enormous commitment to education that everyone showed. This gives one hope for the future. Furthermore, the secondary education sector is expressly asking for the time and freedom to develop and for the trust of government. This serves as an important guiding principle in my eyes. A detailed description of the results of the discussions held on the direction of secondary education can be found on the enclosed CD-ROM. This CD-ROM also contains the reports on these discussions and videos taken by pupils.

Chapter 2 outlines the social developments and the developments within secondary education that were raised during the discussions held with educators. On the basis of these developments, I give my vision for secondary education on the way to 2010.

In Chapter 3, I translate this vision to an agenda with three main points of focus:

- The pupil captivated
- The school unfettered
- Development as a permanent value: the school introducing innovations

Based on these main points of focus, concrete actions to improve secondary education are placed within a framework. This concerns both current and new actions. In an appendix, all the actions are outlined in an overview, accompanied by a timetable. This agenda for the coming years is updated annually and included in the budget.

Chapter 4 describes the consequences of the policy for the (administrative) relationships, roles and responsibilities of the government, school board organisations, schools, local governments and other partners. A conclusion follows in Chapter 5.

Of course, there is much more to say about secondary education. And without a doubt, more matters will be discussed in the coming years than are covered in this document. *Secondary Education in the Netherlands: Agenda for 2010* deals with the main points of focus in the policy and the associated actions. It is meant to be a source of inspiration and, at the same time, an effective encouragement to place the pupil in secondary education at the centre of focus in real and practical terms.

2. Secondary education of tomorrow

2.1. The pupil captivated, the school unfettered

I emphasised earlier that I am not looking to solve the bottlenecks in education by making large changes to the system, which education in the 1990s was subject to. In this respect, peace has returned to secondary education and I would like to keep it that way. But that does not mean that I want to keep everything as it is. Changing political and social relationships, problems in society with which education is confronted and the international position of Dutch education make it necessary to shift the emphasis. If we want to make the pupil the real centre of focus, schools will need more scope to be able to provide tailored education and to work towards improving and modernising the education *they* provide to pupils as they see fit.

My ambition therefore is to give schools greater freedom and to put them in a position to carry out their own policy. The legal frameworks of attainment targets, exit qualifications, examinations, quality and accountability will form the boundaries for this. They should provide sufficient freedom to schools and, at the same time, make it crystal clear what the minimum requirements are that education must meet. This means that we will have to make important choices in the relationship between national government and the education world. This will require some time and we must also take the time to accomplish it. That doesn't mean we can afford to rest on our laurels. We have made a good start, i.e. with the proposals set forth for the first stage of secondary education. This must now be given a decisive follow-up.

The pupil captivated and challenged

Secondary education is the link between primary education, on the one hand, and post-secondary education and the labour market, on the other. In this phase, young people go through a radical development that is vitally important for their further role as a citizen in society. In addition to the parents, this places a large responsibility on the schools and the people that work there on a daily basis. In recent months I have repeatedly noticed that they are fully aware of this responsibility. My discussions with people in the education world have strengthened my conviction that the responsibility for designing and organising education should and can primarily and substantially rest with the school.

The school has more to offer than education alone. In the time they are enrolled in secondary education, pupils develop into independent people that can fully contribute to our society. It is essential that young people learn to form their own well-considered opinions. The guidance they are given during this period is therefore very important. The parents are the ones primarily responsible for providing this guidance. But the school also makes a significant contribution to the process of becoming an adult.

Instead of concentrating on the curriculum, schools want to place the learning process and the educational career of the pupil at the centre of focus. I agree with this view wholeheartedly. Education should motivate and challenge pupils at their own level of development. It should be relevant; not only in the view of the school, but also and especially in the eyes of the pupil himself. For secondary education, the differences between pupils are the starting point. It goes without saying that the pupil himself also bears responsibility for the success of his own educational career.

To realise real, continual learning lines, the differences between sectors – primary education and secondary education, secondary and post-secondary education, as well as those within secondary education itself – should not form an obstacle. The transition from one sector to another often causes problems at present. Among other things, this concerns the alignment of teaching, the alignment of programmes (attainment targets), the system of qualifications and the special needs support structure. Our entire system of education could be more effective if we can prevent it from continually stalling during the transitions pupils make between sectors.

The school unfettered

'Unfettered' has a double meaning. To begin, schools are in a figurative sense 'freed from fetters' and are given greater freedom. Furthermore, I also assume that schools use this freedom to initiate reforms in the interest of the pupil. I choose to use diversity as the point of departure for my policy and set general objectives (exit qualifications and attainment targets) for the education that the schools provide.

Education takes on a concrete form in the school. Within legal frameworks such as attainment targets and exit qualifications, and provisions on accountability and quality, schools are given the freedom to make their own professional policy decisions, for instance on the structure of the teaching process and the organisation that it requires. The responsibility for innovations that are tailored to the pupil is a part of this. The team of teaching professionals plays a crucial role in this process.

The role of policy and administration

The policy of the national government and of the management and the board of the school is aimed at the level of both the pupils and the teachers, as well as at their educational environment. The policy should be focused on supporting the different relationships in and around the school. Education is always an interplay between different parties. In the first place, there is the interplay between teachers and pupils, who could not move forward without one another. There is also interaction between teachers themselves. Teachers influence one another (through things such as peer assessment and review) and their trade organisations support them in their professional development, their development as teachers and their development in their subject. Other parties involved, such as parents, companies or local governments, also maintain relationships with the school and the teaching staff.

A school is a creative learning environment. Good employers and leadership are essential so that professional educational choices can be made from a shared vision of education and of the role that the school wishes to fulfil in society. The freedom provided should be noticeable and available to everyone. It is definitely undesirable for school boards to limit the freedom that the government has provided. Moreover, it is even the responsibility of school boards to enable schools to actually utilise this greater freedom. The school management, in its turn, should tap the innovative capacity of the teaching staff by providing inspiring leadership. In this context, they have the responsibility to use resources in such a manner that they optimally benefit the primary process of education.

New administration, new legislation

Less centralised regulation means that more choices are made at the school level. This can mean that existing, 'historically developed' situations are brought up for reconsideration. Even the differences within the school with respect to the willingness to change (e.g. differences between the school management and teachers, or within the teaching staff) can lead to tension. Still, I believe that the professional education choices in the school should be made by the entire staff. That is also where the discussions should be held that underlie the choices finally made. In some situations, this will create unavoidable commotion. But I am convinced that the school has to go through such a phase in order, in the end, to find a clear place in its own surroundings.

It is and remains the responsibility of the national government to ensure that secondary education is accessible, within reach, affordable and good. The national setting of frameworks and the supervision of the Inspectorate will guarantee this public interest. It should be clear to schools what requirements they should meet, but the rules that we set should not be a continual frustration for schools. That is why we are cutting back on obstructive regulations. We are simplifying rules, making them more flexible, and repealing them when necessary. The legal framework (Secondary Education Act) is being modernised. This will improve the ability of schools to anticipate and meet the changing requirements that society has set for them faster and better.

Summary

OCW enables schools to design the education they provide themselves, so that they can provide their own pupils tailor-made education in their own environment. OCW works within the frameworks and gives greater freedom and responsibility to the schools. The new administrative philosophy can be expressed as follows: "OCW no longer regulates secondary education, but rather enables schools to regulate secondary education".

2.2. Developments in society and in and around the school

Education is successful if it anticipates and responds quickly and sufficiently to social developments. Good education is on the ball and prepares young people to take a fully fledged position in a changing society. Many social developments influence the choices we make for tomorrow. In this section, we will discuss the developments that are most important for secondary education.

Secondary education is being directly impacted by the influence of increased individuality and heterogeneity in society. Secondary education also stands at centre stage in the transition of our society into a knowledge economy. There is also the increasing influence of 'Europe', even though this is not yet felt strongly at schools. Today, 60 per cent of our regulations are influenced by the European Union. In Lisbon, it was agreed that by 2010, Europe had to be the most competitive knowledge economy in the world. Justifiably, education was given a crucial role to play in this – a role that it now must fulfil. This places considerable pressure on education. Via scores on benchmarks such as early school-leavers, reading and graduates in maths and the exact sciences, the results of the various member states will be compared. Agreements are also being reached at the European level on the competencies that young people must acquire in all European member states.

The international orientation of schools in secondary education is gradually increasing. Increasingly, more schools are offering bilingual education. This will become more attractive as studying in other EU member states really starts to take off thanks to the adoption of a common bachelor/master's degree structure. International orientation is also becoming very concrete through exchange projects and projects in which young people from different countries work together on assignments via the Internet.

Individualism and diversity

The Dutch citizen is increasingly better educated and, in part due to the Internet, is increasingly better informed and sooner up to date. Young people set high requirements for their environment. They expect to be given high quality and services that take their wishes into consideration. Modern pupils are self-aware and critical, they know what they want and are not automatically satisfied with the assessment of the teacher or the school management. The same goes for their parents.

Because young people are now independent and individualistic, they want to take more responsibility for their own lives. In addition to school work, many young people give considerable time to jobs as stockers in supermarkets, as newspaper boys/girls, as coaches in sports clubs or as helpers in rest homes. This individualism is putting social cohesion under pressure. Rights and obligations are not necessarily common ground anymore. The questions that must be answered are what are the shared values and norms, and what does good citizenship entail? Also, because of the cultural diversity, especially in the mid-sized and large cities, young people at school can no longer be considered as a single group that can be lumped together in the same category. Problems accumulate fast, especially at schools located in the middle of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in large cities. This requires quite a lot from the capacity of such schools to adapt themselves.

Expectations from society

Society expects education to make an active contribution that goes further than only teaching. This very often concerns the prevention of problems. The school is considered to be a

sophisticated venue in which to provide information on illnesses, the danger of smoking, drugs or the new phenomenon of loverboys (young pimps that beguile young girls into prostitution). The school can also play an active role in the neighbourhood. Many schools find that it is in the interest of the pupil to develop such activities. It is also a way in which to profile themselves, e.g. as a diverse school that makes a contribution to the local community. There are also schools that find it difficult to develop extra activities. They ask themselves whether they are assuming responsibility that actually belongs to the parents. Not all schools have sufficient expertise and capacity to take on these 'irregular' activities on the side.

Knowledge economy requires flexible education

Creativity, an innovative capacity, technological knowledge and excellence are key concepts in the knowledge economy. Nowadays, knowledge rapidly becomes outdated, which makes the labour market very dynamic. It requires education to be flexible. Also, everyone will have to continually maintain and update what he or she has learned at school. Secondary education is therefore not the final destination in lifelong learning. But during a pupil's years there, an important foundation is laid. Against this background, the learning results can no longer be expressed purely by a demarcated level of knowledge and skills. More and more, the focus is being placed on broad competencies that lay the foundation for lifelong personal and professional development.

If our country wants to be ranked in 2010 among the best knowledge economies, then more highly educated people will be needed, especially in the exact sciences and technology. This will require targeted investments. In addition, VMBO courses (pre-vocational secondary education) will require further strengthening as the foundation of the vocational sector. The disconcertingly high percentage of early school-leavers has to be firmly tackled. By holding onto as many young people as possible and enabling them to participate in the labour process, we improve our competitive strength. We also prevent a group of young people from being left out of and left behind by the rest of society.

Despite good results, all resources should be used

Up to now, secondary education in the Netherlands has performed well in international terms. The Inspectorate of Education is also generally satisfied. The sector achieves this result with relatively little money by international standards. This indicates that the sector has a strong basis, as well as flexibility and the capacity to develop. It is a good sign that, according to the Education Report for 2003 published by the Inspectorate of Education, the first generations of students from the second phase of HAVO (senior general secondary education) and VWO (pre-university education) that have entered higher education are better equipped to learn actively and independently. Also, after the introduction of the second phase, more pupils have reached the finish line of secondary education.

These results are encouraging. But that does not remove the fact that several persistent points, which were also raised during the discussions held on the direction of secondary education with educators, are a cause of concern for the future. For the OECD, the lagging proportion of students in science and technology programmes is a cause of concern in light of the knowledge economy. The proportion of women studying in these subjects is also low. The percentage of pupils that do not earn a qualification at the level of HAVO/VWO or MBO (senior secondary vocational education) is high compared with other countries. The high dropout rate is primarily apparent at schools in (medium) large cities where disadvantaged groups are concentrated. At schools in these areas, there is often an accumulation of problems. I share the concern of the Inspectorate that this accumulation of problems is of such a nature that, over time, the quality of education in these locations will fall by the wayside, particularly in view of the fact that increasingly fewer numbers of teachers are willing to work at these schools.

These are often the same schools that are confronted with young people that have serious behavioural problems. It cannot be denied that the problems often surface at VMBO schools that have pupils who need extra attention. At these schools you will find the most vulnerable group of pupils and this is one of the reasons that many school heads, staff members and pupils in VMBO are concerned with the negative impact that news of these problems is having on the image of

VMBO. This image ignores the opportunities that VMBO offers to the majority of the pupils and the many positive developments in the VMBO sector.

Teachers: sufficient numbers, good quality

It continues to be extremely important to interest more people in taking a job in education. In the years to come, many teachers will leave education to retire on a (pre-)pension. We will need many teachers and other education personnel to take their place. This of course does not pertain solely to having sufficient teaching staff, but also to having good teaching staff. Because good education stands or falls with the quality of the teaching. The discussions on the direction of education have revealed that, for teachers and school heads, continual professionalisation is a pre-condition for being able to function at an optimal level.

Having competent personnel requires reaching agreements on the minimum competencies that personnel must possess. The legislative proposal concerned with professions in education, which the Lower House of Parliament adopted in February 2004, makes it possible to establish a national basic set of competency requirements for teaching professions that make flexibility at the school level possible.

Criticism of current education

In the discussions on the direction of education held at schools, pupils have been extraordinarily critical of the education they are receiving. This education is insufficient in the eyes of the self-aware and critical young people of today. They like to go to school, but the education they receive does not catch their interest. They think that it has little relevance or is uninspiring. Coupled with the high dropout rate, this is a bad sign. Apparently we are not tapping the potential that young people possess. And we cannot afford to allow young people to miss the boat in our society.

Teachers are aware of this: they would like to provide these young people with better and more varied education that is geared to their environment. They would like to use their professional knowledge more to offer both the faster and the somewhat slower pupil a challenging programme. To create a teaching profession that has fervour, more room must be found for personal professionalism.

2.3. The task before us: new answers to new challenges

2.3.1. Challenges for secondary education

We live in an open, international society that is characterised by increasing heterogeneity, dynamics and complexity. It is the duty of secondary education to reach young people also within this context. International comparisons show that secondary education is booking good results. At the same time, in the discussions on the direction of education it came to light that the current state of affairs is not an optimum one. We must tap all our resources to maintain these good results. This means that we must concentrate on providing education that captivates young people and that holds their attention as it addresses their talents and sense of responsibility.

Young people want to see that what they learn at school is relevant to their future on the labour market, in post-secondary education and in society. It is therefore important that this education appeals to them and is geared to their environment. The school has to inspire them to learn. In this effort, it is also necessary for the school to be a modern, safe and attractive learning and living environment.

2.3.2. The task of the school

Broad-based task

The school is a part of our society. To prepare young people to participate fully in society, the school must assist young people in their endeavour to earn the highest degree they can, as well as offer them a broad view of their society. It is important that young people are taught standards and values, that they acquire social competencies, learn to understand Dutch society and are

prepared for active citizenship. Both the school and the parents have an important role to play in this effort.

This broad social task of the school cannot be carried out by the national government. Every school is different, as a result of regional differences and differences between pupils and their parents in a certain neighbourhood. That is why each school develops its own approach to preparing pupils for their examinations and for being fully active citizens.

Collaboration for the pupil

It is in the interest of the pupil for the school to stand in the midst of society and have close ties with the surrounding community. For this reason, the school actively seeks to collaborate with the community around the school (local government, Regional Training Centres, trade and industry, cultural, welfare and care institutions, social middle field). The school enters into discussion with these players and, of course, with the parents about giving substance to its social duties. The question to answer is: what does the school want to achieve, within its specific context, in the area of training, standards and values, social competencies, active citizenship and similar areas? Based on its vision, the school reaches agreements with parents, pupils and the surrounding community. The school then gives an account of the results it achieves to the same community.

Freedom of education is not obligation-free

Citizens can establish and maintain a school themselves, within legal frameworks, to correspond with their convictions about life and views on teaching. This is and will remain a mainstay of our education system. This freedom of education guarantees diversity and thus offers opportunities to parents and pupils to choose a school that fits in with their convictions. The national government does not become involved in matters of a philosophical or religious nature and will not prescribe a uniform model in this area. That does not mean that freedom of education is unlimited, it is closely tied to values and standards of our society. Making use of the rights and freedoms offered by Dutch society entails an obligation to defend these rights and freedoms. Each school, whether it is a public school or a privately-run school, a predominantly 'white school' or a predominantly 'black school', is obliged on this basis to teach its pupils the key values of our society and given them a knowledge of and an understanding for the different sections in society. Each school should also contribute to the integration of all pupils into Dutch society. This integration can be promoted by giving attention to citizenship and having respect for each other. Close collaboration between the school and parents is indispensable in this effort.

2.3.3. From teaching to learning

The starting point of *Secondary Education in the Netherlands: Agenda for 2010* is to enable education professionals to put the pupil at the centre of focus. As a result, education is no longer primarily focused on curriculum, but rather on the learning process and the educational career of the pupil. That is why greater emphasis is being placed on the preparatory or bridging function of secondary education. Choosing the side of the pupil also means choosing continual learning lines.

Professionals in secondary education agree with me that schools should be responsible for ensuring that these continual learning lines also actually come about. Schools should be given the ability to do this. It is the responsibility of government to remove the bottlenecks in the connection between primary education, secondary education, vocational education and higher education in the area of attainment targets and exit qualifications, competencies, the special needs support structure and funding.

2.3.4. Choosing diversity and professionalism

Choosing for differences

So many pupils, so many learning styles, so many ambitions, so many backgrounds, so many school situations and so many problems. As I have already said, appealing education cannot be centrally organised. That is why I place responsibilities at the foundation of education – with teachers and other professionals in and around the school. They come into contact with the pupils every day. They know the differences between them and can ensure they all receive suitable

course programmes, special needs programmes or, for instance, special programmes for highly gifted pupils.

The conclusion is clear: social developments and the differences between pupils call for flexibility and differentiation. To provide schools with greater policy freedom, choices have to be made. Making relatively minor adaptations to separate dossiers will simply not be enough. A significant change in direction is needed in the roles of the government and of the many parties active in and around education.

The starting point is for the national government – in consultation with educators – is to set general frameworks with respect to quality, accountability and the minimum of what young people must learn. In short: the attainment targets and the exit qualifications. Next, the school staff must determine how to give this concrete shape. Schools thus are given the opportunity to better anticipate and meet the broad range of learning, care and guidance needs that pupils have, all of which ensue from a pupil lagging behind in learning or being ahead in his learning, from a cultural background or from social-emotional circumstances. It will also be made easier for the school to create a safe school environment. This approach will require a different effort from many. In view of the reactions of educators to the proposals for a new first stage of secondary education – which is a clear first step towards giving the school greater freedom – and to my intentions for the Second Phase, many appear to be willing to take on the challenge.

No blueprints, but rather reform from the bottom-up

Large national reform movements have contributed to the development of secondary education. Since then, the awareness has grown that the needs of pupils and the school in its local environment should be the most important reason to initiate reforms. Schools should themselves choose to introduce reforms. Innovation and school development are tasks of the school and the teaching staff. Apart from the pupils themselves, the interests of post-secondary education and employers are also served by innovative, modern schools that work on improving quality. The national government should enable schools to accomplish this. That is why I am committed to an innovation policy that revolves around the dissemination, development and embedding of knowledge. This policy should do justice to the interest of society in seeing this reform introduced and to the interests of the schools. The policy should encourage and facilitate, but also calls for accountability. I think that the education sector itself should take the initiative in the area of innovation, both in choosing the themes and in asking for support. I want to reach agreements about results for this with the sector.

2.3.5. Education is people work

The sector as a whole should then be responsible for innovation. At the end of the day, the professionals are and will remain the bearers of education and of school development. The educational relationship between teachers and pupils remains at the centre of education. A teacher does not do this alone, but in a team. Assistants and support staff make a crucial contribution to the work of the teacher. On top of this, professionals from outside the school, such as people from cultural institutions, social organisations, sports organisations and care institutions or practical training supervisors at work placement companies are becoming increasingly important in this. Such people make a contribution to education outside the school (e.g. during practical training) and inside the school, e.g. by giving guest lectures.

During the discussions on the direction of education, it became clear that teachers would like to display their craft in a creative manner. They feel too restrained at present. Recognition for their teaching abilities and for their knowledge of their subject is very important to teachers. I have already outlined how the bridging function of secondary education is becoming increasingly important. The school and the teachers have a contribution to make to this. It is crucial that the craft of the teacher is allowed to reach its full potential and that collaboration becomes a given. This will require strong and inspiring school leadership. The discussions on the direction of education have shown that, in this respect, the sector still has a world to conquer. The communication between the school management and the teaching staff in particular leaves a lot to be desired.

2.3.6. Specific points for attention

A coherent special needs support structure

The Cabinet is committed to improving pastoral care, student counselling and the policy on eliminating educational disadvantages. To begin, the complex procedure will be scrutinised. Pupils with behavioural and learning problems should be given the guidance that they need. Early detection of problems, for which the school bears special responsibility, and tailored provision for the special needs of pupils can prevent pupils from leaving school early. The goal is to set up a special needs support structure in and around the school to detect problems in time and to deal with them effectively. On this point there is interdepartmental collaboration ongoing in the project 'JONG'.

The current pastoral care system is not up for discussion, because it is just beginning to bear fruit. No new types of schools will be added. But the Cabinet will respond to the heartfelt cry of schools, pupils and parents to search for a solution for pupils that can no longer be kept in regular education. The facilities for problem pupils will be expanded in number. The Plan of Approach for Safety, which was sent to the Lower House in May 2004, outlines a number of concrete measures that enable schools to achieve a safer school climate.

Examinations: more custom work

The current system of central examinations works well because it provides a passport for post-secondary education and guarantees the quality of the education. That is why I will maintain this system in general terms. A diploma continues to give the right of admission to higher education, even if further testing is developed for post-secondary education. But I would like the examination system to correspond better to the learning process of the pupil, to the developments in post-secondary education and to the labour market. In addition to introducing flexibility in the form of fewer subjects whose examinations are given centrally and placing greater emphasis on the school exams, I am focusing here on the possibilities for giving examinations in the year prior to the examination year and on limiting the content and/or scope of the central examinations. It will also become less laborious to complete examination sections at a higher level. These measures will contribute to enabling pupils to utilise their talents.

VMBO: granting more freedom, making it stronger

Over 60 per cent of pupils in secondary education attend VMBO. Since its introduction several years ago, VMBO has come under fire in the media. That does not alter the fact that VMBO is now beginning to bear fruit. That is why I think that a structural change that would cause considerable commotion is not sensible at this time. I prefer to strengthen the current VMBO programmes further. VMBO is profiting from the greater policy freedom that all schools have been given. Tailored programmes are especially important in VMBO because there are enormous differences between pupils and their respective capacities. Also, in comparison with other school types, the risk of early school-leaving is greatest in VMBO.

More specifically, I am committed to far-reaching flexibilisation and reform in the course programmes, among other ways, by linking the learning process closer with practice in the respective professions. It is also necessary, in the interest of the pupil, to be able to respond quickly to the needs of the business community and post-secondary education.

2.3.7. New relationships

The school at the centre

Today's world requires modern administrative relationships in which schools are initially responsible for providing good, appealing education to all pupils. The team of professionals in and around the school make the choices for the education and possibly the special needs programme. The laws and regulations should enable schools to do this, provide frameworks and, at the same time, offer schools sufficient possibilities for meeting the needs of pupils and society.

Emphasis will shift to the school and its immediate environment. The national government has set clear frameworks which the school will give content to in consultation with the community. The

school will account for these choices openly and in a timely fashion. It will do so, in the first instance, to those involved in and around the school, such as the parents, the pupils and the staff. This multifaceted public accountability is a part of good, modern governance. The public's interest in the quality of education requires it.

The sector is organising itself for real self-management

I want to give the sector as a whole a heavy responsibility for innovation, the maintenance of professionalism and for quality assurance, which are the anchors of the modern relationships sought after. This self-management is a part of the planned new administrative relationships. I want to make result-oriented agreements with the sector on these subjects. School heads and members of staff have to let it be known that they see extra value in a professional organisation in which forces can be combined for things such as innovation, quality assurance and setting priorities (in the political arena). A professional organisation, in addition to or in conjunction with school board organisations, can strengthen the independence and the recognisability of the sector. I would therefore like to promote the creation of a professional organisation, but the actual establishment and organisation of a professional organisation is up to the sector itself.

Trust and interaction

I would like the national education policy to continue to fit the reality in schools more closely by involving educators better and more directly in the preparation and implementation of this policy. That is why I intend – in addition to the organised consultation with educational organisations – to give direct interaction with educators a permanent place in the policy development. In a modern administrative relationship, it is important for schools and the parties involved to be heard directly.

Education needs the space and time to develop. At such a time, wrong decisions can sometimes be made. When they are, they must be corrected on site. What I don't want to do is to restructure policy as soon as something goes wrong. Only by giving the sector the freedom to develop can a solid, responsive and innovative sector in secondary education be possible. That doesn't mean that I find everything acceptable. Some things will never become acceptable, such as fraudulent practices, violence and statements that conflict with generally accepted standards and values. When these things occur, I will call both schools and the sector to account. But within these margins, I will give schools the room and trust to develop themselves.

This new relationship towards schools also has consequences for the dialogue between the Cabinet and the Lower House of Parliament with respect to secondary education. If we accept it is the business of politicians to set clear frameworks and it is the business of schools to give content and substance to education, then the political debate in the Lower House must concentrate on the big picture and not on the specifics.

3. Agenda for 2010: the pupil captivated, the school unfettered

A sector 'with spirit'. That is my ambition for 2010. By 2010, secondary schools will be – (even) more than they are now – pupil-oriented, responsive and innovative, making use of the professionalism in and around the school. This chapter offers a perspective for realising this ambition.

Captivating pupils and preparing them well for their next phase of development requires making these pupils the centre of focus. As a consequence of this, the learning of pupils, not teaching, must be the main priority. The team at work in and around the school – teachers, school heads, supporters – is exhorted to work with the community to provide for education and special needs in a way that provides variety and that utilises the professionalism in and around the school. This requires a number of measures to be taken to enable schools to do this. These measures are described in this chapter.

To formulate a new policy, there are a number of principles to follow. The measures should firstly make a positive contribution to the quality of the education and care given to the pupils and provide answers to the social issues faced by the school. In other words, the pupil should notice this in a positive sense. Secondly, if the frameworks are more general, I assume that the professionals in and around the school will, on the basis of their professionalism, provide better quality than would be possible under detailed and uniform national regulations. This reinforces the sense of responsibility among professionals in and around schools. Thirdly, the frameworks provide an impetus to strengthen the teaching and innovative capacity of both the secondary education sector and the individual schools and education professionals. Finally, at the school level, good guarantees are necessary to ensure that the choices made there both fit the expectations of the recipients of education (pupils and parents) and the community, as well as the insights of the teaching staff. The flip side of being given and taking greater freedom is that schools must be accountable for the choices they make, in the first place to those directly involved in education.

In this chapter, all of the resolutions are described. Firstly, in section 3.1. I will discuss the measures that affect the pupil, through which he notices that the school is better able to meet his needs. The pupil can be 'captivated' (again) from a number of interrelated perspectives:

- a. The educational career and continuous learning lines;
- b. Dealing with differences such that special attention is given to disadvantaged pupils, special needs provision and guidance, problem pupils and safety;
- c. The social commission and the involvement of players from outside the school in the learning and developmental process of the pupil;
- d. Connections to professional practice;
- e. The manner of administering examinations (central examinations).

Section 3.2. describes how the schools and the professionals working there are 'unfettered', how the opportunities for making the learning of the pupil the centre of focus are increased: in regulations for the organisation of teaching, the course programming and in the provisions. In this respect I give special attention to VMBO in order to strengthen this sector further, in view of the fact that 60% of young people of compulsory school age attend one of the many programmes that VMBO offers.

It is extremely important to maintain the cohesion between the total package of measures. If a school, for example, over time wants to offer subjects in connection with each other and in concentrated form, then the school must be able to organise this. To do so it will need to have flexibility with respect to subject matter, as well as flexibility in time and personnel. The second section of this chapter also discusses this.

Innovation is the subject of section 3.3. The needs and opportunities that a school observes in class are the starting point for innovation. In this section, I present my innovation strategy for the

coming years. A number of specific spearheads, such as promoting interest in the exact sciences and in technical subjects, and the use of ICT in the teaching process, will be given added attention.

3.1. The pupil captivated

3.1.1. Continuing to learn: continual learning lines

Seen from the pupil's point of view, secondary education is 'only' a link in his educational career. At the same time, the success of secondary education from this perspective is increasingly measured against the question of how the pupil is doing in post-secondary education, given his starting position in the first year of secondary school. That is why it is important for the links in the chain, from primary education up to and including post-secondary education and the labour market, to run from one to the next as smoothly as possible:

- Between primary education and secondary education
- Between the first and second stages of secondary education and
- Between secondary education and post-secondary education and the labour market

A smooth transition between the links, firstly, means that they inform each other well with respect to the – required and obtained – baggage of the pupil. It is the shared responsibility of primary and secondary schools to exchange the knowledge and data on the pupil in such a way that the pupil can continue on the path he has chosen as much as possible. Continual pupil-monitoring systems and digital portfolios could be important instruments for accomplishing this. A good exchange of information between primary and secondary education is certainly important for pupils that need extra attention. In addition to the transfer of information about the required and obtained baggage of pupils, there should also be a careful transfer of information on the care provided to them so that the pupil continues to be given the care he needs.

The system in the links of the chain differs in certain areas, for instance in the area concerning the competencies of teaching staff, the area of setting indicators for special needs arrangements and the area of funding. I will not regard the various systems as the same, they are sufficient in themselves and differ with reason. So, in view of the large focus placed on the content of subject matter, especially in the second stage of secondary education, it can be clarified that in the competency system in secondary education greater attention is given to specific subject requirements than in primary education. Also, the difference in the funding system can be explained by the difference in the scale of administration. So I am focusing on the differences between the systems, but from these differences I will strive to remove as many as possible of the obstacles the different systems yield.

In the transition from primary education to the first stage of secondary education, I am working to improve the connection between the educational content of programmes by co-ordinating the attainment targets as much as possible. Continual programming is just as necessary in the practical and special needs parts of the education. The work placements in MBO can get more out of the pupil if they build on the practical experience of VMBO. These are examples of transitions in the system where a lot of work still has to be done to achieve continual programming. The realisation of a good connection between VMBO and MBO is especially important because, through this, school dropout rates can be reduced. Here educators emphasise that the risk of a pupil dropping out of school is greatest in the basic vocational programmes of VMBO and the next stage at levels 1 and 2 in the Regional Training Centres. Talents are also not optimally utilised and appreciated if the work experience gained by these young people cannot be recognised in a basic qualification at the level of MBO-2. Targeted actions to improve this connection, collaboration or continual programming, or to recognise each other's acquired competencies, can produce a lot of good results. With respect to this last point, consultation is underway with the Adult and Vocational Education Council. The starting point in these consultations is that the recognition of each other's acquired competencies should take place at the Regional Training Centres.

The pupil in primary education that has become used to having one teacher that stays with him throughout the year, is suddenly confronted in secondary education with the fact that he sometimes has up to fifteen different teachers. Some pupils find this very refreshing, but others experience it as a loss of security. Also, moving on to a school with several hundred pupils requires some first-year secondary school pupils to adapt considerably. Increasing numbers of schools take this into consideration and deploy permanent teaching teams that supervise the pupils for the first couple of years. In VMBO, such a teaching team often stays with the same group of pupils for the entire school career. This is also preferred by the teachers, because it reduces the number of different pupils that they teach each week. This is only one of the many examples that show how secondary education has learned to anticipate and meet the specific needs of pupils in their transition from primary education.

I take seriously the remarks from educators and experts that, if I ask teachers to work better with one another in order to promote the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary education, then I must also ensure that obstacles to this transfer between the systems are removed.

Effort:

- *Facilitate the transfer between different systems in education.*
- *Streamline the different systems so that bottlenecks are removed.*

Actions:

Based on (current) inventories of the trend interruptions between and within different sectors, a plan of approach with a package of measures will be drafted before the end of 2004 that will be implemented starting in 2005. The following actions, in particular, come to mind:

General:

- *Sample projects will be facilitated.*
- *Connection between sectors will be included in quality assurance systems.*
- *A benchmark aimed at a service-oriented information policy will be established.*
- *The national government will ensure, within the (inter)departmental organisation, that there is good co-ordination between the policies for the different sectors.*

Specifically for primary education – secondary education:

- *Inventories will be taken of current continual pupil-monitoring systems/educational reports. We will investigate the possibilities for special needs and testing records that can be used for taking decisions on the arrangement for the special needs of a pupil.*
- *Based in part on this inventory, the development of continual pupil-monitoring systems and digital portfolios will be facilitated.*
- *The pupil transfer policy of schools will be given greater emphasis in the supervision of the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate will be expressly asked to make sure that the school, in accordance with the Organisation of Teaching Decree, bases its consideration concerning the admission and placement of the pupil, in the first instance, on the recommendation of the primary school and, in a support instance, on a study into a pupil's suitability for secondary education, such as the CITO test (CITO = National Institute for Educational Measurement).*

Specifically for the connection between VMBO - MBO:

- *Based on the experiences with offering the training for assistant-workers in VMBO, it will be determined – preferably at the start of the 2007/2008 school year – whether and in which manner this possibility can be anchored legally. Recognition of one another's earned competencies is an important point for attention in this area.*
- *VMBO schools and institutions for Adult and Vocational Education will receive more possibilities to develop attractive arrangements aimed at providing tailored education to pupils.*
- *The law will be amended to make it possible for VMBO schools, starting 1 August 2006, to transfer resources to, for instance, the Regional Training Centres if, in any year, a pupil*

- *makes a mid-term transition from a VMBO school to a Regional Training Centre.*
- *Obstacles to continual learning lines in the funding system will be removed.*

3.1.2. Dealing with differences

Choosing for the pupil is choosing to deal with differences. Each pupil is different, each learns differently. It is the task of the school to provide each pupil with an education that addresses his particular talents, learning style, baggage and background. Because of their situation at home, some pupils come to school with a disadvantage when it comes to understanding and speaking our language and, as a result, find it difficult to fit into the education we provide. Others bring serious problems from home to school. Still others are struggling with their own social-emotional problems. Some pupils have serious behavioural problems, which not only their fellow pupils but also the school staff can experience as threatening.

Most of these pupils come from weaker socio-economic environments. For these pupils, extra effort is necessary in order to give them a fully fledged place in our society through secondary education. Truancy as an expression of such problems is a reality, as is the risk that in more serious cases the pupil will give up and drop out of school early. In the large and mid-sized cities, especially, there are schools with relatively large groups of pupils for which these problems are accumulating. This makes these schools, generally VMBO schools, vulnerable.

In my view, this is very disconcerting. All the more reason to realise arrangements for the education and special needs of these pupils as well that will encourage them to finish their school career successfully. We cannot let ourselves be satisfied with a situation in which we cannot reach certain pupils. The aspects outlined above occur both as independent incidents and as interconnected problems. In the coming period, I would like to take significant steps towards:

- a. Removing language disadvantages and ensuring there is sufficient guidance given to pupils;
- b. Realising a tailor-made special needs support structure inside and outside the school as a guarantee that pupils with behavioural and learning problems are given the guidance they need in time and in a sound manner;
- c. Reinforcing the relief facilities for those pupils that temporarily cannot be kept in regular education.

This effort will contribute, in conjunction with the establishment of appealing educational programmes, to reducing the school dropout rate. Below, I will explain how.

Removing language disadvantages and providing sufficient pupil counselling (guidance)

My objective is for the available money to be given to those schools with a concurrence of problems, such as schools located primarily in the large and mid-sized municipalities. Through a new arrangement for the educationally disadvantaged (LeerPlus), I am committed to removing language disadvantages and preventing pupils from dropping out of school. Schools, local governments and the national government are working closely together on this. The main features of this arrangement are described in the outline memorandum on education arrangement policy that was submitted to the Lower House in June 2004.

Effort:

To remove disadvantages and to realise sufficient counselling for pupils with behavioural and learning problems.

Actions:

- *The extra funds made available for pupil counselling will be deployed in 2005 via the Plan of Approach for Safety.*
- *As of 2006/2007 a new scheme for combating educational disadvantages (LeerPlus) will be introduced.*
- *The mixed special needs model will be evaluated in 2006; based on this, it will be determined*

how it can best be simplified. This will be carried out between 2007 and 2010.

Local governments are responsible for supervising compulsory school attendance. This task primarily has the character of social work and therefore is closely connected to the local government's responsibility for the local youth policy. Local governments work together on this because many pupils attend a school in a different municipality from the one in which they live. By virtue of the Act bearing on the Regional Registration and Co-ordination Centre (RMC), the local governments also have a duty to track down and provide process counselling to pupils of compulsory school age who have no basic qualification and have dropped out of school. The measures that need to be taken are outlined below.

Effort:

Increase the effectiveness of enforcement of the Compulsory Education Act by improving the collaboration between the school and other players, such as the local government.

Actions:

- *In the framework of the Handhaven op Niveau programme [Maintaining Levels] in 2004/2005, a model will be developed for enforcing compulsory school attendance based on pilot projects in three municipalities and in one region.*
- *Through the dissemination of information, the application of the available model will be promoted starting in the spring of 2005.*
- *The reporting of truancy and school-leaving will be simplified and made more complete via the use of the education number. A bill will be introduced in Parliament towards this end in 2005.*

Continual special needs support structure: aligning internal and external special needs support
The ambition is to provide all pupils that have behavioural and learning problems with the counselling they need. This requires a complementary special needs support structure (inside and outside school) that guarantees early detection and effective intervention for pupils with behavioural and learning problems. The school needs good pupil counselling in order to pick up signals in advance that point in the direction of a pupil leaving school early or to enable the staff to identify socio-emotional problems and, if necessary, to call in assistance in time. In the interest of the pupil, the school must be able to call on special support providers outside the school in the community's support system.

Along with its surrounding community, the school is responsible for providing a sufficient system of assistance and care for special needs. The national government has the task of setting sufficient preconditions for this and of removing obstacles to it in regulations. Based on this responsibility, the measures for the coming years are aimed at improving the collaboration between the participants in the system.

Schools experience bottlenecks in the connection between external and internal care for special needs. The collaboration and co-ordination between the different facilities could be improved – there are waiting lists or the school cannot obtain the special needs care it seeks, the division of responsibility is not clear and the management of the chain falters or is lacking. The ambition is to come up with a suitable supply of care for special needs in 2007 in and around all primary and secondary schools by setting up a national infrastructure of special needs support networks.

Effort:

To realise a suitable special needs support structure in and around the school.

Actions:

- *Via participation in the JONG project, obstacles at the level of national government are being removed in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The efforts from the side of secondary education are aimed at:
- identifying bottlenecks in the policy and regulations starting in the autumn of 2004,*

- developing a benchmark instrument and quality standards throughout the sector starting in the autumn of 2004,
- reaching agreements with local governments, provincial governments and the education sector starting in the autumn of 2005,
- supporting and monitoring regional actions starting in the spring of 2004.

- The definitive Youth Agenda (vision document of Operation JONG) was submitted to the Lower House in June 2004 and will be implemented starting in the autumn of 2004.
- In the spring of 2005, the first interim report of Operation JONG will be realised.

A safe school

A safe school climate is an absolute condition for ensuring that pupils can perform well. Schools are investing considerable effort in this area and are often successful. Attention is given to bullying and the promotion of respect between pupils, parents and personnel is actively worked on. Schools continue to look for ways to improve their performance in this respect.

The discussion on safety often focuses on scale. A small-scale organisation of education is important, it was revealed in discussions held at schools, but that doesn't mean that the school as such may not be large. More important than the size of the school is its actual organisation and suitable housing so that a 'small-scale atmosphere' is experienced. The school should be organised to create a learning and working environment in which pupils and staff feel safe and familiar. The Social and Cultural Planning Office and the Inspectorate of Education have recently conducted studies into the relationship between housing size, on the one hand, and quality and safety, on the other, and have established that there is no significant interrelationship. Large schools, too, have been successful in creating a safe school climate. Problems, if any, were more related to the nature of the school population than to the size of the school. Despite this, I will continue to monitor developments in this area, which for years have been reported in the education report of the Inspectorate, and I will continue to discuss these developments with the Inspectorate.

Within secondary education, at a limited number of VMBO schools, there is more amiss: here the problems of pupils accumulate in one school. At these schools extra efforts are being made to ensure safety.

Pupils with serious behavioural problems

Recently, voices have been raised calling on so-called problem pupils to be taken out of regular (VMBO) education – to separate them from other pupils. In this discussion, it is necessary to make a distinction between pupils with specific needs, on the one hand, due to their learning and educational or socio-emotional problems, and pupils that (temporarily) cannot be kept in regular education, on the other. In this last case, there should be sufficient possibilities for placing the pupil somewhere else (temporarily). It would help the pupil in question, it would help the other pupils that suffer the consequences of their behaviour, and it would help the staff that often have to devote too much attention to these pupils and that are often also bothered by their behaviour.

To make it possible for schools to fill this responsibility, measures will have to be taken at the levels of prevention, correction and restraint. By strengthening pupil counselling, expanding the facilities for severely maladjusted children, creating rebound facilities and taking support measures, schools will be given the possibility of identifying and tackling the problems early and, if necessary, taking radical measures.

Effort:

Giving schools the ability to create a safe school climate.

Actions:

- *Implementing the Plan of Approach for Safety in education and the facilities for high-risk pupils. Including the measures developed, the plan of approach was submitted to the Lower House in May 2004 and will be realised starting in 2005:*
 - *the pupil counselling will be reinforced,*
 - *the number of facilities for severely maladjusted children will be increased,*

- rebound facilities will be created,
- schools will be supported by extra measures.
- Consultation with the Inspectorate will be held on school size in relation to education quality and safety at the larger locations.

3.1.3. Learning can take place anywhere

For a long time now, schools have not had a monopoly on teaching. Young people can learn things anywhere. In a weekend job at the supermarket or on a farm, or even while chatting with friends in Thailand, Australia or Utrecht. At the same time, outside the school there are numerous opportunities for learning that could be given an explicit place in the course programme. In this way, the cultural vouchers were a success. Also, in the context of sports and exercise, there are countless opportunities for pupils to gain learning experiences and to test skills.

In short, the pupil can achieve more and at a higher level and can use his talents better if we are successful at integrating learning inside and outside school, as well as formal and informal learning, into the regular course programme better and recognise different learning experiences via, for instance, a portfolio. Pupils, parents, teachers and management all expect that such an approach to education will motivate and appeal to the pupil much, much more. Particularly for those pupils that feel more at home in the practical world than at their school desks, this could be just the ticket needed to get them to continue their education instead of leaving school without a qualification.

Effort:

- To promote the integration of learning inside and outside schools, formal and informal learning into the course programme.
- Broader recognition of different learning experiences.

Actions:

- Continuing on from the development in the first stage of secondary education, VMBO and the second stage, more possibilities will be provided to integrate both learning outside school and informal learning into the course programme and to recognise these learning experiences, e.g. analogous to competencies acquired elsewhere or by means of portfolios. The realisation of this starting in 2005 will be included in the contents of the innovation policy (see § 3.3).
- The dual training and work placement routes in VMBO will be expanded starting in 2007. The manner in which this will be done shall be explained in 2005 in a report submitted to the Lower House with an option for (pilot) projects up to 1 August 2007.

3.1.4. Examinations: proof of personal ability

Pupils in secondary education want to be tested. They want to be subject to requirements. They want to be challenged. They also want to know how they have performed and to see this performance converted into a diploma. Many pupils, according to the discussions on the course of secondary education, see a diploma as the first proof of what they can accomplish. It is their admission ticket for a subsequent step.

The subject of examinations has led to many and sometimes heated discussions. It has become clear that a majority of people want to maintain the civil effect of examinations and that central (independent) examinations should continue, particularly in view of the importance of quality assurance and access to post-secondary course programmes. Many participants, however, also thought that examinations could be modernised and made more flexible, especially in VMBO.

The system of central examinations will continue. The central examination fulfils an important role in our education system. It plays a role in guaranteeing the quality of education and in the continuous learning line to post-secondary education. I also greatly value the 'passport function', and guaranteed access to post-secondary education, the so-called civil effect. Institutions of

higher education have the possibility of placing their own emphasis on admission requirements. In no way do I see this as a replacement for the central examination for secondary education. The rights linked to the (partially) central examination (right to enrol) are also non-negotiable.

Although I see no reason to change the system, it can be improved. The challenge is to provide tailored education, to guarantee civil effect and quality and to keep the examinations organisable at the same time. I also want to see whether it is possible in both VMBO and in HAVO/VWO to find several central examination times every year. And I want to respond to the understandable criticism from educators in particular that the existing system can be an obstacle to modernising the content of education. A system in which school examinations play a more prominent role provides good possibilities for tailored education and innovation, e.g. because school examinations can be taken more than once a year. In relation to the limitation of the subject matter for the central examinations, this gives schools room for providing tailored education.

Reducing the management burden and limiting the vulnerability of the system are important points of departure. With regard to the development of a portfolio, which is frequently demanded, opportunities are provided by the compilation of an examination portfolio within the framework of the Leaving Examinations Decree.

The way in which learning experiences are completed and recognised will be co-ordinated more often with the learning process of the pupil. In the measures described below, which are aimed at improving examinations, greater emphasis is placed on the school examinations. This also makes a contribution to the freedom to provide the pupil with a tailored education. And it means that the school will have to work on setting up its own system of quality assurance.

Effort:

Realising a system of examination that:

- *provides tailored education,*
- *guarantees quality,*
- *guarantees the civil effect,*
- *can be organised and managed.*

Actions:

- *Several central examination times each year are made possible in VMBO, HAVO and VWO under the condition that no insurmountable objections present themselves with respect to the feasibility of organising them, the regulations or the financial consequences of doing so.*
- *Limiting the number of subjects that must be tested through central examinations in the VMBO is being studied, although not by means of experiments.*
- *Schools will be given greater freedom – provided the level stays the same – to design education by striking a new balance between central examinations and school examinations. The exit qualifications will be less detailed and be formulated in general terms. The content and/or the scope of the central examination for each subject will be limited.*
- *For the quality assurance of school examinations, quality assurance systems will be set up, with or without external legitimisation (involvement of post-secondary education and the business community).*
- *It will be possible for pupils to take a central examination in their second to last year.*
- *The extra regular programmes in VMBO (inter-sector and intra-sector) will be fit into the regular structure and a framework will be established for additional content experiments in VMBO.*
- *Examinations using ICT that proved themselves in the experiment phase will be included in the production of regular examinations.*
- *The information and advice on central examinations will be streamlined.*
- *A feasibility study will be launched into an Examination Bureau in which the current activities of the IB-Groep and the CEVO will be merged and the responsibility for the examinations brought closer to the sector.*
- *A study is being conducted into whether the second correction can either be dropped or simplified.*

- *The coercive character of (the regulations on) the programme of testing and completion (PTA) and examinations regulations will be reduced.*
- *CSPE (the central written practical examination) is the preferred form of examination for the vocation-oriented programmes within all educational routes. For the basic vocational programme in VMBO, this will be realised in 2005, the other educational routes will follow.*
- *The possibility will be offered in the basic vocational programme in VMBO of sitting examinations for the general subjects in a more flexible manner during the time period in which examinations are administered for the vocational programmes.*
- *Examination syllabi and the examinations aimed at vocations will be brought into line with the change of the qualification structure in MBO.*
- *The regulations will be adapted so that it is possible to have pupils in VMBO complete their studies in a subject at a higher level..*

All the aforementioned actions will be combined in a package of improvement measures that will be presented to the Lower House in a separate memorandum (including a detailed time schedule) in the autumn of 2004. Implementation of the package of measures will begin in 2005.

3.2. The school unfettered

3.2.1. A personal face in the programme and in the structure

Making the pupil the centre of focus means that school will have to work with flexible course programmes. Schools will also have to deal differently with the moments of intake and completion (that are still fixed), schedules and subject content. Without this flexibility, continual learning lines will simply not get off the ground. Schools should be able to offer modern, innovative course programmes tailored to the needs of their pupils.

The national government will continue – in consultation with educators – to determine what is to be learned in the form of attainment targets and exit qualifications. Regulations pertaining to how education will be provided do not fit into the division of responsibilities that I have in mind. Within general attainment targets and exit qualifications, schools will be given maximum freedom to make their own choices with respect to the content and form of education. The measures in the (central) examinations mentioned in section 3.1.4. make an essential contribution to this.

In order to guarantee that the education provided continues to correspond to the developments in the (regional) labour market, greater flexibility in the course programmes will be necessary, especially in VMBO. That is why the resource plans are being expanded. In HAVO and VWO as well, the rules are being simplified.

Effort:

Promoting the flexibility in the course programmes by:

- *Giving schools greater freedom to make their own professional choices.*
- *Simplifying rules.*
- *Expanding the resource plans.*

Actions:

a. First stage of secondary education

- *Starting 1 August 2006, the legal frameworks with respect to the content, structure and organisation of education will be generalised. Generally formulated attainment targets will serve as guides and the set-up of the course programme will, from then on, be left up to the school.*
- *For pupils in the first stage of secondary education that are scheduled to follow a work placement process, other requirements will be set as of 1 August 2006 with respect to the attainment targets to be offered.*
- *In order to provide schools with support for school development, a Project Group will be set*

up which will be operational from 2004 up to and including 2008.

b. Second stage

- *Greater freedom will be provided to develop the course programme by, among other things, enlarging the optional component and by introducing elective subjects within the set subject combinations. The adaptations of the second stage will be prepared in 2004 and written into a bill at the start of 2005. Then associated amendment decisions will follow in 2005. The Act will take effect on 1 August 2007.*

c. VMBO

- *Schools will be given greater freedom to develop the course programme and to achieve a good link to MBO – e.g. by analogy to the first stage of secondary education – by coming up with a more general description of the exit qualifications.*
- *It will be made possible for schools to offer broader inter-sector and intra-sector programmes aimed at the regional labour market – while retaining the civil effect and guarantees for transferring to the Regional Training Centre. Possible developments include an external legitimisation of the school examinations.*
- *Reforms in VMBO will be encouraged and supported by focusing, in the resource plans, on national management at the level of pre-vocational education (VBO). A more detailed version, via a sector approach, will initially follow in the Exploratory resource plans in the autumn of 2004.*
- *Modern, attractive programmes that link teaching closer to professional practice and that structure teaching so that it is more focused on competencies in order to correspond with developments at Regional Training Centres will be promoted and facilitated.*

3.2.2. Social commission: collaboration for the pupil

Secondary education plays an important role in young people's development. Each school develops its own approach to preparing pupils for their examinations and becoming fully fledged citizens. The school can only fulfil its social task if it occupies a position in the midst of society and maintains close ties to the surrounding community. I do not want to dictate to schools how they should build up local contacts, but I will encourage schools to fulfil their social commission. I will consult with the Inspectorate of Education about how the focus of a broad social commission can be included in the inspection framework.

The concept of the broad-based school works well in giving a school a clear position in the local community. I think the social-service practicum is a significant way to bring pupils into contact with aspects of society that are new to them. During such a practicum they develop social skills and acquire a stronger awareness of norms and values. It is also a good way to make a connection between learning inside school and learning outside school.

Effort:

- *In 2007, 25% of secondary schools in the second stage of secondary education were able to offer pupils the chance of a social-service practicum.*
- *Players in and around the school work together optimally on the school-specific social commission in order to get the best from the pupils.*

Actions:

- *Social-service practicums are made possible and encouraged; the learning experiences that are gained through these practicums are recognised. Based on 10 current pilot programmes in the 2003/2004 school year, assistance has been set up so that, from the start of 2004, a promotional and implementation campaign can be launched for the introduction of the social-service practicum.*
- *The content of the broad-based social commission will be included in the consultation on the inspection framework of the Inspectorate, starting in the 2005/2006 school year. This consultation begins in 2004.*

- *The attainment targets of the first stage of secondary education - which will take effect on 1 August 2006 - will include citizenship classes.*

3.2.3. Staff: the link between learning and the pupil

The staff is an indispensable link in the organisation if the school wants to be able to offer the pupil flexibility. To achieve this goal, there must also be flexibility possible in the deployment of staff. In the discussions on the direction of secondary education, many of those involved in the talks indicated that the current qualification system is too rigid. If a school really wants to organise education significantly differently, then people run into obstacles when the question of qualifications arises. The schools' room for manoeuvre and power of innovation is limited by the system according to the partners in the discussion.

The legislative bill 'Occupations in Education' (BIO Act), awards schools greater freedom to implement their own personnel policy because it is no longer determined centrally what certificates a teacher must have. The question instead is whether he or she meets the competency requirements. The demonstration of this competency for now depends on a Higher Education Certificate (from an initial teacher training course or from a competency study in the case of unqualified teachers from other professions). The competency of teaching staff remains a major point of concern for the national government. The competency requirements that will be established on the basis of the BIO Act should give teacher-training programmes and schools sufficient freedom to train and deploy staff in ways that correspond with the choices that the school has made. Schools could also become increasingly involved in the training of their staff and have greater opportunities to maintain the competency of their staff. This provides encouragement for the professional development of the teaching staff, including the school management.

Effort:

- *Promote flexibility in the deployment of teaching staff.*
- *Promote possibilities for training personnel in the school.*
- *Structurally meet the demand for teachers in order to reduce the teacher shortage.*

Actions:

- *When the BIO Act takes effect, schools will be given more possibilities to broaden the employability of teachers.*
- *In the framework of the Teaching Staff Policy Plan, starting in 2005 (promotional) measures will be initiated and continued that are aimed at achieving a sufficient supply of teachers in both the quantitative and qualitative sense.*
- *At the start of the 2005-2006 school year (no later than 2006), negotiations will start between employers and employees on the entire body of employment conditions, therefore including primary employment conditions such as working hours, the standards for job grading, the general salary developments and the supra-legal social security. The (pre-) pensions have been excluded from these negotiations.*
- *Starting the same school year, a single framework Collective Labour Agreement will be reached for the entire sector of secondary education. The subjects of this agreement will be determined by the sector itself.*

3.2.4. Funding as the basis

The funding must also enable the school to make optimal use of its policy freedom. In view of the fact that the major portion of the funding now reaches schools via a non-earmarked lump sum allowance, the school already has considerable freedom to make its own choices. Only in the case of project subsidies are there application procedures; educators experience these procedures as being too tight. The project subsidies will therefore be limited to a minimum and will entail limited administration expenses.

From different sides in the discussion, it has been stated that when you decide to make the educational career of the pupil the top priority, then the funding system must correspond to this goal as much as possible. The current system, in principle, is not an obstacle to this. But on specific points several things still need to be done, especially in regard to the transition between VMBO and MBO (see also section 3.1.1 on continual learning lines).

Effort:

- *Gear funding to the shift in the education system's focus on the educational career of the pupil.*
- *Increase the autonomy of schools in the spending of available funds.*

Actions:

- *The funding will be simplified, a legislative bill has been introduced to do this in 2004.*
- *Disengagement from the Substitution and Participation Fund will be realised on 1 August 2005.*
- *Starting on 1 August 2006, the lump sum funding for employment-oriented training will be introduced for schools offering employment-oriented training that are currently reimbursed on the basis of expense statements.*
- *To promote the continual learning lines from VMBO to MBO, in 2004 a legislative bill will be introduced. By no later than 1 August 2006, it will be possible for pupils to take parts of the post-secondary education during their enrolment in VMBO. As a part of this programme, the funding rules will correspond to this procedure.*

3.2.5. More freedom and a boost for VMBO and employment-oriented training

VMBO and employment-oriented training will fully profit from the change in direction outlined in this document for secondary education. In addition, the strengthening of the VMBO programmes will require a specific coherent approach.

During the discussions on the direction of secondary education, great emphasis was placed on the further development of VMBO. The differences between VMBO pupils with respect to background, capacity, learning style, motivation and the support required for special needs are now larger than they are at other types of schools and are increasing. Also, many social problems enter VMBO schools together with the pupils. Providing tailored education in VMBO is therefore even more important. Investments in VMBO will serve both to strengthen the knowledge economy and to improve social relationships.

To be able to provide tailored education, VMBO will certainly need an amount of freedom in the regulations in the area of planning curriculum, the programming, dual courses combining study and work experience, the continual learning line, the structure of education, the examinations, the teaching time, the special needs support structure in VMBO and the lump sum funding in employment-oriented training. Schools should be able, as a result, to give further shape, within firm and spacious frameworks, to lively, strong and innovative VMBO and employment-oriented training that fit with the pupils needs and take into consideration the post-secondary education and the labour market in the region.

I want to contribute to the innovative power of secondary education and therefore also to that of VMBO by encouraging innovative experiments. Furthermore, it is also certainly important for VMBO to reduce the (threatening) teacher shortage.

I will facilitate this through:

- Innovative, attractive programmes for more challenging pupil-oriented education that correspond with the reformed first stage of secondary education and the new qualification structure in MBO;
- Modern equipment and improvement of the workstation structure;

- In collaboration with the business community, bringing learning into a much closer relationship with professional practice in order to bring about more and better combinations of learning and professional practice;
- Structuring education to be more competency oriented, partly linked to post-secondary education and the labour market.

In addition, extra attention should be given to the position of employment-oriented training and to strengthening the practical subjects within these programmes. In consultation with relevant parties, I want to see whether the housing of VMBO and employment-oriented training can be improved.

Effort:

Boost VMBO by increasing the options for tailored education and thus contribute to preventing pupils from leaving school early.

Actions:

- *More freedom will be given to VMBO in the area of planning the curriculum, course programmes, dual courses combining study and work experience, the structure and testing/completion of education, teaching time, special needs support structure and continual learning lines and the lump sum funding in employment-oriented training.*
- *Encouraging and facilitating innovative, attractive programmes that tie learning closer to professional practice, among other ways, via the workplace structure and equipment, and structuring education to be more competency oriented so that it corresponds with innovations in the first stage of secondary education and with the developments at the Regional Training Centres and in trade and industry.*
- *Good examples in which housing has led to reforms in education will be compiled and disseminated in 2005.*

In the period from 2004 up to and including 2007, the schools will be given the opportunity, created by the aforementioned actions, to gain experiences. Starting in 2008, an implementation process will follow until 2010 at the latest.

3.3. Development as fixed value: the school innovates itself

The terms innovation and school development are often used interchangeably. School development means that schools keep up to date and keep up with their pupils, while 'innovation' generally points to a more far-reaching, 'really new' approach. Education is by definition dynamic. Our dynamic, complex and demanding society (and thus pupils) demand a lot from schools. Secondary education as a sector, and as individual and collaborating schools, will develop in the midst of this society. Whether this development is far-reaching and innovative or progresses gradually step by step, the pupil will always be the centre of focus.

Although the school bears primary responsibility for innovation, I see it as the responsibility of the national government to encourage and support schools in fulfilling this responsibility. I would like to initiate a strong movement, a movement of initiatives, expansion, of firm grounding and the consolidation of innovations. It will also be necessary to support innovative initiatives and experiments through regulations.

The teacher is the bearer of education and innovation – but he or she does not bear them alone. The educational relationship between teachers and pupils is and will remain the core of learning and the bedrock of education. It all happens between the pupil and the teacher. A teacher cannot and need not shoulder this responsibility alone: assistants and supporters make a crucial contribution to the work activities of the teacher. The importance of professionals from outside the education world is also on the increase.

3.3.1. Innovation strategy

The innovation policy is aimed at getting a strong innovation movement off the ground. This movement will be borne by the schools themselves and will focus on a broad and varied repertoire of learning arrangements for young people in secondary education. At different places in this document focused on the course of secondary education, it is indicated what kind of learning arrangements are involved. For 2004, a particular instrumentation for the innovation policy has been chosen (whose most remarkable measure is a policy rule for innovative projects, which was published in the brochure *Vooruit!*), but it is not representative for the years to come; the approach itself is therefore the emphatic subject of interactive policy and advancing insight.

Investing resources for innovation at the right place

Through the innovation policy, I want to strengthen the innovative capacity of the schools, among other ways, by placing the resources and the evaluation of the efforts expended as closely as possible to the schools and the sector. This touches on an almost permanent subject of discussion with respect to the innovation strategy. Some schools say they prefer to receive the resources directly – earmarked or not - via the lump sum so that no additional project applications have to be submitted. Others still see the advantages of establishing a clear co-ordinating role. I think that the sector of secondary education should be the initiator over the entire length of the innovation policy, and from the position of this role provide the government with the directional themes in which the sector should develop.

To realise this, I would like to take a number of phased steps. Because this primarily pertains to the schools themselves, I have asked the organisation School Managers in Secondary Education to come up with appealing proposals for such an innovation strategy, a strategy in which the (organised) sector can fulfil a central role as director. I am thinking here of the option of adding a part of the available (project) resources directly to the schools' lump sum budget and spending another part as a national innovation budget. The government reaches programmatic agreements with the organised sector concerning the use of the national innovation budget. Within these programmatic agreements, the government provides the freedom to start spending the resources.

For the sake of convenience, I will refer to an 'innovation facility' for the secondary education sector in this memorandum. This can be interpreted in different ways. As soon as such an innovation facility and an innovation strategy have been realised, I will incorporate the available national innovation budget into this facility each year, based on an agreement on how the resources should be spent. In my estimation, these agreements can be made starting in 2005 or as early as possible. Starting in 2006, agreements will be made with the manager of the innovation facility with respect to incorporating other (project) budgets into the facility according to a plan and in phases.

Sharing, embedding and consolidating knowledge

Realising innovations is one thing, making sure that they are then widely disseminated and embedded in the primary process of schools is quite another. It is simultaneously simple and complicated. Simple because the school can look around for innovative solutions to its own problems and challenges, and utilise what comes out of this endeavour for its own situation; so the school simply comes up with its own plan. Complicated because the process of innovation requires a lot from the school: strong educational leadership, a willingness to change among teachers, a capacity to collaborate and such. Complicated also because at both a regional and national level there are many players that are involved in the innovation in one way or another. It could be useful to the schools were the facility to function as an agency and source of information without the facility becoming the one tree too many that finally obscures the view of the forest. Because innovation is a matter for the schools, it is logical to place this function with the sector. This approach will be discussed with School Managers in Secondary Education and the school board organisations in 2004 as the transitional year. Starting in 2005, I assume that binding agreements can be reached with a single legal entity.

I have also asked the organisation School Managers in Secondary Education to position itself as an innovation agency. This innovation agency performs activities that are aimed at sharing and

disseminating knowledge between schools themselves, and between schools and a wide range of players that make a contribution to innovation at the national level. I have promised here to cover the costs incurred in setting up the innovation agency. The costs of the innovation agency itself will be covered from the Innovation facility. In my view, this Innovation Agency can start work in 2004.

Remove obstructive regulations

There is a love-hate relationship between innovation and regulations, as can be seen in the process discussed in this memorandum. The School Managers in Secondary Education organisation has, therefore, been invited to draw up an inventory, which is as concrete as possible, of the regulations that unnecessarily obstruct innovation. Furthermore, within the framework for the modernisation of the WVO, a general experimental article will be introduced for more fundamental innovations for which the expanded legislative framework is still too limiting. Also, pending a more structural liberalisation of the legislative framework (modernisation of the WVO), optimal use can be made of the current divergence provisions in the law.

Greater control over demand in the SLOA policy

Via the Outline Memorandum of 2005, the SLOA organisations were invited to formulate and make concrete what their contribution could be to the innovation movement outlined above. In addition – pending the evaluation of the SLOA Act – greater control over demand could be introduced to the SLOA system. School Managers in Secondary Education could possibly play a role in the formulation of themes within the framework of the think tank activities of the SLOA organisations.

Monitoring, evaluation and the development of knowledge

The development of the innovation and the effects of the measures outlined above will be closely monitored in the years to come. On the instruction of the Ministry of OCW, the University of Twente conducted an inventory study into the current status of innovation in secondary education: the trends, themes, developments and so on. This provides an initial 'state of the art'.

Each year in May, a report will be provided on the manner in which the innovation movement is developing and what effect this movement is having on the quality of teaching and learning. The report is published in May, so it can be combined with the Education Report and the OCW Annual Report. An innovative form will be found for this monitoring that does not burden the schools. The first report will be published in May 2005.

The development of knowledge and science

Innovation in secondary education benefits from a strong scientific foundation. It now seems that changing views of teaching and learning are having a stimulating effect on the scientific research in these fields. Interesting in this context are the activities that are being developed by lecturers at the colleges of professional education. At the same time, the results of scientific research are insufficiently aimed at the practice of teaching. As a result, good ideas reach the school at a slow pace and the research receives signals from the teaching profession very late. Innovation thus generally comes about at a slower pace than is necessary. The idea of knowledge communities, introduced by the Education Council, is one way to strengthen the connection between science and the teaching profession. Educators have repeatedly said that they need just such a connection. The sector could fulfil a pioneering role in this.

The school managers in secondary education were asked therefore, within the framework of the Innovation agency, to draft a plan of approach for 'strengthening the connection between 'innovation and science', in collaboration with scientists – who can participate in this connection – the NWO and the innovation platform. The plan can be completed by 2005 and be implemented that same year.

Effort:

Getting a powerful innovation movement off the ground 'from the grass roots'.

Actions:

- *Starting in 2005, or as much earlier as possible, the innovation resources will be incorporated into an innovation facility for secondary education based on agreements with the sector.*
- *The innovation agency will commence work in 2004.*
- *From 2004, a more demand-oriented approach will be introduced to the SLOA system. Based on the evaluation of the SLOA Act in 2004, a decision will be taken on the spending of future SLOA budgets.*
- *Based on the inventory of 'obstacles to innovation' made by School Managers in Secondary Education and the school board organisations, unnecessary obstacles will be removed. This clean-up action will start in 2005.*
- *In 2005 a legislative bill will be introduced for a 'general experimental article' for innovations.*
- *Each year in May, a report will be issued on the progress and development of innovation in secondary education, beginning in 2005.*
- *In 2005, the plan of School Managers in Secondary Education for 'strengthening the connection between innovation and science' can be implemented.*
- *In 2006 agreement will be reached with the sector on incorporating other project budgets into the innovation facility in a planned manner and in phases.*

3.3.2. Spearheads for innovation

Application of ICT

In the innovation policy, the role of ICT will be given special attention. In practice, ICT has proven to be a powerful means by which to give the innovation needs of schools flesh and blood, and thus catch maximum attention from pupils. The application of ICT provides opportunities to fit in better with the interests of the pupils, with different learning styles and to promote active and independent learning. The applications of ICT within the teaching-learning process provide schools with possibilities for more tailored education and greater flexibility. Simulations can provide exceptionally powerful, modern, safe and relatively inexpensive learning environments, both for vocational preparation and for scrutinising theories. For review and the compilation of a portfolio, the use of ICT applications provides very promising opportunities. In all of these cases, the use of educational, highly significant ICT applications is an integral part of the education process. The school and the teacher can play a crucial role in this as bearers of educational reform.

The integration of ICT in secondary education will not come about by itself. It deserves to be promoted strongly within the framework of a broad innovation strategy. The government will not dictate how this step should be taken, but will encourage and facilitate it. The government is responsible for providing a sufficient level of funding and a recommendation and support structure, with attention given to the dissemination of knowledge. Important roles have been reserved in the integration of ICT in secondary education for the foundations Kennisnet and ICT at School; both of them are ICT organisations set up from the ranks of and for education. Kennisnet is playing a role in the realisation of a high-quality supply of relevant content and services. ICT at School serves as a process co-ordinator and consumer organisation, promoting collaboration and the exchange of knowledge. As organisations borne out of and for education, both foundations focus considerable attention in their activities on the use of ICT for innovation.

After a period of pursuing a separate ICT education policy, the foundation has been laid for the integration of ICT into education, for the step from 'learning to use ICT' to 'using ICT in order to learn'. This means that the user will take a central position in the ICT policy: teachers, ICT co-ordinators and the pupils. As a result, ICT and innovation are inextricably linked together. In the years to come, this should be given more coherence. School Managers in Secondary Education will be asked to come up with proposals to give this concrete shape.

Efforts:

Promote integration of ICT and synergy with innovation.

Actions:

- *School managers in secondary education will be asked in 2004 to make proposals for utilising the synergy between the different innovation and ICT activities and proposals for improving the cohesion between them.*
- *Integration of ICT – as a part of a wider innovation strategy – will be promoted further starting in 2004 through the following specific actions:*
 - *the educational content chain will be reinforced via Kennisnet,*
 - *ICT at School will develop a Knowledge Roundabout with a competition for innovation projects,*
 - *an independent evaluation will be conducted of the continuation of Kennisnet and ICT at School after 2005.*

Substantive innovation: exact sciences / technology

Studies in the exact sciences and technology should be given special attention. They are an important factor in the competitive power in a knowledge economy. At the European level, it has been agreed that the number of HBO and university graduates in the technology sector should rise by 15% by the year 2010. The Delta Plan for Science and Technology, which has been drafted to implement this, uses a broad, coherent approach. The Delta Plan reaches further than education: research organisations and employers have an important role to play in its execution. The line of action for the education part of the plan is aimed primarily at making science and technology studies more attractive. With regard to secondary education, this could contribute to encouraging more pupils to enrol in these subjects in post-secondary education.

Efforts:

Contribute to achieving the objective of the Delta Plan for Science and Technology by increasing the attractiveness of the exact science subjects for pupils in secondary education.

Actions:

- *The regulations of the central examination syllabus within the separate exact science subjects will be limited. Preparations start in 2004 for the introduction in 2007. This will create more possibilities for the schools to provide their own content and for reform of the subjects.*
- *Starting in 2004, the development of a new, integrated exact sciences subject will be facilitated.*
- *The collaboration between secondary education and higher education will be promoted starting in 2004 by carrying out a range of projects.*

3.3.3. Teaching time and development time

Teachers and management also indicated that the current regulations with regard to the teaching time hinder the flexibility in education and thus restrict the opportunities for providing tailored education and for innovation. They think that these regulations are out of date because they no longer fit in with new methods and forms of education, and they offer too few opportunities for development. The legal regulations focus on 'traditional' contact time between a teacher and a class. As a result, the regulations on teaching time obstruct rather than promote innovation and development in education.

The current provisions on teaching time formulate the concept of teaching time – in which 'contact time' is an important element. In addition, a minimum number of hours are prescribed for this. Although I would like to retain a guarantee function in the sense of a minimum amount of effort required for schools, I would like to redefine the concept of teaching time in order to make it possible for schools to make more flexible use of the teaching time available. This will better enable teachers to create appealing, coherent and innovative course programmes for pupils that fit the learning styles, abilities and needs of (groups of) pupils. In the policy response to the recommendation of the Task Group for the Reform of Basic Secondary Education, which was submitted to the Lower House in June 2004, this is further discussed.

Effort:

Enable schools to use the available hours more flexibly for the promotion of tailored efforts in programme choices, innovation and school development.

Action:

To change the concept of teaching time, an adaptation of the legal frameworks is being prepared so that this can take effect on 1 August 2006.

4. Modern administrative relationships

The ambition to bring about real pupil-oriented, responsive, innovative and professional secondary education means that the school will be given the ability to give shape to this goal. The schools themselves are primarily responsible for providing good and appealing education and for acquiring the freedom to do so, as explained concretely in the previous chapter. This also means that the administrative relationships between schools, the organised sector and the national government will have to be reformed.

Key concepts in modern administrative relationships are: clarity with respect to goals, results and responsibilities; openness and transparency; trust and accessibility at all levels. With this in mind, this chapter describes the roles and responsibilities of the principal players.

4.1. National government: frameworks, conditions and inspection

The national government safeguards the public interest in secondary education. This means that the national government guarantees the accessibility, the quality and the effectiveness of secondary education. The national government establishes the frameworks within which the school and the sector can operate.

- The schools are given maximum freedom to carry out the commission that they have and to realise the goals derived from it. Each school accounts for its actions.
- Agreements are reached with the sector concerning goals (achievements) to be realised by the sector as a whole. The sector gives an account of this.

The government attitude is to value results and success and to stimulate development, rather than punishing mistakes and restricting opportunities.

Significance of task and role of the national government for the school

From the perspective of system responsibility, the national government formulates clear frameworks for the schools' use of the freedom granted. Along general lines, the national government determines what must be learned (attainment targets and exit qualifications), determines the teaching time, sets requirements for the teaching staff (qualifications and, after the implementation of the legislative bill on occupations in education, competencies) and regulates the distribution of educational provisions. The national government ensures that regulations are simple and clear and that they entail as little administrative red tape as possible. Towards this end, a project is currently underway that is aimed at reducing the pressure from regulations. The national government creates the conditions, provides facilities and, if necessary, conducts promotional activities. How the school gives shape to and organises classroom teaching is a matter for the school to decide.

This line of autonomy for the school, deregulation by the national government and accountability means that less is organised in detail with respect to what happens in the schools and where national government resources are spent. This will create a large degree of diversity between schools. The vertical supervision of the school by the national government continues to be important in order to verify whether the public interest is being served well.

On behalf of the national government, the Education Inspectorate monitors and continues to monitor the quality of the education in the school and reports on this to the school board. The results are published on the Inspectorate's web site and are thus available to everyone. Each year the Inspectorate reports on the strengths and weaknesses that it distils from the inspections in the Education Annual Report at system level.

Monitoring the legitimacy of the school's acquisition and spending of resources is the responsibility of the public auditor. He reports to the school board and also reviews the Annual Accounts. In principle, these documents are also open to review by the public. OCW/CFI monitor the quality of the Annual Accounts by reviewing them in light of the relevant regulations.

By monitoring the quality and the legitimacy, the national government can, after interventions by the inspectors and with the increased monitoring of the actions that the school undertakes in order to remove shortcomings, finally intervene and take measures when abuses are discovered.

I intend to bring about a more integrated inspection of the school. I want to achieve greater coherence between the various inspection activities conducted by the Inspectorate, the auditor and CFI in order to bring about an integrated monitoring system.

In addition to this vertical monitoring, the horizontal accounting within the school itself gains in importance: within the school organisation discussions must be held on the goals of the school, the choices that the school makes to achieve these goals, the use of (human) resources and the results that the school achieves. The involvement of the community surrounding the school also becomes more important as a result.

Significance of the task and role of the national government for the sector

Choosing to follow the line of autonomy, deregulation and accountability means that the sector as a whole will have to be managed in a different manner.

The national government formulates – related in part to agreements reached at the European level – ambitions, goals and results for the achievements of secondary education as a whole. This takes place as much as possible in consultation with the sector. Examples of this are agreements on the number of early school-leavers and the examination outcomes of the sector.

With regard to the management of the secondary education sector, I want to adhere to the model in which a number of system indicators are named. These system indicators clarify how the system performs with respect to accessibility, quality, effectiveness, legitimacy and continuity. At the moment that the performance of the sector starts to decline or when the ambition is to improve the achievements, then specific policy can be developed in order to improve the performance.

Developments in society, in politics and in Europe influence or broaden these goals: recent examples include the increased attention for safety in the school and the wish to control the school costs for parents.

If for the realisation of these goals and results we intend to refrain from establishing regulations and requirements wherever possible, then we will need a new administrative instrument to fill the gap. I would like to be able to reach agreements with the secondary education sector with respect to goals and results. Sometimes these agreements concern the level of the administration for schools and sometimes they pertain to the management of the schools. If the sector organises itself in such a way that, in conjunction with and with co-ordination between both levels, agreements can be reached that are relevant in the schools where the realisation occurs, then an important building block will have been put in place to give deregulation a sustainable structure.

4.2. The school: open in good governance

The social commission for each school is the same: to educate young people so that they earn a suitable diploma at the highest possible level and, at the same time, to prepare them to function in society by promoting active citizenship, by imparting standards and values, by developing social competencies and to bring about an understanding of Dutch society. A commission that requires a partnership with parents.

This social commission has its own significance for each school. A school translates this commission into concrete terms for its own situation and thus formulates its own ambitions and objectives. In the process, the school includes the agreements made at the national level between the national government and the representative of the sector. Along with the school's policy freedom comes an increase in its social responsibility. As a result, the importance of its actively looking for incentives to safeguard the quality of the education it provides also increases. Many

schools, as a social undertaking, seek active reflection, support and legitimisation for their objectives and ambitions inside and outside the school. They often do this as a part of current collaborative relationships (e.g. local governments, Regional Training Centres, trade and industry, cultural, welfare and care organisations). Within the frameworks of the national government, the school deploys people and resources to realise its objectives.

Accountable to internal and external partners

The school gives a full account of its objectives, its choices pertaining to the use of instruments, the people and resources used to achieve these goals, and the results achieved. This is because, along with the responsibility of the school to use the freedom it has to provide good education, the school is accountable to the government, and especially to the people involved in and around the school: the pupils, the parents, the staff and the surrounding community. The ideal situation is having the school as a learning organisation: being accountable for the results achieved should primarily lead to further improvements in the school. The school also relies in this respect on a sufficient system of quality assurance at the school level.

For several years in succession, the Education Inspectorate has noticed that too few schools have a sufficient quality assurance system. This is not acceptable for an independent school. Good governance relies on it. Quality assurance is a veritable flywheel for a school's development and innovation. The last annual report of the Inspectorate revealed that schools that have a good quality assurance system score well on a number of important elements, such as dropout rates and safety. I will continue to actively support the development of quality systems via concrete projects. Via the inspections, I will ensure there is an acceleration in the pace of improvements at schools.

Good board of education

Thus, each school sets up a closed system of checks and balances that continually guarantees quality improvements. A sufficient system is characterised by a separation between administration, management and oversight on that administration and management. A professional board distinguishes administration from daily management. The board oversees and delegates the daily management to the management. The board determines the objective and strategy of the organisation, reviews the policy and the quality of the organisation in light of the objectives, is responsible for acting as the employer, is the body many parties are accountable to and itself is accountable to third parties. Within its organisation, the management provides transparency as to how the available people and resources are used to realise the goals and makes it clear what results have been achieved. This all concerns a process of internal, horizontal accountability.

I do not intend to initiate any extra laws and regulations in order to strengthen this accountability. This would run the risk that the freedom provided to the school will disappear again into an unnecessary increase in bureaucracy. For the way accountability is provided, there are now a number of legally embedded procedures that suffice. School prospectus, school plan, budget, annual accounts and the report from the board all provide good tools for parents, staff and pupils to influence the school. The complaints procedure also fulfils this role. Procedures and form regulations also appear to be less important than the attitude that people take. But it is essential that the board and management are willing to continue to talk with their internal and external partners and attach consequences to the accountability results: accountability thus leads to actions in the school aimed at improvement. It is a question of good governance. The schools determine for themselves how they do this.

The position of the staff, parents and pupils

Via the participation in decision-making, the school consults openly and clearly with the pupil, the parents and the staff about its policy choices. The complexity of the modern school appears to be a barrier to admission to and the effectiveness of participation councils. I want to improve and boost participation in decision-making.

My role in this is to make it possible to choose for application of the Works Councils Act in addition to choosing the Participation in Education Act (WMO). I will also include in the WMO that, in addition to the parents' right of consent to the level and the spending of the voluntary parental contribution, consultations will be held on the choices that schools make with respect to school costs and on the measures that schools take in order to control these costs.

I also want consultations to be held in the participation councils on the goals of the school, on the deployment of people and resources to realise these goals and on the results achieved. The law is currently sufficient to allow this. This primarily pertains to the performance and the quality of the parent/pupil participation in decision-making. Here there is an important role for the schools themselves and the parent organisations to play. I expect them to come up with concrete and innovative proposals for this that can be realised via the innovation budget.

The position of parents needs an extra stimulus, in view of the social commission of the school. The school and parents should reach agreements with each other, and these agreements should not only be clear, but also be fulfilled. In addition to the formal participation in decision-making, it seems that there are more creative, more direct and more appealing forms for organising the involvement of parents and pupils. Examples of this are panels, samplings and forms of self-evaluation. These often lead to better or additional results. Here too it is the task of the schools and the parents to give substance to this.

4.3. Limiting bureaucracy: shared responsibility

It is the joint responsibility of government, school boards and schools themselves to limit unnecessary bureaucracy. The administration philosophy according to which OCW no longer regulates secondary education, but enables schools to regulate secondary education themselves, implies that (detailed) central regulations will be limited as much as possible and that legislative bills introduced by OCW will be aimed at providing greater freedom to professionals. This contributes to my aim – as recorded in the project plan titled *OCW Ontregelt [OCW deregulates]*, presented to the Lower House of Parliament – to reduce the pressure from regulations for institutions by one-fourth. This will also include regulations from other departments. In the Education Council's Recommendation on this, the Lower House will receive a separate OCW-wide policy response this autumn.

The freedom provided should be palatable and useable for everyone. There is a risk that freedom granted at the central level will only be taken away again by regulations set at the school board or school levels. I call on school boards and schools to prevent this freedom from disappearing at the end of the line. It is the responsibility of school boards to enable schools to use this greater freedom in reality. It is then the responsibility of the school management to use resources in such a way that they optimally benefit the primary teaching process.

4.4. Need for an organised education sector

In the previous sections, I have already stated that the changing administrative relationship between the school and the national government also sets new requirements for the organisation of the sector. To begin, if I speak about the 'secondary education sector', it encompasses the organisation of the entire school: the school board, management, staff and pupils. The increased responsibility of the schools, in this wider sense, calls for a solid organisation and position of the sector. The impetus for this is that the organisation is less fragmented and divided than is now the case; that there is a clear representation and voice, and that the sector sets agendas and provides incentive. In other words, I have in mind a new, decisive body that represents all of secondary education as an organised sector. It will have to be a legal entity with which agreements can be reached on secondary education. It will have to have a clear decision-making structure and a mandate from schools.

From my role, I envisage the following for the organised sector:

- I want to reach agreements with the organised sector that have significance in the schools concerning the achievements of secondary education.
- I want to reach agreements with the organised sector that have significance in the schools with respect to results in order to achieve goals that can arise from the political-social discussion in the Netherlands or from European developments.
- The organised sector gives an integral account of the achievements that secondary education produces.
- With the organised sector, a code of behaviour will be set up for good governance, possibilities for internal monitoring, a clear division of authority between the school board and management, and oversight on this within the school, as well as internal and external accountability.
- I am steering the organised sector towards making agreements with parents and other relevant players to bring about real control over the school costs.
- The organised sector functions as the driving force and agent for innovation, policy-implementation capacity, professionalism and quality assurance. The sector organises its accountability and quality assurance itself. A sector that regulates itself must have an organisation that keeps an eye on quality and, where necessary, strengthen it sector-wide.
- I want to reach agreements with the sector on the further introduction of quality assurance systems. The lack of progress that the Inspectorate has continually seen for several years now calls for a more targeted approach.
- I want to make agreements with the sector on reducing the administrative red tape.

The reality of this moment is that secondary education is fragmented in its organisation: there are four large and several smaller school board and management organisations, there is the organisation School Managers in Secondary Education and there are four large parent organisations. Many school heads have said recently that the sector needs a branch or sector organisation that is able to serve and represent the diversity in the sector. This wish of educators is clear. And I share this desire with them. But it is up to the sector to set up such an organisation.

For employers, the recently established WVO (Employers Association in Secondary Education) is the designated discussion partner.

4.5. The Inspectorate of Education

The Inspectorate oversees the quality of education. This monitoring role is based on the Education Supervision Act (WOT). The work method that the Inspectorate uses to perform its tasks is established in inspection frameworks. These inspection frameworks are established by the Inspectorate and have to be approved by the Minister. Before an inspection framework is established or changed, the Inspectorate consults representatives of the education world and other parties involved. In evaluating the performance of the schools, the Inspectorate looks at the way in which the attainment targets are given priority, what the transfer and graduating percentages are and at the results of the national content targets.

The WOT has a system of promotional and proportional quality inspections. This corresponds with the intended administrative relationships. The better the school performs and the more the school has its own quality inspection in order, the more the Inspectorate, in exercising its monitoring role, can make use of the result of the school's self-evaluation. In other words: by improving its quality assurance, the school 'earns', as it were, greater autonomy.

In the discussions on the direction of secondary education, it has been said several times that the assessment method of the Inspectorate and its reporting in the form of the quality card, sometimes does not take into account the specific situation of the school. As a result, some schools refrain from taking innovative initiatives.

Currently the WOT is being evaluated. The outcome of this evaluation of the operation of the Inspectorate's new inspection frameworks will be announced this year. This evaluation should make it clear (among other things) what the effect of the reformed inspection is on the self-

regulating capacity of institutions. I will discuss the results of the evaluation, together with the signals from the interactive discussion results, with the Inspectorate so that its vision, too, will be clear. In conjunction with this, I will consider the extent to which improvements and/or adaptations are necessary. Encouraging diversity instead of uniformity is my guiding principle for this.

When a school's performance is very weak, the Inspectorate takes a closer look at the way in which the school plans to achieve its results and improvements and requires the school to come up with concrete plans for improvement, for the operations as well. The Inspectorate returns to the school soon for another inspection. Should this more intensive inspection not lead to improvements, then the school enters a managerial supervision phase. If still no improvement is achieved, the national government can, on the recommendation of the Inspectorate, move to end the funding.

Currently there are only a limited number of schools that are structurally below standard in their performance. I have agreed with the Inspectorate that this procedure will be applied consistently and that I will be informed about the schools whose performance remains below standard.

4.6. Municipality and province

The municipal government has a number of important roles and tasks to fulfil with respect to education:

- The local government enforces the Compulsory Education Act.
- The local government has a role to play in reducing the school dropout rate and in reducing unemployment among the young, among other ways, by involvement in the Regional Registration and Co-ordination Centres or the Unemployed Mobilisation Act and the Regional Labour Platforms.
- The local government carries out a local youth and welfare policy that is important for the school and which has influence on the options that schools have. Particularly in the approach to young people with (learning) disadvantages and in the approach to safety problems (see the Plan of Approach for Safety of May 2004), the local government plays an important role.
- The local government is responsible for the housing (new buildings and radical renovation) of schools. (This task can be devolved to the schools on a voluntary basis). In this context, teachers and school heads regularly indicate that they would like to be less dependent on the local government. To support the necessary policy freedom given to the school, I want to strengthen the position of schools in the voluntary devolution of this authority to the school level. The legislative bill for this will be submitted to the Lower House this year.

From its responsibility as outlined above, the local government can, in close collaboration with the school, direct the chain (the system of assistance and care organisations) around the school. The idea is that this network around the school can offer extra facilities where young people need it. The school can point out pupils' problems and take initiatives so that each pupil receives the right care or assistance at the right time. The school and local government must work closely together to achieve this goal. My role in this – in the JONG project and in collaboration with the ministries of Justice, Health/Welfare/Sports, Social Affairs/Employment and the Interior – is to remove bottlenecks that inhibit this collaboration at the local level and to streamline the budgets.

The provincial government is responsible for youth care. The provincial government also has a required advisory role to fulfil in the planning for facilities. In my resolution to simplify the planning procedure, I question to what extent this required advice is still necessary.

4.7. Trade and industry, knowledge centres and other institutions

Contacts with individual companies, business associations, the Chamber of Commerce or other institutions at the local and regional levels are necessary to find practical training positions or apprenticeship jobs for VMBO pupils or to find positions for a social-service practicum. Such

positions can contribute to a further reform of education. For example: pupils run a shop in a nursing home and thus gain relevant learning experiences. The knowledge centres for the professional and business community have a role to play in the accreditation of companies for practical training jobs and are signatories of a practical training agreement. At the central level, intentions can be established, e.g. with (the departments of) MKB Nederland or VNO/NCW, in order to come to practical training positions, apprenticeship jobs or positions for a social-service practicum. This subsequently deserves to be developed concretely at the regional level, i.e. around the school or the schools that are looking for such positions.

4.8. Modern legislation for modern administrative relationships

In accordance with the modernisation of the administrative relationship between the national government and the education sector, I will broach the subject of suitable modern legislation so that the Secondary Education Act is modernised.

A new relationship with the schools also has consequences for the dialogue with the Lower House. If clear frameworks are set, then developing the content of these frameworks will be a matter for the schools. Clear agreements are being reached with the sector concerning the achievements of secondary education.

From the perspective of this philosophy, it is logical that the debate between Parliament and the Cabinet over secondary education is focused on general points, in part based on the developments in the system as can be derived from the system indicators. It also provides us with the opportunity to discuss crucial issues in secondary education, beginning with this long-term policy plan.

Effort:

Modernisation of the administrative relationships by:

- *enabling the school to focus the education it provides on the pupil;*
- *bringing the sector in position;*
- *strengthening supervision and accountability;*
- *enabling the national government to supervise along general lines.*

Actions:

Agreements with the sector

- *The national government is developing a set of system indicators in order to highlight the achievements of the system and, on the basis of this, reach agreements with the sector on the achievements of secondary education as a system.*
- *The sector is setting up a code of conduct for 'good educational management'. This contains subjects such as the division of authority between school board and management, the internal monitoring of the school board and management and the internal accountability. The development for this will last not more than 1.5 years and will be completed by 2006 at the latest.*
- *A code of conduct is being set up between the sector (especially school board organisations) and parents concerning the control of school costs. Based on a declaration of intent from before the summer of 2004, the code of conduct for 2005 is ready. If this cannot be brought about in this manner, the enactment of legislation will be considered.*
- *For 1 January 2006, the national government has reached agreements with the sector concerning the application of quality assurance systems at all secondary schools. The active support from Q5 will be continued starting in 2005 and will take the form of a quality assurance facility.*
- *In expectation of self-organisation by the sector, flows of funds earmarked for quality assurance and professionalisation (including those for Q5 and ISIS) will be combined and transferred if agreements can be reached on the efforts to be expended and the results to be achieved with School Managers in Secondary Education starting in 2004.*

Adaptations to the participation in decision-making

- *An optional model for WMO/WOR will be introduced. In the autumn of 2004, an interactive process will be launched for the design of the optional model, so that in 2006 a legislative proposal can be introduced.*
- *The WMO will be expanded with the obligation to conduct consultation on the school costs: what are the total school costs, what choices does the school make in this respect and what measures does the school take to control the costs. If possible, the amendment will be linked to the amendment of the WMO (see above).*
- *Starting in 2005, modernising and innovative initiatives will be requested and supported – via available innovation facilities – with respect to the operation of parent/pupil participation in decision-making, the involvement of parents and the improvement in the quality of the operation of parent/pupil participation in decision-making.*

Inspectorate

- *To bring about an integrated inspection of the school. With the Inspectorate, CFI and the Auditing Department, agreements should be made on the link between the separate monitoring activities in order to bring about integrated monitoring of the school. Towards this end, a departmental project 'Integral monitoring' was set up in 2004 that will be completed in 2005.*
- *In order to take into consideration the differences and diversity in the monitoring and proportional monitoring, the Inspectorate will be consulted about improvements and adaptations starting in 2005. This will occur partly on the basis of the evaluation of the WOT, which will be made available for the end of the year 2004.*

5. Conclusion

I hope that this long-term plan, *Secondary Education in the Netherlands: Agenda for 2010*, will lead to a constructive debate in the Lower House of Parliament. We can, after all, make the plans for secondary education a success only if there is broad political support for them. In addition, it is important that all parties commit themselves to work together to give shape to *Secondary Education in the Netherlands: Agenda for 2010*. All parties involved have their own role to play in this, their own responsibility and (financial) possibilities. Together, we can achieve the goal of captivating pupils at school again and preparing them well for post-secondary education and playing a full role in society.

I am aware that the desired new administrative relationships and some actions will not be realised between the end of today and tomorrow. I have set my sights on 2010. It seems like a distant date, but we will need the time.

The world never stands still and how society will develop can only be partially predicted. That is why it is very important for us to prevent education from fossilising. I will keep the dialogue with the schools and all other parties involved going over the development of secondary education. I will continue to discuss the course set and the results that the schools have achieved with educators. This will enable us to respond to strong crosswinds and sail around obstacles. Each year I will update the actions, linked to the financial use of resources, via the budget.

The creation of this long-term plan comes in a period of economic difficulties and cutbacks. Still, the Cabinet has reserved extra funds for education in the coalition agreement. Educators have asked for more money. Under current circumstances, the Cabinet cannot oblige them. In my view, however, money is not the biggest priority in the changes we are confronted with. In order to meet our goal, it is much more important that we are willing to change and to make new choices, also in how we spend the available resources.

To end, I would like to repeat the words of a pupil during the student debate: "We have talked to each other the entire afternoon, but will anything come of our ideas when we leave here?". If it's up to me, the answer is yes. Will you join me in bringing this about?

List of abbreviations

BVE	- Adult and Vocational Education
BZK	- Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
CEVO	- Examination Committee for Secondary Education
Cfi	- Central Funding of Institutions Agency
CITO	- National Institute for Educational Measurement
CSPE	- National Written Practical Examination
HAVO/VWO	- Senior General Secondary Education/Pre-University Education
HO	- Higher Education
IB-groep	- Information Management Group
MBO	- Senior Secondary Vocational Education
MKB	- Small and Mid-sized Businesses
NWO	- Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
OCW	- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
OECD	- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PTA	- Programme of Testing and Completion
RMC	- Regional Registration and Coordination Centre
ROC	- Regional Training Centre
SLOA	- Subsidising of National Support Activities
SZW	- Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
VBO	- Pre-vocational Education
VMBO	- Pre-vocational Secondary Education
VO	- Secondary Education
VWS	- Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports
WBIO/Wet BIO	- Occupations in Education Act
WMO	- Education Participation Act
WOR	- Works Councils Act
WOT	- Education Supervision Act
WVO	- Secondary Education Act
WVO	- Secondary Education Employers Association
ZMOK	- Severely maladjusted children