



The Education System in the Netherlands 2005

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1. Political, Social and Economic Background and Trends

1.1. Historical overview

Under Philip the Good, who succeeded to the dukedom in 1419, and his son Charles the Bold, the Low Countries (present-day Netherlands, Belgium and the northwestern fringe of France) belonged to the duchy of Burgundy. On Charles's death in 1477, they passed into the hands of the Habsburgs. Under Charles V (1506-1555), the Habsburgs strove to impose central authority in the Low Countries. These attempts met with increasing opposition, culminating in the revolt known as the Eighty Years' War, which began under the reign of his son and successor King Philip II of Spain. During this conflict, seven provinces in the north, led by Holland, broke away from the rest of the Low Countries in 1579. In 1581, the States General of the Netherlands declared their independence from Philip II, thus creating the Dutch Republic.

The Dutch Republic experienced its apogee in the second half of the seventeenth century. This golden age was followed by a period of gradual decline in the eighteenth century under the regents and the house of Orange. The 1780s saw the emergence of a struggle by a radical group of republicans, known as the Patriots, for greater democracy. The established elite managed to retain power with the aid of Prussian troops.

In 1795, the Dutch Republic was invaded by France. In the same year, the Patriots proclaimed the Batavian Republic. The National Assembly, the first Dutch parliament, held its first session on 1 March 1796. On 1 May 1798, the Netherlands received its first modern constitution. However, the Republic fell prey to the aspirations of the Bonapartes. In 1806, the Netherlands became a monarchy under French hegemony.

Willem Frederik, the Prince of Orange, was invited to return to the Netherlands in 1813 as the Napoleonic era drew to a close. In 1815 he became King Willem I of the Netherlands. His kingdom comprised the northern and southern Netherlands, which had been merged to form a buffer against the expansionist tendencies of France. Deep resentment towards this merger was felt in the south, fuelling a rebellion that resulted in a declaration of independence by the south in 1830. The Netherlands finally accepted Belgian independence in 1839, in the face of pressure from Britain and France.

In 1848 the Netherlands adopted a new constitution, which laid down that the ministers, and not the king, bore responsibility for acts of government. The constitution of 1848 guaranteed freedom to provide education. This was the first victory of Protestants and Catholics in what was to become known as the "schools dispute". However, the government was unwilling to provide funding for private schools. The liberals wanted to keep education non-denominational, while Protestants and Catholics wanted denominational schools with government funding. The schools dispute was eventually resolved in 1917 when the constitution was amended. All primary schools were put on an equal footing and received state funding. This equality was subsequently extended to other areas of education.

Around 1900, Dutch foreign policy was focused on safeguarding colonial possessions and acquiring a leading position in international trade and finance. The Netherlands practised a policy of strict neutrality towards the great power blocs in Europe, and remained neutral during the First World War. In the Second World War, however, the Netherlands was occupied by Nazi Germany. The Queen and

the government fled to Britain. During the war, almost 80% of the Jewish population in the Netherlands, around 110,000 people, were deported and murdered. The south of the country was liberated in 1944, but the north remained in German hands until May 1945.

The end of the Second World War ushered in a period of decolonisation. The Dutch East Indies declared independence as Indonesia immediately after the war. The Netherlands conducted two military operations, euphemistically referred to as “police actions”, against Indonesian nationalists. After four years of military operations and under international pressure, the Netherlands transferred sovereignty to Indonesia. The western half of New Guinea was only transferred to the United Nations in 1962, under pressure in particular from the United States.

The Netherlands Antilles (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St Eustatius and St Maarten) were granted full autonomy within the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1954. Aruba broke away from the Netherlands Antilles, acquiring separate status within the Kingdom, in 1986. Suriname became independent in 1975.

In 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was founded. By joining NATO, the Netherlands turned its back on neutrality, which had been a central principle of Dutch foreign policy since 1839. The Netherlands was also one of the founder members of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957.

Growing industrialisation triggered a rapid rise in prosperity in the 1950s. The 1960s and 1970s were marked by a wave of democratisation and social change. Major shifts were seen in politics, industry, education, women’s rights, sexual relations, youth culture and the position of the church.

The 1980s were characterised by economic decline and high unemployment, which was ultimately successfully combated by major cutbacks in government expenditure and the introduction of the “polder model” of consensus between the government, trade unions and employers. The 1990s were years of great prosperity in which the Netherlands profited from worldwide economic growth. The eighties and nineties also saw further tangible evidence of the ongoing debate on a number of ethical and social issues (legislation on abortion, the question of euthanasia, and equal rights for homosexuals, including same-sex marriages).

Current political situation

The parliamentary elections on 22 January 2003 tempered the shift in the balance of power caused by the elections of May 2002. The CDA emerged virtually unchanged in terms of number of seats. The PvdA almost doubled its number of seats, while the new party, the Pim Fortuyn List (LPF), lost 18 of its 26 seats. Following the 2003 elections the distribution of seats in the Lower House (total membership: 150) was as follows:

- Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA): 44 seats;
- Labour Party (PvdA): 42 seats;
- People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD): 27 seats;
- Democrats ’66 (D66): 6 seats;
- Pim Fortuyn List (LPF): 8 seats;
- Socialist Party (SP): 8 seats;
- Green Left: 8 seats;
- Christian Union: 3 seats;
- Calvinist Party (SGP): 2 seats;

- Group Lazrak: 1 seat
- Group Wilders: 1 seat.

The election result pointed to a coalition between the CDA and the PvdA. This did not come about, however, because of major differences of opinion between the two parties. The current coalition is made up of the CDA, the VVD and D66. The new party, the LPF, did not return to government.

1.2. Ongoing debates

Politicians have turned the spotlight on standards and values in society. There is currently a broad public debate on this issue. Community safety is also high on the political agenda, including safety in schools.

The major political parties each have their own policy priorities in the area of education:

CDA:

- schools remain independent, both financially and in terms of 40% of the curriculum
- parents take part in governing schools
- no further increases in scale
- physical education (swimming, athletics) at all schools
- placements in non-profit or voluntary organisations for pupils in secondary education
- maintain levels of student finance
- more vocationally-oriented subjects in vocational education
- abolish school fees

VVD:

- more choice in vocational and higher education, use of vouchers
- government only sets attainment targets, schools free to spend funds as they wish
- greater say for parents
- universities and institutions of higher professional education set their own tuition fees

D66:

- more independence for schools and universities
- no compulsory contribution in secondary education
- parents and professionals must govern schools
- no rise in tuition fees
- emphasis on independent study by pupils not compulsory
- smaller schools
- private schools must accept pupils and teachers who respect what they stand for

PvdA:

- financial bonus for pupils who obtain a pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) or secondary vocational education (MBO) certificate
- a computer for every child in school by 2006
- parental contributions only on a voluntary basis
- schools decide the shape of the teaching process
- the approval of the parents' council must be sought for important decisions
- greater say for pupils and students
- private schools must admit children from ethnic minorities if their parents respect the school's ideological basis
- graduates must repay student loans in proportion to their income

1.3. Main executive and legislative bodies

National government

The legislature is made up of parliament (the 'States General'), the sovereign and government ministers. The sovereign and ministers form the executive. There are two Houses of Parliament. The Upper House has 75 members, indirectly elected by the Provincial Councils, and the Lower House has 150 members, directly elected by universal suffrage by all Dutch citizens over the age of 18. The main task of the 16-strong Cabinet is to coordinate government policy. It may also appoint state secretaries (comparable to junior ministers), of which there are currently 10. A government's term of office lasts four years.

- Prime Minister:
Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA)
- Minister of Education, Culture and Science:
Maria van der Hoeven (CDA)
- State Secretaries for Education, Culture and Science:
Mark Rutte (VVD) and Medy van der Laan (D66)

The two State Secretaries are responsible, within the policy boundaries laid down by the Minister, for adult and vocational education, higher professional education and university education (Mark Rutte) and culture and media (Medy van der Laan) respectively. The Minister is responsible for primary and secondary education and science policy.

Agricultural education falls under the remit of the Minister of Agriculture, Cees Veerman (CDA). Childcare (see chapter 3) falls under the remit of the Minister of Social Affairs, Aart Jan de Geus (CDA).

Provincial government

The Netherlands is made up of 12 provinces. Each province is administered by a Provincial Council representing the entire population of the province. It is elected directly by the province's voters for a four-year term and its members elect the Provincial Executive, also for a term of four years, from among their ranks. This body has 3 to 9 members, depending on the size of the province. The members of the Provincial Councils also elect the members of the upper house of parliament. The Provincial Executive is responsible for day-to-day administration and, for example, law enforcement in the province. The Queen's Commissioner, who is appointed by the Crown for a period of six years, presides over both the Provincial Council and the Provincial Executive.

Municipal government

There are 483 municipalities in the Netherlands (2004), each administered by a Municipal Council and a Municipal Executive (composed of the mayor and aldermen). Municipal Councils are elected every four years by the inhabitants of the municipality. The number of aldermen appointed by the Municipal Council depends on the size of the municipality. The mayor chairs both the Council and the Executive. The Executive is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the municipality and for implementing decisions taken by central government and the provincial authorities.

1.4. Religions

The Dutch Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. In the Netherlands, Church and State are separate and there is no state religion. Roman Catholics form the largest single group of worshippers (30%), followed by the members of the Dutch Reformed Church (13%) and the Reformed Church (6%) (2002). 9% of the Dutch population belong to other religious or ideological groups, including Islam, and 42% practise no religion (2003).

1.5. Official and minority languages

The inhabitants of the Netherlands speak Dutch, a Germanic language.

In the province of Friesland, Frisian is spoken. Frisian, also a Germanic language, has an official status within the province, and has been officially recognised as a national language. The schools in Friesland teach both Dutch and Frisian, unless they have been exempted from teaching Frisian by the provincial executive at the school's request. Frisian or another living local dialect may be used as the language of instruction at educational establishments in areas where they are spoken alongside Dutch.

In higher, adult and vocational education, classes and examinations must by law be held in Dutch unless the course is in a foreign language, or a non-Dutch visiting lecturer is speaking or the nature, organisation or quality of teaching or the origin of the students necessitates it.

1.6. Demographic situation

The Netherlands has a population of 16.2 million (2003), living in an area of approximately 41,526 km² (33,900 km² excluding rivers, lakes and canals). The population density is 481 people per km² (2004). Non-Western ethnic minorities form over 10% of the total population (1.66 million in 2002). Almost half are from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The number of non-Dutch nationals living in the Netherlands totals 0.7 million (2004). The number of people over the age of 65 will continue to grow steadily in the next few decades as the population ages. The greatest concentration of population is in the west of the country. Of the 483 municipalities, 25 have a population of 100,000 or more (2004).

The population of the Netherlands rose by 65,000 in 2003, 22,000 fewer than in 2002. This represents a further slowdown in the rate of growth, a trend first registered in 2001. The slower pace of growth is chiefly attributable to a drop in immigration coupled with a rise in emigration. Net immigration (the number of immigrants less the number of emigrants) fell from 55,000 in 2002 to 36,000 in 2003. A gradual increase in the death rate, due to the aging of the population, also contributed slightly to the falling pace of growth. The number of births (excluding stillbirths) fell by 1%.

1.7. Economic situation

The Netherlands is the sixth biggest economy of the European Union's twenty-five members (EU25). It accounts for almost 5% of the EU's gross domestic product (GDP). Almost one fifth of Dutch GDP is spent on private and public sector investment, which is the EU average for the pre-enlargement fifteen-member EU (EU15). Dutch household consumption amounts to approximately half of GDP, well below the EU average (EU25). Growth in household consumption broadly mirrors growth in GDP. In the second half of the 1990s, consumption and GDP grew in the Netherlands, at a higher rate than in the EU as a whole. Growth in consumption tailed off from 2001 onwards, and the Netherlands fell below the EU average. In 2003, Dutch consumption and GDP even contracted. In the Netherlands, public sector consumption accounts for almost a quarter of GDP, a rate surpassed only by Sweden and Denmark.

The Netherlands has long had an open economy. Among EU countries, it has the ninth most open economy (EU25). In terms of export volume, it is only outstripped by four EU countries. Many of its imports come from the US and Asia and are destined for the European hinterland. As a result, Dutch exports to other EU countries (EU15) in 2002 outweighed its imports from the EU by €76 billion.

(Source: The year in figures 2003, Statistics Netherlands (CBS))

1.8. Statistics

1.8.1. Demographic statistics

Population on 1 January (in thousands)	2003	2004
Total	16,193	16,258
Men	8,015	8,046
Women	8,177	8,212

	2003	2004
Population per km ²	479	481

Population by age (as a percentage)	2003	2004
under 20	24.5	24.5
20-44 years	28.6	28.0
45-64 years	33.2	33.6
65-79 years	10.4	10.4
80 and over	3.4	3.4

Demographic pressure (as a percentage of population aged 20-64)	2003	2004
under 20 ('green pressure' ¹)	39.7	39.8
65 and over ('grey pressure' ²)	22.2	22.5
Total ³	61.9	62.3

- ¹ Defined as the proportion of people aged under 20 as a percentage of those aged between 20 and 64 (known as the 'productive' age group).

- ² Defined as the proportion of people aged 65 and over as a percentage of those aged between 20 and 64.

- ³ Defined as the proportion of people aged under 20 and those aged 65 and over as a percentage of

those aged between 20 and 64.

Population growth	2002	2003
Total (in thousands)	87	65
Per 100 inhabitants	0.5	0.4

Source: StatLine 2004, Statistics Netherlands (CBS)

1.8.2. Workforce

Workforce (aged 15-64) (in thousands)	2002	2003
Total population (15-64 years)	10,868	10,920
Total workforce	7,427	7,510
Employed	7,125	7,114
incl. women	2,914	2,952
Unemployed	302	396

Rate of unemployment	2002	2003
	2.3%	3.4%

Source: StatLine 2004, Statistics Netherlands (CBS)

1.8.3. Financial statistics (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science)

Gross domestic product (GDP), central government expenditure and expenditure by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) (in € millions)	2002	2003
Gross domestic product	444,649	453,795
Gross central government expenditure	114,100	119,959
Expenditure, OCW (education, student finance, research)	21,311	22,591
as % of GDP	4.8%	5.0%
as % of gross central government expenditure	18.7%	18.8%

Source: Key Figures 1999-2003. Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands

2. Organisation and administration

2.1. Historical overview

“Schools dispute” and the “Pacification”

The statutory equality of public and private schools is an important feature of the Dutch education system. This equality of status, which dates from 1917, was achieved after a long political dispute which began in the nineteenth century and continued into the early part of this century.

The first piece of educational legislation in the Netherlands, the Elementary Education Act, was passed in 1801. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, elementary schools were divided into public schools funded by the government and private schools maintained from private sources. The unequal treatment of public and private education led to the “schools dispute”, a political battle to achieve complete equality under the law for both types of school. Catholics and Protestants wanted their own schools with a pronounced Roman Catholic or Protestant stamp but with equal state funding. The Liberals too wanted the freedom of education guaranteed by the Constitution to be reflected in equal financial treatment of public and private schools. This was finally achieved in the 1917 Constitution, in what is known as the “Pacification of 1917”.

After 1917, the principle of financial equality was extended to secondary and higher education. There are now nearly twice as many privately run as publicly run schools.

The history of compulsory education

The first legislation making education compulsory was passed in 1900. It prescribed 6 years of compulsory education (between the ages of 6 and 12). The Act was repeatedly amended and eventually replaced by the Compulsory Education Act 1969, under which it was compulsory for children to attend school full time between the ages of 6 and 16. In 1985 the lower age limit for compulsory schooling was lowered from six to five. Children must now attend school full time from the age of five for at least 12 full school years and, in any event, until the end of the school year in which they turn 16. In 1971, the Compulsory Education Act was extended to include an additional period of part-time compulsory education for young people who have completed their period of full-time compulsory schooling. Under-18s must attend school at least one day a week until the end of the school year in which they turn 17.

2.2. Ongoing debates

Policy programmes

In June 2004, three documents were published setting out the future policy programmes for primary, secondary, and adult and vocational education. The way in which they were produced reflects the government's aim of involving the general public in policy development. At various locations all over the country, group interviews were held with pupils, parents, staff and managers. Freedom and the space to make choices are the key aims of the policy programmes for primary and secondary education. For adult and vocational education, the main themes are innovation, and space for both learners and institutions.

HOOP (Higher Education and Research Plan)

HOOP describes the new administrative relationships in higher education that will lead to different forms of government involvement, fewer regulations, greater accountability for expenditure of public

funds and new types of supervision. A new Higher Education Act will provide the framework for these reforms. A new integrated funding model for higher education will enter into force in 2007. The new system will be fraudproof and demand-led and promote quality.

Performance

In 2005, the focus will shift from compliance with detailed rules and regulations to performance. Policy and system indicators will be developed with which the status of the education system can be assessed.

2.3. Fundamental principles and basic legislation

Education is governed by a number of Acts of Parliament, the chief of which are:

- Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO)
- Expertise Centres Act (WEC)
- Secondary Education Act (WVO)
- Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB)
- Higher Education and Research Act (WHW)
- Recognised Educational Institutions Act (WEO)
- Student Finance Act 2000 (WSF 2000)
- Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS)
- Compulsory Education Act 1969
- National Education Support Activities (Subsidies) Act
- Education Participation Act 1992 (WMO)
- Education Inspection Act (WOT).

The Constitution and freedom of education

One of the key features of the Dutch education system, guaranteed under article 23 of the Constitution, is freedom of education, i.e. the freedom to found schools (freedom of establishment), to organise the teaching in schools (freedom of organisation of teaching) and to determine the principles on which they are based (freedom of conviction). People have the right to found schools and to provide teaching based on religious, ideological or educational beliefs. As a result there are both publicly run and privately run schools in the Netherlands.

Publicly run schools:

- are open to all children regardless of religion or outlook;
- are generally subject to public law;
- are governed by the municipal council or by a public legal entity or foundation set up by the council;
- provide education on behalf of the state.

Some publicly run schools base their teaching on specific educational ideas, such as the Montessori, Jena Plan or Dalton method.

Privately run schools:

- are subject to private law and are state-funded although not set up by the state;
- are governed by the board of the association or foundation that set them up;
- base their teaching on religious or ideological beliefs;
- they include Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindustani and anthroposophic schools;
- can refuse to admit pupils whose parents do not subscribe to the belief or ideology on which the school's teaching is based.

Some private schools base their teaching on specific educational ideas, such as the Montessori, Jena Plan or Dalton method. Some 70% of pupils attend privately run schools.

The freedom to organise teaching means that private schools are free to determine what is taught and how. This freedom is however limited by the qualitative standards set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in educational legislation. These standards, which apply to both public and private education, prescribe the subjects to be studied, the attainment targets or examination syllabuses and the content of national examinations, the number of teaching periods per year, the qualifications which teachers are required to have, giving parents and pupils a say in school matters, planning and reporting obligations, and so on.

The Constitution places public and private schools on an equal financial footing. This means that government expenditure on public education must be matched by spending on private education. The conditions which private schools must satisfy in order to qualify for funding are laid down by law.

2.4. General structure and defining moments in educational guidance

There is limited formal educational provision in the Netherlands for children under four. In June 2000 the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Minister for Urban Policy and Integration of Minorities published a policy letter on early childhood education (VVE). It outlines government policy and lists concrete measures. Early childhood education is geared to children aged 2 to 5 who are at risk of educational disadvantage. This policy is partially integrated into urban policy and municipal policy on educational disadvantage.

Most children start primary school at the age of four, although they are not required by law to attend school until the age of five. On leaving primary school at the age of about 12 (after eight years of primary schooling) children choose between three types of secondary education: VMBO (pre-vocational secondary education; four years), HAVO (senior general secondary education: five years) and VWO (pre-university education: six years). VMBO is a type of secondary education introduced in the 1999/2000 school year to replace VBO and MAVO. There are four learning pathways in VMBO:

- basic vocational programme;
- middle-management vocational programme;
- combined programme;
- theoretical programme.

Most secondary schools are combined schools offering several types of secondary education so that pupils can transfer easily from one type to another. All three types of secondary education start with a period of basic secondary education, during which all pupils study a broad range of subjects that is virtually the same at all types of school. HAVO and VWO pupils study three modern languages, while pupils in VMBO study two. The period of basic secondary education varies in length from one type of school to another, but lasts at least two years (as in the case of VMBO) and usually three.

After completing VMBO at the age of around 16, pupils can go on to secondary vocational education (MBO). Pupils who have successfully completed the theoretical programme within VMBO can also go on to HAVO. HAVO certificate-holders and VWO certificate-holders can opt at the ages of around 17 and 18 respectively to go on to higher education. HAVO is designed to prepare pupils for higher professional education (HBO). In practice, however, many HAVO school-leavers also go on to VWO and secondary vocational education. Only VWO certificate-holders can go straight to university. In practice,

many of them also enter higher professional education. MBO certificate-holders can also go on to higher professional education.

In addition to mainstream primary and secondary schools there are special schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties who – temporarily at least – require special educational treatment (see chapters 4 and 5). There are also separate schools for children with disabilities of such a kind that they cannot be adequately catered for in mainstream schools (see chapter 10). Pupils who are unable to obtain a VMBO qualification, even with long-term extra help, can receive practical training, which prepares them for entering the labour market.

Young people aged 18 or over can take adult education courses (chapter 7) or higher distance learning courses (Open University; see chapter 6).

(Structure of the Dutch education system: see annexe)

2.5. Compulsory education

The obligation to attend school is laid down in the Compulsory Education Act 1969. Every child must attend school full time from the first school day of the month following its fifth birthday; in fact, however, nearly all children attend school from the age of four. Children must attend school full time for 12 full school years and, in any event, until the end of the school year in which they turn 16. Young people are then required to attend an institution providing courses for this purpose for two days a week for another year. Those who have a practical training contract in a particular sector of employment attend classes one day a week on a day release basis and work the rest of the week. In these contracts, institutions and training companies agree on the quality of practical training.

If a child of compulsory school age is not enrolled at a school or stays away from school without permission, the parents can be fined up to 2,250 euros or, in extreme cases, even sent to prison. Young people aged 12 or over who stay away from school without permission can themselves be fined between 2 and 2,250 euros. An alternative measure is usually imposed instead. For pupils aged 14 and over who are experiencing problems with full-time education, a special programme can be devised combining general education with some form of light work that is carried out in conjunction with their school work. This is intended for a small group of pupils only, who cannot be helped in any other way.

The Compulsory Education Act is implemented by the municipal authorities. The municipal executive checks that children below school-leaving age who are registered as resident in the area are enrolled as pupils at an educational establishment. The municipal authorities ensure compliance with the Act in both public and private schools through the school attendance officer appointed for this purpose. The Act requires each municipality to have one sworn attendance officer with specific responsibility for this matter, although in smaller local authorities such officials frequently carry out other duties in addition. Since 1995 the municipal authorities have been responsible for registering early school leavers under the age of 23 and coordinating regional policy on this matter. In 2002, the Regional Registration and Coordination (Early School Leavers) Act (RMC) entered into force to prevent and tackle early school leaving in ordinary and special secondary schools, secondary vocational education and adult general secondary education. The municipal authorities are responsible for ensuring an integrated approach to the issue of early school leaving. Schools and colleges are required to report all cases up to the age of 23, i.e. beyond school-leaving age. The main aim is for all young people to leave school with a basic qualification.

2.6. General administration

A distinctive feature of the Dutch education system is that it combines a centralised education policy with the decentralised administration and management of schools. Central government controls education by means of legislation and regulations with due regard for the provisions of the Constitution. Control is exercised in this way over both publicly and privately run institutions (see § 2.6.1). The involvement of the provincial authorities mainly takes the form of statutory supervisory and judicial duties vis-à-vis public and private schools alike (see § 2.6.2). As the local authority for all schools in the area, the municipal authorities have certain statutory powers and responsibilities vis-à-vis both public and private schools (see § 2.6.3).

All schools, both public and private, are governed by a legally recognised competent authority (school board). The competent authority is the body responsible for implementing legislation and regulations in schools. The competent authority or school board of publicly run schools is the municipal authority. Since 1997 the municipal authorities have been able to choose the form the competent authority takes (see § 2.6.4). The competent authority or school board of a private school is the board of the association or foundation that maintains it (see § 2.6.4).

2.6.1. General administration at national level

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is headed – at political level – by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and his two State Secretaries, each of whom has specific areas of responsibility within the general policy lines laid down by the Minister. The State Secretary for Education is mainly responsible for adult and vocational education and higher education, the State Secretary for Culture for cultural heritage, the arts and the media. The chief civil servants together form the Executive Board, which has overall executive responsibility for the running of the Ministry and the preparation and implementation of policy, for which the Minister and State Secretaries are politically accountable.

In addition to the Executive Board, the Ministry comprises 21 core departments plus ten semi-independent executive agencies. These include:

- the Central Funding of Institutions Agency;
- the Education Inspectorate;
- the Education Council and
- the Science and Technology Advisory Council.

There are five departments responsible for developing policy on science and on the various sectors of education. These are:

- the Primary Education Department;
- the Secondary Education Department;
- the Adult and Vocational Education Department;
- the Higher Education Department and
- the Research and Science Policy Department.

Each department is responsible for a particular field of education and maintains contact with the institutions in that field. Other departments, like the International Policy Department, the Information and Communication Technology Department, the Legislation and Legal Affairs Department and the Labour Market and Personnel Policy Department are responsible for matters affecting all areas of

education.

Education Inspectorate

Under various education acts, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science is charged with the inspection of education, which is carried out under his authority by the Education Inspectorate. The Education Inspectorate is a semi-independent agency that comes under the Minister's authority. Its self-governing status is regulated in a ministerial order dating from 1998: the Education Inspectorate (Status) Order.

Education Inspection Act

The Education Inspection Act (WOT) enables the Inspectorate to operate professionally and independently and give institutions pointers as to how they can improve standards on the basis of their own quality assurance systems. The Minister remains fully responsible for the Inspectorate's work, and is entitled to issue instructions, though not on the assessments contained in inspection reports.

Inspections are always based on self-evaluations, and target institutions that need them most (proportional inspections). Annual inspections are carried out at every institution but they are less intensive where teaching is of a high standard and quality assurance systems well developed.

Under the Act, institutions may receive financial support to improve standards, which may be used, for instance, to pay for an external expert to advise management. Penalties – withholding of funding and withdrawal of rights – continue to apply, albeit that funding can only be withheld if an institution fails to comply with statutory regulations.

The Inspectorate is responsible for proper supervision. In developing its quality assurance system it is assisted by an advisory board. Internal audits are to be conducted in 2004. The Inspectorate is seeking accreditation by the Dutch Accreditation Council.

Higher Education Accreditation Act

Under the Higher Education Accreditation Act, the main principles of the Education Inspection Act also apply to the higher professional education sector and the universities. However, the role of the Inspectorate in higher education has changed. The Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) is the body responsible for inspecting institutions and deciding whether they should be accredited and thus funded. The Inspectorate supervises the NVAO.

Central Funding of Institutions Agency

The Central Funding of Institutions Agency (CFI) is an executive agency responsible for funding educational establishments, research institutes and education support organisations on the basis of legislation and regulations and in accordance with the established financial frameworks. Its duties include gathering, managing and supplying information on these institutions for policymaking and funding purposes. The CFI is also responsible for the ministry's own accounts. Since 1996 when the CFI acquired agency status, it has formed an autonomous part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Tasks of central government

Central government, in the person of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, controls education by means of regulations and legislation, taking due account of the provisions of the Constitution. Its prime responsibilities with regard to education relate to the structuring and funding of the system, the management of public-authority institutions, inspection, examinations and student support. Central government also promotes innovation in education. The Minister is, moreover, responsible for the coordination of science policy and for cultural and media policy. Control may be exercised by imposing qualitative or quantitative standards relating to the educational process in schools and/or attainment results, by means of arrangements for the allocation of financial and other resources, and by imposing conditions to be met by schools.

Matters on which central government decides include:

- the types of school that may exist;
- the length of courses in each type of school;
- for some types of school:
 - the subjects that must or may be taught;
 - the minimum and maximum number of teaching periods to be devoted to each subject in each type of school;
 - the minimum and maximum number of teaching periods per year;
 - the length of teaching periods;
- the norms for splitting up classes;
- standards of competence for teaching staff;
- the maximum number of teaching periods per staff member;
- the salaries and main elements of the legal status of teaching staff;
- arrangements for admitting pupils to special schools and secondary schools;
- arrangements for examining pupils;
- opportunities for participation by staff, pupils and parents;
- the norms for the establishment and closure of schools.

Autonomous administrative authorities in the education, culture and science sector

The Information Management Group (IB-Groep) is an autonomous administrative authority with which the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has a formal statutory relationship. The Information Management Group is responsible for implementing the Student Finance Act (WSF) and the Study Costs Allowances Act. Its other duties include the collection of school and course fees, the provision of administrative support for examinations, the placement and registration of prospective students, the evaluation of diplomas and the implementation of benefit schemes for education personnel. The Information Management Group is governed by public law and funded directly from the budget of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The other autonomous administrative authorities in the education, culture and science sector include the Staff Replacement Fund (for meeting the costs of supply staff) and the Collective Redundancy Payments Fund (for the payment of unemployment benefits to education personnel). These two funds are governed by private law and funded by the educational establishments from the payment included in the central government grant for this purpose. Autonomous administrative authorities are not part of the Ministry.

2.6.2. General administration at regional level

The involvement of the provincial authorities mainly takes the form of statutory supervisory and judicial duties. The Provincial Council ensures the availability of adequate numbers of publicly run primary and secondary schools and acts as the appeal body for private schools with regard to decisions taken by the municipal authorities. With regard to the management of schools and the curriculum, the role of the provinces is limited, partly because they cannot be the competent authority of an educational institution. The Netherlands is divided into 12 provinces.

2.6.3. General administration at local level

The municipal authorities are the local authority for all schools in the area, whether publicly or privately run. As such they have the following powers and responsibilities:

- drawing up annual plans for necessary changes in accommodation for schools;
- funding accommodation, other facilities and running costs; adopting annual plans for the provision of new public and private schools; maintaining the school advisory services;
- allocating resources from the budget for eliminating educational disadvantages and drawing up a local compensatory plan;
- buying in adult education for certain target groups; implementing the legislation on school transport, imposing their own criteria and conditions within the statutory framework;
- implementing the Compulsory Education Act by monitoring compliance with the Act and keeping a record of early school leavers.

2.6.4. Educational institutions: administration and management

All schools have a legally recognised competent authority, also referred to as the school board. The competent authority administers and manages the school or schools for which it is responsible. Administration entails looking after the material aspects of the organisation of a school and, in particular, meeting the running costs and personnel costs. Management involves determining policy on the curriculum, personnel matters (appointment and dismissal of staff) and the admission of pupils. The competent authority is responsible for what goes on in the school insofar as this is governed by statutory regulations. Some of its powers may be delegated to the school head, but responsibility continues to lie with the competent authority.

The competent authority of publicly run schools

In the case of public primary and secondary schools, the municipal executive may act as the competent authority. Alternatively, the municipal council has been able, since 1997, to opt to delegate the tasks performed by the municipal authorities as the competent authority of publicly run schools to some other type of body governed by public law. The following options are available:

- the municipal executive;
- a governing committee;
- the body designated for this purpose in a joint agreement (i.e. a cooperative agreement between two or more neighbouring municipalities);
- a legal person governed by public law;
- a foundation.

The competent authority of private schools

The competent authority of private schools is an administrative body governed by private law. There are two types of school board or competent authority: associations and foundations, the latter being the most common. As a condition of funding from the public purse, the law lays down that private educational establishments must be maintained by a legal person with full legal competence, whose aim is to provide education, without any profit-making motive.

The number of members that make up the competent authority or school board differs from school to school, and a competent authority can be responsible for more than one school. Members usually include parents and other representatives of the local community, including in some cases the local churches, who are elected on the strength of their expertise and/or influence.

The powers and responsibilities of competent authorities

The law states that anyone is free to provide education. This encompasses the freedom of establishment, the freedom of conviction and the freedom of organisation of teaching:

- The freedom of establishment implies the freedom to found a school based on principles or beliefs of any kind.
- The freedom of conviction means that the competent authority is free to determine the principles or beliefs on which the school is based.
- The freedom of organisation of teaching refers to the freedom of the competent authority to determine the content of teaching and the teaching methods used.

Apart from this, the competent authority has a number of more specific powers and responsibilities. The governing body of a publicly run school has the same powers and responsibilities as that of a private school. These include:

- setting up a school;
- choosing the teaching materials;
- including optional subjects in the timetable;
- fixing the timetable (assigning teaching periods to different subjects or areas of the curriculum);
- appointing and dismissing heads, teachers and support staff;
- determining personnel policy and aspects of the conditions of service of staff attached to the school;
- deciding on the admission and exclusion of pupils;
- formulating rules of conduct for the pupils;
- determining the internal organisational structure of the school, including arrangements for participation by pupils, parents and staff;
- determining the nature of out-of-school activities;
- deciding whether the school will participate in educational innovation projects;
- deciding what use the school will make of the services of educational support organisations;
- determining the form and nature of relations between the school and outside organisations;
- deciding whether third parties may make use of the school building, and how;
- managing the school's financial resources and taking care of the administration;
- deciding whether to close a school or a department within it.

The governing body of publicly run schools also has a small number of additional responsibilities linked to the specific function of public-authority education:

- there is no formal freedom to found and maintain public schools, but rather a duty to provide an

- adequate number of schools;
- no child may be refused admission to a school;
- the governing body can be publicly called to account by the municipal council for its actions.

Interdenominational schools

Some schools actually consist of two or more schools with different outlooks which cooperate closely together and share the same competent authority. Some public and private schools cooperate in this way. Cooperation between public and private schools is governed by statutory regulations, the purpose of which is to safeguard the provision and nature of public education within mixed schools of this kind.

Future developments

The incentive scheme to promote the pooling of administrative capacity among primary schools and increase the policymaking capabilities of school boards was terminated as of 1 August 2004. In light of the introduction of block grant funding in primary schools, a new scheme to strengthen school boards and management was introduced on 1 May 2004.

2.6.4.1. Day-to-day management of educational institutions

The powers and duties of the management of educational institutions are laid down in various Acts of Parliament. A new Act entered into force in 1997 which is designed to promote the proportional representation of women in management posts in education. The Act applies to all sectors of education. The competent authority (the board or management of the institution) is obliged, if women are underrepresented in senior and management posts, to draw up a document once every four years setting out its policy (complete with target figures and a schedule) and the results achieved. This obligation ceases as soon as women are proportionally represented in management posts. The Act did not lapse on 1 January 2002, as had been planned, but was extended indefinitely.

2.6.4.2. Day-to-day management of primary schools

The day-to-day running of primary and special schools is the responsibility of the head teacher. Primary schools usually have one or more deputy heads. Apart from the head, the staff consists of teachers and support staff. The competent authority draws up a document describing the duties and powers of the school management. The head teacher is responsible, under the aegis of the competent authority, for:

- the general running of the school; assisting in the planning and implementation of policy with regard to teaching, the organisation of the school and internal matters;
- helping to plan and implement the school's personnel policy;
- helping to plan and implement the school's financial policy; maintaining internal and external contacts regarding the above matters;
- giving lessons insofar as he or she is not exempted from teaching duties;
- other duties arising from the post of head.

Multi-school management, where the same group of persons manages several schools, focusing primarily on preparing and implementing cross-school policy, is becoming increasingly common. At least one head must be attached to each school to take care of educational, organisational and internal matters on behalf of the competent authority.

2.6.4.3. Day-to-day management of secondary schools

The day-to-day running of secondary schools is the responsibility of the head of the school, who is known in VWO schools as the rector and in other schools as the directeur. Secondary schools have one or more deputy heads. Together they form the management team. The competent authority draws up a document describing the duties and powers of the school management. The head and deputy heads are responsible, under the aegis of the competent authority, for:

- the general running of the school;
- assisting in the planning and implementation of policy with regard to teaching, the organisation of the school and internal matters;
- helping to plan and implement the school's personnel policy;
- helping to prepare policy on behalf of the competent authority and preparing meetings of the governing body if asked to do so by the competent authority;
- maintaining internal and external contacts in relation to the above-mentioned tasks;
- giving lessons and performing other teaching duties insofar as the nature and size of the institution warrant it;
- other duties arising from their post.

The introduction of broad-based combined schools has made it possible to set up central management boards in schools providing VMBO/HAVO/VWO courses. Schools can now opt either for an "ordinary" management team (i.e. a head and one or more deputies) or a central management board consisting of up to five people (no more than three full-time equivalents), one of whom is appointed chairperson.

Various new forms of management are increasingly being introduced. Rather than there being a head and several deputies, for instance, the school management may consist of the head plus a number of "portfolio managers" with special responsibility for specific fields. Depending on the size of the school, the management team may also include one or more site heads who, as well as helping to shape policy, are responsible for implementing all aspects of policy at their own site.

2.6.4.4. Management of adult and vocational education institutions

Since 1 January 1998 all adult and vocational education institutions have been incorporated in regional training centres (ROCs). There are two types of ROC: those in which the institutions involved are completely integrated and those in which only the management has merged. In the former case, all the existing institutions merge to form a single institution with a single competent authority, a single central management board or executive board, a single participation council and one central policy on all issues. In the latter case, there is also a single institution with a single competent authority, a single central management board or executive board and a single participation council, but a joint policy is only necessary in respect of finance, personnel, teaching and examinations, and quality assurance. The central management board or executive board, consisting of up to three members, including the chairperson, is responsible on behalf of the management of the ROC, for the preparation and implementation of policy and the daily affairs of the institution.

2.6.4.5. Management of higher education institutions

The management structure of institutions of higher education is governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). Institutions of higher professional education and universities have different

management structures.

Institutions of higher professional education

The day-to-day management of a private institution of higher professional education (hogeschool) is entrusted to either a central management board or an executive board. Both have up to three members.

- The central management board is responsible, on behalf of the administration of the institution, for managing the preparation and implementation of policy and coordinating the daily running and management of the institution.
- The executive board has the same powers and duties as a central management board and, in addition, any powers and duties delegated to it by the administration.

Universities

Following the introduction of the University Government (Modernisation) Act (MUB) in 1997, the management structure of a university now consists of a supervisory board, an executive board and the dean. The purpose of the Act is to increase universities' autonomy and make their administration more professional. Students and staff no longer sit on the governing bodies but are represented through the participation bodies instead.

- The executive board is responsible for all aspects of the administration and management of the university. It consists of up to three members, one of whom is the rector. The executive board is accountable to the supervisory board and must furnish it with any information the supervisory board requests concerning its decisions and actions.
- The supervisory board supervises the administration and management of the university in broad terms and advises the executive board. It also appoints, dismisses and suspends the members of the executive board. The supervisory board consists of between three and five members who are appointed by the Minister. It is accountable to the Minister and must furnish him with any information he requests concerning its actions.
- At faculty level, administration and management are the responsibility of the dean, who is in charge of the day-to-day running of the faculty. The dean is responsible for the organisation of teaching and research within the faculty and is appointed by the executive board. Alternatively, the executive board may appoint a faculty board with the same powers and responsibilities, to be chaired by the dean. The dean or faculty board is accountable to the executive board, which, in turn, is overseen by the supervisory board.

Because of their distinctive character, private universities may have different management structures and different provisions on staff and student participation if the Minister does not object.

Open University

The governing bodies of the Open University are the executive board and the supervisory board.

- The executive board, which is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Open University, consists of up to three members who are appointed by the supervisory board.
- The supervisory board, which is appointed by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, consists of between three and five members.

2.7. Internal and external consultation

2.7.1. Internal consultation

Participation in decision-making by staff, parents and pupils in primary, secondary, adult and vocational education is governed by the Education Participation Act 1992 (WMO 1992). Participation by staff and students in higher professional education, the universities and the Open University is governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). The arrangements for participation by university students were changed in 1997 with the entry into force of the University Government (Modernisation) Act (MUB) which amended the Higher Education and Research Act.

Under the Education Participation Act 1992 (WMO 1992), every primary and secondary school and every adult and vocational education institution is legally required to set up a participation council. This comprises an equal number of elected staff and parent/pupil representatives, varying from 6 to 18 persons, depending on the size of the establishment. At institutions for adult and vocational education, the participation council comprises representatives of both the staff and students. Pupils in primary schools are not represented on the participation council. Members of the competent authority of the school or institution may not sit on the participation council. The participation council has a number of general powers and has the right to give its advice or consent and to put forward proposals. Parents can participate through the parents' council, which advises the parent representatives in the participation council and coordinates parent activities. Secondary school pupils can set up a student council. Most secondary schools have a pupils' charter setting out the rights and obligations of pupils.

Under the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), every institution of higher professional education (hogeschool) is legally required to set up a participation council. This comprises an equal number of elected staff and student representatives, varying from 10 to 24 persons, depending on the size of the institution. The participation council has a number of general powers and has the right to give its advice or consent and to put forward proposals. Members of the administration of the institution may not sit on the participation council.

Universities may opt for either joint or separate participation. The executive board decides whether the Works Councils Act will apply. If so, staff and students are represented by separate bodies (separate participation). If not, they are represented by the same body (joint participation). This decision stands for a period of at least five years at a time. In the case of joint participation, the participation bodies are the university council for the university as a whole (up to 24 members, who may not be members of the governing bodies) and, for the faculties, the faculty councils. If the university opts for separate participation, participation regulations must be drawn up, giving students an equivalent level of representation.

Apart from the participation bodies, universities, institutions of higher professional education and the Open University also have study programme committees, at least half of whose members must be students. These advisory bodies have an important part to play in determining the content of courses and assessing teaching at the university. Through the study programme committee, students can call upon those responsible for a course to account for the quality of teaching. Students' rights and obligations are set out in the students' charter.

Future developments

Plans are afoot to extend the scope of the Works Councils Act (WOR) to cover teaching and non-

teaching staff in adult and vocational education. For students at institutions for secondary vocational education, a student council will be set up and amendments to the legislation have been proposed to strengthen their position. The bill containing these proposals was submitted to parliament at the end of 2003. It has not yet been approved.

2.7.2. Consultation involving players in society at large

2.7.2.1. Advisory bodies

All new legislation, from whichever Ministry, has to be seen by the Council of State, the highest advisory body in the country, before it is presented to parliament.

The statutory advisory bodies of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science are the Education Council, the Council for Culture and the Science and Technology Advisory Council.

One of the tasks of the Education Council, as set out in the Education Council Act, is to advise the government and both houses of parliament on the broad outline of educational policy and legislation, both proactively and reactively. In the case of parliament such advice must be solicited; in the case of the government the Council may submit advice unasked. Its annual programme is approved each year by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

The Council advises the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries on the application of the law, orders in council and ministerial orders in the field of education.

The Council also advises municipal councils on certain matters relating to local education policy, in particular where there is a difference of opinion between the municipal authorities and one or more school boards concerning the use by the municipal council of its powers in relation to the provision of accommodation for primary and secondary schools, local compensatory policy, minority language teaching and the school advisory services, where these powers are felt to impinge on the freedom of schools.

The following bodies may also advise the government on matters touching upon education, culture or science: the Social and Economic Council (SER) and the Advisory Council on Government Policy (WRR).

2.7.2.2. Consultative bodies

With regard to primary and secondary education, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science consults within the Consultative Committee for Primary and Secondary Education with representatives of school boards, teaching staff, head teachers, parents and pupils. (The organisations representing these groups appoint their own representatives.)

As regards adult and vocational education, the Minister consults with representatives of educational institutions and the knowledge centres for vocational education and industry (the former national vocational education bodies) in the Adult and Vocational Education Consultative Committee. The Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries holds regular talks with representatives of the agricultural training centres, the national agricultural education body and the agricultural innovation and practice centres in the Agricultural Education Consultative Committee.

With regard to higher education, the Minister consults with the associations of HBO institutions, universities and teaching hospitals and with the national research organisations. Consultation takes place within the Student Consultative Committee between the Minister and representatives of the national student organisations.

Pay and conditions negotiations

Negotiations with the trade unions on conditions of service and the legal status of personnel take place at various levels within the education sector. At suprasectoral level, the Association of Public Sector Employers (VSO) holds talks with the Association of Public Service and Education Trade Union Federations (SCO) in the Council for Public Sector Personnel Policy (ROP), which discusses general social security legislation and pensions.

At sectoral level the federations of public service and education unions negotiate with the Minister in the Education Personnel Committee (SCOP) on the primary conditions of service of education personnel, namely pay, social insurance provision over and above the statutory entitlement, overall working hours and the yardsticks for job evaluation. For staff in the primary sector, other conditions of service are also discussed at this level, though some secondary conditions, relating in particular to work and care, have been decentralised.

The primary conditions of service of staff in the secondary education sector are laid down in the legal status framework decrees. The conditions of service (primary and other) of staff in the primary sector are set out in the Legal Status (Education Personnel) Decree (RPBO).

In the adult and vocational education, higher professional education and university sectors the primary conditions of service are decentralised and negotiations take place at decentralised level. The legal status and primary, secondary and tertiary conditions of service of staff are regulated in collective agreements (CAOs).

2.8. Methods of financing education

Flows of funds

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science administers almost all central government expenditure on education, while the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality funds agricultural education. Under the terms of the Constitution, all educational institutions – public and private – are funded on an equal footing. This means that government expenditure on public educational institutions must be matched by expenditure on private, government-funded educational institutions.

The relationship between educational institutions and the government is characterised by a large measure of institutional autonomy; government merely creates the right conditions. Schools qualify virtually automatically for funding, provided they meet the quality standards and funding conditions imposed by law for the school system as a whole.

Funds are channelled from the Ministry to educational institutions both directly and indirectly. The main flows of indirect funding are via the municipalities, for example to fund adult education, compensatory policy, the school advisory services, and primary and secondary school accommodation. Another source of funds are the course and tuition fees paid to the institutions by the students themselves. Educational institutions can also generate income from other sources, such as voluntary parental contributions, extra funding from the municipal authorities for special projects, interest on capital, contract activities and sponsoring.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science receives school fees from certain categories of students in secondary education and adult and vocational education (see § 5.8. and 7.8).

Education number

The legislation introducing education numbers for every child was passed by parliament in 2001. Every pupil in the country will be issued with a personal identification number for use in education (www.onderwijsnummer.nl). Parents will need it when they register their child at a school, for instance. An identification number of this kind will make it easier to follow pupils' educational achievement over several years. It will also be easier to compile data on early school leavers – but education numbers may not be used to trace individual drop-outs. The municipal authorities and educational establishments will have less red tape to deal with, and their spending can be monitored to check that budgets are being used as they should be. The education number is the same as the tax and social insurance number (SOFI number). By 2004 every pupil will have their own education number. Children will be issued with a number at the age of 3½.

2.8.1. Methods of financing primary and special schools

The funding of primary and special schools has been governed since 1 August 1998 by the Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO) and the Expertise Centres Act (WEC). Government funding for primary and special schools is spread over three budget headings: staff, running costs and accommodation. Detailed regulations apply, which means that schools have relatively little freedom. Each school is awarded a staff establishment budget consisting of a number of units of account based on the number of pupils enrolled at it. Within this budget, the school (i.e. the competent authority) can claim the actual staffing costs incurred. The staff establishment budget system accounts for around 85% of total funding.

Running costs such as furniture and fittings, teaching materials and maintenance costs are funded on the basis of the Londo system. The system was simplified in 1997 (VeLo) and funding is now based on the number of pupils and classes. Schools may also receive an additional payment for running costs in connection with supplementary staffing policy and minority language teaching under the Additional Funding System (BSA). Responsibility for the funding of accommodation has been delegated since 1997 to the municipal authorities and payments are now made from the Municipalities Fund.

The introduction of the personnel budget in 2001 has given schools and school boards the funds to adopt a modern personnel policy, of which flexibility is one of the key elements. The personnel budget pools funding for various items:

- in-service training
- school profile
- management, support and labour market conditions (MOA budget)
- in-service training for primary school managers to prepare for integrated personnel policy
- staffing difficulties faced by individual schools.

Future developments

If all goes according to plan, primary schools and special schools will receive block grant funding as of 1 August 2006. Schools will receive a set amount, which their boards will be free to spend as they see fit. Block grant funding will enable schools to match teaching and their policies to their own situations. A few school boards will take part in a pilot project with this new funding system from 1 August 2004. They will try out various working methods relating for instance to making their own financial decisions

or concluding management contracts between head teachers and school boards. The results will be used by organisations of head teachers and school boards and trade unions to develop better instruments and courses for all schools.

2.8.2. Methods of financing secondary schools

The funding of secondary schools is governed by the Secondary Education Act (WVO). The staff establishment budget system, which was introduced in secondary schools in 1992, was replaced in 1996 by block grant funding. Schools receive an annual budget from which all staff and running costs must be met. The amount allocated for staff costs is calculated by multiplying the number of establishment posts by the average personnel costs (GPL). The GPL is the amount established nationally for personnel costs by establishment post and staff category.

Block grant funding gives the competent authority greater freedom in deciding how resources are spent and also in negotiating the pay and conditions of staff. Negotiations on pay and conditions in secondary education have been partly decentralised. The component for running costs (cleaning, teaching materials, electricity, heating, etc.) is fixed on the basis of the Running Costs Funding System (BSM). Schools receive a fixed amount per pupil together with a fixed amount per school (flat-rate basic grant).

Responsibility for the funding of accommodation has been delegated since 1997 to the municipal authorities and payments are now made from the Municipalities Fund.

2.8.3. Methods of financing adult and vocational education

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) governs the funding of adult and vocational education. There are various sources of funding in this sector:

1. Government funding:
 - a. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science funds vocational education courses directly, based partly on the number of students per course/learning pathway and partly on the number of certificates awarded per institution.
 - b. The Minister funds the knowledge centres for vocational education and business on the basis of the number of qualifications devised, the number of training companies recognised as such and the number of practical training places (BPV places) filled.
 - c. The central government budget for adult education is allocated to the municipalities on the basis of the number of inhabitants over the age of 18, the number of ethnic minorities and the number of adults with an educational disadvantage.
 - d. The municipal authorities then buy in adult education courses by concluding contracts with the regional training centres (ROCs).
 - e. The municipalities receive a separate budget, for which the Ministry of Justice is responsible, for civic integration courses for ethnic minorities (bought in from the ROCs).
2. Students pay course fees to the institutions. Students on vocational training courses (BOL) pay fees to the Minister and are eligible for student finance.
3. Institutions receive income from contract activities for companies and private individuals.

2.8.4. Methods of financing higher education

The statutory basis for the funding of higher education is the Higher Education and Research Act

(WHW). Funding takes the form of block grants and is further regulated in the Higher Education and Research Funding Decree and the Higher Education Funding Order.

The total national budget for higher education institutions, the central government grant, is fixed by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science regardless of performance indicators. The budget is corrected in line with wage and price rises only, except where adjustments have to be made in the light of policy decisions (e.g. on the basis of estimated student numbers). It is then distributed among the institutions according to an allocation formula based on numbers of students and various performance indicators such as the number of degree certificates awarded per academic year.

Institutions for higher professional education receive income from various sources as well as from the central government grant. These include tuition fees and income from contract activities. Since 1994 benefit payments for staff and payments for accommodation have been covered by the central government grant. Almost 95% of the central government grant is allocated direct to the institutions in the form of a block grant. The institutions are then free to decide the most efficient way of using this money to meet their personnel, equipment and accommodation costs. The remaining 5% consists of funding for specific activities such as innovation. Courses in the fine and performing arts are funded on the basis of previously agreed numbers of students (capacity funding).

The formula used for allocating the central government grant among the universities (the 'first flow of funds') was adjusted in 2000 to place more emphasis on performance-based criteria. Under the Performance-based Funding System (PBM), 50% of the teaching component of the central government grant is now allocated on the basis of the number of degree certificates awarded, compared to 10% previously. Payments for accommodation and funding for specific activities are covered by the central government grant, as in higher professional education. The universities are free to spend these funds as they wish, in keeping with their statutory tasks. Negotiations on the pay and conditions of university personnel were decentralised in 1999. Payments are also made from the central government grant for the universities to the teaching hospitals. Tuition fees form an additional source of income for the universities.

University research is funded from three different sources:

- the central government grant, which includes an amount for research (the first flow of funds);
- funding for specific projects from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) (the second flow of funds);
- and finally, grants and research contracts from other sources (the third flow of funds). The latter consists mainly of funding from national and international government agencies and organisations, and research funded by non-profit institutions. The business community accounts for around 15% of this category of funding.

On 1 January 1998 a new funding formula was introduced for the Open University of the Netherlands (OUNL), which places more emphasis on teaching and educational innovation. The OUNL receives a basic component, an amount for investment, an amount for redundancy pay and an amount based on the number of certificates (course certificates, propaedeutic certificates and degree certificates) awarded. With regard to the latter component, an agreement covering a four-year period is made with the OUNL as to the number of certificates to be awarded during that period. Since 1994 the fees charged for courses have covered a larger proportion of the actual costs. Students who are unable to pay the course fees and belong to the primary target group (second-chance students) may be exempted from payment.

2.9. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands: Facts and Figures 1999-2003.

Key to abbreviations

PO	primary and special education
VO	secondary education
MBO	secondary vocational education
BOL	vocational training pathway in MBO
BVE	adult and vocational education
HBO	higher professional education
WO	universities

2.9.1. Institutions

Number of institutions	2001	2002	2003
PO	7943	7945	7975
VO	784	680	667
BVE	62	61	59
	2001	2002	2003
HBO	55	50	49
WO	12	12	12

Institutions by denomination	2001	2002	2003
Primary education			
public	33.1%	33.1%	33.1%
Prot.	29.9%	29.9%	29.8%
RC	30.2%	30.2%	30.1%
other	6.8%	6.9%	6.9%
Secondary education			
public	28%	30%	29%
Prot.	23%	22%	22%
RC	28%	26%	26%
priv. non-denom.	11%	12%	12%
interdenom.	10%	11%	11%

Key to abbreviations

interdenom.	interdenominational
other	other private
priv. non-denom.	private non-denominational
Prot.	Protestant
RC	Roman Catholic

2.9.2. Pupils and students

Number of pupils/students (x 1000)	2001	2002	2003
Total	3505.0	3538.1	3578.0
primary & special	1652.3	1654.1	1653.7
secondary	904.5	913.6	924.9
BVE (MBO)	455.5	469.5	477.7
BVE (adult education)	155.7	164.3	155.5
HBO	320.8	322.1	334.5
universities	171.9	178.8	187.2

2.9.3. Financial statistics: general

Total expenditure per type of education (x € million)	2001	2002	2003
primary & special	6430.0	7018.0	7422.5
secondary	4779.2	5066.4	5268.8
BVE	2521.5	2598.4	2624.4
HBO	1530.1	1648.0	1680.6
universities total	2971.3	3123.5	3213.7

Expenditure by institutions per pupil/student (x € 1000)	2001	2002	2003
primary & special	4600	5000	5200
secondary	5700	6000	6100
BOL full-time	6000	6300	6500
HBO	6000	6400	6400
universities	6200	6500	6400

Including local government grant and HBO/university tuition fees

2.9.4. Key financial statistics: student finance (WSF) and study costs allowances (WTOS)

Total relevant expenditure on student finance and public transport passes by type of education (x € million)	2001	2002	2003
Total	1987.5	1804.3	2318.8
universities	492.7	560.0	665.4
HBO	829.6	853.4	955.2
BOL	649.6	613.7	696.7
secondary education	171.0	218.8	239.9
not specified	15.6	-228.8	1.5

Expenditure on study costs allowances by type of education (x € million)	2001	2002	2003
Total	330.6	347.8	363.2
Total WTOS 18-	276.6	289.3	294.6
secondary education	190.7	196.8	201.5
BOL + higher education	85.9	92.5	93.1
Total WTOS 18+	5.3	9.1	17.5
secondary education	0.5	1.2	1.3
higher education	4.8	7.9	16.3
Total VO 18+	48.7	49.4	51.1

2.9.5. Fees

Standard amounts in euros	2001	2002	2003
Full-time education (16+)	852	885	916
Higher education	1330	1396	1445

3. Pre-primary education

The Netherlands has no formal educational provision for children under the age of four, the age at which they can begin primary school. Outside the formal education system there are, however, childcare facilities for younger children. Childcare facilities, in the form of out-of-school care, are also available for children of school age. Childcare policy falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

Every day, upwards of 300,000 children make use of facilities at over 3,500 (2004) childcare centres, paid for by parents, employers and the state. Increasing the availability of childcare was until recently high on the political agenda. An extensive network of high-quality childcare facilities makes it easier for parents to combine work and care.

A childcare place can be:

- subsidised by the municipal authorities;
- provided by the employer;
- paid for by the parents.

Single parents on benefit seeking to work or study qualify for assistance towards the costs of childcare and out-of-school care if they earn less than 130% of the statutory minimum wage.

There is of course also informal childcare provided by a friend or relative.

Childcare provision

The following organised facilities are available:

- **Day nurseries** cater for children aged from 6 weeks to 3 years. They are open on week days, from around 8.00 to 18.00 (10 hours a day on average), with a few exceptions. There are usually two qualified staff per group of children. Half-day nurseries cater for the same age group and are open for at least 5 hours a day. The two are sometimes combined.
- **Out-of-school care** is available for primary schoolchildren (aged between 4 and 12 or in some cases 13). These centres are open before and after school (and sometimes at lunchtimes), on afternoons or days when there is no school, and during the school holidays. Most stay open all year round. After-school care is a specific form of out-of-school care, provided at the end of the school day.
- **Childminders** can be found through agencies that have been specially set up to put parents in touch with private individuals who are willing and able to look after up to 4 children in their own homes. They cater for children aged between six weeks and 12 years of age, and tend to provide around 8 hours care a week for children under the age of 4, and 5 hours for children between the ages of 4 and 12.
- **Employer-funded childcare places** are intended for employees or, in the case of universities, etc., students. They include creches attached to a particular company (internal childcare), shared company creches and reserved places at subsidised and non-subsidised nurseries. Employers receive tax incentives to provide childcare facilities for their staff.
- The supervision of children staying at school during the lunch break will become the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science as of 1 January 2005.

3.1. Historical overview

Organised childcare has existed in the Netherlands since as long ago as 1840 when children of working mothers could be sent to establishments known as “bewaarscholen” from the age of 2½. These establishments were funded and run by philanthropic individuals or the church. The gradual shift in emphasis from care to education led eventually to the development of nursery education.

After the Second World War, the “bewaarscholen” became known as “kleuterscholen” (nursery schools). Between 1956 and 1985, the education of four to six-year-olds fell under the Nursery Education Act. During this period most children started nursery school at the age of four, although it was not compulsory for them to attend school until the age of six. 1985 saw the introduction of a new Primary Education Act, integrating educational provision for children aged four to twelve so that separate nursery schools ceased to exist. At the same time the age at which children are required to start school was lowered to five. In April 1998 the Primary Education Act was amended once more, so that primary education and some types of special education are now regulated in a single act.

The first playgroups appeared after the Second World War. In 1970 the Association of Dutch Childcare Centres (WKN) was established with the aim of promoting the professionalisation of playworkers in day nurseries and playgroups by formulating quality guidelines, promoting staff development and providing information. The Association also gave advice to childcare centres and central and local government. The WKN has since become part of the Netherlands Institute for Health and Social Services (NIZW).

In 1977 the Government Grants Scheme for Day Nurseries was introduced, under which day nurseries set up before 1975 could apply for a grant. In the late eighties these grants were abolished in line with new welfare legislation. From 1990 to 2003 government policy actively sought to expand the number of childcare places.

3.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

The Childcare Act will enter into force on 1 January 2005. The new Act will regulate the quality and funding of childcare. Responsibility for childcare is to be shared by parents, employers and government. For all of these parties the situation will change. Parents who combine work with looking after their children will qualify for a government subsidy. At present, most parents make use of subsidised or employer-funded childcare places – a distinction which will cease to exist. Under the new Act, parents will themselves sign a contract with a childcare provider. Employers will not be obliged to contribute towards the costs of childcare. If they do not, the government will provide compensation in the form of an income-related subsidy for parents earning less than €45,000 per year. Those who earn more will be entitled to compensation until the end of 2008. The employers of both parents may together fund up to a maximum of one third of the total childcare costs tax-free.

Providers of childcare facilities and childminder agencies will be required to meet certain quality standards, i.e. to provide care in a healthy and safe environment beneficial to children's development and well-being. Providers will be obliged to draw up health and safety assessments, to use Dutch as the language of communication, to inform parents about their policies and – except in the case of communal creches set up by groups of parents (see § 3.15) – to set up a parents' committee to advise on matters such as safety, opening times and prices. The Act also requires providers to pay attention to matters such as the ratio of professional staff to children (per age group), group size, staff qualifications and rules on the deployment of trainees.

Covenant on the quality of childcare

In October 2004, representatives of parents' and childcare providers' organisations signed a covenant that fleshed out the above-mentioned general quality requirements and the concept of responsible childcare. It contains agreements on the following qualitative areas:

- educational policy;
- number of children per staff member and group size;
- accommodation;
- participation in decision-making;
- safety;
- health;
- staff quality.

The covenant's provisions have been translated into a set of policy rules on the quality of childcare.

Municipal authorities' role in the field of childcare

Under the new childcare legislation the municipal authorities will have a different role. From January 2005 they will be responsible for:

- monitoring the quality of childcare (checks will be carried out by the municipal health service);
- subsidising childcare for certain categories of individuals not receiving help with childcare costs from an employer, i.e.:
 - benefit claimants (with the exception of work disabled persons and unemployed persons on reintegration schemes for whom the employer's share is paid by the Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body (UWV);
 - people re-entering the labour market who are registered at a Centre for Work and Income (CWI);
 - recent immigrants who are following a compulsory civic integration programme;
 - students.

Parents and children registered as having sociomedical problems will not fall under the new Act in 2005. Instead, the budget for childcare for this group has been transferred to the Municipalities Fund, giving municipalities the freedom to fund childcare for this group as they think fit.

Early childhood education

June 2000 saw the publication of a policy letter on early childhood education (VVE), outlining the government's plans. Early childhood education is geared to children aged 2 to 5 who are at risk of educational disadvantage. They include children with poorly educated parents and ethnic minority children. The aim is to tackle educational disadvantage at an early age. Policy on early childhood education will be partially integrated with urban policy and municipal policy on educational disadvantage. Municipal authorities will be given financial incentives to develop and implement early childhood education programmes.

Aims relating to educational disadvantage are set out every four years in a national policy framework (LBK). A new policy framework took effect on 1 August 2002, covering the period from 2002 to 2006. One of its aims is to give children a better start at primary school by enabling at least half the target group to take part in effective early childhood programmes by 2006. 25% of the target group were reached in 2003.

As a component of municipal policy on eliminating educational disadvantage, early childhood education is the responsibility of the municipal authorities. They must ensure that it is provided in the form of

effective programmes and that children from the target group participate in these programmes. Policy evaluation is also their responsibility. The budget for early childhood education forms part of the educational disadvantage budget. Municipalities consult with schools to determine how much of the educational disadvantage budget will be used for early childhood education, taking account of the above-mentioned LBK aim for 2002-2006.

3.3. Specific legislative framework

Childcare falls under the 1994 Social Welfare Act. This Act gives the municipal authorities responsibility for planning and funding welfare facilities at local level. The minimum standards (relating to equipment, hygiene and safety) to be imposed on childcare facilities by the municipal authorities are laid down in the Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree, which came into force on 1 January 1996. These minimum requirements apply to all childcare centres, whether they are subsidised or not. Childcare centres are also subject to the Client's Right of Complaint (Care Sector) Act and – if they are subsidised – the Participation (Clients of Care Institutions) Act.

In 1996 the Childcare and Out-of-School Care (Single Parents) Scheme was set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment to enable single parents to combine work and family responsibilities, with a view to combating hidden poverty and social exclusion. Under this scheme, the municipal authorities can meet the full costs of childcare places for single parents living on benefit, so that they can go out to work. The scheme became permanent in 1997.

In 1999 the Childcare and Out-of-School Care (Expansion) Scheme entered into force, which will fund the creation of a further 71,000 places between 1999 and 2002. The scheme will end with the entry into force of the Childcare Act. It has also been decided to create 10,000 extra places in 2003, and to optimise inspection and monitoring by providing extra resources. Education for children aged four and over is regulated in the Primary Education Act.

3.4. General objectives

Childcare facilities and playgroups offer young children the opportunity and the space to play and develop in the company of children of their own age. The aim is to stimulate children's social, cognitive and emotional development. Childcare also enables parents to take part in activities outside the home, such as a course, training schemes leading to employment, or paid employment.

3.5. Geographical accessibility

The Netherlands has no educational facilities for children under 4. There are therefore no measures promoting geographical accessibility. The introduction of demand-led funding under the Childcare Act is expected to lead to a better match between supply and demand.

3.6. Admission requirements and choice of institution/centre

In principle, all children between 2-2½ and 4 years of age can get a place at a playgroup. However, priority may be given by individual municipalities to children with sociomedical problems and children suffering from (or at risk of) developmental delay. The age requirements for admission to childcare are as follows:

- 0-4 years for day nurseries and half-day nurseries;
- 4-12 years for out-of-school and after-school care.

The age limits for childminding are flexible. Municipal authorities can give priority to special target groups in subsidised childcare, such as children with sociomedical problems. Access to childcare at the workplace is governed by agreements between employers and employees. Another factor limiting admission to playgroups and day nurseries is the availability of places. The Childcare Act does not contain any provisions concerning admission.

3.7. Financial support for pupils' families

The parental contribution to childcare is income-dependent. The lower the household income, the lower the contribution. The Childcare Act will enter into force on 1 January 2005. It is based on the principle that the costs of childcare should be shared by parents, employers and government. Although employers are expected to contribute towards the costs of childcare, they will not be obliged to do so. The Act assumes that the employers of both parents will together meet one third of the costs. If they do not, the government can provide compensation in the form of an income-related subsidy for households earning less than €45,000 per year. Those who earn more will be entitled to compensation until the end of 2008. Parents can apply for compensation irrespective of whether or not their employers contribute to childcare costs. Applications are submitted to the tax authorities.

3.8. Age levels and grouping of children

To ensure the quality of childcare, playgroups and day nurseries are subject to a number of restrictions regarding the size of each group and the ratio of staff to children. Municipal ordinances on childcare treat these rules as a minimum standard. The Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree imposes the following restrictions:

- for children under 12 months: no more than 12 children per group;
- for children under 13: no more than 16 children per group, of whom no more than 8 may be under 12 months;
- for children aged 4 to 12: no more than 20 children per group.

The maximum permitted number of children per qualified leader is as follows:

children under 12 months:	4
children aged 1 to 2:	5
children aged 2 to 3:	6
children aged 3 to 4:	8
children aged 4 to primary school leaving age:	10

Each group should be supervised by at least two qualified leaders. The model ordinance drawn up by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) limits the number of children per group to sixteen. These rules may be extended to playgroups, even though playgroups are not covered by the Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree. Municipal authorities may also draw up separate standards for playgroups.

Developments

The rules governing quality will change as from 1 January 2005 (see § 3.2).

3.9. Organisation of time

There are no regulations on the daily or weekly organisation of childcare.

3.9.1. Organisation of the year

There are no regulations on the annual timetable in childcare.

3.9.2. Weekly and daily timetable

There are no regulations on daily or weekly timetables for childcare or early childhood education.

3.10. Curriculum, types of activity and number of hours

There is no curriculum as such in childcare provision. From the age of four, children can go on to primary or special schools. Out-of-school care facilities are in principle available outside school hours for children aged 4 to 12, whose parents want it, but there are not always enough places.

3.11. Teaching methods and materials

Most childcare establishments employ no specific teaching method. There are, however, some preschool facilities which are based on a particular educational concept, e.g. the Montessori or Reggio Emilia approach.

3.12. Evaluation of children

There is no formal assessment of pupils in the childcare sector, though observation of various kinds takes place in early childhood education.

3.13. Support facilities

Special programmes

Since 1988 there have been projects for young children whose parents have had little schooling and/or are members of the main ethnic minorities represented in the Netherlands (mainly Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese children). The target groups are under-4s and their parents, and 4-7 year olds. The aim is to prevent educational disadvantage and prepare children for entry to Dutch primary schools, and to provide support for these children in the early years of primary school. The development and initial implementation of these projects was financed by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Since then they have been funded by the municipal authorities. Most of these projects form part of local compensatory policy.

In addition to the above projects, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science launched two new programmes (Kaleidoscope and Pyramid) in 1995. The Kaleidoscope programme is designed to improve the quality of provision in playgroups and the first four years of primary school and focuses on professional development and training in particular. Pyramid is a comprehensive programme targeted at three to six-year-olds. The main areas of a child's development are covered, using themes and subjects which bring all these areas of development together. The aim of these two methods of early childhood education is:

- to increase the number of target-group pupils benefiting from preschool facilities;
- to improve the quality and content of preschool provision;
- to eliminate educational disadvantage among target-group pupils;
- to encourage cooperation between preschool facilities and primary schools, thereby facilitating an uninterrupted line of development;
- to increase parental involvement and support.

These programmes form part of local compensatory policy.

Children with disabilities

A great deal of knowledge and expertise has been built up in recent years regarding the integration of children with disabilities in ordinary childcare facilities. The aim is to end the distinction between facilities for disabled and non-disabled children. Equipped with the necessary expertise, information and support, childcare centres can make a valuable contribution to the development of disabled children, while at the same time reducing the risk of isolation. They can also provide support for parents. This does not mean that specialist facilities will no longer be needed. There are numerous specialised organisations providing peripatetic support for staff in ordinary childcare centres who are caring for children with disabilities. Some municipal authorities reimburse the cost of this support.

3.14. Private sector provision

Providing childcare facilities is not a task for government. However, the government does require such facilities to meet certain standards. These are set out in the Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree. Municipal authorities are responsible for the quality of childcare in their area, as well as for monitoring compliance. They must therefore have a municipal ordinance on childcare that accords with the above decree. Such ordinances may introduce additional quality requirements, but they may not lower standards. Childcare facilities must also comply with the regulations on licences, which are compulsory.

Developments

The rules governing quality will change as from 1 January 2005 (see § 3.2).

3.15. Organisational variations and alternative structures

Much childcare takes the form of informal solutions found by parents themselves (e.g. within the extended family). Sometimes groups of parents set up communal creches, which they themselves run and manage without paid professional staff.

Developments

As of 1 January 2005, communal creches will be classified as a form of organised childcare under the Childcare Act.

3.16. Statistics

Childcare facilities	2000	2001
For under-4s	2,216	2,583
For 4-12 year olds	1,371	1,647
Total	3,587	4,230

Capacity	2000	2001
Under-4s	84,445	102,546
4-12 year olds	43,507	54,616
Total	127,953	157,161

Number of children in childcare places	2000	2001
Under-4s	164,418	184,020
4-12 year olds	75,746	95,998
Total	240,164	280,018

Percentage of children in childcare places	2000	2001
Under-4s	20.4	22.5
4-12 year olds	4.2	5.7
Total	9.3	10.8

Capacity per 100 children	2000	2001
Under-4s	10.49	12.56
4-12 year olds	2.44	3.07
Total	4.94	6.06

Type of place	2000	2001
- places subsidised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment	6,264	7,452
- private places	14,598	18,910
- places provided by employers	62,862	82,412
- subsidised places	28,729	29,550

Source: SGB0 monitor of childcare per municipality 2001, p. 11

4. Primary education

4.1. Historical overview

Until 1985 there were separate nursery and primary schools, catering for 4 to 6-year-olds and 6 to 12-year-olds respectively. In 1985, when the Primary Education Act 1981 (WBO) came into force, nursery and primary schools were integrated to form new-style primary schools catering for children from 4 to 12. Special schools were governed by the Special Education Interim Act (ISOVSO). Ordinary schools and special schools were completely separate.

On 1 August 1998 the Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO) came into operation, replacing the Primary Education Act 1981. It brought together the Primary Education Act 1981 and parts of the Special Education Interim Act. One of the purposes of the new Act is to increase the ability of ordinary primary schools to cater for pupils with behavioural and learning difficulties, so that fewer children have to be referred to special schools. Since 1 August 1998 special primary and secondary education has been governed by the Expertise Centres Act (WEC).

4.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

The future direction of primary education

The Minister has set out the direction and main outline of policy on primary education up to 2010 in a multi-year policy plan which was submitted to the House of Representatives in June 2004. It was produced in an interactive process involving input from teachers, headteachers, parents, pupils, teacher training colleges and other stakeholders.

Making school timetables more flexible

A bill currently in preparation will give schools more flexibility regarding their timetables. They will still have to provide at least 7,520 teaching periods over the eight years that children attend school, but matters such as the distribution of periods between the first four years and the last four years will be more flexible (see § 4.9.2).

Block grant funding

The government is introducing block grant funding so as to give primary schools and special schools more freedom in terms of spending. School boards will be given a certain budget and will themselves determine how they spend it. This measure will be introduced on 1 August 2006. Pilots involving 34 school boards and around 700 schools have been launched in an attempt to obtain a clear picture of the opportunities offered by block grant funding, the possible pitfalls, the instruments required and schools' and school boards' need for support. The participating schools and boards have been divided into two groups focusing attention on small, medium-sized and large school boards.

School advisory services

From 1 August 2005, funds for advisory services will be allocated directly to primary schools rather than to school advisory services. Schools will be free to determine what services they pay for, and who provides them, in line with their individual policy on quality (see § 4.15.2). A bill introducing these measures was submitted to the House of Representatives in November 2004.

Participation in decision-making

Developments in primary education and in school management in particular prompted the Minister of Education, Culture and Science to take a closer look at how participation is arranged in primary schools. In June 2004 the Primary Education Participation Expert Group identified aspects of the current participation legislation for primary education that require improvement. The results of this exercise were presented in an advisory report. The report suggests that new legislation be drafted with the working title Schools Participation Act. The new legislation should meet the following criteria:

- it should provide some form of joint participation arrangements for parents and staff, as in the Education Participation Act (WMO);
- it should provide for an independent form of participation for staff on matters pertaining to their terms and conditions of employment;
- it should offer enough flexibility to allow the participation structure to be adjusted to suit developments in relations between the board and the management;
- it should lead to a general improvement in participation in decision-making in primary education.

Work on the new legislation will begin in spring 2005. It is hoped that it will enter into force in 2007.

Future compensatory policy

The government feels that the distribution of responsibilities between school boards and municipal authorities with regard to compensatory policy for educationally disadvantaged children is not yet sufficiently clearly defined. As a result, it is not always apparent who should be held accountable. As schools and school boards are the main actors involved in implementing compensatory policy, they will be given more freedom to decide how the available funds should be spent. In particular, they will no longer be required to draw up a compensatory plan together with the municipal authorities, setting out their joint objectives, activities and spending plans.

The government wishes to encourage the conclusion of binding agreements between municipal authorities and school boards on the balanced distribution of disadvantaged pupils among schools in each area. School boards will be required to hold talks with the municipal authorities on ways of preventing segregation and promoting integration.

The municipal authorities will also be made responsible for setting up multi-school bridging classes for primary school pupils, whatever their ethnicity, whose language skills are holding them back. These children will spend a year learning Dutch before going back to normal classes.

Review of weighting system in primary education

The weighting system is an important part of compensatory policy, as it largely determines class size. A desire to focus on young children, cater better for actual problems, give disadvantaged ethnic minority pupils more attention and prevent segregation has prompted a review of the current system.

In future, 'ethnicity' will no longer be a factor in determining pupil weighting, although a language test will be used to identify pupils with particularly severe language problems. The parents' level of education will be the main factor in the future weighting system.

4.3. Specific legislative framework

The Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO) and the Expertise Centres Act (WEC) came into force on 1 August 1998, replacing the Primary Education Act 1981 and the Special Education Interim Act. One of the purposes of the WPO is to further the integration of and cooperation between mainstream primary

schools and certain types of special school. It governs both mainstream schools and special schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (LOM), children with learning difficulties (MLK) and preschool children with developmental difficulties (IOBK). LOM, MLK and IOBK schools are now known officially as special schools for primary education (“speciale scholen voor basisonderwijs”). The term primary education (“primair onderwijs”) encompasses both ordinary primary schools and special schools for primary education.

- LOM and MLK secondary schools have been governed since 1998 by the Secondary Education Act (WVO; see Chapter 5).
- All other types of special school (both primary and secondary) formerly regulated by the Special Education Interim Act have been governed since 1998 by the new Expertise Centres Act (WEC; see Chapter 10).

The Primary Education Act 1998 defines the objectives of primary education and contains regulations governing the organisation of teaching (content, quality, school plan, school prospectus, complaints procedure) and special needs provision (special needs plan, consortium). It also regulates the position of staff, pupils (admissions) and parents.

The main implementing regulations pertaining to primary education are the:

- Staff Establishment Decree (Primary Education Act). This relates to the funding of staff.
- Primary Education Attainment Targets Decree 1998. The attainment targets define what pupils are expected to have acquired in the way of knowledge, understanding and skills by the end of primary school.

4.4. General objectives

Primary education aims to promote the development of children’s emotions, intellect and creativity and the acquisition of essential knowledge together with social, cultural and physical skills in an uninterrupted process of development. Teaching must reflect the fact that pupils are growing up in a multicultural society. In the case of children who need extra help, the aim is to provide individual attention that is tailored to the needs of the child. Teaching in special schools for primary education is geared to enabling as many pupils as possible to return to mainstream education.

Future developments

Education has an important role to play in active citizenship. This applies to every school and every pupil. The government therefore intends to pass legislation requiring schools to devote more teaching time to citizenship education.

4.5. Geographical accessibility

On average there is one primary school per 5.9 km² in the Netherlands. Parents can claim back their child’s travel costs if these costs are regarded as necessary under the rules drawn up by the municipal authorities. In the case of public-authority schools, municipalities can be divided into catchment areas in order to ensure an efficient spread of pupils. Children must attend the school in the area designated by the municipal authority (usually that in which the pupil lives). Exemptions from this rule are possible. This system does not apply to private primary schools.

Planning of new schools

New schools (whether publicly or privately run) will only receive funding if they appear in the municipal

plan for new schools. A school will be included in the plan once it has demonstrated that it will have a sufficient number of pupils. The required number will depend on the number of pupils per km² in the municipality in question. A new public-authority school will always be incorporated in the plan if there is no public-authority school within 10 kilometres by road of the place in the municipality where there is a need for public-authority education.

4.6. Admission requirements and choice of school

4.6.1. Admission requirements

Primary schools cater for children from 4 to about 12 years of age. The competent authority (school board) may allow children who have not yet turned four to attend school for up to 5 days in the 2-month period preceding their birthday in order to help them get used to the school environment. Children cannot officially be admitted to school until their fourth birthday. In practice, over 98% of children start school at the age of four. Full-time schooling is compulsory from the first school day of the month following a child's fifth birthday. Children may not remain at primary school beyond the end of the school year in which they reach the age of fourteen.

Primary education is free of charge. Some schools ask for a parental contribution, but such contributions are voluntary and may not constitute an obstacle to the admission of pupils.

4.6.2. Choice of school

In the Netherlands parents are free to send their children to the school of their choice. This may be a public-authority school or a private school. Education is free up to the age of 16. Schools may ask for a parental contribution, but it may not constitute an obstacle to the admission of pupils. It is simply intended to enable extra activities to take place. Public-authority primary schools are open to all children, although some municipalities are divided into catchment areas. Private schools may set admission requirements connected with their ideological basis.

4.7. Financial support for pupils' families

Primary education is free of charge. Some pupils qualify for partial reimbursement of their travel costs (see § 4.5).

4.8. Age levels and grouping of pupils

Mainstream primary schools and special schools for primary education are free to decide on their own internal organisation. Each class may include one or more age groups. At most primary schools the pupils are grouped by age. There are eight year groups in all and each child begins in year 1 and, in most cases, goes up a class each year until they reach the top class. At some schools, children of different ages are placed in the same class. Others have a flexible arrangement and children are grouped according to their level of development or ability. Years 1 to 4 (4 to 8-year-olds) are known jointly as the juniors and years 5 to 8 (9 to 12-year-olds) as the seniors. Alternatively, the school may be divided into junior, middle and senior sections (years 1 to 3, 4 to 6 and 7 and 8 respectively).

The number of teaching posts in a school is based on the number of pupils. The number used for this purpose is not the absolute number of pupils, but a weighted number. In other words, pupils who fall

into certain categories count for more than one unit. These categories are:

- children whose parents have a low level of education (1.25);
- children living in a children's home or with a foster family (1.4);
- children with traveller parents (1.7);
- children from non-Dutch cultural backgrounds (1.9).

Children who do not fall into any of these categories count as one unit each. The weighting system is currently under review. For more information, see § 4.2.

Primary school teachers and teachers at special schools for primary education are qualified to teach all subjects (except sensory coordination and physical exercise) across the entire age range. Schools may also have additional specialist teachers to teach specific subjects such as physical education (and sensory coordination), religious education, art, music, handicrafts or Frisian. The ratio of specialist teachers to class teachers is decided by the school.

In 1997, the post of teaching assistant was introduced to provide help in the classroom for teachers in years 1 to 4. Teaching assistants help the teacher with routine teaching activities and supervise pupils in the acquisition of practical skills. Their duties are primarily of an educational nature. Occupational profiles have been drawn up, on which the exit qualifications for the training course for teaching assistants (a secondary vocational course) are based.

Class size and quality

Policy is geared to reducing class sizes in the first four years of primary school in order to improve the quality of teaching. The first steps were taken in 1997 with the allocation of additional staff. Since 2003 schools have no longer been obliged to deploy the additional staff to improve the quality of teaching in years 1 to 4. The idea is to allow schools to use extra personnel more flexibly, e.g. by appointing an extra teacher or a teaching assistant or trainee teacher to assist the class teacher. A pupil-teacher ratio of 21:1 was reached on 1 October 2003.

In 2004 a class size and quality project was rounded off with a final evaluation. The conclusion was that the project had been a success in that class sizes had been reduced according to plan and that initial steps had been taken towards further quality improvement in primary education.

4.9. Organisation of school time

4.9.1. Organisation of the school year

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science determines the dates of the school year and the length and dates of the summer holidays. In primary schools, the school year runs from 1 August to 31 July of the following year. The summer holidays last six weeks and are staggered across the three regions (northern, central and southern) into which the country is divided for this purpose. The length and dates of the summer holidays, and how they are staggered across the country, are prescribed by the Minister. The dates of the shorter holidays (autumn, Christmas, spring and May holidays) can be decided by the competent authority of the school (school board) without having to obtain the Minister's consent. The Minister recommends a period of one week's holiday after every seven to eight weeks of school.

4.9.2. Weekly and daily timetable

Schools are free to decide how much time is spent on the various subjects and areas of the curriculum, and when. The only restriction relates to the minimum number of teaching periods per year, which is laid down in the Primary Education Act. The total minimum figure for the first four years is 3,520 periods and for the last four years 4,000 periods. The school day may last a maximum of 5.5 hours (excluding breaks), with an even spread of activities during the day. This may, however, be extended in connection with additional activities designed to prevent and/or eliminate educational disadvantage. Pupils receive an average of 22 hours' teaching per week during the first two years of schooling and an average of 25 hours a week in the last six years. It is up to the competent authority of the school (school board) to decide when the school day starts and ends and how long the lessons last.

Under the Primary Education Act (WPO) the competent authorities of primary schools are obliged to provide facilities for pupils who wish to stay at school during the lunch break. The costs involved are borne by the parents of those children who make use of this facility. Around 30% of pupils stay at school during the lunch break.

Future developments

A bill is currently in preparation which will give schools more flexibility regarding their timetables. They will still have to provide at least 7,520 teaching periods over the eight years that children attend school, but the distribution of periods between the first four years and the last four years will be more flexible. Schools will be allowed to reduce the total number of teaching periods in the last four years to 3,760. The minimum number of periods over the first four years will remain unchanged at 3,520. The bill scraps the present maximum of 5.5 hours of teaching a day. The Education Participation Act of 1992 regulates participation councils' right of approval regarding the setting and changing of school timetables.

4.10. Curriculum, subjects and number of hours

Primary education aims to promote the development of children's emotions, intellect and creativity and the acquisition of essential knowledge together with social, cultural and physical skills. Schools are free to decide how much time is spent on the various areas of the curriculum, and when. The only restriction relates to the minimum number of teaching periods per year, which is laid down by law. The total minimum figure for the first four years is 3,520 periods and for the last four years 4,000 periods. The school day may last a maximum of 5.5 hours (excluding breaks), with an even spread of activities during the day. This may, however, be extended in connection with additional activities designed to prevent and/or eliminate educational disadvantage.

4.10.1. Areas of learning

Under the terms of the Primary Education Act, the following subjects must appear in the curriculum, where possible in an integrated form:

- sensory coordination and physical education;
- Dutch; arithmetic and mathematics;
- English;
- a number of factual subjects, including geography, history, science (including biology), social structures (including political studies) and religious and ideological movements;
- expressive activities, including use of language, art, music, handicrafts, and play and

- movement; social and life skills, including road safety;
- healthy living.

Although these subjects are compulsory, schools are free to decide how much time they devote to each subject.

The language of instruction is Dutch. However:

- schools in the province of Friesland also teach Frisian and may teach other subjects in Frisian as well.
- children from a non-Dutch background may likewise be taught for part of the time in their own language in order to help them settle in.
- English has been a compulsory subject since 1986, and is usually taught in the top two years of primary school.

Special funding for minority language teaching (OALT) was abolished on 1 August 2004. The government intends to focus on children's proficiency in Dutch, for the benefit of integration. There is also no evidence that minority language teaching has a positive impact on children's command of Dutch.

4.10.2. School plan, school prospectus and right of complaint

Every school must have a school plan, updated every four years, describing the steps being taken to monitor and improve quality and indicating the school's policy on educational matters, staffing and internal quality assurance. Through this document, the school accounts to the Inspectorate for its policies. A school plan may cover one or more mainstream primary schools and special schools for primary education and one or more other schools which share the same competent authority (school board). It must be approved by the participation council. Schools must have a participation council, unless they have been granted exemption on account of their religious or other beliefs. By sitting on the participation council parents and teachers can influence how the school and teaching at the school are organised. The participation council of a primary school comprises two groups of members: representatives of the parents and representatives of the staff. The participation council has two rights: the right of approval and the right to be consulted.

The school prospectus, which must be updated every year, contains information for parents and pupils about what goes on in the school, its objectives and the results achieved. It also gives details about the voluntary parental contribution and the rights and obligations of parents and pupils. The prospectus has to be approved by the participation council before publication.

The right of complaint supplements the existing opportunities for participation in decision-making and the management of the school. The school board is obliged by law to draw up a complaints procedure. Every school must also have a complaints committee with an independent chairperson.

4.10.3. National guide to primary education

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science publishes an annual national guide to primary education. The guide, which first appeared in 1996, contains information for parents on their rights and obligations vis-à-vis the school and also provides advice on choosing a school. "Primary school: a guide for parents and carers 2003-2004" can be consulted on the Ministry's website (<http://www.minocw.nl/po/gids2004nl/pogids2004.pdf>).

4.10.4. Attainment targets

The content of teaching and the teaching methods to be used are not prescribed. Attainment targets have, however, been formulated and schools are expected to organise their teaching in such a way that all the subject matter to which these targets relate has been covered by the end of primary school. The targets define in broad terms the core curriculum at primary schools and ensure that pupils are prepared for secondary school. Intermediate targets and teaching guidelines, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, have been developed for arithmetic and mathematics and Dutch to provide additional support for schools in organising teaching in these subjects. Intermediate targets provide a starting point for teaching in each year of primary schooling. Teaching guidelines provide a general framework for designing and organising learning and development processes in a given subject area or part thereof in the medium to long term. They include the following elements, presented in relation to each other:

- the goals to be achieved and in what order;
- appropriate subject matter;
- the underlying approach to the subject;
- educational and organisational pointers for achieving these goals.

Future developments

The present attainment targets are under review. The new attainment targets will give schools more freedom to cater for the differences between pupils, and will not therefore have the same level of detail in all areas of learning. In practice, this will mean that the attainment targets for, say, Dutch or arithmetic will be more detailed than those for creative subjects.

4.11. Teaching methods and materials

Mainstream primary schools and special schools for primary education are free to choose their own teaching methods and materials. Teaching materials are the property of the school. In the Netherlands, the production, distribution and sale of teaching materials is a commercial activity. The National Teaching Materials Information Centre produces a consumer guide to teaching materials which schools can use to compare existing and new products (NICL; see www.slo.nl -> leermiddelen). The NICL is part of the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO).

4.12. Pupil assessment

The school reports on pupils' progress to the parents. When a pupil leaves the school, the head teacher, together with the teaching staff, draws up a report providing information about the pupil for his or her new school. A copy of the report is given to the child's parents.

The CITO Group (CITO; see www.cito.nl) develops tests which schools can use to measure their end results and compare them with those of other schools (primary school leavers attainment test). The number of pupils taking this test is increasing every year. Over 90% of primary schools use the CITO test. A total of 167,000 pupils from over 6,400 schools sat the test in 2004. CITO also develops tests for measuring the progress of individual pupils (pupil monitoring system) so that teaching can be tailored more to individual needs.

4.13. Progression of pupils

There are no statutory rules about when pupils may move up to the next year and when they may not. Individual schools lay down procedures for this in their own school plans. A pupil may occasionally have to repeat a year, but the aim of ensuring an uninterrupted process of development means that this is avoided wherever possible.

4.14. Certification

The Primary Education Attainment Targets Decree 1988 defines in general terms the minimum targets that schools should aim to achieve in their teaching in terms of the knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils are expected to acquire by the end of their primary schooling. At the end of their eight years of primary schooling, pupils do not receive a certificate or diploma, but a school report describing their level of attainment and potential and based in part, in many cases, on the results of an attainment test. This report is drawn up by the school head in consultation with the teaching staff, and is for the use of the chosen secondary school. A copy of the report is given to the child's parents.

4.15. Educational guidance

4.15.1 Pupil guidance

Schools are responsible for pupil guidance. Pupils receive guidance from their class teacher, but can also receive extra assistance from an internal supervisor or a remedial teacher. Internal supervisors counsel parents as well as pupils, so that a child's environment becomes more conducive to learning. Remedial teachers help pupils with difficulties. Pupils can attend courses to help them overcome fear of failure or to make them more resilient. These are not part of mainstream education and are not government-funded. Internal supervisors have a coordinating, supervisory and innovatory role. Not all schools have one.

4.15.2. School advisory services

Since 1 January 1997 the municipal authorities have been responsible for the provision and quality of the local and regional school advisory services (School Advisory Services Regulations). The municipal authorities receive funds from central government, specifically earmarked for maintaining the school advisory services, which work with schools and individual pupils in primary and special education.

As of the same date, the activities of the three national educational advisory centres, the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) and the Centre for Innovation in Training (CINOP) have been subsidised under the National Education Support Activities (Subsidies) Act (SLOA). There are three national educational advisory centres: the Educational Advisory Centre (APS) for non-denominational schools, the Protestant Educational Advisory Centre (CPS) and the Catholic Educational Advisory Centre (KPC). These centres provide services for primary schools, secondary schools, primary teacher training institutions and the school advisory services.

Future developments

As of 1 August 2005, funds previously paid to the school advisory services will be paid directly to primary schools, which may then allocate these funds in line with their individual policy on quality.

There will be a three-year transition phase, during which schools will be obliged to make use of their local school advisory service (each year to a lesser degree). After this time schools will be free to disburse their budgets as they see fit.

4.16. Private education

Private schools are governed by the same legislation as public-authority schools. Article 23 of the Constitution places public and private schools on an equal financial footing. As a condition of funding from the public purse, the law lays down that private educational establishments must be maintained by a legal person with full legal competence, whose aim is to provide education, without any profit-making motive. The competent authority (school board) of a private school is the board of the association or foundation that maintains it.

Private schools are established by private individuals. Though there are some non-denominational private schools, the majority are denominational. Most of these are Roman Catholic and Protestant, but there are also Muslim, Hindu and Jewish schools, among others. At primary level two thirds of schools are privately run.

4.17. Organisational variations and alternative structures

There are separate schools for traveller children. Mobile schools and schools at mooring places are part of mainstream education and fall under the Primary Education Act 1998. The only way in which these schools differ from regular schools has to do with how and where classes are held. Mobile schools offer full primary education to the children of funfair operators and circus artists. Schools at mooring places teach barges' children between the ages of 3½ and 7.

4.18. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from 'Key Figures 1999-2003. Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands'.

4.18.1. Pupils

	2002	2003
Number of pupils at primary schools (x 1000)	1654.1	1653.7
% attending primary schools	94.8	94.8

4.18.2. Schools and staff

	2002	2003
Number of establishments		
- number of primary schools	7,021	6,994
- number of annexes	152	156
Average school roll	221	221

Number of staff in FTEs		
- per calendar year (x 1000)	94.2	95.0
% of women staff in FTEs		
- heads	17.9	19.8
- teachers (including deputy heads)	75.9	76.6
- ancillary staff	69.3	70.2
Age of staff (incl. special schools)		
- average age	41.8	42.0
- % aged 50 or over	28.1	29.7
	2000	2001
Pupil-teacher ratio	16.8	17.2

5. Secondary education

Secondary education follows on from ordinary and special primary education. It does not include special schools for disabled children (see chapter 10), adult and vocational education (see chapter 7) or higher education (see chapter 6). Secondary education is provided at schools for:

- pre-university education (VWO; 6 years, age 12-18);
- senior general secondary education (HAVO; 5 years; age 12-17);
- pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO; 4 years, age 12-16);
- practical training (age 12-18).

There are also special secondary schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (LOM) and children with learning difficulties (MLK) (see § 5.3).

The first stage of secondary education

The first stage of secondary education encompasses the four-year VMBO course and the first three years of HAVO (total duration: 5 years) and VWO (total duration: 6 years). Basic secondary education is the core curriculum for the lower years of all the different types of secondary school. The emphasis is on applying knowledge, acquiring skills and delivering an integrated curriculum. Teaching is based on attainment targets indicating the knowledge, understanding and skills pupils are expected to acquire. Pupils are taught a minimum of 15 subjects. The period of basic secondary education can vary from school to school and is normally three years. This may be extended to four years or reduced to two.

The second stage of secondary education

The second stage of secondary education encompasses the 4th and 5th years of HAVO and the 4th to 6th years of VWO. This period of pre-higher education (VHO) follows on from basic secondary education. Two new concepts have been introduced as a result of the reforms in the second stage of secondary education – independent study (“studiehuis”) and study load:

- the term “studiehuis” refers to an approach to teaching where the emphasis is on enabling pupils to work increasingly on their own, under the supervision of a teacher;
- the study load system is based on the time required by the average pupil to master a particular quantity of material. This includes preparation and self-study at home as well as attending lessons.

The reforms, relating to curriculum content and teaching methods, were introduced in all HAVO and VWO schools on or before 1 August 1999. By learning to study independently while still at secondary school, pupils will be better equipped for higher education.

5.1. Historical overview

Until well into the second half of the twentieth century, Dutch secondary education comprised a wide range of types of school existing side by side. Up to 1968, these different types of school were governed by separate Acts of Parliament, but the introduction of the Secondary Education Act (WVO) in that year, popularly known as the Mammoth Act, brought them all together in a single piece of legislation (with the exception of apprenticeships, which combined attending classes and working for a company or in a trainee workshop). This Act also introduced a new type of secondary schooling: senior general secondary education (HAVO). A major aim of the Act was to increase mobility between the various parts of the secondary education system.

In 1986 separate legislation governing higher professional education was enacted (the Higher

Professional Education Act or WHBO), thereby removing it from the sphere of the Secondary Education Act. Ten years later secondary vocational education (MBO) and adult general secondary education (VAVO) were also removed from the Secondary Education Act and have since been governed, together with apprenticeships, by the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB). In 1992 junior secondary vocational education (LBO) with its five different categories of school was replaced by pre-vocational education (VBO) comprising various departments.

The period from 1993 onwards saw a number of major reforms of the secondary curriculum. Since 1993, all four types of secondary education, i.e. pre-vocational education (VBO), junior general secondary education (MAVO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO), have begun with a period of basic secondary education, with the emphasis shifting from the transfer of knowledge to the application of knowledge and the development of skills. The general aim of the reforms introduced since 1998 has been to facilitate the transition to further education and employment. In 1999 a new system of learning pathways was introduced in MAVO and VBO and the existing VBO departments were reorganised. Combined schools offering both MAVO and VBO courses may now call themselves schools for pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO).

Since 1 August 1998 special secondary schools for children with learning difficulties (VSO-MLK) and children with learning and behavioural difficulties (VSO-LOM) have been governed by the Secondary Education Act. These schools/units are now officially known as special schools for secondary education or special departments for secondary education (SVO). Schools providing pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO, formerly MAVO and VBO) and practical training and special schools for secondary education are now required as of 1 January 1999 to be part of a consortium. The purpose of these changes is to enable ordinary secondary schools to provide extra help, where needed, so that pupils do not have to be referred to a special school. There was a transitional period of four years, from August 1998 to August 2002, to give VSO-MLK and VSO-LOM schools time to decide whether they would, in future, provide learning support or practical training.

On 1 August 1998 a new approach to teaching was introduced in the second stage of HAVO and VWO with the emphasis on active learning through independent study ("het studiehuis"), coupled with fixed subject combinations designed to provide an integrated study programme. The upper years of HAVO and VWO are together referred to as the period of pre-higher education (VHO).

5.2. Ongoing debates

The future direction of secondary education

The Minister has set out the direction and main outline of policy on secondary education in a document entitled "Agenda for 2010: the pupil captivated, the school unfettered". This multi-year policy plan was submitted to the House of Representatives in June 2004. It was produced in an interactive process involving input from teachers, headteachers, parents, pupils, teacher training institutes and other stakeholders.

Funding model

There are plans to simplify the funding system for secondary education so that schools can plan their own activities more effectively and pursue their own policies to a greater extent. This is in line with the general policy of deregulation, increased autonomy and reducing the administrative burden. A bill containing the following measures has been presented to parliament:

- funding per calendar year instead of per school year;

- abolition of the pupil fluctuation factor, which took account of changes in the number of pupils during the course of the school year;
- drastic reduction in the number of factors affecting funding.

The new Act is due to enter into force on 1 January 2005.

Accountability, oversight and control

The supervision and control of the financial and educational activities of secondary schools, in other words the system of accountability, oversight and control, are to be tightened up in order to ensure that schools do not abuse the powers they will gain as a result of deregulation. This will be achieved by increasing the effectiveness of and cohesion between internal and external supervision of schools.

Reform of basic secondary education

Basic secondary education was evaluated by the Education Inspectorate in 1999. One of the conclusions was that the curriculum was overloaded and fragmented. In October 2001 the Education Council published recommendations on the future shape of the curriculum. Its findings, together with those of the Inspectorate, will form the basis for reform of the basic secondary education curriculum. In June 2004 a working group set up in October 2002 published its report on the future of the first stage of secondary education. Its main recommendations were as follows:

- the current attainment targets should be replaced by 58 revised targets for a core curriculum covering at least two-thirds of a two-year period;
- the minimum number of hours' teaching should be 950 hours (1 hour = 60 minutes), with a maximum of 1,150 hours, and no other restrictions;
- steps should be taken to improve internal quality assurance and the external accountability of the school towards pupils, parents and other stakeholders;
- measures should be taken to increase the employability of teachers and develop the skills of individual teachers.

These recommendations were adopted by the Minister, apart from the minimum and maximum number of hours' teaching, for which the Minister proposes a range of between 1,000 and 1,134 hours. New legislation based on these recommendations is expected to enter into force in August 2006. The term 'basic secondary education' will be replaced as of that date by the 'first stage' or 'lower years' of secondary education.

HAVO and VWO subject combinations

In future schools will have more control over the curriculum because there will be fewer compulsory elements and they will be able to offer optional specialised subjects as part of the four fixed subject combinations. The planned reforms to the second stage of secondary education will be prepared in 2004 and incorporated in a bill in early 2005. This will be followed by various pieces of secondary legislation. The new Act of Parliament is expected to enter into force on 1 August 2007. Committees have been set up to produce recommendations on further curricular reform in the long term.

Innovative projects

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has earmarked additional funds in 2004 for schools wishing to launch innovative projects to improve and reform the learning process in the broadest sense. This might take the form of out-of-school learning, for instance working for a company or voluntary organisation.

Future policy on eliminating educational disadvantage

The government feels that the distribution of responsibilities between school boards and municipal authorities with regard to compensatory policy for educationally disadvantaged children is not yet sufficiently clearly defined. As a result, it is not always apparent who should be held accountable. As schools and school boards are the main actors involved in implementing compensatory policy, they will be given more freedom to decide how the available funds should be spent. In particular, they will no longer be required to draw up a compensatory plan together with the municipal authorities, setting out their joint objectives, activities and spending plans.

The government wishes to encourage the conclusion of binding agreements between municipal authorities and school boards on the balanced distribution of disadvantaged pupils among schools in each area. School boards will be required to hold talks with the municipal authorities on ways of preventing segregation and promoting integration.

Funding for ethnic minority pupils

Under the Ethnic Minority Pupils Funding Scheme (CUMI-VO), schools can apply for extra funding for ethnic minority pupils who have been living in the Netherlands for between one and eight years, and who therefore classify as newcomers. This scheme is to be adapted so that it is no longer only the number of ethnic minority newcomers that determine the level of disadvantage within a school but also various kinds of problems that schools may encounter. The criteria to be applied are still being investigated.

Participation in decision-making

A bill amending the participation procedure in secondary education is in preparation. This bill, if enacted, would allow the competent authority to opt either for a participation structure as provided for by the Education Participation Act 1992 or for its equivalent under the Works Councils Act. The details, and indeed the desirability, of such a system have yet to be established in consultation with the parties concerned, including staff associations and organisations of school boards.

5.3. Specific legislative framework

The Secondary Education Act (WVO), which was revised on 1 August 1998, has been in force since 1968 and governs:

- pre-university education (VWO);
- senior general secondary education and junior general secondary education (HAVO and MAVO);
- pre-vocational education (VBO), including learning support;
- practical training;
- other forms of secondary education.

MAVO schools, VBO schools and combined schools offering both MAVO and VBO courses may decide to call themselves schools for pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) and most schools do so. There are 19 schools still using the name MAVO and 13 using the name VBO.

Since 1 August 1998 special secondary schools for children with learning difficulties (VSO-MLK) and children with learning and behavioural difficulties (VSO-LOM) have also been governed by the Secondary Education Act. These schools are now officially known as special schools for secondary education (SVO).

The main implementing regulations pertaining to secondary education are:

- the Basic Secondary Education (Attainment Targets and Recommended Number of Periods per Subject 1998-2003) Decree which contains details of the attainment targets for basic secondary education and the recommended number of periods per subject;
- the Secondary Education (Organisation of Teaching) Decree, which regulates teaching in the different types of school, including the admission requirements and the recommended number of periods per subject;
- the VWO-HAVO-MAVO-VBO Leaving Examinations Decree, which regulates the choice of examination subjects and stipulates how examination results are to be determined.

5.4. General objectives

The same general objective applies to the whole of secondary education, namely that education should contribute to the development of pupils with due regard to and respect for the different ideological and social values within Dutch society.

Future developments

Education has an important role to play in active citizenship. This applies to every school and every pupil. The government therefore intends to pass legislation requiring schools to devote more teaching time to citizenship education.

5.5. Types of institution

In 1999 MAVO and VBO were reorganised with a view to bringing these types of education more closely into line with further education and employment. They are now together known as pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO).

- Pre-vocational secondary education lasts four years and is intended as a foundation course as regards both the general and the pre-vocational component. VMBO is not therefore terminal education, but provides a basis for further vocational training. VMBO caters for pupils between the ages of 12 and 16. Pupils choose one of four different types of programme (learning pathways) and extra help is provided for those pupils who need it.
- Learning support is available for pupils who are lagging behind the rest of the class or have other problems but who are nonetheless deemed capable of obtaining a VMBO certificate. Teaching is tailored to individual needs. The duration of learning support, and the form it takes, can vary from pupil to pupil.
- Practical training is a new type of education, that is separate from the four learning pathways. It is aimed at pupils who are realistically deemed unlikely to obtain a qualification via one of the learning pathways, even with learning support. Unlike the four learning pathways, practical training does not lead on to secondary vocational education but prepares pupils for direct entry to the regional labour market.

Senior general secondary education (HAVO) lasts five years and is for pupils aged 12-17 years. It consists of a first stage (three years) and a second stage (two years). HAVO provides a general education and prepares pupils for entry to higher professional education.

Pre-university education (VWO) is for pupils aged 12-18 years and lasts six years. It consists of a first stage (three years) and a second stage (three years). There are three types of VWO school: the

“atheneum”, the “gymnasium” (where Greek and Latin are compulsory) and the “lyceum” (a combination of “atheneum” and “gymnasium”). VWO prepares pupils for university.

Most secondary teaching takes place within combined schools offering a number of different types of secondary education (VMBO, HAVO, VWO). Some are narrow-based and consist of a former VBO school and a former MAVO school. Others are broad-based and offer all the different VMBO programmes as well as HAVO and VWO. Schools offering the VMBO theoretical programme only, together with HAVO and VWO, are known as combined schools for general secondary education (AVO)

There are also schools which provide only one type of secondary education. There are no separate schools for HAVO. VMBO schools, schools providing practical training and special schools for secondary education are required to form part of a consortium.

As a result of the government’s mergers policy in the 1990s, the number of schools fell from 1,454 in 1992 to 784 in 2001/2002. Current policy, on the other hand, aims to promote small-scale schools and halt the creation of ever larger establishments.

5.6. Geographical accessibility

On average there is one secondary school per 61 km² in the Netherlands. Every year the Minister of Education, Culture and Science draws up a three-year plan for secondary schools that aims to achieve a balanced provision of educational facilities, taking into account the demand for education in each region.

5.7. Admission requirements and choice of school

5.7.1. Admission

5.7.1.1. First stage

Pupils are admitted to secondary school after leaving primary school or a special school for primary education, at an average age of 12.

Decisions on admission to VMBO, HAVO or VWO are made by the competent authority (school board), which may appoint an admissions board to take such decisions under its aegis. The admissions board consists of the head and one or more teachers from the school. It may also include heads and teachers from primary schools. The head of the child’s primary school is required to draw up a report on his or her educational potential and level of attainment (educational report).

For admission to VMBO, HAVO and VWO, pupils must be assessed to establish their suitability. The commonest method of assessment is for pupils to be tested in at least the final year of primary school, using tests developed centrally to gauge pupils’ level of knowledge and understanding. The National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO; see www.cito.nl) has developed a primary school leavers’ attainment test, which is used by over 90% of all Dutch primary schools (2004). Primary schools advise parents as to the type of secondary education most suited to their child on the basis of the CITO test results and the educational performance, interests and motivation of the child.

Since 1 August 1998, applications for admission to learning support departments and practical training courses have been assessed by a regional referral committee (RVC) on the basis of the educational

report and other documents supplied by the pupil's current school and a written submission from the parents. The committee then advises the school on whether to admit the child.

The regional referral committee issues a learning support statement for pupils eligible to receive learning support. The school at which the child is registered then receives extra funding which can be used in combination with funds from the regional special needs budget to provide support for either stated or non-stated children. A practical training statement from the regional referral committee is required for admission to practical training.

5.7.1.2. Second stage

From 2003 VMBO pupils who have successfully completed the theoretical programme will be able to transfer from VMBO to the fourth year of HAVO, provided their examination subjects included mathematics and either French or German. There may be other requirements as well. A VMBO pupil wanting to take the science and technology option at HAVO level, for instance, must have studied physics and chemistry, while a pupil wanting to take science and health must have studied biology, physics and chemistry. Pupils with HAVO certificates may likewise be admitted to the fifth year of VWO.

5.7.2. Choice of school

At secondary level, pupils are free to attend the school of their choice, provided they meet certain general conditions.

5.8. Registration and/or tuition fees

Education is free of charge up to the age at which full-time education is no longer compulsory. Schools may ask parents to contribute towards the cost of certain activities (parental contribution), but such contributions are voluntary and may not constitute an obstacle to the admission of pupils.

Under the School and Course Fees Act, fees have to be paid by all pupils and students aged 16 or over at the start of the school year (1 August). This applies to full-time pupils in secondary and special education and students in secondary vocational education (vocational training pathway) and adult general secondary education. These fees are collected by the Information Management Group (IB-Groep) on behalf of the Minister. The level of the fees is adjusted annually on the basis of the cost-of-living index. The fees for the 2004/2005 school year are set at €936. This can be paid in instalments.

5.9. Financial support for pupils

Financial aid for pupils is regulated in the Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS), which applies to:

- full-time pupils under the age of 18 in secondary education, special education or secondary vocational education (vocational training pathway) (WTOS 18-);
- full-time pupils in secondary education and special education aged 18 or over but under 30 (VO 18+).

Under this Act, parents can apply for help with the costs of sending their child to school. The study costs allowance is dependent on income and consists (in the case of the maximum possible award) of the full amount of the statutory fees payable and a contribution towards other study costs, such as the

cost of books and learning materials, travel and placements. It is not subject to income tax and does not have to be repaid.

5.10. Age levels and grouping of pupils

5.10.1. First stage

Most schools employ the year group system with children of the same age being placed together in the same class. Schools are free to group pupils by type of education or place pupils following different types of education in the same class.

Combined schools often group their pupils in combined classes in the first year or so. More than half of all first-year pupils are in mixed VMBO/HAVO or HAVO/VWO classes. At the end of the second year VMBO pupils choose a sector and a learning pathway. HAVO/VWO pupils have until the end of the third year to choose one of four fixed subject combinations. They are then regrouped in accordance with the choices made.

5.10.2. Second stage

At the end of the third year of HAVO and VWO (and in some cases at the end of the fourth year of VWO), pupils choose one of four subject combinations (see § 5.11.2.) and are regrouped accordingly. Examinations are all taken at the same level.

5.11. Specialisation of studies

5.11.1. First stage

Since the 1999/2000 school year VBO and MAVO have together been known as pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO). VMBO is not a vocational course as such but lays the basis for secondary vocational education (MBO) or, for pupils taking the theoretical programme, senior general secondary education (HAVO). After the period of basic secondary education, which lasts two years in VMBO, pupils specialise by opting for:

1. a particular sector: this is a group of subjects that lays the foundation for further training;
2. one of the pathways within that sector: each pathway comprises a distinctive, self-contained group of subjects and vocationally-oriented programmes. The system of learning pathways takes into account differences in the learning styles of pupils who may be either theoretically or practically inclined. The different programmes correspond with different styles of learning (from the more theoretical to the more practical). The choice of pathway has implications for the options open to pupils beyond VMBO;
3. a vocationally-oriented programme within the chosen pathway (NB. Pupils taking the theoretical programme study general subjects instead of a vocationally-oriented programme):
 - a. pupils can opt to specialise within one particular department (this programme leads on to vocational training in a specific occupation)
 - b. or they can delay choosing a specialisation by opting for an intrasectoral programme, which provides a broader base (see 'broad-based' options in the table below).

Pupils who have studied mathematics at VMBO level may go on to any MBO course, regardless of their choice of vocationally-oriented programme.

The specialisation stage lasts two years.

Sector	Learning pathway	Departments	Provided by	Leads on to
Engineering and technology	theoretical programme		former MAVO schools	MBO professional training (level 3) and MBO middle-management training (level 4) HAVO (only with maths and French or German at VMBO level)
	combined programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - building techniques - metalworking - motor mechanics - electrical engineering 	former MAVO/VBO schools	MBO professional training (level 3) and MBO middle-management training (level 4)
	middle-management vocational programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fitting techniques - printing technology - transport and logistics other:	former VBO schools	MBO professional training (level 3) and MBO middle-management training (level 4)
	basic vocational programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - metalworking/electrical engineering - fitting techniques/electrical engineering - construction - (broad-based) 	former VBO schools	MBO basic vocational training (level 2)
Care and welfare	theoretical programme		see under engineering and technology	see under engineering and technology
	combined programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - caring occupations - beauty care and hairdressing 		
	middle-management vocational programme	other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - care and welfare (broad-based) 		
	basic vocational programme			
Business	theoretical programme		see under engineering and technology	see under engineering and technology
	combined programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clerical work - commerce and retailing 		
	middle-management vocational programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fashion and clothing - catering other:		
	basic vocational programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - catering (broad-based) - commerce and clerical work 		

Sector	Learning pathway	Departments	Provided by	Leads on to
Agriculture	theoretical programme		see under engineering and technology	see under engineering and technology
	combined programme	- agriculture and the natural environment		
	middle-management vocational programme	other: - agriculture (broad-based)		
	basic vocational programme			

Special needs support is available to ensure that as many pupils as possible complete one of the learning pathways and obtain a VMBO certificate:

- Learning support (LWOO) is provided for pupils who need temporary help to cope with their chosen programme. The curriculum is the same as for pupils following the same programme.
- Practical training is available for pupils who are not expected to obtain a VMBO certificate. This is a special form of education preparing pupils for direct entry to the regional labour market. Special needs support is provided by special schools for secondary education (SVO).

In order to receive learning support or practical training, pupils must first obtain a statement of needs from the regional referral committee (RVC).

5.11.2. Second stage

All pupils entering the fourth year of HAVO and the fifth year of VWO have to choose one of the following four subject combinations:

- culture and society;
- economics and society;
- science and health;
- science and technology.

Each group of subjects includes:

- a common component, which occupies 40% to 46% of the curriculum;
- a specialised component (consisting of subjects relating to the chosen subject combination), occupying 36% to 38% of the curriculum, and
- an optional component occupying 18% to 21% of the curriculum (pupils are free to choose from the subjects offered by the school, including subjects provided through an arrangement with other schools; the number of optional subjects depends on the study load in the specialised component).

The educational reforms introduced in the second stage of secondary education involve a new approach to teaching ("het studiehuis") with the emphasis on knowledge acquisition and active learning through independent study rather than knowledge transfer (teaching). The teacher's role has therefore shifted from that of instructor to supervisor.

HAVO and VWO subject combinations

In future schools will have more control over the curriculum because there will be fewer compulsory elements and they will be able to offer optional specialised subjects as part of the four fixed subject combinations. The planned reforms to the second stage of secondary education will be prepared in

2004 and incorporated in a bill in early 2005. This will be followed by various pieces of secondary legislation. The new Act of Parliament is expected to enter into force on 1 August 2007. Committees have been set up to produce recommendations on further curricular reform in the long term.

5.12. Organisation of school time

5.12.1. Organisation of the school year

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science determines the dates of the school year and the length and dates of the summer holiday. In secondary schools, the school year runs from 1 August to 31 July of the following year. The summer holidays last seven weeks and are staggered across the three regions (northern, central and southern) into which the country is divided for this purpose. The length and dates of the summer holidays, and how they are staggered across the country, are prescribed by the Minister. The dates of the shorter holidays (autumn, Christmas, spring and May holidays) can be decided by the competent authority of the school (school board) without having to obtain the Minister's consent. The Minister recommends a period of one week's holiday after every seven to eight weeks of school.

5.12.2. Weekly and daily timetable

The Secondary Education Act (WVO) lays down the number of teaching periods for the period of basic secondary education (VMBO and the first three years of HAVO and VWO) in the form of a table showing the recommended number of periods. The number of periods in the second stage of secondary education (i.e. the upper years of HAVO and VWO, together known as pre-higher education) is based on the study load system. Teaching periods in the first stage of secondary education are assumed to last 50 minutes each and in the second stage of secondary education 60 minutes each. The length of a teaching period is not, however, prescribed by law. This is decided by the competent authority of the school (school board), which also determines when the school day starts and ends.

During the first three years of secondary education – the period of basic secondary education – the recommended number of periods is intended to serve as a guideline within which it is possible to achieve the attainment targets. The tables assume that teaching periods last 50 minutes and that the attainment targets can be achieved in 75% of the time recommended for each subject. Schools need not follow the tables exactly, since the attainment targets can be achieved in 75% of the time. In addition, there is a compulsory minimum number of periods for social studies, arts subjects and physical education in VMBO, HAVO and VWO. A total of at least 3,000 50-minute periods must, however, be provided in the subjects of the core curriculum.

In the first three years of VMBO, HAVO and VWO the minimum number of periods is 1,280 per year, based on 32 periods per week. In the fourth year of VMBO this becomes 1,200 hours, based on 30 periods per week.

In the second stage of HAVO and VWO – the period of pre-higher education (i.e. the last two years of HAVO and the last three years of VWO) – the standard study load per pupil is 1,600 hours per school year (40 hours a week for 40 weeks). This includes at least 1,000 hours of teaching during school time. These hours are "real" hours, i.e. 60 minutes, whereas in basic secondary education each teaching period is assumed to last 50 minutes.

The study load is calculated on the basis of the time required by the average pupil to master a particular quantity of material, both at school and at home. This covers every element of the curriculum, including writing up projects, reading, using a resource centre, excursions and homework. The study load for the second stage of HAVO is 3,200 hours (spread over two years), while for VWO it is 4,800 hours (spread over three years). The study load system has been compulsory since the 1999/2000 school year. Before that the timetable in both the first and second stages of HAVO and VWO was based on tables showing the recommended number of periods.

The school board or administration of each educational institution decides when the school day/working day will begin and end and how long lessons or lectures will be.

5.13. Curriculum, subjects and number of hours

5.13.1. Curriculum

The Secondary Education Act (WVO) states, for each type of education, which subjects must in any event be included in the curriculum. The Secondary Education (Organisation of Teaching) Decree prescribes the number of periods to be spent on each subject or group of subjects in the form of a table showing the recommended number of periods (for the period of basic secondary education and VMBO) or a study load table (for the period of pre-higher education, i.e. the second stage of HAVO and VWO). How this is distributed over each year group is up to the school, subject to statutory restrictions regarding the minimum number of hours' teaching, etc.

There is one table for the period of basic secondary education (i.e. the first three years of HAVO and VWO) and another covering the four years of VMBO, which incorporates the table for basic secondary education (see § 5.13.2.1.). The HAVO and VWO timetables are therefore based in the first three years on the table showing the recommended number of periods for basic secondary education and in the upper years (pre-higher education) on the study load table (see § 5.13.3.).

Basic secondary education refers to the core curriculum in the first stage of secondary education in the various types of school. Attainment targets have been set for the subjects in the core curriculum, indicating the knowledge, understanding and skills which pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the period of basic secondary education. The attainment targets set for the period from 1998 to 2003 will continue to apply indefinitely, until new targets are formulated in line with the ongoing reform of the curriculum in the first stage of secondary education (see § 5.2).

The school plan, school prospectus and right of complaint

Every school must have a school plan, updated every four years, describing the steps being taken to monitor and improve quality and indicating the school's policy on educational matters, staffing and internal quality assurance. Through this document, the school accounts to the Inspectorate for its policies. A school plan may cover one or more secondary schools and one or more other schools which share the same competent authority (school board). It must be approved by the participation council.

The school prospectus, which must be updated every year, contains information for parents and pupils about what goes on in the school, its objectives and the results achieved. It also gives details about the voluntary parental contribution and the rights and obligations of parents and pupils. The prospectus has to be approved by the parents, staff and pupils before publication.

The right of complaint supplements the existing opportunities for participation in decision-making and the management of the school. The school board is obliged by law to draw up a complaints procedure. Every school must also have a complaints committee with an independent chairperson.

National guide to secondary education

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science publishes an annual national guide to secondary education. The guide contains information for parents and pupils on their rights and obligations vis-à-vis the school. It is designed to help parents choose the right school for their child and be more involved in school matters. "Secondary school: a guide for parents, carers and pupils 2003-2004" can be consulted on the Ministry's website (www.minocw.nl/vo/gids2004nl/index.html).

5.13.2. First stage

5.13.2.1. Basic secondary education curriculum

During the period of basic secondary education pupils are taught a compulsory core curriculum of 15 subjects (1,000 periods of 50 minutes per year. The remaining 20% of teaching time (840 hours) may be used by schools for lessons and other educational activities at their own discretion. In the first three years of secondary school pupils must be taught for at least 1,280 periods of 50 minutes per year. Tables have been published giving the recommended number of periods to be spent on each subject, assuming that one period lasts 50 minutes.

There are three new subjects: technology, IT studies and life skills. The number of periods shown for the arts (visual arts education, music, dance and drama) and physical education is the prescribed minimum number of periods.

Language teaching

During the period of basic secondary education all pupils have to study English and either French or German. Pupils can, however, be exempted from studying French or German and study a different language instead. Dutch can be replaced by Frisian. Frisian is compulsory in the province of Friesland, unless the Education Inspectorate grants an exemption.

Under the current proposals for the reform of the basic secondary education curriculum, all pupils other than those following the VMBO basic vocational programme would have to study a second modern language as well as English, but would be able to choose from any of the modern languages listed in the Secondary Education Act, i.e. French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Arabic, Turkish or Frisian. These proposals were debated in the Lower House of Parliament in autumn 2004.

A third modern language is compulsory in the first three years of HAVO and VWO, while the "gymnasium" curriculum must also include Latin or Greek.

Recommended number of teaching periods: basic secondary education

Dutch	400
English	280
second modern language (French, German)	240
history and politics	200
geography	140
economics	80

mathematics	400
physics and chemistry	200
biology	120
life skills	100
IT studies	20
technology	180
physical education	360
visual arts education, music, drama, dance (at least two of these)	280

The remaining 20% of the timetable, which schools are free to use as they wish, can be employed for subjects such as Latin, religious education, mother tongue teaching or pre-vocational subjects or devoted to subjects from the core curriculum, private study or vocational orientation. The time need not be used in the same way for every pupil and its extent may vary for each year group.

Future developments

Various measures have been introduced in response to the problems encountered by schools in connection with basic secondary education. Since 2001, schools no longer have to cover all the attainment targets (and the associated subject matter). They also have more freedom to exempt groups of pupils from certain subjects or parts of subjects. At the same time, however, schools are required to devote a minimum number of periods to the core curriculum. The timetable during the first three years of secondary school comprises at least 32 periods per week. This adds up to a total of 96 periods over three years. Schools will therefore be required, for the time being, to spend at least 70 of the 96 periods available during the period of basic secondary education on the core curriculum. In addition, at least two periods a week will have to be spent on each core curriculum subject for one whole year. This is to safeguard the provision of non-examination subjects.

Basic secondary education has been evaluated by the Education Inspectorate. In its report the Inspectorate concludes that the principles of basic secondary education have not yet been fully implemented in all schools, that the curriculum is overloaded and fragmented, and that too little account is taken of the differences between pupils. In response to recommendations made by the Education Council and the Inspectorate's findings, the basic secondary education curriculum will be adapted as of 2006 (www.vernieuwingbasisvorming.nl). Two-thirds will be compulsory (core curriculum), and schools will be free to fill in the other third. It will be possible to complete the entire curriculum within two years, giving schools more scope to cater for differences between pupils. The content of the core curriculum, to be provided for all pupils, will be fixed centrally as of 1 August 2006 and will cover two-thirds of two years. In the meantime, temporary measures will be taken to relieve the burden on schools.

5.13.2.2. VMBO curriculum

The Secondary Education Act (WVO) specifies the subjects to be studied by VMBO pupils during the four-year course. Tables have been published giving the recommended minimum number of periods to be spent on each subject or group of subjects and on study skills, spread over four years. Because the recommended timetable for VMBO covers all four years of the course, it incorporates the table for basic secondary education which occupies the first two years of VMBO. At the end of the second year at the earliest pupils opt for a particular sector and learning pathway. Each sector (engineering and technology, care and welfare, business or agriculture) and each learning pathway (the theoretical

programme, combined programme, middle-management vocational programme or basic vocational programme) has its own curriculum. VMBO was introduced in the 1999/2000 school year.

In the recommended timetable for VMBO, one period is assumed to last 50 minutes. In the first three years the minimum number of periods is 1,280 per year, based on 32 periods per week. In the fourth year this becomes 1,200 hours, based on 30 periods per week. For some subjects, two figures are given: the number of periods to be provided for all pupils and an additional number of periods to be provided for pupils who have chosen that subject as one of their options.

The number of periods shown for social studies, the arts (music, drawing, handicrafts, dance and drama) and physical education is the prescribed minimum number of periods.

Each subject combination comprises:

- a common component;
- a sector-specific component comprising the following subjects:

Engineering and technology	mathematics and physics and chemistry I
Care and welfare	biology and either mathematics or social studies II
Business	economics and one of mathematics, French or German
Agriculture	mathematics and either biology or physics & chemistry I

- and an optional component.

The exam syllabus for each subject is approved by the Minister.

Recommended number of teaching periods: VMBO

	subjects	theoretical programme	vocational programmes		combined programme
			basic	middle-management	
common component	Dutch	600	520	560	600
	English	480	400	440	480
	social studies	80	80	80	80
	arts 1	320	320	320	320
	physical education	400	400	400	400
	second modern language	240 (200)	240 (120)	240 (160)	240 (200)
	third modern language	200 (200)	0	0	200 (200)
	history and politics	200 (200)	200 (120)	200 (160)	200 (200)
	geography	140 (200)	140 (120)	140 (160)	140 (200)
	social studies II	(200)	(120)	(160)	(200)
	mathematics	400 (200)	400 (120)	400 (160)	400 (200)
	physics and chemistry I	200 (200)	200 (120)	200 (160)	200 (200)
	physics and chemistry II	200	0	0	200
	biology	120 (200)	120 (120)	120 (160)	120 (200)
	economics	80 (200)	80 (120)	80 (160)	80 (200)
	arts II	200	0	0	200
	IT studies	20	20	20	20
	life skills	180	180	180	180
	technology	180	180	180	180
	study skills	80	80	80	80
	vocationally-oriented or intrasectoral programme	0	960	960	320

Since August 2001 schools providing basic vocational programmes have been able to offer programmes combining work and study. Work-study programmes are learning pathways within the basic vocational programmes that include an out-of-school practical component comprising between 640 full hours (80 days) and 1,280 hours (160 days), incorporated into the third and fourth year of the course. These programmes are specifically aimed at obtaining a basic qualification at basic vocational level. Pupils must at the least take classes in Dutch and the appropriate vocational subject. They must also sit examinations in these subjects. Examinations may also be taken in other subjects, but are not compulsory. Pupils are awarded a special diploma enabling them to go on to related courses at MBO level 2. As of 1 August 2006 different requirements will apply for pupils in the lower years who will be going on to work-study programmes.

Language teaching

English is compulsory in all VMBO programmes. In addition, pupils who have opted for the business sector have to study either a second modern language (French or German) or mathematics. Pupils who were exempt from studying French or German during the period of basic secondary education remain exempt, provided they instead study one of the following subjects: Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, social studies II, history and politics, or geography.

5.13.2.3. Practical training curriculum

Practical training (see also www.praktijkonderwijs.nl) includes at least Dutch language, arithmetic and mathematics, IT studies and physical education plus subjects that prepare pupils for jobs on the regional labour market. These subjects are chosen by the competent authority (school board) in consultation with the municipal authorities and, through them, local employers.

5.13.3. Second stage

A distinction needs to be made here between the curriculum as it was prior to the reforms in the second stage of secondary education and the situation thereafter. These reforms were introduced either in the 1998/99 school year or the 1999/2000 school year, depending on the individual school. Both curricula therefore existed alongside each other until the end of the 2002/2003 school year in the case of HAVO and the end of the 2003/2004 school year in the case of VWO.

From 1 August 1998 (or one year later) the number of periods taught in the second stage of HAVO and VWO have been based on study load. This system replaced the old system of tables showing the recommended number of periods, which was not designed to cope with the introduction of four subject combinations. The total number of hours' teaching for HAVO and VWO courses from the first to the final year have to be based on the table showing the recommended number of periods for basic secondary education and the study load for the upper years (years 4 and 5 for HAVO and years 4, 5 and 6 for VWO). The study load system is based on the time required by the average pupil to master a particular quantity of material. The total study load is calculated as 1,600 hours per year (40 weeks of 40 hours), at least 1,000 hours of which should consist of teaching during school time.

HAVO curriculum

The standard study load for the 4th and 5th years of HAVO combined amounts to:

- 1,480 hours for the common component;
- 1,160 hours for the specialised component;
- 560 hours for the optional component.

These hours are based on the time required by the average pupil. Unlike the recommended timetable for basic secondary education where each “hour” equates with a teaching period of 50 minutes, these hours are “real” hours, i.e. 60 minutes. The study load per subject is shown below.

HAVO subject combinations

The common component, specialised components and optional component comprise the following subjects:

A. Common component (for all pupils)

Dutch language and literature	400
English language and literature	360
French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian	
Arabic, Turkish or Frisian language and literature 1	160
general science	160
history and social studies	160
culture and the arts	120
physical education	120

B. Specialised components

1. Science and technology

mathematics B1&2	440
physics 1&2	440
chemistry	280

2. Science and health

mathematics B1	320
physics 1	240
chemistry	280
biology	320

Pupils may, if they wish, swap the half-subjects mathematics B1 and physics 1 for mathematics B1&2 and physics 1&2 respectively, both of which are full subjects.

3. Economics and society

economics 1&2	440
mathematics A1&2	280
history	240
geography	200

Pupils may, if they wish, swap the full subject mathematics A1&2 for the half-subject mathematics B1 or the full subject mathematics B1&2.

4. Culture and society (specialised component)

- a) one of the following half-subjects, to be combined with the corresponding half-subject from the common component: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Arabic, Turkish or Frisian language or literature

	200
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 or
 one of the following subjects: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Arabic, Turkish or Frisian language and literature 1&2

	360
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- b) the half-subject culture and the arts 2 with a study load of 120 hours, combined with one of the following half-subjects with a study load as indicated:

culture and the arts 3 (art and design)	240
culture and the arts 3 (music)	240

culture and the arts 3 (drama)	240
culture and the arts 3 (dance)	240
c) history	240
d) economics 1	200
e) mathematics A1	160

Pupils may, if they wish, swap the half-subject economics 1 for the full subject economics 1&2 and swap the half-subject mathematics A1 for mathematics A1&2 or mathematics B1&2 (both full subjects) or the half-subject mathematics B1.

Depending on the choices made, the total study load for pupils opting for science and health, economics and society or culture and society may be greater than the figure of 1,160 hours mentioned above.

C. Optional component

- a) any of the subjects or half-subjects listed for the specialised components. If the half-subject mathematics A1 or the full subject mathematics A1&2 is combined with the half-subject mathematics B1 or the full subject mathematics B1&2, the study load for the subject or half-subject mathematics, chosen as part of the optional component, is reduced by 160 hours.
- b) any of the following subjects (for pupils who did not study the language concerned during the period of basic secondary education):
- | | |
|---|-----|
| Spanish language and literature (for beginners) | 360 |
| Russian language and literature (for beginners) | 360 |
| Italian language and literature (for beginners) | 360 |
| Arabic language and literature (for beginners) | 360 |
| Turkish language and literature (for beginners) | 360 |
- c) any of the following subjects:
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| social studies | 200 |
| philosophy | 360 |
| management and organisation | 280 |
| information techn | 240 |
| physical education | 240 |
- d) subjects or other elements of the curriculum specified by the competent authority
- e) any of the following half-subjects:
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| French language and literature 1 | 160 |
| German language and literature 1 | 160 |
| Spanish language and literature 1 | 160 |
| Russian language and literature 1 | 160 |
| Italian language and literature 1 | 160 |
| Arabic language and literature 1 | 160 |
| Turkish language and literature 1 | 160 |
| Frisian language and literature 1 | 160 |
- f) subjects and half-subjects listed under the specialised components for VWO which do not correspond or overlap with subjects or half-subjects for HAVO

Future developments

In future schools will have more control over the curriculum because there will be fewer compulsory elements and they will be able to offer optional specialised subjects as part of the four fixed subject combinations. The planned reforms to the second stage of secondary education will be prepared in 2004 and incorporated in a bill in early 2005. This will be followed by various pieces of secondary

legislation. The new Act of Parliament is expected to enter into force on 1 August 2007. Committees have been set up to produce recommendations on further curricular reform in the long term.

VWO curriculum

The standard study load for the 4th, 5th and 6th years of VWO combined amounts to:

- 1,960 hours for the common component;
- 1,840 hours for the specialised component;
- 1,000 hours for the optional component.

These hours are based on the time required by the average pupil. Unlike the recommended timetable for basic secondary education where each "hour" equates with a teaching period of 50 minutes, these hours are "real" hours, i.e. 60 minutes. The study load per subject is shown below.

VWO subject combinations

The common component, specialised components and optional component comprise the following subjects and half-subjects:

A. Common component (for all pupils)

Dutch language and literature	480
English language and literature	400
French language and literature 1	160
German language and literature 1	160
general science	200
history and social studies	200
culture and the arts 1	200
physical education 1	160

B. Specialised components

1. Science and technology

mathematics B1&2	760
physics 1&2	560
chemistry 1&2	520

2. Science and health

mathematics B1	600
physics 1	360
chemistry 1	400
biology 1&2	480

Pupils may, if they wish, swap the half-subjects mathematics B1, physics 1 and chemistry 1 for mathematics B1&2, physics 1&2 and chemistry 1&2 respectively, all of which are full subjects.

3. Economics and society

economics 1&2	520
mathematics A1&2	600
history	360
geography	360

Pupils may, if they wish, swap the full subject mathematics A1&2 for the half-subject mathematics B1 or the full subject mathematics B1&2.

4. Culture and society (specialised component)

- a) one of the following half-subjects, to be combined with the corresponding half-subject from the common component:

French language and literature 2	320
----------------------------------	-----

German language and literature 2	320
or one of the following subjects:	
Spanish language and literature	480
Russian language and literature	480
Italian language and literature	480
Arabic language and literature	480
Turkish language and literature	480
Frisian language and literature	480
Latin language and literature	480
Greek language and literature	480
b) one of the subjects or half-subjects listed under a) with the study load indicated, or philosophy with a study load of 320 hours	
c) the half-subject culture and the arts 2 with a study load of 200 hours, combined with one of the following half-subjects with a study load as indicated:	
culture and the arts 3 (art and design)	280
culture and the arts 3 (music)	280
culture and the arts 3 (drama)	280
culture and the arts 3 (dance)	280
d) history	360
e) mathematics A1	360

Pupils may, if they wish, swap the half-subject mathematics A1 for mathematics A1&2 or mathematics B1&2 (both full subjects) or the half-subject mathematics B1.
Depending on the choices made, the total study load for pupils opting for science and health, economics and society or culture and society may be greater than the figure of 1,840 hours mentioned above.

C. Optional component

The optional component for all subject combinations at VWO level may comprise:

- a) any of the subjects or half-subjects listed for the specialised components.
If the half-subject mathematics A1 or the full subject mathematics A1&2 is combined with the half-subject mathematics B1 or the full subject mathematics B1&2, the study load for the subject or half-subject mathematics, chosen as part of the optional component, is reduced by 280 hours.
- b) any of the following subjects (for pupils who did not study the language concerned during the period of basic secondary education):
- | | |
|---|-----|
| Spanish language and literature (for beginners) | 480 |
| Russian language and literature (for beginners) | 480 |
| Italian language and literature (for beginners) | 480 |
| Arabic language and literature (for beginners) | 480 |
| Turkish language and literature (for beginners) | 480 |
- c) any of the following half-subjects:
- | | |
|-------------|-----|
| biology 1 | 160 |
| economics 1 | 280 |
- d) any of the following subjects:
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| social studies | 360 |
| management and organisation | 360 |
| information technology | 280 |

- e) classical culture with a study load of 200 hours (for pupils studying Latin language and literature and/or Greek language and literature)
- f) subjects or other elements of the curriculum specified by the competent authority.

All "gymnasium" pupils study classical culture instead of the half-subject culture and the arts 1, whatever the subject combination chosen. They may, however, opt for culture and the arts 1 as part of the optional component. All "gymnasium" pupils also take Latin language and literature and/or Greek language and literature, both of which have a study load of 480 hours.

Recommended number of teaching periods for VWO

The old and new systems continued to exist alongside each other until the end of the 2003/2004 school year. The old-style VWO examination was sat for the last time in 2004.

Future developments

In future schools will have more control over the curriculum because there will be fewer compulsory elements and they will be able to offer optional specialised subjects as part of the four fixed subject combinations. The planned reforms to the second stage of secondary education will be prepared in 2004 and incorporated in a bill in early 2005. This will be followed by various pieces of secondary legislation. The new Act of Parliament is expected to enter into force on 1 August 2007. Committees have been set up to produce recommendations on further curricular reform in the long term.

5.14. Teaching methods and materials

There are no detailed regulations with regard to the curriculum (content, teaching methods and materials), although the attainment targets for basic secondary education covering the period from 1998 to 2003 do, however, stress the importance of information and communication technology (ICT). Schools select their own textbooks and course materials. School books are purchased by the parents. Many schools operate a book fund, buying the books and renting them out to parents. Others make arrangements for books to be rented from book suppliers. The school plan must describe the subject matter covered and the teaching methods used. The leaving examination regulations provide guidance as to the content of the various curricula. The National Teaching Materials Information Centre (NICL) produces a guide to teaching materials which schools can use to compare existing and new products. The NICL is part of the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO; www.slo.nl -> leermiddelen).

The new approach to teaching which is part of the reforms in the second stage of secondary education ("het studiehuis") is geared to encouraging active learning through independent study.

5.15. Pupil assessment

Tests based on the attainment targets are set for each subject in the core curriculum (with the exception of physical education). The attainment targets are drawn up under the responsibility of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and describe what pupils are expected to achieve in terms of knowledge and skills by the end of the period of basic secondary education. Tests are taken in each subject or group of subjects. The method of testing is recorded in the school plan.

Interim assessment may also take place where subjects are not taught throughout the entire period of

basic secondary education. The final tests may not, however, be sat before the end of the second year of the course. Schools may supplement these tests with their own test papers and can decide when and in what order the tests are to be taken. The attainment targets set in 1998 for the period from 1998 to 2003 will continue to apply indefinitely until new targets have been formulated.

At the end of the second year, the competent authority (school board) will advise pupils as to which option they should choose. Pupils unable to achieve all the attainment targets may qualify for exemption from the attainment targets or from one or more subjects in the core curriculum. Decisions of this kind are taken by a committee appointed by the school board.

The package of tests supplied by the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO) for 2000 includes reference data (for certain subjects only) allowing teachers to compare their pupils' results with the scores obtained nationwide at schools offering the same, or different, types of education (www.cito.nl).

5.16. Progression of pupils

The school plan outlines the school's policy on educational and other matters, including the rules for promoting pupils to the next year.

5.16.1. First stage

During the period of basic secondary education, pupils may have to repeat a year or they may be admitted to the next year on a provisional basis.

Pupils may take up to five years to complete the first stage of secondary education (the four-year VMBO course or the first three years of HAVO and VWO). This may be extended to a maximum of six years for certain groups of pupils in VMBO, i.e. disabled pupils, pupils who received their primary schooling outside the Netherlands and pupils who have missed more than a year of schooling due to illness or circumstances beyond their control. The Inspectorate may, in exceptional cases, grant exemption from the five-year rule for pupils in these categories at the request of the head teacher.

5.16.2. Second stage

Pupils who have successfully completed the VMBO theoretical programme may transfer to HAVO, provided their examination subjects included mathematics and either French or German. There may be other requirements as well. A VMBO pupil wanting to take the science and technology option at HAVO level, for instance, must have studied physics and chemistry, while a pupil wanting to take science and health must have studied biology, physics and chemistry. Pupils with HAVO certificates may likewise be admitted to the fifth year of VWO.

5.17. Certification

5.17.1. VMBO

The VMBO leaving examination is in two parts: a school examination and a national examination. For some subjects, i.e. physical education, social studies and arts I, there is a school examination only.

The national examination consists, for all pupils, of a written exam and, for pupils taking the basic vocational programme or the middle-management vocational programme, a practical component as well. The school examination includes a project on a topic relating to the chosen sector. This is compulsory for all pupils, apart from those taking the basic vocational programme.

The final grade in each subject (or intrasectoral or vocationally-oriented programme) is calculated by combining the mark for the school examination and the mark for the national examination as follows:

- in the basic vocational programme, the mark in the school examination counts as 2/3 of the grade and the mark in the national examination as 1/3;
- for the other learning pathways, each counts as half.

Not all subjects are marked in figures:

- physical education and arts I are marked as 'satisfactory' or 'good';
- the grade obtained in the school examination for social studies counts in its entirety towards the final results.

learning pathway component	theoretical programme	combined programme	basic vocational programme	middle-management vocational programme
common component	Dutch language, English, social studies, physical education, arts I (5 subjects)			
exams: common component	Dutch language and English: school exam and national written exam; physical education, social studies and arts I: school exam only			
sector-specific component	2 subjects	2 subjects	2 subjects	2 subjects
exams: <i>sector-specific component</i>	school exam and national written exam			
optional component	2 subjects from the sector-specific component not already chosen as part of that component	1 general subject from the sector-specific component + 1 departmental subject from that component or an intrasectoral programme	1 departmental subject or an intrasectoral programme	1 departmental subject or an intrasectoral programme
exams: <i>optional component</i>	school exam and national written exam		school exam, national written exam and national practical exam	

VMBO pupils sat the new national examinations for the first time in 2003. This mainly affects the general subjects in the basic and middle-management vocational programmes and vocational subjects in the basic and middle-management vocational programmes and the combined programme.

5.17.2. HAVO and VWO

On 1 August 1998 a new examination syllabus for every subject in HAVO and VWO was introduced that ties in with the four subject combinations. The school-leaving examinations are in two parts: a national examination held in the final year and a component organised by the school, known as the school exam. For some subjects there is a school exam only.

The school exam takes the form of an examination portfolio comprising various elements as documented in a form decided upon by the school, e.g. a list of grades or examples of project work. The requirements to be met by the school exam, as approved by the Minister for Education, Culture and Science, are set out in the examination syllabus and cover all the elements that make up the examination portfolio for each subject. The separate elements of the school exam are not all scheduled for the final year. Each school can decide when the various parts of the exam are to be held. In the case of subjects for which there is a school exam only, the exam can be held before the final year, for instance at the end of the fourth year.

The national examination consists of the same questions – or questions of an equivalent degree of difficulty – for all pupils and is assessed against national standards. It is taken at the time specified by the government, which is the same for all HAVO schools and all VWO schools respectively.

The HAVO and VWO school-leaving examinations cover the following subjects:

- the subjects that make up the common component, including the literature element of language studies, for which a separate mark is awarded, although there is no separate study load;
- the relevant specialised subjects, including a project with a study load of 80 hours;
- pupils cannot be examined twice in the same subject, e.g. they can sit the exam in economics 1 or in economics 1,2, but not in both;
- pupils can, however, sit exams in both mathematics A and mathematics B;
- subjects or other elements of the curriculum that make up the optional component.

Not every subject taken as part of the optional component has to be an exam subject. The optional component generally accounts for 120 hours of the exam syllabus, depending on the study load in the specialised component. Schools may offer pupils the chance to take additional subjects – bringing the study load to over 120 hours – without sitting an exam in them.

Marks are awarded on a scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent). A six is a pass. Pupils can still be awarded an overall pass mark even if they get a lower grade in up to two subjects (either two fives or one four and one five is acceptable). Pupils who get a grade of 3 or lower in any of their subjects have failed. In addition, pupils must have no more than one grade 4 or 5 in their specialised subjects.

Successful candidates at both HAVO and VWO level receive a national HAVO or VWO certificate and a transcript listing the grades achieved in the school exam, the exam syllabus followed for each subject and the grades achieved in the national examination, the topic or title of the project undertaken together with the subjects studied for it and the mark obtained, the mark obtained for the subjects culture and the arts 1 and physical education 1, the final grades obtained for the examination subjects and the outcome of the school-leaving examination.

There are different VWO certificates for atheneum and gymnasium, but both qualify pupils to enter university and higher professional education.

The HAVO qualification gives entry to higher professional education, but school-leavers with HAVO certificates can also enter the fifth year of VWO or go on to secondary vocational courses.

5.18. Educational/vocational guidance and education/employment links

5.18.1. VMBO

VMBO is not designed as terminal education but is intended to lay the basis for further education. The majority of pupils with VMBO qualifications go on to MBO. In August 1999 four learning pathways were introduced in VMBO in an attempt to facilitate the transition to MBO (see § 5.11.1. Specialisation). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the vocational education sector have taken various measures in recent years to make it easier for students to move up through VMBO and MBO to higher professional education (HBO).

5.18.2. HAVO and VWO

It is the government's aim that every school-leaver entering the labour market possess at least the minimum qualifications for entry to a profession. HAVO provides a general education and is therefore not intended as terminal education. Its purpose is to prepare pupils for entry to higher professional education (HBO). In practice, however, school-leavers with HAVO certificates also opt to move across into VWO or go on to MBO. The purpose of VWO is to prepare pupils for university entry (WO). However, some school-leavers with VWO qualifications go on to HBO. New subject combinations have been introduced in HAVO and VWO (see § 5.11.2.) with the aim of improving the interface with higher education.

5.19. Private education

Private schools are governed by the same legislation as public-authority schools. Article 23 of the Constitution places public and private schools on an equal financial footing. As a condition of funding from the public purse, the law lays down that private educational establishments must be maintained by a legal person with full legal competence, whose aim is to provide education, without any profit-making motive.

The competent authority (school board) of a private school is the board of the association or foundation that set it up, foundations being the most common. Private schools are established by private individuals. Though there are some non-denominational private schools, the majority are denominational. Most of these are Roman Catholic and Protestant, but there are also Muslim, Hindu and Jewish schools, among others.

5.20. Organisational variations and alternative structures

There are no alternative types of school within secondary education.

5.21. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken: Key Figures 1999-2003 Education Culture and Science in the Netherlands.

5.21.1. Pupils

5.21.1.1 Number of pupils (x 1000) and % of ethnic minority pupils per type of school

Number of pupils	2002		2003	
	number	%	number	%
Total (mainstream secondary)	879.8	9.6	889.9	9.1
Total (mainstream, excl. special needs)	777.6	7.3	787.0	7.2
years 1 and 2	334.3	8.8	339.0	8.2
VBO year 4	0.7	3.8	-	-
VMBO basic vocational prog. years 3 and 4	39.5	13.5	36.6	14.6
VMBO middle-man. vocational prog. years 3 and 4	45.5	9.1	44.7	9.8
VMBO theoretical prog. years 3 and 4	80.2	7.8	80.1	8.1
VMBO combined prog. years 3 and 4	14.9	5.8	15.8	6.2
HAVO/VWO year 3	78.8	4.3	80.6	4.6
HAVO years 4 and 5	88.0	4.7	91.4	5.1
Number of pupils	2002		2003	
	number	%	number	%
VWO years 4 to 6	95.7	3.1	98.8	3.3

Total (mainstream, with special needs)	102.2	26.4	102.9	24.1
learning support years 1 and 2	46.7	28.3	44.4	22.6
learning support/basic voc. prog. years 3 and 4	27.0	22.9	27.7	23.3
learning support/middle-management vocational prog. years 3 and 4	3.5	21.7	4.7	22.3
learning support/combined prog. years 3 and 4	0.4	14.2	0.6	15.5
learning support/theoretical prog. years 3 and 4	1.5	5.6	1.0	5.4
learning support year 4	0.4	25.3	-	-
SVO-LOM	-	-	-	-
SVO-MLK	-	-	-	-
practical training	22.7	28.8	24.5	29.0

SVO-LOM: schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties

SVO-MLK: schools for children with learning difficulties

5.21.1.2. Schools

Number of secondary schools and percentage distribution of pupils

A) Type of school	2002		2003	
	schools	% pupils	schools	% pupils
Secondary education: total	680	100.0	667	100.0
SVO-LOM	-	-	-	-
SVO-MLK	-	-	-	-
Practical training	116	2.0	111	2.0
VBO	12	0.3	12	0.4
VBO/practical training	1	0.2	1	0.2
AVO (one type only)	23	1.0	21	0.9
VWO	39	2.9	39	2.9
AVO (combined school)	152	19.5	148	19.8

A) Type of school	2002		2003	
	schools	% pupils	schools	% pupils
Narrow-based AVO/VBO	42	3.9	41	3.6
Narrow-based AVO/VBO + practical training	4	0.5	4	0.5
Broad-based AVO/VBO	234	54.2	227	52.7
Broad-based AVO/VBO + practical training	45	14.3	50	15.8

VSO-LOM: schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties

VSO-MLK: schools for children with learning difficulties

AVO: general secondary education

5.21.2. Percentage distribution of schools by denomination

B) Denomination	2002		2003	
	% schools	% pupils	% schools	% pupils
Total	100	100	100	100
public	30	27	29	27
private non-denominational	12	9	12	10
Protestant	22	25	22	24
RC	26	27	26	27
combination	11	13	11	13

5.21.3. Staff

A) Staff in FTEs (x 1000)	2002	2003
Total	80.1	81.9
- teachers only	60.9	61.7
B) Female staff (%)		
Total	37.0	38.1
- heads/deputies	14.8	16.3
- teachers	36.2	37.4
C) Average age		
Total	45.2	45.2
- heads/deputies	51.5	51.6
- teachers	44.7	44.7
D) Percentage aged 50+		
Total	39.9	40.9
	2000	2001
E) Ratios		
pupil-teacher ratio	17.1	17.1

6. Tertiary education

Higher education comprises higher professional education (HBO) and university education (WO). These types of education are provided by HBO institutions (“hogescholen”) and universities respectively.

Higher professional education

HBO institutions provide theoretical and practical training for occupations for which a higher vocational qualification is either required or useful. Graduates find employment in various fields, including middle and high-ranking jobs in trade and industry, social services, health care and the public sector.

University education

Universities combine academic research and teaching. University education focuses on training in academic disciplines, the independent pursuit of scholarship and the application of scholarly knowledge in the context of a profession and aims to improve understanding of the phenomena studied in the various disciplines and generate new knowledge.

6.1. Historical overview

6.1.1. Higher professional education

Higher professional education was brought under the Secondary Education Act (WVO) in 1968. A sharp rise in student numbers followed. From 1986 to 1993 higher professional education came under a separate Act, the Higher Professional Education Act (WHBO). Since 1993 it has been governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW).

In 1984, the Open University of the Netherlands was established in order to offer adults a means of pursuing higher education without admission requirements and at their own pace, through distance education. The Open University Act (WOU) of 1985 gave the Open University of the Netherlands its own statutory framework.

6.1.2. University education

The second half of the twentieth century has seen a massive growth in university education in the Netherlands. University education had traditionally been confined to only a small group, but in the fifties the universities began gradually to expand. Government increased its spending on education and, between 1960 and 1975 in particular, the universities grew by leaps and bounds. The expansion of the student finance system helped to make a university education attainable for a much larger group of students.

6.1.3. Higher distance education

In 1984, the Open University of the Netherlands was established in order to offer adults a means of pursuing higher education without admission requirements and at their own pace, through distance education. The Open University Act (WOU) of 1985 gave the Open University of the Netherlands its own statutory framework. In 1993, however, it was brought under the Higher Education and Research Act. The Open University may offer both HBO and university courses.

6.2. Ongoing debates

New funding formula for higher education

A new funding formula for higher education is to be introduced in 2006. The formula is designed to be more demand-driven and less susceptible to fraud, and to increase quality. It will also take greater account of the flexibility enjoyed by students in determining what to study and how long they take to complete their studies. The precise details have yet to be decided.

New Higher Education Act

A new Higher Education Act is being drafted. It should enable higher education institutions to respond better to demand from students and business. The government and society also want more insight into institutions' performance.

Admissions policy

Experimental legislation will come into force for the academic years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. Institutions will be permitted to admit students who do not hold the qualifications required by law for admission, provided they have acquired knowledge and experience of an equivalent level. Initiatives of this kind will be assessed by a committee set up on 1 June 2004 to carry out the following tasks:

- assessing proposed flexible admissions experiments in the academic years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007;
- assessing proposed initiatives from universities and HBO institutions to prepare in the 2004/2005 academic year for such experiments;
- other activities relating to admissions policy.

The committee will publish its final report by 1 January 2006.

6.3. Specific legislative framework

The Higher Education and Research Act came into force in 1993. It provided a single statutory framework for university education, higher professional education and the Open University, which had previously been governed by the University Education Act, the Higher Professional Education Act and the Open University Act respectively. There is also the Student Finance Act 2000 (WSF 2000).

The Higher Education and Research Act contains general provisions applicable to the entire higher education sector. It also includes:

- provisions that apply specifically to higher professional education, the universities or the Open University. These relate to the structure of courses and institutions;
- parameters relating to the organisation of teaching, such as entry requirements with regard to previous education, and study loads;
- regulations concerning examinations, students, participation in decision-making, staff, planning and funding;
- provisions governing cooperation between institutions.

The main implementing regulations pertaining to higher education are the Funding Decree and the Implementation Decree. The Funding Decree regulates the central government grant to publicly and privately run institutes of higher professional education ("hogescholen") and universities, the Open University of the Netherlands and the teaching hospitals. The Implementation Decree contains more detailed regulations on the functioning of higher education.

The Quality and Practicability Act of 1996 (amending the Higher Education and Research Act) was based on agreements reached with the universities, higher professional education institutions and student organisations on a number of measures to improve the quality and “practicability” of higher education courses. These included changes to the students’ charter, which sets out the rights and obligations of students, and improved arrangements for payments to students who, owing to special circumstances, have not completed their studies but are no longer eligible for student support. Students in this situation are entitled to payment from a special fund set up for this purpose by the institution.

CROHO

The Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO) is a systematically arranged collection of data on the courses provided by higher education institutions. Registration means that:

- the institution concerned is entitled to funding for that course from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science or the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality;
- full-time students and students on dual courses combining working and learning who are enrolled on registered courses are eligible for student support;
- institutions may award certificates and official academic titles subject to the provisions of the Higher Education and Research Act.

There is a separate category for approved institutions, which do not receive government funding for courses entered on the register but are entitled to award certificates in accordance with the Higher Education and Research Act. They can also set their own fees, regardless of the statutory rate. Full-time and dual-course students at approved institutions are, however, eligible for student support, and the institutions are authorised to award degrees in accordance with the Higher Education and Research Act. The Information Management Group (IBG) is responsible for establishing, managing and publicising the register and supplying information from it. The Central Register of Higher Education Enrolment (CRIHO), which contains the enrolment details of all students in higher education, is also managed by the IBG.

Bachelor-master system

The purpose of introducing the bachelor-master system and accreditation is to create a more open system of higher education in the Netherlands, in which it is the quality of individual courses that counts rather than the quality of the institution providing the course. University students are entitled to complete their studies under the old system. Each university may set a reasonable period within which they may do so.

The introduction of accreditation and the bachelor-master system has altered the structure of Dutch higher education. The distinction between higher professional education and university education in terms of their respective goals remains. A new credit system, based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), has been introduced, under which sixty credits equate with the workload of a full-time student during one academic year (1 credit being equal to 28 hours of study). A university degree programme consists of:

- a bachelor’s part (180 credits);
- followed by a master’s part (60 credits).

There are also longer master’s courses:

- teacher training (60-120 credits);
- medicine, veterinary science and pharmacy (180 credits);

- dentistry, philosophy, engineering and technology (120 credits).

Universities will still be able to offer combined bachelor's-master's courses for the time being, however. In higher professional education, first degree courses are bachelor's courses consisting of 240 credits. HBO institutions will also be able to offer official HBO master's degree courses. The advanced courses they now offer (see § 6.18.1) will remain until they are discontinued or converted into master's courses by royal decree. Those offered at present will be officially recognised on condition that they obtain accreditation from the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO; www.nvao.net).

Accreditation is an indispensable element of the bachelor-master system. This entails giving courses that meet certain quality standards an official stamp of approval. Accreditation is an independent form of certification based on an integrated assessment of the quality of an entire degree course. Bachelor's and master's degrees may be awarded and students on accredited courses are eligible for financial assistance. Academic titles may be used by graduates of accredited courses only. Institutions need to have their accreditation renewed by an independent accrediting body every six years. The NVAO accredits HBO and university courses, based on assessments by review and assessment boards (VBIs). VBIs assess the quality of courses according to criteria drawn up by the NVAO. Internationally accepted criteria have to be used in order to ensure that Dutch degrees are comparable to those awarded elsewhere. The focus is on accrediting existing courses and assessing new courses. Existing courses are periodically accredited. New higher education courses have to be tested before they are introduced, thus guaranteeing they satisfy quality requirements. Applications for accreditation are dealt with using a standard procedure.

6.4. General objectives

Higher education comprises higher professional education (HBO) and university education (WO). These types of education are provided by HBO institutions ("hogescholen") and universities respectively.

6.4.1. Higher professional education

Higher professional education (HBO) provides theoretical and practical training for occupations which require a higher vocational qualification. The HBO institutions are responsible for providing higher professional education and may conduct research that is related to the courses they provide. In addition, they must in any event provide bachelor's courses (and may also provide master's courses) and transfer knowledge for the benefit of the community. They also contribute to the development of those occupations to which their teaching is geared.

6.4.2. University education

University education comprises training in the independent pursuit of scholarship and/or the application of scholarly knowledge in the context of a profession. The core business of universities is to teach and to carry out research. To these tasks, the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) has added the transfer of knowledge for the benefit of the community, the provision of initial education (i.e. first degree) courses and the training of researchers and design engineers. University education includes both the study of academic disciplines and specialised training for certain occupations.

6.5. Types of institution

6.5.1. Higher professional education

Higher professional education is provided at “hogescholen” (institutions of higher professional education) and is for students aged 17 and over. HBO establishments generally offer courses in several different fields.

Institutions are required to have at least 700 enrolled students, with the exception of those providing only primary school teacher training, which must have no fewer than 250 students. The average size of HBO institutions is increasing as a result not only of mergers but of rising student numbers.

There are 54 government-funded higher professional education institutions. In addition, there are 63 approved institutions of higher professional education which fall under the Higher Education and Research Act but do not receive funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

First degree – or initial – courses consist of 240 credits. To complete the course, students must obtain this number of credits and pass their final examination. In addition to the range of initial courses of higher professional education, there are also a small number of advanced courses open to students who have already completed a higher education course.

Bachelor-master system

Existing first degree courses were officially given the status of bachelor’s courses as of 1 September 2002. HBO institutions can now also offer HBO master’s degree courses that are recognised by law. All bachelor’s and master’s courses must be accredited by the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). The existing advanced courses will remain until they are discontinued by royal decree. A bachelor’s degree awarded by an HBO institution will qualify its holder for a master’s course at either an HBO institution or a university. However, universities will usually require holders of such degrees to complete a bridging programme. HBO institutions and universities will set their own intake requirements.

6.5.2. University education

Degree courses are provided at 14 universities, including the Open University (see § 6.18.3). Three universities – the technical universities in Delft (TUD), Eindhoven (TUE) and Twente (UT) – focus predominantly on engineering and technology. The Agricultural University in Wageningen comes under the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. Besides the 14 universities, there are a number of approved institutions (see § 6.3), including five offering theological courses, one offering a degree course in humanism, and Universiteit Nyenrode (the Netherlands Business School).

6.6. Admission requirements

Anyone wishing to enrol on a higher education course must have the necessary educational qualifications. Additional requirements regarding educational qualifications can be laid down by ministerial order. There is a central admissions system. Some courses are subject to a quota (“numerus fixus”): if demand exceeds the number of places available, places are allocated by means of a draw or, if the institution so wishes, it may select students itself. Others have a restricted intake because the supply of graduates in that subject exceeds demand on the labour market. Otherwise,

students are free to study at whichever institution they wish.

6.6.1. Higher professional education

Applicants wishing to be admitted to higher professional education must possess:

- a senior general secondary education (HAVO) certificate;
- a middle-management or specialist training certificate;
- a pre-university education (VWO) certificate.

Prospective students who do not possess the required qualifications may be admitted after passing a *viva voce* examination. This entrance examination may only be taken by those aged 21 or over. This lower age limit may be waived in the case of courses in the fine and performing arts. In exceptional cases, younger students may also take a *viva voce* examination.

Applicants possessing any of the above qualifications have in principle the right to be admitted, but additional requirements regarding the subjects studied can be laid down by ministerial order. In 1999, four subject combinations (see § 5.11.2) were introduced in HAVO and VWO. Since 2001, HBO institutions have had to indicate which of these subject combinations are required for admission to each course. Applicants with less suitable subject combinations may still be eligible for admission depending on the optional subjects taken at school. Students who received their secondary education certificate before subject combinations were introduced will be admitted to HBO courses until the 2004/2005 academic year on the basis of the old system, under which they may be required to have passed examinations in one or two subjects laid down by ministerial order. From the 2005/2006 academic year onwards, students may be admitted following an examination by the institution to determine whether they satisfy equivalent requirements.

In addition to educational requirements, institutions may impose supplementary requirements relating to the profession for which the course trains students or to the course itself. These requirements may only relate to matters not covered during the student's previous schooling. Prospective students must first contact the institution concerned, which then decides whether they meet the supplementary requirements and can be admitted.

Admission to *numerus fixus* courses

Like the universities, HBO institutions have a central admissions system. In addition, for courses subject to a quota ("*numerus fixus*"), there is a weighted draw for places followed by selection by the institutions themselves. Prospective students must apply to the Central Applications and Placement Office (CBAP). Where no restrictions on numbers apply, students are free to enrol on whichever course and at whichever institution they wish. *Numerus fixus* courses are those where the maximum number of first-year students that may be admitted to a particular course and/or institution is restricted. Places are allocated by means of a weighted draw or by the institutions themselves. The higher a student's average examination grade, the higher his or her chances of gaining admission via the draw.

There are three types of *numerus fixus*:

- a **national quota** or **course-related quota**. This applies where the joint capacity of all the institutions providing a particular course is insufficient for the number of students wishing to enrol on that course.
- a **labour market-related quota**, which is imposed when the supply of graduates from a particular course exceeds or is likely to exceed demand for a sustained period.
- an **institution quota**, which applies when there is sufficient capacity within the sector as a

whole but insufficient places at one or more individual institutions.

A new system for numerus fixus courses was introduced in 1999. Half of the places are allocated via a draw, and half may be awarded by the institution itself. However, prospective students with an average grade of 8 or higher do not have to take part in the draw and are automatically awarded a place, provided they have the right combination of subjects. Applicants may take part in no more than two draws. Those with an unsuitable combination of subjects are no longer allowed to take part in a draw.

6.6.2. University education

Admission to university is possible with a pre-university (VWO) school-leaving certificate or an HBO qualification or HBO propaedeutic certificate. Prospective students aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may be admitted to university after a *viva voce* examination.

In 1999, four subject combinations were introduced in HAVO and VWO (see also § 5.11.2). Since 2001, universities have had to indicate which of these subject combinations, possibly in combination with additional subjects, are required for admission to each course. Applicants with less suitable subject combinations may still be eligible for admission depending on the optional subjects taken at school. Students who received their secondary education certificate before subject combinations were introduced will be admitted to university courses on the basis of the old system until the 2004/2005 academic year. For some courses, they may be required to have passed examinations in one or two subjects laid down by ministerial order. From the 2005/2006 academic year onwards, students may be admitted following an examination by the institution to determine whether they satisfy equivalent requirements.

Admission to numerus fixus courses

As with HBO institutions, there is a central admissions system. For courses subject to a quota ("numerus fixus"), there is also a weighted draw for places followed by selection by the institutions themselves. Prospective students must apply to the Central Applications and Placement Office (CBAP). Where no restrictions on numbers apply, students are free to enrol on whichever course and at whichever university they wish. Numerus fixus courses are those where the maximum number of first-year students that may be admitted to a particular course and/or institution is restricted. Places are allocated by means of a weighted draw or by the institutions themselves. The higher a student's average examination grade, the higher his or her chances of gaining admission via the draw.

There are three types of numerus fixus:

- a **national quota**, where the joint capacity of all the institutions providing a particular course is insufficient for the number of students wishing to enrol on that course.
- a **labour market-related quota**, which is imposed when the supply of graduates from a particular course exceeds or is likely to exceed demand for a sustained period.
- an **institution quota**, when there is sufficient capacity within the sector as a whole but insufficient places at one or more individual institutions.

A new system for numerus fixus courses was introduced in 1999. Half of the places are allocated via a draw, and half may be awarded by the institution itself. However, prospective students with an average grade of 8 or higher do not have to take part in the draw and are automatically awarded a place, provided they have the right combination of subjects. Applicants may take part in no more than two draws. Those with an unsuitable combination of subjects are no longer allowed to take part in a draw.

6.7. Registration and/or tuition fees

Students in higher education pay tuition fees to the institution. As long as they continue to receive student finance, they are charged the statutory rate for tuition fees. The annual statutory tuition fees for the 2004/2005 academic year are €1,476. The level of the statutory fees is fixed by law and is adjusted every year in line with the family spending index. Students aged 30 or over have to pay fees at a separate rate, the level of which is set by the institution itself and can therefore vary from one institution to another.

6.8. Financial support for students

The **Student Finance Act 2000** (WSF 2000) applies to students in higher education who are under the age of 34 and who began their studies before the age of 30. Every student enrolled on an accredited full-time course in higher education who satisfies the applicable conditions is entitled to a non-means-tested basic grant. Depending on their parents' income, students may be able to claim a supplementary grant in addition to the basic grant. The size of the basic grant and the supplementary grant depends on the type of education (higher education or adult/vocational education) and on whether or not the student is living away from home. Students may also take out an interest-bearing loan, subject to a ceiling. Since 1 January 1995, student loans have no longer been related to parental income. Some students may qualify for a single parent allowance or an allowance for their partner. These allowances are paid in addition to the basic grant and are not dependent on parental income.

All students in receipt of financial aid are entitled to a public transport pass giving unrestricted free travel on public transport throughout the Netherlands. Students can choose between a week-day pass and a weekend pass. The week-day pass entitles them to unrestricted travel during the week and reduced-rate travel (40-50% off) at the weekend, while the weekend pass allows free travel at the weekend and cheap travel during the week.

Students aged 30 or over do not forfeit their entitlement to financial assistance as long as they are still following without interruption the same course of study they were following when they turned 30. Higher education institutions have been given special funds with which to make financial provision for students whose progress has been delayed due to circumstances beyond their control or exceptional personal circumstances (course completion funds).

a. Students who enrolled before 1 September 1996: **progress-related grant**

- Students have to obtain a minimum number of credits each academic year, namely 50% of the standard study load for that year.
- If they fail to do so, their grant for that year will be converted into an interest-bearing loan.
- If, however, during the full duration of the course plus one year, they succeed in obtaining the full number of credits for the whole course, this step can be reversed. This type of grant is known as a progress-related grant.
- There is also a limit to the length of time for which a student can claim financial assistance in higher education.
- The maximum period for assistance in the form of a non-repayable grant is equivalent to the official course duration plus one year's grace.
- After this period, students are entitled to a maximum of two years' assistance in the form of an interest-bearing loan, provided they have not exceeded the maximum period of enrolment.

- b. Students who enrolled after 1 September 1996: **performance-related grant**
- A new type of grant, known as a performance-related grant, was introduced on 1 September 1996 for students entering higher education in that or subsequent years.
 - Most higher education courses last 48 months. During this time all students are entitled to a non-means-tested basic grant and possibly a supplementary grant which is dependent on income.
 - Students who need longer to complete their studies can then apply for an interest-bearing loan for a further 36 months.
 - The basic grant and supplementary grant are paid out in the form of a performance-related grant. This works on the principle of “loan then grant”. The amount of the basic grant and supplementary grant are initially received as a loan. The student must obtain a degree within ten years of starting his or her studies for the loan to be converted into a non-repayable grant. Up to 1 September 2004, it had been possible to permanently convert the loan received in the first year into a grant even if the ten-year time limit for obtaining a degree was not met.
 - The travel allowance is also performance-related for students in higher education who first received financial aid on or after 1 September 1999.
- c. As of 1 September 2001, students from a member state of the European Economic Area studying in the Netherlands and following a course for which student finance is available, will be entitled to financial assistance under the Student Finance Act 2000. They will qualify for an allowance equivalent to the basic grant for students living at home, although not for a public transport pass. The allowance is paid in the form of a non-repayable grant.

6.9. Organisation of the academic year

6.9.1. Academic year

In higher education, the academic year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year.

6.9.2. Weekly timetable in higher education

The length of higher education courses is defined in the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) in terms of the study load, which is expressed in credits. As a rule, the study load of a course is equal to 240 credits, i.e. 60 credits per year for a total of four years. The study load for engineering and science courses lasting five years is 300 credits. A credit is equivalent to 28 hours of study (see § 6.3). The length and timing of lectures in higher education are not laid down by law but are set out by the administration of the institution in the teaching and examination regulations for that institution.

6.10. Fields of study

6.10.1. Higher professional education

Government-funded higher professional education courses cover the following seven areas: Education, Economics, Behaviour and Society, Language and Culture, Engineering and Technology, Agriculture and the Natural Environment, and Health Care. Most HBO institutions offer courses in several of these fields (see www.hbo-raad.nl for more information about HBO institutions). There are full-time and part-time courses and dual forms of training combining study and work experience. Initial teacher training courses at HBO level are dealt with separately in chapter 8.

As a rule, HBO courses have a study load of 240 credits (based on the European Credit Transfer System or ECTS). This is equivalent to four years of study. Courses leading to a grade one teaching qualification are longer than this.

6.10.2. University education

Of the 14 universities, ten teach and carry out research in a broad range of disciplines spanning seven sectors: Economics, Health, Behaviour and Society, Science, Law, Engineering and Technology, and Language and Culture (for information about the universities see www.vsnu.nl). Three – the technical universities in Delft (TUD), Eindhoven (TUE) and Twente (UT) – focus predominantly on engineering and technology. The Agricultural University in Wageningen provides courses in the field of agriculture and the natural environment and comes under the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The approved institutions include theological universities and a humanist university offering courses in theology and humanism, and Universiteit Nyenrode (the Netherlands Business School). There are both full-time and part-time courses, as well as dual courses combining learning and working.

University courses consist of a bachelor's part (180 credits) followed by a master's part (60 credits). This is equivalent to four years of study. Some courses at the technical universities and the agricultural university and certain science courses have a study load of 300 credits or 5 years, as do courses in philosophy of a particular discipline. Courses in medicine, veterinary science and pharmacy require six years of study.

6.11. Curriculum

6.11.1. Higher professional education

Higher professional education provides training for occupations which require both theoretical knowledge and specific skills. HBO courses are therefore almost always closely linked to a particular occupation and most courses include a work experience placement. Some are dual courses combining study and work.

Teaching and examination regulations

As far as teaching is concerned, the government lays down no more than a framework, within which the institutions must operate; it is the responsibility of the administration of the institution to expand on this framework in the teaching and examination regulations. These lay down for every course provided at the institution such matters as the syllabus, the main degree subjects and detailed regulations with regard to the content and organisation of the various examinations. The participation council has a say in the adoption or amendment of the regulations.

Study load

Initial education is provided in the form of study programmes – or courses – made up of a number of units of study, which together form a cohesive entity. The study load for each course is expressed in terms of credits, one credit being equivalent to 28 hours of study, consisting of lectures, laboratory work (where applicable) and independent study. As a rule each unit of study is worth 2 or more credits.

The academic year lasts 42 weeks. Most full-time courses have a study load of 240 credits, which is equivalent to four years of study. The first part of the course is called the propaedeutic part and

consists of 60 credits. This part of the course concludes with an examination.

Shortened courses

Institutions may exempt students with certain qualifications from part of a course. The curriculum is determined by each institution individually.

Dual learning

Since the 1998/1999 academic year HBO institutions have been able to offer a dual learning variant for all full-time courses. Dual courses combine study and paid work, the aim being to bring education and employment closer in line with each other and to prepare students more effectively for the world of work. Dual learning can be compared with the existing practice of incorporating work experience placements in full-time training courses, but takes this principle one step further. What is more, there is greater emphasis on supervision of the student, by both institution and employer. Part of the course is subject to a "learning and working" contract between student, institution and employer. The student's programme is determined by the student and the employer in consultation with the institution. HBO institutions help to promote lifelong learning by allowing students to alternate periods of study with paid work and by emphasising the connections between the two in all their curricula.

Quality of instructors and education

In 2001, knowledge networks and senior lecturers were introduced at HBO institutions. These innovations are intended to intensify the transfer, dissemination, circulation and development of knowledge in and from the HBO system, thereby enhancing the quality of instruction and education. The results were evaluated in 2004. The evaluation showed that senior lectureships had a positive impact on education. It was decided that the project would be continued in 2005.

6.11.2. University education

Study load (from the 2002/2003 academic year)

Under the new bachelor-master system, students first follow a three-year bachelor's course, then carry on to do a one-year or two-year master's course. A student must obtain 60 credits for each academic year (1 credit being equal to 28 hours study). The study load for a bachelor's course is 180 credits, and for a master's course at least 60 credits. Some master's courses have a heavier study load:

- teacher training (generally 60-120 credits);
- medicine (180 credits);
- pharmacy (180 credits);
- veterinary science (180 credits);
- philosophy of a particular discipline (120 credits);
- some engineering and agricultural sciences courses (leading to the title of "ingenieur") (120 credits);
- dentistry (120 credits).

During a bachelor's course students are primarily trained in academic disciplines; they acquire skills and specialised knowledge, as well as analytical ability. Some students will choose to get a job after obtaining a bachelor's degree. But those who want to complete their academic training must go on to do a master's course, because it is only then that they start to specialise and are trained for the labour market or an academic career.

Dual learning

A start has been made on developing dual learning pathways in order to bring university courses closer into line with the labour market, further the exchange of innovative knowledge and prepare students better for the world of work. Courses in various disciplines, in which learning and working are combined as an integrated whole, were introduced on an experimental basis in September 1998. These courses were evaluated in 2001 and have been given official status. Dual courses strengthen the connection between education and the workplace. At universities, they are expected mainly to provide an alternative for students taking master's degrees.

6.12. Teaching methods

The administration of each institution is responsible for the development of courses within the framework imposed by central government. The choices made with regard to the syllabus and examinations are set out in the teaching and examination regulations.

6.13. Student assessment

Each unit of study concludes with an interim examination ("tentamen") testing students' knowledge, understanding and skills. Institutions determine the content and design of these examinations themselves.

6.14. Progression of students

At the end of their first year – the propaedeutic year – students following full-time or dual bachelor's courses in higher professional education are advised as to whether they should continue with their course or switch to another. In the case of part-time bachelor's courses, each institution may determine when such advice is given. This advice may or may not be optional. A propaedeutic year may also be built into university degree courses, but is not mandatory.

Performance-related grant

In 1996 a new type of grant, known as a performance-related grant, was introduced. The new system works on the principle of "loan then grant". Students initially receive a loan, which, provided they obtain a fixed minimum number of credits, is later converted into a grant. The payment consists of a standard amount for living expenses and for books and learning materials, an allowance towards the cost of the course fees and a travel allowance. At the end of the first year the student's progress is reviewed. If they have obtained at least half the credits possible for the year, the loan they received for the first year is permanently converted into a grant. The Student Finance Act and the student finance regime were amended as of 1 September 2000. The travel allowance paid to students who first received a higher education grant after 1 September 1999 is now also subject to obtaining the required number of credits. Provided the student graduates within ten years, the loan awarded for the second, third and fourth years of study is also converted. The upper age limit for applying for student finance is 30. Students who have turned 30 are entitled to a student loan for a further four years only. Students who entered higher education before 1996 will continue to receive a progress-related grant (see § 2.8).

6.15. Certification

6.15.1. Higher professional education

Responsibility for examinations within the institution rests primarily with the administration of the institution. A separate examining board is set up for each study programme to conduct examinations and organise and coordinate the interim examinations. The Act contains a number of conditions regarding the procedure to be followed. The purpose of the examinations is to assess whether candidates have attained the level stipulated in the teaching and examination regulations in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills.

At the end of the first year of study, there may be a propaedeutic examination. After four years the final examinations are held. Successful candidates are awarded a certificate listing the subjects in which they were examined. Students abandoning their courses before the final examinations receive a transcript indicating how much of the course they have completed and which interim examinations ("tentamens") they have passed.

Courses which are geared to specific occupations in particular must include practical preparation for professional practice.

Academic titles

A bachelor's or master's degree is conferred on students who pass the final examination of an HBO bachelor's or master's course. HBO graduates in the fields of engineering & technology and agriculture & the natural environment may also use the title "ingenieur", while the title "baccalaureus" may be used by HBO graduates from other courses. The titles "ingenieur" and "baccalaureus" are shortened to "ing." and "bc." respectively and placed before the name. The title "Bachelor" is abbreviated to "B." and placed after the name.

In the new system, HBO institutions are now able to offer master's courses leading to a master's degree. Foreign higher education institutions may also offer courses in the Netherlands leading to a bachelor's or master's degree, provided the courses have been accredited. The Council for Higher Professional Education has advised institutions regarding the titles to be conferred for HBO bachelor's and master's degrees and the abbreviations to be used. The aim is to arrive at a limited number of recognisable professional titles, such as Bachelor of Education.

6.15.2. University education

Every university course includes a bachelor's examination and a master's examination. A separate examining board is set up for each study programme to conduct the examinations and organise and coordinate the interim examinations. The faculty council draws up the teaching and examination regulations after consulting the relevant examining board and study programme committee. Students who pass the final examinations are awarded a certificate listing the different parts of the examination and, where appropriate, the professional qualification obtained.

Courses which are geared to specific occupations in particular must include practical preparation for professional practice. This applies to the courses for doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons, architects and pharmacists.

Academic titles

A bachelor's or master's degree is conferred by the institution on students who pass the final examination of a bachelor's or master's course. Graduates are entitled to use the titles "Bachelor" or "Master", abbreviated to "B." and "M." and placed after the name. They may opt to use a Dutch title instead of the relevant international title:

- graduates with a master's degree in the fields of engineering & technology and agriculture & the natural environment may use the title "ingenieur", abbreviated to "ir."
- law graduates with a master's degree may use the title "meester", abbreviated to "mr."
- graduates of other master's courses may use the title "doctorandus", abbreviated to "drs."

These titles are placed before the name.

To obtain a doctorate and be entitled to use the title "dr.", students have to complete a thesis with the support of one or more supervisors.

6.15.3. Summary of academic titles, old and new

	old title	new title
Bachelor's course (HBO)	"baccalaureus" (bc.) or "ingenieur" (ing.) after four years or "Bachelor", possibly followed by an indication of the type of examination	(after four years) "Bachelor" with subject/occupational field or bc. / ing.
Master's course (HBO)	---	"Master" with indication of subject/occupational field
Bachelor's course (university)	broadly similar to a "kandidaat" certificate	(after three years) "Bachelor of Arts" or "Bachelor of Science" (depending on the course). Other designations may be introduced in due course by ministerial order. Holders of "kandidaat" certificates may not use the title "Bachelor".
Master's course (university)	"doctorandus" (drs.), "meester" (mr.) and "ingenieur" (ir.) or "Master", possibly followed by an indication of the type of examination	"Master of Arts", "Master of Science" (depending on the course). Other designations may be introduced in due course by ministerial order. or drs., mr. of ir.
Additional master's course (university) (formerly: master's course following a "doctoraal" examination)	"Master" with subject/occupational field	"Master" with subject/occupational field

6.16. Educational/vocational guidance and education/employment links

6.16.1. Higher professional education

Guidance

Students enrolled on HBO courses have a right to guidance. The administration of the institution has a duty to pay particular attention to the guidance of ethnic minority students. The Expertise Centre for Ethnic Minorities in Higher Education (ECHO) supports higher education institutions in their efforts to provide guidance and assistance for this group of students with a view to boosting the number of ethnic minority students and graduates in higher education and reducing the group's dropout rate (www.echo-net.nl).

Relationship with the labour market

Close contacts between HBO institutions and the labour market are extremely important. Such contacts occur at both national and individual course level.

Each year a national survey of the employment position of HBO graduates, known as the HBO Monitor, is carried out by the Council for Higher Professional Education (www.hbo-raad.nl).

AXIS, a national platform for science and technology in education and the workplace, was set up in 1998 to increase the attractiveness of the exact sciences, engineering and technology as a subject of study and as a career. Educational establishments with ideas for innovative projects can apply to AXIS for funding (www.platform-axis.nl).

6.16.2. University education

Guidance

Students enrolled on university courses have a right to guidance. The administration of the institution has a duty to pay particular attention to the guidance of ethnic minority students. The Expertise Centre for Ethnic Minorities in Higher Education (ECHO) supports higher education institutions in their efforts to provide guidance and assistance for this group of students with a view to boosting the number of ethnic minority students and graduates in higher education (www.echo-net.nl).

Relationship with the labour market

University studies prepare students for research training and for occupations in which it is useful to have an academic background. Only a small proportion of graduates (around 10%) are eventually employed in research. Some full-time courses include a compulsory placement.

The universities, like the HBO institutions, monitor the position of their graduates on the labour market by means of an annual survey. The first such survey was held in the autumn of 1998 among students who had graduated in 1997. The results are announced in the Universities Monitor, first published in spring 1999.

AXIS, a national platform for science and technology in education and the workplace, was set up in 1998 to increase the attractiveness of the exact sciences, engineering and technology as a subject of study and as a career. Educational establishments with ideas for innovative projects can apply to AXIS for funding (www.platform-axis.nl).

6.17. Private education

The legislation governing higher education does not differentiate between private and public higher education.

6.18. Organisational variations and alternative structures

6.18.1. Advanced courses

HBO institutions provide a number of advanced courses. These include art courses, courses in architecture and teacher training courses (special education and grade 1 qualification in general subjects). They are governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). The former follow on from initial courses in the arts and involve a study load of up to 120 credits. The latter follow on from building and architecture courses and involve a study load of 240 credits.

Postgraduate vocational courses are offered by both universities and HBO institutions. Examinations following on from postgraduate vocational courses are not regulated by the Higher Education and Research Act. Courses of this kind are not funded by government and there is no state financial aid for students. Although government start-up subsidies were available in the past, in principle the costs of such courses are borne by the students or their employers. Following the introduction of the bachelor-master system, these advanced courses will eventually be discontinued by royal decree.

Bachelor-master system

The introduction of the bachelor-master system allows institutions to offer post-initial courses leading to master's degrees, as long as these courses are accredited. There is no statutory provision dealing specifically with such courses.

6.18.2. Training for researchers and design engineers

After completing their degree, graduates can apply for posts as research assistants (AIOs), research students (OIO) or grant-funded PhD students. AIOs and OIOs are appointed on a temporary basis by universities and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) respectively to conduct academic research and receive training with a view to becoming fully-fledged researchers or design engineers. Both AIOs and OIOS are public servants and as such have certain rights (redundancy pay, holiday allowances, pension rights) and obligations (terms of contract). PhD students are not public servants; they receive a four-year grant. The four-year research training concludes with the presentation of a thesis, prepared with the help of one or more supervisors. The design engineer training provided by the three technical universities concludes with the production of a technological design.

Research schools

Research schools are centres for high quality research in one particular field or in a multidisciplinary context. They offer talented research assistants (AIOs) research posts including an intensive four-year course at the end of which they will be capable of carrying out independent research. AIOs are expected to obtain a doctorate at the end of their training. The research schools are national and international centres of excellence and provide a guaranteed level of supervision and tuition. They are responsible for their own budgets and carry out regular evaluations. There are 137 officially recognised research schools in the Netherlands (2004).

Top research schools

The concept of top research schools was introduced to give extra impetus to top-level academic research in the Netherlands. The institutions bearing this title must meet stringent quality criteria and are eligible for extra funding. They are selected by the general board of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), based on the recommendations of an independent committee. Six institutions were designated by the Minister as top research schools in 1998. The performance of these institutions was evaluated at the end of 2003. Based on this evaluation, it was decided to continue extra funding until 2008.

6.18.3. Open University of the Netherlands

The **Open University of the Netherlands** (OUNL) is a state establishment offering distance learning courses at university level for people aged 18 and over (www.ou.nl). The tasks of the OUNL, as stated in the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), are to provide initial courses at university level in the form of distance education and contribute to innovation in higher education.

The OUNL was founded in 1984 to provide higher education courses for persons who were unable for various reasons to obtain a higher education qualification in the past (second chance education). Besides the headquarters in Heerlen, there are 18 study centres spread throughout the Netherlands, providing information, guidance and advice for students in relation to their studies. Although the OUNL is independent, it maintains contacts with other institutions of higher education.

The main objective of the OU is to make higher education accessible to adults who want a second chance. Its "openness" manifests itself in the following four ways:

- absence of any admission requirements relating to prior education;
- freedom as to place and time of study;
- freedom as to pace of study;
- freedom as to choice of courses: students can combine modules to make up their own programme of study.

In 1995 it became clear that the OUNL was serving a large group of students who did not belong to the original target group of adults wanting a "second chance" but were graduates wishing to expand or update their knowledge in the context of lifelong learning whilst not necessarily looking to obtain a full university degree. It was therefore decided to enhance the University's innovative function. In 1997 the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) was amended accordingly to make explicit reference to the twofold task of the OUNL, i.e. to provide higher distance education and to contribute to innovation in higher education. As part of its innovative role, the University works alongside 12 other Dutch and Flemish higher education institutions within the Consortium for Innovation in Higher Education. This cooperation has resulted in a wide range of projects.

Developments in the field of telelearning, ICT applications within higher education as a whole and the falling proportion of "second-chance" students have implications for the future of the OUNL and its added value as part of the higher education system. In April 2000 the University presented a strategic plan, outlining its future role. In response to this plan, the views of an advisory committee and the final report of an external consultancy, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science decided that a consortium should be formed. Together with three universities, six HBO institutions and other partners, the OUNL has created a digital university offering a broad range of courses. The aim of the consortium, which came into being in the spring of 2001, is twofold: to contribute to innovation in

education and to offer digital education as part of government-funded higher education and for new target groups. The digital university will focus on developing teaching material for initial courses at the participating institutions.

Organisation

Teaching is organised in the form of separate modules, each of which is deemed to require approximately 20 hours of study. Students may combine various modules to compile their own programme of study. There are over 200 courses to choose from, covering numerous disciplines; most courses comprise one or two modules. It is also possible to complete a full degree programme. These degree programmes comprise 56 modules (70 for information technology) and give graduates the right to use the same academic title as a regular university graduate. The OUNL does not offer postgraduate courses.

Teaching is mainly by correspondence, course materials being sent to the student's home. Other media are also used, such as information and communication technology. If they have questions, students can contact one of the 18 study centres.

The Open University of the Netherlands is not subject to any set criteria as to minimum student numbers.

Given that OUNL students put together their own study programmes and determine their own pace of study, there are no official course years as such.

Curriculum

Central government lays down only a statutory framework within which the OUNL must operate (in the Higher Education and Research Act). The content of teaching is not prescribed. The Open University of the Netherlands offers eight degree programmes: Dutch law, psychology, arts subjects, economics, information technology, management science, public administration and environmental sciences.

Certificates and diplomas

Students who pass their examinations are awarded a certificate which can then be "traded in" if they subsequently decide to follow a full OUNL programme.

A full university degree can be obtained by completing one of the eight degree programmes.

Academic titles

The Open University of the Netherlands has the right to award students completing a degree programme legally recognised titles such as "drs.", "mr." and "ir.". It is also possible to obtain a doctorate from the Open University of the Netherlands ("dr."). Since the introduction of the bachelor-master system, graduates can also choose to use the titles "Bachelor" or "Master" (see § 6.15.3).

6.19. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from 'Key Figures 1999/2003. Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands'. The figures do not include agricultural courses (apart from § 6.19.6).

6.19.1. Students in higher professional education

Students enrolled in HBO (x 1000)

	2002	2003
Total	313.9	325.8
Intake of first-year students in HBO (x 1000)	79.5	85.0
Total full-time	240.1	249.0
Total part-time	63.7	65.5
HBO graduates (x 1000)	2002	2003
Total full-time (incl. dual courses) & part-time	56.7	60.2

6.19.2. Institutions and staff (higher professional education)

	2002	2003
Total number of institutions	50	49
Number of staff in FTEs (x 1000)	23.4	24.1
- teaching staff	13.2	13.6
- support staff	10.2	10.5
Average age	45.0	45.0
Student-teacher ratio	23.8	24.0

6.19.3. University students

Students enrolled at universities, including "extranei" (external students) (x 1000)

	2002	2003
Total	174.8	182.9
Science	12.2	12.7
Engineering & Technology	25.5	25.9
Health	21.8	23.4
Economics	30.0	30.8
Law	24.3	24.5
Behaviour & Society	37.3	39.9
Language & Culture	23.0	24.8
University teacher training	0.7	0.9
Intake of first-year university students (x 1000)	34.4	36.5
University graduates (x 1000)	20.9	21.1

6.19.4. Institutions and staff (universities)

	2001	2002
Number of institutions	12	12
Average roll (enrolled students gross x 1000)	14.4	15.0
Number of staff in FTEs (x 1000)		
Total	38.6	39.5
- academic staff	20.4	21.2
- women as % of academic staff	30.6	29.7
Ratio of students to academic staff	8.5	8.5

6.19.5. Open University

	2001	2002
Number of enrolled students (x 1000)	21,182	21,182
New OU students (x 1000)	9,087	9,138
Number of university degrees awarded	329	337

6.19.6. Wageningen Agricultural University

	2002	2003
Enrolled students incl. "extranei" (external students) (x 1000)	4.0	4.3
Intake of first-year students (x 1000)	1.0	1.1
Graduates (x 1000)	0.6	0.5

7. Adult and vocational education

The structure of secondary vocational education

The national qualification structure for vocational education, comprising all qualifications and partial qualifications and the relevant diplomas and certificates, was introduced in 1997. The courses are divided into four levels. Students can take these courses consecutively, the diploma from one course serving as the entry requirement for the next. For each course there are in principle two learning pathways:

- **vocational training** (BOL) where practical training will take up between 20% and 60% of the course;
- **block or day release** (BBL) where practical training will take up more than 60% of the course.

Features of secondary vocational education

Secondary vocational education (MBO) provides both theoretical instruction and practical training in preparation for the practice of a wide range of occupations for which a vocational qualification is necessary or useful. It also furthers the general education and personal development of students and helps them to play an active part in society. Its main target group is young people from the age of sixteen. Vocational education within the meaning of the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) does not include higher professional education (HBO).

Types and length of courses

All courses within the qualification structure are entered in the Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO). This register records:

- which institutions provide which courses;
- what the exit qualifications are;
- which learning pathway is involved and
- which of the partial qualifications awarded are subject to external validation.

The exit qualifications comprise an overview of the knowledge and skills students should have gained by the end of the course. The register also indicates which courses are funded by the government and which bodies are authorised to validate examinations. Anyone who wishes may consult the register to find out what courses are on offer and how they fit into the qualification structure.

Private (i.e. non-government-funded) educational institutions can incorporate their courses into the new system subject to the same conditions as government-funded institutions.

The courses vary in length:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------------|
| - training to assistant level: | 6 to 12 months | (level 1); |
| - basic vocational training: | 2 to 3 years | (level 2); |
| - professional training: | 2 to 4 years | (level 3); |
| - middle-management training: | 3 to 4 years | (level 4) |
| - specialist training: | 1 to 2 years | (level 4) |
| - other courses, e.g. computer courses: | at least 15 weeks. | |

For more information on the four levels, see § 7.10.1.

Courses lead to qualifications for successively higher levels of professional practice, middle-

management and specialist training courses being the fourth and highest level. For each course there are in principle two learning pathways: vocational training where practical training will take up between 20% and 60% of the course and block or day release where practical training will take up more than 60% of the course.

The structure of adult education

In 1997 a new qualification structure for adult education (KSE) was introduced with four types of courses and six levels of qualification, ranging from basic skills to secondary education. Courses in Dutch as a second language offer five levels only.

Since 1 January 1997, the Adult and Vocational Education Act has identified four types of courses:

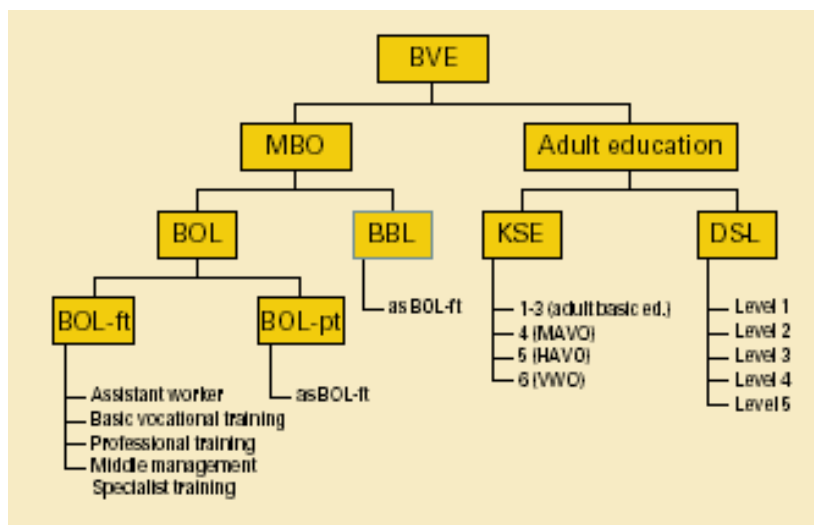
- adult general secondary education (VAVO), leading to a pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO theoretical programme), senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) certificate (levels 4, 5 and 6);
- courses providing a broad basic education;
- courses in Dutch as a second language;
- courses aimed at fostering self-reliance

Since adult education has been decentralised to municipal level, other courses can also be provided, depending on local policy.

The purpose of adult education, unlike vocational education, is not to train students for a particular occupation, but to provide a solid foundation for vocational and secondary education courses and enable adults to participate in society (self-reliance). Since the introduction of the Adult and Vocational Education Act, adult education courses have been provided by the regional training centres (ROCs). These centres provide a full range of adult and vocational education courses, both full-time and part-time, including vocational training (BOL) and block or day release (BBL) courses, adult basic education, adult general secondary education (VAVO), apprenticeship training and part-time non-formal education for young people. Adult Vocational Training Centres, Centres for Vocational Orientation and Training and Women's Training Centres, which provide training under the Manpower Services Act, have the option of either becoming part of an ROC or working closely with them as independent institutions.

Features of adult education

Adult education is geared to furthering the personal development of adults and their participation in society by developing their knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes in a way that fits in with their needs, potential and experience and the needs of society. Where possible, it brings students up to the level required for admission to vocational education courses. Adult education does not include any form of higher education.



7.1. Historical overview

Many of the forms of adult education that exist today originated in the nineteenth century, often thanks to private benefactors setting up educational and training facilities for adults. The government did not become involved in adult education – in the sense of statutory provision – until the twentieth century. As a result of the trend towards the democratisation of education in the 1970s, various policy papers were published in the early 1980s, followed by legislation aimed at harmonising adult education provision – the Adult Education Framework Act.

Vocational education, too, was for many years reliant on private initiative. The Occupational Education Act, the first piece of legislation governing vocational education, was not introduced until 1919, in response to the growth in the number of vocational schools. Since then, the sector has expanded greatly both in terms of the number of institutions and the range of specialisations offered:

- The Secondary Education Act of 1963, which entered into force in 1968, brought general secondary education and vocational education (including higher professional education) together under one Act.
- From 1966 to 1993 the apprenticeship system, combining school and work, either for a company or in a practical training workshop, was regulated separately in the Apprenticeship Act.
- From 1993 to 1996 when the Adult and Vocational Education Act came into effect, apprenticeship training and part-time MBO fell under the Part-time Vocational Education Act (WCBO, 1993-1996).
- From 1986 until 1993 higher professional education was regulated separately in the Higher Professional Education Act (WHBO).
- Since 1993 it has been governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW).
- On 1 January 1996 the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) was introduced, bringing greater unity to the system of adult and secondary vocational education.

Of the existing types of adult and vocational education (part-time non-formal education for young people, adult basic education, adult general secondary education, apprenticeships and senior secondary vocational education) some disappeared altogether while others have continued in a new form or under a new name.

7.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

Framework for Dutch as a second language

There are plans to replace the qualification structure for Dutch as a second language (NT2) by a framework for Dutch as a second language, an adaptation of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF). The CEF was developed by the Council of Europe to provide a common basis for language courses, curriculum development guidelines and examinations in Europe. The NT2 Framework identifies six levels.

Participation in decision-making

Educational institutions are constantly upscaling and are becoming too large for the 1992 Education Participation Act (WMO) to cater for. In December 2003, a bill was submitted to parliament based on a divided participation structure, with staff and students represented in separate bodies. The Works Council Act (WOR) will apply to staff. Students will be represented in college councils.

The rights and obligations of students

The government has approved a proposal ensuring that the rights and obligations of students aged 18 and over in MBO and higher education are brought into line with each other. MBO students will have more rights and performance-related grants will be introduced to encourage them not to leave college without a qualification.

Personal budget in MBO

Problems have emerged in providing aids for individual disabled students moving on from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to MBO, who rely on special facilities. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is exploring ways of better distributing the funds available for individual facilities for disabled students.

7.3. Specific legislative framework

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), which entered into force on 1 January 1996, brings together the various forms of adult and vocational education in a single statutory framework. The WEB Implementation Decree regulates the funding of vocational education and the knowledge centres for vocational education and business, and central government grants to adult education institutions. The Manpower Services Act provides a statutory framework for training measures for the unemployed.

7.3.1. Adult and Vocational Education Act

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) entered into force on 1 January 1996. The Act was introduced in stages between 1 January 1996 and 1 January 2000 beginning with the introduction of the qualification structure for vocational education in 1997. The last group of new regional training centres (ROCs), offering the complete range of adult and vocational education courses under one roof, opened their doors in 1998. Finally, on 1 January 2000, the new funding system was introduced. Under this system, institutions are funded partly on the basis of student numbers by course and learning pathway, and partly on the basis of numbers gaining qualifications.

At the heart of the Act are the national qualification structures for adult and vocational education. Each qualification structure is a structured system of qualifications and partial qualifications, each with its own diploma or certificate. Private educational institutions can take part in the national

qualifications structure for vocational education subject to the same conditions as government-funded institutions, although they are not entitled to funding.

Objectives

Social trends and the need for lifelong learning have made adult and vocational education of crucial importance for individuals, the labour market and society as a whole. One of the Act's aims is to ensure that every person is able to obtain a minimum basic qualification.

Educational institutions are free under the terms of the Act to devise learning pathways tailored to the needs of educationally disadvantaged students.

The student comes first. Institutions must offer courses that are geared to the needs of young people who have no job experience, employed people and those seeking work. Adult and vocational education courses must be better attuned to each other. Various options will be available, both full time and part time, to suit students' personal circumstances and preferences.

A new quality assurance system is to be introduced to improve the quality of teaching, together with a funding system designed to encourage better performance. An example is the introduction of performance-related grants for MBO students.

Adult education is also important and can serve various purposes, including preparation for vocational training, assimilation and social integration of migrants and the personal and social development of people who are at risk of becoming marginalised. As well as a socioeconomic function (matching supply to demand, greater employability), the Act therefore also has a sociocultural function (integration of disadvantaged groups, greater participation).

In a policy document published in 2004, the government sets out its policies on adult and vocational education over the next few years. The main innovation relates to the relationship between the various parties within the sector, with students, institutions and the business sector working together at regional level.

Knowledge centres for vocational education and business

The Adult and Vocational Education Act contains measures to bring education more into line with the world of work. The knowledge centres for vocational education and business form the link between vocational education and the business sector organisations. Organised by sector, they are managed by representatives of employers and employees, and in most cases, educational institutions. The centres are responsible for developing a clear qualification structure setting out the knowledge and skills required by employers. They also decide which companies or organisations are qualified to provide practical training, doing so on the basis of specific criteria. Employers meeting these criteria receive official recognition and are entered in the knowledge centre's register.

7.3.2 Work and Income (Implementation Structure) Act

Centres for Work and Income (CWI) have been set up throughout the Netherlands as a direct result of the introduction of the Work and Income (Implementation Structure) Act (SUWI), which entered into force on 1 January 2002. The motto of the new Act, drafted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, is 'work above income'. The role of the CWIs is to serve the unemployed, other jobseekers and employers by bringing together supply and demand in one place. The services they provide are

geared towards helping jobseekers find work and employers to fill their vacancies, in both cases as quickly as possible. Where necessary, an intake interview is held to collect and assess information in order to establish whether an individual is entitled to unemployment or social assistance benefit.

Another result of the new Act is the merger of the National Social Insurance Institute (LISV) and the existing benefit agencies (GAK, Cadans, GUO, etc.) to form a single agency, the Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body (UWV). The UWV (like the municipal social services) assesses benefit applications from the CWIs and pays out benefits. It also collects social insurance contributions from employers and calls on the services of reintegration agencies for clients the CWIs are unable to assist.

In 2002, the basic services previously provided by manpower services were taken over by the CWIs. Intake interviews to establish entitlement to benefit were previously conducted by the municipal social services and the various benefit agencies; they are now the responsibility of the CWIs. Within this system, work always takes precedence over benefit. This has been made possible by combining the activities of jobseeking and applying for benefit under one roof. The CWIs have also taken over most of the other statutory tasks performed in the past by manpower services, such as support for jobseekers and benefit claimants in seeking work and support for employers in finding employees.

The CWIs help to increase the transparency of the labour market by collecting data; the availability of relevant market information plays an essential part in matching supply and demand quickly and efficiently and will enable individual jobseekers and employers to take the initiative themselves. In this light, the centres provide information and advice on employment, the labour market and social security matters. They also support sectoral, regional and occupational group-specific initiatives, where necessary and possible.

The government's aims are as follows:

- to establish an operational network of approximately 130 Centres for Work and Income;
- to find suitable work for jobseekers by offering a job placement service (and where necessary arranging for benefit) so that they are able to re-enter the labour market as quickly as possible;
- to offer an appropriate service to every employer that registers a vacancy at a CWI, either via access to www.werk.nl, the vacancies and job applicants database, or by putting forward suitable candidates so that vacancies are filled as quickly as possible.

7.3.3. Training measures

Employees without a basic qualification (equivalent to secondary vocational education (MBO), level 2) who were previously unemployed are often the first to lose their jobs when there is a downturn in the economy. In order to ensure that this group of individuals has a better chance of staying in work, it is essential that they have the opportunity, while working or before starting a job, to obtain a basic qualification. Until now, the following instruments have been deployed for this purpose:

- reductions in tax and social insurance contributions to offset the wage costs of employees on day release schemes;
- training for the employed to basic qualification level, upgrading to MBO level 4 and cross-sectoral training. These types of training are funded with a grant from the European Social Fund (ESF).

As of 2002 employers have also been eligible for a reduction in their tax and social insurance

contributions to offset the extra costs of training and supervising employees who subsequently obtain a basic qualification and who (a) had to abandon a training scheme in order to accept their current job or (b) did not have a basic qualification when they started work and were not already receiving training. The size of the potential target group is estimated at 150,000 people a year.

7.4. General objectives

7.4.1. Secondary vocational education

The aim of secondary vocational education, as defined in the Adult and Vocational Education Act, is to provide both theoretical instruction and practical training in preparation for the practice of a wide range of occupations for which a vocational qualification is necessary or useful. It also furthers the general education and personal development of students and helps them to play an active part in society.

7.4.2. Adult education

Adult education is geared to furthering the personal development of adults and their participation in society by developing their knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes in a way that fits in with their needs, potential and experience and the needs of society.

7.5. Types of institution

There were 41 regional training centres (ROCs) operating in the 2003/2004 school year, offering a complete range of adult and vocational education courses, both full-time and part-time. On 1 January 1998 institutions which were not part of an ROC ceased to be eligible for government funding with the exception of 13 specialist colleges providing training for a specific branch of industry. Two other institutions have been granted exemption on religious grounds, two are attached to Inholland, an institution of higher professional education and two are attached to institutes for the deaf. Agricultural courses are now provided at agricultural training centres (AOCs). Vocational education courses in the agriculture and natural environment sector are the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

7.6. Geographical accessibility

The government pursues no special policies on the geographical accessibility of institutions for adult and vocational education.

7.7. Admission requirements

7.7.1. Secondary vocational education

Under the qualification structure introduced by the Adult and Vocational Education Act:

- anyone is able to enrol for a course at assistant or basic vocational training level. There are no requirements regarding previous education;
- the admission requirements for a course at professional or middle-management training level are:
 - a certificate of pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) or:
 - a certificate of junior general secondary education (MAVO) or:
 - proof that the first three years of senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre university education (VWO) have been successfully completed;
- admission to a course at specialist level is possible with a professional training qualification for the same occupation or occupational group.

Block or day release courses are open to persons above school leaving age only.

The rights of VMBO (pre-vocational secondary education) certificate-holders regarding admission to secondary vocational education (MBO) are regulated in the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) by analogy with HAVO and VWO:

- Students who successfully complete the theoretical, combined or middle-management vocational programme at VMBO level are eligible for professional and middle-management training (MBO levels 3 and 4).
- Students who complete the basic vocational programme are eligible for basic vocational training (MBO level 2). The choices open to them within these programmes depends on the subjects taken at VMBO level.

In order to improve the link between learning in schools and learning in the workplace, a system has been set up whereby skills acquired elsewhere, e.g. through experience in the workplace, can be officially recognised (EVC). This will make it easier to ascertain the precise training needs of individuals. It will also permit the comparison of competencies acquired at school or college with those acquired at work and encourage the sharing of knowledge between the world of education and the world of work.

To encourage use of the scheme, the government has set up a knowledge centre for prior learning assessment and recognition (www.kenniscentrumevc.nl). Launched in 2001, the centre primarily targets people in employment. Its tasks are threefold: to promote knowledge transfer, contribute to the development of EVC schemes and promote their use. It carries out research, collects and distributes information, and also has a network function. The centre is being funded by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, Education and Science and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment for a period of four years (2001-2004). This initiative is supported by the social partners. A decision on funding after 2004 will be taken on the basis of an evaluation.

7.7.2. Adult education

Adult education courses are open to adults only, that is to say persons aged 18 or over who are resident in the Netherlands. In view of the numbers of young people under the age of 18 taking VAVO courses it

was decided in 1997 to waive the minimum age requirement for 16 and 17-year-olds for a transitional period. This period has been extended to 31 December 2006.

7.8. Registration and/or tuition fees

7.8.1. Secondary vocational education

Students aged 16 and over undergoing full-time vocational training (more than 850 teaching periods a year) have to pay school fees every year. These were set at €936 in the 2004/2005 school year. There is no statutory contribution for students undergoing part-time vocational training (fewer than 850 teaching periods a year) who were under 18 at the start of the school year. The same applies to students on full-time or part-time block release schemes. Students on either learning pathway have to pay course fees once they reach the age of 18. Course fees for basic vocational training and training to assistant level were €194.06 in the 2004/2005 school year. For professional, middle-management and specialist training they were €471.86.

7.8.2. Adult education

Adult learners taking both full-time and part-time adult general secondary education courses (VAVO) have to pay fees. In the 2004/2005 school year, these amounted to €936 for full-time courses (more than 850 teaching periods a year) and €0.60 per 45 minutes for part-time courses (fewer than 850 teaching periods a year).

7.9. Financial support for learners

MBO students below the age of 18 can get financial assistance through the Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS). Students aged 18 and over doing a full-time MBO course are entitled to student finance.

7.10. Main areas of specialisation

7.10.1. Secondary vocational education

The qualification structure for secondary vocational education introduced on 1 August 1997 comprises four levels of training:

- level 1: courses at **assistant level** equip students to perform simple executive tasks. These courses are intended for those who are not able to obtain a basic qualification (level 2) but can thus obtain a certificate nonetheless.
- level 2: **basic vocational training** prepares students to perform executive tasks at a slightly higher level. The diploma awarded at this level is equivalent to a basic qualification, which is the minimum qualification that everyone should have.
- level 3: holders of a **professional training** diploma are able to carry out tasks completely independently. They must also be able to account for their actions to colleagues and monitor and supervise the application of standard procedures by others.
- level 4: **middle-management or specialist training** prepares students to carry out tasks completely independently, combined with the ability to perform a broad range of tasks or specialisation in a particular field. Students must also demonstrate that they possess non-job-specific skills, such as tactical and strategic thinking, and can expect to take up posts in which they have hierarchical, formal and organisational responsibilities.

The 2004 policy document on adult and vocational education proposes introducing an entry-level qualification, which would come before level 1, for young people who are unable to complete training at assistant level.

All courses (or, in official terminology, qualifications) forming part of the qualification structure are listed in the Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO). A total of 700 qualifications have been registered to date. In principle, each of these courses should be offered in two variants (i.e. two alternative learning pathways). This currently applies to just over half of all courses. Since the introduction of the new legislation, private (i.e. non-government-funded) educational institutions have also been able to offer courses within the new qualification structure.

Changes to the qualification structure

A new qualification structure, based on competences, is being developed for secondary vocational education. The current structure, and the educational provision based on it, no longer dovetails with trends on the job market or in society. The parties involved – the COLO, the Adult and Vocational Council and the Platform for Approved and Recognised Private Educational Institutions in the Netherlands (Paepon) – signed a covenant to this end on 1 October 2003. It deals with:

- the new qualification profiles;
- the tasks and powers of:
 - the social partners
 - the knowledge centres
 - COLO
 - funded and non-funded institutions
 - the Adult and Vocational Education Council and Paepon
 - the Examination Quality Centre and
 - the education and agriculture ministers.

The plan is to start pilot projects involving competence-related learning pathways in the 2005/2006 school year.

Another focus of attention is technical education. The number of students taking technical courses has been falling, whereas the demand for skilled technical staff is high. The scope for further integration of the partial qualification structures for metalworking, electrical engineering, fitting and process technology is being looked into, with a view to cooperation and harmonisation between the various knowledge centres for vocational education and business and even a possible merger.

7.10.2. Adult education

Adult education has been decentralised, and is now the responsibility of the municipal authorities. It is now up to the sector, working with the municipal authorities, to develop the qualification structure.

The sector has identified the following levels:

- **KSE 1** self-reliance level
- **KSE 2** threshold level
- **KSE 3** basic level

Integration courses

It is compulsory under the Newcomers Integration Act for all newcomers to the Netherlands to attend special courses designed to help them integrate into Dutch society. The courses aim to increase the self-reliance of newcomers, and give them more opportunities to undergo further training and get jobs.

Within the framework of reference for Dutch as a second language (NT2), there are five levels:

- **NT2 1** Students have a very elementary knowledge of Dutch, sufficient at the very most for referral to an NT2 course at level 2.
- **NT2 2** Students have a sufficient knowledge of Dutch to get by in Dutch society and cope with a vocational education course at assistant level or a manpower training course or training in the workplace at an equivalent level, provided the course in question comprises enough language components so that, on its completion, the student's command of the Dutch language is in line with the exit level.
- **NT2 3** Students have a sufficient knowledge of Dutch to cope with a secondary vocational education course at basic vocational or professional training level or a manpower training course or training in the workplace at an equivalent level. Their command of the language is such that they can work in unskilled jobs. This level is the target level for integration programmes for newcomers to the Netherlands.
- **NT2 4** Students have a sufficient knowledge of Dutch to take a secondary vocational education course at middle-management or specialist level or enrol at a university or institute of higher professional education. Their command of the language is such that they can work at intermediate level or higher.
- **NT2 5** Students have a sufficient mastery of Dutch to be able to speak it fluently with very little trace of an accent.

Courses providing a broad basic education

These are courses which teach the skills needed for people to function independently in everyday situations, for instance in contacts with their child's primary school or the healthcare services. They include speaking, reading, listening and arithmetic.

Courses aimed at fostering self-reliance

The aim of these courses is to achieve a minimum level of self-reliance, for instance in arithmetic or social skills.

The Minister may stipulate by ministerial order what falls into the category of courses providing a broad basic education and courses aimed at fostering self-reliance. No other provisions are laid down concerning the precise nature of the courses to be provided within these categories.

7.11. Teaching methods

Nothing is laid down in the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) regarding teaching methods. It is up to the institutions themselves to organise courses and teaching in such a way that students are able to obtain a diploma.

7.12. Trainers

The knowledge and skills required of teachers in adult and vocational education are specified in the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB). Qualified secondary school teachers may also teach adult and secondary vocational courses. Graduates who have not undergone teacher training are required to obtain a certificate of competence, as designated by ministerial order. Certificates of competence are also required of people who have at least three years' practical experience in the profession for which the course trains, or have gained the necessary skills through a combination of training and

experience.

7.13. Learner assessment/progression

7.13.1. Secondary vocational education

The teaching and examination regulations drawn up by the administration of the institution describe the content and organisation of each course offered by the institution and the examinations to be held.

The contract concluded between the institution and the student includes provisions on supervision, including regular advice to students as to whether they should continue with their course or switch to another one. The method of assessment during the period of practical training is set out in the practical training contract. Some of the courses in the vocational pathway can be taken part time.

7.13.2. Adult education

The contract concluded between the institution and the student includes provisions on supervision, including regular advice to students as to whether they should continue with their course or switch to another one.

7.14. Certification

7.14.1. Secondary vocational education

Every course in secondary vocational education leads to a certain qualification, made up of partial qualifications with the relevant set of exit qualifications. Exit qualifications are standards in terms of knowledge, skills and professional attitudes, in which students are examined. The examination comprises sections corresponding to the partial qualifications. A certificate is proof that the student has obtained a full qualification. A diploma is proof that the student has obtained a full qualification. Students have passed their examinations if they have passed all the tests for the partial qualifications, and have successfully completed their practical training and all other parts of the course.

The institutions are responsible for the examinations for the courses they provide. Their responsibility covers all aspects, including the regulations and exam syllabus, organisation, preparation and marking, the holding of exams, and the awarding of diplomas. Institutions are responsible for assuring the quality of the examinations and for making any necessary improvements, and they are accountable to the public. Under the Adult and Vocational Education Act, the competent authorities (governing bodies) of the institutions are obliged to draw up teaching and examination regulations for every course they provide, including for instance the exit qualifications and the content and parts of the examination.

To increase public confidence in the quality of the examinations in secondary vocational education and the value of the diploma, a new, comprehensive examination system was introduced on 1 August 2004. The main changes are as follows:

- External monitoring of examinations will be conducted by a single body, the Examination Quality Centre (KCE), instead of by a number of examining bodies and the Inspectorate.
- External monitoring by the KCE and internal monitoring by the institution itself will take place on the basis of national standards, to be drawn up by the KCE. Examinations will therefore

have to meet these standards from now on. The KCE will give an independent assessment and issue institutions with a certificate accessible to the public.

- The institutions will be responsible for demonstrating that their examinations meet the standards; this will have consequences for internal monitoring.
- All partial qualifications – not just 51% – will be subject to external monitoring.
- If examinations are not up to scratch, the Minister may withdraw the institution's right to hold them.
- The Inspectorate will supervise the quality of the KCE's work.
- "New-style" examining bodies may also acquire the right to hold examinations, but only if institutions contract examinations out to them. They may of course also provide support services.
- The aim of the new system is greater involvement of industry, more innovation and greater efficiency.

Institutions may decide to contract examinations out if they cannot guarantee the quality required or, if only a few students attend the course, for reasons of efficiency. In doing so, however, they also transfer responsibility for them. Institutions are obliged to contract examinations out if their right to hold them has been withdrawn.

The national objective is for at least 85% of examinations to meet the national standards by 2005. The institutions can use the period up to 1 August 2004 to work towards the new system by participating in incentive projects.

7.14.2. Adult education

Exit qualifications have been formulated for some adult education courses. These describe the qualities in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and, where applicable, professional attitude, which those completing the course should possess with a view to their future career and role in society and which, in some cases, are necessary for entry to further or higher education.

In 1997 exit qualifications approved by the Minister were introduced for the most common types of adult education course, i.e. courses at certain levels in Dutch, Dutch as a second language, English, mathematics and social orientation.

There are no separate exit qualifications for VAVO, although the level to be achieved corresponds with the examination syllabuses for VMBO, HAVO and VWO, which are revised each year. The 1999/2000 school year saw the first in a series of changes to the examinations in line with the reforms in the second stage of secondary education.

The Minister may stipulate by ministerial order what falls into the category of courses providing a broad basic education and the category of courses aimed at fostering self-reliance. He may also draw up exit qualifications for these courses. No other provisions have been laid down concerning the precise nature of the courses to be provided within these categories.

Where no exit qualifications have been laid down by the Minister, the regional training centres (ROCs) must formulate their own.

Apart from VAVO and Dutch as a second language courses, the examination syllabus for adult

education courses is part of the teaching and examination regulations, a document setting out the main elements of teaching and the examinations to be held. These regulations are drawn up by the administration of the institution for each course offered by the institution and include the exit qualifications and the content and parts of the examination.

Regulations are laid down by order in council governing the examinations, examination syllabuses and parts of the examination for VAVO courses. A certificate is awarded for each part of an examination. Students who pass the examination are awarded a diploma.

7.15. Education/employment links

7.15.1. Secondary vocational education

Social trends, including lifelong learning, have made adult and vocational education of crucial importance for individuals, the labour market and society as a whole. The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) and the formation of the regional training centres have created the conditions necessary to perform this broad social function. The Act includes a number of measures designed to improve the alignment of education and employment, including a clear qualification structure for vocational education with an integrated system of courses and considerable emphasis on practical training. Employers' organisations and trade unions in the relevant sector of employment are represented in the knowledge centres for vocational education and business, which formulate the exit qualifications. Industry can therefore influence the exit qualifications.

Both learning pathways include practical training. This takes up between 20% and 60% of the course in the case of the vocational training pathway and more than 60% for the block or day release pathway.

The diploma awarded at level 2 of the qualification structure for vocational education is equivalent to a basic qualification, which is the minimum qualification that everyone should have. Holders of this diploma are capable of carrying out slightly more complicated routines and standard procedures and are equipped to enter the labour market.

Technocentres

Cooperation between education and industry was strengthened in 1999 with the creation of a number of technocentres: intermediary organisations set up at regional level by educational institutions (including the regional training centres and higher professional education institutions), local businesses, the local authorities, manpower services and other relevant partners. The role of these centres is threefold: to improve the alignment of education and employment, to further the diffusion and application of knowledge, and to allow the joint use of advanced equipment. The Technocentres Framework Scheme was evaluated in 2002 and will be continued until 2005, when it will be evaluated again.

Fiscal measures

In order to encourage employers to make work experience places available for block or day release students, a special tax exemption scheme has been introduced. Employers can deduct a fixed amount per practical training contract per calendar year from the total amount of salaries tax and social insurance contributions owed by the company or organisation in that year, up to a maximum of €2,500 per year. To be eligible for the scheme, the employer must have a "genuine" employment relationship with the trainee. The trainee's wage may not exceed €20,793.

7.15.2. Adult education

The Adult and Vocational Education Act is the last in a series of developments which were set in motion some time ago, including a shift towards greater emphasis on the requirements of the labour market. The Act includes a number of measures designed to improve the alignment of education and employment, including a separate qualification structure for adult education with improved scope for transferring to vocational education.

7.16. Private education

Private schools are governed by the same legislation as public-authority schools. Article 23 of the Constitution places public and private schools on an equal financial footing (see § 2.1 and § 2.2). As a condition of funding from the public purse, the law lays down that private educational establishments must be maintained by a legal person with full legal competence, whose aim is to provide education, without any profit-making motive.

7.17. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from 'Key Figures 1999-2003. Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands'.

7.17.1. Students (secondary vocational education)

Number of students (x 1000)	2002	2003
Secondary vocational education (total)	445.9	454.2
Block or day release pathway (BBL)		
- levels 1 and 2	76.9	73.0
- levels 3 and 4	78.9	79.0
Vocational training pathway (BOL) – full-time		
- levels 1 and 2	57.0	65.6
- levels 3 and 4	207.5	216.1
Vocational training pathway (BOL) – part-time		
- levels 1 and 2	12.3	9.0
- levels 3 and 4	13.2	11.5

7.17.2. Students (adult education)

Number of students (x 1000)	2002	2003
Adult education (total)	164.3	155.5
Adult education qualification structure (KSE)		
levels 1 to 3	46.8	38.7
level 4	6.8	5.6
level 5	6.4	6.8
level 6	2.8	2.4
Dutch as a Second Language (NT2)		
levels 1 and 2	67.2	64.9
level 3	19.3	20.3
level 4	10.6	11.0
level 5	4.4	5.9

7.17.3. Institutions and staff

	2002	2003
Total number of institutions	61	59
Number of staff in FTEs (x 1000)	36.9	37.6
Average age	45.6	45.9
% aged 50 or over	39.2	40.9

8. Teachers

8.1. Initial training of teachers

Initial teacher training courses for the various types of school are part of higher education, some being provided at institutions of higher professional education (HBO) and some at universities. There are full-time, part-time and dual (i.e. work-study) HBO teacher training courses for primary education and secondary education (leading to a grade one or grade two qualification). There are also full-time, part-time and dual university training courses leading to a grade one secondary school teaching qualification (ULO courses). These courses are open to university students and graduates only. Teacher training courses are available in practically all subjects taught at secondary schools. Grade two teachers are qualified to teach the first three years of HAVO and VWO, all years of VMBO and in secondary vocational education. Grade one teachers are qualified to teach at all levels of secondary education. In other words, unlike grade two teachers, they can also teach at pre-higher education level, i.e. the last two or three years of HAVO and VWO respectively. Grade one and grade two teachers of art, music, handicrafts, eurhythmics, dance, drama, English, Frisian and gymnastics are also qualified to teach at primary level and in special education.

Primary school teachers are qualified to teach all subjects at primary level and in special and adult education. Most teachers working at special schools have also completed a postgraduate course leading to a special education teaching qualification. They may take the course after completing their initial primary or secondary teacher training, or another higher education course. Students can specialise in a particular field of work (e.g. teaching children with hearing disabilities or maladjusted children) and are awarded a qualification with the relevant endorsement. The institutions providing the training decide whether or not a candidate will be admitted. This training course is not compulsory; it is still possible to work in special education with an ordinary teaching qualification.

There are no specific training courses for those wishing to teach in higher education. Lecturers at institutions of higher professional education (HBO) must hold a higher education qualification plus a certificate of competence to teach. This does not apply to staff at HBO teacher training institutions who must have a grade one teaching qualification. However, this requirement will no longer apply if a bill that is currently before parliament becomes law. For university lecturers, there are no specific requirements regarding previous training.

Bachelor-master system

The bachelor-master system was introduced on 1 September 2002. As a result, the Dutch credit system of 42 credits a year (1 credit being equal to 40 hours of study) has been replaced by a new system designed to facilitate the comparison of courses within the EU. Under the new system, which is based on the European Credit Transfer System or ECTS, a student must obtain 60 ECTS credits a year (1 credit being equal to 28 hours of study). Existing initial courses of higher professional education (HBO) have been converted into bachelor's courses. Advanced courses offered by HBO institutions will be converted into master's courses provided they are accredited by the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO).

Generally speaking, teachers will have done teacher training. Another way of entering the teaching profession is through lateral entry. This allows people with higher education qualifications to enter the teaching profession after passing an aptitude test. They then receive training and supervision aimed at

equipping them with the necessary skills within two years.

8.1.1. Historical overview

8.1.1.1. Primary school teacher training

Up to the introduction of the Primary Education Act (WBO) in 1985, there were two separate forms of teacher training: courses for nursery teachers (4 to 6-year-olds) and primary school teacher training at the "Pedagogische Academie" (6 to 12-year-olds). With the integration of nursery and primary schools within the new-style primary schools, these two courses were integrated into a single primary school teacher training course at HBO level. For in-service training, see § 8.2.10.

8.1.1.2. Training of teachers in secondary, adult and vocational education

Prior to the introduction of the Secondary Education Act (WVO) in 1968, there was no specific training for grade one or grade two teachers. In 1969, a higher professional course was introduced for grade two teachers under the name new-style secondary teacher training (NLO). In addition, there were part-time courses leading to grade one (MO-B) or grade two (MO-A) qualifications. For some years the old NLO courses provided training in two subjects. This changed in 1990: students now specialise in one subject. MO qualifications no longer exist, but a grade two qualification and a supplementary grade one qualification can be obtained through part-time study at an HBO institution.

From the sixties until the early eighties, there were short training courses available for university graduates who wished to become teachers (grade one). This led to the introduction of a separate optional component in first degree courses which students could take to obtain a teaching endorsement for a particular subject. University training courses for secondary school teachers (ULO) were introduced in 1987. This was a postgraduate course leading to a grade one qualification with a study load of 60 ECTS credits (equivalent to one year of full-time study or two years of part-time study). Since 1998 new variants have been introduced enabling students to begin, and in some cases complete, a teacher training course while they are still undergraduates. For in-service training see § 8.2.10.

8.1.1.3. Teaching practice

Teaching practice is an important component of primary teacher training. Students receive practical training in the area in which they intend eventually to work. This is a compulsory part of the course. The teaching and examination regulations for each course must by law specify how teaching practice is organised. For more information see § 8.1.4.1 and § 8.1.4.2.

8.1.2. Ongoing debates

The Temporary Workers (Education) Act entered into force on 1 July 2003, making it possible for schools to employ teachers on secondment and temporary staff without having to appoint them.

Education Professions Act (WBIO)

The Education Professions Act was adopted by parliament in 2004 to regulate standards of competence for both teachers and other people working in education-related jobs in the primary, secondary and

adult and vocational education sectors. In future, it is these standards that will matter, not the old certificates of competence. Proposals as to what these standards should entail will be put forward by professional organisations such as the Association for Professional Standards in Education (SBL), and the Dutch School Managers' Academy (NSA), and they will be laid down by order in council pursuant to the Education Professions Act in the first six months of 2005. The Act also enables schools to devise policy on maintaining the skills of their staff.

The date on which the Act enters into force largely depends on when the order in council governing standards of competence for teachers enters into force. That will probably be mid-2006.

8.1.3 Specific legislative framework

Primary school teacher training is governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) which entered into force in 1993.

8.1.4. Institutions, level and models of training

8.1.4.1. Primary school teacher training

Primary school teacher training courses are higher professional education courses offered at both multisectoral HBO institutions and colleges providing primary teacher training only.

Over 30 HBO institutions provide primary school teacher training courses (2003), some at several different locations. Some 25,000 students are enrolled on these courses.

There are full-time, part-time and dual (i.e. work-study) higher professional education courses leading to a primary school teaching qualification. All courses have a study load of 240 ECTS credits (equivalent to four years' full-time study). However, students may be given exemptions on the basis of previous educational qualifications or skills acquired elsewhere, so that, in practice, institutions can now offer shorter tailor-made as well as standard courses. Course graduates are fully qualified to teach:

- all subjects and all age groups at primary level;
- in special education, at both primary and secondary level;
- in adult and vocational education, adult education in particular.

A postgraduate course in special education with a study load of 60 ECTS credits is also available. Although not compulsory, almost all teachers working in special education take this course.

Teaching practice

Teaching practice is an important component of primary teacher training. Students receive practical training in the area in which they intend eventually to work. This is a compulsory part of the course. The teaching and examination regulations for each course must by law specify how teaching practice is organised. Around a quarter of the entire course is devoted to periods of teaching practice, beginning in the first year. Teaching practice takes place mainly in primary and special schools.

The post of trainee teacher (LIO) was introduced in primary schools in August 2000. Students in the final year of their training can be employed part time under a training and employment contract for a limited period (equivalent to no more than five months' full time), provided the school has a vacancy. The trainee teacher does everything a regular member of staff would do, including speaking to parents at parent evenings and discussing reports. The level of supervision is minimal. This makes the transition from student to teacher less abrupt and the teacher training institutions are better able to

keep abreast of current developments in education.

New developments

The government supports pilot projects giving schools more responsibility for the training of teachers and teaching assistants as part of their personnel policy.

8.1.4.2. Training of teachers in secondary, adult and vocational education

Secondary school teacher training courses are provided at HBO institutions and universities. The subjects on offer vary from place to place. HBO courses in technical subjects are mainly taught at the Fontys Technical Teacher Training College of the Netherlands, while those relating to agricultural subjects are provided by the STOAS Agricultural Teacher Training College. HBO courses in arts subjects are provided by a number of HBO institutions specialising in courses in the fine and performing arts and by institutions offering teacher training in other fields as well. Teacher training is provided by 9 universities: 3 technical and 6 general. Courses vary per university.

HBO teacher training courses

HBO teacher training courses for secondary school teachers lead to either a grade one or grade two qualification. Courses are available in general subjects, arts subjects, technical subjects and agricultural subjects. Students specialise in one subject. HBO teacher training courses cover both subject training and aspects of teaching in general, including:

- teaching methods
- teaching practice
- command of language
- communication
- educational theory.

Teachers who have obtained a grade two qualification in a general subject after studying either full or part-time can then take an HBO course (usually part-time) leading to a grade one qualification in the same subject.

Courses in technical and agricultural subjects lead to a grade two qualification only. Both full-time and part-time courses are available.

The training course for physical education teachers leads to a grade one qualification. Similarly, courses in certain arts subjects (fine arts and design, music, drama and dance) lead to a grade one qualification only (with a study load of 240 ECTS credits).

Grade two teachers are qualified to teach the first three years of HAVO and VWO and all years of VMBO and secondary vocational education. Grade one teachers are qualified to teach at all levels of secondary education, including the last two or three years of HAVO and VWO respectively.

In recent years, the government has given HBO institutions providing secondary school teacher training extra funds to enable them to offer tailor-made courses for various target groups, integrate ICT into courses, work more closely with schools, adapt courses in line with the standards of competence, enhance career prospects and raise pass rates.

University-based teacher training courses

University graduates with a “doctoraal” or master’s degree can take a postgraduate teacher training course (ULO) leading to a grade one qualification. Students can also begin, and, if they wish, complete their teacher training while they are still undergraduates. The part-time, full-time and dual options all have a study load of 60 ECTS credits (equivalent to one year’s full-time study). Courses are available in all subjects in the secondary curriculum. Students specialise in one subject, sometimes with an extra qualification to teach a subject like general science or culture and the arts. Graduates from university-based teacher training courses have a grade one qualification. They may teach at all levels of secondary education, including the last two or three years of HAVO and VWO respectively.

Teaching practice

Teaching practice is an important component of teacher training. Students receive practical training in the area in which they intend eventually to work. This is a compulsory part of the course. Details about the period of teaching practice are set out in the institution's teaching and examination regulations. There are no rules concerning teaching practice for HBO courses leading to grade one and grade two teaching qualifications. Similarly, there are no statutory requirements for teaching practice for students attending university teacher training courses. However, the universities themselves have agreed that teaching practice should last 840 hours, 250 of which must be spent in a school, with students actually taking a class for at least 120 hours.

Secondary school teacher training courses now offer a combined period of work and study in the final year. Students can be employed part time in a school under a training and employment contract for a limited period (equivalent to no more than five months’ full time), provided the school has a vacancy. The trainee teacher (LIO) does everything a regular member of staff would do, including speaking to parents at parent evenings and discussing reports. The level of supervision is minimal. This makes the transition from student to teacher less abrupt and the teacher training institutions are better able to keep abreast of current developments in education.

On-the-job training in schools

Increasingly, primary and secondary schools and institutions for adult and vocational education are training teaching staff themselves, including students on a training and employment contract, teaching assistants undergoing teacher training and lateral-entry staff. This generates a culture of learning and working within schools. Schools share the responsibility for training both new and existing teaching staff with the teacher training institutions.

To many schools, training on the job presents many opportunities. They benefit from the extra help, and students or lateral-entry teachers learn faster because they can immediately put theory into practice. Schools gain expertise, which they can use when training their own staff. The quality of both teacher training and the school as a whole receives a boost.

Only those institutions accredited to provide teacher training and to train teaching assistants may issue certificates of education. They must therefore be confident that the training provided by schools is of an adequate standard, so close cooperation is essential.

In order to guarantee the quality of on-the-job training in schools, it is important that primary and secondary schools and institutions for adult and vocational education meet a number of basic conditions. They are:

an infrastructure for training and supervision, which is part of integrated personnel policy;

agreements with institutions (providing teacher training or training teaching assistants) on the division of responsibilities and duties.

111 primary school boards (350 schools), 56 secondary school boards (175 schools) and seven institutions for adult and vocational education now possess a teacher training infrastructure, and have reached agreement with teacher training institutions on on-the-job training. They have received a start-up grant from the government.

8.1.5. Admission requirements

8.1.5.1. Primary school teacher training

Candidates for admission to an HBO primary teacher training course must possess an HAVO (senior general secondary education), VWO (pre-university education) or MBO (secondary vocational education) certificate. In the latter case they must have completed level 4 (middle-management or specialist training). Applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may also be admitted after passing a viva voce entrance examination. There are no government-imposed restrictions on the number of places (numerus fixus).

8.1.5.2. Training of teachers in secondary, adult and vocational education

Candidates for HBO teacher training courses must possess at least an HAVO, VWO or MBO certificate. In the latter case they must have completed level 4 (middle-management or specialist training). Additional requirements regarding the subjects studied apply for some grade two courses. Applicants for grade one HBO training courses must have a grade two qualification in the subject to be studied. Applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may also be admitted after passing a viva voce entrance examination.

Both university graduates and master's degree students may be admitted to university teacher training courses, but their subject must correspond to the subject they will be trained to teach. In principle, students should also have completed a two-month orientation programme as part of their first degree course. There are no government-imposed restrictions on the number of places available.

8.1.6. Curriculum, special skills and specialisation

8.1.6.1. Primary school teacher training

The organisation of teacher training courses is regulated in the teaching and examination regulations drawn up by the institution concerned. There are no statutory regulations relating to the curriculum. Only the principles, structure and procedures underlying the teaching and examination regulations are prescribed by law. Some HBO institutions have drawn up a common curriculum covering about 70% of the total programme, but it is not compulsory by law. However, for primary school teacher training courses, there are regulations relating to the content of the examination syllabus and the exit qualifications. The competencies which primary school teachers are expected to have at the start of their careers have also been formulated and the institutions have entered into a covenant with the government agreeing to incorporate them in their curricula. The competencies relate to subject and learning area content and dealing with pupils and other tasks. These standards of competence will in

due course be laid down by law (in the Education Professions Act), so that institutions will be obliged to train students to meet them. The regulations relating to the examination syllabus and exit qualifications will then no longer apply. There are no government regulations on the organisation of courses.

The study load for each course is 240 ECTS credits (four years). One ECTS credit is equivalent to 28 hours of lectures and independent study. Courses consist of a propaedeutic part (60 ECTS credits) and the main part. For full-time courses the propaedeutic part lasts one year and the main part three years. The duration of courses varies in practice depending on a range of factors, including the student's previous educational qualifications and skills acquired elsewhere. Teaching practice is an important component of primary teacher training and is compulsory.

Training for other jobs in primary schools

Priority has been given to the professional development of school boards and management. Funds have been earmarked for training, advice and guidance. A postgraduate management course for primary school heads was introduced at five HBO institutions in 1994. The aim of the course is to train head teachers to handle the financial and educational policies of the school, given the many areas of policy that are now determined by schools themselves. Successful participants are awarded a certificate. The course lasts two years and takes up one day a week. Half of the course consists of lessons, which can be attended during work time without loss of salary; the costs of a supply teacher are reimbursed. The other half of the course comprises private study in the teacher's own time. The course is not compulsory. HBO institutions also provide government-subsidised courses for deputy heads and prospective heads. Some also provide courses in multi-school management.

In addition to the level 4 secondary vocational education training course for teaching assistants, which began on 1 August 1998, holders of a level 3 qualification in social and community work education who have specialised in primary education can also become teaching assistants. Teaching assistants help the teacher with routine teaching activities and supervise pupils in the acquisition of practical skills. Their duties are primarily of an educational nature. Occupational profiles have been drawn up, on which the exit qualifications for the training course for teaching assistants are based.

Classes in minority languages can be provided outside school hours for primary school children from ethnic minorities. Minority languages can also be used to help children's understanding in other lessons. An HBO course leading to qualification as a minority language (OALT) teacher has existed for some years. Applicants must meet certain criteria. Students specialise in a single language and culture.

In recent years, the government has given HBO institutions providing primary school teacher training extra funds to enable them to offer tailor-made courses for various target groups, increase the number of students and graduates from ethnic minorities, integrate ICT into courses, work with schools to train teachers and adapt courses in line with the standards of competence.

8.1.6.2. Training of teachers in secondary, adult and vocational education

The organisation of teacher training courses is regulated in the teaching and examination regulations of the HBO institution or university concerned. Only the principles, structure and procedures underlying the teaching and examination regulations are prescribed by law. There are no statutory requirements relating to curriculum content. In the case of HBO courses there is a common

curriculum that is used by many of the institutions. It is not however compulsory by law. The government does not lay down regulations concerning the organisation of teaching. The standards of competence for teachers which are shortly to be introduced will of course influence curriculum content.

HBO teacher training courses

There are HBO teacher training courses in general subjects, arts subjects, technical subjects and agricultural subjects. Since 1990, students qualify to teach one subject rather than two, as was previously the case. The courses cover both subject training and aspects of teaching in general, including:

- teaching methods
- teaching practice
- command of language
- communication
- educational theory.

Teaching practice is an important component of every course. Courses leading to a grade two qualification, both full-time and part-time, have a study load of 240 ECTS credits under the bachelor-master system (see also § 8.1). Courses consist of a propaedeutic part (60 ECTS credits) and the main part (180 ECTS credits). Qualified teachers with a bachelor's degree may then carry on studying for a grade one qualification in the same subject. These courses have a study load of 120 ECTS credits. The grade one courses in arts subjects have a study load of 240 ECTS credits for both full-time and part-time courses. Courses in technical and agricultural subjects lead to a grade two qualification only. The study load for both full-time and part-time courses is 240 ECTS credits. The training course for physical education teachers is available as an ungraded (usually full-time) course with a study load of 240 ECTS credits.

University-based teacher training courses

University-based teacher training courses lead to a grade one qualification in one subject (i.e. a HAVO/VWO examination subject), sometimes with an extra qualification to teach a subject like general science or culture and the arts. Courses have a study load of 60 ECTS credits (equivalent to one year of full-time study or two years of part-time study). As a rule, half the course consists of teaching practice while the rest is devoted to theory (teaching methods).

On 1 May 1998 the government and the Association of Dutch Universities (VSNU) concluded a covenant, the aim of which is to attract more students into the teaching profession by offering more options within teacher training. A number of new variants are now offered alongside the existing postgraduate teacher training course, including a dual training course combining working and learning, teacher training options at undergraduate level and tailored courses.

The 1998 covenant on exact sciences stated that all new-look science degrees would include a teacher training option to be incorporated, as far as possible, in the regular five-year undergraduate course. These will remain under the bachelor-master system.

8.1.7. Evaluation and certificates

8.1.7.1. Primary school teacher training

A qualified primary school teacher can teach all subjects in all year groups, except physical education, which can be taught in years 1 and 2 only. Since 2001, a separate postgraduate qualification has been needed to teach physical education in years 3 to 8. Schools can also appoint specialist teachers with a secondary school teaching qualification in sensory coordination and physical education, art, music, handicrafts, eurhythmics, dance, drama, English, Frisian or minority languages. To complete the primary teacher training course, students must obtain 240 ECTS credits. Those completing the course receive a certificate of higher professional education. This usually states the course attended, the parts of the examination and the teaching qualification obtained.

8.1.7.2. Training of teachers in secondary, adult and vocational education

A key feature of general secondary education is the distinction between grade one and grade two teaching qualifications. Grade two teachers are qualified to teach only the first three years of HAVO and VWO but all years of VMBO and secondary vocational education. Grade one teachers are by contrast qualified to teach at all levels of secondary education.

For secondary vocational education, however, there is a different system: in addition to teachers with secondary teaching qualifications, graduates from other HBO courses can be appointed. The institution in question decides whether the candidate has sufficient subject knowledge and teaching skills. If not, he or she can be required to follow a short teacher training course. Candidates without an HBO qualification but who are considered capable of functioning at HBO level on the basis of their education and experience can also be appointed if they complete a supplementary teacher training course.

Students who complete the secondary teacher training course (grade one or two) receive a certificate of higher professional education indicating at least the course attended, the qualification obtained and the parts of the examination.

Students who complete the university teacher training course receive a certificate indicating the course attended, the parts of the examination and the qualification obtained.

8.1.8. Alternative training pathways

Staff shortages in primary schools have led to measures to promote intake into the profession. With the entry into force of the Lateral-entry Recruitment (Primary and Secondary Education) Interim Act in 2000, people with higher education qualifications may enter the teaching profession without having trained in the normal way. Under the terms of the Act, anyone with a higher professional education or university degree who passes an aptitude test may teach. Such teaching may be on a part-time or full-time basis, and is combined with additional training, leading within two years to a full teaching qualification.

Lateral-entry posts are also available in secondary schools, both for people who do not yet have the required qualifications and for teachers who want to obtain a qualification in another subject.

The government has signed a covenant with the Education Sector Employment Board (SBO), a platform of employers' and employees' organisations, to promote lateral entry, appoint extra teaching

assistants, support staff and ethnic minority teachers, and make it easier for teachers to move on to management posts.

8.2. Conditions of service of teachers

The conditions of service and legal status of education personnel (e.g. teachers, specialist teachers, head teachers, teaching assistants, technical assistants, ICT managers, caretakers, internal counsellors and therapists) in both the public and private sectors are determined partly at suprasectoral and sectoral level (both of which involve central government) and partly at decentralised and institutional level. Negotiations at decentralised level are between the employers' organisations and trade unions in the education sector. Negotiations at institutional level are between each competent authority and the federations of public service and education unions representing the staff of the institutions for which that particular competent authority is responsible. There are thus four levels of negotiation in all.

8.2.1. Historical overview

As part of the administrative reforms in education, the boards and heads of educational institutions are being given increasing autonomy. As a result, the volume of central legislation is decreasing and legislation governing the legal status of staff is becoming more general in nature, giving schools and institutions more scope for shaping their own policies. One example of these reforms is the decentralisation of regulations on legal status. In the past, all employees in publicly run primary, secondary and special schools, for instance, were subject to the same provisions, laid down in the Legal Status (Education Personnel) Decree (RPBO). This Decree contained numerous rules to be taken into account by the school board in formulating and implementing personnel policy. The conditions of service of education personnel, apart from those in primary and special education, are now - in part - regulated separately per sector of education. A series of framework decrees provides a statutory framework for the further elaboration of conditions of service per sector.

The sectors are: primary and special education (PO), secondary education (VO), adult and vocational education (BVE), higher professional education (HBO), universities (WO) and research and science policy (OWB). Conditions of service are determined at the level of the education and science sector in negotiations between the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the civil servants' and teachers' unions. As part of the move towards greater autonomy, negotiations on some aspects of pay and conditions have been moved to decentralised level and institutional level. In short this means that in the primary and special education sector both primary and secondary conditions of service are regulated by the Minister; in secondary education primary conditions of service are regulated by the Minister and secondary conditions at decentralised level. In the adult and vocational education sector conditions of service have been regulated since 1 February 2003 at decentralised level, as they are in the higher education sector.

8.2.2. Ongoing debates

If all goes to plan, from 1 August 2005, conditions of service in the secondary education sector will also be regulated at decentralised level. The same will apply to secondary conditions in the primary and special education sector from 1 August 2006. From that date too, block grants will be introduced, so that employers will no longer be able to declare salary costs to the ministry, but, subject to certain conditions, will receive a sum of money from which they will pay salaries themselves.

8.2.3. Specific legislative framework

The basis for the establishment of the conditions of service of education personnel is laid down in the Primary Education Act, the Secondary Education Act, the Expertise Centres Act, the Adult and Vocational Education Act, the Higher Education and Research Act and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research Act. The details are set out in:

- the Legal Status (Primary Education and Expertise Centres) Decree (RPB WPO/WEC) applies to primary and special schools;
- the Legal Status (Secondary Education) Framework Decree (applicable in secondary schools since 1 August 1996);
- the Legal Status (Adult and Vocational Education) Framework Decree (applicable in adult and vocational education from 1 August 1996 until 1 February 2003, when it was replaced by sectoral collective agreements);
- the sectoral collective agreements for the universities, HBO institutions and research institutes, applicable since 1 January 1999, which are based on the Conditions of Service (Universities, HBO Institutions and Research Institutes) Decentralisation Decree.

The framework decree for secondary education contains fewer articles and provisions than the RPB WPO/WEC. It sets out agreements on pay, overall working hours (standard working year), job evaluation and social insurance provision over and above the statutory entitlement. Other agreements on the legal status and conditions of service of staff can be laid down by schools in consultation with the unions. Not every school conducts its own negotiations. Other conditions of service are determined for the sector as a whole by representatives of the schools in consultation with the unions, resulting in a collective agreement (CAO). The universities, HBO institutions, research institutes and institutions for adult and vocational education conduct independent negotiations on pay and conditions. The Ministry of Education is no longer involved.

As of 1 January 2001 all government personnel, including education personnel, will be covered by the same employee insurance schemes and the same legislation as employees in the private sector, including the Sickness Benefits Act (ZV) and the Unemployment Insurance Act (WV). Staff working in education who lose their jobs will in future be eligible for unemployment insurance under the Unemployment Insurance Act together with an additional payment under the Enhanced Unemployment Insurance Scheme (Primary, Secondary, Adult and Vocational Education Personnel) Decree (BBWO). The old scheme, governed by the Unemployment (Education and Research Personnel) Decree (BWO), will continue to apply to persons already receiving an allowance prior to 1 January 2001.

Funding of redundancy pay

- Primary, secondary and special education
Since 1 August 1995 the boards of primary, secondary and special schools have been obliged to pay contributions into a collective fund, the administrators of which are in charge of the budget for unemployment benefits. If a member of staff is made redundant, for instance because of a drop in the number of pupils, the board may apply to the fund for funding to meet the cost of redundancy pay. The application is then assessed to ascertain whether the criteria contained in the fund's regulations regarding the grounds for dismissal have been met. If so, the school or institution does not have to finance the redundancy pay itself. From 1 August 2005, it will no longer be compulsory for secondary schools to contribute to the collective fund. The same will probably apply to primary schools a year after block grant funding has been introduced in this sector.
- Adult and vocational education and higher education

A different system applies in adult and vocational education and higher education. In adult and vocational education and higher professional education, part of expenditure on unemployment benefits is funded collectively, i.e. expenditure on entitlements existing when the system was introduced and 40% of the costs of every new entitlement. The remaining 60% is financed by each institution separately. At universities, the entire amount is paid by the institution itself. Their budgets contain a component to cover the costs of unemployment benefit.

8.2.4. Planning policy

Regional covenants

The teaching labour market is largely a regional labour market. It is imperative that schools and teacher training institutions as well as the trainers of teaching assistants strike a balance between the demand for and supply of teaching staff. Early in 2004, schools and teacher training institutions in about twenty regions (mainly those in which there were shortages), entered into a regional covenant together with the local authorities to tackle the teacher shortage in both the short and the medium to long term.

Mirror forecast model

The Mirror forecast model was developed for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to support the regional alignment of demand and supply in the teaching labour market. Expanding demand for teachers, combined with the rising replacement demand, is expected to lead to increasing staff shortages in the short and medium term. Mirror is a micro-simulation model for the teaching labour market. It enables regions and individual school boards to gain insight into developments in the labour market and to determine the effectiveness of the various policy measures, thus providing important input for the development of regional labour market policy.

8.2.5. Entry to the profession

Access

Teachers applying for a job in a given sector of education must possess a certificate qualifying them to teach the subject or subjects in question at that level. Primary and special school teachers are required to have a primary school teacher training qualification. Secondary school teachers must have a grade one or grade two secondary school teaching qualification. Teachers in higher professional education are required to have an HBO or university degree and a certificate of education. Teachers in adult and vocational education who have not trained as a teacher must have a certificate of education. Apart from the relevant teaching qualifications, teachers must be able to produce a certificate of good conduct.

Teachers who are not yet fully qualified may also be appointed on a temporary basis. They are usually lateral-entry teachers, i.e. HBO or university graduates without teaching qualifications but with enough relevant experience or other qualifications to be admitted to an aptitude test. If they pass, they can be appointed as teachers, provided they are willing to undergo further training. After two years at the most, they may be awarded a teaching certificate if they are found to be competent. For technical subjects at VMBO level, an MBO qualification is sufficient for admission to the aptitude test.

Nature of contract

Since 1995 all primary, secondary and special school staff (i.e. head teachers, teaching staff and non-teaching staff) and all staff in adult and vocational education have been employed in the general

service of the competent authority, rather than by a particular school. This means that staff who move to another school governed by the same school board are not dismissed and reappointed but simply transferred. The letter of appointment must record a number of details. The most important of these are: the date on which the appointment commences, the post and relevant pay scale, whether the appointment is temporary or permanent, the number of hours to be worked, the place of work and the salary.

8.2.6. Professional status

Staff in public-authority schools and institutions are formally public sector personnel; they are public servants within the meaning of the Central and Local Government Personnel Act. The same does not apply to staff in the private sector who sign a contract with the board of the legal person, governed by private law, whose employment they enter. They fall under the provisions of the civil law, insofar as the relevant educational legislation and the regulations based thereon do not differ from these provisions. Private sector staff can be deemed to share the status of public sector personnel in respect of those conditions of service that are determined by the government.

8.2.7. Replacement measures

If a teacher is unable to work, primary and secondary schools may claim money to pay for a supply teacher from the Staff Replacement Fund (VF). Money can be claimed in the following cases: absence through sickness, exceptional leave, leave to fulfil military service, pregnancy and maternity leave, parental leave and suspension. The Fund operates on the basis of a differentiated contribution system. Every school year, the contributions paid by each competent authority are examined in the light of the amounts claimed for supply teachers to cover for teachers on sick leave. If more money is claimed than is paid in contributions, the regulations specify that the competent authority has to make an extra contribution. This system places the responsibility for taking action to prevent sick leave firmly in the court of the competent authority. The fewer teachers going off sick, the less that needs to be claimed for supply teachers.

Supply teachers may be hired externally, or found within the school by paying teachers to work extra hours. Some schools make use of a pool. Teachers can also be seconded from other schools. In some cases trainees or lateral-entry teachers do supply work.

In principle, schools employ qualified supply teachers. However, they may request dispensation from the Inspectorate so that, for example, a teaching or classroom assistant can cover. In this case too, the costs can be claimed from the Staff Replacement Fund. Supply teachers are funded for a maximum of 30 months. It is not compulsory for teachers to cover for a sick colleague.

8.2.8 Supporting measures for teachers

School boards are themselves responsible for their personnel policies and for supervising new teachers. The necessary funds come from the personnel budget, which school boards in primary and secondary education receive to spend at their own discretion. They may spend the money on supervising trainee teachers and other new staff members. Schools also receive money to fund the professional development of their staff, which they can use for, for example, courses or coaching.

Support and supervision are very important in giving new teachers a good start on the teaching labour

market, since both staff retention and the quality of education benefit. The intake of many newcomers and the new groups entering schools (for instance teaching and classroom assistants and lateral entrants) in the past few years have made it more important than ever for both new teachers and support staff to receive adequate supervision.

In August 2000, the Lateral-entry Recruitment (Primary and Secondary Education) Interim Act entered into force making it possible for HBO and university graduates to become teachers without having undergone formal teacher training. Prospective teachers are assessed to establish whether they are sufficiently competent to start work immediately, and to identify their training and supervision needs for the next two years.

Lateral-entry teachers are mainly trained on the job. In primary education, supervisors spend an average of 3 hours a week on training activities and in secondary education, two hours. In primary schools it is mainly fellow teachers, specialist teachers or school heads who are responsible for supervision. In secondary education it is usually a fellow teacher, but in this sector lateral-entry teachers are often given general supervision. The training and supervision of lateral-entry teachers, for which grants are available, takes no more than two years.

Experienced teachers, for instance those over the age of 55, can play an important role in supervising new teachers, since they can impart their knowledge and experience to their new colleagues. They can also act as personal coaches. This school year, the schools launched the Nestor project, an initiative subsidised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The experience gained in this project using older teachers as supervisors may form the basis for new policy. In primary education, the Education Sector Employment Board (SBO) has launched a similar project in which teachers on early retirement are trained as coaches for new staff.

A practical guide has also been published to improve the supervision of new teachers in both primary and secondary schools, and a website has been opened for new members of staff and those responsible for supervising them (coaches and headteachers etc.). See <http://www.nieuwonderwijspersoneel.kennisnet.nl>.

The Open University's Ruud de Moor Centre has been asked to help develop more flexible initial and in-service training courses incorporating distance education, competence-oriented training and on-the-job training and making use of ICT applications. The Centre is now developing a virtual learning and working environment, providing support to trainees, new teachers and lateral-entry teachers in the workplace.

A number of collective agreements in secondary education have implemented cuts in the number of hours new teachers have to spend on certain tasks, so that they have more time to prepare lessons.

8.2.9. Evaluation of teachers

Teachers are appointed by school boards, which are themselves responsible for personnel policy and for recruiting, training and evaluating their staff. Evaluation involves both job performance interviews and assessment interviews. During job performance interviews, teachers discuss their performance with their heads, and look at their prospects for the future. During assessment interviews, the teacher's performance in the period preceding the interview is assessed.

The information given below is taken from the fourth survey of integrated personnel policy in primary and secondary education, held in 2005. Most schools regularly hold job performance interviews with their teaching staff, in most cases once every two years. Information on a teacher's performance is mainly supplied by the individual concerned. In primary schools, classroom observation is an important source of information. This also applies to some secondary schools, where colleagues and pupils are also consulted on teachers' performance.

According to 18% of primary school heads and 11% of secondary school heads, assessment interviews are regularly held with teachers. In most cases teachers are assessed once a year. Some schools do not hold separate assessment interviews, but assess their teachers during their job performance interviews. This construction is used by 12% of the primary school heads and 13% of the secondary school heads who indicated that they do not hold assessment interviews.

The criteria used in assessing staff include attitude towards colleagues, and professional development. Heads also like to have measurable indicators of the performance of individual teachers and their staff as a whole.

41% of primary school heads and 55% of secondary school heads have drawn up competence profiles for at least some of their teachers. Some of the heads (35% in primary schools and 29% in secondary schools) use them intensively for the purpose of evaluation.

Consequences may be attached to assessments. For temporary staff, the results may determine whether their contracts are extended, terminated or made permanent. Teachers may also be asked to undergo coaching, or accept a transfer to another job. With the introduction of the personnel budget, schools have more scope to give their teachers a performance-related allowance or bonus. They may decide to do so on the basis of an assessment. It is up to the school to decide under what conditions bonuses or allowances will be granted, and how much money they are prepared to spend on them.

8.2.10. In-service training

To maintain the quality of teaching, it is essential that staff undergo training, enabling them to keep abreast of trends in education in general and in their own subject in particular.

Historical overview

Beginning in 1993, the budget for in-service training of teachers in primary, secondary, special and vocational education has been transferred in stages from the teacher training institutions to the schools and vocational education institutions. Schools themselves are now able to dictate both the actual content of courses and which institution provides the training. They are also responsible for deciding how in-service training funds should be spent.

Specific legislative framework

In 1993 the statutory regulations governing the funding of in-service training were amended to give schools their own training budgets. The thinking behind this was that demand-led funding would improve the quality of in-service training.

On 1 August 2001 a new 'personnel budget' was introduced in primary schools, which combined previously separate budgets (e.g. management support, labour market activities, school-specific problems, integrated personnel policy and in-service training). Schools are free to spend this budget as

they wish, as long as expenditure is personnel-related. Institutions providing secondary education, secondary vocational education and higher education may therefore determine, within this budget, how much they spend on in-service training and how they spend it.

In-service training institutions

There are no specific in-service training institutions governed by law. Courses can be provided by all kinds of institution, within both the public and commercial domain. Many are provided by the teacher training institutions (HBO institutions and universities with teacher training departments). They are sometimes organised in cooperation with the school advisory services, one of the national educational advisory centres or experts from outside the education system. The content of courses and the choice of training institution are left to the schools to decide. Since 1993 funding for in-service training has been demand-led; in other words, schools have their own budgets which they are free to spend as they wish on the in-service training market.

Maintaining skills

As soon as the Education Professions Act enters into force, every school board will be obliged to take measures and introduce instruments to ensure that the staff to whom standards of competence apply can maintain their skills.

8.2.11. Salaries

Every post in education has a corresponding salary scale, determined in accordance with the pay scales laid down pursuant to the Legal Status (Primary Education and Expertise Centres) Decree (for primary and special education), the Legal Status (Secondary Education) Framework Decree and the collective agreements for the higher professional education sector, the universities and research institutes, and for the adult and vocational education sector. The level of a particular post is determined by the salary scale attached to that post. Before a member of staff can reach the maximum salary amount he or she must move up through a number of salary amounts in keeping with a given career pattern. The categories of teaching and management posts in primary and special schools are: teacher, deputy head and head.

8.2.12. Working time and holidays

Working time

On 1 August 1998 the standard number of hours to be worked per year (standard working year) was fixed at 1,659 for all sectors of education. The official number of working hours is either 1,710 or 1,790. This includes additional leave in lieu of a shorter working week (ADV), which, for staff with a standard full-time post, amounts to either 51 or 131 hours. Staff are appointed to a standard full-time teaching post or a part-time post, expressed as a "working hours factor". Ten percent of a teacher's actual working hours are available for professional development.

The leave entitlement of part-time staff is calculated on a pro rata basis using the working hours factor. Additional leave may be taken off during the course of the year (additional annual leave) or saved up (accumulated leave). Since 1 August 2000 it has also been possible to 'cash in' the additional leave entitlement and receive an additional payment instead of additional time off work.

In primary and special education, both types of additional leave are regulated centrally and additional leave can be saved up over a period of between 5 and 12 years. In all other sectors, similar

arrangements have been made as part of the negotiations on pay and conditions at decentralised level.

Primary and special school teachers may be required to spend an average of no more than 930 hours a year teaching (in relation to the official number of working hours of 1,710 or 1,790 this works out at 961 or 1,010 hours respectively). For secondary school teachers this figure is 750 hours (a maximum of 26 50-minute lessons a week). In the adult and vocational education sector, arrangements regarding working hours are made by the employer in consultation with the staff representatives on the participation council. Teachers may be assigned no more than 823 hours of executive duties per year. This includes teaching, taking examinations, supervising students on placements, taking practical lessons and running courses provided on a contract basis. Other arrangements may be negotiated at institutional (IGO) level.

Leave

There are various leave arrangements for education personnel:

- **Holiday leave**

Teaching staff enjoy paid leave during school holidays and on national and religious holidays.

- **Sick leave**

In principle, all staff on sick leave continue to receive their full pay for up to 18 months, provided they are unable to work for at least 55% of their total working hours. Thereafter staff are paid 80% of their salary until their contract of employment is terminated. When a member of staff has been unfit for work for 12 consecutive months, a medical examination is carried out to ascertain whether they are entitled to benefit payments under the Invalidity Insurance Act (WAO). To be eligible for benefit, a person must be at least 15% disabled. The amount received depends on the degree of invalidity. As long as the employer is still obliged to pay the employee's salary, the amount of benefit awarded may be deducted in its entirety from the salary payable. After 2 years the contract of employment may be ended. Former teaching staff are then entitled in principle to a supplementary allowance for up to 66 months, amounting to 80% of their last salary for the first 33 months and 70% thereafter. In other cases, former employees receiving invalidity benefit (WAO) can receive a supplementary invalidity pension, amounting in most cases to 70% of their last salary for those who are 100% disabled.

- **Maternity leave**

Female staff are entitled to sixteen consecutive weeks of maternity leave. The period of leave must begin at least four weeks before the due date.

- **Parental leave**

Parents of children under the age of 8 can opt to take parental leave. Parents may choose either not to work at all for a consecutive period of time or to work fewer hours a week for up to 12 months. No salary is paid for the hours not worked. As of 1 August 2003, parents with a child under 6 may take paid parental leave for a quarter of their working hours.

- **Additional annual leave, accumulated leave, age-related leave**

Teaching staff in primary, secondary, special, adult and vocational education may choose between taking the additional leave due to them in lieu of a shorter working week on an annual basis (additional annual leave) or saving it up (accumulated leave). Primary and special school teachers may use their accumulated leave to take a consecutive period of leave (sabbatical) or, from the age of 52, to work fewer hours a week over several years (age-related leave), possibly in combination with the scheme to promote employment among older people (BAPO). Similar arrangements apply in secondary education and adult and vocational education.

- **Other leave entitlement**

The competent authority must grant teachers paid leave in certain cases, for example when they

get married or upon the death of a close relative. The competent authority may also grant unpaid leave.

8.2.13. Promotion and advancement

The job structure devised by the parties to the collective agreements for the secondary education and adult and vocational education sectors comprises model teaching and support jobs at various levels, thus providing for career and promotion opportunities for both teachers and support staff. As part of their integrated personnel policies, schools and institutions can assess whether members of staff have developed their competencies, and if so, whether they can be promoted to a job at a higher level. Promotion prospects also depend on the educational and organisational choices the school or institution makes, and on its financial position. In primary education, the current range of standard and model jobs provides sufficient opportunities for job differentiation for both teachers and support staff.

8.2.14. Transfers

Teachers are appointed and dismissed by the competent authority of a school (school board). There is an open selection procedure; no placement system exists. Teachers are free to apply for any job they like and to change jobs if they so wish.

8.2.15. Dismissal

There are various statutory provisions relating to dismissal. The arrangements for primary and special education are set out in the Legal Status (Primary Education and Expertise Centres) Decree (RPB WPO/WEC). For the other sectors, the details are set out in the relevant collective agreement (CAO). Various legal remedies are open to public-authority and private schools. Redundancy regulations, dating from 31 July 1996, apply in primary and secondary education. However, they no longer apply to individual schools but to all schools falling under the same school board.

If a school is planning to dismiss a member of staff, it must apply for permission to do so from the Collective Redundancy Payments Fund. Members of staff may be dismissed if a temporary contract is not renewed or there is too little work for them, for compelling reasons, where there is a clash of personalities, or on denominational grounds. First the school is obliged to attempt to find another job for the person in question either internally or externally, and these efforts are included in the Fund's assessment. Schools may also apply to the Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body (UWV) for permission to dismiss a member of staff after 24 or 30 months' absence due to sickness or disability.

8.2.16. Retirement and pensions

As a rule, everyone in the Netherlands retires at the age of 65 and is then entitled to an old age pension under the General Old Age Pensions Act (AOW). Education personnel in both the public and private sectors also receive a supplementary pension from the pension fund for public servants and education personnel, the ABP Pension Fund. Pensions are calculated on the basis of average salary. This applies to FPU (see below), old age and surviving dependants' pension, and invalidity pension built up since 1 January 2004. Pensions built up before that date are calculated on the basis of final salary. Teachers and other staff start to build up their pension on entering service. On the basis of its financial position, the ABP decides each year whether pensions will be index-linked.

The Public Servants' Superannuation Fund (ABP), which was governed by public law, ceased to exist as of 1 January 1996 and was replaced by the ABP Pension Fund, which falls under the Pensions and Savings Funds Act (PSW). The Public Servants Superannuation Act was rescinded and replaced by the Pension Regulations, the contents of which are determined by the Council for Public Sector Personnel Policy (ROP), which comprises equal numbers of representatives of employers and employees. The Benefits Agency for the Public Service and Education Sector (USZO) handles the payment of benefits to public sector and education personnel.

On 1 April 1997 the early retirement scheme (VUT) for public sector and education personnel was replaced by the Flexible Pension and Retirement Scheme (FPU). This is a permanent flexible pension scheme, which allows employees to retire or reduce their working hours at any time between the ages of 55 and 65, as they wish. The pension received depends on the age at which an employee stops working.

8.3. School administrative and/or management staff

8.3.1. Requirements for appointment as a school head

Primary education

Candidates seeking appointment as head or deputy head of a primary school must be in possession of:

- a certificate of good conduct and
- a teaching certificate.

They must not have been banned from teaching by judgment of a court.

Secondary education

Candidates seeking appointment as head or deputy head of a secondary school must be in possession of:

- a certificate of good conduct
- a teaching certificate qualifying them to teach the relevant subject at that type of school
- a certificate of education.

The competent authority may depart from these requirements for up to half of the members of the school management team. Candidates must not have been banned from teaching by judgment of the court.

These requirements do not apply to either the head or the members of central management teams.

8.3.2. Conditions of service

Conditions of service are the same as for teachers, though head teachers are usually in a higher salary scale. See § 8.7.3.

8.4. Education Inspectorate

The Minister is responsible for the quality of education and the Education Inspectorate is responsible for supervision. The Inspectorate is managed by the inspector-general and three chief inspectors, who head the Inspectorate's three sectors: primary and special education, secondary and higher education, and adult and vocational education. School inspectors work in accordance with the provisions of the

Education Inspection Act.

8.4.1 Requirements for appointment as an inspector

School inspectors are nominated by the chief inspectors for appointment by the inspector-general. There are no specific requirements, but candidates with experience in the sector in which they are to work and/or analytical skills are preferred. The same applies to chief inspectors, who should also have administrative experience. They are nominated by the inspector-general for appointment by the Minister of Education. The inspector-general is nominated by the Minister for appointment by the government.

8.4.2 Conditions of service of inspectors

Inspectors have the same legal status as civil servants.

8.5. Educational staff responsible for support and guidance

There are no provisions of law or regulations governing the responsibility for support and guidance. The government has launched a number of projects in this field, the long-term aim of which is a central agreement, with schools obtaining funding to perform this task adequately.

8.6. Other educational staff or staff working with schools

The rest of the staff is made up of support staff, who may be employed in a range of jobs. For primary schools, there are standard and model profiles, for, for instance, caretakers, administrative staff, classroom assistants and teaching assistants. Special schools also employ specialists like speech therapists, physiotherapists and mobility instructors.

Secondary schools employ both general support staff, like caretakers, administrative staff and canteen managers, and educational support staff, like teaching and classroom assistants for science subjects.

Similar jobs also exist in higher professional education and as part of the job structure for adult and vocational education.

8.7. Statistics

The statistics in § 8.7.1. and § 8.7.2. have been taken from Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands: Key Figures 2001-2003. The data in § 8.7.3. have been provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

8.7.1. Number of staff (in FTE x 1000)

	2001	2002	2003
primary and special education	119.2	126.6	129.7
* primary education and special schools for primary education	99.0	105.0	106.4
* special education (primary and secondary level)	20.2	21.6	22.9
secondary education	76.2	80.1	81.9
adult and vocational education	35.0	36.9	37.6
higher professional education	22.5	23.3	-
universities	38.6	-	-

8.7.2. Average age of staff (in years)

	2001	2002	2003
primary education	42.4	42.4	42.0
secondary education	45.4	45.1	45.3
adult and vocational education	45.7	45.7	45.9
higher professional education	44.8	45.0	-
universities	-	-	-

8.7.3. Salaries

- Job levels for primary education are taken from the Legal Status (Primary Education and Expertise Centres) Decree (RPB WPO/WEC) and for the other sectors from the decentralised collective agreements.
- The starting salary and salary schedule for head teachers and deputy heads depend on the salary earned prior to promotion.
- From 1 March 2001 scales for primary school head teachers and deputy heads have been adjusted and maximum salaries increased.

8.7.3.1. Salaries in primary education

Salaries on 1 March 2003; career progress as of 1 August 2002

	Teacher		Deputy Teacher			Head Teacher			
			up to 399 pupils	400 to 899 pupils	900 pupils and over	up to 199 pupils	200 to 399 pupils	400 to 899 pupils	900 pupils and over
starting salary	2,120	2,198	2,122	2,171	2,220	2,433	2,528	2,624	2,624
maximum salary	3,058	3,359	3,162	3,410	3,920	3,583	4,061	4,541	4,733
schedule in years	18	18	11	13	18	13	15	16	18

8.7.3.2. Salaries at special schools for primary education (SBO)

Salaries on 1 March 2003; career progress as of 1 August 2002

	Teacher		Deputy Teacher		Head Teacher		
			up to 199 pupils	200 pupils and over	up to 199 pupils	200 to 399 pupils	400 pupils and over
starting salary	2,198	2,198	2,171	2,220	2,628	2,624	2,624
maximum salary	3,359	3359 +215.64	3,410	3,920	4,061	4,541	4,733
schedule in years	18	18	13	18	15	16	18

8.7.3.3. Salaries in special education (SO)

Salaries on 1 March 2003; career progress as of 1 August 2002

	Teacher		Deputy Teacher		Head Teacher		
			up to 24 FTEs	24 or more FTEs	up to 24 FTEs	24 to 42 FTEs	42 or more FTEs
starting salary	2,198	2,198	2,171	2,220	2,528	2,624	2,624
maximum salary	3,359	3359 +215.64	3,410	3,920	4,061	4,541	4,733
schedule in years	18	18	13	18	15	16	18

8.7.3.4. Salaries in secondary education

Salaries on 1 March 2003; career progress as of 1 August 2002

	Teacher			Head Teacher					Head of Central Management Team			
starting salary	2,198	2,221	2,220	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
maximum salary	3,359	3,920	4,459	3,920	4,459	4,836	5,314	5,838	4,836	5,314	5,838	6,414
schedule in years	18	18	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

8.7.3.5. Salaries in adult and vocational education

Salaries on 1 April 2003; career progress as of 1 August 2002

	Teacher		Teacher-Coordinator	Sector Head	Head of Central Management Team
starting salary	2,199	2,212	2,221	3,973	5,317
maximum salary	3,361	3,922	4,461	5,317	7,751
schedule in years	18	18	18	12	13

1) This is a model job in the job evaluation system for the adult and vocational education sector, and could apply to support services like Personnel, Finance and ICT. The collective agreement for the adult and vocational education sector leaves it up to the institutions themselves to organise their own job

structure and to decide on the level of each job. This is the highest level support job occurring in practice.

8.7.3.6. Salaries in higher professional education

Salaries and salary schedules on 1 April 2003

	Technical Skills Instructor	Practical Training Instructor	Senior Practical Training Instructor	Teacher	HBO Teacher	Senior HBO Teacher	Lector
starting salary	1,775	2,279	2,251	2,323	2,235	2,874	3,492
maximum salary	2,724	3,080	3,384	3,984	4,491	4,871	5,352
schedule in years	13	10	18	18	24	19	19

8.7.3.7. Salaries at universities

Salaries and salary schedules on 1 April 2003

	Professor A	Professor B	Research Assistant	Trainee Specialist (medicine)	Student Assistant (up to a maximum of ½ working hours)
starting salary	4,428	4,937	1,501	2,468	1,611
maximum salary	6,462	7,805	2,143	3,180	1,881
schedule in years	14	16	4	7	3

9. Evaluation of the education system

The Education Inspectorate is charged with the inspection of education. The right of the authorities to supervise education is derived from article 23 of the Constitution; the details are worked out in the Education Inspection Act (WOT) and the Inspectorate's annual work plan.

The Inspectorate monitors and promotes the quality of education in Dutch educational establishments, based on a thorough knowledge of individual schools and institutions. Regular, systematic visits are made to schools and institutions for this purpose. A report of the Inspectorate's findings is sent to the school or institution concerned, to the Minister and State Secretaries, and to parliament.

Under the Education Inspection Act (WOT), the duties of the Inspectorate, as laid down in education legislation, are:

- to ensure compliance with statutory regulations;
- to monitor compliance with regulations;
- to promote the quality of education;
- to report on the development of education;
- to perform all other tasks and duties required by law.

Under the Primary Education Act, the Secondary Education Act and the Adult and Vocational Education Act, the competent authorities are responsible for ensuring the quality of education.

The Inspectorate encourages educational institutions to fulfil their responsibilities for pursuing policies on quality. If schools regularly evaluate the standard of their teaching, the Inspectorate bases its own conclusions on the results of these self-evaluations, and keeps its own inspections to a minimum.

9.1. Historical overview

Since the early 1980s, Dutch education policy has been geared to improving quality. Educational institutions are becoming increasingly responsible for setting and raising standards in education. As well as internal evaluation by schools and institutions themselves, external inspections and evaluations are also carried out – by the Education Inspectorate in primary and secondary schools, by the Education Inspectorate and the Examination Quality Centre (KCE) in adult and vocational education and by the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) in higher education. The Inspectorate is responsible for the education system as a whole.

9.2. Ongoing debates

The Education Professions Bill Act (WBIO) is currently published in the Bulletin of Acts and Decrees in July 2004, and will enter into force at a date to be specified later. Once it becomes law, the Act will be part of a new quality assurance system in the primary, secondary, and adult and vocational education sectors, with the schools and institutions themselves bearing most of the responsibility for providing high-quality, tailor-made education. Schools will be free to operate within certain parameters, for which the government will remain accountable. The quality and professionalism of the staff are important factors in determining the quality of teaching.

Under the Act, schools and the government will share responsibility for quality, and their tasks will be clearly delineated. The government sets clear standards which allow schools sufficient latitude and govern matters such as the quality of the curriculum, the general principles to which teaching must adhere, professional requirements, and a system of supervision that is both independent and

challenging.

On 1 August 2004, a new examination system was introduced in adult and vocational education. The Examination Quality Centre (KCE) is the external body responsible for safeguarding the quality of examinations. The Inspectorate supervises the quality of the KCE's work.

For schools, the primary teaching process is no longer merely a question of carrying out rules set by the government. Since they now have more freedom to set their own policies, they are also responsible for quality assurance and for developing and accounting for policy in this area. They can be held accountable not only by the government for their performance, but also by pupils and parents for the standard of teaching, which must meet the requirements society sets. This is in line with the Education Inspection Act, which entered into force in 2002 and which is based on the principle that of proportional inspections. This means that the Inspectorate focuses on schools in need of supervision. The frequency and scope of inspections depend on whether institutions are able to deliver sufficient quality, for which they are able to render clear and reliable account. However, the Inspectorate pays an annual visit to each institution to keep track of trends, and identify possible risks. Inspections at institutions providing high-quality teaching, and with a well-developed quality assurance system will be less intensive. should focus on schools' own quality assurance systems and how they render account for them.

9.3. Specific legislative framework

The Education Inspection Act (WOT) came into force on 1 September 2002. It applies to the primary, secondary, vocational and adult education sectors and enables the Inspectorate to operate professionally and independently and to give institutions pointers as to how they can improve standards on the basis of their own quality assurance systems. Under the Act, the Inspectorate has a statutory duty to promote the quality of education.

The Education Inspection Act contains three conditions to be met by inspections:

1. They must take account of freedom of education, and institutions' own responsibilities. Schools bear primary responsibility for the quality of their teaching. They are required to define the standards they wish to achieve in terms of targets, achieve these targets, monitor quality and render account to the public for the quality of their teaching. Schools' responsibilities and the matters for which they are accountable are set down in the statutory provisions governing the school plan and the school prospectus in primary and secondary schools, and the quality assurance report on the quality of teaching in adult and vocational education. Within these statutory parameters, it is up to the schools themselves to set their own quality targets and standards, and to decide how quality is measured and evaluated, and what improvements need to be made once an evaluation has been carried out.

The Inspectorate encourages educational institutions to make full use of their scope to evolve policy on quality. If a school regularly carries out evaluations of the quality of its teaching, the Inspectorate will base its own assessment on them, and only a limited inspection will be needed.

However, it will first examine the school's self-evaluation to see whether it meets three conditions:

- that it includes all relevant factors relating to functioning and performance. The Inspectorate checks whether the school must in any event have assessed the aspects of quality included in the inspection framework. Inspection frameworks go into more detail about the Inspectorate's methods and the content of inspections;
- that it is reliable and sound, as witness the documents supplied by the school;
- that the school has applied appropriate standards in setting its targets.

2. They may not place a greater burden on the school than is strictly necessary for careful supervision (proportional inspections).
3. They must also supply information about quality trends in the sector.

For primary and secondary education, the Education Inspection Act divides aspects of quality into two categories: statutory regulations and other.

- Statutory regulations relating to basic quality standards and conditions for funding;
- The category “other” includes aspects, namely:
 - yield: results and progress in pupils’ development;
 - the structure of the learning process: syllabus, learning/teaching time, educational climate, school climate, teaching methods, response to individual needs, and content, level and implementation of tests, assignments or examinations.

For the adult and vocational education sector, statutory requirements and quality standards are based on the provisions of the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB)

These various aspects of quality are worked out in inspection frameworks, in which the Inspectorate accounts for the way in which it inspects schools. These frameworks are drawn up by the inspector-general of education, subject to the approval of the Minister. Though there are separate frameworks for each sector, some items are the same in each and they are all based on the same definition of quality.

Inspection frameworks go into more detail about the Inspectorate’s methods and the content of inspections. They supply information on the kind of inspections the Inspectorate carries out, their frequency and importance, the reports published by the Inspectorate based on their findings, and the relationship between these reports and the digital school dossiers and school report cards.

Each framework contains an assessment framework in which aspects of quality are expressed in terms of indicators and norms. The assessment framework shows the standards a school may reasonably be expected to achieve. It groups aspects of quality into three domains: quality assurance, teaching and learning, and results.

The Education Inspection Act does not list aspects of quality for the adult and vocational education sector, given the autonomy enjoyed by institutions and the tasks they are required to fulfil under the Adult and Vocational Education Act. The purpose of inspections will therefore be to establish what institutions are doing to fulfil these tasks, what targets they have set themselves and whether they are achieving them.

Following the entry into force of the Higher Education Accreditation Act in 2002, the main principles of the Education Inspection Act also apply to the higher education sector. The Inspectorate will carry out its duties proportional inspections based on these new principles in all sectors of education as from 1 January 2003 (see § 9.2).

Under the Education Inspection Act, the Minister may give institutions may receive financial support to help them improve standards, for instance to pay for an external expert to advise management. Penalties – withholding of funding and withdrawal of rights – continue to apply, although funding can only be withheld if an institution fails to comply with statutory regulations.

9.4. Evaluation at school/institutional level

The Education Inspectorate and, for which the Minister of Education, Culture and Science is responsible, supervises the quality of education. (The Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality is responsible for the agricultural education inspectorate; www.minInv.nl/thema/kennis/inspectie).

The Inspectorate performs the following tasks:

- assessing the quality of teaching;
- promoting the quality of teaching;
- reporting on the development of education, in particular its quality, across the entire system and in individual institutions.

The Inspectorate bases its assessments on the principle that the institutions themselves bear primary responsibility for the quality of teaching. Supervision of Higher Education has changed (see § 9.4.2.4).

9.4.1. Internal Evaluation

9.4.1.1. Internal evaluation in primary and secondary education

There are various instruments available for setting and monitoring standards within schools: the school plan, the school prospectus and the complaints procedure. These have been compulsory for primary, secondary and special schools since 1998.

Various educational organisations have joined forces to set up projects to help both primary and secondary schools organise quality assurance systems:

- Q*Primair is a project for primary schools. It was launched by organisations of school boards and managers and representatives of teachers' unions (www.qprimair.nl).
- Q5 was launched by organisations of school boards. The project targets secondary schools (www.q5.nl).
- The 'Kwaliteitsring' combines organisations of school boards and primary and secondary school managers, the national educational advisory centres, the SLO (National Institute for Curriculum Development), the CITO (National Institute for Educational Measurement) and the SBL (Platform for the Professional Development of Teachers) (www.kwaliteitsring.nl).

School plan

The school plan, which must be updated by the school board every four years, describes the steps being taken to improve the quality of education. Every school must regularly assess its own performance. This information forms the basis for the school plan, which must be approved by the participation council. Through this document, the school accounts to the Inspectorate for its policies.

School prospectus

The school prospectus contains information for parents and pupils. It is updated every year on the basis of the school plan and describes in more detail what goes on in the school, its objectives and the results achieved. It thus serves as a basis for discussion between parents and the school about the school's policy. The prospectus includes information on the parental contribution and the rights and obligations of parents and pupils. It also describes the provision made for pupils with learning difficulties or behavioural problems.

The school sends a copy of its prospectus to the Inspectorate, to which it is accountable for its policy on quality. The Inspectorate may decide to verify whether the statements made in the prospectus

accurately reflect the situation in practice.

Complaints procedure

Schools are required to inform parents about the procedure for handling complaints, which supplements the existing opportunities for participation in decision-making and the management of the school. It gives parents an easy way of making known any complaints they have about the competent authority or members of the staff. The school board is required by law to set up a complaints committee to which parents can submit any complaints they may have.

Pupil monitoring system

There are various pupil monitoring systems in use in mainstream primary schools and special schools for primary education (former MLK and LOM schools) as quality control instruments. The most commonly used are the CITO and IPMON systems.

- The system developed by the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO) comprises an integrated series of tests with a psychometric basis that allows pupils' progress to be measured and a system for the manual or computerised registration of pupils' achievements. This quality assurance system is designed as a tool for recording progress in children's functional development, reading, spelling and arithmetic, listening and writing skills, environmental studies and data handling. Pupils' progress can be measured in broad terms once or twice a year. The results are recorded in individual reports and class lists. The individual reports are based on the pupil's scores in a given series of tests, usually over a period of several years. The class lists show how well each child in the class has done in a particular test, enabling the teacher to assess whether his or her method of teaching is proving effective. Average scores at class or school level may prompt reconsideration of the methods employed by the school, thus encouraging self-evaluation.
- The IPMON system (IPMON = Instrument for Independent Periodic Assessment) is based on the use of Teaching Age Equivalent (DLEs). These show how many months' teaching a pupil needs on average to reach a given level of attainment. Test results are recorded in pupil and class profiles. A pupil profile is a card on which all the pupil's test results are recorded. The same card is used from year 1 of primary school to the first year of secondary school. Class profiles are based on the marks scored by a particular class in a specific test or series of tests. This card stays with the same class from year 3 to the first year of secondary school.

9.4.1.2. Internal evaluation in adult and vocational education

One of the central aims of the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) is to improve the quality of adult and vocational education. Institutions are required to set up and maintain a quality assurance system. This statutory provision is based on the self-regulating ability of the institutions. They must be able to monitor the quality of their teaching and correct any shortcomings. Institutions have to report regularly on the quality of teaching, and every year on the quality of the examinations and the results. They are required to publish their findings in a self-evaluation report, which also contains their policy plans. This report is accessible to the general public.

Under the Education Inspection Act, educational institutions are themselves responsible for the quality of teaching. Inspections are based on institutions' own quality assurance systems, and are proportional. Obviously, where institutions are responsible for the quality of their teaching, the Inspectorate will base the inspections it carries out every three years on the results of self-evaluation, as contained in the self-evaluation report, which covers the period between inspections.

Central Register of Vocational Courses

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) provides for a Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO)). This is a systematic collection of data relating to vocational courses, the institutions that provide them and the bodies authorised to validate their examinations. The CREBO also lists institutions whose right to set examinations has been withdrawn. The register does not contain information about adult education courses.

9.4.1.3. Internal evaluation in higher education

A quality assurance system is in operation, which has been set up to pay systematic and structural attention to the quality of higher education. This system comprises three distinct elements:

- the objectives of the course, which must be clearly formulated and of an adequate standard;
- a monitoring system, from which it is possible to see whether the objectives are indeed being achieved. This includes a properly functioning system for recording students' progress and the keeping of records on success rates and the number of students who drop out;
- evaluation. This is the final and most important link in the process of quality assurance. A distinction is made between internal evaluation (by the staff concerned) and external evaluation (by external experts).

Internal and external evaluations look at the following areas:

- teaching
- exit qualifications
- content
- teaching process
- success rate and parameters
- services to the community
- the institution's policy.

Research, which is subject to a separate quality assurance system. Self-evaluation is the instrument used for internal evaluations.

The board of each HBO institution or university is responsible for internal evaluation (self-evaluation). This is organised as far as possible in collaboration with other institutions and is carried out in accordance with an established protocol. Self-evaluation serves as the basis for assessment by the independent experts who make up the review committee (see § 9.4.2.4). The committee's findings are presented in a separate report for each course. Meta-evaluations are performed by the Education Inspectorate (see § 9.3.4.). The board is responsible for ensuring that courses are accredited on time by the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). Accreditation is obtained on the basis of an external assessment by a review committee, carried out in accordance with the NVAO's terms of reference. In performing the assessment, the committee uses the results of the institution's self-evaluation, and also looks at the internal quality assurance system applicable to the course.

Since the entry into force of the Quality and Practicability Act, every HBO institution and university has been required to draw up a quality management plan.

9.4.2. External eEvaluation

The Education Inspectorate

The Minister is responsible for the quality of education. The Education Inspectorate is responsible for supervision.

The Inspectorate is managed by the inspector-general and three chief inspectors. Each chief inspector is responsible for a different sector: primary and special education, secondary education, adult and adult and vocational education sectors each have their own chief inspector. There is one chief inspector for both the secondary and higher education sectors. The Inspectorate's role in higher education has now changed (see § 9.4.2.4).

The Inspectorate monitors and promotes the quality of teaching in Dutch educational institutions based on a thorough knowledge of individual institutions. The Inspectorate's findings are presented to the school or institution concerned as well as to the Minister and State Secretaries and parliament.

The Inspectorate's methods

The Inspectorate may carry out five different types of inspection:

- Annual inspections are limited in scope, since they take up just one day. The aims are to inspect the school's performance, to update the school report card, to discuss the development of the quality assurance system and the school in general, and to analyse risks that might threaten the development of the school;
- Periodic quality inspections are carried out every four years in the primary and secondary education sectors and every three years in the adult and vocational education sector. Three years and look at every aspect of quality. Their scope depends on the school's situation. The Inspectorate's findings are made public;
- A further inspection may follow a periodic inspection to establish whether quality falls seriously short. On its completion, the Inspectorate may decide to finalise the inspection;
- A quality improvement inspection is carried out if the Inspectorate has carried out a further inspection and decided that quality falls seriously short;
- Incidental inspections are carried out in response to trends in society, reports in the media, complaints from parents and so on.

Proportionality is the guiding principle of every activity the Inspectorate undertakes. The Inspectorate makes sure that institutions are not confronted with more inspections than strictly necessary. The better the school's self-evaluation, the fewer the number of inspections. Wherever possible, the Inspectorate will use the information the school supplies from its own self-evaluations. Proportionality also applies to the frequency and intensity of inspections. If all the signs show that a school has no particular problems with quality, frequent, intensive inspections will be unnecessary. Since each school needs to know what they can expect in the way of inspections, the Inspectorate agrees an inspection schedule with them, specifying their nature and frequency. At the end of an inspection, the Inspectorate informs the school whether it has detected problems of any kind and how serious they are. These problems will affect the nature and frequency of the follow-up inspections subsequently agreed upon.

The Inspectorate uses its own data for the annual Education Report and publications on specific themes. Its inspection reports, including those on the annual inspections, are available on the Internet (www.owinsponderwijsinspectie.nl/publicaties).

Reporting

The Inspectorate draws up a report after each visit it makes. The main purpose of these reports is to provide pointers for schools to help them develop their own policies and quality assurance system. They are public, and have been published on the Internet since 2000. The data necessary for assessing the quality of a school are also used to draw up public reports on the education sector as a whole. These are intended primarily for the Minister and parliament and are based on the outcome of school inspections and relevant data from other organisations.

The Inspectorate assesses and reports on quality, but it is also responsible for encouraging schools to introduce improvements where necessary. The recommendations regarding the measures that need to be taken to improve the quality of education are an important part of the reports. This aspect of the Inspectorate's work – its advisory role – should not be seen in isolation from its other tasks. Nor should the Inspectorate be seen as an advisory body to the Minister. Rather, it publishes reports and makes recommendations as a logical continuation of its total package of activities. If it discovers serious shortcomings or if quality seriously falls short for a longeran extended period of time, it will submit an inspection report to the Minister on the school in question, accompanied by recommendations as to measures to be taken. The Minister may then decide to impose penalties, i.e. withdrawal of all rights relating to the course and/or a funding cut.

The largest and most important of its the Inspectorate's publications is the Education Report which is published each year in May. The Minister, who is responsible for this report, then presents it to parliament.

Future developments

Under the WOT, failing schools are placed under close Inspectorate supervision. If a school continues to perform below par, and no improvement is expected, the Inspectorate will report this to the Minister. The Minister will then deal directly with the school, making binding agreements about the desired improvements. These agreements are really a last chance for the school. If the quality of teaching does not improve within a reasonable time, the Minister will withdraw funding.

9.4.2.1. External evaluation in primary and special education

Schools are expected to organise teaching in such a way as to achieve an optimum outcome for all pupils. Evaluation and control instruments such as attainment targets, testing, research and educational surveys safeguard the quality of education.

Attainment targets for primary education

Attainment targets have been formulated for primary schools as part of the statutory quality requirements for primary education. These targets formulate teaching objectives in terms of levels of achievement. They define what pupils are expected to achieve in the way of knowledge, understanding and skills. Schools are required to adopt these targets as minimum objectives for their teaching activities.

Primary School Leavers Attainment Test

The National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO) has developed a Primary School Leavers Attainment Test, a relatively short but wide-ranging test, which gives a general indication of individual pupils' level of attainment. A new version has been issued each year since 1970. The test consists of four sections on language, arithmetic, study skills and environmental studies. Schools may, if they wish, omit the section on environmental studies. (www.cito.nl/po/ebentree/eb/eind_fr.htm) The test is

intended as an aid for teachers in advising parents as to the right secondary school for their child. Use of the test is optional, but over 85% of all primary schools take part in it. (see www.cito.nl).

As well as measuring the performance of individual pupils, the test also shows how well a particular school is performing. The schools that use the test are sent two reports, one comparing the performance of the school concerned with all the other schools that used the test, and another comparing the average pupil's score with the average score at schools in a similar situation. This gives the school an indication of the effectiveness of its curriculum.

PRIMA cohort survey

The national primary school PRIMA cohort survey (PRIMA survey) is carried out in mainstream primary schools and special schools. Pupils are tested every two years in years 2, 4, 6 and 8 so that their progress can be followed. Their social development and attitude to school is also observed. Every two years the oldest cohort moves on to secondary school and a new year 2 cohort is added. Teachers and heads are asked questions about the curriculum and their opinion of the pupils. Parents are asked about the help and support given to children at home in relation to their school work and certain other factors, such as the language spoken at home and their own level of education.

The data collected is used for various purposes, for instance in evaluating compensatory policy and the Going to School Together (WSNS) project. The PRIMA survey is an extension on a broader scale of the National Educational Priority Policy Evaluation Programme (LEO) set up in 1988. The first PRIMA survey took place in 1994/95; the findings were published in the autumn of 1996. The second round took place in 1996/97, the third in 1998/99, and the fourth in 2000/2001 and the fifth in 2002/2003. A sixth, using the same cohort, is planned for 2004/2005.

The PRIMA database is a valuable source of information for research purposes. In 1996 a study was made of the extent to which mainstream primary schools are able to cater for pupils with special needs who would previously have been referred to a special school and what resources they have at their disposal to help them do so. Pupils in years 2, 3 and 4 who could be deemed on the basis of their performance and behaviour to be at risk of being referred to a special school were selected from the database. One year later the same pupils were tested again. In the meantime, data were collected on how their needs were being addressed and how any problems were identified. This information was used to assess the effectiveness of the additional help being given to these pupils, from which conclusions can be drawn as to the effectiveness of the Going to School Together policy.

In 2004, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) is carrying out a study into a new cohort system based on pupils' education number. It showed that there is a need for such a system, but that it would run up against a number of practical obstacles, to do with protection of privacy for instance. It is therefore unclear when the system will be introduced.

School report cards for primary schools

The Education Inspectorate has issued school report cards for primary schools since 2003. Each "report card" gives information on results obtained, the atmosphere in the school, the text books and teaching materials used, the quality of the lessons and the contacts the school maintains with parents and the local community. The Inspectorate publishes these report cards on its website (www.onderwijsinspectie.nl).

9.4.2.2. External evaluation in secondary education

Various evaluation and control activities are carried out in order to safeguard the quality of secondary education. These include the formulation of attainment targets, setting examination syllabuses and

research.

Attainment targets for basic secondary education

Basic secondary education refers to a common core curriculum for all pupils in the first stage of secondary education in the various types of school. National attainment targets have been set for the subjects in the core curriculum for the period from 1998 to 2003. These attainment targets indicate the expected level of attainment in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills. They are compulsory minimum standards which schools are expected to achieve by the end of the period of basic secondary education. Since no new attainment targets were set in 2004, the current ones will continue to apply until 1 August 2006. Until then, measures to reduce the study load will apply.

Reform of basic secondary education

Basic secondary education was evaluated by the Education Inspectorate in 1999. One of the conclusions was that the curriculum was overloaded and fragmented. In October 2001 the Education Council published recommendations on the future shape of the curriculum. Its findings, together with those of the Inspectorate, will form the basis for reform of the basic secondary education curriculum. In June 2004 a working group set up in October 2002 published its report on the future of the first stage of secondary education. Its main recommendations were as follows:

- the current attainment targets should be replaced by 58 revised targets for a core curriculum covering at least two-thirds of a two-year period;
- the minimum number of hours' teaching should be 950 hours (1 hour = 60 minutes), with a maximum of 1,150 hours, and no other restrictions;
- steps should be taken to improve internal quality assurance and the external accountability of the school towards pupils, parents and other stakeholders;
- measures should be taken to increase the employability of teachers and develop the skills of individual teachers.

These recommendations were adopted by the Minister, apart from the minimum and maximum number of hours' teaching, for which the Minister proposes a range of between 1,000 and 1,134 hours. New legislation based on these recommendations is expected to enter into force in August 2006. The term 'basic secondary education' will be replaced as of that date by the 'first stage' or 'lower years' of secondary education.

Examination syllabuses

Examination syllabuses are set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. In VMBO, HAVO and VWO, the examination syllabuses serve as a means of setting and monitoring standards.

In the 1999/2000 school year a new system of learning pathways and sectors was introduced in VMBO. New examination syllabuses have been developed for VMBO courses which tie in with the attainment targets for basic secondary education and the new learning pathways in VMBO. The first examinations based on the new syllabuses will be were sat in 2003. Pupils who started the VBO or MAVO course before the 1999/2000 school year will sit examinations based on the old programmes.

New examination syllabuses were introduced for all HAVO and VWO subjects on 1 August 1998 (or one year later) as a result of the new subject combinations introduced to facilitate the transition to higher education. The first new examinations were held in 2001.

School report cards for secondary schools

The Education Inspectorate has issued school report cards for secondary schools since 1998. Each "report card" gives the particulars of the school, and the results it has achieved shows, in an easily

readable form. They show how well a particular the school has performed, and the quality of its teaching. Apart from, for instance, the marks obtained in the leaving examinations, for instance, they report cards also contain information on the educational and general and educational climate in the school. They can be used as a source of information in the public debate on the quality of individual schools. In order to make as fair and broad a comparison as possible, the results of each school are compared with those of other schools in similar circumstances. They can also be compared with the national average and with schools in the same part of the country. The Inspectorate publishes these report cards on its website (www.onderwijsinspectie.nl).

9.4.2.3. External evaluation in adult and vocational education

Under the terms of the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), the competent authority of an institution is required to set up a quality assurance system. This is to ensure that institutions pay systematic attention to their own performance and how they can improve it. Following the introduction of proportional inspections under the Education Inspections Act (WOT) on 1 January 2003, institutions publish reports on the quality assurance measures they have taken (also known as self-evaluation reports) every three years, to coincide with inspections.

Adult and vocational education institutions have to produce a report every two years setting out the measures taken with regard to quality assurance and, if necessary, an action plan for improvements. If the quality of teaching is found to be inadequate in any way, the institution will be given the opportunity to remedy the situation before a follow-up inspection one or two years later.

Exit qualifications

Exit qualifications have been formulated for all adult and vocational education courses, describing the knowledge, skills and insight which students are expected to acquire by the end of the course. To ensure unity, these exit qualifications have been brought together in a qualification structure for adult education and a qualification structure for vocational education.

The exit qualifications are determined partly by the institutions and partly by the Minister. An important aspect of the qualification structure for adult education is the quality and organisation of tests and examinations. Account has been taken of the new administrative relationship between central government, the institutions and the municipal authorities. In other words, responsibility for the adequacy of tests and examinations lies primarily with the institutions.

Provision of information

Under the Adult and Vocational Education Act institutions must regularly supply information to the Ministry. This refers mainly to data on the numbers of students entering and leaving adult and vocational education or going on to other courses. The data supplied must shed light on the results and performance of the institution, including the success rate, the destination of target-group students and access to education. This information is used in connection with funding and to underpin and evaluate government policy.

Inspections

The Inspectorate will examine the data from the self-evaluation for compliance with its own assessment framework. This framework lists those aspects of quality the Inspectorate is looking for, and specifies how it reaches its conclusions. Where the data from the self-evaluation provide enough reliable information, the Inspectorate will adopt the findings of the self-evaluation. That might mean that those elements no longer need to be included in the inspection. However, elements on which too little reliable information can be found in the self-evaluation will be included in the inspection, as will

those for which the targets lack ambition are too modest. The same applies to aspects of quality not included in the self-evaluation, or to those that the Inspectorate suspects of falling short. The Inspectorate also does random checks to confirm that the data from the self-evaluation are correct. In deciding what kind of inspection it will perform, the Inspectorate takes account of information from earlier inspections and from the Central Funding of Institutions Agency (CFI).

The most extensive type of inspection with which institutions will be confronted is the periodic quality inspection (PKO), the aim of which is to enable the Inspectorate to produce a comprehensive report on the quality of teaching. Periodic quality inspections will be held in principle every three years. Under the Education Inspections Act (WOT), the Inspectorate has to carry out an inspection at each institution every year. However, these annual inspections (JO) are limited in scope, and usually take no more than a single day.

School report cards

The Inspectorate has been issuing report cards on institutions for adult and vocational education since 2004. They provide information on the quality of teaching and the results achieved in an easily readable form. The Inspectorate publishes them on its website (www.onderwijsinspectie.nl).

External validation

A test or examination is held at the end of most courses to establish whether the student has acquired the knowledge, skills and insight specified in the exit qualifications. Those who pass are awarded a certificate or diploma as proof that they have completed the course successfully. Educational institutions are responsible by law for holding examinations. The quality of the examinations held at the end of vocational courses is further guaranteed through external validation by examining institutions.

Future developments

On 1 August 2004 a new examination system was introduced in secondary vocational education (MBO). The Examination Quality Centre (KCE; see www.kce.nl) will monitor the quality of examinations in MBO on the basis of national standards, which the KCE is itself developing, and which will be approved by the Minister. These standards are not merely guidelines, but quality requirements which the examinations have to meet. Educational institutions are responsible for the examinations. They have to safeguard their quality, and are accountable for meeting the standards. Every year, the KCE monitors the examinations held at each institution and issues a certificate of approval. If an institution fails to get this certificate for a given course, the Minister may withdraw the institution's right to set the relevant examinations. In that case, it has to enter students for examinations set by another, authorised institution. It takes three years before the Minister will reinstate an institution whose right to set examinations has been withdrawn. For the record, institutions may choose to enter their students for examinations set by another institution. In doing so, they also hand over full responsibility for the examinations. The Inspectorate's task is confined to monitoring both the KCE and the authorisation of examining institutions.

9.4.2.4. External evaluation in higher education

Under the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW 1993), the task of supervising higher education falls to the Education Inspectorate, under the responsibility of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science; the task of supervising agricultural education falls to the Inspectorate for Agricultural Education under the responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The Inspectorate supervises both individual institutions and the system as a whole, including the system of

accreditation (see below). It has a dual task: to enforce the law and to promote the quality of teaching. To this end, it monitors compliance with statutory regulations and inspects aspects of quality. The Inspectorate carries out inspections at the request of the Minister, on its own initiative, or in response to signals it has received from the institution or the community.

An accreditation system was introduced in the Netherlands in 2003. Courses have to be accredited if they are to receive funding or recognition from the government. The Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO, www.nvao.nl) is responsible for delivering the system, and both new and existing courses have to be accredited. The NVAO drafted the relevant framework in 2003. Under the accreditation system, a course cannot be accredited until its quality has been assessed and found to be adequate. Accreditation is valid for six years. New courses cannot be started until the NVAO has established that the quality of the proposed programme is in order.

Review and Assessment Boards (VBIs)

The NVAO does not assess courses itself, but will be delegating the task to the Review and Assessment Boards (VBIs). Under the auspices of the VBIs, review committees visit institutions, where they assess the self-evaluation, examine whether courses measure up to the criteria contained in the accreditation framework and assess their quality. The institution submits the resulting VBI report to the NVAO for accreditation.

The NVAO will mainly monitor the working methods of the VBIs and the reasons they give use to underpin their conclusions. If the NVAO cannot validate the assessment on the basis of the VBI report, it may decide on an extended inspection, or request additional advice. The NVAO has drafted a protocol listing the criteria VBIs should meet:.

They are:

- Independent.
The VBI must be able to show that the institutions undergoing assessment have no influence on the outcome.
- Independent review committees.
The VBIs must be able to guarantee that the review and assessment process can take place entirely independently.
- Composition of the review committees.
Each review committee must comprise at least three independent members, whose expertise and authority are generally accepted in their field, and one student.
- Quality assurance system.
Each VBI should have its own internal quality assurance system.
- Assessment protocol.
Each VBI must have an assessment protocol.
- Terms of reference
VBIs must understand the quality requirements characteristic of for the domain to which the course relates/belongs.

Examination regulations

Higher education institutions are required to draw up teaching and examination regulations for each course. These must include details of the course and examination syllabus and the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to acquire by the end of the course. The examinations serve as a means of setting and monitoring standards.

Assessing quality

A quality assurance system has been put in place to provide students with more information on the

quality of various aspects of teaching so that they can take this into account when choosing what and where to study. This system classifies courses according to various factors, including objectives/exit qualifications, practicability, relationship to the labour market, internal quality assurance, quality of the staff and success rate.

9.5. Evaluation of the education system

Under Article 23 of the Constitution, education is the constant concern of the government. The same article stipulates that all persons are free to provide education, but that the government has the right of supervision. The government is responsible for an adequate education system, and for safeguarding its accessibility and quality. It does so through statutory regulations, funding and administrative measures.

The Education Council

The Education Council advises the government on matters relating to education, such as the main outlines of policy and legislation. It occupies an independent position vis-à-vis the Ministries of Education, Culture & Science and Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality, and the education sector itself. It advises the ministers involved, both on request and of its own volition, and answers questions from parliament. In certain specific cases governed by law, the local authorities may also ask the Council for its advice.

9.6. Research on education

Evaluation surveys are conducted as part of the external evaluation carried out at national level (see § 9.34.). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science commissions policy studies and evaluations, mainly with a view to policy preparation and implementation. This work is carried out by universities and external research companies. In addition, the Education Inspectorate carries out surveys of the quality of education in the different sectors.

9.7. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands: Facts and Figures 1999-2003 (a) and the Education Inspectorate Annual Report 2002 (b).

9.7.1. Visits to primary and secondary schools

2000	primary schools	secondary schools
Number of schools/institutions 2000/2001 2002 (a)	7,945	680
Number of schools/institutions 2001/20023 (a)	7,975	667
Number of pupils 2000/20012 (a)	1,654,100	879,800
Number of pupils 2001/20023 (a)	1,653,700	889,900
Number of inspections (b)	4,210	295
of which annual	3,176	166
of which periodic	1,034	129

(a) Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands: Facts and Figures 2003

(b) Education Inspectorate Annual Report 20032

9.7.2 Number of inspectors

Number of inspectors	
Men	106
Women	70
Total	176

Education Inspectorate Annual Report 20023

9.7.3. Visits to institutions for adult and vocational education

	regional training centres
Number of institutions (a)	59
Number of inspections (b)	145
of which annual (b)	102
of which periodic (b)	43

(a) Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands: Facts and Figures 2003

(b) Education Inspectorate Annual Report 20023

10. Special educational support

10.1. Historical overview

Schools for children with sensory and mental disabilities have existed in the Netherlands ever since the nineteenth century. Since the introduction of the first Compulsory Education Act in 1901 special education has continued to expand. Over the years the number of different types of special school multiplied as the definition of special education became increasingly broad.

The Primary Education Act 1920 governed both special and mainstream schools. On 1 August 1985 separate legislation for special primary and secondary education in the form of the Special Education Interim Act (ISOVSO) came into force. Mainstream primary education was governed by the Primary Education Act 1981.

As part of the “Going to School Together” (WSNS) policy, efforts were made to break down the division between mainstream and special primary education. This led to the introduction on 1 August 1998 of a new Primary Education Act governing special primary education for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (LOM), children with learning difficulties (MLK) and preschool children with developmental difficulties (IOBK) as well as ordinary primary education. Since 1 August 1998, all other types of special school listed in the old Special Education Interim Act (i.e. group 2 and 3 schools) have been governed by the Expertise Centres Act (WEC), while special secondary education for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (LOM) and children with learning difficulties (MLK) come under the Secondary Education Act. Where possible, pupils are placed in mainstream schools and given extra assistance. They are only placed in special schools – preferably on a temporary basis – if it is unavoidable.

Hospital schools were abolished as of 1 August 1999. Schooling for this category of children is now the responsibility of their own schools and is no longer subject to the Expertise Centres Act. The schools – and very occasionally individual pupils – can be assisted by a specialised consultant from the school advisory service.

10.2. Ongoing debates

Block grant funding

The government is to introduce block grant funding on 1 August 2006. The governing boards of special schools will be given a lump sum which they can spend as they wish.

10.3. Definition and diagnosis of the target group(s)

Since the 1998/1999 school year, special education has been split into two groups.

The first comprises special schools for primary education, including:

- former schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (LOM);
- former schools for children with learning difficulties (MLK);
- former schools for preschool children with developmental difficulties (IOBK).

These schools are governed by the Primary Education Act (see Chapter 4). The former special secondary schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (VSO-LOM) and children with learning difficulties (VSO-MLK) are now known as special schools for secondary education and fall under the Secondary Education Act (see Chapter 5).

The second group – known simply as special schools – comprises schools providing special education

for disabled children and children whose education requires a special approach, catering for either the primary or secondary age group or both. Education of this type, which is governed by the Expertise Centres Act, is divided into four categories:

- Category 1: schools for the visually impaired, who may also be multiply disabled;
- Category 2: schools for deaf children, partially hearing children and children with severe speech disorders, who may also be multiply disabled;
- Category 3: schools for physically disabled children, children with severe learning difficulties (ZMLK) and chronically sick children (LZK) with a physical disability, who may also be multiply disabled;
- Category 4: schools for severely maladjusted children (ZMOK), chronically sick children who are not physically disabled and children in schools attached to paedological institutes (i.e. institutes associated with a Dutch university which give guidance to special schools).

With the exception of schools for the visually impaired, all special schools falling into a particular category will work with each other, together forming an expertise centre for their region.

10.4. Financial support for pupils' families

Attendance at special schools for primary education is free. Parents of children in special education are eligible for financial support under the Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS). The Act is intended to help parents meet educational expenses. The study costs allowance is dependent on income and consists (in the case of the maximum possible award) of the full amount of the statutory fees payable and a contribution towards other study costs. It is not subject to income tax and does not have to be repaid.

10.5. Special provision within mainstream education

10.5.1. Specific legislative framework

The Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO) came into force on 1 August 1998, replacing the Primary Education Act 1981 and the Special Education Interim Act, both of which had been in force since 1985. The purpose of the new Act is to further the integration of and cooperation between mainstream primary schools and certain types of special school. It governs both mainstream schools and special schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (LOM), children with learning difficulties (MLK) and preschool children with developmental difficulties (IOBK). LOM, MLK and IOBK schools are now known officially as special schools for primary education ("speciale scholen voor basisonderwijs"). The term primary education ("primaire onderwijs") encompasses both ordinary primary schools and special schools for primary education.

LOM and MLK secondary schools have been governed since 1998 by the Secondary Education Act (WVO; see Chapter 5). All other types of special school (both primary and secondary) formerly regulated by the Special Education Interim Act have been governed since 1998 by the new Expertise Centres Act (WEC).

10.5.2. General objectives

Since 1991 policy has been geared to integrating children with special needs in mainstream primary schools, under the motto "Going to School Together" (WSNS). The aim of this policy is twofold. Firstly, to enable pupils with special needs to attend mainstream primary schools. Secondly, to control costs by

awarding a set budget to consortia of ordinary schools and special schools for primary education, from which the latter schools and special facilities at ordinary primary schools are funded. Within these consortia, the special schools provide expertise and peripatetic supervision so that pupils with special needs can remain in mainstream schools. Part of the budget earmarked for special education now therefore goes to mainstream schools.

There are long waiting lists for special schools for primary education. The operational aims of WSNS have therefore been extended to include:

- broadening and strengthening special needs facilities at primary schools so that more pupils with special needs can remain in mainstream education and all pupils receive the support they need;
- eliminating waiting lists. In 2003, 240 pupils were on a waiting list. In 2001, that figure was 620.

The WSNS Plus project was launched in March 2002 to follow up on existing WSNS policy. An expert group has also been appointed to support consortia encountering specific problems.

10.5.3. Specific support measures

The legislation on **personal budgets** (LGF) gives the parents of children with disabilities the option of choosing between an ordinary and a special school for their child. This new funding system was introduced on 1 August 2003. Children who require special facilities to attend a mainstream school because of a sensory, physical or mental disability are awarded a personal budget. The extra resources needed for a child with a physical or mental disability or disorder 'travel' with the child, even if he or she attends a mainstream school. This budget is intended to pay for staffing and equipment costs and any adaptations that may be necessary to meet the child's needs. It is expected that about a quarter of disabled pupils will be able to attend mainstream schools as a result of this scheme.

Children are assessed against a national set of objective criteria by an independent committee (CVI), appointed by the regional expertise centre (a consortium of special schools), to establish whether they are eligible for such funding or for admission to a special primary or secondary school. A national supervisory committee (LCTI) oversees the assessment of children with special needs by these centres. The personal budget is allocated to the school where the child has been placed. This money is used to pay for extra help for the child, for instance in the form of extra teaching materials or special needs training for teachers. Part of it must be spent on peripatetic supervision. An individual education plan is drawn up for the child, which is evaluated by the school and the parents at the end of the school year. In the case of schools for the visually impaired (category 1) children are referred not by an independent committee but by individual schools. In early 2004, the LCTI put forward proposals for simplifying the referral criteria, and they were changed accordingly in April 2004.

Preventive peripatetic supervision and split placements

Preventive peripatetic supervision entails the provision of extra help to enable pupils with special needs to attend an ordinary school. The help is provided by teachers from special schools and focuses not only on the pupil but also on advising staff at the mainstream school. This form of peripatetic supervision is provided to children without a positive assessment from the CVI.

Special secondary schools work together with mainstream secondary schools to offer split placements. This term refers to the possibility of arranging for part of the syllabus for pupils at special secondary schools to be taught at schools providing pre-vocational secondary education, practical training or learning support, or at adult and vocational education institutions. Split placements play a role in the transition from special to mainstream secondary education. They were also introduced in primary

education on 1 August 2003.

10.6. Separate special provision

10.6.1. Specific legislative framework

Since 1998, schools for children with one or more disabilities have been governed by the Expertise Centres Act (WEC). They include schools for:

- deaf and partially hearing children;
- children with severe speech disorders;
- visually impaired children;
- physically disabled children;
- chronically sick children:
 - o who are physically disabled;
 - o who are not physically disabled;
- children with severe learning difficulties;
- severely maladjusted children;
- children in schools attached to paedological institutes;
- children with multiple handicaps.

The Expertise Centres Act (WEC) defines the objectives of special education, sets out the different categories of special education and contains regulations governing the organisation of teaching (content, quality, school plan, school prospectus, complaints procedure). It also regulates the position of staff, pupils (admissions) and parents, and contains provisions on funding and the establishment and closure of schools. As the planning procedure has been frozen, no new schools may currently be established.

One of the main implementing regulations pertaining to special education is the Staff Establishment Decree (Expertise Centres Act), which governs the funding of staff.

10.6.2. General objectives

Special schools cater for children who require special educational treatment. Teaching is geared to the developmental potential of the individual child. Special education aims to promote the development of children's emotions, intellect and creativity and the acquisition of essential knowledge together with social, cultural and physical skills in an uninterrupted process of development. The aim is to enable as many pupils as possible to return to mainstream education.

10.6.3. Geographical accessibility

Parents can claim back the costs of travel to and from school if the municipal authorities consider them necessary.

10.6.4. Admission requirements and choice of school

The minimum age at which a child can be admitted to special education varies:

- severely maladjusted children: 4;
- children with severe learning difficulties: 4;

- other children: 3.

The upper age limit for special secondary education is 20.

10.6.5. Age levels and grouping of pupils

Special schools are free to organise their classes as they wish. Classes are smaller than in mainstream schools (around 15 to a class) and may contain children of different ages. Both the age and level of the children is taken into account. The size of the class depends to some extent on the type of special education.

10.6.6. Organisation of the school year

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science determines the dates of the school year and the length and dates of the summer holidays. In special schools the school year runs from 1 August to 31 July of the following year. The summer holidays last six weeks and are staggered across the three regions (northern, central and southern) into which the country is divided for this purpose. The length and dates of the summer holidays, and how they are staggered across the country, are prescribed by the Minister. The dates of the shorter holidays (autumn, Christmas, spring and May holidays) can be decided by the competent authority of the school (school board) without having to obtain the Minister's consent. The Minister recommends a period of one week's holiday after every seven to eight weeks of school.

10.6.7. Curriculum and subjects

Special education aims to promote the development of children's emotions, intellect and creativity and the acquisition of essential knowledge together with social, cultural and physical skills.

Areas of learning

Under the terms of the Expertise Centres Act (WEC), the following subjects must appear in the curriculum, where possible in an integrated form:

- sensory coordination and physical education;
- Dutch;
- arithmetic and mathematics;
- a number of factual subjects, including geography, history, science (including biology), social structures (including political studies) and religious and ideological movements;
- expressive activities, including use of language, art, music, handicrafts and play and movement;
- self-reliance, i.e. social and life skills, including road safety;
- healthy living.

Although these subjects are compulsory, schools are free to decide how much time they devote to each subject. The curriculum may also include English and domestic skills.

The curriculum in special secondary schools includes, where possible in an integrated form:

- Dutch language;
- history (including politics);
- geography;
- social studies;
- mathematics and arithmetic;

- music;
- art;
- handicrafts;
- physical education.

The curriculum must also include at least two subjects taught in ordinary schools for pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO) other than those listed above.

The language of instruction is Dutch. However:

- schools in the province of Friesland also teach Frisian and may teach other subjects in Frisian as well;
- children from a non-Dutch background may likewise be taught temporarily in their mother tongue in order to help them settle in. Lessons in minority languages can be provided by special schools, but must take place outside normal school hours. Children's home languages can be used in years 1 to 4 to help pupils follow the regular curriculum, for instance when teaching language, arithmetic or geography.

10.6.8. Teaching methods and materials

Special schools are free to use whatever teaching methods they like. The content of teaching, teaching methods and teaching materials are not prescribed by government. Teaching materials are the property of the school. In the Netherlands, the production, distribution and sale of teaching materials are a commercial activity. The National Teaching Materials Information Centre (NICL) produces a consumer guide to teaching materials which schools can use to compare existing and new products. The NICL is part of the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO).

10.6.9. Progression of pupils

The competent authority (school board) issues reports on the progress of each pupil, either to the child's parents or, in the case of pupils over the age of majority (18 years) who are legally competent, to the pupil him or herself. There are no statutory rules about when pupils may move up to the next year and when they may not. Individual schools lay down procedures for this in their own school plans.

10.6.10. Educational/vocational guidance and education/employment links

Pupils who are not capable of obtaining an ordinary pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) diploma may undergo practical training. Practical training is intended for pupils who need extra help because they are disadvantaged or face structural problems. Pupils in this category who follow one of the learning pathways, possibly in combination with learning support, are not awarded a VMBO diploma. Practical training prepares pupils for jobs in the regional labour market below the level of training to assistant level (see chapter 7).

10.6.11. Certification

When a pupil leaves the school, the head, in consultation with the teachers and the assessment board, draws up a report for the benefit of the child's new school. The assessment board may re-examine the child for this purpose. Pupils who are going on to secondary education are tested to assess both their level of attainment and their physical and mental development. The outcome will partly determine

which type of school they go to. Depending on the age and legal competence of the pupil, a copy of the report is sent either to the parents or to the child. Pupils at special secondary schools may, at the request of the parents or pupil, take their school-leaving examinations at mainstream education.

10.6.12. Private education

Private schools are governed by the same legislation as public-authority schools. Article 23 of the Constitution places public and private schools on an equal financial footing. As a condition of funding from the public purse, the law lays down that private educational establishments must be maintained by a legal person with full legal competence, whose aim is to provide education, without any profit-making motive. The competent authority (school board) of a private school is the board of the association or foundation that maintains it, foundations being the most common. Private schools are established by private individuals. Though there are some non-denominational private schools, the majority are denominational.

10.7. Special measures for children of immigrants

Since 1 August 1998 the municipal authorities have been responsible for compensatory policy, or policy on eliminating educational disadvantage, in all schools in their area, i.e. both public-authority and privately run schools. Those authorities that are eligible for a specific-purpose grant to fund compensatory policy must draw up a plan describing the measures they intend to take in the coming four years.

Future policy on eliminating educational disadvantage

The government feels that the distribution of responsibilities between school boards and municipal authorities with regard to compensatory policy for educationally disadvantaged children is not yet sufficiently clearly defined. As a result, it is not always apparent who should be held accountable. As schools and school boards are the main actors involved in implementing compensatory policy, they will be given more freedom to decide how the available funds should be spent. In particular, they will no longer be required to draw up a compensatory plan together with the municipal authorities, setting out their joint objectives, activities and spending plans.

The government wishes to encourage the conclusion of binding agreements between municipal authorities and school boards on the balanced distribution of disadvantaged pupils among schools in each area. School boards will be required to hold talks with the municipal authorities on ways of preventing segregation and promoting integration.

Weighting system

Pupils in primary education are assigned weightings according to their socioeconomic background. Immigrant children, at least one of whose parents comes from southern Europe or a non-English-speaking country outside Europe (with the exception of Indonesia), are assigned a weighting of 1.9.¹ Immigrant children, at least one of whose parents is recognised as a refugee, are also assigned a weighting of 1.9. Weightings affect class sizes, since staff numbers are based on the weighted number of pupils. This system is being revised. For more information see § 4.2.

¹ The United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia are English-speaking countries. For the purpose of determining a child's cultural background, all other countries outside Europe are considered non-English-speaking countries.

Classes for asylum seekers' children

Almost all municipalities with an asylum seekers' centre provide classes for the children of asylum seekers of primary school age. These classes are partly funded from the Municipal Compensatory Policy (GOA) budget.

In future, the municipal authorities will be responsible for setting up multi-school bridging classes for primary school pupils, whatever their ethnicity, whose language skills are holding them back. These children will spend a year learning Dutch before going back to normal classes.

Additional staff

The Staff Establishment Decree (Primary Education Act) provides for additional staff for schools attended by children from ethnic minorities. The level of additional staffing depends on a school's weighting.

10.8. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands: Facts and Figures 2003.

10.8.1. Pupils

A) Number of pupils (x 1000)	2002	2003
special schools	33.1	33.6
special schools for primary education	52.1	51.5
special secondary schools	19.0	21.0
B) Distribution of pupils (%)	2002	2003
mainstream primary schools	94.8	94.8
special schools for primary education	3.2	3.2
other special primary schools	2.0	2.1

10.8.2. Schools and staff

Number of schools	2002	2003
special schools for primary education	354	348
special schools for secondary education	329	324
Average school roll	2002	2003
special schools for primary education	147	148
special schools for secondary education	158	168
Number of staff in FTEs per calendar year (x 1000)	2002	2003
special schools for primary education	7.4	7.3
special schools for secondary education	14.1	15.3

11. The European and international dimension in education

11.1. Historical overview

Between 1960 and 1990, only a tiny minority of Dutch schools showed an interest in adding a European dimension to their teaching. A survey in the late 1980s showed that about 10% of secondary schools arranged pupil exchanges, involving some 7,000 pupils annually, and that each year about 400 teachers went on study visits. The lack of Dutch interest in this area contrasted sharply with the sizeable exchange programmes set up by Germany, France and the United Kingdom. In 1988, the EC member states adopted a resolution on a European dimension in education. This resulted in measures to greatly increase the opportunities open to schools and coordinate activities in this area. In the early 1990s a series of national programmes was set up which, together with the somewhat more recent EU programme SOCRATES, led to a great many activities to promote internationalisation at Dutch schools.

There are a number of regulations governing the recognition of diplomas and qualifications within Europe. These include two Council of Europe instruments, i.e. the European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (1953) and the 1964 Protocol to this convention. These agreements make it possible to study at a university in another member state, although there may be specific rules for admission to university in a particular country (in the Netherlands, for example, there are certain requirements with regard to language).

The Lisbon Convention (1997), which contains agreements on the mutual recognition of diplomas, will be ratified by the Netherlands in due course.

The Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science was among the 29 European ministers who signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999 with the aim of establishing an open higher education area in Europe. At the core of the Bologna Declaration are efforts to achieve greater transparency in European higher education, based on a two-cycle undergraduate and graduate system. Under new legislation entering into force in the 2002/2003 academic year, universities and institutes of higher professional education will have the option of introducing a bachelor-master system. This will enable them to strengthen their position in the international education market and respond more effectively to international trends.

The Recognition of EC Vocational Qualifications Act, implementing Directive 92/51/EEC which created a second general system for the recognition of vocational qualifications, entered into force in 1994. The Act makes it possible to gain admission within the European Union to occupations that in the Netherlands require vocational qualifications at a level below that of an HBO or university degree.

There are various pieces of European Union legislation that relate to the recognition of higher education diplomas and qualifications. These include a number of directives relating to specific professions. Training has been harmonised within the European Union for the following professional groups: doctors, nurses, dentists, veterinary surgeons, midwives, architects, general practitioners and pharmacists. Students following these courses may receive financial assistance for study outside the Netherlands.

In 1994, the Recognition of EC Higher Education Diplomas Act came into force to implement Directive 89/48/EEC (a general system for the recognition of diplomas awarded for vocational courses of three years or more in higher education). This Act allows citizens of European Union member states with

appropriate higher education qualifications to practise a regulated profession anywhere in the Union. In certain cases, however, employers may impose additional requirements in the form of an adaptation period or an aptitude test.

11.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

European presidency

The Netherlands held the presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2004. The themes on the agenda included:

- improving the quality of mobility in education;
- financial assistance for study anywhere in the EU;
- increasing cooperation in the field of quality assurance and accreditation;
- Europe as a knowledge Union in the world market for knowledge workers;
- European citizenship and shared norms and values.

Student finance for study abroad

The government wants to support students in higher education who study within the European Union by making it possible for them to take their grants and loans with them. Financial assistance for study outside the Netherlands is still fraught with problems stemming from European legislation and case law. One of the problems concerns non-Dutch students living in the Netherlands who want to study abroad. The unintended use of Dutch student finance could increase as a result. It is therefore not yet possible for students to take their grants and loans with them. This issue is now on the European political agenda.

Permanent focus on the European Union

One of the aims of internationalisation policy is to make optimum use of the Socrates II and Leonardo II programmes. The Socrates programme enables teachers and students in primary, secondary and higher education to experience other countries' educational systems. The Leonardo programme aims to improve the quality of vocational education in the European Union through transnational cooperation, pilot projects and mobility initiatives. Obstacles to student and teacher mobility form a separate area of concern. The Netherlands seeks to promote forms of cooperation that will reinforce developments within the education systems of the member states. One option would be to carry out regular comparative studies of aspects of education, with emphasis on good practice.

The Lisbon process

Within the framework of the Lisbon process, the Netherlands has contributed in the following way to the five targets agreed at European level:

1. Early school leavers:
 - 30% fewer early school leavers in 2006 than in 1999;
 - 50% fewer early school leavers in 2010 than in 2000;
 - this means that 8% of young people aged 18-24 will have dropped out of school and have no basic qualifications in 2010.
2. Science and technology graduates:
 - by 2007: increase the intake of students in higher education in the scientific and technological fields by 15%, and redress the imbalance between men and women;
 - by 2010: bring about a 15% increase in the number of students in these fields, compared with 2000;

- in 2010, this should result in 6.7 university graduates and doctors in science and technology per 1000 inhabitants aged 20-29.
- 3. Completion of upper secondary level education:
 - 85% of young people aged 22 should have completed upper secondary level education by 2010.
- 4. Basic proficiency:
 - not more than 9% of pupils aged 15 should have low literacy skills (corresponding to level 1 and lower in the PISA survey) by 2010.
- 5. Lifelong learning:
 - at least 20% of people aged 25-64 should participate in education and training by 2010.

EU positioning policy

The Erasmus Mundus programme was launched in autumn 2004. The aim of this European programme is to help higher education institutions in the EU work together in providing joint Master's courses aimed in particular at non-EU students.

Netherlands Education Support Offices (NESOs) [internet, various]

The Netherlands Education Support Offices (NESOs) can be found in countries with potential markets for Dutch higher education institutions. NESOs play a role in promoting Dutch higher education, advising and counselling students in their choice of study and informing them about the requirements they must meet to study in the Netherlands. NESO is currently present in four countries, and this number is to be expanded. The policy letter on the internationalisation of higher education in the Netherlands, Setting Course for Quality, which was sent to parliament in autumn 2004, identifies the following countries: Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

Knowledge fairs

One of the policy intentions is no longer to include non-EU students in the budget for universities and institutions of higher professional education. The money saved will remain at the disposal of the institutions, but will be deployed more selectively. Institutions should try to use the money to pay for knowledge fairs to attract high flyers from outside the EU. The exact date of entry into force has not yet been determined.

11.3. National policy guidelines/specific legislative framework

The policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has four main aims, building on the Dutch government's general foreign policy:

- making it easier for participants in education, culture and science to explore and exploit opportunities to study abroad;
- enhancing the quality of education, culture and science in the Netherlands through international orientation, comparison and competition;
- raising the profile of Dutch educational, cultural and scientific institutions on the international education market;
- learning from and working with other countries in bilateral and multilateral networks at central level, acquiring knowledge relevant to the Netherlands and benchmarking.

Priorities

Priority is to be given to cooperation with the EU member states and especially Germany, Belgium

(Flanders), France and the United Kingdom, both at EU level and bilaterally. This ties in with government policy as a whole but is also expressly intended to improve the quality of education in the Netherlands. The key concept in bilateral cooperation with these countries is the goal of creating an open European higher education area. Cooperation with countries in Central and Eastern Europe focuses on Russia, Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Poland because of their rich academic heritage. Existing arrangements with Russia and Hungary were continued following positive evaluations in 2002. Outside Europe, internationalisation policy focuses above all on links with Indonesia, China and South Africa. Attention will also be devoted to the countries of origin of ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands, such as Morocco, Turkey and Suriname. Bilateral cooperation tends to be channelled through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). In these documents, both countries decide on how cooperation will be organised and on the common objectives they will aim to achieve.

In the case of higher education, the emphasis will be on developing instruments that help institutions strengthen their position in the international market. At primary and secondary level, the number of countries with which partnerships can be initiated was expanded in 2001, and the duration of grants has been extended.

Internationalisation policy is about learning from one another. One method of learning from other countries is benchmarking. A benchmark project has been set up to compare elements of the Dutch education system with those of a small number of selected countries. For the present, these are Germany, Belgium (Flanders), the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries.

Removing as many obstacles to mobility as possible - for students, teachers and researchers - is a top priority. One step in this direction is to facilitate the issuing of temporary residence and work permits. Attention is also being focused on the international position of Dutch higher education and, specifically, on improving the comparability of the higher education system, the comparative length of courses in the Netherlands and abroad, enhancing the international orientation of courses and the language of instruction in higher education. Funds will also be invested in training foreign students in the Netherlands. This will include the new DELTA scholarship programme, which began in 2001/2002.

The evaluation of internationalisation policy has to date focused on evaluating its effect on mobility. Intermediary organisations have been asked to publish an annual mobility monitor showing trends in both national and European programmes. Compiled by BISON (Dutch Council for International Cooperation in Education), the monitor gives an indication of international mobility in education, mainly based on information from the scholarship programmes. In future, it will also give information on other forms of internationalisation. An interim evaluation of second generation national programmes was held in 2000, focusing on primary and secondary education. A new grant scheme came into force in 2003 based on the results of this evaluation.

Student finance

Dutch students who study abroad are eligible for a grant if they spend part of their course abroad while still registered as full-time students at a Dutch institution. Under current regulations, students attending full-time courses in medicine, veterinary science, dentistry, pharmacy, architecture, nursing and midwifery at a designated institution for higher education within the EU or European Economic Area (EEA) are entitled to financial assistance. The Student Finance Act (WSF) also applies to students attending full-time higher education courses in Flanders (including Dutch-language courses in the Brussels region) and in the German Länder of North Rhine-Westphalia, Bremen and Lower Saxony. The

courses in question must however fall within the scope of the student finance systems operated by the governments of the countries concerned.

11.4. National programmes and initiatives

The Netherlands has three organisations active in the field of international cooperation in education. Each serves a different sector of education. They are:

- the **European Platform for Dutch Education**, serving primary and secondary education (www.europeesplatform.nl);
- **CINOP** (Centre for Innovation in Training), serving adult and vocational education (www.cinop.nl);
- **NUFFIC** (Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education), serving higher education (www.nuffic.nl).

These intermediary organisations serve as a link between educational institutions, central government and international organisations. Their main functions are:

- to provide information/documentation;
- to implement national and international programmes;
- to advise central government on policy implementation;
- to represent government on the management committees of international programmes;
- assist educational institutions with project applications and fund raising.

11.4.1. Bilateral programmes and initiatives

The first steps towards the development of policy on neighbouring countries were taken in 1991 when bilateral cooperation with Belgium (both Flanders and Wallonia) and Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Bremen) began. The aim is to create a single "open higher education area" in these regions. Relations with these regions since the introduction of the Unbounded Talent Action Plan have been mainly of a bilateral nature. At multilateral level, policy has been geared to the exchange of information in order to increase the transparency of education systems for members of the public.

The chief aim of policy on neighbouring countries is to enhance mobility between them and to remove any obstacles that stand in its way. Where necessary, legislation and regulations are amended to ensure full, unrestricted movement. A bilateral approach has thus far proved successful. Efforts have centred on stepping up cooperation between higher education institutions at institutional level, taking into account the courses on offer in neighbouring countries when planning new courses, mutual notification of decisions concerning new courses, and intensifying language acquisition at all levels of education. One of the elements of structural cooperation is to encourage those involved to gain knowledge of each other's languages and cultures. Another is to contribute to innovation, national priorities and school policy (through exchanges). The focus has been on higher education and, to a lesser extent, secondary vocational education.

An example of Flemish-Dutch cooperation is the GENT-wide (Geheel Nederlandse Taalgebied = entire Dutch language area) action programme. In October 2003, the sixth agreement was reached with Flanders (GENT-6) on enhancing cooperation in all education sectors. GENT-6 focuses on:

- policy exchanges in all areas where the two ministries consider this to be important;
- mobility between the two countries and internationally;
- where possible, joint preparation of positions in multilateral bodies (EU, OECD);

- the establishment of joint institutions and the sharing of facilities.

Bilateral cooperation between the Netherlands and Germany is based on the Dutch-German Gemeinsame Erklärung (Joint Statement) of 2001. The aims of policy here are to enhance knowledge of Germany and the German language in the Netherlands, and to step up Dutch-German cooperation in the field of education. A joint statement was signed with North Rhine-Westphalia in 1999 and with Lower Saxony in 2000. Cooperation between primary and secondary schools and secondary vocational education colleges will be stepped up by means of school twinning schemes, pupil and teacher exchanges, joint school projects, joint training ventures and specialist conferences. Special attention will be paid to lifelong learning and the introduction of new media.

The Germany programme for higher education, which will run until late 2005, is implemented by the Germany Institute of the University of Amsterdam (DIA) for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, in consultation with appropriate education and research institutions and other parties. It covers six themes, including economic restructuring, Germany and the EU and German language and culture, and deals with topics that are critical to understanding today's Germany. As part of the programme, a research school has been established, open to postgraduate students at any university. The Netherlands and Germany plan to cooperate more closely on education and research. On 25 September 2001, the education ministers of the two countries signed a joint statement including provisions on the transnational mobility of pupils, students and researchers, particularly in vocational and higher education.

Structural cooperation between France and the Netherlands is focusing initially on language teaching, in accordance with policy on the languages of neighbouring countries and the principle of reciprocity. Activities are also being organised which promote cooperation geared to more extensive exchanges of information and knowledge, as well as student and teacher exchanges.

Cooperation with the United Kingdom largely takes place within the national European programmes and schemes, and by means of individual cooperation at institution level. Bilateral cooperation with the United Kingdom has yet to be established. A Franco-Dutch Network for Higher Education and Research has been set up. It is intended to provide a strong new impetus to the cooperation between Dutch and French institutions.

11.4.2. Multilateral programmes and initiatives

Cooperation within the European Union in recent years has centred on:

The Lisbon process: objectives report, benchmark report

In February 2002, in the context of the Lisbon Strategy, the Council issued its report on the Concrete Future Objectives of Education and Training Systems. These objectives have to do with the quality and accessibility of education and training. The open coordination method is used to bring the policies of the various member states more closely into line with each other.

In May 2003, the Council reached agreement on the following EU targets for 2010:

- reducing the number of early school leavers;
- increasing the number of science and technology graduates;
- increasing the number of young people who complete upper secondary level education;
- reducing the number of pupils aged 15 who read poorly;

- increasing adult participation in learning activities.

In February 2004, the Council issued a report for the Spring Council of that year. Though the member states had in general made progress, the Council felt that reform of the education and training systems should be stepped up. To this end, member states should:

- implement concrete reforms faster;
- invest in strategic areas (such as human capital);
- implement national strategies, particularly in the field of lifelong learning;
- create a European Space for education and training, partly by removing obstacles to mobility.

Enhanced cooperation in the field of education

In November 2003, the Council adopted conclusions concerning human capital in the knowledge society. It concluded that if the Union is to achieve the Lisbon objectives, it is essential for member states to cooperate in this area. Member states also need to invest more in human capital. This requires continued careers guidance (as defined in the Council Resolution on guidance). For this purpose, the Council adopted a resolution to increase the employability of workers and prevent pupils from dropping out of school, by providing long-term guidance to people at all stages of their school and working careers. The aim of the resolution is to stress the importance of consolidating cooperation among member states. The education ministers discussed long-term careers guidance during an informal meeting in Dublin in April 2004. This was prompted by research conducted by the OECD, the European Commission and the World Bank, which revealed that the policy measures and systems in the field of long-term careers guidance did not correspond to the needs and objectives of the knowledge economy.

Europass

The 'Europass' decision was adopted during the Dutch presidency in December 2004. Europass is a collection of documents describing the qualifications and competencies of the holder in common European terminology, with a view to increasing transparency of qualifications. It incorporates the following documents:

- the European Curriculum Vitae (a European model for a curriculum vitae);
- the Mobilipass (which describes experience of vocational education abroad);
- the Diploma Supplement (which describes higher education diplomas);
- the European language portfolio (a language passport which describes the language skills of the holder);
- the Certificate Supplement (which describes the vocational qualifications and competencies of the holder).

Quality assurance in vocational education and training

The education ministers of the EU, the then candidate member states and the European Economic Area partners (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) adopted a declaration in Copenhagen in November 2002 on consolidated European cooperation in the field of vocational education and training. In the period that followed, the Council adopted a number of texts aimed at strengthening European mobility, recognition of qualifications and quality assurance. During the Education, Youth and Culture Council on 15 November 2004, the Council adopted conclusions that, with a view to cohesion between the Copenhagen process and the Lisbon objectives for education and training, underline the importance of effective implementation of agreements made, with a focus on more intensive European cooperation. In Copenhagen, it was also agreed that there should be a follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration. The

follow-up should cover progress made since 2002 and, on that basis, set out new priorities and strategies for vocational education in line with the Lisbon objectives. The Maastricht Communication, adopted during the Dutch EU presidency in Maastricht on 14 December 2004, is the follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration.

Recognition of competencies

During the Irish presidency, the Council adopted conclusions on the recognition of competencies obtained through non-formal and informal training (empirical knowledge and learning pathways outside formal education systems) within the EU. The conclusions are the outcome of the Copenhagen Declaration (2002), which expressed the need to improve recognition of competencies in different countries and assure the quality of vocational education.

New EU education programme

The Council, Commission and European Parliament are currently working on the follow-up to the EU education programmes Socrates and Leonardo for the 2007-2013 period. From 2007, there will be an integrated programme with four subprogrammes for the different education levels. The new programme will also probably consist of two parallel subprogrammes with common themes such as language and ICT. There will be a stronger emphasis on the quality of exchange programmes, with special attention to cooperation between institutions.

11.5. European/international dimension through the national curriculum

The Unbounded Talent Action Plan (1998-2002) translates policy on internationalisation in education into a number of concrete action points. It is also an instrument for monitoring and evaluating internationalisation policy. A progress report was issued in 1999.

The Action Plan has boosted internationalisation in Dutch education in the following ways:

- experiments with teaching the language of a neighbouring country as a second language (primary schools near the border begin teaching French or German, as appropriate, at an early stage);
- experiments with the use of native speakers in the classroom;
- award of study hours for internationalisation activities in secondary education: this makes exchanges, for example, a fixed part of the school curriculum;
- development of specific teaching materials for international activities;
- development of international placements as an obligatory component of secondary vocational education;
- research on the position of modern languages in secondary vocational education;
- increasing the international orientation of quality assurance in higher education;
- achieving benefits in terms of curriculum development and information and communication technology through international cooperation.

The second generation of national programmes promoting internationalisation have helped to intensify contacts between educational establishments in the Netherlands and neighbouring countries.

Bilingual education/intensive language teaching and early foreign language teaching

In secondary education, the European Platform is being used to channel incentives for bilingual education and intensive language teaching in schools. Sixty-four schools in the Netherlands now provide bilingual Dutch-English education, and one school provides bilingual German-Dutch education,

with a number of subjects being taught in English to pupils doing pre-university education. Interest in extending bilingual education to senior general secondary education (HAVO) has increased (ten schools offered it in 2004) and pre-vocational education is now under consideration. Studies (Huibregtse, 2001) show that pupils receiving bilingual Dutch-English education have a better command of English than other pupils, while scoring equally well in other subjects.

For some years now, experiments have been carried out in teaching the language of a neighbouring country (i.e. French or German) as a second language to young children – mainly in primary schools near the border with Belgium and Germany. Given the success of these pilot projects in early foreign language teaching, the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science announced in early 2001 that they would be given formal status and early second-language teaching could be expanded in border regions subject to certain conditions.

In the case of intensive language teaching, extra hours of foreign language teaching will be added to the number of hours stipulated by the curriculum. These may be given by a native speaker or an assistant for the modern language in question.

Europe in the curriculum

The attainment targets for primary and secondary schools require attention to be paid to Europe in a number of subjects. Pupils learn that developments in the Netherlands are not isolated events, but must be seen in a wider context. Consideration is also given to the economic, political and social implications of cooperation in the European Union. The changes affecting Europe and the accession of Eastern European countries to the EU are also important attainment target themes. These themes are dealt with in subjects such as geography, history (primary and secondary schools), society (primary schools) and economics (secondary schools).

Primary and secondary schools can order teaching materials relating to Europe and the European Union from the European Platform.

The themes Europe and the European Union do not have to be covered in adult and vocational education, or in higher education, but can of course be dealt with if relevant to the course. A European conference on European citizenship was held under the Dutch presidency of the EU in 2004. This conference launched the Elos project (Europe as a learning environment in schools), aimed at encouraging schools to give European citizenship a prominent place in their curriculums. This is up to the schools themselves. An Elos school forms part of a European school network, in which all pupils can take part in exchanges and much attention is paid to the EU in the classroom. Languages also receive extra attention and science is taught in an EU context.

11.6. Mobility and exchange

For mobility and exchange between pupils and teachers in primary and secondary education, see § 11.6.1. and § 11.6.2.

In promoting mobility in vocational education, priority is currently given to increasing transparency and recognising vocational qualifications (the Copenhagen process). The Netherlands focused on this during its presidency of the EU in 2004.

As regards higher education, the government plans to integrate existing mobility programmes and

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science resources into a new scholarship programme, known as the Huygens Scholarship Programme (HSP). The aim of this national programme is to award international competitive scholarships in order to attract talented researchers, keep them in the Netherlands and send them abroad on assignment. About 20% of the budget is intended for talented Dutch students who want to study abroad.

11.6.1. Mobility and exchange of pupils/students

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science aims to boost internationalisation among pupils and teachers in primary and secondary education and ensure that international cooperation between schools in the Netherlands and schools in other European countries is incorporated into school policy. The Ministry therefore supports various programmes that contribute to this.

Neighbouring countries (programme for internationalisation in primary education via ICT)

This programme focuses on cooperation with neighbouring countries (Belgium, France, Germany and the United Kingdom). Schools can choose their own activities, provided ICT is given a central, identifiable role beyond the occasional email. Pupil exchanges, teacher mobility and other activities can complement these ICT contacts. Grants for pupil exchanges or teacher mobility are provided for a maximum of five days.

PLUVO (programme for pupil exchanges in secondary education)

This pupil exchange programme consists of the following activities:

- exchanges between Dutch pupils (groups and/or individuals) in secondary education (practical training, pre-vocational education (VMBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO) and pupils of schools in one or more other countries;
- meetings between Dutch pupils and pupils from schools in at least three other countries;
- fact-finding visits for teachers in the context of the above activities.

Iceland, Norway, the EU member states and candidate countries can take part in these activities.

For exchanges or meetings, Dutch pupils should in principle spend at least five days in the other country and the same applies to foreign pupils in the Netherlands. A shorter stay is possible for exchanges with Belgium, France, Germany or the United Kingdom. The fact-finding visits should in principle take no longer than a week.

11.6.2. Mobility and exchange of teachers

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science provides grants to various programmes to promote the mobility and exchange of teachers.

PLATO+ (promoting teacher mobility, work experience and training in education +)

The PLATO programme includes the following activities:

- study visits by teachers and head teachers of schools and teacher training colleges;
- in-service training abroad for students in teacher training colleges.

Both individual and group applications can be submitted for study visits. Only group applications are accepted for in-service training.

The programme supports study visits and in-service training in the EU member states. Study visits can

also be made to Morocco or Turkey, if applicants have pupils from those countries. Individual applicants can also visit other countries, besides those mentioned above, if there is a clear educational relevance.

As a rule, study visits last between five days and three weeks, and have a study programme of at least four full days per week. Grants can be awarded for shorter study visits to Belgium, France, Germany and the United Kingdom and for shorter conferences.

PITON (programme for more international language teaching in the Netherlands)

This programme supports language assistants and the following special forms of language teaching in primary and secondary education.

Language assistants are native speakers who have come to the Netherlands for no longer than a year, at the invitation of the European Platform. They provide support in lessons, but cannot replace a teacher.

In bilingual education, non-language subjects such as maths or biology are taught in a language other than Dutch.

In the case of intensive language teaching, extra hours of foreign language teaching will be added to the number of hours stipulated by the curriculum.

Early second-language teaching in primary schools enables pupils to learn a second language at an early stage. There are no restrictions for English-language teaching. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science, however, must approve teaching in French and German, in accordance with section 9, subsection 9 of the Primary Education Act.

11.7. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands: Facts and Figures 2003.

11.7.1. Mobility in primary and secondary education, adult and vocational education, higher professional education and university education

Internationalisation in primary and secondary education

	2002	2003
Number of grants a year	3,395	3,141
Number of pupils taking part in internationalisation activities	20,329	20,674
Number of heads/teachers taking part in internationalisation activities	5,946	6,016
Total amount of grants in euros	7,315,531	7,953,002

Source: 2003 monitor of international mobility in education compiled by BISON (Dutch Council for International Cooperation in Education)

Participation in internationalisation projects (adult and vocational education)

Programme		2002	2003
Unbounded Talent *)	pupils	5,545	*
	teaching staff	939	*
BAND **)	pupils	184	175
	teaching staff	41	36
Leonardo da Vinci	young employed people	39	15
	pupils	1,117	1,300
	teaching staff	197	289

Source: 2002 monitor of international mobility in education compiled by BISON

*) seeks to prepare individuals for their future function in the Netherlands or elsewhere, both personally and in society. Promotes European and world citizenship. This programme was terminated in 2003.

**) promotes partnerships between Dutch and German institutions providing vocational education.

11.7.2. Countries of destination and origin

Main countries of destination in %, 2002-2003

Country	Primary/ secondary education	Adult/ vocational education	Higher education
	%	%	%
Germany	51%	14%	9%
Belgium	9%	9%	5%
France	9%	2%	12%
United Kingdom	3%	27%	18%
Czech Republic	3%	3%	0%
Denmark	3%	3%	0%
Italy	12%	3%	5%
Sweden	2%	3%	8%
Spain	1%	7%	16%
Other	5%	10%	15%

Source: 2003 monitor of international mobility in education compiled by BISON

Main countries of origin of students in the Netherlands, 2002-2003

Country	Total	Erasmus	Foreign nationals in higher professional education (HBO)	Foreign nationals in university education
Germany	6,107	857	2,852	2,398
Belgium	2,378	391	615	1,372
Spain	1,897	1,149	589	159
United Kingdom	981	437	263	281
France	1,153	827	195	131
Italy	847	527	170	150

Morocco	1,664	-	1,168	496
Turkey	780	-	493	287
Suriname	952	-	415	537
China	1,371	-	717	654
Indonesia	695	-	314	381
Iran	302	-	94	208

Mobility of HBO graduates, in % of total student numbers per subject area

Subject area	1999/2000	2000/2001
agriculture	59.7	56.0
art and culture	38.8	39.0
economics	34.9	31.4
health care	20.4	21.0
engineering and technology	21.6	19.3
behaviour and society	15.1	14.6

(no data for education sector)

Mobility of university graduates, in % of total student numbers per subject area

Subject area	1999/2000	2000/2001
health care	50.7	49.4
engineering and technology	53.6	52.9
language and culture	45.7	45.8
natural sciences	45.8	44.2
economics	38.3	39.8
behaviour and society	29.0	31.7
law and public order	28.2	27.8

(no data for agriculture)

Mobility of HBO and university graduates by type, in % of total student numbers

Type of mobility	HBO				Univ.			
	1999	2000	2001	av.	1999	2000	2001	av.
Total	29.4	28.4	25.9	28.0	38.3	40.1	41.6	39.2
placement	15.8	14.7	13.4	14.9	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.3
placement (practical training)	-	-	-	-	5.8	5.9	6.0	6.1
placement (research)	-	-	-	-	7.7	8.3	9.5	8.4
study	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.2	8.7	8.7	9.2	8.7
placement + study	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.9	3.3	3.0	3.1
other	5.6	5.3	4.8	5.2	7.1	7.3	6.9	7.1
placement + study + other	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.4	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.1

av.=average

11.7.3. Number of foreign students in higher professional education (HBO) and university education

		total	of whom foreign nationals	
			absolute figures	%
HBO	2001/2002	323,590	10,068	3.11
	2002/2003	325,950	10,344	3.17
University	2001/2002	174,300	8,822	5.06
	2002/2003	181,890	10,187	5.60
total HBO and university	2001/2002	497,890	18,890	3.79
	2002/2003	507,840	20,531	4.04

Source: 2003 monitor of international mobility in education compiled by BISON