

Appendix 10

The Speaker of the House of Representatives
of the States General
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Our reference

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Subject

Policy response to Sardes report, TalentForce and
boys in primary education teacher-training,
undertaking ID 1431

During the General Consultation with the House of Representatives regarding the Emancipation Memorandum of 7 and 12 November 2007, I undertook to send you a substantive response to the Sardes study 'Unseen differentiation in education' and to include the high dropout rate of boys in primary education teacher-training colleges as well as the TalentForce project. In this memorandum I will first give you a general outline of the aforementioned study and the projects, after which I will give you my substantive response.

The reports

The *Sardes report*, which is a collection of studies in recent years, shows that girls do well in primary and secondary education. On a number of points they now do better than boys. This means that quantitative arrears have been completely caught up, except by the group of girls of non-Dutch heritage. From a qualitative point of view girls make different choices than boys; there are large differences between the numbers of boys and girls in certain subject clusters, degree programmes and - ultimately - professions. Girls are less likely than boys to choose technical studies; boys are very unlikely to choose (health)care and education. Girls tend to choose subjects combinations/clusters that means they will earn less than boys in the future. Sardes describes a study that demonstrates that teachers play a role in these choices. Teachers tend to see girls as more industrious, quieter and more serious. Boys, however, are seen as having a better understanding and a better ability to make connections. They are encouraged to take an active approach and to have a clear presence more often than girls. Because students tailor their behaviour to what is expected of them, these differing 'educational identities' of boys and girls are formed, which further reinforces the differences between boys and girls.

Sardes explains the problem at three levels:

- the structural level, in other words the structuring and organisation of education. The contents of the key objectives and the classification into sectors and subject clusters have not caused

the horizontal segregation in education to disappear. The educational system is aimed at making early choices, even though it is a known fact that at a young age people tend to make more traditional choices. Another example are the subject combinations, which, more often than before, tend to point in the direction of a split between studies with and studies without technical and science subjects. One exception is the introduction of the Nature & Health subject cluster, which is chosen by many girls.

Conversely, the 'harder' subject cluster of Nature & Technology is still chosen by only very few girls. The Sardes report also shows that choices are difficult to change, but that the school can make a contribution, for instance by offering good role models, providing role-breaking study advice and conscious encouragement for girls to choose technical subject clusters.

- the symbolic level: the interaction of factors that have a subconscious effect. Male characteristics are valued higher than female characteristics. People have a lower expectation pattern for girls. These are the daily images in our society and they resonate in our schools. In this context Sardes recommends that substantive attention is needed for conceptualisation, selection processes and the formation of images of the future.
- the psychological level: girls have a less positive self-image and they have less self-confidence than boys. They are lacking role models, and parents and teachers have lower expectations of them.

The report entitled '*Paboys wanted*' conducts research into the causes why boys are less likely to attend Pabo (*primary education teacher-training college*) and why they tend to drop out. The report concludes that boys are less likely to choose Pabo because they are lacking role models, the profession is 'more for girls' and as a result their peer group also responds negatively to their potential choice. Boys are also more likely to leave the course because the study was not their first choice, the study method is less appealing to boys (including reflection on own actions etc.) and because they experience little support from fellow students.

The Education Sector Employment Board (SBO) conducted pilots in conjunction with six academies to recruit more men to Pabo institutes and to increase the study results of men in Pabo education. These pilots have now been completed and have resulted in a number of recruitment tools, improvement of the (work placement) support, curriculum changes and especially customisation. The pilots have made the Pabo institutes more aware of the feminisation of the Pabo education. They are now actively working on adapting the courses, to make them more appealing to boys. It will take several years before the effects of this process can be measured. Consequently, the results of these efforts are not yet reflected in the figures.

The SBO ordered a study into the preference for the teaching profession. Based on existing studies, it is assessed what motives young people have for choosing or not choosing to become a teacher. With the results of the study the teacher training institutes can improve their information provision to boys and girls about the teaching profession.

The SBO will shortly be issuing a publication about the Educational Leadership minor in Pabo and teacher training, which allows students to gain experience in leadership. The expectations are that this

will make the course more attractive for men. At the same time, women can also discover what their leadership qualities are.

The *TalentForce* research programme is aimed at mapping out the talents of young children (3-5) and the possibilities for nurturing and further developing these talents. Among other things, this is done by tapping in to the perceptions of children, their enthusiasm and inquisitiveness. Study groups at the University of Amsterdam, the University of Groningen, the University of Leiden, the University of Maastricht and the University of Utrecht are conducting the study. In the course of 2008 the University of Nijmegen is also expected to join the study. The main objective of *TalentForce* is to increase the opportunities for the optimal individual development of children. The results of the study may be valuable for the educational field. The study is financially supported up to and including 2010 by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. After completion of the study I will notify the House of Representatives of the results.

Substantive response

I observe that girls do well in education, but that there are large differences between the numbers of boys and girls in certain subject clusters and courses. According to the Sardes report this has to do with, among other things, the structure or organisation of education, the way in which girls are handled or encouraged differently than boys, and the lower self-esteem of girls regarding their performance in science subjects.

The fact that boys and girls choose a different education and therefore arrive at different places in the employment market is a result of the choices they make. These choice processes are not only influenced by parents, family, fellow students and teachers; general perceptions also play a role. The horizontal segregation that results from these choices means that talent is lost. Firstly this is detrimental to the knowledge economy; secondly a horizontal professional segregation creates inequality between men and women, as professions with a female image tend to have lower remuneration. Furthermore, this segregation violates the freedom of choice and development opportunities of individuals.

In short, it is desirable for boys and girls to have the ability to develop their talents in all directions, and not be limited by stereotypical images or a limited understanding of the different subject clusters, studies and professions. The support of selection processes therefore requires extra attention, as well as the attractive presentation of subject clusters and degree programmes for both boys and girls.

Horizontal segregation is not easy to overcome, but looking at the experiences from the Platform Bèta Techniek it is possible. In the coming years I want to give priority - also on the basis of the emancipation policy - to the choices girls have in technology and the choices boys have in teaching, and generally focus on combating gender stereotyping. In the Emancipation Memorandum I have included the objective that at least half of the growth in the influx in the sciences/technology must consist of girls. In this objective I want to choose my role carefully. The educational process in the classroom is the responsibility of the schools themselves.

Below I indicate which activities I will undertake, or which will be undertaken by the educational field.

- The Platform Bèta Techniek, which has been working to increase the influx into technology since 2004, has included a specific focus on girls in the policy framework for 2008. In the realisation of its programmes, the platform collaborates with VHTO, the national expertise agency for girls/women and sciences/technology. The platform targets all the schools in vmbo (*lower secondary education*), havo (*pre-professional education*), vwo (*pre-university education*), mbo (*intermediate vocational education*), hbo (*professional vocational education*) and wo (*scientific education*). Participating schools develop targets and ambitions regarding the participation of girls in science and technology. Together, VHTO and the platform provide analysis tools that schools can use to improve their policy. Schools are also facilitated by means of expertise and role models. Gender is a key element in all audits of schools, companies and knowledge institutes. I will be discussing with the platform how the specific focus on girls can be reinforced in the coming years. Extra resources are also available for this purpose.
- I will ask the Technology Education Employment-Market Taskforce (TTOA), which will be organised on a regional basis, to aim its activities in respect of the shortages in the employment market for science and technology in part on the unutilised female potential, such as women coming into a profession from a non-standard background and women re-entering the employment market. There appears to be a blank spot in business with respect to the re-employability of women in the technical and technology field.
- I will ask the Secondary Education Council (VO-Raad) to pay extra attention to the support schools provide in students' decision-making processes, as the projects of the Platform for Science and Technology show that in schools in which students receive good support and vocational information, the students make different choices and are more likely to choose technology.
- Parents play a major role in the choices their children make, and can therefore exert a major influence on their subject cluster choices. I will therefore put the subject of subject cluster and study choices on the agenda in the Student Parent Chamber for Secondary Education. This is a regular consultation in which student organisations and parent organisations in secondary education and State Secretary Van Bijsterveldt participate, and the Secretariat of which has been allocated to my Ministry.
- The SBO (Education Sector Employment Board) and the Pabos (primary education teacher-training colleges) will distribute the knowledge they have gained in the 'Paboys' pilots in the Pabos via the regional platforms and on the knowledge portal www.onderwijsarbeidsmarkt.nl. The Pabos themselves are also actively engaged in recruitment activities for larger numbers of men in Pabo education and in adjustments to the courses. The SBO also supports initiatives, such as the Educational Leadership minor for primary and secondary education at the Driestar Educatief

academy, in order to interest more students in supervisory and coordinating tasks in education, such as the profession of head teacher.

- I will also pay personal attention to the importance of girls in technology and boys in teaching. For instance, on 24 April this year, on Girls Day, I will accompany a group of girls to visit a business. The key concept of Girls Day is that thousands of girls in the ages of 10-15 visit companies in their own region in small groups and get actively introduced to technology and ICT.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science,

Dr. Ronald H.A. Plasterk