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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 Emperor 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 in the Netherlands 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 northern 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 elected 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 domination.

The Napoleonic period ended in 1813. Willem Frederik, son of Willem V, was asked to return to the Netherlands, where he became King Willem I in 1815. His kingdom comprised the northern and southern Netherlands, which had been merged to form a buffer against the expansionist tendencies of France. The Belgians, discontented with their annexation and with the king’s rule, rebelled and declared their independence 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, 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 followed a policy of strict neutrality between the major blocs of European powers. The country 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, Curacao, 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. At the end of 2010, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will comprise four countries: Aruba, Curacao, the Netherlands and St Maarten, while the islands of Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba will become Dutch municipalities. 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

After the fall of Jan Peter Balkenende’s second government, the House of Representatives was dissolved and new elections were held on 22 November 2006. The Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA) experienced modest losses, while the Labour Party (PvdA) and the right-leaning liberal VVD saw their parliamentary representation drop sharply. The Socialist Party (SP) was the foremost victor in the elections, increasing the size of its parliamentary party from 8 to 25 MPs. The Christian Union doubled its parliamentary representation. The Pim Fortuyn List failed to return to Parliament, while two new parties – the right-wing Freedom Party (PVV) and the Animal Rights Party (PvdD) – elected their first MPs. The following table shows the party affiliation of the 150 MPs, with the division of seats before the elections following in brackets:
The election result made a coalition between the CDA, the PvdA and the Christian Union inevitable. The current government comprises 16 ministers (8 from the CDA, 6 from the PvdA and 2 from the Christian Union) and 11 state secretaries (4 from the CDA, 6 from the PvdA and 1 from the Christian Union).

The government formulated its plans for education in the coalition agreement. It set the following goals:

- No one may leave school without completing their education.
- Educational institutions will be given more opportunities to shape their programmes; we will show confidence in the professionals in the field, imposing fewer rules and less supervision.
- High quality: we will make clear what pupils and students should know at the end of their courses and what the social objectives of education are, leaving schools free to fill in the details and accountable to society for the results.
- Schools have the right to enforce and protect their ideological bases and traditions.
- We will combat school segregation.
- Human-scale schools will be promoted, in some cases within existing larger units, and the incentive for secondary schools to merge will be eliminated.
- School books in secondary education will become free.
- The government will endeavour to decrease the workload and increase the quality of education by:
  - tackling the teacher shortage;
  - improving the quality of teacher training programmes;
  - giving further consideration to salary and job differentiation, career prospects, the number of teaching hours, the number of hours for teacher-pupil interaction, scope for individual pupil guidance, educational development and teacher professionalism;
  - allowing more freedom for tailor-made solutions.
- Plans will be developed to integrate special needs children into mainstream schools.
- Special education will continue to be a necessary adjunct to mainstream education. Eliminating waiting lists and further simplifying the needs assessment, if possible in cooperation with the youth care system, will be a priority.
- A single, new, comprehensive bill on the funding and administration of higher education and research will be introduced.
- Extra money will be invested in higher education, through direct government funding and funding via research organisations.
- Early school leaving will be tackled.
• Laws that impede pupils’ progression from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to secondary vocational education (MBO) to higher professional education (HBO) will be eliminated.
• The concept of community schools will be promoted.

1.2. 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 Senate (upper house), with 75 members, elected by the provincial councils, and the House of Representatives (lower house) with 150 members elected by universal suffrage of all Dutch nationals 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)
• Deputy Prime Ministers: Wouter Bos (PvdA) and André Rouvoet (Christian Union)
• Minister of Education, Culture and Science: Ronald Plasterk (PvdA), whose responsibilities include:
  o higher professional education;
  o university education;
  o research;
  o the Innovation Platform (of which he is first deputy chair);
  o culture and media;
  o equal rights (including lesbian/gay rights);
  o tackling early school leaving;
  o teachers’ working conditions.
• State Secretaries for Education, Culture and Science:
  o Sharon Dijkstra (PvdA), State Secretary for secondary and professional education, responsible for:
    ▪ secondary education;
    ▪ pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), secondary vocational education (MBO) and adult education;
    ▪ tackling early school leaving;
    ▪ teacher training.
  o Marja van Bijsterveldt-Vliegenthart (CDA), State Secretary for primary education, responsible for:
    ▪ primary education;
    ▪ special education; policy on eliminating educational disadvantage;
    ▪ childcare and preschool provision.

Agricultural education falls under the remit of the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Gerda Verburg (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 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 (in Limburg also referred to as the Governor), 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 441 municipalities in the Netherlands (as of 1 January 2009), 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.

1.3. 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 Protestants (20%) and Muslims. Two per cent of the Dutch population belong to other religious or ideological groups and 42% practise no religion (2006).

1.4. Languages

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

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages entered into force in the Netherlands on 1 March 1998. This meant that Lower Saxon and Limburger were recognised as regional languages alongside Frisian. Like Dutch, all three are Germanic languages. Yiddish and Romani were recognised as non-territorial languages. Part III of the Charter, which includes provisions for the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in education, is only applicable to Frisian.

Schools in the province of Friesland teach in both Dutch and Frisian, unless they have been exempted from teaching in Frisian by the provincial executive at the school’s request.

Lower Saxon, a group of non-standardised West Germanic Low German variants, is spoken in Groningen, Drenthe, Overijssel, Gelderland (Veluwe and the Achterhoek) and East and West Stellingwerf in southeast Friesland. Limburger is a regional language of the western Maas basin and Rhineland, spoken in Dutch and Belgian Limburg.

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, a non-Dutch visiting lecturer is speaking, or the nature, organisation or quality of teaching or the origin of the students necessitates it.
1.5. Population

The Netherlands has a population of 16.49 million (2009), living in an area of approximately 41,526 km² (33,900 km² excluding rivers, lakes and canals). The population density is 486 people per km² (2006). Ethnic minorities form 19.6% of the total population in 2008 (3.22 million: 1.19 million first generation and 1.59 million second generation). Just over a third (36.6%) are from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. 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 441 municipalities, 24 have a population of 100,000 or more (2009).

The population is expected to increase by less than 100,000 between 2004 and 2006, compared with a growth of 270,000 between 2001 and 2003. 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 24,000 in 2002 to -16,000 in 2004 and -31,000 in 2006. 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 3%.

1.6. Economy

The Dutch economy has changed considerably in the last twenty years, as reflected in both the source and the level of national income. Today nearly half the gross domestic product (GDP) is generated by commercial services, compared with 36% in 1980. The economy has also become increasingly internationally oriented. Compared with twenty years ago, more goods and services are sold abroad and more are imported from other countries. Imports and exports have grown by much more than GDP since 1980, due in part to a substantial increase in re-export. The standard of living has risen considerably. Per capita GDP was nearly one and a half times higher in 2003 than in 1960.

The economy was beginning to stall at the end of the 1970s. Unemployment rose to above 10% against a backdrop of high inflation and sharp wage increases. This dismal situation impelled trade unions, employers and the government to negotiate an agreement encompassing wage restraints, shorter working hours and tax cuts. The remaining margin for pay increases was used to create new jobs in the private sector. This successful approach increased employment by an average of 1.8% annually in the period from 1984 to 2000. Job growth was accompanied by slower growth of labour productivity, which rose by an average of 1.1% a year in the same period. The economy suffered a new setback from 2000 to 2003. As unemployment started to go up again, employers and employees agreed once more to curb wage increases.

In 2006 there was a turnaround in the job market, as employment rose and unemployment fell for the first time since 2002. Employment went up by 1.5%, which is roughly equivalent to 150,000 jobs. In May 2007, the seasonally adjusted figure for EU-wide unemployment stood at 7.0%. The Netherlands had the lowest unemployment rate (3.2%) of all 27 member states.

GDP grew by 2.9% in 2006, nearly twice the rate recorded in 2005. In 2007, the Dutch economy experienced growth of 3.5%, the highest since 2000. In 2008, economic growth came to a standstill. While average economic growth in the first three quarters of 2008 was, on average, 2.7% compared to the same period in 2007, the economy collapsed in the 4th quarter of the year. The global economic recession affected Dutch exports, and households, too, cut back on consumption. The rate of investment activity, however, remained high.
1.7. Statistics

The statistics in 1.7.3. have been taken from Key Figures 2004-2008 Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands. The other data have been provided by Statistics Netherlands.

Jaar in cijfers 2007

Kerncijfers 2004-2008 Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap

1.7.1. Demographic statistics

Table 1.1. Population; by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population on 1 January (in thousands)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16,334</td>
<td>16,358</td>
<td>16,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>8,077</td>
<td>8,089</td>
<td>8,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8,257</td>
<td>8,269</td>
<td>8,293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2. Population per square km

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population per km²</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>484</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.3. Population; history by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population by age (x 1000)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 19</td>
<td>3,976</td>
<td>3,957</td>
<td>3,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 44</td>
<td>5,705</td>
<td>5,629</td>
<td>5,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 64</td>
<td>4,324</td>
<td>4,404</td>
<td>4,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 - 79</td>
<td>1,743</td>
<td>1,768</td>
<td>1,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and over</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4. Population; history by demographic pressure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic pressure (as a percentage of population aged 20-64)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 20 (‘green pressure’) (1)</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>39.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over (‘grey pressure’) (2)</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (3)</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(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.

Table 1.5. Population growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population growth</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23,782</td>
<td>47,407</td>
<td>81,188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.7.2. Working population

Table 1.6. Working population; by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(aged 15-64) (in thousands)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total workforce</td>
<td>7,486</td>
<td>7,603</td>
<td>7,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total working population</td>
<td>7,074</td>
<td>7,259</td>
<td>7,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of unemployment</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total unemployed workforce</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Table 1.7. GDP and expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross domestic product (GDP), central government expenditure and expenditure by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross domestic product (x € 1 milliard)</td>
<td>539.9</td>
<td>567.1</td>
<td>595.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross central government expenditure (excluding service of national debt) (x € 1 milliard)</td>
<td>136.5</td>
<td>145.8</td>
<td>192.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCW expenditure (education, student grants and loans, research) (x € 1 million)</td>
<td>29,341.3</td>
<td>31,920.4</td>
<td>34,732.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As % of GDP</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As % of central government expenditure</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 under the age of 18. Following an amendment to the Act on 1 August 2007, under-18s who have finished their period of compulsory education are now required to continue their schooling until they obtain a basic qualification. The aim is to ensure that young people do not leave school without at least a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 certificate. They may obtain a basic qualification in full-time education or in part-time education, if they wish to combine their studies with work.

2.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

The new quality agenda for secondary education

The new quality agenda for secondary education was launched in July 2008. In it, the government and the education sector set out their six policy priorities for the years to come, and the actions necessary to achieve them. The six policy priorities are:

- mathematics and language: to achieve a marked improvement in children's language and numeracy skills;
EURYBASE THE NETHERLANDS

- excellence: to get the best out of pupils at all levels of education and ensure that all pupils leave school with an appropriate qualification;
- citizenship: to provide civic education to all pupils, including a placement in a non-profit or voluntary organisation;
- professional freedom: to ensure professional freedom for teachers;
- examinations: to ensure the quality and reliability of examinations;
- culture of improvement: to turn weak schools into good schools, and make good schools even better.

Good teachers will be vital to achieving these objectives. That is why they are targeted as a policy priority in both the quality agenda and the government’s education policy.

**Good Education and Good Governance Bill**

In December 2008, the government submitted the Good Education and Good Governance Bill to the House of Representatives. The Bill would enable the government to cut off funding to individual primary or secondary schools in the interests of their pupils if the level of education they provided was consistently poor. The Bill formulates minimum quality requirements for all schools. In the case of mismanagement by the board, schools may receive a warning. If they fail to act on the warning, funding may be cut. The Bill also contains provisions to encourage the further development of the principles of good governance in primary and secondary education, including the separation of responsibility for governance from that for internal supervision, and the development of a code of conduct for good governance for each educational sector.

**Free school books**

From the 2009/2010 school year, school books will be distributed free of charge to secondary school pupils. In the 2008/2009 school year, parents had to pay for books themselves but were reimbursed a fixed amount of 316 euros per pupil, the average cost of a set of school books in 2008. From 2009/2010, the money for school books will be paid directly to schools. Schools will buy the books themselves and distribute them free of charge to pupils. The free school books scheme will include:

- textbooks, workbooks, project books and books of tables, compilations of old examinations and examination practice books, and learning material developed by schools themselves, including CDs and/or DVDs;
- access to digitised learning material (e.g. licence costs) prescribed by the school for a specific year.

Atlases, dictionaries, calculators and school diaries do not fall under the free school books scheme. Parents are also responsible for providing their child’s other school supplies, such as laptop computers, sports gear, tools, exercise books and binders, and pens.

The free school books scheme will apply to all pupils in mainstream secondary education (VMBO, MAVO, HAVO and VWO), including practical training schools and agricultural training centres. Pupils in special secondary education already receive free school books. The scheme only applies to schools which receive funding from the Dutch government.

**Strategic Agenda for Adult and Vocational Education 2008-2011**

The government wants to improve the quality of vocational education to bring it in line with developments on the job market. The Strategic Agenda for Adult and Vocational Education was therefore published in 2008. It was drawn up in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and addresses the following policy priorities:
a closer match between vocational education and the labour market;

- The supply of qualified people should meet the demand on the labour market, both qualitatively and quantitatively;
- better-quality training;
  - All secondary vocational education institutions will be working with the new-style qualification guidelines (see 7.14.1.) by August 2010;
- improved cohesion within the vocational education sector;
  - There needs to be better cohesion at all three levels of vocational and professional education (VMBO-MBO-HBO) in order to reduce dropout and ensure that as many students as possible gain the qualifications needed by the job market (see 7.13.);
- active and sustainable participation in education, the labour market and society;
  - Certain people (often young, elderly or disabled) have particular difficulty in finding their place in society because they are under-qualified, under-skilled or lack the appropriate professional attitude. As a result, they may find it hard to get a job and to stay in employment. MBO training can help them to acquire the right competences and institutions should therefore continue to pursue a low-threshold policy on admissions;
- a more integrated education policy;
  - The current system under which municipalities have separate budgets for adult education, social rehabilitation and civic integration training is not conducive to a harmonised approach. As from 1 January 2009 the government wants to merge the various municipal budgets that promote social participation.

The Delta Plan for language and mathematics in secondary vocational education

The Delta Plan is being developed in close consultation with education experts, teachers and umbrella organisations (the Secondary Education Council, the Secondary Vocational Education Council and the Council for Higher Professional Education) to boost standards in language skills and mathematics in the short term. The aim is to introduce it in spring 2009.

Appropriate education

A number of parallel systems are in place to provide extra support for pupils while they are in compulsory education. Each system has different processes and admission requirements, as well as different responsibilities and funding systems. An evaluation of the various systems has led to a review of the current approach. The notion of imposing a duty of care has been debated, resulting in plans to introduce a system whereby every pupil would be guaranteed education appropriate to his or her needs.

Appropriate education policy will aim to put in place regional networks that will be able to provide all pupils with education appropriate to their needs, thus reducing waiting lists and long-term absenteeism and improving the quality of education. These regional networks will in principle be formed by connecting existing structures. Consortia formed under the ‘Going to School Together’ policy (see 10.5.2.) in primary education will thus be teamed up with similar consortia at secondary level and the regional expertise centres (RECs) (see 10.6.4.).

The key elements of appropriate education policy, as described in the parliamentary papers published in June 2008, are:

- quality of education:
  - the introduction of attainment targets in special education;
● the development of a digital system to track pupils’ progress, linked to an instrument to assess pupils’ potential for development;
● the development of new teaching guidelines and materials;
● the implementation of quality assurance systems at all schools for special education;
● special secondary schools will be responsible for arranging work placements and work placement supervision for pupils;

- development of regional networks;
- involvement of staff and parents:
  - staff:
    - a comprehensive network to support staff professionalisation;
    - involve staff in implementation of appropriate education policy;
    - support teachers in their day-to-day work;
    - support teachers in protecting their interests;
  - parents:
    - provide individual support to parents (both through the regional network and independently in the form of guidance through the process);
    - collective representation of parents’ interests;
    - a systematic approach to quality in the regional network;
- budget management:
  - a one-stop shop for educational needs assessment;
  - multi-year block grants.

In the autumn of 2009, the House of Representatives will decide on a statutory basis for this policy as of 2011. This will be preceded by experiments in selected regions.

Internationalisation agenda for MBO

In January 2009, the internationalisation agenda for secondary vocational education was presented to the House of Representatives. The agenda sketches the current situation and the goals for the short term (2008-2011) and medium term at national, European and international level. The agenda identifies four main objectives:

- to strengthen the international outlook of secondary vocational education:
  - through implementation of the Internationalisation of Vocational Education Programme (PIB). This is a joint programme of the Ministries of Education, Culture & Science and Economic Affairs, the Secondary Vocational Education Council, the Council for Higher Professional Education and the Royal Association MKB Nederland, which represents small and medium-sized businesses. It aims to enhance and expand the international orientation of both pupils and teachers at MBO and HBO, by increasing the opportunities for international experience;
  - by increasing the number of MBO students, currently some 2,400 primarily at levels 3 and 4, who have an international placement or are following courses abroad. This number should grow to 3,200 in 2010. The number of MBO teachers acquiring international experience through study or work placements should also increase;
  - by removing existing obstacles, for instance concerning residence permits or visas; and
  - by making Dutch grants and loans portable, if possible;
- to attract international students to the Netherlands and encourage Dutch students to spend part of their education abroad;
- to strengthen European cooperation;
- to improve the competitiveness of Dutch secondary vocational education at international level.

In addition to supporting the development of gifted students, policy is geared to increasing the international recognition of the vocational qualifications offered in the Netherlands.

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)
- 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)
- Participation in School Decision-making Act (WMS)
- 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

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 a governing committee) or by a public legal entity or foundation set up by the council;
- provide education on behalf of the state.

Privately run schools

Privately run schools:
- can refuse to admit pupils whose parents do not subscribe to the belief or ideology on which the school's teaching is based;
- 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 and include Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindustani and Steiner-Waldorf schools;

Some schools base their teaching on specific educational ideas, such as the Montessori, Dalton, Freinet or Jena Plan method. They may be either publicly or privately run.
The freedom to organise teaching means that private schools are free to determine what is taught and how. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science does however set quality standards which apply to both public and private education and 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. The conditions which private schools must satisfy in order to qualify for funding are laid down by law.

- Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB)
- Compulsory Education Act 1969
- Education Inspection Act (WOT)
- Education Participation Act (WMO 1992)
- Expertise Centres Act (WEC)
- Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS)
- Higher Education and Research Act (WHW)
- National Education Support (Subsidies) Act
- Participation in School Decision-making Act (WMS)
- Primary Education Act (WPO)
- Secondary Education Act (WVO)
- Study Finance Act 2000 (WSF 2000)
2.4. General structure and defining moments in educational guidance

Organisation of the education system in the Netherlands, 2008/09

Pre-primary – ISCED 0
(for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Primary – ISCED 1

Lower secondary general – ISCED 2
(including pre-vocational)

Upper secondary general – ISCED 3

Post-secondary non-tertiary – ISCED 4

Tertiary education – ISCED 5A

ISCED 0
ISCED 1
ISCED 2

Compulsory full-time education
Compulsory part-time education
Part-time or combined school and workplace courses
Additional year
Compulsory work experience + its duration
Study abroad

Source: Eurydice.

There is limited formal educational provision in the Netherlands for children under four (see chapter 3.). Early childhood education is geared to children aged 2 to 5 who are at risk of 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 basisonderwijs at the age of about 12 (after eight years of primary schooling) children choose between three types of secondary education voortgezet onderwijs: VMBO (pre-vocational secondary education voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs: four years), HAVO (senior general secondary education hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs: five years) and VWO (pre-university education voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs: 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 distinguish between the lower years and the upper years. In the lower years the emphasis is on acquiring and applying knowledge and skills, and delivering an integrated curriculum. Teaching is based on attainment targets which specify the knowledge and skills pupils must acquire. In the first two years of secondary school, 1,425 real hours per year must be spent on the 58 attainment targets. The school itself translates these targets into subjects, projects, areas of learning, and combinations of all three, or into competence-based teaching, for example (see 5.13.1.). Besides English, which is compulsory for all pupils, those in HAVO and VWO study two other modern languages, while pupils in VMBO study one.

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 hoger beroepsonderwijs (HBO). In practice, however, many HAVO school-leavers also go on to the upper years of VWO and to secondary vocational education middelbaar beroepsonderwijs. VWO is designed to prepare pupils for university. In practice, many VWO certificate-holders enter HBO. MBO certificate-holders can go on to higher professional education, while HBO graduates may also go on to university.

In addition to mainstream primary basisonderwijs and secondary schools voortgezet onderwijs there are special schools speciaal onderwijs for children with learning and behavioural difficulties who – temporarily at least – require special educational treatment. There are also separate schools for children with disabilities of such a kind that they cannot be adequately catered for in mainstream schools (see 10.3.). Pupils who are unable to obtain a VMBO qualification, even with long-term extra help, can receive practical trainingpraktijkonderwijs, which prepares them for entering the labour market (see 5.5.).

Young people aged 18 or over can take adult education courses (chapter 7.) or higher distance learning courses (Open University; see 6.18.3.).

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.

Basic qualification requirement

Under the basic qualification requirement that came into effect in September 2007, all young people up to 18 years must attend school until they attain a basic qualification. A basic qualification is a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 certificate. This new measure is intended to reduce drop-out rates and will take effect as of the 2007/2008 school year (see 7.2.). Young people under the age of 18 who are no longer in full-time education will be required to follow a full-time programme combining work and study, such as block or day release in MBO, until they have attained one of the required certificates (see chapter 7.).
Criteria to be met by schools

An amendment to the Compulsory Education Act concerning criteria for schools came into effect on 1 September 2007. Under the Act, privately funded schools must offer the same levels of competence and facilities as government-funded schools. The amendment aims to make a clear distinction between the roles of the Inspectorate and the school attendance officer. The latter assesses whether a privately funded school fulfils the necessary criteria, but must at all times take account of the Inspectorate’s advice. The bill prescribes the steps to be taken by the school attendance officer when a school fails to comply with all the legal criteria, in the opinion of the Inspectorate. If this is the Inspectorate’s conclusion, the school attendance officer will have to inform pupils’ parents that they are not fulfilling their statutory obligation under the Compulsory Education Act.

Registration and coordination at regional level

Since 1995 the municipal authorities have played a key role in the system set up to tackle drop-out at regional level. They are responsible for registering early school leavers under the age of 23 and coordinating regional policy on this matter (see 7.2.). In 2002 the Regional Registration and Coordination (Early School Leavers) Act (RMC) entered into force to prevent and tackle early school leaving in ordinary voortgezet onderwijs and special secondary schools voortgezet speciaal onderwijs, secondary vocational education middelbaar beroepsonderwijs and adult general secondary education voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs. 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.

Young people who drop out of school are channelled back into education or job training. Municipalities network with youth care services, educational institutions and centres for work and income in order to enable early school leavers to return to school and/or work. The aim is to ensure they acquire at least a basic qualification (a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 certificate). Steps are being taken to make it easier for young people to enrol mid-course.

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 up to 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 within the meaning of the Act. 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.
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. With due regard for the provisions of the Constitution, central government creates enabling conditions for education through legislation, which applies to 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. 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 two State Secretaries, each of whom has specific areas of responsibility within the general policy lines laid down by the Minister (see 1.2.): one State Secretary is responsible for secondary and vocational education, the other for primary education.

The chief civil servants together form the Education, Culture and Science Management Team (MT-OCW) 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. The Management Team comprises the Secretary-General and his/her Deputy, the Director-General of Higher and Vocational Education and Science, the Director-General of Primary and Secondary Education and the Director-General of Culture and Media.

Apart from an Executive Board and 21 core departments, the Ministry also comprises nine semi-independent executive agencies. These include:

- the Central Funding of Institutions Agency (CFI; www.cfi.nl), which is specifically responsible for funding educational establishments, research institutes and education support organisations, and for collecting and disseminating qualitative and quantitative data;
- the Education Inspectorate, which oversees the quality of education;
- the Education Council, which advises the government and parliament on matters concerning education, in particular policy and secondary legislation, and
- the Science and Technology Advisory Council, which advises the government and parliament on policy on scientific research, technological development and innovation.

There are five policy 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 and Student Finance 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 Legislation and Legal Affairs 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 an executive agency which falls under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Its status is regulated in a ministerial order dating from 1998: the Education Inspectorate (Status) Order. The Education Inspectorate performs its tasks on the basis of the provisions contained in the Education Inspection Act.

**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.

**Higher Education Accreditation Act**

Under the Higher Education Accreditation Act hoger onderwijs, 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 existing legislation. 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 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 per year;
- 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 (IBG) is an autonomous administrative authority with which the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has a formal statutory relationship (laid down in the Database Office (Autonomous Status) Act). The Information Management Group is responsible for implementing the Student Finance Act 2000 and the Fees and Educational Expenses (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, and the evaluation of diplomas. 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.
2.6.2. General administration at regional level

The Netherlands is divided into 12 provinces. 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.

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 and funding necessary changes in accommodation for primary and secondary schools;
- adopting annual plans for the provision of new public and private schools at primary and secondary level;
- 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 transport of pupils, 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 etc.) 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. Besides the municipal executive, therefore, the following options are available:

- 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

Under article 23 of the Constitution, 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.

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. If women are underrepresented in senior posts, school boards are obliged to draw up a document once every four years setting out their 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.

2.6.4.2. Day-to-day management of primary schools

The day-to-day running of primary primair onderwijs and special schools speciaal onderwijs 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 voortgezet onderwijs is the responsibility of the head of the school, who is known in VWO schools as the rector and in other schools as the director. 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/HAO/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, the school management may consist of the head plus a number of "portfolio managers". 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, i.e. have merged 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;

- those in which only the management has merged, i.e. there is 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 (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 an executive board, a supervisory board and the dean. They have the following tasks, responsibilities and powers.

- 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. It consists of between three and five members, who are appointed by the Minister. The supervisory board is accountable to the Minister and must furnish him with any information he requests concerning its actions. The chair and other members of the supervisory board of public universities are appointed by the Minister. The supervisory board appoints, suspends and dismisses the members of the executive board.
- 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.

The MUB was introduced in order to give universities more 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.

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 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 (MR). If a school board is responsible for more than one school, there must also be a joint participation council (GMR).

A participation council 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 primair onderwijs 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 participate through the parents’ council, which advises the parent representatives in the participation council and coordinates parent activities. Secondary school pupils voortgezet onderwijs can set up a student council. Most secondary schools have a pupils’ charter setting out the rights and obligations of pupils.

On 1 January 2007, the 1992 Education Participation Act (WMO) was replaced by the Participation in School Decision-making Act (WMS), regulating participation in decision-making in primary and secondary schools, including special schools. The main points of the Act are:

- All schools must have a participation council. Schools could previously plead exemption on religious or ideological principles, but this has now been abolished.
- The participation council’s right to be informed has been strengthened. The board must provide and account for all relevant policy-related and financial information, both independently and at the request of the participation council.
- The participation council also has more far-reaching powers. No important decisions can be taken without its assent or advice.
- In addition to a package of joint powers of assent, teachers and parents have been assigned a series of independent powers of assent relating to topics that particularly concern them. In the case of teachers these include conditions of employment; in the case of parents, the size of the parental contribution, for instance.

The competent authorities need the prior consent of the participation council for decisions affecting such matters as the adoption of or changes to the school’s educational aims, the school plan, the curriculum, the special needs plan, the school rules or the complaints procedure, or the transfer of or merger of a school, etc.

The participation council can advise on decisions relating to the adoption of or changes to the main points of the school’s multi-year financial policy (and the timetable, in the case of secondary schools), decisions to enter into, terminate or significantly change a long-term partnership with another organisation, the adoption of changes to policy on the school’s organisation, the appointment or dismissal of the head/deputy head, construction of new school buildings or major alterations to existing buildings, etc.

If the school board and the participation council cannot reach agreement, they can ask a disputes committee (an independent committee of experts) to mediate. The committee will usually start by presenting a proposal, but if the problem remains unsolved, it can issue a binding decision. There is one national disputes committee (LCG-WMS) for all types of education.

Higher Education and Research Act

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.

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. The tasks of the Education Council are as follows:

- 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 work programme is approved each year by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science;
- to advise 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;
- to advise 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 (KBB; see 7.15.1.) in the Adult and Vocational Education Consultative Committee. The knowledge centres keep close track of trends in education and industry and provide advice, information, courses and training. They act as a bridge between the education sector and industrial organisations in the Netherlands.

The Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality 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

The conditions of service and legal status of education personnel in both the public and private sectors are determined partly at suprasectoral and sectoral level and partly at decentralised and institutional level. Employers’ organisations and trade unions in the education sector negotiate at decentralised level. The 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 negotiate at institutional level. (see 8.2.)

Except in the primary sector, some aspects of pay and working conditions are now regulated per sector, as provided for by various education acts and sector-specific framework decrees (see 8.2.2.).

The social partners (employers’ organisations and trade unions) conclude collective agreements without the mediation of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

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 article 23 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, and primary and secondary school accommodation. Another source of funds are the statutory course and tuition fees paid to the institutions by the students themselves (see 5.8.). 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.).

**Public-Private Expertise Centre**

In January 2007, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science established a Public-Private Expertise Centre (EPP) to answer the many questions schools have concerning expenditure. Schools wish to know, for instance, under what conditions public funding may go to private activities.

**Personal identification number**

Every child in the country over the age of 3½ has been issued with a personal identification number (PGN). Commonly referred to as the education number, it is the same as the tax and social insurance number (SoFi number). Parents need it when they register their child at a school, for instance. Children who do not have a SoFi number are given a number by the Information Management Group (IBG). Schools pass on the PGN, together with certain other data on pupils, to the IBG. They register this data, which is used to determine schools’ funding and for policy development and supervision purposes, the latter by the Education Inspectorate. The data kept by the IBG is increasingly used for purposes such as monitoring pupils’ school careers, school attendance or early leaving.

**2.8.1. Methods of financing mainstream primary schools and special schools**

The funding of primary and special secondary schools is governed by the Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO) and the Expertise Centres Act (WEC).

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

As of 1 August 2006 mainstream primary schools and special schools now receive a block grant to cover their staffing costs in addition to the block grant already allocated for running costs. As a result, school boards now receive a single sum of money, which they are free to spend at their own discretion, giving them more scope to manage the school as they see fit (see also 4.15.).

**2.8.2. Methods of financing secondary schools**

The funding of secondary schools voortgezet onderwijs, 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 norm-based block grant funding. Schools receive an annual budget from which all staff and running
costs must be met. The amount allocated is based on fixed rates for each cost item. Within the scope afforded by law, schools may decide themselves how they choose to spend the block grant.

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:

- Government funding:
  - 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.
  - The Minister funds the knowledge centres for vocational education and business (see 7.15.1.) 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.
  - 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. The municipal authorities then buy in adult education courses by concluding contracts with the regional training centres (ROCs).
    - Until December 2006, municipalities received a separate budget under the Civic Integration (Newcomers) Act for civic integration courses for ethnic minorities (bought in from the ROCs). This Act was superseded on 1 January 2007 by the Civic Integration Act, which abolishes the status of the ROCs as sole providers of civic integration training. With the market opened up, municipalities are now free to buy in courses from whoever they want.
  - Students pay course fees to the institutions. Students on vocational training courses (BOL) pay fees to the Minister and are eligible for student finance.
  - Institutions receive income from contract activities for companies and private individuals.

2.8.4. Methods of financing higher education

2.8.4.1. Higher education in general

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.

2.8.4.2. Higher professional education

Institutions of higher professional education are funded mainly on the basis of student numbers. Roughly speaking, the faster students graduate or decide to give up their studies (i.e. within the first year), the bigger the grant the institution will receive. The reverse is also true. The longer students take to graduate (over and above four years) or the later they decide to give up their studies (i.e. after the first year), the smaller the grant. This is because funding takes account of income from tuition fees. The total government grant depends on the number of years for which the student paid fees. So the longer students are enrolled and the more fees they have paid, the smaller the government grant.

Institutions of higher professional education hoger beroepsonderwijs also receive income from contract activities and, since 1994, an allocation for benefit payments for staff and to cover accommodation. Almost 95% of the central government grant is allocated 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.

2.8.4.3. Universities

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. There is also a basic provision for teaching, and part is allocated according to the number of first-year students. As in higher professional education, the central government grant also covers expenditure on accommodation and benefit payments for staff. 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 in connection with the work performed there by medical faculty staff. Tuition fees form an additional source of income for the universities. University funding makes a distinction between funds for teaching, and funds for research.

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.

2.8.4.4. Open University

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 1991 the fees charged for courses have covered a larger proportion of the actual costs, particularly for students who already have a university degree or other higher education diploma. 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

All statistics have been taken from Key Figures 2004-2008 Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands.

Key to abbreviations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>primary education (including special schools for primary education (SBAO) and special primary and secondary schools ((V)SO))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBO</td>
<td>secondary vocational education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOL</td>
<td>vocational training pathway in MBO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVE</td>
<td>adult and vocational education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>higher professional education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>universities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kerncijfers 2004-2008 Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap

2.9.1. Institutions

Table 2.1. Number of institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO (schools and annexes)</td>
<td>7,572</td>
<td>7,540</td>
<td>7,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVE</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2. Primary schools by denomination (in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions by denomination</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public-authority</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2.9.2. Pupils and students

**Table 2.3. Number of pupils/students (x 1000)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,676.4</td>
<td>3,705.1</td>
<td>3,725.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>1,658.5</td>
<td>1,661.9</td>
<td>1,663.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>942.5</td>
<td>941.0</td>
<td>934.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVE (MBO incl. agricultural education, excl. adult education)</td>
<td>490.1</td>
<td>503.3</td>
<td>511.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO (incl. agricultural education)</td>
<td>365.8</td>
<td>373.9</td>
<td>382.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO (incl. agricultural university)</td>
<td>207.2</td>
<td>211.5</td>
<td>219.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.9.3. Financial statistics: general

**Table 2.4. Total Ministry expenditure on education per type of education, netted and including overheads (x € 1 million)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26,187.7</td>
<td>26,673.6</td>
<td>28,454.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>8,356.9</td>
<td>8,627.4</td>
<td>9,038.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>5,804.6</td>
<td>6,049.8</td>
<td>6,545.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVE</td>
<td>3,168.5</td>
<td>3,232.2</td>
<td>3,376.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>1,859.8</td>
<td>2,047.9</td>
<td>2,178.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>3,438.0</td>
<td>3,545.2</td>
<td>3,710.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student finance</td>
<td>3,559.7</td>
<td>3,171.2</td>
<td>3,605.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.5. Ministry expenditure on education compared to gross domestic product and central government expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education expenditure (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) (x € 1 mln)</td>
<td>26,187.7</td>
<td>26,673.6</td>
<td>28,454.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (x € 1 milliard)</td>
<td>539.9</td>
<td>567.1</td>
<td>595.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total as % of GDP</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education sectors</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student finance</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total as % of central government expenditure</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education sectors</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student finance</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.6. Institutional expenditure per pupil/student (in current prices in euros), including local government grants and HBO/university tuition fees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>6,100</td>
<td>6,300</td>
<td>6,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>7,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBO</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>6,600</td>
<td>6,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>6,800</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>7,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>7,100</td>
<td>7,300</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2.7. Ministry expenditure per pupil/student (in current prices in euros)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>4,940</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>5,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>6,270</td>
<td>6,540</td>
<td>7,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBO</td>
<td>6,130</td>
<td>6,250</td>
<td>6,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>5,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>5,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

### Table 2.8. Expenditure on student finance and study costs allowances (in current prices in euros), per pupil/student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOL</td>
<td>3,430</td>
<td>3,080</td>
<td>3,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>4,640</td>
<td>4,150</td>
<td>4,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>4,700</td>
<td>4,290</td>
<td>4,740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.9. Key financial statistics: student finance (WSF), study costs allowances (WTOS) and student public transport passes (OVSK) by type of education (x € million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) Total expenditure</td>
<td>3,864.6</td>
<td>3,550.2</td>
<td>4,060.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total WSF &amp; OVSK</td>
<td>3,500.1</td>
<td>3,189.1</td>
<td>3,703.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which not relevant</td>
<td>1,643.7</td>
<td>1,951.7</td>
<td>1,957.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVSK</td>
<td>638.4</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>96.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTOS</td>
<td>269.2</td>
<td>267.6</td>
<td>254.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B) Expenditure per sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure WSF/WTOS</td>
<td>3,769.3</td>
<td>3,456.7</td>
<td>3,957.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>211.2</td>
<td>212.6</td>
<td>199.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVE</td>
<td>1,168.1</td>
<td>1,033.3</td>
<td>1,146.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>1,415.5</td>
<td>1,303.8</td>
<td>1,572.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>974.5</td>
<td>907.0</td>
<td>1,038.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.10. Expenditure on study costs allowances (WTOS) by type of education (x € million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>269.2</td>
<td>267.6</td>
<td>254.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure 17-</td>
<td>197.1</td>
<td>195.5</td>
<td>180.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>151.7</td>
<td>150.8</td>
<td>137.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOL + higher education</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total WTOS 18+</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total VO 18+</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.9.5. Fees

**Table 2.11. Standard study costs allowances (WTOS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>17- (in euros per year)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational expenses VO lower years</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational expenses VO upper years</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational expenses BOL</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees VO and BOL</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VO 18+ (in euros per month)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic allowance (students living away from home)</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic allowance (students living at home)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational expenses</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees VO</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WTOS 18+ (in euros per year)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total allowance higher education</td>
<td>1,196</td>
<td>1,207</td>
<td>1,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum total allowance higher education</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.12. Standard fees per school/academic year, in euros**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard fees in euros</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time education (16+)</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>1,519</td>
<td>1,538</td>
<td>1,565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Pre-primary education

The Netherlands has no formal educational provision for children under the age of four. The compulsory school-starting age is five, but children may – and almost all do – begin primary school at the age of four. Outside the formal education system there are, however, childcare facilities for younger children such as day nurseries and playgroups. Childcare facilities, in the form of out-of-school care, are also available for children of school age. Up to February 2007, childcare fell under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. As of March 2007, it falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Around 40% of children under the age of four make use of facilities at around 3,500 childcare centres, while some 12% of children aged 4 to 12 make use of out-of-school care at some 3,000 locations. Increasing the availability of childcare and improving its quality are high on the political agenda, based on the idea that an extensive network of high-quality childcare facilities enables parents to combine work and care and boosts children’s development. For children under four, high-quality childcare means that they are better equipped to start school at the age of four.
The Childcare Act, which entered into force on 1 January 2005, regulates the quality of childcare and the way it is funded. It is based on the principle that childcare is a matter for parents, employers and government. Parents who combine work and care receive childcare benefit, provided the childcare they use complies with the government’s quality standards (see 3.2.. and 3.7.). The benefit is linked to parents’ earnings.

**Childcare provision**

The following forms of childcare fall under the Childcare Act:

- Day nurseries offer year-round childcare for children under the age of four. Children go to day nursery for one or more half or full days a week.
- Out-of-school care for children aged 4 to 12 attending primary school. The school board is required by law to arrange this type of childcare is provided before and after school, as well as in school holidays (excluding public holidays), from 7.30 to 18.30, at parents’ request. The Dutch childcare system is based on supply and demand, which means that whether or not care is actually provided at certain times also depends on whether childcare organisations can do so in a commercially feasible manner.
- Childcare for children up to the age of 12 provided by a registered childminder either in their own home or in the home of the child. Childminders may have up to four children (not including their own) in their charge.
- Innovative childminders: under certain conditions, a childminder may have up to six children in their charge, other than their own.
- Communal crèches set up by groups of parents: the parents themselves take turns looking after the children. Aside from being exempted from the parents’ committee requirement, all quality standards applicable to day nurseries apply.

The Childcare Act does not apply to informal childcare carried out by friends, family members, au pairs or occasional babysitters. Plans have been made to include quality requirements for playgroups in the Childcare Act, as this would make it easier for childcare facilities and playgroups to work together.

**Definition of childcare**

In section 1, subsection 1 of the Childcare Act, childcare is defined as: the provision of care and learning opportunities for children commercially or otherwise, but not for free, until the first day of the month in which they start secondary school.

BoinK, the Dutch association for parents using childcare defines childcare as: the provision of care, supervision and learning opportunities for children aged up to 16, in a clear organisational structure, by those other than their parents or primary carers, in a way that is appropriate for the duration of the childcare per day, a child’s age and the needs of their parents or primary carers.

**Day nurseries**

Day nurseries provide childcare for children from six to eight weeks of age until their fourth birthday. Children in day nurseries usually have parents who work or study. Ordinary day nurseries are open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Some day nurseries close for a fixed number of days or weeks per year, such as around Christmas or during the summer, or have staff training days. The children are divided into groups according to age or are put in groups which have a mix of children between 0 and 4 years. Although childcare is charged by the hour, parents can usually only purchase childcare in five-hour blocks (morning and afternoon). Many day nurseries have a child development policy that prescribes a minimum number of blocks per week. The following combinations of childcare are commonly offered:
- Full day: parents purchase childcare for fixed days of the week.
- Half day: parents purchase either a morning or an afternoon block. This type of care is often combined with full-day care on other days. Day nurseries tend to limit the number of half days for child development and capacity reasons.
- Extended day: more and more day nurseries will extend their opening hours on demand, by starting an hour earlier in the morning or closing an hour later in the evening.
- Flexible care: parents purchase a fixed number of blocks per week but are not tied to fixed days. This allows them to plan childcare in accordance with their work schedule. For example, a child may go to day nursery from Monday to Wednesday one week and from Wednesday to Friday the next week. Parents usually need to book the days that they want to use childcare about a month ahead.

Registered childminders

Registered childminders offer flexible childcare in a family setting, usually in the childminder’s own home. They may have up to four children (not including their own) in their charge, but never more than six. Children’s ages may vary from 6 weeks to 12 years. Parents can purchase childcare for a fixed or flexible number of hours over an extended period of time. This type of childcare is provided through childminding agencies, which act as brokers between parents and childminders. Innovative childminders may, under certain conditions, including a guaranteed quality of care, have up to six children in their charge, other than their own.

3.1. Historical overview

Organised childcare has existed in the Netherlands since 1850. With industrialisation, more and more mothers started working away from home. In response, establishments known as “kinderbewaarscholen” or “kinderbewaarplaatsen” arose where children could be sent from the age of 2½. They were funded and run by philanthropic individuals or the church, and were intended as help for the poor. The methods they used were based on the ideas of educational theorists like Pestalozzi, Fröbel and Montessori, and they were the forerunners of what became known after the Second World War as “kleuterscholen” (nursery schools). As they developed, there was a gradual shift in emphasis from care to education.

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 primair onderwijs and some types of special education speciaal onderwijs are now regulated in a single act.

In-company day nurseries were first established after the Second World War. The playgroups movement which stressed the role of learning and playing, arose in the 1960s and continued to grow throughout the 1970s, as more and more women joined the workforce. The approach in playgroups has always been to focus on children’s educational development, in a play setting. Between 1965 and 1986, the number of playgroups increased from about 100 to 3,000, most of which were run by volunteers. In 1970 the Association of Dutch Childcare Centres (WKN) was established with the aim of promoting the professionalism of staff 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; www.infokinderopvang.nl). From 1975 playgroups fell under the Government Grants Scheme for Social and Cultural Work and received grants to support their work. 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 1986 the Social Welfare Act shifted responsibility for administering and financing social welfare services, such as childcare, to the municipal authorities. At the same time, a tax incentive was introduced for parents who were likely to need childcare.

In the years after 1986, the number of childcare places continued to grow, but not quickly enough to have a significant impact on further increasing women’s participation in the workforce. In 1990, therefore, the government launched a new policy designed to expand childcare capacity. Successive incentives introduced between 1990 and 2004 to increase the number of places proved effective: capacity grew from about 20,000 places in 1989 to roughly 200,000 in 2004.

Since 1990 the government has held the position that childcare is a matter of common interest and a shared responsibility of three parties – parents, government and employers. Childcare is also financed by these three parties. In addition to capacity, the government has also focused on the quality of childcare. Quality standards were first laid down in the Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree which entered into force in 1996, but was replaced by the Childcare Act in 2005 (see 3.3.).

**Early childhood education**

Since 2000 the government has provided funding for early childhood education (VVE), a form of education designed to optimise the development opportunities of children aged 2 to 5 from underprivileged backgrounds, who are at risk of educational or language disadvantage. In the future, early childhood education may also be provided for babies at risk of language disadvantage, which is greatest for babies and children of poorly educated parents. Early childhood education for preschoolers (two to four-year-olds) is provided by playgroups and, to a lesser extent, day nurseries. Primary schools offer VVE programmes for four and five-year-olds.

Early childhood education is part of municipal policy on eliminating educational disadvantage. The municipal authorities are also responsible for allocating funding. Additional funding is made available by central government to finance preschool programmes (see § 3.13). The government intends to lay down quality criteria for these programmes: they will have to comprise at least three half-days per week and be taught by qualified staff.

Schools are responsible for early childhood education for 4 to 5-year-olds. The budget for schools is distributed according to a weighting system. Between 2006 and 2010, the aim will be to reach 70% of the target group at both preschool and early primary level. Municipalities consult with schools to ensure a smooth transition from preschool to primary school provision.

The 31 largest cities in the Netherlands receive multi-purpose grants to realise performance targets in a variety of areas, including educational disadvantage. All other municipalities receive specific-purpose grants. These funds can be spent on early childhood education or bridging classes at primary schools. Municipalities also have some scope to develop their own strategies for compensatory policy.
3.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

Harmonising and broadening early childhood education

The Development Opportunities through Quality and Education Act, which will enter into force on 1 August 2010, will introduce the following quality criteria for playgroups:

- playgroups have a maximum group size of 16 children, with 2 playworkers present;
- at least one playworker must have a professional qualification at SPW-3 or equivalent level;
- at least 2 professionally qualified playworkers must be present in playgroups providing early childhood education.

The Act aims to increase cooperation between playgroups and day nurseries, so as to ensure that all children are offered similar opportunities for development regardless of the preschool facility attended. The VVE infrastructure will effectively be expanded, ensuring that early childhood education reaches a far broader group of children.

By 2011 at the latest, schools that receive extra funding to tackle educational disadvantage will offer early childhood education in years 1 and 2 to eliminate language disadvantage and boost young children's social and emotional development.

Early childhood education 2006-2010

Early childhood education will be strengthened by improving:

- lines of supervision;
- the professionalism of day nursery staff and school teachers: training courses will be provided for those currently involved in early childhood education and an early childhood education module will be developed for primary school teacher training colleges and social and community work courses;
- support to municipal authorities: the government will consult with the Association of Netherlands Municipalities on ways to support municipalities as of 2006 in the area of early childhood education policy. Possibilities include a panel of experts on early childhood education, information on the new division of responsibilities for early childhood education, a model to help municipalities reach the target group more effectively, a website, newsletters and regular conferences.
- the quality of playgroups, to bring them more in line with childcare centres. Playgroups and day nurseries will be encouraged to work more closely together and allowances will be available for parents whose children receive early childhood education at the playgroup. The cost to parents of children who need early childhood education will be equivalent to the cost of using day nurseries. Municipalities will play an important role in implementation.

3.3. Specific legislative framework

Childcare Act

The Childcare Act entered into force in 2005, giving childcare its own statutory framework. The Act safeguards the quality and supervision of childcare, and regulates the way it is funded (see 3.7.).

As regards quality safeguards, providers of childcare facilities and childminder agencies are 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. Representatives of childcare and parents’ organisations have fleshed out these
general standards in a detailed agreement on the quality of childcare. The Childcare Act itself also lays down a number of specific requirements:

- providers are obliged to draw up health and safety assessments;
- Dutch must, in principle, be the language of communication in day nurseries (see 3.10.);
- providers must inform parents about their policies;
- except in the case of communal crèches set up by groups of parents (see 3.15.), providers must set up a parents’ committee to advise on matters such as safety, opening times and prices;
- childcare provision must be laid down in a written agreement between parents and provider;
- providers must pay attention to matters such as:
  - the ratio of professional staff to children per age group
  - group size
  - staff qualifications
  - rules on the deployment of trainees.

Amendments to the Childcare Act

The following amendments to the Childcare Act came into force on 1 January 2007:

- All employers are required to contribute towards the cost of childcare. The employer’s contribution is paid to working parents together with the childcare benefit.
- As of the start of the 2007/2008 school year, schools are required to arrange out-of-school care at parents’ request.

Municipal authorities’ role in the field of childcare

The municipal authorities are responsible for:

- monitoring the quality of childcare. In accordance with the Act, the actual checks of day nurseries and childminding agencies are carried out by the municipal health service (GGD), commissioned by the municipal authorities. Overall national responsibility for monitoring compliance with quality standards is a responsibility of central government.
- subsidising part of the cost of childcare for parents who are:
  - 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 Agency (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.

3.4. General objectives

Childcare facilities enable parents to combine work and care and boost children’s development. For children under four, childcare makes them better equipped to start school at the age of four.
3.5. Geographical accessibility

There are childcare facilities in the Netherlands for children under 4, but no formal educational facilities. The geographical accessibility of childcare is determined by supply and demand, in line with the Childcare Act.

3.6. Admission requirements for childcare

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. Another factor limiting admission to playgroups and day nurseries is the availability of places. The Childcare Act does not contain any provisions concerning admission; however, parents need to meet certain conditions if they wish to qualify for allowances to help cover the cost of using day nurseries.

3.7. Financial support for families

The Childcare Act which entered into force on 1 January 2005 lays down that the costs of childcare must be shared by parents, employers and government. In 2005 and 2006 employers were not obliged to contribute towards the costs of childcare, although they were expected to do so. The employer’s share was made mandatory as of 1 January 2007, because many parents were not receiving a contribution from their employers. Now, all employers pay their share and all working parents, employed and self-employed, receive the employer’s share. This new scheme is implemented by central government (see 3.3.).

Working or studying parents whose children attend a childcare centre or are cared for by a registered childminder can apply for a means-tested childcare allowance. The allowance they receive is determined by their income, and is paid by the Tax Administration.

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 minimum ratio of staff to children. The agreement between providers and parents on the quality of childcare and the Policy Rules on the Quality of Childcare lay down maximum group sizes. At day nurseries, children have their own regular group which has its own ‘base’, or room. The size and design of the rooms are in keeping with the group size and children’s ages. The maximum number of children in a group at the same time is:

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

In day nurseries or out-of-school care at a childcare centre, the maximum permitted number of children per qualified staff member is as follows:

- four children under 12 months; or
● five children aged 1 to 2; or
● six children aged 2 to 3; or
● eight children aged 3 to 4.

At small childcare centres, where only one qualified staff member needs to be present, there must always be at least one other adult to provide assistance. The rules on quality and supervision in the Childcare Act do not apply to playgroups, but most municipal authorities have ordinances laying down separate quality standards for them.

The maximum number of children in an out-of-school care group is 20. There must be one qualified staff member present for every 10 children. A group may consist of 30 children when all of the children are older than 8 years, provided two qualified staff members are present and one adult assistant.

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.

3.10. Curriculum, types of activity and number of hours

There is no prescribed curriculum as such in childcare provision, but providers are obliged to draw up policy on child development and learning opportunities, in consultation with parents’ committees. From the age of four, children can go on to primary schools, where attainment targets apply (see 4.10.4..10.4.).

Dutch is the language of communication in both day nurseries and out-of-school care in childcare centres. In places where Frisian or another regional language is widely spoken, it may be spoken alongside Dutch. Children from a non-Dutch background may likewise be spoken to for part of the time in their own language to aid comprehension.

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.

Every childcare centre and childminding agency must have a child development policy plan, describing its vision on interacting with and caring for children, as well as practical matters such as:

● the methods used, the maximum size and age distribution in groups;
● how children’s emotional security is ensured, what opportunities are provided for personal and social development, and how children are taught rules and social values;
the opportunities for activity and play outside the group room;
the type of assistance given to professional child carers by other adults.

The Policy Rules on the Quality of Childcare also contain requirements for indoor play and living areas, sleep areas and outdoor play areas.

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

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science launched two new centre-based programmes (Kaleidoscope and Pyramid) in 1995, as well as a number of smaller, similar programmes. Both home-based and centre-based programmes may be incorporated into local compensatory policy. However, municipal authorities and schools enjoy complete freedom in the selection of early childhood programmes. A special manual describing various programmes is available to help them do so.

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.

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. The Childcare Act provides safeguards for the funding and quality of childcare, as well as quality control. Childcare organisations themselves bear the primary responsibility for the quality of childcare. Municipalities are responsible for monitoring compliance with quality requirements (such as group size, development and learning policy, and risk assessment) (see 3.8.).

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 crèches, which they themselves run and manage without paid professional staff.

As of 1 January 2005, communal crèches have been classified as a form of organised childcare under the Childcare Act.

3.16. Statistics

These statistics are based on 'Key Figures 2004-2008; Education Culture and Science in the Netherlands', unless otherwise stated.

Table 3.1 Use of childcare facilities (number of children whose parents receive a childcare allowance x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of childcare</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day nurseries</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-school care</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childminders</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Childcare capacity by number of places, 2006-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity in number of places</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day nurseries</td>
<td>129,811</td>
<td>149,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-school care</td>
<td>94,656</td>
<td>159,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>224,467</td>
<td>308,515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Childminder capacity is not included in this table, as it is expressed in numbers of parent-childminder matches and not in numbers of places.

Table 3.3 Number of organisations and employees in the childcare sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisations</td>
<td>1,516</td>
<td>1,571</td>
<td>1,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees (x 1000)</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age (in years)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female employees (%)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male employees (%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kerncijfers 2004-2008 Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap

Monitor Capaciteit Kinderopvang 2008-2011
4. Primary education

Organisation of the education system in the Netherlands, 2008/09

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 merged into new-style primary schools catering for children from 4 to 12. Special schools speciaal onderwijs were governed by the Special Education Interim Act (ISOVSO).

On 1 August 1998 the WBO and the ISOVSO were replaced by the Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO) and the Expertise Centres Act (WEC). Primary education primair onderwijs now encompasses mainstream primary schools (BAO) basisonderwijs and special schools for primary education (SBAO) speciaal basisonderwijs and special primary and secondary education ((V)SO). One of the purposes of the new Act is to ensure that primary schools work more and more closely with special schools (the Going to School Together policy), so that children with special needs are where possible catered for at mainstream primary schools.
4.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

Stimulating excellence

The ‘excellence in primary education’ programme was developed as part of the quality-centred agenda for primary education (see 4.4.). Its purpose is to identify, in good time, children with high cognitive ability and to offer them an appropriate challenge. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science leaves it to schools to define which children fall into this category. It includes not just highly gifted children, but all children with cognitive potential. By providing highly gifted children with an appropriate challenge early enough, it is possible to prevent boredom, underachievement and – later on – the need for extra care.

The ‘excellence in primary education’ programme consists of national projects which all schools in the Netherlands can benefit from, and a local element. The national projects include:

- A website (www.beterweters.nl) providing a digital learning environment for high-ability primary school children. The website offers all schools in the Netherlands, as well as pupils and parents, information, a digital meeting place and digital teaching material.
- Four projects run by the national educational advisory centres and the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) concerned with the early identification of talented children, appropriate education for talented children, quality assurance tools, and other research and development activities directly benefiting schools.
- Pilot projects in The Hague and Apeldoorn, supervised by experts, intended to provide practical experience of special classes for very able children, ‘Leonardo’ education (see 4.17.), digital teaching material and the early identification of gifted children. The aim is to apply the results of these projects nationally.
- A survey and a plan, by the Science and Technology Forum, to link up primary education and the scientific community. The idea is for primary schools to enlist the help of universities to give pupils an extra challenge and introduce them to the study of science.

The programme also includes a local grant scheme for schools working together to develop innovative approaches for the most able children, with an emphasis on learning from each other. The scheme is overseen by the National Institute for Curriculum Development, Edventure (an organisation that promotes the interests of school advisory services) and the Quality Forum, attached to the Primary Education Council. School boards have until 28 February 2009 to submit project proposals to the Central Funding of Institutions Agency (CFI).

Good Education and Good Governance Bill

In December 2008, the government submitted the Good Education and Good Governance Bill to the House of Representatives. The Bill would enable the government to cut off funding to individual primary or secondary schools in the interests of their pupils if the level of education they provided was consistently poor. The Bill formulates minimum quality requirements for all schools. In the case of mismanagement by the board, schools may receive a warning. If they fail to act on the warning, funding may be cut. The Bill also contains provisions to encourage the further development of the principles of good governance in primary and secondary education, including the separation of responsibility for governance from that for internal supervision, and the development of a code of conduct for good governance for each educational sector.

Countering segregation in primary education

Since August 2006, municipal authorities and school boards have had a statutory duty to jointly discuss measures to promote integration and counter segregation in education. Several pilot schemes were started
in 2008 in order to find out the most effective ways of pursuing these aims. The measures being introduced under these schemes are designed to provide more multi-ethnic schools and include:

- fixed enrolment times and agreements with schools on admissions policies;
- support for parental initiatives (parents are given support if they want to change the composition of a school);
- more information for parents;
- further development of ‘friendship schools’ and knowledge exchange between schools.

The pilot schemes will run until 2011, with an interim evaluation in 2010.

4.3. Specific legislative framework

Primary education primair onderwijs encompasses mainstream primary schools (BAO) basisonderwijs, special schools for primary education (SBAO) and special primary and secondary education ((V)SO) voortgezet speciaal onderwijs. It is regulated by the Primary Education Act (WPO) in the case of mainstream schools and special schools for primary education and the Expertise Centres Act (WEC) in the case of special primary and secondary education.

The WPO and the WEC describe the objectives of primary education (attainment targets) and prescribes how teaching should be structured and organised (content, quality, school plan, funding, school prospectus, complaints procedure). It also lays down rules governing the special needs support structure (special needs plan, consortia) and the position of staff, parents and pupils.

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 (‘Going to School Together’ policy, see 4.4.). 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").

Other types of special school (both primary and secondary) not covered by the WPO are governed by the Expertise Centres Act (WEC; see Chapter 10.3.).

The main implementing regulations pertaining to primary education are the:

- Funding Decree (WPO)
- Funding Decree (WEC)
- Provision of Information Decree (WPO/WEC)
- Education Decree (WEC)
- The Primary Education Attainment Targets Decree 1998 is to be withdrawn. School authorities may only make use of these attainment targets up to 1 August 2009.
- Revised Attainments Target Decree (WPO)

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 (see 4.10.1.).
4.4. General objectives

The Primary Education Act and the Expertise Centres Act assign schools a number of tasks. One of these is to teach different subjects. Attainment targets indicate what schools must offer pupils in terms of teaching matter (see 4.10.). Schools must pay attention to the cognitive, creative, social, emotional and physical development of children. Moreover they must not only instil knowledge in pupils, but also skills and insights, such as behaviour that shows respect for generally accepted norms and values, as well as knowledge of and respect for religious and other beliefs that play an important role in Dutch 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. These children are not automatically placed in special schools. Ordinary primary schools and special schools for primary education work together, so that as many children as possible can stay at ‘ordinary’ primary schools. The government works together with schools to actively promote this policy, which is known as ‘Going to School Together’ (WSNS). Special schools for primary education are only intended for children who really cannot cope at an ordinary school, despite extra help (see also chapter 10.). The WSNS policy has been in force since 1 August 1996.

Primary schools and special schools for primary education both fall under the Primary Education Act. Both have the same attainment targets. However, pupils at the latter can take more time to complete their primary schooling, staying on until the age of 14 if necessary.

General policy: a quality-centred agenda, focusing on language and numeracy, and investing in teachers

In November 2007, the government presented its new quality-centred agenda for primary education, ‘Schools for tomorrow’, to parliament. It provides the education sector and the authorities with an overview of the government’s policy objectives for its four-year term (2007-2011). The agenda gives priority to improving children’s language and numeracy skills, since competence in this area is essential to their success in other subjects at school, in their further school career and in society at large. The government has set out five tracks by which it seeks to realise its aims:

- Track 1: ‘What pupils should know and be able to do when they leave primary school’; in consultation with the education sector, the government is to set clear benchmarks by the end of 2008 for language and numeracy indicating the knowledge and skills children should have acquired by the time they leave primary school.
- Track 2: ‘Prospects of success’; by 2011, at least 80% of schools should meet the quality assurance standards defined in the Inspectorate’s supervisory framework.
- Track 3: ‘Learning from and with each other’; primary school teachers will extend their knowledge in the area of language and numeracy. In their spending on in-service training, primary schools are being encouraged to harness positive experiences and use proven methods for language, numeracy and quality assurance. Teachers will also be given the opportunity to learn from and with their peers, head teachers and experts. These measures tie in with the Teachers Matter action plan (see 8.1.2.).
- Track 4: ‘Reducing language disadvantage’; by 2011, there should be comprehensive early childhood education provision and a 40% reduction in language disadvantage among children of primary school-leaving age compared with 2002.
- Track 5: ‘A rich learning environment’; children need a stimulating and challenging learning environment. Teaching needs to take account of children’s differences and different talents.
Community school

The concept of the community school comes from an initiative by local actors such as municipalities, school boards and welfare services. Schools enter into long-term partnerships with other sectors like childcare providers, health and welfare services, and sports and cultural institutions, to enhance pupils’ opportunities for development. A community school is, in other words, a network in and around schools, within which teachers not only teach but also work with other professionals to help children develop in all sorts of ways.

A community school can be housed in a single multifunctional building, but can also consist of a number of different organisations working as a network and spread over the neighbourhood. The number of community schools is increasing quickly. They have been established or are being developed in 337 of the Netherlands’ 443 municipalities (i.e. 76%). In 2008, around 100 community schools were operating in the primary sector, and municipalities aim to have set up some 1,200 by 2010. Their aims are decided locally and hence differ from school to school, but they often include increasing children’s development opportunities, greater parental involvement, continuity of provision and an overarching approach. Possible elements include:

- intensive cooperation on preschool provision for two to four-year-olds;
- social work and out-of-school care for four to 12-year-olds;
- an extended school day with sporting and art activities;
- activities for parents such as parenting support and language courses;
- activities for local residents so that a school can play a pivotal role in the neighbourhood.

Central government provides plenty of scope for local initiatives and decision-making. There are no national rules on community schools; their form, content and aims are determined by local stakeholders. Generally speaking, responsibilities are divided as follows:

- Central government stimulates, supports and facilitates the development of community schools through, for example:
  - providing information about community schools;
  - providing funding for combined positions (people who work in different sectors but are employed by a single employer, e.g. music teachers who give lessons both at a school of music and a community school) and for multifunctional accommodation;
  - conducting research;
  - experimenting with financial decompartmentalisation;
  - setting up a support centre for community schools.

- Municipalities have a facilitating, initiating and funding role.

- The heads of community schools and the management of organisations such as care and welfare services determine the course each individual school will pursue and the type of activities it will offer.

Compensatory policy

Of the 1.5 million children who attend primary school, around 280,000 (2007) are educationally disadvantaged, often because of their socioeconomic or cultural background. Compensatory policy seeks to improve the educational achievements and career prospects of educationally disadvantaged children and young people. The distribution of responsibilities between school boards and municipal authorities has been defined such that parties can be held accountable. The lion’s share of the budget for compensatory policy goes directly to schools, the remainder to the municipal authorities. A weighting system determines the amount of money allocated to schools.
Schools are responsible for combating educational disadvantage. They are also responsible for preschool education. Schools have the freedom to decide how the funds they are allocated for compensatory policy should be spent.

The municipal authorities are responsible for:

- ensuring the local infrastructure functions properly;
- ensuring the availability of early childhood education and bridging classes (bridging classes are mainly intended for primary school pupils whose language skills are holding them back – pupils spend a year catching up on their language skills, after which they return to normal classes), consulting with school boards on preventing segregation and promoting integration and compensatory policy;
- encouraging individual schools to tackle disadvantage, including the link between early childhood education and primary education;
- coordinating basic facilities at local level and ensuring the availability of youth services (see also the section on community schools);
- ensuring that school-aged children attend school, preventing early school leaving, including the regional registration of early school leavers, and urban policy.

The weighting system is an important part of compensatory policy. Changes to the system were introduced on 1 August 2006, and will be completed in four stages over a four-year period. Most schools use the system to fund extra staff so that classes at schools with a large number of weighted pupils are smaller than in schools where this is not the case. In the new system, weightings are determined by the parents’ level of education only and no longer by their ethnicity and occupations. There are three pupil weightings:

- a weighting of 0.3 if both parents’ highest level of education is junior secondary vocational education (LBO/VBO);
- a weighting of 1.2 if one parent’s highest level of education is primary education and the other parent’s is LBO/VBO;
- a weighting of 0 if at least one parent’s level of education is higher than LBO/VBO.

A school’s weighting budget is determined by adding up all the weighted pupils. The new weighting system is running parallel with the old one over a four-year period. Under the old system, pupils with poorly educated parents were assigned a weighting of 1.25, pupils living in a children’s home or with foster families 1.4, pupils from traveller families 1.7 and pupils with a non-Dutch cultural background 1.9. The full introduction of the new system should be complete by the 2010/2011 school year.

As of the 2009/2010 school year, schools will receive additional funding under the weighting system if they are situated in specific areas, designated by postcode, with a high proportion of people living on low incomes and/or social security benefits. Schools facing cumulative problems will therefore be given more money. The designated postcodes are in both urban and rural areas.

4.5. Geographical accessibility

On average there is one primary school basisonderwijs per 5.9 km² in the Netherlands. Parents can claim back their child’s travel costs if these costs are regarded as necessary and reasonable under the rules drawn up by the municipal authorities (this applies when there is no school within a ‘reasonable distance’, i.e. within a radius of 6 km, along a route considered safe and accessible to children). 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

The setting up of new schools is subject to certain restrictions. A new publicly-run school can only be set up or a private school funded 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. Moreover, the teaching offered by the school must meet the attainment targets. Schools may themselves determine how teaching is to be structured, how the school will be managed and what teaching methods will be used.

4.6. Admission requirements and choice of school

Admission requirements

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 three years and ten months. 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 (or the age of 20 in the case of special schools).

Primary education is free of charge.

Public-authority schools admit all pupils irrespective of their religion or beliefs. However, a municipality can define catchment areas, and assign pupils to a school within such an area (though schools can apply for exemption). Private schools can set admission requirements according to the denominational or ideological character of the school. The school board decides whether a pupil will be admitted. They may refuse to do so if the school has reached a maximum number of pupils. Some schools have waiting lists on which children can be placed. If a public-authority school refuses to admit a pupil, the municipality ensures that the pupil in question is admitted to another public-authority school. If a private school refuses to admit a pupil, the school board must refer the child to another school falling under the same board. The board of a private school may also refuse a pupil if parents do not endorse the denominational or ideological character of the school.

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. Parents have access to various sources of information on which to base their choice of school. Many schools hold information evenings for parents of potential pupils; others allow parents to sit in on lessons. Moreover, all schools are statutorily obliged to publish a prospectus for parents setting out the school’s objectives and the results achieved. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science also publishes a national education guide containing information that is helpful when choosing schools. Finally, the Education Inspectorate draws up and publishes school report cards on the quality of individual schools (see 9.4.2.).

Schools may ask for a voluntary 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 (celebrations, cultural activities, school
trips, etc). If parents fail to pay the contribution, schools are nevertheless obliged to provide supervision for children not taking part in school trips or other activities paid for from the parental contribution.

### 4.7. Financial support for pupils’ families

Primary education basisonderwijs and special education are free of charge. Parents can claim back their child’s travel costs if there is no school (or no school of the denomination or educational character sought by the parents) within a radius of 6 km along a route considered safe and accessible to children). Parents apply to the municipal authorities, who draw up rules on this matter.

### 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. Others have mixed-age groups or group children according to their level of development or ability. In the latter case, the pupils’ position is reviewed each year. 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. 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).

Primary school teachers basisonderwijs and teachers at special schools for primary education speciaal basisonderwijs 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. 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. The ratio of teaching assistants and specialist teachers to class teachers is decided by the school.

#### Class size

The ministry does not set any requirements regarding minimum or maximum numbers of pupils to a class. On 1 October 2005 the average junior class numbered 21 pupils while senior classes had an average of 23.4 pupils.

### 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 dates of the summer holidays are prescribed by the Minister.
4.9.2. Weekly and daily timetable

Schools are free, within the framework set by central government, to decide how much time is spent on the various subjects and areas of the curriculum. They have also been given more flexibility regarding the length of the school day so that timetables can reflect the specific needs and wishes of the school and the community. They 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 is flexible. Schools can 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 remains unchanged at 3,520. The maximum of 5.5 hours of teaching a day has been abolished.

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. The parent members of participation councils have a right of assent regarding the setting and changing of school timetables. The teacher members of the participation council are entitled to advise on when the school day starts and ends, and all parents’ opinions are canvassed before any decisions are taken, to minimise problems. Schools are also allowed to timetable in a maximum of seven 4-day weeks a year for years 3 to 8 (not counting weeks in which the school is closed for a day anyway, due to a public holiday). The school prospectus must inform parents when these are before the start of the school year. The Education Inspectorate oversees school timetables and sees to it that schools keep to the times stated in their prospectus.

Under the Primary Education Act, school authorities 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. In special schools, it is standard practice for children to stay at school during the lunch break.

4.10. Curriculum, subjects, number of hours

The Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO) and the Expertise Centres Act (WEC) require schools to teach various subjects. An indication is given per subject of what pupils must learn, in the form of attainment targets (see 4.10.1.). Attainment targets indicate what schools must offer pupils in terms of teaching matter, focusing not only on cognitive and emotional development but also on creativity and social, cultural and physical skills. Schools are free, within the framework set by the government, 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 by law (see 4.9.2.).

4.10.1. 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 primair onderwijs, 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/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.

58 new attainment targets were introduced as of the 2005/2006 school year (from August 2006 for years 1 and 2). Schools will have until August 2009 to implement them. They 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 factual or creative subjects. The new attainment targets now also cover citizenship, technology and cultural education.

The subjects French and German do not fall within the attainment targets, though schools may include them in their curriculums. The statutory attainment targets for English provide a model for French and German. Schools have the option of having one or more class teachers train as French/German teachers.

**The Canon: a timeline of Dutch history**

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has devised a timeline of Dutch history and culture, known as the Canon, made up of fifty icons. The purpose is to provide a framework that will facilitate learning about the past. The Canon fits within existing attainment targets and is intended for the upper classes of primary school and the lower classes of secondary school. It comes complete with illustrations and suggestions for use, and will be reviewed every five years.

**4.10.2. Areas of learning**

Since 1 August 2006, under the terms of the revised Primary Education Act, schools must provide teaching in six curriculum areas. Schools are, however, free to determine how many teaching periods to devote to each subject. The attainment targets relate to the following subjects:

- Dutch;
- English (this has been a compulsory subject since 1986, and is taught in the top two years of primary school);
- arithmetic and mathematics;
- social and environmental studies (including, for instance, geography, history, science (including biology), citizenship, social and life skills (including road safety);
- healthy living; social structures (including political studies) and religious and ideological movements;
- creative expression (including, for instance, music, drawing and handicrafts);
- sports and movement.

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;
the Niedersachsisch, Limburger, Yiddish and Romany languages may be used as a language of instruction alongside Dutch (see 1.4.).

4.10.3. 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 and the participation council 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.

The school prospectus, which must be updated every year, contains information for parents and pupils about the school’s objectives, how it intends to achieve them and what it has 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 parent members of 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.

4.10.4. 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 2008-2009" can be consulted on the Ministry’s website.


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. To help schools make an informed choice, the Ministry publishes guides comparing the quality of all teaching materials per subject area. 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). Teachers also have access to online teaching materials for a variety of subjects, such as those provided by the website www.leerkracht.kennisnet.nl (together with background information arranged according to theme). Some schools prefer to seek assistance when it comes to translating attainment targets into daily teaching practice. SLO has developed intermediate targets and teaching guidelines in response to a request from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. These teaching guidelines indicate per subject area how children progress from a certain initial level to the attainment targets. Intermediate targets mark important stages throughout this process. Using this framework, teachers can gain a much better idea of their pupils’ progress and so help them achieve the attainment targets.
Some schools organise their teaching according to a particular educational theory. These include Montessori, Dalton, Freinet and Jena Plan schools, which may be public-authority or private. Schools are free to set pupils homework from whatever age they see fit. By no means all schools assign homework, and young pupils, in particular, tend not be set homework.

Nearly all schools use information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching or innovative purposes, and over half have laid down and implemented ICT policy plans. Over the last four years, the number of schools making intensive use of computers has doubled. Most have an internet connection. Many schools have a computer room, where groups of children can work at terminals. There is an average of one computer for every six pupils in primary and secondary schools. This figure has not changed greatly over the last four years, suggesting that many schools have reached saturation point as far as computers are concerned. 89% of staff make use of computers when teaching, usually in the form of drill software, although its popularity has waned compared with previous years in favour of using the computer to search for information or for word processing. Primary school teachers use computers in teaching for an average of seven hours per week. The public ICT support organisation for the education sector, Kennisnet, publishes an annual survey on the use of ICT in education.

4.12. Pupil assessment

Most schools report on pupils’ progress per subject or subject area (usually three times a year). Parents are invited to the school on parents’ evenings, when they can look at their child’s exercise and text books, and discuss their progress, homework, tests, projects and out-of-school activities. Some schools express pupils’ progress by means of marks, while others provide a written assessment. Many schools use intermediate targets and tests to measure pupils’ progress. Such tests are often part of the teaching material, or are general tests.

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, often on the basis of a school leavers’ attainment test. A copy of the report is given to the child’s parents.

Primary schools use tests devised by various bodies engaged in educational measurement. The largest of these, the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), develops attainment tests for pupils in year 8 which schools can use to measure their end results and compare them with those of other schools (primary school leavers attainment test). Nearly 85% of primary schools use the CITO test. A total of 153,000 pupils from about 6,200 schools sat the test in February 2009. It comprises 200 multiple-choice questions covering the basic skills in reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, as well as study skills. There is also an optional section on environmental studies consisting of 90 questions, which was tackled by 85% of pupils sitting the CITO test in 2009. CITO also develops tests for measuring the progress of individual pupils (pupil monitoring system) so that teaching can be tailored more to individual needs. There is a digital version of the CITO test tailored to the level of pupils with a significant learning disadvantage and a supplementary test was introduced for this category of children in 2008. For each child that sits the supplementary test, the school receives reports including information needed for applications for practical training or learning support on leaving primary school (see 5.5.).

Schools constantly strive to improve the quality of their teaching. Nearly all use a pupil monitoring system that enables them to respond better to differences between pupils. All schools keep files on their pupils,
which are used to store test results, report marks, the results of special studies, progress reports and records of conversations with parents. They sometimes also contain information about pupils’ social and emotional development, their level of motivation and any special language approach used.

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

After completing eight years of primary education, pupils do not receive a certificate or diploma, but a school report describing their level of attainment and potential (see 4.12.).

The Primary Education Revised Attainment Targets Decree defines 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.

4.15. Educational guidance

Pupil guidance

As well as the regular teaching staff, schools can appoint specialist teachers, internal counsellors, coordinators responsible for language or arithmetic, or for teaching in the junior classes, remedial teachers and so on, with a view to improving teaching. Schools are responsible for pupil guidance. Pupils receive guidance from their class teacher, but can also receive extra assistance from an internal counsellor or a remedial teacher. Remedial teachers help pupils with difficulties. Internal counsellors support children with special needs. They counsel parents as well as pupils, so that a child’s environment becomes more conducive to learning, and have a coordinating, supervisory and innovatory role. Pupils can also attend special courses to help them overcome fear of failure or to make them more resilient. These are not government-funded.

School advisory services

The school advisory services help schools (both mainstream and special) to introduce innovations and solve problems. Schools receive funds from central government with which to buy in services from the provider of their choice; this is referred to as demand-driven provision. This budget forms part of the block grant paid to schools and is therefore not earmarked. Demand-driven provision was introduced on 1 August 2006. School advisory services had previously been funded by the municipalities. The introduction of market forces has changed the position of the school advisory services, and effectively amounts to deregulation. Most school advisory services still receive a grant from the municipal authorities of around 50% of the funding they received prior to the introduction of demand-driven provision.

National education support services

Besides a few specialised organisations like the Dutch Language Teaching Expertise Centre and the Freudenthal Institute for Science and Mathematics Education, primary schools are supported at national level
by five organisations: the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) and three national educational advisory centres which provide support in the field of educational innovation: the Educational Advisory Centre (APS) for non-denominational schools, the Protestant Educational Advisory Centre (CPS) and the Catholic Educational Advisory Centre (KPC). Since 1 January 1997 these organisations have been subsidised under the National Education Support Activities (Subsidies) Act (SLOA).

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. This means that both public and private schools are funded by the government, as long as they meet certain conditions. 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. Within statutory parameters, the legal person is free to start a school of any denomination or educational character and to organise teaching as it sees fit.

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 basisonderwijs two thirds of schools are privately run.

4.17. Organisational variations and alternative structures

The Compulsory Education Act 1969 provides that all school-age children must attend school. 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 bargees’ children between the ages of 3 and 7. The Compulsory Education Act also provides that school-age children must attend a school as defined by the Act. Very few children attend schools that are not government-funded. There are two types of non-government funded, i.e. private-sector, schools which children may attend:

- international or foreign schools exclusively intended for pupils who do not have Dutch nationality;
- private-sector schools categorised by the school attendance officer as ‘a school within the meaning of section 1, subsection b (3) of the Compulsory Education Act’.

The Primary Education Act contains a number of general provisions that also apply to non-government funded education and that impose conditions on privately funded primary education. It also contains provisions that relate specifically to non-government funded education.

‘Leonardo’ education

Leonardo education involves teaching highly gifted children in classes that are entirely separate from those in which the other children in a school are taught. The term ‘Leonardo school’ is sometimes used, but the separate lessons are usually given within ordinary primary schools. Children with an IQ of 130 or higher may be selected for these classes.
4.18. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from Key Figures 2004-2008 Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands.

Kerncijfers 2004-2008 Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap

4.18.1. Pupils

Table 4.1 Number of pupils (x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils in primary education</td>
<td>1,658.5</td>
<td>1,661.8</td>
<td>1,663.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. attending BAO, SBAO and (V)SO</td>
<td>1,658.0</td>
<td>1,661.3</td>
<td>1,663.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAO, SBAO and SO</td>
<td>1,630.8</td>
<td>1,633.1</td>
<td>1,631.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAO</td>
<td>1,548.4</td>
<td>1,551.8</td>
<td>1,552.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBAO</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSO</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAO (traveller children)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key

BAO: mainstream primary schools
SBAO: special schools for primary education
(V)SO: special schools (primary and secondary level)
SO: special schools (primary level)
VSO: special schools (secondary level)
All these schools fall into the category of primary education.

**Table 4.2 Percentage distribution of pupils**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAO</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBAO</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.18.2. Schools and staff**

**Table 4.3 Number of establishments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of primary education establishments</td>
<td>7,940</td>
<td>7,914</td>
<td>7,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(schools + secondary establishments)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total number of schools (BAO, SBAO and (V)SO)</td>
<td>7,572</td>
<td>7,540</td>
<td>7,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of BAO schools</td>
<td>6,929</td>
<td>6,901</td>
<td>6,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of SBAO schools</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of (V)SO schools</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.4 Average school size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no. of pupils per school</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAO</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBAO</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(V)SO</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 4.5 Number of staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>number of staff in FTEs (x 1000)</td>
<td>131.5</td>
<td>132.0</td>
<td>133.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### % of women staff in FTEs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy heads</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other *</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### % aged 50 or over in FTEs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy heads</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other *</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ancillary and administrative staff
5. Secondary education

Organisation of the education system in the Netherlands, 2008/09

Secondary education voortgezet onderwijs follows on from ordinary basisonderwijs and special primary education speciaal onderwijs. It does not include special schools for disabled children (which fall under the Expertise Centres Act, see chapter 10.), adult and vocational education (see chapter 7.) or higher education hoger onderwijs (see chapter 6.). There are three kinds of secondary education voortgezet onderwijs:

- pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs) which takes four years;

- senior general secondary education (HAVO hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs) which takes five years;

- and pre-university education (VWO voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs) which takes six years.
The lower years of secondary school

Secondary education distinguishes between the lower years (the first two years of VMBO and the first three years of HAVO and VWO) and the upper years. In the lower years, the emphasis is on acquiring and applying knowledge and skills, and delivering an integrated curriculum. Teaching is based on attainment targets which specify the knowledge and skills pupils must acquire.

The upper years of secondary school

The upper years of secondary school encompass the 3rd and 4th years of VMBO, the 4th and 5th years of HAVO and the 4th, 5th and 6th years of VWO. The upper years of HAVO and VWO are also known as pre-higher education (VHO). In HAVO and VWO, teaching centres on the ‘studiehuis’, an approach to teaching where the emphasis is on enabling pupils to work increasingly on their own, under the teacher’s supervision. The amount of work pupils are expected to do is expressed in terms of study load. This is the time required by an average pupil to master a particular quantity of material. This includes preparation and self-study at home as well as attending lessons.

5.1. Historical background

Until well into the second half of the twentieth century, Dutch secondary education voortgezet onderwijs 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. Standards were generally considered to be too low, and differences between pupils due to socioeconomic and cultural factors too great. What is more, pupils had to make crucial decisions about their careers and studies at far too early a stage. The curriculum for the first few years of secondary education was modernised and harmonised to produce a single basic secondary education curriculum for all pupils (VMBO, HAVO and VWO) with attainment targets and a common basis. With the introduction of the new curriculum, the emphasis shifted from transferring to applying knowledge and developing skills, while building on the knowledge acquired in the upper years of primary school and preparing pupils for the next stage of the various types of secondary education. Basic secondary education no longer exists.

As of the 1999/2000 school year, individual pre-vocational education was incorporated into learning support (LWOO) leerwegondersteunend onderwijs in VMBO and practical training primair onderwijs was introduced. With these changes, special schools for secondary education voortgezet speciaal onderwijs (previously
special secondary schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (VSO/LOM) and children with learning difficulties (VSO/MLK) became part of mainstream secondary education. From 1 January 1999, schools providing VMBO and practical training and special schools for secondary education were required to work together in consortia to cater for children with special needs within mainstream secondary education.

On 1 August 1998, curriculum reforms were introduced in the upper years or ‘second stage’ (tweede fase) of HAVO and VWO. Pupils choose one of four subject combinations, which provide an integrated study programme and ensure a smooth transition to higher education. The upper years of HAVO and VWO are together referred to as the period of pre-higher education (VHO).

5.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

The new quality agenda for secondary education

The new quality agenda for secondary education was launched in July 2008. In it, the government and the education sector set out their six policy priorities for the years to come, and the actions necessary to achieve them. The six policy priorities are:

- mathematics and language: to achieve a marked improvement in children’s language and numeracy skills;
- excellence: to get the best out of pupils at all levels of education and ensure that all pupils leave school with an appropriate qualification;
- citizenship: to provide civic education to all pupils, including a placement in a non-profit or voluntary organisation;
- professional freedom: to ensure professional freedom for teachers;
- examinations: to ensure the quality and reliability of examinations;
- culture of improvement: to turn weak schools into good schools, and make good schools even better.

Good teachers will be vital to achieving these objectives. That is why they are targeted as a policy priority in both the quality agenda and the government’s education policy.

Culture card

From the 2008/2009 school year, all secondary school pupils will receive a culture card, a personal card with a magnetic strip and a balance of €15 that can be used to pay for cultural activities. Initially, teachers will decide how or when pupils may use the culture card, based on the school’s cultural policy. The card entitles holders to discounts on cultural activities, and can be used to reserve places and pay for cultural activities, both online and at the ticket office. The culture card is developed, implemented and marketed by the Stichting Cultureel Jongeren Paspoort, the Dutch Euro<26 card organisation. It replaces the vouchers for culture and the arts (CKV vouchers) that were introduced in 1999 to encourage youth participation in cultural activities.

Tackling dropout

Making education compulsory to the age of 18, extra work experience placements and follow-up care for pupils going on from VMBO to MBO should ensure that by 2012 the dropout rate is 50% lower than in 2002 (no more than 35,000 dropouts). All young people up to the age of 18 are required to continue learning until they have obtained a basic qualification. This measure replaces compulsory part-time education. Money will be invested in language teaching (through early years education and bridging classes) and in more attractive, more practical education. Students in further and higher education will be encouraged to mentor
and coach pupils and the support advisory teams for schools will be expanded. The Inspectorate will also monitor whether schools pursue adequate policies on truancy. Early school leavers who neither work nor attend school will be subject to compulsory supervision, giving municipal authorities extra opportunities to get them back to school or into work. It will also be easier for young people to enrol mid-course.

**Free school books**

From the 2009/2010 school year, school books will be distributed free of charge to secondary school pupils. In the 2008/2009 school year, parents had to pay for books themselves but were reimbursed a fixed amount of 316 euros per pupil, the average cost of a set of school books in 2008. From 2009/2010, the money for school books will be paid directly to schools. Schools will buy the books themselves and distribute them free of charge to pupils. The free school books scheme will include:

- textbooks, workbooks, project books and books of tables, compilations of old examinations and examination practice books, and learning material developed by schools themselves, including CDs and/or DVDs;
- access to digitised learning material (e.g. licence costs) prescribed by the school for a specific year.

Atlases, dictionaries, calculators and school diaries do not fall under the free school books scheme. Parents are also responsible for providing their child’s other school supplies, such as laptop computers, sports gear, tools, exercise books and binders, and pens.

The free school books scheme will apply to all pupils in mainstream secondary education (VMBO, MAVO, HAVO and VWO), including practical training schools and agricultural training centres. Pupils in special secondary education already receive free school books. The scheme only applies to schools which receive funding from the Dutch government.

**Flexible examinations pilot project**

In the wake of the discussion on more flexible national examinations, a project has been launched at thirteen schools for VMBO, HAVO and VWO. It started in the 2005/2006 school year and will run to the end of August 2010. The aim is to discover whether allowing examinations to be sat at several points throughout the school year will benefit pupils and ensure a smoother transition from secondary to post-secondary education without giving rise to insurmountable organisational problems. Pupils may sit their examinations in January, May and August of their final year. They may sit their national exam for the first time at any point in the examination cycle, on condition that they have completed the school exam in that subject. They are entitled to sit the national exams in each of their subjects twice. (See 5.17. for a description of the current examinations system.)

**Experimental VMBO-MBO 2 course**

Twenty VMBO schools and MBO institutions started a trial with an integrated VMBO-MBO 2 course on 1 August 2008. The duration of the new course is three to four years. Schools are free to decide on the form and content within the general framework laid down by the Ministries of Education, Culture & Science and Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality. The VMBO leaving examination is not mandatory for pupils taking this course, but pupils who cannot keep up must be offered an alternative learning pathway, so that they can still obtain a VMBO or MBO certificate.

There are currently 36 experimental courses integrating the upper years of the VMBO basic vocational programme and level 2 secondary vocational training (MBO). These integrated vocational courses increase pupils’ chances of obtaining a basic qualification (a certificate at MBO level 2 or higher, see 2.1.) and thus
combat dropout. The first year of the experiment has drawn 1,139 pupils. The next intake of pupils will be in August 2009. A total of 5,000 pupils will participate in the experiment, which runs until 2013.

**Combined VMBO-MBO training to assistant level**

From the 2009/2010 school year, secondary vocational training to assistant level will be combined with pre-vocational education, so that pupils can start an MBO level 1 course in their third or fourth year of VMBO. This will help to tackle the problem of pupils who fail to go on to MBO after obtaining their VMBO certificate and will increase the likelihood of pupils staying in school until they have attained a basic qualification (MBO level 2 certificate or higher, see 2.1.). The combined course is intended only for pupils in the basic vocational programme who have difficulty fitting in with the school routine. The VMBO schools and MBO institutions are jointly responsible for the course and the pupils enrolled in it. The Secondary Education Act and the Adult and Vocational Education Act will be amended so that the combined course can be offered permanently (see 5.3. and 7.3.).

**Stricter examination requirements**

New, stricter examination requirements will apply from the 2011/2012 school year (see 5.17.). Secondary school pupils will only receive a leaving certificate if their average mark for their national exams is a pass. In addition, they may only get a fail (mark of 5) in one of the subjects Dutch, English and mathematics. This measure aims to raise examination standards, improve the quality of school exams and reduce the discrepancy in marks for school exams and national exams. Pilot projects were launched in the autumn of 2008 to improve the content and marking of school exams.

**Good Education and Good Governance Bill**

In December 2008, the government approved the Good Education and Good Governance Bill. The Bill will enable the government to cut off funding to individual primary or secondary schools in the interests of their pupils if the level of education they provide is consistently poor. The Bill formulates minimum quality requirements for all schools. In the case of mismanagement by the board, schools may receive a warning. If they fail to act on the warning, funding may be cut. The Bill also contains provisions to encourage the further development of the principles of good governance in primary and secondary education, including the separation of responsibility for governance from that for internal supervision, and the development of a code of conduct for good governance for each educational sector.

### 5.3. Legislation

The Secondary Education Act (WVO) has been in force since 1968 and was revised in 1998. Secondary education is made up of:

- pre-university education (VWO voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs);
- senior general secondary education and junior general secondary education (HAVO hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs and MAVO);
- pre-vocational education (VBO), including learning support (LWOO leerwegondersteunend onderwijs);
- practical training praktijkonderwijs;
- other forms of secondary education voortgezet onderwijs

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. As of the 1999/2000 school year, special secondary schools voortgezet speciaal onderwijs for children with learning
and behavioural difficulties (VSO/LOM) and for children with learning difficulties (VSO/MLK) were brought within the scope of the Secondary Education Act. The education they provide is now known as learning support and practical training. These schools are now officially known as special schools for secondary education (SVO).

The main implementing regulations pertaining to secondary education are:

- the Attainment Targets Decree;
- the Secondary Education (Organisation of Teaching) Decree, which regulates teaching in the different types of school, including the admission requirements;
- 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 aims and aims of the lower and upper years

5.4.1. Aims of the lower and upper years

The following general aim has been formulated for secondary education voortgezet onderwijs: it contributes to pupils’ development, with attention and respect for the various religious, philosophical and social values that exist in Dutch society, and with an emphasis on the knowledge and skills needed to function well in society, as an individual, a citizen and a worker. The aims of the lower years of secondary school have been set down in 58 general attainment targets. They apply to all pupils. There are also a number of supplementary targets for modern languages which apply to the majority of pupils. School policy determines how the attainment targets are fleshed out at every level and for each method of learning.

The aims of the upper years of HAVO and VWO are to provide a broad general education and to ensure cohesion between the various subjects and harmonisation with the methods used in higher education.

5.4.2. Community schools

According to the community school concept, municipal authorities work with schools and other services like health and welfare services and sports and cultural institutions to enhance pupils’ opportunities for development. A community school is a network in and around schools within which teachers teach and other professionals work alongside them to help children develop in all sorts of ways. In smaller municipalities, maintaining levels of service is an important secondary aim. Schools often respond to local developments. These may range from a growing need for wraparound care and more opportunities for children from deprived areas to more safety in the neighbourhood. 25% of municipalities organise out-of-school care through community schools.

Central government provides plenty of scope for local initiatives and decision-making. There are no national rules on community schools. Central government provides support in the form of grant schemes and promotes the development of community schools through the provision of information. The municipal authorities are in charge of such schools; they monitor progress and evaluate processes and results. It is up to the heads of community schools and the management of organisations such as care and welfare services to determine the course each individual school will pursue and the type of activities it will offer.

Community schools have been established in 337 out of 443 Dutch municipalities. There are now approximately 350 community schools active in secondary education.
5.4.3. Cooperation between secondary education and adult and vocational education (BVE)

The Secondary Education and Adult and Vocational Education (Cooperation) Decree allows secondary schools to place certain pupils with other educational institutions. The aim is to provide these pupils with a tailored programme in order to prevent them from dropping out without a basic qualification. By enabling educational institutions to use each other's facilities, the scheme also makes for greater efficiency. The Decree defines a framework for cooperation between secondary schools, and between secondary schools and BVE institutions. Schools themselves are free to decide the form and scope of their cooperation within this basic framework. The Decree allows for five possible arrangements, each for a specific type of pupil:

- a secondary school pupil is placed with another secondary school;
- a secondary school pupil is placed with a BVE institution;
- pupil funding is transferred in the case of a mid-year transfer;
- a secondary school pupil is placed with an institution for adult general secondary education (VAVO);
- a secondary school pupil is placed with a VAVO institution in order to study for final exam subjects.

Following an amendment to the Decree, 16 to 17-year-old VMBO pupils with a VMBO certificate for the combined or theoretical learning pathways can be placed with an institution for full-time VAVO, the fourth option listed above, so that they can obtain a HAVO certificate.

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. They may choose from four different learning pathways: the basic vocational programme (BL), the middle-management vocational programme (KL), the combined programme (GL) and the theoretical programme (TL). Pupils can also be given extra support within these programmes.

- 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. It is tailored to pupils’ special needs and can vary in length.

- 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 through 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 to 17 years. HAVO provides pupils with a basic general education and prepares them for higher professional education.

Pre-university education (VWO) is for pupils aged 12 to 18 years and lasts six 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 in combined schools scholengemeenschap offering a number of different types of secondary education (VMBO, HAVO and 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 WVO, are known as combined schools for general secondary education (AVO).

There are also schools which provide only one type of secondary education, for instance VMBO or VWO, and
VBO schools that provide only the basic and middle-management vocational programmes. VMBO schools
and schools providing practical training 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
647 in 2008. Now, incentives for mergers have been scrapped and current policy 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 21.9 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 guarantee 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. Lower years

Pupils are admitted to secondary school voortgezet onderwijs, after leaving primary school primair onderwijs
or a special school for primary education speciaal basisonderwijs, 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 the final year of primary school, using tests
developed centrally to gauge pupils’ level of knowledge and understanding. Each year the National Institute
for Educational Measurement (CITO) publishes a primary school leavers’ attainment test, which is used by
almost 85% of all Dutch primary schools (2009). 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 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 statemented or
non-statemented children. A practical training statement from the regional referral committee is required for admission to practical training.

5.7.1.2. Upper years

Since 2003, VMBO pupils who have successfully completed the theoretical programme may transfer from VMBO to the 4th year of HAVO. Pupils with HAVO certificates may likewise be admitted to the 5th 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. In practical terms, pupil’s freedom of choice is limited only by their primary school’s advice on the most appropriate type of education and the admission requirements of the VMBO pathways, HAVO and VWO.

5.8. Registration and/or tuition fees

Secondary education is free of charge apart from certain educational expenses, i.e. costs connected with schools and education, which are not prescribed by law or paid for by the government. These include:

- a voluntary parental contribution;
- supplementary learning materials (such as atlases and dictionaries);
- materials and tools;
- excursions and field trips organised by the school;
- travel costs (from home to school);
- other educational requirements.

The parental contribution is voluntary; a school may not reject a pupil because his or her parents refuse to pay or cannot pay the contribution. The parental contribution usually goes towards financing school festivities, cultural activities and supplementary learning materials.

Secondary education for pupils up to the age of 18 is free, apart from educational expenses. Learners in full-time adult or vocational education who are 18 years or older on 1 August have to pay course fees.

On reaching their 18th birthday, children may receive a basic allowance or study costs allowance from the government, but parents remain legally responsible for their child’s upkeep and educational expenses until the child’s 21st birthday.

5.9. Financial support for pupils

Financial aid for pupils is regulated in the Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS). As far as fees are concerned (see 5.8.), his Act applies to full-time pupils in secondary education and special education aged 18 or over but under 30 (VO 18+). As far as educational expenses are concerned (see 5.8.), the Act applies to full-time pupils below the age of 18 in secondary and secondary vocational education and full-time pupils between the ages of 18 and 30 in secondary education.
Under this Act, parents can apply for help with educational expenses and fees (see 5.8.). The allowance is dependent on income but is not subject to income tax and does not have to be repaid. The size of the allowance for educational expenses depends on the type and stage of education.

**Learning Plus and Newcomers (Secondary Education) Funding Scheme**

On 1 August 2006, a new scheme known as the Learning Plus and Newcomers (Secondary Education) Funding Scheme was introduced to fund compensatory policy in secondary education. In 2007, a supplementary funding scheme was introduced to help secondary schools bridge the period between the enrolment of immigrant newcomers and the receipt of regular funding. These schemes replace the Ethnic Minority Pupils Funding Scheme.

The schemes are made up of three parts.

- The first part redistributes the budget for compensatory policy. Schools will receive extra money if at least 30% of their pupils come from deprived neighbourhoods or areas. The aim is to provide more tailor-made solutions, improve pupils’ performance by promoting policy on learning Dutch and prevent drop out by strengthening the network around the school. Schools can decide for themselves how they will spend the money, though they have to consult with the municipal authorities on the matter at least once a year.

- The second part of the scheme provides funding to help schools cope with immigrant newcomers. Schools are given extra money for every pupil who has been in the Netherlands for less than two years and is an alien within the meaning of the Aliens Act (i.e. does not have Dutch nationality). Schools can decide for themselves how they organise teaching for these pupils, for example in separate classes.

The third part of the scheme helps schools bridge the period between the enrolment of newcomers and the receipt of regular funding. Schools can apply for a bridging grant based on their situation on the reference dates, 1 April and 1 October.

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**5.10. Age levels and grouping of pupils**

**5.10.1. Lower years**

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 3rd year to choose one of four fixed subject combinations. They are then regrouped in accordance with the choices made.

**5.10.2. Upper years**

At the end of the 3rd year of HAVO and VWO (and in some cases at the end of the 4th year of VWO), pupils choose one of four subject combinations (see 5.11.2.) and are regrouped accordingly.
5.11. Specialisation of studies

5.11.1. Lower years

There is no specialisation in the lower years of secondary school voortgezet onderwijs.

5.11.2. Upper years

VMBO

VMBO is not a vocational course as such but lays the basis for basic vocational training (level 2), professional or middle-management training (level 3) and specialised training (level 4) at MBO middelbaar beroepsonderwijs level. After two years, pupils specialise by opting for:

- basic vocational (BB)
- middle-management vocational (KB)
- combined (GL)
- theoretical (TL).

Each learning pathway offers programmes in four sectors: engineering and technology, care and welfare, business, and agriculture. The subjects taught in each sector are geared to the requirements of further vocational education beyond VMBO.

Within these sectors, pupils in the combined pathway or one of the two vocational learning pathways opt for one of a number of vocationally-oriented programmes. Pupils following the theoretical pathway, however, study only general subjects. Schools do not always offer all vocationally-oriented programmes. Some schools offer an intrasectoral programme made up of different vocational elements within one sector. Schools may also offer an intersectoral programme combining elements from different sectors.
Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Care and welfare</th>
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<th>Agriculture</th>
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<td>Clerical work</td>
<td>Agriculture and the natural environment</td>
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<td>Beauty care and hairdressing</td>
<td>Commerce and retailing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Electrical engineering</td>
<td>Fashion and clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motor mechanics</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fitting techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Printing technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrasectoral programmes</td>
<td>Construction (broad-based)</td>
<td>Care and welfare (broad-based)</td>
<td>Commerce and clerical work (broad-based)</td>
<td>Agriculture (broad-based)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metalworking / electrical engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fitting techniques / electrical engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering and technology (broad-based)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersectoral programmes</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering and technology in the combined programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intersectoral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport and public services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning pathway</th>
<th>Theoretical</th>
<th>Combined</th>
<th>Middle-management vocational</th>
<th>Basic vocational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leads on to</td>
<td>MBO professional training (level 3)</td>
<td>MBO professional training (level 3)</td>
<td>MBO professional training (level 3)</td>
<td>MBO basic vocational training (level 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MBO middle-management training (level 3)</td>
<td>MBO middle-management training (level 3)</td>
<td>MBO middle-management training (level 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MBO specialised training (level 4)</td>
<td>MBO specialised training (level 4)</td>
<td>MBO specialised training (level 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HAVO</td>
<td>HAVO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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).

**HAVO and VWO**

All pupils entering the 4th year (HAVO and VWO) or the 5th year (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 35% to 43% of the curriculum;
- a specialised component (consisting of subjects relating to the chosen subject combination), occupying 39% to 48% of the curriculum, and
- an optional component occupying 18% to 20% 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 upper years of secondary school 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).
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), in consultation with the participation council, 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. The total number of days on which no lessons are given may not exceed 68 per school year.

5.12.2. Weekly and daily timetable

The participation council advises the competent authority of the school (school board) on the school timetable and any changes to it. The competent authority also determines when the school day starts and ends, and how long lessons last, with the approval of the parent and pupil representatives on the participation council.

Table 5.3 Teaching hours in secondary education: statutory minimum norms (in real hours)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years 1 &amp; 2, VMBO, HAVO, VWO</th>
<th>1040</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 3, HAVO &amp; VWO</td>
<td>1040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3, VMBO</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4, HAVO</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 4 &amp; 5, VWO</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final year, VMBO (year 4)</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final year, HAVO (year 5)</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final year, VWO (year 6)</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical training (all years)</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools decide for themselves how these hours should be spread over the school year. There is no prescribed or advisory timetable, and no prescribed minimum for the number of teaching hours in each subject. Physical education is, however, an exception. The subject must be taught in every year, and there are norms as to how the lessons must be spread over the school year.

In the upper years of HAVO and VWO, the length of lessons and the length of the school day are also determined on the basis of study load. 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
The study load for the upper years of HAVO is 3,200 hours (spread over two years), while for VWO it is 4,800 hours (spread over three years).

The teaching hours requirements have been relaxed as of the 2007/2008 school year. Of the statutory 1,040 teaching hours, schools may elect to devote up to 40 hours to extracurricular activities (including customised activities such as mentoring classes and arts classes for talented pupils). These activities, which are no longer compulsory, are open to all pupils. Placements in non-profit or voluntary organisations also count as teaching hours (up to a maximum of 72 hours). Because the summer holidays are staggered, the school year in a given region may occasionally be shorter than normal, in which case, schools may subtract 27 hours from the statutory minimum norm.

5.13. Curriculum, subjects and number of hours

The attainment targets specify the standards of knowledge, understanding and skills pupils are required to attain in the lower years of secondary school. The Secondary Education Act (WVO) states, for the upper years of 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 study load table.

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 and the participation council 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 the school’s objectives, how it intends to achieve them and the results already 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.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science publishes an annual national guide to secondary education on its website. 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.

The Canon: a timeline of Dutch history

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has devised a timeline of Dutch history and culture, known as the Canon, made up of fifty icons. Its purpose is to facilitate learning about the past. The canon fits within existing attainment targets and is intended for the upper classes of primary school and the lower years of secondary school. It comes complete with illustrations and suggestions for use and will be reviewed every five years.
5.13.1. Curriculum in the lower years

The Secondary Education Act sets certain requirements of the curriculum, and contains provisions on time spent in school, deployment of staff and participation in decision-making. It leaves schools free to draft their own policies on other matters. At least two thirds of teaching hours in the lower years (1,425 real hours) must be spent on the 58 attainment targets. The school itself translates these targets into subjects, projects, areas of learning, and combinations of all three, or into competence-based teaching, for example. The rest of the curriculum is also subject to statutory requirements, which vary according to type of education. They include a second modern language (French, German, Spanish, Arabic or Turkish) in VMBO (in the theoretical, combined and middle-management vocational programmes), French and German in HAVO and VWO (or Spanish, Russian, Italian, Arabic or Turkish, Frisian in Friesland or Latin and Greek in a "gymnasium"), and the elements needed for an uninterrupted learning pathway or to enable the school to establish its special profile (e.g. its religious or philosophical character or an emphasis on sports).

Other requirements include:

- coherence and an uninterrupted learning pathway from primary to secondary school and from the lower to the upper years;
- enabling pupils finishing the second year of VMBO to choose from all the sectors available, and pupils finishing the 3rd year of HAVO and VWO to choose any of the subject combinations. This means that in HAVO and VWO the curriculum for the upper years cannot start until the 4th year. Of course, the basis can be laid in the 3rd year.

It is up to the schools themselves to group the attainment targets into subjects, projects, areas of learning and so on, to work them out in detail by type of education, to set standards, choose teaching aids and decide what should be taught in the 3rd year of HAVO/VWO. More freedom does however mean that schools have to account to the Inspectorate for their policies, and show that they have included all the attainment targets in their curriculum and that pupils enter the upper years properly prepared. They render account to the parents, pupils and staff in the school plan and the school prospectus.

**VMBO curriculum**

The Secondary Education Act (WVO) specifies the subjects to be studied by VMBO pupils during the four-year course. 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.

Each subject combination comprises a common component, an optional component, and a sector-specific component. The common component is compulsory for all pupils and comprises Dutch, English, social studies I, physical education and arts I.
Table 5.4 Subjects in the sector-specific component of the theoretical programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and technology</td>
<td>mathematics and physics &amp; chemistry I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and welfare</td>
<td>biology and one of mathematics, geography, history or social studies II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>economics and one of mathematics, French or German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>mathematics and either biology or physics &amp; chemistry I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depending on their learning pathway, pupils follow either one or two additional optional subjects:

- one major vocationally-oriented subject in the basic vocational and middle-management vocational programmes;
- one minor vocationally-oriented subject and one general subject in the combined programme;
- two general subjects in the theoretical programme.

Schools providing basic vocational programmes may 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 3rd and 4th 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. Different requirements apply for pupils in the lower years who will be going on to work-study programmes.

Since 1 September 2004, VMBO schools have been able to offer pupils in the 4th year of the basic vocational programme the opportunity to follow training to assistant level (MBO level 1), after which they may transfer to a programme at MBO level 2. This should ease the transition from VMBO to MBO, and encourage more pupils to follow further education and obtain a basic qualification.

Practical training curriculum

Practical training 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.

5.13.2. Curriculum in the upper years

In the upper years of HAVO and VWO, teaching is based on study load. 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. On 1 August 2007 an amendment to the Secondary Education Act entered into force, introducing more optional elements in the upper years of HAVO and VWO (see § 5.11.2). As of the 2007/2008 school year, all pupils entering the 4th year of HAVO and VWO will be following the revised curriculum (see 5.13.2.). Pupils who started their 4th year before the 2007/2008 school year still fall under the
old system, which will run side by side with the revised curriculum until 2011. The two systems differ mainly with regard to the subject combinations, the examination syllabus and the pass/fail criteria.

5.13.2.1. 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.

The total standard study load for the 4th and 5th years of HAVO combined in the revised curriculum is also divided into three components.

- The study load for the common component is 1,120 hours.
- The specialised component is made up of both compulsory and optional subjects which together have a study load of:
  - 1,400 to 1,480 hours for science and technology;
  - 1,360 to 1,480 hours for science and health;
  - 1,360 to 1,480 hours for economics and society;
  - 1,360 to 1,520 hours for culture and society.
- The study load for the general optional component is 600 hours for science and technology and 640 hours for the other subject combinations.

Finally, pupils also have to write a project (‘profielwerkstuk’) that has a study load of 80 hours, bringing the total study load for HAVO to 3,200 hours.

These hours are based on the time required by the average pupil. The study load per subject under both the old and the new systems is shown in the tables below.

In the revised curriculum for the upper years, the specialised component comprises compulsory specialised subjects and optional specialised subjects. Pupils choose their optional subjects from a range of subjects offered by the school.

- There are three compulsory specialised subjects and one optional specialised subject in each of the subject combinations ‘science and technology’, ‘science and health’ and ‘economics and society’.
- There are two compulsory specialised subjects, one optional specialised cultural subject and one optional specialised social subject in the subject combination ‘culture and society’.

Schools are not required to provide a full range of optional specialised subjects and may even choose to make certain subjects compulsory and not offer any optional subjects.

The general optional component consists of two parts: official exam subjects and a ‘free’ component of the school’s own choosing. The school is responsible for the content and study load of the ‘free’ component. It may even choose to make certain ‘free’ subjects compulsory if they reflect the school’s profile. While national examination syllabuses are not set for ‘free’ subjects, a ‘free’ subject may qualify as an official subject for the HAVO leaving examination if it has a study load of at least 320 hours and has been approved by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.
Table 5.5  Overview of subjects in the revised curriculum for the upper years of HAVO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common component</th>
<th>Science and technology (NT)</th>
<th>Science and health (NG)</th>
<th>Economics and society (EM)</th>
<th>Culture and society (CM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>Culture and the arts</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialised component – compulsory subjects</th>
<th>Mathematics B</th>
<th>Mathematics A (or B)¹</th>
<th>Mathematics A (or B)¹</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Modern language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialised component – optional subjects:</th>
<th>Science, life &amp; technology</th>
<th>Management and organisation</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Social sciences</th>
<th>Economics</th>
<th>Arts subject</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NT 1 of 4</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NG 1 of 3</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM 1 of 4</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM 1 S &amp; 1 C</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Biology                                    | 400                         | 400                         | 400       | 400             | 400       | 400         |         |
| Information technology                     | 400                         | 400                         | 400       | 400             | 400       | 400         |         |

| Project                                    | 80                          | 80                         | 80        | 80              | 80        | 80          |         |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Optional component</th>
<th>official exam subject</th>
<th>official exam subject</th>
<th>official exam subject</th>
<th>official exam subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘free’ component</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 3200  Total: 3200  Total: 3200  Total: 3200

¹ For mathematics B the study load is 360 hours.
Table 5.6 Common component (for all pupils)

The left-hand side of the table shows the study load per subject under the old curriculum that runs until 2011. The subjects and study loads on the right-hand side concern the revised curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>400 Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>360 English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modern language</td>
<td>160 social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general science</td>
<td>160 physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social studies</td>
<td>160 culture and the arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture and the arts 1</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical education 1</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STUDY LOAD</td>
<td>1480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7 Science and technology: compulsory specialised subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mathematics B1&amp;2</td>
<td>440 mathematics B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physics 1&amp;2</td>
<td>440 physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chemistry</td>
<td>280 chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STUDY LOAD</td>
<td>1160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8 Science and health: compulsory specialised subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mathematics B1</td>
<td>320 mathematics A or B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physics 1</td>
<td>240 biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chemistry</td>
<td>280 chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biology</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STUDY LOAD</td>
<td>1160 (1160)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.9 Economics and society: compulsory specialised subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>economics 1&amp;2</td>
<td>440 mathematics AB or B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mathematics A1&amp;2</td>
<td>280 economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history</td>
<td>240 history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geography</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STUDY LOAD</td>
<td>1160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.10 Culture and society: compulsory specialised subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>modern language 2</td>
<td>history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture and the arts 2&amp;3</td>
<td>modern language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mathematics A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STUDY LOAD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.11 Optional component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under the old curriculum, until 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one exam subject or half-subject to be chosen from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the range of specialised subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management and organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical education 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modern language 1 (half-subject)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'free' component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pupils taking ‘science and technology’ have a ‘free’ component of 280 hours. Pupils taking the other three subject combinations have a ‘free’ component of 320 hours. All pupils also take one optional exam subject (320 hours) as part of the general optional component.

Zakboek Tweede Fase. Tweede Fase Oude Regeling en Vernieuwde Tweede Fase

5.13.2.2. VWO curriculum

Under the old system, 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.

The total standard study load for the 4th, 5th and 6th years of VWO combined in the revised curriculum is also divided into three components.

- The study load for the common component is 1,920 hours.
- The specialised component is made up of both compulsory and optional subjects which together have a study load of:
  - 1,960 to 2,000 hours for science and technology;
  - 1,880 to 2,000 hours for science and health;
  - 1,880 to 2,000 hours for economics and society;
  - 1,880 to 2,160 hours for culture and society.
The study load for the general optional component is 840 hours for science and technology and 920 hours for the other subject combinations.

Finally, pupils also have to write a project (‘profielwerkstuk’) that has a study load of 80 hours, bringing the total study load for VWO to 4,800 hours.

These hours are based on the time required by the average pupil. The study load per subject is shown below.

Table 5.12 Overview of subjects in the revised curriculum for the upper years of VWO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common component</th>
<th>Science and technology (NT)</th>
<th>Science and health (NG)</th>
<th>Economics and society (EM)</th>
<th>Culture and society (CM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Atheneum'</td>
<td>Dutch 480</td>
<td>Dutch 480</td>
<td>Dutch 480</td>
<td>Dutch 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English 400</td>
<td>English 400</td>
<td>English 400</td>
<td>English 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd modern lang. 480</td>
<td>2nd modern lang. 480</td>
<td>2nd modern lang. 480</td>
<td>2nd modern lang. 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social studies 120</td>
<td>Social studies 120</td>
<td>Social studies 120</td>
<td>Social studies 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical education 160</td>
<td>Physical education 160</td>
<td>Physical education 160</td>
<td>Physical education 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture &amp; the arts 160</td>
<td>Culture &amp; the arts</td>
<td>Culture &amp; the arts</td>
<td>Culture &amp; the arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(or classical culture)</td>
<td>(or classical culture)</td>
<td>(or classical culture)</td>
<td>(or classical culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Gymnasium'</td>
<td>General science 120</td>
<td>General science 120</td>
<td>General science 120</td>
<td>General science 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised component – compulsory subjects</td>
<td>Mathematics B 600</td>
<td>Mathematics A (or B) 520</td>
<td>Mathematics A (or B) 520</td>
<td>Mathematics C (or A or B) 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics 480</td>
<td>Biology 480</td>
<td>History 440</td>
<td>History 480</td>
<td>History 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry 440</td>
<td></td>
<td>Economics 480</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT 1 of 4</td>
<td>Mathematics D 440</td>
<td>Information technology 440</td>
<td>Social sciences 440</td>
<td>Social sciences 440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science, life &amp; technology 440</td>
<td>Mathemtaics D 440</td>
<td>Information technology 440</td>
<td>Social sciences 440</td>
<td>Social sciences 440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics 480</td>
<td>Science, life &amp; technology 440</td>
<td>Management and organisation 440</td>
<td>Geography 440</td>
<td>Geography 440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology 440</td>
<td>Geography 440</td>
<td>Social sciences 440</td>
<td>Philosophy 480</td>
<td>Philosophy 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology 480</td>
<td>Modern language 480</td>
<td>Modern language 480</td>
<td>Modern language 480</td>
<td>Modern language 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project 80</td>
<td>project 80</td>
<td>project 80</td>
<td>project 80</td>
<td>project 80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 For mathematics B, the study load is 600 hours.
2 For mathematics A, the study load is 520 hours. For mathematics B, the study load is 600 hours.
### Table 5.13 Common component (for all pupils)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch language and literature</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language and literature</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch language and literature 1</td>
<td>second modern language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German language and literature 1</td>
<td>social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general science</td>
<td>physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social studies</td>
<td>culture and the arts or classical culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history</td>
<td>general science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture and the arts 1</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical education 1</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STUDY LOAD</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5.14 Science and technology: compulsory specialised subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mathematics B1&amp;2</td>
<td>mathematics B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physics 1&amp;2</td>
<td>physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chemistry 1&amp;2</td>
<td>chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
<td>project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STUDY LOAD</td>
<td>1840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5.15 Science and health: compulsory specialised subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mathematics B1</td>
<td>mathematics A or B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physics 1</td>
<td>biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chemistry 1</td>
<td>chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biology 1&amp;2</td>
<td>project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL STUDY LOAD</td>
<td>1840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.16 Economics and society: compulsory specialised subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>economics 1&amp;2</td>
<td>mathematics A or B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mathematics A1&amp;2</td>
<td>economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history</td>
<td>history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geography</td>
<td>project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
<td>project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL STUDY LOAD 1840 1520 (1600)

Table 5.17 Culture and society: compulsory specialised subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects under the old curriculum until 2011</th>
<th>Subjects as of 1 August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>modern language 2</td>
<td>mathematics C (or A/B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>philosophy or modern language 2</td>
<td>history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture and the arts 2&amp;3</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mathematics A1</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project</td>
<td>project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL STUDY LOAD 1840 1040 (1080/1160)

Table 5.18 Optional component for all VWO subject combinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under the old curriculum until 2011: one exam subject or half-subject to be chosen from: the range of specialised subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biology 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economics 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social studies 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management and organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical education 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classical culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘free’ component</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL STUDY LOAD 1000

Classical culture is part of the core curriculum at ‘gymnasium’ and replaces the half-subject culture and the arts 1. ‘Gymnasium’ pupils may, however, take culture and the arts 1 as part of the general 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 in the old curriculum and 600 hours in the revised study curriculum.
Pupils taking ‘science & technology’ have a ‘free’ component of 400 hours. Pupils taking the other three subject combinations have a ‘free’ component of 480 hours. All pupils also take one optional exam subject (440 hours) as part of the general optional component.

Zakboek Tweede Fase. Tweede Fase Oude Regeling en Vernieuwde Tweede Fase

5.14. Teaching methods and materials

There are no detailed regulations with regard to the curriculum (content, teaching methods and materials). Some schools organise their teaching according to a particular educational theory. These include Montessori, Dalton and Jena Plan schools, which may be public-authority or private. 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 (see 5.2.). 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).

The approach to teaching in the upper years of secondary school ("het studiehuis") is geared to encouraging active learning through independent study.

Over the last few years, the number of schools making intensive use of computers has grown steadily. More than half of them have set down their views on the use of ICT in an ICT policy plan, which they are also implementing. Fifty-eight per cent of teachers regularly use computers as teaching aids (on average three to four hours a week). ICT has many applications in the classroom and none predominates. Many schools have a media library and computer rooms, where groups of pupils can work at terminals. Over the last ten years, the number of teachers using computers has increased by less than 3% per year, on average. At this rate, it will take another 10 to 15 years before all teachers have adopted ICT teaching aids. There is an average of one computer for every six pupils. This figure has not changed greatly over the last few years. Sixty per cent of secondary schools have an electronic blackboard.

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;
- the Niedersachsisch, Limburger, Yiddish and Romany languages may be used as a language of instruction alongside Dutch (see 1.4.).

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 in the lower years. Schools monitor pupil's progress by means of regular testing.
Interim assessment may also take place where subjects are not taught throughout the lower years. 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.

At the end of the second year, the 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.

At most schools, parents receive three to four progress reports per year. Some schools also give six-weekly interim reports on pupils’ progress. Report card marks are based on numerous data about a pupil’s performance. While each school has its own assessment system, report card marks generally reflect a pupil’s combined performance on:

- written and oral tests to check that homework has been done;
- written tests;
- projects.

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. At the end of the second year, the school will advise pupils about the type of education that would be most appropriate for them: VMBO, HAVO or VWO.

5.16.1. Lower years

Pupils may take as long as they need to complete the lower years of secondary school.

5.16.2. Upper years

Pupils who have successfully completed the VMBO theoretical programme may transfer to the 4th year of HAVO and pupils who have successfully completed HAVO may transfer to the 5th year of VWO.

5.17. Certification

The leaving examination is in two parts: a school examination [schoolexamen](#) and a national examination [centraal examen](#). The elements to be tested in each are specified in the examination syllabus, which is approved by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The syllabus also specifies the number of tests which make up the national examination, and their length. Schools are responsible for setting the school exam. Every year, schools are required to submit their own school exam syllabus to the Inspectorate showing what elements of the syllabus are tested when, and how marks are calculated, including the weight allocated to tests, and opportunities to resit them.

Generally speaking, the school exam consists of two or more tests per subject. These may be oral, practical or written. There are also practical assignments for which no marks are given, only an acknowledgement that the candidate has completed them properly. The school exam must be completed and the results submitted to the Inspectorate before the national examination starts. The national examination consists of tests with
open or multiple-choice questions and in some cases a practical component too. For some subjects there is only a school exam.

The national examination can be sat at three times during the school year – in May, June and August. All candidates sit the examination in May. The June and August sessions are for pupils doing resits, or who were unable to sit the examination in May. The head teacher is responsible for determining each candidate’s final marks. The final mark in each subject is the average of the mark for the school exam and the mark for the national examination. To obtain a leaving certificate, a candidate must have scored pass marks in a specified number of subjects (see below). For subjects with only a school exam, the mark obtained is the final mark (rounded off).

Marks are awarded on a scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent). A six is a pass. Candidates with a final mark of six or higher in every subject have of course passed their school-leaving examination, but they can still be awarded an overall pass mark even if they get a lower mark in some subjects (see below). Successful candidates receive a certificate and a transcript listing the marks scored in the school exam, the marks scored in the national examination, the final marks for each subject and the outcome of the school-leaving examination. Candidates who fail the examination after doing resits may decide to repeat the final year, go to an institute for adult secondary general education, or study for the state examination instead.

In the future, pupils taking the national examination will have to demonstrate a basic level of computer competence. To this end, schools may set a digital exam instead of a paper exam in one subject in each subject combination for HAVO and VWO pupils, or one subject in each sector of the VMBO combined programme. The optional digital exams will be available to schools in their current form until 2010.

Early examinations

Schools may decide to allow pupils in their penultimate school year to take the national exam in one or more of their final exam subjects. HAVO pupils may do one or more subjects at VWO level and VMBO pupils may do some subjects at a higher level too, either from a follow-up programme or at HAVO or VWO level.

5.17.1. VMBO

Dutch, English, social studies, physical education and two subjects relating to their sector are compulsory for all VMBO pupils following a learning pathway. In addition, depending on their learning pathway, they have to choose two more subjects (theoretical pathway), a vocationally-oriented programme (basic vocational or middle-management vocational pathway) or one subject and one vocationally-oriented programme (combined pathway). The school exam in the theoretical and combined programmes includes a practical project on a topic relating to the chosen sector.

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 of written exams and combined written and practical exams.

- All pupils take a written exam in general subjects like Dutch, maths and biology.
- Pupils in the basic vocational, middle-management vocational and combined learning pathways also take a national written and practical examination (CSPE) for vocationally-oriented subjects like building techniques and caring occupations. The CSPE consists of a practical assignment and related theoretical questions.
The final mark in each subject 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 final mark and the mark in the national examination as 1/3;
- for the other learning pathways, each counts as half.

Not all subjects are marked numerically:

- physical education and arts 1 in the common component, and the sector-related project, are marked as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘good’;
- the mark obtained in the school examination for social studies counts in its entirety towards the final results.

In the basic vocational programme and middle-management vocational programme, the final mark for the specialisation subject or intrasectoral programme counts twice. Candidates may have one five, provided their other marks are six or higher. They may have no more than one four or two fives, provided all the other marks are six or higher, and there is at least one seven or higher among them.

Pupils who satisfy these requirements receive a VMBO certificate that specifies the learning pathway followed. Pupils who followed a combined work and study programme receive a VMBO certificate for the basic vocational/work-study pathway. Pupils who trained to assistant level receive a level 1 MBO certificate. Pupils leaving a school for practical training receive a certificate of attendance.

5.17.2. HAVO and VWO

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 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 4th 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 mark in up to two subjects (either two fives or one four and one five is acceptable). Pupils who get a mark of 3 or lower in any of their subjects have failed. In addition, pupils must have no more than one 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 marks 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 covered 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;
- 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 5th year of VWO or go on to secondary vocational courses.

**Examination syllabus for the revised curriculum**

A revised curriculum was launched on 1 August 2007 for all pupils entering the 4th year of HAVO and VWO. The first national exams under the new system will be held in 2008/2009 for HAVO and in 2009/2010 for VWO.

The National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) has published examination guidelines listing the elements to be assessed in school examinations. The guidelines are not compulsory, in contrast with national examination syllabuses.

The examination syllabuses for history, geography and social studies have been completely overhauled while few if any changes have been made to the remaining syllabuses. The old and new systems do, however, differ fundamentally for all subjects as regards the descriptions contained in the examination syllabuses. There are other differences, too.

- The syllabuses have become shorter and less detailed.
- Under the revised curriculum, the national examination no longer covers the entire syllabus. This applies to nearly all subjects.
- Schools can add their own elements to those described in the syllabus.
- The new syllabuses no longer prescribe how elements must be tested or how they must be weighed.
- Some examination syllabuses have been partly or completely revised. There are new examination syllabuses for history, geography, social studies, and science, life and technology and the maths syllabuses have been radically rearranged.
5.18. Educational/vocational guidance and education/employment links

It is the government’s aim that every school-leaver entering the labour market possesses at least the minimum qualifications for entry to a profession. HAVO provides a general education and is intended 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.

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. The four learning pathways were introduced in VMBO in an attempt to facilitate the transition to MBO (see 5.11.1.). Given the continuing shortage of skilled personnel on the labour market (see 5.5.), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is working with the vocational education sector on measures to make it easier for students to move up through VMBO and MBO to higher professional education (HBO).

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. This means that both public and private schools are funded by the government (see chapter 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. Within the parameters laid down by the government, the legal person is free to start a school of any denomination or educational character and to organise teaching as it sees fit.

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. The majority are denominational schools. Most of these are Roman Catholic or Protestant, but there are also Muslim, Hindu and Jewish schools, among others. There are also non-denominational private schools. The Steiner schools combine their own particular view of humankind with a special approach to education.

5.20. Organisational variations and alternative structures

The Compulsory Education Act 1969 provides that all school-age children must attend a school as defined by the Act. Only very few children attend schools that are not funded by the government. There are three types of non-government funded schools which children can attend:

- non-funded schools approved as examination institutions;
- international or foreign schools exclusively intended for pupils who do not have Dutch nationality;
- private-sector schools categorised by the school attendance officer as ‘a school within the meaning of section 1, subsection b (3) of the Compulsory Education Act’. 
5.21. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from Key Figures 2004-2008 Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands.

5.21.1. Pupils

Table 5.19 Number of pupils (x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (mainstream secondary)</td>
<td>905.9</td>
<td>905.6</td>
<td>900.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (mainstream, excl. special needs)</td>
<td>793.8</td>
<td>792.1</td>
<td>788.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 secondary</td>
<td>160.8</td>
<td>158.5</td>
<td>158.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 secondary</td>
<td>162.7</td>
<td>162.0</td>
<td>160.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO basic vocational programme year 3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO basic vocational programme year 4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO middle-man. vocational programme year 3</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO middle-man. vocational programme year 4</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO theoretical programme year 3</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO theoretical programme year 4</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO combined programme year 3</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO combined programme year 4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO year 3</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO year 4</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO year 5</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO year 3</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO year 4</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO year 5</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO year 6</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.20 Number of pupils (x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (mainstream secondary with special needs)</td>
<td>112.1</td>
<td>113.5</td>
<td>111.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support year 1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support year 2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support/basic voc. programme year 3</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support/basic voc. programme year 4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject combination</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support/middle-management vocational programme year 3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support/middle-management vocational programme year 4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support/combined programme year 3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support/combined programme year 4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support/theoretical programme year 3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning support/theoretical programme year 4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practical training year 1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical training remaining years</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.21 Number of pupils by subject combination in the 5th year of HAVO (x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject combination</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science &amp; technology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science &amp; health</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics &amp; society</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture &amp; society</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined s&amp;t /s&amp;h</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined e&amp;s/c&amp;s</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.22 Number of pupils by subject combination in the 6th year of VWO (x 1000)
## Table 5.23 Number of pupils repeating a year (x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education: total</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO (learning support)</td>
<td>1,2,3,4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO (basic, middle-management, combined programmes &amp; theoretical programme)</td>
<td>3,4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO</td>
<td>4,5,6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table 5.24 Early school-leavers from full-time education (x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New early school-leavers</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table 5.25 Number of secondary schools and percentage distribution of pupils by type of school (schools x 1, pupils x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>schools</td>
<td>pupils</td>
<td>schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education: total</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Percentage distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical training</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBO/practical training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVO (one type only)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVO (combined school)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow-based AVO/VBO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow-based AVO/VBO + practical training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad-based AVO/VBO</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad-based AVO/VBO + practical training</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertically combined schools</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AVO: general secondary education

VBO: pre-vocational education

### 5.26 Staff numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff numbers in FTEs (x 1000)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.27 Percentage of women staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female staff (based on FTEs)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.28 Percentage of staff aged 50+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage aged 50+</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Figures 2004-2008, Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands
6. Tertiary education

Organisation of the education system in the Netherlands, 2008/09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>ISCED Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
<td>ISCED 0</td>
<td>(for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>ISCED 1</td>
<td>(including pre-vocational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary general</td>
<td>ISCED 2</td>
<td>(including pre-vocational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary general</td>
<td>ISCED 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary non-tertiary</td>
<td>ISCED 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>ISCED 5A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>ISCED 5B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eurydice.

Dutch higher education **hoger onderwijs** comprises higher professional education (HBO **beroepsonderwijs** middelbaar beroepsonderwijs) and university education (WO wetenschappelijk onderwijs). 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). As part of a pilot scheme launched in the 2006/2007 academic year, the WHW now also covers associate degrees.

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. Since 1993, university education has been governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW).

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 (see 6.18.3.). 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.

6.1.4. Higher education and the EU: the Bologna Process

In 1999, the European Union ministers of education signed the Bologna Declaration. The Bologna Process was set up with a view to harmonising national education systems in the Member States and creating a single European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. Basically, higher education in all the countries is to consist of two cycles of study: undergraduate (bachelor) and postgraduate (master). All the Member States are committed to making their higher education degrees compatible. However, despite efforts towards harmonisation, it is still necessary to have foreign degrees evaluated. In the Netherlands, the Bologna Process has led to the introduction of the bachelor-master system (see 6.5.), the accreditation system (see 6.10.) and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) (see 6.9.). The Bologna ministerial meeting is held every two years. The next ministerial meeting will be held in Budapest and Vienna in 2010.

6.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

Higher pass rates

The drop-out rate in higher education needs to be reduced. Students should receive an education that draws on their full potential, so policy focuses on creating an ambitious learning culture that will help them
improve their performance. To make this possible, the government has earmarked extra funding, which will be spent on improving course information for prospective students, strengthening career advice and coaching, promoting closer collaboration within vocational and higher professional education, and improving the intake in higher education by interviewing prospective students before they choose their course of study. Agreements have also been made with higher education institutions in the five largest Dutch cities on helping immigrant students to pass their courses, for instance by providing better coaching.

**Improving the quality of higher education**

The Sirius programme is designed to improve the quality of higher education. Its aim is to increase knowledge and generate understanding of ways of improving success rates and promoting excellence, and to identify current obstacles. The aim is to develop the full potential of the most gifted students, who comprise an estimated 10-15% of the student population. The Sirius Programme applies across the whole spectrum of higher education.

**A fully-fledged bachelor-master system**

As from the 2010/2011 academic year students will not be allowed to embark on a master’s degree programme until they have completed their bachelor’s degree. The aim is to make the bachelor-master system more effective, increase student mobility and ensure that the decision to move on to a master’s degree is a meaningful choice on the part of the student. An evaluation commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science shows that there is currently too much overlap between certain bachelor’s and master’s courses. Approximately 80 per cent of students automatically opt for the master’s degree programme that follows on from their bachelor course. Universities will:

- have to stagger the starting times of master’s degree courses;
- have to create more transparent admission requirements for master’s degree courses;
- be allowed to offer master’s degree courses lasting 18 months, if these are part of a joint degree programme run with international partner institutions. Statutory provisions will soon be introduced enabling joint degrees. The aim is to promote internationalisation.

**A simpler system of accreditation**

A bill is currently before parliament which aims to simplify accreditation in higher education. Universities and HBO institutions will have less red tape to cope with, and more attention will be devoted to the content of courses. All courses will continue to be evaluated but issues which affect all the departments within an institution (such as human resources policy or student facilities) will be assessed at institutional level. Discrepancies in quality will become visible. The amendments to the system should be operational by 1 January 2010.

**Academic titles**

A new academic title has been introduced to supplement those currently in use in HBO. In future, HBO graduates will be able to choose: they may use the degree titles currently conferred by their institution or instead, the title ‘Bachelor/Master of Applied Arts/Applied Sciences’.

People who have already graduated with a bachelor’s or master’s degree from an HBO institution may also supplement their title with ‘of Applied Arts/Applied Sciences’.
Holdes of HBO degrees who graduated before the introduction of the bachelor-master system in 2002 and used the title ‘ing.’ may now use the title ‘Bachelor of Applied Sciences’. Graduates who put ‘bc.’ after their name may now use the title ‘Bachelor of Applied Arts.’

**Relationship with the labour market**

To encourage entrepreneurship among pupils and students, the government wants to promote and strengthen collaboration between schools and the business community. The idea is for pupils and students to learn more about entrepreneurship and after completing their course, to start their own business. Enterprise may be offered as a separate subject within the curriculum, or may also be incorporated within other subjects. Grants for enterprise in education will be open to primary and secondary schools, schools for secondary vocational education, teacher training colleges, centres of expertise, entrepreneurs and third parties such as the Chamber of Commerce. The grants will enable schools to network with the business community on a regional or sectoral basis, facilitating exchanges of knowledge and enabling enterprise to become embedded in education.

**Opening up the system**

Plans are under way to allow privately-funded institutions to fund training courses temporarily from government grants. Small-scale experiments involving an open system were conducted in the 2007/2008 academic year and will continue to the end of 2009/2010.

**6.3. Specific legislative framework**

The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) came into force in 1993. It provided a single statutory framework for university education wetenschappelijk onderwijs, higher professional education hoger beroepsonderwijs and the Open University open universiteit, which had previously been governed by the University Education Act (WWO), the Higher Professional Education Act (WHBO) and the Open University Act (WOU) 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.

At the beginning of 2009 a bill was presented to parliament amending the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). The amendments are designed to improve the quality of higher education and the position of students and professionals. Among other things, they will address the legal protection of students, student participation, simpler administrative processes for enrolment and de-registration, a clear separation between governing and supervisory bodies and the role of the examining boards. The Bill will also enable joint degrees to be awarded.
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 institutions of higher professional education ("hogescholen") and universities, the Open University of the Netherlands and the teaching hospitals. The Implementation Decree contains certain detailed regulations, for instance on the organisation of the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes and financial assistance to students (other than student finance).

The coalition agreement of 2007 states that after consultations with the education sector, a new integrated bill will be introduced in the near future on the funding and management of higher education and research. The bill will devote attention in particular to improving the quality and position of vulnerable courses. It will also include uniform, simple and enforceable funding rules that prevent inappropriate forms of funding and do justice to the position of students. The bill will be further elaborated after dialogue with the higher education umbrella organisations and with students' organisations. The Implementation Decree for this new funding model will be presented to parliament no later than the end of December 2009.

**CROHO**

The Information Management Group (IBG) keeps records of all programmes of study run by government-funded and approved universities and higher professional education institutions, and post-initial master's degree courses run by legal persons with full legal competence as specified in section 1.12a of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). The data are published as a systematically arranged collection in the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO). To be registered, new study programmes must be accredited (see 6.10.) by the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). Government-funded initial programmes must also fulfil efficiency criteria set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science or, in the case of agricultural and environmental studies, by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Under the provisions of the Higher Education and Research Act, institutions of higher education may register programmes in the CROHO. Registration in the system is a condition for:

- government funding of individual courses;
- determining eligibility for student finance;
- awarding degrees.

Section 6.13., subsections 4 and 5 of the Higher Education and Research Act summarises which data from initial and post-initial programmes have to be published in the CROHO.

There is a separate category of 'legal entities providing higher education' which do not receive government funding for courses entered in the register but are entitled by law to award certificates and degrees. Full-time and dual-course students at these approved institutions are eligible for student support. The 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. The funding for universities and HBOs is based on these enrolment details.
6.4. General objectives

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

The Open University of the Netherlands (OUNL) is responsible for providing initial courses at university and higher professional level and contributing to innovation in higher education. Courses are provided though the medium of distance education.

Strategic agenda for higher education, research and science

The strategic agenda for higher education, research and science policy was published in November 2007. It was drawn up after close consultations with HBO institutions, universities, research institutes and students. The plan envisages an ambitious learning culture and an excellent research climate, which will create better education for students and researchers. Reducing drop-out among students in higher education is an integral part of an ambitious learning culture. A new funding model for higher education will enhance quality and diversity in the courses on offer. The government also wishes to bring the training of researchers more into line with the American model (graduate schools).

Het Hoogste Goed: Strategische Agenda voor het hoger onderwijs-, onderzoek -en wetenschapsbeleid

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 provide higher professional education and may conduct research that is related to the programmes they provide (applied research). They have the following tasks:

● to provide bachelor’s degree programmes;
● to provide master’s degree programmes under certain conditions;
● to transfer knowledge for the benefit of the community;
● to contribute to the development of those occupations to which their teaching is geared;
● to devote attention to students’ personal development and foster their sense of social responsibility;
● within the framework of their responsibilities in the field of education, to train Dutch students to improve their communicative proficiency in Dutch.

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. Universities have the following tasks:

● to provide initial courses in higher education (i.e. bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes);
● to carry out research;
● to train researchers and design engineers;
● to transfer knowledge for the benefit of the community;
● to devote attention to student’s personal development and foster their sense of social responsibility;
● within the framework of their responsibilities in the field of education, to train Dutch students to improve their communicative proficiency in Dutch.
University education includes both the study of academic disciplines and specialised training for certain occupations.

6.5. Types of institution

Higher education in the Netherlands is provided by three types of institution.

- Government-funded institutions receive funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science or the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, and charge their students government-approved fees. There are 36 higher professional education institutions and 14 universities, including the Open University.
- 'Legal entities providing higher education' are covered by the terms of the Higher Education and Research Act but are not funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. They are free to decide on their own fees and admissions policy, although students must be in possession of a HAVO, MBO or VWO certificate. Students at these institutions are eligible for student support. Like government-funded institutions, legal entities providing higher education award bachelor’s and/or master’s degrees for courses that are accredited. A small number of these institutions (primarily for faith-based higher education) do receive funding. Many of the provisions of the Higher Education and Research Act do not apply to legal entities providing higher education.
- Private-sector institutions are not covered by the Higher Education and Research Act. They include foreign universities and business schools to which Dutch government regulations do not apply.

6.5.1. Higher professional education

Higher professional education is provided at "hogeschoolen" (institutions of higher professional education) and is for students aged around 17 and over. HBO institutions generally offer courses in several different fields.

The average size of HBO institutions is constantly increasing as a result not only of mergers but also of rising student numbers. There are 36 government-funded higher professional education institutions. In addition, there are about 60 legal entities providing higher professional education. They fall under the Higher Education and Research Act but do not receive funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (see 6.2., CROHO).

In addition to the range of initial courses of higher professional education, there are also a small number of advanced courses, most of which have been upgraded to master’s degree courses. These include art courses, courses in architecture, and teacher training courses in special education (see also 10.5.3.) or leading to a grade 1 qualification in general subjects (see 6.18.1.). These are open to students who have already completed a higher education programme.

6.5.2. University education

Degree courses are provided at 14 universities, including the Open University (see 6.18.3.). Three universities – the universities of technology 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 6.2., CROHO), including six offering theological courses, one offering a degree course in humanism, and Nyenrode Business University.
6.6. Admission requirements

HBO institutions and universities have 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.

The selection procedure for places at universities and HBO institutions is as follows:

- Prospective students with an average grade of 8 or higher in their school-leaving examination are automatically awarded a place on the course of their choice.
- Those not entitled to direct admission are allocated places by means of a weighted draw. The higher a prospective student’s average school-leaving examination grade, the higher their chances of gaining admission via the draw. Applicants may take part in no more than three draws.
- Decentralised selection: places may be awarded by the educational institutions themselves. They may apply their own selection criteria, provided these are not linked to school-leaving examination results. Decentralised selection is optional, and if institutions decide not to opt for it, the draw system automatically applies instead. Currently, the number of places to be allocated under decentralised selection may not exceed 50% of the total available places, minus the number of students with a grade 8 or higher, who have been directly awarded places. There are plans to expand this to 100%, minus the number of directly awarded places.
- 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 (such as university courses in medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and life sciences, or HBO courses in journalism and physiotherapy).

There are two types of numerus fixus:

- a national quota, when the joint capacity of all the institutions providing a particular course is insufficient for the number of students wishing to enrol on that course. When applying, students may rank the institutions in order of preference. The national quota only applies to university education;
- an institution quota, when there is sufficient capacity within the sector as a whole but insufficient places at one or more individual institutions. The institution quota applies to universities and HBO institutions.

**Online application and registration**

All applications to first-year courses are filed online through Studielink, a common instrument for higher education, which links up all institutional administrations with the Information Management Group (IBG), thus enabling them to exchange information. In concrete terms, this means that students have a one-stop shop on the internet for all application and registration procedures, including change of address. Studielink also helps to ensure that the requirements for better-quality information do not cause more administrative problems for students and institutions.

**Special entrance examination**

Applicants who wish to be admitted to higher education and are over 18 or do not have the required school-leaving certificates may study at the Open University, which has no formal entry requirements. Alternatively, prospective higher education students may be admitted to higher education after passing a special entrance examination ("colloquium doctum") which tests their knowledge at the appropriate level. 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 special entrance examination.

Subject combinations

Secondary school pupils voortgezet onderwijs choose one of four subject combinations for their school-leaving examination (see 5.11.2.). Entry to most higher education courses is on the basis of specific subject combinations but candidates who do not meet this requirement may still be admitted on the strength of certain optional subjects studied at school. Applicants who obtained their school-leaving certificate before the subject combinations were introduced may be assessed by the institution in question prior to admission to determine whether they satisfy equivalent requirements.

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 middenkaderopleiding or specialist training specialistenopleiding certificate at secondary vocational education (MBO) level;
- a pre-university education (VWO) certificate.

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 addition to educational requirements, institutions may impose supplementary requirements relating to the profession for which the course trains students or to the course itself. For instance, applicants for courses in dance or sport and movement must have the skills specified by the institution in question. 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.

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.

6.7. Tuition fees

Students in higher education pay tuition fees to the institution. As long as they are under 30 years old on the date when the academic year begins, they are charged the statutory rate for tuition fees. The annual statutory tuition fees for all full-time courses during the 2008/2009 academic year are €1,565, providing the courses are accredited. Fees will increase to €1,620 in 2009/2010, irrespective of the type of full-time course. 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.
HBO master’s degrees

After gaining some experience on the job market, many students opt for master’s degree programmes at HBO institutions. These are not government funded. Institutions set their own fees, which vary from €5,000 to €15,000. Students attending these courses may still be entitled to financial support if they did not use up their full entitlement completing their bachelor’s degree, and providing the master’s programme is accredited.

6.8. Financial support for students

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science guarantees the accessibility of higher education and the government is responsible for financial support for students.

The Student Finance Act 2000 (for developments, see 6.2.) 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 financial assistance. Under the current system, financial assistance consists of an allowance towards expenses such as living costs, books and study materials, tuition fees and travel. Grants are intended as a means of keeping higher education broadly accessible and are paid monthly.

Financial assistance may include a basic grant, a supplementary grant and an interest-bearing loan. Students in higher education receive a performance-related grant. The basic grant and supplementary grant are initially paid out in the form of a loan. Students receive financial assistance for the duration of their course and a loan period of 36 months after the course ends. Provided the student graduates within ten years, the loan is converted into a non-repayable grant. The performance-related grant can be supplemented by an additional loan.

The performance-related grant is a loan and becomes non-repayable when the student obtains a master’s degree. Students who do not wish to pursue master’s degree studies may opt to have the loan made non-repayable after obtaining their bachelor’s degree. This ends their entitlement to financial support for master’s degree studies. Graduates who have not used up their full entitlement to financial assistance may use it later on in their careers for post-initial studies.

The basic grant is non-income-related. The size of the grant depends on the type of education (higher education or vocational training) and on whether or not the student is living away from home. Depending on their parents’ income, students may be able to claim a supplementary grant in addition to the basic grant. The interest-bearing loan that students may take out is subject to a ceiling and is not related to parental income. Students with children and/or a partner may qualify for a single parent allowance or an allowance for their partner.

Student finance is officially split into tuition fees and other costs. Since 1 September 2007, students have been eligible for a separate loan to cover tuition fees, due to amendments to the Student Finance Act 2000 (WSF 2000). Tuition fee loans can be used for the nominal duration of the course plus three years. Students can borrow up to a twelfth of the total fees, per month.

Loans must be repaid. This may be done from two years after completion of the course of study, for a maximum of 15 years. After 15 years, any remaining debt will be cancelled. In the case of low-income earners, the instalments are reduced accordingly.
All students eligible for financial aid are entitled to a public transport pass giving unrestricted free travel on public transport throughout the Netherlands. Students may opt for a weekday pass or a pass for weekends and public holidays, which entitles them to free travel on the days in question.

Students are allowed to earn a gross income of €13,215.83 (2009) from employment without their grant being affected. However, if their income exceeds this amount, they will be sent a claim by the IB Group. The first part of the claim is for the sum earned above the permitted maximum, up to the full basic grant received by the student and including the supplementary grant, if applicable. The second part of the claim relates to the student’s public transport pass, and is charged at a rate of €80 a month for every month that the student has been a pass-holder. Students can forestall an IB claim by arranging not to receive financial support for the year in question. The arrangement may also apply retrospectively. In practice, the IB claim is not normally sent until several years after the student’s income has exceeded the permitted level, since the earnings have to be checked against complete income records.

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).

From 1 September 2007, students from a member state of the European Economic Area studying in the Netherlands and following an accredited course and meeting the other requirements laid down in the Student Finance Act 2000 have been eligible for tuition fee loans of up to the amount of the annual tuition fees. EEA students who enrolled before 1 September (academic year 2006/2007) and who received an allowance equivalent to the basic grant for students living at home (but not a public transport pass) come under the Raulin Scheme and will continue to receive this grant for the duration of their course.

**Portable financial assistance for study abroad**

From 1 September 2007, students eligible for Dutch student finance who want to pursue all or part of their studies abroad can apply for financial assistance to study in any of the 29 countries in Europe involved in the Bologna Process (see 6.1.4.) or in certain countries outside Europe. This gives students maximum freedom to pick the course of their choice. However, all courses abroad must meet Dutch quality standards. The requirements will be monitored by Nuffic, the Dutch organisation for international cooperation in higher education. Students do not need to be registered at a Dutch higher education institution in order to be eligible for a grant. However, irrespective of the nationality they hold, they must have been resident in the Netherlands for at least three of the six years prior to commencing their studies.

**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 and study credits in higher education**

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 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. The system is based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and facilitates comparison at an international level.
credit is equivalent to 28 hours of study, consisting of lectures, seminars and tutorials, laboratory work (where applicable) and independent study. As a rule, each module (unit of study) is worth one or more credits. To convert old-style credits (42 credits per year of study) into ECTS credits, the number must be multiplied by 1.43. Numbers may be rounded up to prevent students being disadvantaged.

The academic year lasts 42 weeks (equivalent to 60 credits, or 1,680 hours of study). Most full-time courses have a study load of 240 credits, which is equivalent to four years of study.

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

Bachelor-master system

The bachelor-master system was introduced in 2002. The distinction between higher professional education and university education in terms of their respective goals remains. By now, all 4-year HBO courses and a majority of university courses have been converted into bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes. A bachelor’s programme at university takes three years and a master’s degree takes one, one and a half or two years. Within the HBO system, all bachelor’s degree courses take four years, and there are now (2007) 130 accredited master’s degree programmes.

The introduction of the bachelor-master system and accreditation system is part of the move towards a common open system of higher education in Europe. Students have a greater degree of choice and can more easily attend a master’s degree programme at a different institution (in the Netherlands or abroad) from the one where they obtained their bachelor’s degree.

Table 6.1. Courses in the Netherlands assessed by January 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of higher education courses</td>
<td>2,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO bachelor’s degree programmes</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBO master’s degree programmes</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University bachelor’s degree programmes</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University master’s degree programmes</td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined HBO-university bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accreditation

The main task of an accreditation body is to accredit existing degree courses and assess new ones. Educational institutions receive an official seal of approval if they meet certain quality standards. Internationally accepted criteria have to be used in order to ensure that Dutch degrees are comparable to those awarded elsewhere. The Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) has been monitoring the quality of bachelor’s and master’s programmes since 2003 on a 6-year cycle. NVAO
Accreditation is not compulsory for master’s programmes that existed before 2003, though they may apply for it on a voluntary basis. For developments see 6.2.

Accreditation is an indispensable element of the bachelor-master system. It 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 for accredited courses and students on accredited programmes are eligible for financial assistance, subject to the terms of the Student Finance Act.

**Bachelor’s degree programmes**

There are two types of bachelor’s degree course in the Netherlands: broad and narrow. Narrow courses target a specific subject area. A broad bachelor’s degree is multidisciplinary (i.e. it contains elements from several fields of study). Students choose a main subject (major) and a number of optional subsidiary subjects (minors). There are no special regulations governing the major-minor system. Some institutions offer both broad and narrow bachelor’s courses, but an increasing number are opting for the broad variant.

**Post-initial master’s degrees**

The new master’s degree programmes (for example in Finance, Fine Arts, Health Administration, Real Estate or Theology) do not follow on directly from a specific bachelor’s course. They are primarily designed for people who already have an HBO or university bachelor’s degree and relevant work experience. These programmes do not receive any government funding. However, students who have not yet used up all the financial support to which they are entitled, can still make use of it, on condition that the new course is accredited by the NVAO (see 6.10.). In order to be admitted to a post-initial master’s degree programme, applicants need not necessarily hold a bachelor’s degree in a related subject. Since the number of places is limited, candidates are individually selected. Post-initial master’s degree programmes are offered by some universities as well as by HBO institutions.

**6.10.1. Higher professional education**

All existing first degree courses were given the status of bachelor’s degree programmes by law as of 1 September 2002. HBO master’s degree programmes are also recognised by law, providing they are accredited by the NVAO, and HBO institutions can now develop their own master’s programmes for accreditation by the NVAO. Master’s degrees may only be awarded for accredited courses.

The existing advanced courses (see 6.18.1.) will remain in their present form until they are discontinued by royal decree and upgraded to master’s degree programmes. Many of them already have master’s degree status.

A bachelor’s degree awarded by an HBO institution will qualify its holder for admission to a master’s degree programme 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 set their own intake requirements.

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
A new type of higher education was introduced in 2007. It lasts two years and confers its own statutory qualification: the Associate Degree. Associate degrees (Ad) were introduced at the request of various sectors of the labour market. The course of study is a two-year degree programme within the HBO bachelor’s degree framework. Pilot studies were run in the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 academic years and HBO institutions were asked to run a third pilot in 2008/2009, with associate degrees leading to a teaching qualification for secondary education or vocational education.

In general, associate degree programmes:

- are part of HBO bachelor’s degree courses;
- involve a study load of 120 ECTS credits;
- lead to an independent labour market qualification in the form of an official degree (Ad), as provided for under article 7 of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW);
- entitle the holder to complete the HBO bachelor’s degree immediately or at a later date. Students doing an associate degree programme are entitled to financial support if they meet the standard eligibility requirements.

6.10.2. University education

Most university courses have already switched to the bachelor-master system. This usually takes places in two stages, resulting in differences within and between institutions.

Of the 14 universities excluding the Open University, 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 universities of technology in Delft (TUD), Eindhoven (TUE) and Twente (UT) – focus predominantly on engineering and technology. The Agricultural University in Wageningen provides courses in agriculture and the natural environment and comes under the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. Besides the 14 government-funded universities, there are a number of legal entities providing higher education, including six offering theological courses, one offering a degree course in humanism, and Nyenrode Business University. There are both full-time and part-time courses, as well as dual courses combining learning and working.

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.

University master’s degree courses

Master’s degree courses at Dutch universities are academic in character and last one or two years. As a rule, students are eligible for a year’s financial support. However, two years’ financial assistance may be granted at the Minister’s discretion, for instance for certain courses in science, technology and education. It is expected that in future this arrangement will also apply to research programmes at master’s degree level and to courses which have proven to take longer than one year to complete.

Master’s programmes vary in focus, and may prepare the student for:

- a career in business or society
6.11. Curriculum

Dual learning

Universities and HBO institutions can offer a dual learning variant for 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. Furthermore, 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.

Teaching and examination regulations

As far as teaching is concerned, the government lays down the framework within which 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.

6.11.1. Higher professional education

Higher professional education (HBO hoger beroepsonderwijs) 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.

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. 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.

Senior lectureships

In 2001 knowledge networks and senior lectureships ("lectoren") were introduced at HBO institutions. These innovations are intended to bridge the gap between teaching and professional practise, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching. These networks bring together HBO institutions, companies and public sector organisations. They are also a source of research topics for the practice-based research that is carried out in HBO institutions, which in turn, contributes to the development of professional practice.
The 2004 and 2008 evaluations showed that senior lecturerships have a positive impact on HBO teaching. A total of 326 senior lecturers have now been appointed in numerous fields. A quality assurance system for senior lecturers and practice-based research will be introduced in 2009.

**RAAK scheme**

The RAAK scheme aims to promote the exchange of expertise between HBO institutions, adult education institutions and small and medium-sized businesses. In 2007, 2,430 entrepreneurs and 1,073 professionals from public sector institutions were involved in projects, 93% of which also involved senior lecturers.

**6.11.2. University education**

**Study load**

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

- teacher training (generally 60-120 credits);
- medicine (180 credits);
- pharmacy (180 credits);
- veterinary medicine (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; from 1 September 2007, 180 credits).

A bachelor’s programme primarily trains students in academic disciplines. They acquire skills and specialised knowledge, as well as analytical ability. University education does not end with the completion of the three-year bachelor’s phase, however. Graduates may opt to get a job after obtaining their bachelor’s degree and then follow a master’s degree course later on, if they wish. Alternatively, they may proceed directly to a master’s programme. It is only then that they start to specialise. The master’s degree lays the foundation for an academic career, although many students go straight on to the labour market after completing their master’s degree.

**Dual learning**

Dual learning programmes were enshrined in the law in 2001. They were designed 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. For instance, grade one teacher training courses based at universities (see 8.1.4.2.) are now offered as dual learning programmes. Dual programmes are expected mainly to provide an alternative for students taking master’s degrees.

**6.12. Teaching methods**

Central government stipulates the framework within which institutions operate but the administration of each institution is ultimately responsible for developing courses within this framework. 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 (e.g. module) 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 in higher education following bachelor’s programmes are advised as to whether they should continue with their course or switch to another. At universities, the propaedeutic year serves as a means of orientating, referring and selecting students. Universities are free to decide whether to hold propaedeutic examinations.

6.15. Certification

6.15.1. Higher professional education

At all institutions, responsibility for the examinations lies with the administration. 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 must include 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 programme. The situation regarding academic titles changed on 20 April 2009 (see 6.2.).

6.15.2. University education

All bachelor’s and master’s programmes at university conclude with a final degree examination. A separate examining board is set up for each study programme to conduct final examinations and organise and coordinate interim examinations. Students who pass the final examinations are awarded a certificate listing the different parts of the examination and, where appropriate, the professional qualification obtained.

Obtaining a bachelor’s or master’s degree does not necessarily mean that the course of training is complete. Courses which are geared to specific occupations must include practical preparation for professional practice, followed by the further examinations. This applies to medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, philosophy and all teacher training courses run by university departments (ULOs).
**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 of Arts/Science” or “Master of Arts/Science”, abbreviated to ‘BA’, ‘BSc’, ‘MA’ and ‘MSc’ and placed after the holder’s 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 (see 6.18.2.).

**6.16. Educational/vocational guidance and education/employment links**

**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 category of students with a view to boosting the number of ethnic minority students and graduates in higher education and reducing the dropout rate.

The Platform Bêta Techniek (www.platformbetachtienk.nl) was set up by the government in 2004 to ensure a sufficient supply of well-qualified people with a background in science and technology. It is also responsible for bringing together authoritative expertise from the worlds of business, education and research and acting as ambassador for the government’s Delta Plan, which is designed to prevent a shortage of knowledge workers, especially in science and technology.

**6.16.1. Higher professional education**

**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).

**6.16.2. University education**

**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 first held in 1998. The results are announced every year in the Universities Monitor.
6.17. Private education

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

6.18. Alternative structures and advanced courses

6.18.1. Advanced courses

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 assistance 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.

Bachelor-master system

The introduction of the bachelor-master system allows institutions to offer post-initial courses (see 6.10.2.) 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 (holiday allowances, pension rights) and obligations (terms of contract). PhD students 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 universities of technology 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 86 officially recognised research schools in the Netherlands (2008).

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), on the basis of 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. The performance of these institutions was evaluated at the end of 2003 and it was decided to continue extra funding until 2013, with an interim evaluation in 2009 or 2010.

6.18.3. Open University of the Netherlands

The Open University of the Netherlands (OUNL) is a state establishment founded in 1984. Its social task is to provide a second chance or second way to attend higher education (partly through distance learning) to adults who have not previously had this opportunity. 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. By dispensing with formal admission requirements and offering considerable flexibility as regards place, duration and pace of study, the OUNL makes higher education accessible to a wide range of people. There are 12 study centres and 2 support centres in the Netherlands and 6 study centres in Flanders, which provide 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.

Certificates and diplomas

Students who pass their examinations are awarded a certificate certificaat which can then be “traded in” if they subsequently decide to follow a full OUNL programme. A full university degree diploma 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 ‘BA’ and ‘MA’. It is also possible to obtain a doctorate (‘dr’).

6.19. Higher education statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from Key Figures 2004-2008 Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands.

Kerncijfers 2004-2008 Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap
6.19.1. Students (higher professional education)

**Table 6.2 Students enrolled in HBO (in thousands), by subject category and course type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>365.7</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>382.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject category</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>129.8</td>
<td>135.4</td>
<td>140.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and Society</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Culture</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>292.2</td>
<td>301.1</td>
<td>309.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.3. Intake of first-year HBO students (in thousands), by subject category and course type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject category</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and Society</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Culture</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6.4. HBO degrees awarded (in thousands), by subject category and course type

#### Subject category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject category</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and Society</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Culture</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Agriculture degrees</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Course type (inclusive agriculture)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course type</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Bachelor degrees</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Education</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Health</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Economics</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Behaviour and Society</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language and Culture</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Total Agriculture</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### B) Total Master degrees (exclusive agriculture)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Bachelor degrees</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject category</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Education</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Health</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Economics</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Behaviour and Society</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language and Culture</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Total Agriculture</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.5. HBO institutions (by size)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of institutions</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small HBO (up to 1,000 students)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-sized HBO (1,000-5,000 students)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large HBO (5,000-10,000 students)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conglomerate HBO</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.6. Average roll (HBO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average roll per HBO institution</td>
<td>9,670</td>
<td>9,890</td>
<td>10,420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.7. Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of FTEs (in thousands)</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- academic staff</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- support staff</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of students to academic staff</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of woman staff</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage aged 50+</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.19.3. University students

Table 6.8. Students (including external students) enrolled at universities (in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject category</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total excl. Agriculture</td>
<td>202.7</td>
<td>206.8</td>
<td>213.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and Society</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Culture</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.9. First-year students enrolled at universities by subject category (in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject category</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total excl. Agriculture</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and Society</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Culture</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6.10. ‘Doctoraal’ and Master certificates awarded (in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject category</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total excl. Agriculture</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and Society</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Culture</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.19.4. Institutions and staff (universities)

#### Table 6.11. Number of institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of institutions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average roll (gross enrolments, in thousands)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 6.12. Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Total number of FTEs (in thousands)</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- academic staff</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- support staff</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoogleraar</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University head teacher</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University teacher</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other academic staff</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant in opleiding (aio)</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Women as % of academic staff</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- of which are University head teachers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- of which are Hoogleraar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of students to academic staff</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6.19.5. Open University (OUNL)

#### Table 6.13. Open University statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total active students (in thousands)</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First years (in thousands)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of university degrees awarded</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Adult and vocational education

Vocational education is provided at secondary schools voortgezet onderwijs (pre-vocational secondary education, VMBO), institutions for secondary vocational education (MBO middelbaar beroepsonderwijs) and institutions for higher professional education (HBO hoger beroepsonderwijs). This chapter discusses vocational education as set out in the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), which covers secondary vocational education (MBO) and adult education, but not higher professional education (HBO) or pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs).

Figure 7.1 The structure of adult and vocational education (BVE)

BOL: vocational training pathway

BBL: block or day release pathway

ER: educational self-reliance

SR: social self-reliance

PRO: professional self-reliance, unqualified

PRG: professional self-reliance level 1
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. Its main target group is young people from the age of 16. There are three sectors: business, engineering and technology, and personal and social services and health care. Secondary vocational education (MBO) is provided at four qualification levels (see 7.10.1.):

- level 1: training to assistant level assistentopleiding;
- level 2: basic vocational training basisberoepsopleiding;
- level 3: professional training vakopleiding;
- level 4: middle-management training middenkaderopleiding and specialist training specialistenopleiding.

Every level has requirements which are defined in terms of exit qualifications (see 7.14.1.).

For each course there are in principle two learning pathways:

- vocational training (BOL) where practical training takes up between 20% and 60% of the course;
- block or day release (BBL) where practical training takes up more than 60% of the course (formerly the apprenticeship system).

Adult education

Adult education is geared to furthering the personal development of adults and their participation in society. The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) identifies four types of courses (see 7.10.2.):

- 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) or part of one;
- courses providing a broad basic education (BMF);
- courses in Dutch as a second language (NT2);
- courses aimed at fostering self-reliance (SR).

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 Society for the Promotion of the General Good was set up in 1784 with the aim of educating the working classes and turning them into virtuous citizens. From 1850, many initiatives were launched to set up forms of adult education, most of them inspired by the Toynbee lectures and debates in Britain, when professors talked about developments in their fields.

The first adult education institute ('volksuniversiteit') was set up in Amsterdam in 1913. It provided education without the pressure of examinations, with instruction based on scientific objectivity, and was accessible to people from all walks of life. 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, a form of adult education was introduced that aimed to give people of 18 and over a second chance to obtain a school-leaving certificate. Since only examination subjects were taught, adults could obtain a MAVO certificate within three years or
they could study for separate subject certificates. This form of adult education was particularly popular among women with children, since classes were taught at times that were particularly suited to them.

New adult education policy plans launched in the 1980s ultimately led to the Adult Education Framework Act of 1991, which was incorporated into the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) in 1996.

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.

On 1 January 1996 the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) entered into force, bringing greater unity to the existing provision of adult and secondary vocational education. Prior to that, the Dutch system had consisted of apprenticeship training and vocational education. Apprenticeship training prepared students for a wide range of trades and occupations and combined school with ‘learning on the job’. Senior secondary vocational education began in the 1950s with senior technical schools (MTS). Other subject areas were soon added, such as business and commerce (MEAO), agriculture (MAO) and personal and social services and health care (MDGO).

7.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

Strategic Agenda for Adult and Vocational Education 2008-2011

The government wants to improve the quality of vocational education to bring it in line with developments on the job market. The Strategic Agenda for Adult and Vocational Education was therefore published in 2008. It was drawn up in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and addresses the following policy priorities:

- a closer match between vocational education and the job market
  - The supply of qualified people should meet the demand on the labour market, both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- better-quality training
  - All secondary vocational education institutions will be working with the new-style qualification guidelines (see 7.14.1.) by August 2010.
- improved cohesion within the vocational education sector
  - There needs to be better cohesion at all three levels of vocational and professional education (VMBO-MBO-HBO) in order to reduce dropout and ensure that as many students as possible gain the qualifications needed by the job market (see 7.13.).
- active and sustainable participation in education, the labour market and society
  - Certain people (often young, elderly or disabled) have particular difficulty in finding their place in society because they are under-qualified, under-skilled or lack the appropriate professional attitude. As a result, they may find it hard to get a job and to stay in employment. MBO training can help them to acquire the right competences and institutions should therefore continue to pursue a low-threshold policy on admissions.
- a more integrated education policy
  - Before 2009, the municipalities had separate budgets for adult education, social rehabilitation and civic integration training. This was not conducive to a harmonised approach. However, with the entry into force of the Social Participation Budget Act on 1
January 2009, the various municipal budgets for promoting social participation were merged. In preparing the new legislation, the House of Representatives cut the budget for educational activities, with effect from 2010. In its place, an equivalent sum will fund a comprehensive new plan to boost standards in mathematics and language in secondary vocational education. The government takes the view that a preventive policy – forestalling learning deficits in language skills and other areas at MBO level – will be more effective than a curative one – trying to repair the damage later on, in adult education. As from 2011, municipal authorities will no longer be obliged to spend their adult education budget at regional training centres (ROCs).

**Competence-based education**

Competence-based education (CGO) seeks to teach students how to operate in occupational contexts. Schools began phasing it in 2004 and the transition is still ongoing, so the old system still exists alongside the new. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science wants the competence-based qualification structure to be fully operational by 1 August 2010. At present the new system applies to about 72% of MBO students.

The new, competence-based qualification structure describes:

- core tasks and working processes that are relevant to, and characteristic of, the occupation or trade;
- the competences needed to carry out these processes successfully;
- the underpinning subject knowledge and skills;
- performance indicators which demonstrate that competences have successfully been acquired.

In practice, the new certification should match students more effectively to labour market requirements, and also offer better prospects of progressing to higher professional education later on.

For each MBO course, a set of qualification guidelines has been drawn up by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. Together they constitute the national qualification structure, the framework for competence-based vocational education. Schools are free to decide which methods they use for training students to diploma standard. The Education Inspectorate (see 9.4.2.) uses the qualification guidelines to assess the quality of teaching and examining within competence-based education.

**The Delta Plan for language and mathematics in secondary vocational education**

The Delta Plan is being developed in close consultation with education experts, teachers and umbrella organisations (the Secondary Education Council, the Secondary Vocational Education Council and the Council for Higher Professional Education to boost standards in language skills and mathematics in the short term. The aim is to introduce it in spring 2009.

**Experimental VMBO-MBO 2 course**

A trial with an integrated VMBO-MBO 2 course started on 1 August 2008, involving 20 VMBO schools. Pupils receive up to four years of tuition and schools have a free hand as regards course content and teaching methods. The Ministries of Education, Culture and Science, and of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality only stipulate the basic curricular frameworks. Within this experimental context, the VMBO examination is not compulsory, but there must be a contingency plan in place to cater for potential dropouts. Pupils who fail to complete their training must be helped onto a standard course leading to a basic qualification at VMBO or MBO level.
There are currently 36 experiments integrating upper-year VMBO subjects (basic vocational programme) and MBO level 2 subjects into a single programme. The aim is to reduce the number of early leavers and enable more pupils to obtain a basic qualification (MBO level 2 see 2.1.). A total of 1,139 pupils took part in the first round of the trial. The second round will start on 1 August 2009. The experiment will run until 2013 and will involve up to 5,000 pupils.

**Integrated VMBO/MBO assistant-level training**

As from the 2009/2010 school year, there will be a new course combining MBO assistant level and VMBO. This will mean that pupils can make a start on MBO training at Level 1 as early as their third or fourth year of VMBO. This should reduce dropout at the transfer stage between VMBO and MBO and also give pupils a greater chance of getting a basic qualification (MBO Level 2, see 2.1.). The integrated assistant level course is only for basic vocational programme pupils who have difficulty coping with the school timetable. VMBO and MBO schools will be jointly responsible for the course and the pupils attending it. In order to make the integrated assistant level course a permanent option, amendments will be made to the Secondary Education Act and the Adult and Vocational Education Act (see 5.3. and 7.3.).

**Tackling dropout**

The government wants to reduce the school dropout rate to half its 2002 level, cutting the numbers from 71,000 to 35,000 by 2012. In 2006, the previous government introduced a programme to tackle dropout, comprising a package of measures aimed at prevention, facilitating transfer and mobility within the vocational education sector, keeping pupils at school for longer and providing hands-on learning. In addition:

- a compulsory work-study requirement was introduced on 1 August 2007 for unqualified young people aged between 16 and 18, making it mandatory for them to attend a course of training that leads to a basic qualification;
- for the 2006/2007 school year, voluntary agreements were signed with the 14 Regional Registration and Coordination Centres that have the highest dropout figures;
- registration of dropout has been substantially improved by the introduction of the education number system.

This policy is being pursued with certain modifications by the present government (the fourth led by Jan Peter Balkenende). The emphasis is on preventing dropout by keeping pupils at school for longer and improving mobility between the various types of school. The policy aims to:

- facilitate smooth transition from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to vocational secondary education (MBO);
- generate more scope for VMBO pupils who learn best working with their hands;
- provide more made-to-measure training in order to prevent dropout;
- expand the support advisory teams (ZATs) for pupils with multiple behavioural problems and/or special needs in secondary vocational education. This entails intensifying cooperation between the ROCs, the municipal health services, the social services, school attendance authorities, youth care services and the police, so that help can be given promptly to those who need it. The government wants every school to have its own support advisory team by 2011;
- offer guidance and coaching, and better advice on the choice of studies and career;
- keep young people at school longer by making education more attractive and incorporating sport and culture;
- create an extra 20,000 prior learning assessment and recognition schemes (EVC) for early school leavers aged between 18 and 23.
In January 2009, the Advisory Council on Government Policy (WRR) issued its report ‘Confidence in the school,’ about the problem of early school-leaving by ‘overburdened young people.’ The report focuses on the home situation and emotional development of these pupils, the role played by teachers and efforts to involve them in society.

**Registration and coordination at regional level**

Young people who drop out of school are channelled back into education or work-study placements by the municipalities which act as regional registration and coordination centres for school drop-out. The municipalities network with youth care services, educational institutions and Centres for Work and Income in order to create the appropriate conditions for early school leavers to return to school and/or work. The aim is to ensure they acquire at least a basic qualification (a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 certificate). Steps are being taken to make it easier for young people to enrol mid-course. Plans are also being developed for a compulsory work-study requirement for young people aged between 18 and 27 who have no basic qualifications, and compulsory registration and supervision of early school leavers.

**Registration and supervision of absentees**

Efforts to tackle truancy have been hampered by the procedure whereby educational institutions have to report incidences to the municipal authorities. In order to solve the problem, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Information Management Group (IBG) have set up a single online address for reporting truancy. Soon, schools will report their truancy figures straight to the IBG, which will then inform the registration and coordination centre for school attendance in the relevant municipality. A pilot project testing the new system was run from November 2007 to May 2008 and involved 18 schools (MBO and secondary schools) and nine municipalities. The online one-stop-shop procedure for reporting absenteeism is being introduced nationwide on 1 August 2008. By 1 September 2009, the system should be fully operational, involving all the municipalities, secondary schools and institutions of adult and vocational education in the Netherlands.

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 centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market, and central government grants to adult education institutions (see 7.15.1.). 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 regional training centres (ROCs) opened their doors in 1998 (see 7.5.). 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. An amendment to the Adult and Vocational Education Act, making provision for personal budgets in vocational education, entered into force on 1 August 2008 (see 7.9.). National qualification structures are central to the Adult and Vocational Education Act (see 7.2.).

Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB)

7.3.2. Education Participation Act

Under the Education Participation Act 1992 (WMO), every institution for adult and vocational education is legally required to set up a participation council (MR) (see also 2.7.1.), 50% of whose members are staff and 50% are students attending courses at the institution. Members of the competent authority of the institution may not sit on the participation council. By exercising the right of approval and the right to be consulted, the participation council can influence the way the school is organised, how teaching is organised, the proportions of the budget spent on staffing and staff and labour market policy, and the maintenance and upkeep of the school’s premises. Under the terms of the Act, the competent authority of the school cannot take any important decisions without the agreement or advice of the participation council.

Education Participation Act (WMO 1992)

7.3.3. Training measures

When there is a downturn in the economy, employees without a basic qualification who were previously unemployed are often the first to lose their jobs. In order to ensure that this group of individuals have 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 (a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 certificate). The following instruments are deployed for this purpose:

- reductions in tax and social insurance contributions to offset the wage costs of trainees on work-study placements (see 7.15.1.);
- grants from the European Social Fund (ESF) (see 7.2.): businesses and government bodies can use these grants to train employees so that they are equipped for changing conditions on the labour market;
- employers are also 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 either had to abandon a training scheme in order to accept their current job or did not have a basic qualification when they started work and were not already receiving training.

7.4. General objectives

Social trends and the need for lifelong learning have made adult and vocational education crucially important for individuals, the labour market and society as a whole (see 7.2.). As well as a socioeconomic function (matching supply to demand, greater employability), the Act therefore also has a sociocultural function (promoting integration and greater participation of disadvantaged groups).

Lifelong learning

The notion of lifelong learning – that people continue to learn throughout their careers – is in line with the Lisbon goal that by 2010, 20% of the population aged 25-64 will be participating in education and training. The aim is for people to develop their learning capacity and to respond flexibly to changes within society and
the world of work. The Learning and Working Project is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Employers, employees, the general public, the business community, educational institutions, Centres for Work and Income (CWI), the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), reintegration agencies, municipal authorities and other parties involved at regional level are actively encouraged to promote lifelong learning. The government creates the enabling conditions but ultimately, the responsibility for achieving the goals lies with the various partners involved in the learning and working process. The government is offering tax incentives to make lifelong learning more attractive (see 7.3.) and has made grants available to enable prior learning assessment and recognition (EVC) and create training and employment helpdesks (see 7.15.).

7.4.1. Secondary vocational education

The aim of secondary vocational education middelbaar beroepsonderwijs, 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 educatie is geared to furthering the personal development of adults and their participation in society (self-reliance). Knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes are developed in relation to the needs, opportunities and life experience of adults. Adult education can prepare individuals for vocational training and boost their personal and social roles.

7.5. Types of institution

Institutions are required to provide made-to-measure training for jobseekers, people in regular employment and young people with no work experience. The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) gives institutions the opportunity to devise special learning pathways for educationally disadvantaged students.

Regional training centres (ROCs roc’s) offer a complete range of adult and vocational education courses, both full-time and part-time. This combined approach serves to strengthen the institutional and curricular cohesion between vocational education and adult education. Since the introduction of the WEB in 1996, municipalities have been responsible for planning and funding adult education. The Adult and Vocational Education Council is the umbrella organisation representing the sector.

In 2005, the sector consisted of 42 ROCs (excluding those in the agricultural sector). From 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 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.
**Adult education**

Municipalities are responsible for providing courses that meet the demand for adult education. The target group includes illiterate adults, immigrants and elderly people and also specific groups such as young mothers or the long-term unemployed. The municipalities buy in courses from the ROCs, including literacy courses, and report to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on their education policy. Since the introduction of the Adult and Vocational Education Act, adult education courses have been provided by the regional training centres (ROCs). 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.

The Netherlands has 100 adult education institutes (‘volkuniversiteiten’). Most of them have independent foundation or association status and six are accommodated in ROCs. Adult education institutes offer a wide range of courses on a variety of subjects, the most popular being foreign languages, history, art and culture, and arts and crafts. The courses are attended by about 200,000 people per year. The institutes’ other tasks are:

- to encourage study and discussion of philosophical and social issues;
- to organise lectures, discussions, exhibitions and so on;
- to develop educational programmes for special groups, such as volunteers in the care sector, ethnic minority mothers, the elderly and people with minor learning disabilities.

**7.6. Geographical accessibility**

The government has 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 may enrol for a course at assistant assistentopleiding or basic vocational training level basisberoepsopleiding. There are no requirements regarding previous education;
- the admission requirements for a course at professional vakopleiding or middle-management training level middenkaderopleiding 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 specialistenopleiding is possible with a professional training qualification for the same occupation or occupational group.

The rights of VMBO (pre-vocational secondary education) certificate-holders regarding admission to secondary vocational education (MBO) are regulated by law. 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).
7.7.2. Adult education

Adult education courses are open to anyone aged 18 or over who is resident in the Netherlands. However, they are particularly intended for adults who are educationally disadvantaged.

7.8. Registration and/or tuition fees

7.8.1. Secondary vocational education

As of 1 August 2005, school fees were abolished for all pupils and students aged 16 and 17. Students aged 18 or over on 1 August who are in full-time vocational training (BOL) in secondary vocational education (mbo) or taking full-time adult general secondary education (vavo) courses (see 7.8.2.) have to enrol with an education card and therefore have to pay school fees. The Information Management Group (IBG; see 2.6.1.) collects fees on behalf of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The fees for the 2006/2007 school year are €963.

Students aged 18 or over on day release schemes (BBL) or in part-time vocational training (BOL) have to pay course fees instead of school fees. The amount depends on the level of the course. In 2006/2007 the course fees were €199.71 for assistant-level or basic vocational training and €485.60 for middle-management or specialist training.

| Table 7.1. Fees in secondary vocational education (in euros) |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Full-time secondary vocational education | 975           | 993           |
| Assistant-level and basic vocational training | 202           | 205           |
| Middle-management/specialist training      | 491           | 499           |

7.8.2. Adult education

The costs of adult education courses consist of statutory fees and learner costs (i.e. all expenditure, other than fees, directly related to the course of study, such as travel expenses and the purchase of textbooks and study materials). Adult learners aged 18 or over on 1 August who are taking full-time or part-time adult general secondary education courses (VAVO) or courses in Dutch as a second language at levels B1 or B2 (see 7.10.2.) have to pay course fees.

There are no statutory regulations governing the payment of fees in the non-formal adult education sector.
Table 7.2. Fees in adult general secondary education (in euros)

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<tr>
<td>Full-time course</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>993</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time course</td>
<td>0.63 per 45 minutes</td>
<td>0.64 per 45 minutes</td>
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7.9. Financial support for learners

With the abolition of fees for 16 and 17-year-olds, financial assistance is no longer necessary. From the 2005/2006 school year, the government allowance towards the cost of fees has therefore been abolished for students who no longer have to pay fees. However, MBO students under the age of 18 can still get financial assistance to help with educational expenses under the Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS). Parents of MBO students aged under 18 are entitled to child benefit and can apply to the Information Management Group (IBG) for financial support.

As of the 2005/2006 school year, the rights and duties of MBO and HBO students aged between 18 and 34 have been brought into line. This means that both MBO and HBO students are entitled to student finance, comprising a basic grant, a supplementary grant (depending on parental income), an interest-bearing loan and a public transport pass. For MBO students doing levels 1 and 2, no conditions are attached to the basic and supplementary grants. Students doing levels 3 and 4 receive performance-related grants. This means that the grant is initially awarded in the form of a loan, which students only have to pay back if they fail to complete their course within ten years. Students are entitled to a performance-related grant for four years. They can then take out a straightforward loan for another three years. The standard duration of the course determines the number of months’ grant for which can be converted. Successful MBO candidates who decide to go on to higher professional education (HBO) are entitled to a new grant, depending on the length of their course.

A similar arrangement has been in place since August 2005 for students taking MBO-level courses in Health and Welfare, Metal Work and Electrical Engineering, and Commercial Studies. Under a previous scheme, MBO students were allowed to use their Dutch grants to attend specific courses anywhere in the European Economic Area. Interim evaluation showed that there was a need to expand the scheme, so since 1 August 2007, secondary vocational education students receiving student finance have been able to use their grants to attend equivalent courses of study in Flanders and Germany. The experiment, which was designed to widen the options for MBO students, will be evaluated in spring 2009. The final evaluation report will be sent to parliament with a written response by the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science about the need and scope to widen the options for portable student finance.

Personal budgets (LGF) in secondary vocational education

Personal budgets (LGF) were introduced into adult and vocational education in order to safeguard educational continuity for individual learners registered as having a disability or chronic illness. This extra, student-specific funding makes it possible to provide appropriate facilities and peripatetic assistance. The government extended the LGF scheme to include secondary vocational education through interim grant legislation introduced on 1 January 2006. An amendment to the Adult and Vocational Education Act, making provision for personal budgets in vocational education, will enter into force on 1 August 2008.
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 (slightly more complicated routines and standard procedures). 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 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 is currently the case for 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.

7.10.2. Adult education

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) identifies four types of courses (see 7.10.2.):

- 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 of the qualification structure) or part of one;
- courses providing a broad basic education;
- courses in Dutch as a second language (NT2 opleidingen nederlands als tweede taal);
- courses aimed at fostering self-reliance.

**Adult general secondary education (VAVO)**

VAVO students can go on to study for a full or partial qualification in VMBO (theoretical programme), HAVO or VWO. These ‘second-chance students’, who tend to be over 22, go back to school to get first-time qualifications. For various reasons, ‘second-way students’ (usually under 22) opt to get their qualifications from the ROCs instead of attending secondary school. This could be because of the two-year framework offered at the ROC, or because they have already failed their examinations twice and have had to leave secondary school.
Broad basic education

The aim of broad basic education is to boost the learner’s skills and knowledge (or professional self-reliance, as it is called) so that they can move on to vocational training or adult general secondary education.

Courses aimed at fostering self-reliance

Courses in social self-reliance teach learners to cope independently in common social situations such as medical appointments or contact with their child’s schoolteacher. Learners have to achieve a minimum level in language (NT1), arithmetic or social skills.

NT1 (Dutch as a first language)

Over one million Dutch people have an inadequate command of their mother tongue. The NT1 courses are intended to help them improve their language skills.

NT2 (Dutch as a second language)

On 8 March 2006 the NT2 framework became law. This framework is the Dutch version of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF) which was drafted by the Council of Europe to provide a common basis for the development of language courses and guidelines for curriculum development and examinations in Europe (standards for fluency levels). The CEF distinguishes six learner levels, but the NT2 framework has only adopted the first five. Levels one to four (A1, A2, B1 and B2) have a statutory basis. Levels A1 and A2 equate to basic proficiency, levels B1 and B2 indicate that the learner can cope independently in the language, and level C indicates a fluent or proficient user. There are state examinations for levels B1 and B2.

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 and the field to organise courses and teaching in such a way that students are able to obtain a certificate.

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 middelbaar beroepsonderwijs. 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.

Transfer and mobility within the vocational education sector

There is a shortage of skilled people at the intermediate and higher levels on the Dutch labour market, so the Ministry of Education is working with the vocational education sector to facilitate the transition from one level of vocational education to another (see 5.5.). Secondary vocational education must supply enough young people with level 3 and 4 qualifications to meet demand in the lower and middle ranges of the knowledge economy. It is vital for students to be able to move on without difficulty from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to secondary vocational education (MBO) to higher professional education (HBO). Under the new arrangements, more students will be able to obtain the right qualifications and be equipped for the job market sooner than in the past. Most students who complete VMBO go on to MBO, and the link between the two has been strengthened by the introduction of the four ‘learning pathways’ within vocational education (see 5.11.1.). Extra support will be provided for pupils transferring from VMBO to MBO. Plans are also under way to develop the concept of ‘learning careers’, enabling young people to exploit all the opportunities that are open to them across a wide range of learning environments, and to remove the barriers between the different levels of vocational education. Experiments to this end are now under way (see 7.2., Experimental VMBO-MBO 2 course).

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


Every course in secondary vocational education leads to a certain occupational skill or qualification. Currently, courses are based on either exit qualifications or competences. Where applicable, exit qualifications are described in exit qualification documents.

In 2004, the business and education communities embarked on a joint initiative to introduce competence-based learning (CGO) into secondary vocational education. Institutions agreed to structure courses in accordance with new qualification guidelines which will be updated and improved every year until 1 February 2010. The guidelines are learner-based, specifying the competences, knowledge and skills the junior practitioner must possess in order to be qualified for the occupation in question. The examination
tests whether the candidate can carry out occupational tasks appropriately and whether they have the competences and underpinning knowledge necessary for the job.

In competence-based education (CGO) (see § 7.2), exit qualification documents will be replaced by qualification guidelines. The following arrangements are in place:

- The business community and the teaching profession are responsible for producing qualification guidelines which describe the knowledge and/or skills a candidate must possess in order to obtain an MBO certificate.
- The guidelines are then checked by the Vocational Qualifications Coordination Centre.
- The government gives the qualification guidelines its approval.
- The institution provides high-quality courses and, in consultation with the business community, decides on teaching methods and strategies.
- The institution puts together an examination that tests whether the candidate genuinely has the skills, knowledge and/or attitudes prescribed in the qualification guidelines.
- The Education Inspectorate is responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching and examinations in secondary vocational education.

Where courses are based on exit qualification documents approved by the Minister, the exit qualifications are further subdivided into partial qualifications with corresponding certificates (see also § 7.10.1). The system has internal coherence, so a diploma from one course serves as an entry requirement for another.

Under the terms of the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), the primary responsibility for examinations rests with the institutions themselves. The aim is to achieve closer cohesion between teaching and examinations and allow for flexibility and a tailored approach. It is up to the individual institution to decide on the form examinations should take, within the statutory frameworks.

At the same time, secondary vocational education examinations must meet the quality standards laid down by the government. For instance, the examination must test the competences, knowledge and skills prescribed in the qualification guidelines. Individual institutions have to ensure that their own examinations meet the national quality standards. This means that they are responsible for quality assurance and for making any necessary improvements. They are also accountable to the public. The Education Inspectorate, in turn, is responsible for monitoring examination quality.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science may withdraw the right to hold examinations from institutions that fail to meet the standards. These institutions then have to outsource the examinations to an institution that is authorised to hold examinations.

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

**New developments**

Besides monitoring, the government is working on three new ways of improving examination quality in secondary vocational education by:

- introducing a national examination in Dutch and arithmetic/mathematics;
- promoting further standardisation of examinations in vocational subjects, for example by using examinations compiled nationally;
Central Register of Vocational Courses

The vocational qualification structure (KSB) encapsulates all Dutch vocational qualifications and has been enshrined in law since 1997 (for recent developments, see 7.2.). All KSB training courses are listed in the Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO), together with details of:

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

7.14.2. Adult education

The exit qualifications for courses in adult general secondary education voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs are the same as those that apply to secondary schools. For other types of adult education specific exit qualifications may be laid down by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. This is the case for courses in Dutch, English, social orientation and arithmetic/mathematics. In all other cases, it is up to the institutions themselves to do so. Exit qualifications describe qualities in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and, where applicable, professional attitudes, 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.

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 full examination are awarded a diploma.

In 2007 the European Language Portfolio is to be introduced for all foreign language teaching in non-formal adult education.

7.15. Education/employment links

Social trends, including lifelong learning (see 7.2.) , have made adult and vocational education crucially important 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 (ROCs) have created the conditions necessary to perform this broad social function.
**Prior learning assessment and recognition (EVC)**

The Learning and Working Project team funds and steers the Knowledge Centre for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. People starting jobs or training courses already have certain competences that they have acquired elsewhere. The centre officially recognises working experience as previously acquired competence. Its aim is to match school curricula more effectively to the world of work and to assess its clients’ requirements for on-the-job training (see www.kenniscentrumevc.nl).

**Training and employment helpdesks**

The CWIs are working with the providers of courses at regional level to set up training and employment helpdesks to provide the general public, jobseekers, employees and employers with information about EVC, training, dual courses, careers and funding. People who do not have the competences required for their occupation or field of work can receive supplementary training and thus acquire the full or partial qualification they need. The helpdesks actively promote participation of employers, employees, benefit agencies, jobseekers and other members of the public. They function as front offices for educational institutions (MBO, HBO and universities), both government-funded and non-government-funded, bringing together supply and demand.

The training and employment helpdesks first opened in 2006 and there are currently 26 of them.

**7.15.1. Secondary vocational education**

All secondary vocational education courses include practical training. This takes up between 20% and 60% of the course in the case of the vocational training pathway (BOL) and more than 60% for the block or day release pathway (BBL).

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

**Centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market**

The Adult and Vocational Education Act contains measures to bring education more into line with the world of work. The centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market (KBBs) form the link between vocational education and the business sector organisations. Organised by sector, their managing boards comprise representatives of employers and employees, and in most cases, educational institutions. The centres are responsible for developing a clear qualification structure (see 7.2.) setting out the knowledge and skills required by employers. They monitor the quality of MBO examinations and ensure sufficient training placements. They also decide which companies or organisations are qualified to provide practical training, on the basis of specific criteria. Employers meeting these criteria receive official recognition and are entered in the centre’s register. COLO is the umbrella organisation for the centres.

**Technocentres**

Cooperation between KBBs, 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, employment services and other relevant partners (www.technocentra.nl - in Dutch only). There
are currently 14 such centres in the Netherlands. The Technocentres Framework Scheme for 2006-2010 aims to strengthen and update the knowledge infrastructure and improve education/employment links by:

- fostering the spread and application of knowledge between industry, knowledge institutions and third parties;
- shared use of high-tech equipment and resources by several institutions;
- promoting a good match between technical education and the labour market.

**Fiscal measures**

Incentives have been introduced to make more training places available for block or day release students, whereby 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.

**7.15.2. Adult education**

The Adult and Vocational Education 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. 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**

All statistics are taken from 'Key Figures 2004-2008; Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands'.
### Table 7.3 Students in secondary vocational education, by level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students (in thousands)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary vocational education (total)</td>
<td>464.4</td>
<td>477.1</td>
<td>484.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block or day release pathway (BBL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 2</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 3</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training pathway (BOL) – full-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 2</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 3</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 4</td>
<td>176.3</td>
<td>177.4</td>
<td>176.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training pathway (BOL) – part-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level 4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7.4. Students in adult education, by age and level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students (x 1000)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult education (total)</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education (16-17 year olds)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education (other)</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**By level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VMBO theoretical</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7.5. Number of students awarded diplomas by Regional Training Centres (ROCs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of diplomas (in thousands)</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>137.3</td>
<td>141.7</td>
<td>144.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block or day release pathway (BBL)</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training pathway (BOL) – full-time</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training pathway (BOL) – part-time</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total adult education</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VMBO theoretical</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVO</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VWO</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7.6. Institutions and staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of institutions</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Regional training centres</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Specialist</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of staff in FTEs (in thousands)</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% aged 50 or over</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% women (based on FTEs)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Kerncijfers 2004-2008 Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap*
8. Teachers, management, inspectorate and support staff

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 (see 8.1.4.) for:
  - primary education basisonderwijs;
  - secondary education voortgezet onderwijs, grade two qualification for the first three years of HAVO and VWO, and all years of VMBO and secondary vocational education;
  - secondary education, grade one qualification for all levels of secondary education, including pre-higher education level, i.e. the last two years of HAVO and the last three of VWO.
- There are also full-time, part-time and dual university training courses leading to a grade one secondary school teaching qualification (ULO courses) for all levels of secondary education, including pre-higher education. These courses are open to university students and graduates only.

Teacher training courses are available in practically all subjects taught at secondary schools. Grade one and grade two teachers of art, music, handicrafts, eurhythmics, dance, drama, English, German, French, Frisian and physical education 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 education, with the exception of physical education. Most teachers working at special schools have also completed a master’s degree course in special educational needs. 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 speciaal onderwijs with an ordinary teaching qualification.

There are no specific training courses for those wishing to teach in higher education.

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 through an alternative admission procedure. They then receive training and supervision aimed at equipping them with the necessary skills within two years (see 8.1.8.).

8.1.1. Historical overview

8.1.1.1. Primary school teacher training

With the merger of nursery and primary schools within the new-style primary schools in 1985, the two forms of teacher training – courses for nursery teachers (4 to 6-year-olds) and teacher training at the Pedagogische
Academie (6 to 12-year-olds) – were merged to form a single primary school basisonderwijs 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. They lead to a grade one qualification with a study load of 60 ECTS credits (see 8.1.4.2.). For in-service training (see 8.2.10).

8.1.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

The Quality in the Classroom agenda

The Quality in the Classroom agenda for 2009/2011 contains measures for boosting the quality of teacher training in the Netherlands and increasing take-up in training institutions. Entry and exit requirements will be introduced for training courses as well as requirements for examinations. In addition, there must be greater scope for excellence. The Netherlands currently has a shortage of teachers in two respects:

- Quantity: research shows that primary and secondary education come under pressure when the shortage is greater than 1%. However, if the current trend persists, the teacher shortage in secondary education will rise to 6% in 2011;
- Quality: approximately 10% of teaching in secondary education is provided by unqualified teachers. The quality of teacher training is also under discussion.

The Quality in the Classroom agenda is based on three key concepts:

- strengthening the quality of HBO teacher training institutions;
- employing more university-trained teachers: a new learning pathway will qualify students with a bachelor’s degree to teach VMBO theoretical courses and the first three years of HAVO and VWO, provided that they have completed a minor course in teaching;
- creating more variety in training and the teaching profession with a view to making it more attractive for people to become teachers.

The Teachers Matter voluntary agreement

The signing of the Teachers Matter voluntary agreement marks a significant step towards tackling the teacher shortage. It guarantees better pay for teachers working in both HBO and MBO. The voluntary agreement is part of the Teachers Matter action plan (see www.leerkrachtvannederland.nl), which focuses on the following three themes:

- a stronger profession;
- a more professional school;
better pay.

Standards of competence for head teachers and support staff

The Dutch School Managers Academy (NSA) has put forward proposals on standards of competence for primary head teachers. The aim is for these proposals to be included in the Standards of Competence (Teaching Staff) Decree.

Standards of competence for support staff (e.g. classroom assistants, instructors and supervisors) have not yet been formulated. The National Forum for Education Professions (LPBO) has proposed classifying education support as a profession, to be practised at two levels. The first level will require a secondary vocational (MBO) qualification, level 4. Support staff working at the second, more advanced, level will need to have completed an associate degree programme affiliated to a bachelor of education degree programme. Associate degrees will be offered from the beginning of the 2009/2010 academic year. At the same time, competence profiles and standards of competence will be formulated.

8.1.3. Specific legislative framework

Teacher training courses are provided by institutions for higher professional education and universities and are governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) which entered into force in 1993.

Education Professions Act (WBIO)

The Education Professions Act, which entered into force on 1 August 2006, regulates standards of competence for both teachers and other people working in education-related jobs in:

- primary education;
- secondary and adult and vocational education;
- pre-higher education (years 4 and 5 of HAVO and years 4, 5 and 6 of VWO).

Anyone wanting to become a teacher will need a certificate from an institution of higher professional education or university to show that they meet the standards of competence laid down by order in council pursuant to the Act. Like the Act, the order entered into force on 1 August 2006. The Act also enables schools to devise policy on maintaining the skills of their staff (see 8.2.10.). The Inspectorate monitors compliance with its provisions.

8.1.4. Institutions, level and models of training

Bachelor-master system

The bachelor-master system was introduced on 1 September 2002. To facilitate the comparison of courses within the EU, a new study load system has been introduced based on the European Credit Transfer System or ECTS. Students must now 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. HBO institutions provide teacher training at both bachelor’s (primary and secondary, grade two) and master’s (secondary, grade one) level. Universities provide training at master’s level only (secondary, grade one).

All teacher training courses can be taken full-time, part-time or as dual courses, i.e. in combination with work experience.
8.1.4.1. Primary school teacher training

Primary school basisonderwijs 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, with an annual intake of between 8,000 and 9,000 students, provide primary school teacher training courses, some at several different locations.

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 (see 8.1.8.), so that, in practice, institutions can now offer shorter tailor-made as well as standard courses.

Although not compulsory, almost all teachers working in special education (including secondary level) also take a master’s course in special educational needs.

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. Details about the period of teaching practice must be set out in the institution's teaching and examination regulations. 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 is supervised by a qualified teacher and does everything a regular member of staff would do. 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.

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. Teacher training in agricultural subjects is 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, and the courses prepare them to meet the statutory standards of competence, (see 8.2.1.). HBO teacher training courses cover both subject training and aspects of teaching in general (see 8.1.6.2.).

University-based teacher training courses

University graduates with a master’s degree can take a postgraduate teacher training course 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 must be set out in the institution’s teaching and examination regulations. 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 *voortgezet onderwijs* teacher training courses 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.

**8.1.4.3. On-the-job training in schools**

Increasingly, primary and secondary schools and institutions for secondary 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 guarantee the quality of on-the-job training in schools, a number of basic conditions have to be met. They are:

- close cooperation between schools and teacher training institutions;
- 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;
- certificates of competence issued by a teacher training institution.

Since 2006 the government has been supporting pilot projects in which, as part of their personnel policies, schools shoulder much of the responsibility for training staff such as teachers and teaching assistants. Some projects include studies of ways of combining on-the-job training with research into school development.

**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 middenkaderopleiding or specialist training specialistenopleiding). Applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications
may also be admitted if their previous training is deemed to be adequate. There are no government-imposed restrictions on the number of places (numerus clausus).

**Language and numeracy skills**

As of the 2006/2007 academic year, students starting a primary school teacher training course will have to take a test to establish whether their Dutch language and numeracy skills are up to scratch. If not, they will be given extra support. However, if they fail the test again at the end of their first year, they will not be allowed to continue their course.

### 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 certificate of competence in the subject to be studied. Applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may also be admitted if their previous training is deemed to be adequate.

Both university graduates and master’s degree students may be admitted to university teacher training courses.

### 8.1.6. Curriculum, special skills and specialisation

To prepare graduates for a job in education, the curricula of teacher training courses are organised in such a way as to ensure that they meet the standards of competence listed in the Education Professions Act (WBIO; see 8.1.3.). These are the basic knowledge and skills required of teachers, to which specialisations may added, such as training as a lower or upper primary or vocational teacher, or subject specialisations.

There are no statutory regulations relating to the organisation of teacher training courses or the curriculum. The organisation of teaching is regulated in the teaching and examination regulations drawn up by the institution concerned. Only the principles, structure and procedures underlying the teaching and examination regulations are prescribed by law.

Dutch is the language of instruction and the language in which the examinations are set. Another language may be used:

- for modern language courses;
- for lectures given by a guest lecturer from another country;
- if required, given the specific nature, organisation or quality of teaching or the origins of the student, in accordance with the code of conduct drawn up by the administration of the institution.

### 8.1.6.1. Primary school teacher training

HBO institutions have reached agreement on a limited number of possible subject combinations and safeguards to ensure that courses train students to meet the standards of competence and are at higher education level (Dublin descriptors).

The study load for each course is 240 ECTS credits (four years’ full-time education). 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. Furthermore, the course may be offered in a part-time dual format by several different HBO institutions. Teaching practice is an important component of primary teacher training and is compulsory (see 8.1.4.1.).

**Training for other jobs in primary schools**

The government has entered into a voluntary agreement with schools on the professional development and supervision of primary and secondary school staff, and has earmarked funds to this end (see 8.2.10.). Schools may use this money to enable head teachers to attend a postgraduate management course, for instance. This 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.

There are two levels of training for support staff. The first is 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 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.

A higher level of training will be offered in 2009/2010 by a number of HBO institutions, through associate degree programmes (see 6.10.1.). For the time being, however, the programmes of study will be exclusively geared to support staff in secondary and vocational education, since there are no higher-level teaching assistants in primary education.

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

HBO institutions have reached agreement on a limited number of possible subject combinations and safeguards to ensure that courses train students to meet the standards of competence and are at higher education level (Dublin descriptors).

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 (see 8.1.8.). Teaching practice is an important component of teacher training and is compulsory

**HBO teacher training courses**

There are HBO teacher training courses in general subjects, arts subjects, technical subjects and agricultural subjects. Students qualify to teach one subject, and the courses prepare them to meet the statutory standards of competence (see 8.1.2.). The courses cover both subject training and aspects of teaching in general, including:

- teaching methods
- teaching practice
- command of language
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 90 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). Science degrees include a teacher training option to be incorporated, as far as possible, in the regular five-year undergraduate course.

**8.1.7. Evaluation and certificates**

**8.1.7.1. Primary school teacher training**

Primary teaching certificates are awarded by Primary School Teacher Training Colleges (PABO), which are part of the higher professional education system. Certificate holders are fully qualified to teach:

- all subjects and all age groups at primary level;
- in special education *speciaal onderwijs*, at both primary and secondary level *voortgezet speciaal onderwijs*.

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 (or the standards of competence met, see 8.1.3.

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. A separate postgraduate qualification is 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, German, French, Frisian or minority languages.

**8.1.7.2. Training of teachers in secondary, adult and vocational education**

A secondary school teaching qualification can be obtained at HBO institutions and at universities (see 8.1.6.2.). Students are trained to teach one subject.

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.
The following system applies to secondary vocational education: in addition to teachers with secondary teaching qualifications, graduates from other HBO courses can be appointed as lateral-entry teachers. The institution in question decides whether the candidate meets the standards of competence for the subject in question. If not, he or she is required to make up for the shortfall within two years. Candidates are also required to gain a certificate of competence in teaching within two years, in order to be designated a qualified teacher. 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 on the same basis.

8.1.8. Alternative training pathways

Lateral entry

Staff shortages in primary schools and the need for teachers with other qualities have led to measures to promote intake into the profession of people who have not had teacher training. Since 2000 people with higher education qualifications may enter the teaching profession without having trained in the normal way. Anyone whose education and profession have equipped them with the relevant knowledge and experience may work as a teacher on a temporary contract for a maximum of two years, provided they pass an aptitude test. Within these two years, these lateral entrants are given the training and support needed to gain a full teaching qualification, and thus a permanent contract. Teacher training institutions test their prior learning competences to establish which individual qualities they possess. They may then be exempted from taking certain parts of the examination. If they display shortfalls, they may be offered a course to make up for them. 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 (see 8.2.5.).

8.2. Conditions of service of teachers

In almost all educational sectors, primary and secondary conditions of service have been decentralised. The only exception to this is primary conditions of service in primary education. 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 public-authority and privately run institutions are determined at decentralised level in sectoral collective agreements. Where possible and desirable, these agreements leave room for further elaboration at school-board level. Employers’ organisations and trade unions in the education sector negotiate at sectoral level. The 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 negotiate at institutional level. There are thus, for the time being, three levels of negotiation:

- negotiations at central government level (central collective agreement for the educational sector (primary education);
- negotiations on sectoral collective agreements between employers’ organisations and trade unions in the education and science sector;
- negotiations between competent authorities of institutions and federations of public service and education unions.

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. One example of these reforms is negotiating on pay and conditions. Conditions of service for all educational sectors are now decentralised, with the exception of secondary conditions of service in primary education.
8.2.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

The aim is to decentralise primary conditions of service in primary education as of 1 January 2010 (ongoing decentralisation).

8.2.3. Specific legislative framework

The secondary conditions of service of education personnel in primary education, and the primary and secondary conditions of service for education personnel in other education sectors, are regulated in sectoral collective agreements. The Legal Status (Primary Education) Framework Decree governs primary conditions of employment in primary education. The framework decree contains agreements on pay, overall working hours (standard working year), job evaluation and social insurance provision over and above the statutory entitlement.

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 (ZW) and the Unemployment Insurance Act (WW). 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 (BWOO), will continue to apply to persons already receiving an allowance prior to 1 January 2001.

The Teachers Matter voluntary agreement

In order to tackle the threat of teacher shortages, the government will be investing substantially in the teaching profession over the next few years by offering better pay, better career prospects and a teacher development grant for in-service training. In 2009, the budget will total more than €400 million, rising to more than €700 million during the present government’s term of office (up to 2011), and exceeding €1 billion per year from 2020. The funding is chiefly being used to improve teachers’ pay. It also covers teacher development grants and measures for improving the position of teachers in schools and for deploying teaching staff more effectively. Prior to implementing these plans, the government signed the Teachers Matter voluntary agreement with the social partners (employers’ organisations and trade unions) in primary and secondary education, secondary vocational education and adult education.

Teachers’ pay will increase in the years ahead, as a result of two government measures:

- the number of incremental tiers per salary scale will be reduced, creating steeper intervals;
  - from 2009, the incremental pay rises for teachers in primary, secondary and secondary vocational education will gradually be increased, enabling teachers to progress faster to the top of their pay scale, and giving their typical career pattern a steeper curve. This will give education an edge over other labour market sectors, and will offer incentives to experienced teachers to stay in the profession longer. Teachers who have already reached the top of their pay scale will be eligible for a monthly ‘top-up’ supplement;
- more teachers will be put into higher pay scales as part of the policy on salary diversification;
  - as from 2010, funding will be made available for all primary and secondary schools and institutions of secondary and higher vocational education to promote a large proportion of their staff to higher salary scales in line with the new policy on salary diversification. More funding will be available for the Randstad (the conurbation in the western Netherlands), where teacher shortages are greatest.
Funding of redundancy pay

**a. 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. As of 1 January 2007, it is no longer compulsory for secondary schools to contribute to the collective fund. Schools themselves are now responsible for funding 25% of the redundancy pay. The remaining 75% is funded by all secondary schools collectively. A similar system applies to the sectors listed under b).

**b. Adult and vocational education and higher education**

In adult and vocational education bve and higher professional education hbo, 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. As of 1 January 2007 all new benefits granted in these sectors will be charged to the institution effecting the redundancy. 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 voluntary agreements

The teaching labour market is largely a regional labour market. Early in 2004, schools and teacher training institutions in about twenty regions (mainly those in which there were shortages), entered into a regional voluntary agreement together with the local authorities to tackle the teacher shortage in both the short and the medium to long term. Schools, teacher training institutions and the trainers of teaching assistants are attempting to match the demand for and supply of teaching staff.

**8.2.5. Entry to the profession**

Access

Generally speaking, 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 (see 8.1.8.).

Under the Education Professions Act (WBIO; see 8.1.3.), which entered into force in August 2006,
teachers can only be appointed after they have submitted a higher education certificate showing that they meet the standards of competence for the duties they will perform. For that reason, teacher training courses now issue certificates clearly specifying which of the standards of competence the holder meets as well as the subject or subject area he or she is qualified to teach. Holders of teaching certificates issued before August 2006 are deemed to meet the standards of competence and therefore continue to be eligible for appointment.

**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, including 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 schools may claim money to pay for a supply teacher from the Staff Replacement Fund (VF). As of 1 January 2006, it is no longer compulsory for secondary schools to contribute to this fund. Instead, they pay the costs themselves.

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. Money can be claimed in the event of absence through sickness. The schools themselves have to pay the costs of other forms of leave. 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. It is not compulsory for teachers to cover for a sick colleague. 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.
8.2.8. Supporting measures for teachers

School boards are themselves responsible for their personnel policies and for supervising new teachers (see 8.1.4.3. and 8.5.). 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.

Lateral-entry teachers (see 8.1.8.) in primary schools are supervised for approximately 3 hours a week and in secondary schools for two hours a week. In primary education, 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.

A practical guide has 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.

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:

- job performance interviews, during which teachers discuss their performance with their heads, and look at their prospects for the future and
- assessment interviews during which 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.

**Job performance interviews**

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. The same applies in secondary schools, where colleagues and pupils are also consulted regularly on teachers’ performance.

**Assessment interviews**

Assessment interviews are held once a year. Some schools do not hold separate assessment interviews, but assess their teachers during their job performance 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. In primary schools competence profiles are used.

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
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

#### Historical overview

Schools for primary, secondary and special education and adult and vocational education institutions have their own budgets for in-service training for teachers. They decide on both the actual content of courses and the institution that provides the training.

Primary schools have had their own training budget since the introduction of block grant funding on 1 August 2006. They are free to spend this money as they wish, as long as it is used for personnel-related expenditure.

There are no specific in-service training institutions governed by law. Courses can be provided by institutions 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.

#### Teacher development grant

As of 2008, teachers wishing to raise their professional level, deepen their specialist knowledge or specialise can apply to the Information Management Group for a ‘teacher development grant’.

They can only apply for a grant once in their teaching career. It can be used to cover:

- fees up to a maximum of EUR 3,500 a year, for up to three years;
- the costs of study materials and travel;
- the cost to the employer of arranging a supply teacher during study leave, for a maximum of 20 days a year.

To qualify for a grant, applicants must:

- be qualified primary, secondary or vocational education teachers, or, for teachers in higher professional education, have at least a bachelor’s degree;
- have been working at a school funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science for at least one year;
- spend at least 20% of their working hours on teaching duties.

#### Maintaining skills

With the entry into force of the Education Professions Act (WBIO; see 8.1.3.) at the start of the 2006/2007 school year, every school board is now obliged to take measures and introduce instruments to ensure that the staff to whom standards of competence apply can maintain their skills.

In 2006 employers’ organisations and trade unions in the primary and secondary education sectors signed a voluntary agreement on the professional development and training of staff (see 8.1.6.1.), with provisions on training and support for students, trainee teachers and other education personnel.
The block grant for both primary and secondary schools was increased this year. Schools now have the opportunity to pursue personnel and training policies that are appropriate to their own situation. They are also required to have drafted a support programme for new education personnel by 2008 and to make agreements with training institutions on the distribution of tasks and responsibilities when education personnel receive part of their training on the job and when students from teacher training institutions do their teaching practice.

The adult and vocational education sector has also received extra funds for professional development and training of education personnel and can therefore enter into agreements on the matter.

8.2.11. Salaries

Every post in education has a corresponding salary scale, determined in accordance with the job evaluation system specified in the relevant sectoral collective agreement. The salary scale is determined by the content and difficulty of the work in question. 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. 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.

When the standard number of hours was reduced, teachers could acquire an additional leave entitlement by working more hours than the number for which they were appointed. This additional leave may be taken during the course of the year (additional annual leave) or saved up (accumulated leave).

Primary and special school teachers may be required to spend an average of no more than 930 hours a year teaching. 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. After 12 months, they receive 70% of their pay for the hours not worked due to disability. When a member of staff has been unfit for work for 12 consecutive months, a medical examination is carried out.
out to ascertain whether they are entitled to benefit payments under the Invalidity Insurance Act (WAO). 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 2001, parents 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 primary and 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. In primary education, the current range of standard and model jobs also provides opportunities for job differentiation within both teaching and support posts. Under the terms of the Teachers Matter voluntary agreement, schools will be given extra funding from 2010 to employ teachers in higher salary scales, enabling a greater mix of posts.

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.

### 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, with the details set out for each sector 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 primary school is planning to dismiss a member of staff, it must inform 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 dismiss a member of staff after 24 or 30 months’ absence due to sickness or disability on the basis of a claim assessment under the Work and Income (Capacity for Work) Act.

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. From 1 January 2004, pensions have been calculated on the basis of average salary. Pension entitlements (i.e. old age and surviving dependants’ pension, and invalidity pension) 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.

Tax laws were changed on 1 January 2006. Employees born after 1 January 1950 are no longer eligible for tax relief on contributions to early retirement schemes.

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, and
- 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

Head teachers’ conditions of service are the same as for teachers, though they are usually in a higher salary scale (see 8.7.2.).

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 a number of chief inspectors responsible for:

- primary and special education;
- secondary education;
- adult and vocational education;
- higher 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.

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.

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 tables 8.1 and 8.2 have been taken from Key Figures 2004-2008 Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands. The data in 8.7.2. have been provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Kerncijfers 2004-2008 Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap

8.7.1. Staff

Table 8.1 Number of staff (in FTE x 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>primary education</td>
<td>131.5</td>
<td>132.0</td>
<td>133.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mainstream primary schools</td>
<td>105.8</td>
<td>105.6</td>
<td>106.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* special schools for primary education</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* special education (primary and secondary level)</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary education</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adult and vocational education</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher professional education</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universities</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.2 Percentage of staff aged 50 and over

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>primary education</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary education</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adult and vocational education</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher professional education</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universities</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.3 Percentage of women staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>primary education</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary education</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adult and vocational education</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.7.2. Salaries

- Job levels are taken 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.
- Apart from a holiday bonus of 8% in May, employees receive an extra bonus at the end of every year: in primary education it amounts to 5.9% (including a 0.8% contribution to a life-course savings scheme), in secondary education 6.4%, in adult and vocational education 5.8%, in higher professional education 3.7% and in universities 4.9% (2007).

8.7.2.1. Salaries in mainstream primary education

**Table 8.4 Salaries* on 1 January 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary scale</th>
<th>Officer</th>
<th>Deputy Teacher</th>
<th>Head Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>&lt; 400 pupils</td>
<td>400 to 900 pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>AC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting salary</td>
<td>2,270</td>
<td>2,72</td>
<td>2,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum salary</td>
<td>3,274</td>
<td>3,386</td>
<td>3,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule in years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Gross/month
### 8.7.2.2. Salaries at special schools for primary education (SBO)

**Table 8.5 Salaries* on 1 January 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary scale</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Deputy Teacher</th>
<th>Head Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>LB+ allowance</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting salary</td>
<td>2,354</td>
<td>2,354</td>
<td>2,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum salary</td>
<td>3,597</td>
<td>3,597 + 230.92</td>
<td>3,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule in years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gross/month

### 8.7.2.3. Salaries at special schools for secondary education (SVO)

**Table 8.6 Salaries* on 1 January 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary scale</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Deputy Teacher</th>
<th>Head Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB</td>
<td>LB &amp; allowance</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting salary</td>
<td>2,354</td>
<td>2,354</td>
<td>2,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum salary</td>
<td>3,520</td>
<td>3,520 + 230.92</td>
<td>3,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule in years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gross/month
### 8.7.2.4. Salaries in secondary education

**Table 8.7 Salaries* on 1 January 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary scale</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Head Teacher</th>
<th>Head of Central Management Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>LD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting salary</td>
<td>2,374</td>
<td>2,388</td>
<td>2,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum salary</td>
<td>3,630</td>
<td>4,234</td>
<td>4,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule in years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gross/month

### 8.7.2.5. Salaries in adult and vocational education

**Table 8.8 Salaries* on 1 January 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary scale</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Teacher-Coordinator</th>
<th>Sector Head</th>
<th>Head of Executive Board</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LB</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting salary</td>
<td>2,376</td>
<td>2,586</td>
<td>2,815</td>
<td>4,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum salary</td>
<td>3,718</td>
<td>4,251</td>
<td>4,820</td>
<td>5,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule in years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gross/month

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.
### 8.7.2.6. Salaries in higher professional education

**Table 8.9 Salaries* and salary schedules on 1 January 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Senior Lecturer (old style)</th>
<th>Senior lecturer</th>
<th>Senior lecturer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum salary scale</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard rate</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting salary</td>
<td>2,118</td>
<td>2,298</td>
<td>2,298</td>
<td>2,974</td>
<td>3,636</td>
<td>3,674</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>4,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum salary</td>
<td>2,910</td>
<td>3,279</td>
<td>3,602</td>
<td>4,204</td>
<td>4,781</td>
<td>5,135</td>
<td>5,642</td>
<td>6,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule in years</td>
<td>12 (1)</td>
<td>11 (1)</td>
<td>13 (1)</td>
<td>13 (1)</td>
<td>13 (1)</td>
<td>11 (1)</td>
<td>12 (1)</td>
<td>13 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The schedule changed on 1 January 2006. Salaries are no longer raised automatically on 1 August of each year. The size of the raise, and the date on which it takes effect depend on an assessment. The raise is no longer a set amount, but a percentage of the maximum salary. If the assessment is:

- good: 1 x the percentage
- very good: 2 x the percentage
- unsatisfactory: no raise.

There is also a preliminary scale within each scale. Depending on the maximum scale, this preliminary scale will disappear after a few years, or be reduced, so that the schedule indicated above will also be shorter. The schedule specified above is based on a satisfactory annual assessment. As of 2009 the shortening of the schedule has ended.
8.7.2.7. Salaries at universities

Table 8.10 Salaries* and salary schedules on 1 January 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professor A</th>
<th>Professor B</th>
<th>Research assistant</th>
<th>Student assistant (up to a maximum of ( \frac{1}{2} ) working hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starting salary</strong></td>
<td>4,904</td>
<td>5,463</td>
<td>2,042</td>
<td>1,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum salary</strong></td>
<td>7,142</td>
<td>8,662</td>
<td>2,612</td>
<td>2,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schedule in years</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gross/month
9. Evaluation of educational institutions and the education system

The Education Inspectorate supervises 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 and 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 the duties of the Inspectorate are:

- to assess the quality of teaching on the basis of checks on compliance with legislation;
- to monitor compliance with legislation;
- to promote the quality of teaching;
- to report on the development of education;
- to perform all other tasks and duties required by law.

Under the Primary Education Act (WPO), the Secondary Education Act (WVO) and the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), school boards bear primary responsibility for ensuring the quality of teaching. As the competent authority, they are the point of contact for inspections. Wherever possible, risk analyses are conducted on the basis of existing information. The Inspectorate will not ask for supplementary information unless risks are identified and a further inspection is considered necessary.

9.1. Historical overview

Since the early 1980s Dutch education policy has been geared to giving educational institutions more and more responsibility for setting and raising standards in education. As well as internal evaluation by schools and institutions themselves, independent 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 monitoring the performance of the education system as a whole. Final responsibility rests with the Minister.

9.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

Both the Education Council’s report of February 2006 on education inspections and the Ministry’s viewpoint document on inspections covering the period 2007 to 2011 call for insight into the functioning of education in the Netherlands, based on independent information and summarised in a manageable set of standards. Decentralised management and proportional monitoring are only possible if there is adequate quality assurance within the sector and the institutions themselves. Working step-by-step and in consultation with all parties involved, the Ministry of Education seeks to take a more arm’s-length approach and to give those in the field real opportunities to make use of the scope delegated to them. Work is under way on ‘the governance model’, under which educational institutions have more freedom, monitor their own management (for example through a supervisory board) and render account for their actions to the relevant
stakeholders. The model is still under development; although it is operational to a large extent in higher education, it is still to be introduced in the primary and secondary education sectors.

**Accreditation**

Over the next few years, the accreditation of higher education programmes at HBO institutions and universities (see 9.4.1.3. and 6.10.) will become simpler and more efficient:

- Bachelor’s programmes at university will become broader and will be virtually halved in number. University master’s degree programmes and HBO courses will also be restructured and reduced in number.
- New programmes of study will not be accredited until the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has first established that there is a social demand for them.
- The administrative burden will also be reduced.

Future accreditation by the NVAO will focus more on the education content of study programmes and less on the process involved.

From 2009 it should also be possible to grant conditional accreditation to HBO institutions and universities as a whole. Institutions would have to have an impeccable track record and guarantee quality assurance procedures. These measures will be incorporated in a new Higher Education and Research Act.

**Monitoring examination quality**

On 15 November 2007, the Education Inspectorate took over responsibility for monitoring the quality of decentralised MBO examinations, in accordance with amendments to the Adult and Vocational Education Act and the Education Inspection Act. The Inspectorate investigates the quality of the decentralised examinations and publishes a final assessment.

In 2009, the Inspectorate will monitor MBO examination quality on the basis of random samples of courses at all institutions in the country. In addition, it will assess improvements to examination quality at institutions which were found to be below par in 2008. If it is not up to standard within one year, an institution may lose its right to hold examinations.

**Monitoring childcare at national level**

When the fourth Balkenende government took office in February 2007, responsibility for childcare policy shifted from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. In tandem with this, the Education Inspectorate also took over responsibility for the second level of supervision under the Childcare Act.

The Childcare Act provides for childcare to be supervised at two levels. The first involves direct inspection by municipalities of the quality of childcare. The second level is now the responsibility of the Inspectorate and involves assessing the standard of municipal supervision.

Under the Act, municipal health services (GGD) are commissioned by municipal authorities to monitor the quality of childcare directly. The municipal health services monitor the quality of childcare centres, out-of-school care and childminding agencies. In turn, the Inspectorate monitors the work of the municipalities, assessing the degree to which their supervision meets the requirements for effectiveness and compliance with the law.
The Inspectorate publishes its findings and assessments in public reports, which are presented to parliament by the State Secretary. The reports are published on the internet and sent to all Dutch municipalities and municipal health services, the national association of municipal health services (GGD Nederland), the Association of Netherlands Municipalities and the sector’s umbrella organisations.

9.3. Specific legislative framework

**Education Inspection Act**

The Education Inspection Act (WOT) came into force on 1 September 2002. It regulates the tasks, responsibilities and powers of the Inspectorate, enables the Inspectorate to operate professionally and independently, and creates scope for stimulating evaluation. The Inspectorate monitors whether institutions are shouldering their own responsibilities for quality assurance. Since 2002, the Inspectorate has had the statutory duty to promote the quality of education.

The Education Inspection Act contains four conditions to be met by inspections:

- They must take account of freedom of education, and institutions’ own responsibilities. School boards 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 standards, 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. The Inspectorate takes the results of schools’ self-evaluation as a guideline.

- 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.

- They may not place a greater burden on the school than is strictly necessary for careful supervision (proportional inspections).

- They must also supply information about quality trends in the sector.

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). In primary and secondary education, the Inspectorate’s reporting reflects the requirements laid down in or pursuant to the provisions of education legislation, and takes into account other aspects of quality, i.e.:

- statutory regulations relating to basic quality standards and conditions for funding;
- other quality 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.

These aspects of quality elements are worked out in inspection frameworks, within which the Inspectorate accounts for the way in which it inspects schools. The frameworks are drawn up by the inspector-general of education, subject to the approval of the Minister. There are separate frameworks for each education sector.
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 and the reports published by the Inspectorate based on their findings. Each inspection 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 five domains: results, learning process, pupil care, quality assurance and compliance with legislation. The assessment framework also contains a set of indicators and norms, on which the assessment ‘at risk’ or ‘failing’ is based.

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 Inspectorate has drawn up an assessment framework elaborating these tasks. When risk analyses reveal that an institution is at risk or failing, its quality will be checked on the basis of this assessment framework.

Since the Higher Education Accreditation Act came into force in 2002, the main principles of the Education Inspection Act now also apply to supervision of the higher education sector. The Inspectorate has been responsible for inspecting all sectors of education since 1 January 2003 (see 9.4.2.). In higher education, it monitors compliance with legislation and supervises the system.

**Education Professions Act (WBIO)**

The Education Professions Act, which entered into force on 1 August 2006 (see also 8.1.3.), regulates standards of competence for both teachers and other people working in education-related jobs in:

- primary education;
- secondary and adult and vocational education;
- pre-higher education (years 4 and 5 of HAVO, and years 4, 5 and 6 of VWO).

Anyone wanting to become a teacher will need a certificate from an institution of higher professional education or a university to show that they meet the standards of competence laid down by order in council pursuant to the Act. The Act also enables schools to devise policy on maintaining the skills of their staff (see 8.2.10.). The provisions of the Education Professions Act have been incorporated into sectoral legislation and the Inspectorate monitors compliance.

**9.4. Evaluation at school/institutional level**

The Education Inspectorate, for which the Minister of Education, Culture and Science is responsible, supervises the quality of education by:

- assessing the quality of teaching on the basis of checks on compliance with legislation;
- monitoring compliance with legislation;
- promoting the quality of teaching;
- reporting on the development of education;
- performing all other tasks and duties required by law.

The Inspectorate bases its assessments on the principle that the institutions themselves bear primary responsibility for the quality of teaching.
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.

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 renders account to the Inspectorate for its policies. The requirements to be met by the school plan are laid down in the Primary Education Act.

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. The requirements to be met by the school prospectus are laid down in the Primary Education Act.

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. The school prospectus informs parents of the procedure for filing complaints about the school.

Pupil monitoring system

There are various pupil monitoring systems in use in mainstream primary schools and special schools for primary education as quality control instruments. It is not mandatory to have a pupil monitoring system, but most schools have one. The most commonly used are the CITO and IPMON systems (see also www.cito.nl and www.kwaliteitsring.nl).

- 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 the following areas of learning:
o arithmetic (ordering and counting, space and time, numbers, mental calculation, fractions and decimals, proportions, percentages, measures and time)

o language: spelling, vocabulary, concepts and verbs; reading (technique and comprehension) and listening skills

o environmental studies (geography, history, biology and science).

o study skills.

● Pupils’ social and emotional development is measured using VISEON, a digital monitoring system. 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 Equivalents (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:
  o 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.
  o 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.

The Inspectorate requires schools to collect and use information to assess the standard and progress of their pupils, and to determine whether pupils have any special needs. A pupil monitoring system may be used to support this process.

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. Within the adult and vocational sector, the Inspectorate monitors:

● the quality of teaching;

● the quality of examinations;

● the regularity of expenditure, financial management and the financial position of schools.

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. The Inspectorate’s monitoring is risk-based: the form of supervision depends on the outcome of periodic risk analyses. Institutions which perform well ‘earn’ the right to less supervision, whereas inspection is intensified at institutions with problems. Inspectors deal with the school boards, in view of their responsibility for quality. Furthermore, risk analyses are based as far as possible on data which are already available. The Inspectorate will only ask for supplementary information if risks are identified and further inspection is necessary.

Central Register of Vocational Courses

The Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO) lists all courses provided by funded and non-funded institutions for vocational education that are entitled to set examinations (see also 7.10.1.). 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**

Higher education institutions are responsible for the quality of their teaching and for the system they use to guarantee that quality. Such a system may have three distinct elements:

- clearly formulated course objectives;
- 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 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 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 often organised on the basis of protocols laid down by the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) and the Review and Assessment Boards (VBIs).

**9.4.2. External evaluation**

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 several chief inspectors, each of whom is responsible for evaluation in one or more education sectors (primary and special education, secondary education, adult and vocational education and higher education) or the expertise centres, which are responsible for primary and secondary special education (see 9.4.2.4.).

The Inspectorate monitors the quality of education, compliance with legislation, and whether funds are obtained and spent in a regular and efficient manner. Its findings in relation to both individual institutions and the sector as a whole are actively made public. The Inspectorate operates on the principle that high-quality teaching requires less intense supervision.

In recent years, institutions have been given greater scope to organise education in the way that they, as professionals, see fit. Schools are individually responsible for providing high-quality teaching and for monitoring it. The Inspectorate has adapted its supervision to current government policy.
Institutions which perform well ‘earn’ trust and with it the right to less intense supervision. However, at institutions with problems, the Inspectorate takes steps rapidly and effectively.

The Inspectorate’s methods

The Inspectorate’s new monitoring system has been in place since 1 January 2008. Under the terms of the Education Inspection Act (WOT) (see 9.3.), institutions which perform well ‘earn’ the right to less supervision, whereas inspection is intensified at institutions with problems. Inspectors deal with the school board, in view of the competent authority’s responsibility for quality.

All primary and secondary schools – including those that are performing well – are inspected at least once every four years. The Inspectorate draws up an annual inspection schedule for each school board, indicating what the inspection will entail for that year at the educational institutions within the its remit. The schedule focuses on manifest risks, which may be educational or financial in nature. If no risks are identified, the institution is awarded ‘basic inspection status’, which means that the Inspectorate does not think any special measures are required. This status may be reviewed at any time if new information comes to light, such as a series of complaints pointing to a structural problem. Subject to analysis and further investigation, the inspection status may be changed to ‘increased risk’ or ‘high risk/failing’.

However, if the inspectors identify one or more risks, documents and available supplementary data from the institution are examined in greater depth. This analysis also looks at the school board’s administrative capacity. On the basis of this second analysis, the institution is either awarded basic inspection status (no risk = no intervention) or subjected to a further inspection.

If a further inspection is required, supplementary information is collected and active consultation is started with the school board about the risks and problems that have been identified, and the ways in which the Inspectorate intends to intervene. Intervention then follows at the institutions where this is necessary, with the aim of making a thorough quality assessment or introducing measures for improving quality as soon as possible. The school board is responsible for deciding on the measures to be taken and their implementation. Progress is monitored by the Inspectorate. In such situations, the institution’s inspection status is ‘increased risk’ or ‘high risk/failing’.

In 2008, the Education Inspectorate visited every school board in order to discuss the analyses and inspection status.

In order to restrict the inspection burden to a minimum for the institutions, the risk analysis will be based as far as possible on available data, such as educational outcomes, annual reports, signals and findings from previous inspections. These data must meet certain requirements. The Inspectorate will not ask for supplementary information unless risks are identified and a further inspection is considered necessary.

Inspection findings are published on the Inspectorate’s website (www.onderwijsinspectie.nl).

Special needs assessment inspection

Since 1 January 2008 the Inspectorate has been responsible for monitoring special needs assessment, which was previously done by a national supervisory committee (LCTI). Parents or guardians of children with special needs can apply for the child to be assessed by an independent committee of specialists representing the school category relevant to the child’s problem. The committee decides whether the child is eligible for a personal budget (special needs funding for children attending a mainstream school) or for admission to a special school (see 10.5.3.). In the latter case, the child is referred to one of the following school categories:
- category 2 for hearing impaired children;
- category 3 for children with physical and/or cognitive impairment;
- category 4 for children with behavioural difficulties.

Visually impaired children (category 1) are referred by their school, not by the independent committee. They may be enrolled directly at a suitable school.

The Inspectorate is responsible for monitoring the independent committees’ compliance with legislation and ensuring that they apply the assessment criteria correctly and competently.

**Inspection cards**

In the autumn of 2008, school report cards were replaced by inspection cards, in line with the new-style inspection system that was introduced at the beginning of that year (see 9.4.2.). Inspection cards for primary and secondary schools provide information on the Inspectorate’s assessment and the proposed form of supervision. In the primary sector, inspection cards are issued to individual school sites. Secondary schools receive inspection cards for each type of education offered, and also per individual site, if applicable. Adult and vocational education institutions are issued with cards at course level.

**Reporting**

The Inspectorate draws up a report after each visit it makes. The purpose of these reports is to provide pointers for schools to help them develop policies and a quality assurance system. The Inspectorate assesses and reports on quality, and is also responsible for encouraging schools to introduce improvements where necessary. The second purpose of the reports is to inform parents and society at large. The reports are published on the internet (www.onderwijsinspectie.nl).

If the Inspectorate discovers that a school board is failing in the long term to improve quality at one or more of its schools, or is evidently incapable of tackling the problem, the Minister is sent an inspection report on the institution in question, accompanied by recommendations as to measures to be taken. The Minister may then decide to take administrative action, including penalties, i.e. withdrawing rights from the institution, such as a funding cut.

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. Their main purpose is to bring the quality of teaching up to the required standard again.

The Inspectorate should not 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. The largest and most important of the Inspectorate’s publications is the Education Report, which is published each year in May. The Minister then presents it to parliament with his response, thus reflecting his political accountability for the education system.

**Failing institutions**

In primary primair onderwijs, secondary voortgezet onderwijs and special education speciaal onderwijs, the Inspectorate distinguishes:

- schools where quality is up to standard;
- schools at risk;
schools that can be described as failing.

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 make binding agreements with the school about the desired improvements, either directly or through the Inspectorate. If the quality of teaching does not improve within a reasonable time, the Minister can intervene. This may ultimately lead to penalties, such as a funding cut.

9.4.2.1. External evaluation in primary 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.

Supervision and quality

In the first instance, schools evaluate themselves and learn lessons from the results of their evaluations. In addition, it is the Inspectorate’s task to assess the quality of teaching. In theory, it inspect each school once a year and conducts a full inspection once every four years. In conducting the school inspection, the Inspectorate makes as much use as possible of the results of the school’s self-evaluation. The inspection results in a report which is posted on the internet.

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. They are not regarded as performance standards for the school or the pupils.

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. 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 almost 85% of all primary schools use it.

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 the other comparing the school’s performance with that of other schools with a similar pupil population. This gives the school an indication of the effectiveness of its curriculum. The Inspectorate also uses the test to assess schools’ performance.

Schools must be able to account for their results. Many do this through the school leavers attainment test, but they are allowed to use alternative means such as a pupil monitoring system or pupil portfolios.
Cohort surveys

Over the last two decades, a number of cohort surveys have measured the educational performance of pupils and schools, on the basis of test scores. This started with the National Educational Priority Policy Evaluation Programme (LEO) cohorts in primary schools. These were followed by the databases of the PRIMA cohort survey (primary education) and the VOCL cohort survey (secondary education). The Educational Careers Cohort Survey (COOL), covering ages 5 to 18, started in the 2007/2008 school year, and will provide comprehensive data on the development of children and young people within the Dutch education system (primary, secondary and adult and vocational education) which can be used for both policy and research purposes. The COOL survey examines:

- pupils’ cognitive development (literacy, numeracy, intelligence);
- the psychosocial aspects of pupils’ development;
- pupils’ social and emotional development;
- environmental factors (home, school);
- educational careers;
- the development of citizenship competences.

COOL also offers the possibility of self-evaluation for the education sector as a whole (its periodic outcomes call for reflection on developments and whether or not they are desirable). Schools taking part in the survey get data feedback at school level.

The COOL survey tests pupils in years 2, 5 and 8 of primary school and year 3 of secondary school and will be repeated every three years, starting each time with a new year 2.

School inspection cards

School report cards were abolished in 2008 and replaced by school inspection cards (see 9.4.2.), which contain the Inspectorate’s assessment of the school and the proposed form of supervision. They also provide information about the quality of teaching per school site.

9.4.2.2. External evaluation in secondary education

Supervision and quality

In the first instance, schools evaluate themselves and learn lessons from the results of their evaluations. In addition, it is the Inspectorate’s task to assess the quality of teaching. To this end, it conducts limited or more extensive inspections. The inspectors conduct desk studies and interview the school board if problems occur at a school. If no improvement is forthcoming, the inspectors will conduct an on-site inspection. The inspectors also carry out theme inspections and research for the education report.

School inspection cards

School report cards were abolished in 2008 and replaced by school inspection cards (see 9.4.2.), which contain the Inspectorate’s assessment of the school and the proposed form of supervision. Where applicable, they also provide information about the quality of teaching per school site.

Attainment targets for secondary education

Various evaluation and control activities are carried out in order to safeguard the quality of secondary education voortgezet onderwijs. These include the formulation of attainment targets, setting examination syllabuses and research:
The aims of the lower years of secondary school have been set down in 58 general attainment targets. They apply to all pupils. There are also a number of supplementary targets for modern languages which apply to the majority of pupils. School policy determines how the attainment targets are fleshed out at every level and for each teaching style.

Examination syllabuses are set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. In vmbo, havo and vwo, they serve as a means of setting and monitoring standards.

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.

Inspection framework for non-government-funded institutions

Since January 2008, inspection of non-government-funded institutions has been formally based on inspection frameworks. These incorporate certain statutory requirements and aspects of quality, but are more limited in scope than the frameworks used for publicly-funded institutions. If an institution performs below par, the minister may withdraw its status as an approved or recognised institution.

Regional training centres, specialist institutions and non-government-funded institutions

Most of the education in the adult and vocational sector is provided by regional training centres (ROCs) and agricultural training centres (AOCs). These large establishments often provide the full range of adult and vocational education. ROCs also offer opportunities to transfer from one type of course to another. Besides ROCs, there are smaller institutions which cater for specialist occupations such as graphic design.

It is also possible to attend vocational education courses at private institutions which receive no government funding (NBIs), but which are recognised by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

Agricultural education

Since 2004 the Inspectorate has also been responsible for inspecting teaching establishments which fall under the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Supervision and quality

In the adult and vocational education sector, the Inspectorate monitors:

- the quality of teaching;
- the quality of examinations;
- the regularity of expenditure, financial management and the financial position of schools.

The Inspectorate’s monitoring is risk-based: the form of supervision depends on the outcome of periodic risk analyses. Institutions which perform well ‘earn’ the right to less supervision, whereas inspection is intensified at institutions with problems. Inspectors deal with the school boards, in view of their responsibility for quality. Furthermore, risk analyses are based as far as possible on data which are already available. The Inspectorate will only ask for supplementary information if risks are identified and further inspection is necessary.

The Inspectorate’s findings are published on its website (www.onderwijsinspectie.nl).
Monitoring examination quality

In 2009, the Inspectorate will monitor MBO examination quality on the basis of random samples of courses at all institutions in the country. In addition, it will assess improvements to examination quality at institutions which were found to be below par in 2008. Inspections are based on the standards set for examinations by the Minister.  

2009 inspection framework for adult and vocational education

The inspection framework for adult and vocational education sets out the procedures for inspecting teaching and examination quality at government-funded and non-government-funded institutions, and financial regularity at non-government funded institutions.

Monitoring centres of expertise

Another new feature is inspection of the centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market (KBBs). The legal basis is a voluntary agreement drawn up in 2006 between the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, the Association of Centres of Expertise on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (COLO) and the Inspectorate. A more definitive inspection framework for the KBBs was produced in 2008.

First phase: inspection of examination quality

Once the sample has been selected, the institution sends the Inspectorate electronic copies of its examinations and accompanying background documents for the courses in question. Then, in line with past practice, a group of independent subject specialists (external auditors) evaluates the quality of the examinations. The evaluation takes place off-site so as not to place an undue burden on the school.

Before an on-site visit, an inspection programme is drawn up in consultation with the school board. The inspectors analyse documents and, where possible, observe a random sample of exam situations. They interview the institution’s management, the members of the examining board and others involved in running the examinations. Staff also have an opportunity to discuss the inspectors’ provisional findings. The inspection ends with a final interview.

In 2009, inspections will be based on the appendix to the rules for quality standards in MBO examinations. The random sample evaluation will be combined with assessment of improvements to examination quality at previously below-standard institutions and, where applicable, prior learning assessment and recognition (EVC) procedures.

Second phase: inspection of teaching quality

A second round of inspection is conducted at institutions where potential risks have been identified, the problem threatens to get out of control and there is a lack of clarity about the situation. The aim of the second inspection is to find out whether or not there is an actual risk. The analysis may be carried out by the Inspectorate or by the institution itself, but the final assessment is always done by the Inspectorate. Self-inspection is based on the assessment framework. There is a variant framework for non-government-funded institutions. If the institution is found to be at risk or actually failing, the Inspectorate applies the following three elements from the framework: statutory requirements, results and teaching (with the exception of examinations). Each inspection is proportional and based on reliable information that is already available. No further inspection may be deemed necessary. However, in every case, the Inspectorate gives an assessment of the institution’s performance in terms of statutory requirements, results and teaching.
**Inspection cards**

In 2008, report cards were replaced by inspection cards (see 9.4.2.), which contain the Inspectorate’s assessment of the school and the proposed form of supervision. Information about the quality of adult and vocational education provision is provided by course.

**Exit qualifications and competences**

Exit qualifications have been formulated for all adult and vocational education courses, describing the knowledge, skills and insights which students are expected to acquire by the end of the course. To ensure uniformity, these exit qualifications have been brought together in a qualification structure for adult education and a qualification structure for vocational education (see 7.10.1., 7.14.1. and for developments 7.2.). The exit qualifications are determined by the minister.

A new, competence-based qualification structure for individual occupations is being developed, using a standardised list of 25 competences that denote active behaviour such as working with other people, giving presentations and applying expertise. These are being elaborated for each core task and work process (see 7.2.). This system should be fully operational by 2010. In the 2007/2008 school year, some 40% of learners enrolled in new training courses were already working with competences instead of exit qualifications.

**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. The information is used to determine how much funding the institution receives and to support and evaluate government policy.

**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 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.

The Inspectorate oversees some 70 government-funded universities and HBO institutions, and a similar number of universities and HBO institutions which are not government-funded, although the qualifications they award are recognised as equivalent.

**Monitoring compliance with legislation**

The Inspectorate checks that institutions comply with the law in respect of teaching, applying admission qualifications, holding examinations and awarding certificates and doctorates. It does so by:

- reviewing the implementation of a particular part of the Act at set times (for example, how students are exempted from taking interim examinations);
screening a particular university or HBO institution, for example in response to reports of serious or frequent breaches of the law.

The Inspectorate also looks into how the executive and supervisory boards of universities and HBO institutions ensure that relevant legislation is properly implemented.

**Monitoring policy implementation**

In addition, the Inspectorate looks at specific aspects of higher education that are the focus of public interest, usually in response to a request from the Minister. Examples include:

- the operation of the bachelor-master system introduced in 2002;
- provision for specific groups, such as disabled or ethnic minority students;
- the shortage of students on science, technology and engineering courses;
- the quality of teacher training courses;
- the quality of examinations.

**Accreditation**

An accreditation system was introduced in the Netherlands in 2003 (see 6.10. and 6.2.). Courses have to be accredited if they are to receive funding or recognition from the government. Institutions’ boards are responsible for ensuring timely accreditation from the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). Both new and existing courses have to be accredited. The NVAO drafted the relevant framework for this in 2003. The NVAO only assesses new courses, and delegates the task of assessing existing courses 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 to underpin their conclusions. If the NVAO accepts the VBI’s assessment, the institution receives its accreditation. 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. 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.

The NVAO has drafted a protocol listing the criteria VBIs should meet. They are as follows:

- The VBI should be independent and must be able to demonstrate that the institutions being assessed have no influence on the outcome.
- The review committees must be independent. The VBIs must be able to guarantee that the review and assessment process can take place entirely independently.
- Each review committee must comprise at least three independent members, whose expertise and authority are generally accepted in their field, and one student.
- Each VBI should have its own internal quality assurance system.
- Each VBI must have an assessment protocol.
- VBIs must understand the quality requirements for the domain to which the course belongs.

In turn, the Inspectorate monitors the operation of the accreditation system by means of:

- systematic research into the system’s operation;
- analysis of the NVAO’s work, notably its assessments of the quality of courses and how they are arrived at.

The Inspectorate publishes the results of these inspections in its annual Education Report or in separate reports.
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.

### 9.5. 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 (which is responsible for agricultural education), and the education sector itself. It advises the relevant ministers both on request and of its own volition, and answers questions from parliament. In certain specific cases governed by law, local authorities may also ask the Council for its advice.

### 9.6. Research into Education linked to Evaluation of the Education System

Evaluation surveys are conducted as part of the external evaluation carried out at national level (see 9.4.). 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 agencies. In addition, the Education Inspectorate carries out surveys of the quality of education in the different sectors.

### 9.7. Statistics

All statistics in this section are from the 2007 annual report of the Education Inspectorate.

**Table 9.1. Number of visits to primary and secondary schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools/institutions, 2005</td>
<td>7,955</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils, 2005</td>
<td>1,657,800</td>
<td>903,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of inspections, 2005</td>
<td>7,069</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- annual inspections</td>
<td>4,789</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- periodic quality inspections</td>
<td>2,280</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 9.2. Inspectorate personnel (as at 31 December)\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff (in numbers)</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff (in FTEs)</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of female staff</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of women on scale 10 and above</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average years of service</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Because of the transfer of monitoring from the KCE to the Inspectorate on 15 November 2007, the statistics are not individually comparable with those of previous years.

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\(^3\) Ministry of Education Annual Report 2007 p.27 (Figure 3.1).
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.

The “Going to School Together” (WSNS; 1996) policy seeks to break down the division between mainstream basisonderwijs and special primary education speciaal basisonderwijs. This led to the introduction on 1 August 1998 of a new Primary Education Act (WPO) 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 mainstream primary education. Since 1 August 1998 all other types of special school listed in the old Special Education Interim Act 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 (WVO). All other forms of special education are governed by the Expertise Centres Act (WEC). 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.

10.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

Appropriate education

A number of parallel systems are in place to provide extra support for pupils while they are in compulsory education. Each system has different processes and admission requirements, as well as different responsibilities and funding systems. An evaluation of the various systems has led to a review of the current approach. The notion of imposing a duty of care has been debated, resulting in plans to introduce a system whereby every pupil would be guaranteed education appropriate to his or her needs.

Appropriate education policy will aim to put in place regional networks that will be able to provide all pupils with education appropriate to their needs, thus reducing waiting lists and long-term absenteeism and improving the quality of education. These regional networks will in principle be formed by connecting existing structures. For categories 3 and 4 (see 10.3.), consortia formed under the ‘Going to School Together’ policy (see 10.5.2.) in primary education will thus be teamed up with similar consortia at secondary level and the regional expertise centres (RECs) (see 10.6.4.).

The key elements of appropriate education policy, as described in the parliamentary papers published in June 2008, are:

- quality of education:
The introduction of attainment targets in special education;
the development of a digital system to track pupils’ progress, linked to an instrument to assess pupils’ potential for development;
the development of new teaching guidelines and materials;
the implementation of quality assurance systems at all schools for special education;
special secondary schools will be responsible for arranging work placements and work placement supervision for pupils;

- development of regional networks;
- involvement of staff and parents:
  - staff:
    - a comprehensive network to support staff professionalisation;
    - involve staff in implementation of appropriate education policy;
    - support teachers in their day-to-day work;
    - support teachers in protecting their interests;
  - parents:
    - provide individual support to parents (both through the regional network and independently in the form of guidance through the process);
    - collective representation of parents’ interests;
    - a systematic approach to quality in the regional network;
- budget management:
  - a one-stop shop for educational needs assessment;
  - multi-year block grants.

The House of Representatives has agreed that appropriate education policy will be implemented in stages. By 2011 a coherent system will have to be in place to address pupils’ individual needs and guarantee that all children receive an education. Legislation will be drawn up concerning the development of regional networks and the obligation on schools to provide education appropriate to each pupil’s needs. Multi-year block grants, which give professionals maximum freedom to develop individualised programmes for all special needs pupils, will be introduced as soon as possible after 2011. Currently, special needs pupils either receive a complete personal budget, or no budget at all.

10.3. Definition and diagnosis of the target group(s)

Prior to 1998 special schools speciaal onderwijs were governed by the Special Education Interim Act (ISOVSO). Mainstream schools and special schools were completely separate. On 1 August 1998 the Primary Education Act 1981 (see 4.2.) and the ISOVSO were replaced by the Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO) and the Expertise Centres Act (WEC). The following types of school fall under these two Acts and the Secondary Education Act (WVO):

Primary Education Act:
- mainstream primary schools
- 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).

Secondary Education Act:
● **mainstream secondary schools**, including pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), learning support (LWOO) and practical training (PRO), which developed from:
  o special secondary schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties (LOM);
  o special secondary schools for children with learning difficulties (MLK).

**Expertise Centres Act:**

● **special schools** for disabled children and children whose education requires a special approach, catering for the primary age group;
● **special schools** for the same category of children, catering for the secondary age group;
● **regional expertise centres (RECs)**, which are consortia of special schools within a particular region, grouped by category.

Education of this type is divided into four categories (as are the RECs):

● **category 1**: schools for the visually impaired;
● **category 2**: schools for hearing impaired children and children with communication disabilities (due to hearing, language or speech difficulties);
● **category 3**: schools for physically or mentally disabled children;
● **category 4**: schools for children with psychiatric or behavioural disorders.

In 2004 94.8% of pupils attended mainstream schools, 3.1% attended special schools for primary education and 2.1% attended a category of special school.

Pupils can be referred from mainstream schools to the different types of special school and vice versa. Pupils can also move from one type of education to another when they finish primary school/special primary school. Individual needs committees and regional referral committees (see 10.5.2. and 5.7.1.1.) determine whether a child is eligible for admission to a special school. An independent committee (see 10.5.3.) decides in which type of school to place them and how much funding they will receive.

Special education is provided at special primary and secondary schools, and at schools providing both special primary and secondary education.

The **Going to School Together** policy (see 10.5.2.) applies to schools that fall under the Primary Education Act. The policy targets all pupils with special needs, but this wide-ranging group can be divided into four specific categories:

● autistic children;
● children suffering from ADHD;
● dyslexic children;
● gifted children.

Schools are responsible for providing these pupils with appropriate education and guidance. To this end, schools and teachers can apply to the ministry for support.

Compensatory policy is applied in the case of children whose language development lags behind and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (see chapters 3.2., 3.13., 4.4. and 5.9.). An autistic child, for instance, might attend a mainstream school in line with WSNS policy, or a special school. 2002 saw the start of the WSNS Plus project, which aims to improve the response to individual needs (see 10.5.2.).
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). School fees are charged from the age of 18.

Parents do have to pay educational expenses, however, i.e. costs linked to education which are not laid down statutorily and for which schools do not receive government funding. This includes the cost of learning materials, the voluntary parental contribution (though schools must admit children even if their parents do not pay this contribution) and travel costs. The WTOS is intended to help parents meet these costs. The study costs allowance is dependent on income and consists (in the case of the maximum possible award) of the full amount of any 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. The purpose of the new Act is to further the integration of and cooperation between mainstream primary schools and certain types of special school (WSNS policy, see 10.5.2.). 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) (see 10.3.). 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 mainstream primary schools and special schools for primary education.

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:

- to enable pupils with special needs to attend mainstream primary schools;
- to control costs by awarding a set budget to consortia of mainstream schools and special schools for primary education, from which the latter schools and special facilities at mainstream primary schools are funded;
- to broaden and strengthen special needs facilities at primary schools basisscholen so that more pupils with special needs can remain in mainstream education and all pupils receive the support they need, at the same time helping to eliminate waiting lists for admission to special schools for primary education.

As a result of the WSNS policy, pupils with special needs are not automatically referred to special schools. The aim is to integrate them in mainstream schools. However, if parents and teachers believe that a pupil would be better placed at a special school for primary education, the parents can register the child with their local individual needs committee (PCL), one of which is attached to each of the above-mentioned regional consortia. The committee decides whether a pupil needs to be placed in a special school for primary education, or whether they require some other kind of special assistance that can be provided at their own school or at another school within the regional network. In line with the WSNS policy, the consortia must ensure that as many children as possible attend mainstream primary schools. Special schools for primary
education are intended for children who cannot cope at mainstream primary schools, even with extra assistance. Part of the budget earmarked for special education now therefore goes to the consortia so that they can provide services for pupils with special needs. Children who qualify for special education are entitled to special funding (see 10.5.3.).

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, and about a quarter of disabled pupils can now attend mainstream schools as a result. Children who require special facilities to attend a mainstream school because of a sensory, physical or mental disability and/or learning difficulties or behavioural problems are awarded a personal budget. This money ‘travels’ with the child if they qualify for special education, but their parents prefer them to attend a local mainstream school, and is intended to pay for staffing and equipment costs and any adaptations that may be necessary to meet the child’s needs.

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 school. In such cases children do not receive a personal budget because they attend a special school. A national supervisory committee (LCTL) 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.

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 mainstream institutions.

Qualifications of teachers at special schools

Primary school teachers are qualified to teach all subjects at special schools. Most teachers who work at special schools also take a master’s degree in special educational needs. After initial teacher training, usually as a primary or secondary school teacher, teachers can follow Special Education Training (OSO), under the auspices of the Platform on Special Education Training (WOSO). Depending on the field of work, it is possible to study for a specialised master’s degree (for instance in teaching children with learning difficulties or disabilities). The institutions offering such courses decide who to admit. It is not compulsory to train as a special education teacher – it is possible to work in special education with mainstream qualifications.
10.6. Separate special provision

10.6.1. Specific legislative framework

Since 1998, schools for children with one or more disabilities (special schools) have been governed by the Expertise Centres Act (WEC). They comprise the following ten types of special education (speciaal onderwijs), divided into four categories (see 10.3):

- deaf and partially hearing children;
- children with severe speech disorders;
- visually impaired children;
- physically disabled children;
- chronically sick children:
  - who are physically disabled;
  - 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 and pupils (admissions).

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

There is no information available about the geographical distribution of special schools. Parents who experience difficulties in arranging transport to and from school for their children can claim back the travel costs if the municipal authorities consider them necessary and acceptable.

10.6.4. Admission requirements and choice of school

The minimum age at which a child can be admitted to special education (speciaal onderwijs) is four, except in the case of deaf and hearing impaired children, who can be admitted at the age of three. The upper age limit for special secondary education is 20.

Parents who have reason to believe their child needs special education can apply to their regional expertise centre (REC). Each REC has an independent committee which decides on the basis of set criteria whether the child should be placed in a special school, in which case they will also qualify for a personal budget. If it is decided that the child needs special education, the parents can either opt for a special school or a
mainstream school in the vicinity. In the case of schools for visually impaired children, the application does not go through the above-mentioned committee but through the schools themselves.

Mainstream primary schools are not obliged to accept children with special needs. They might for instance feel unable to provide the pupil with appropriate education. In such cases, placement at the school would not be in the interests of either the special needs pupil or his or her fellow pupils. The school may accordingly refuse to accept a pupil, though they must provide grounds for their refusal.

If the above-mentioned committee finds that a child has special needs, its parents can refer him or her to the REC, which will then provide help in finding a school, whether special or mainstream. If a school cannot be found, the parents can also apply to an educational adviser or the Admissions and Supervision Advisory Committee (ACTB). Parents can apply to the ACTB if:

- they wish to object to a decision by a mainstream school not to admit their child;
- they do not agree with the school’s individual education plan for their child or the way in which the school intends to use the child’s personal budget;
- the head of the school wishes to expel their child, and they do not agree.

In such cases, parents, schools and RECs can all ask the ACTB for advice. The ACTB usually asks an educational adviser to investigate and if possible resolve the situation. In the event that a solution cannot be found, the ACTB will advise.

The ACTB will be disbanded as of 1 August 2009.

10.6.5. Age levels and grouping of pupils

Special schools *speciaal onderwijs* are free to organise their classes as they wish. Classes are smaller than in mainstream schools 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 dates of the summer holidays 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 *speciaal onderwijs* 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

Practical training is intended for pupils who need extra help because they are disadvantaged or face structural problems (see 5.5.). Pupils in this category who follow one of the learning pathways, possibly in combination with learning support leerwegondersteunend onderwijs, 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 7.10.1.).

10.6.11. Certification

When a pupil leaves primary 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

Special schools can be either privately or publicly run. Article 23 of the Constitution places private and public-authority schools on an equal financial footing, which effectively means that they are also governed by the same legislation. 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

Compensatory policy

Compensatory policy aims to provide every pupil the best possible chances of development, regardless of their family background. In 2007, some 18% of pupils were disadvantaged. They start primary school with an educational disadvantage. It is parents’ level of education, not ethnicity, that determines whether or not a pupil is disadvantaged. Schools receive extra funding for disadvantaged pupils, which is used, for instance, to provide extra language lessons.

Municipalities are given a budget to provide early childhood education to young children aged 2½ to 4 years. Such programmes tackle language disadvantage in young children. Sometimes, municipalities and
primary schools jointly provide bridging classes, where primary school pupils with a language disadvantage receive intensive language training for up to one year.

**Weighting system in primary education**

Children attending special schools for primary education and other special schools (at both primary and secondary level) and immigrant children with special needs fall under the Learning Plus and Newcomers (Secondary Education) Funding Scheme. Under this scheme, schools with a high proportion of ethnic minority pupils may, under certain conditions, be eligible for extra funding.

The weighting system applies to children in mainstream education. The current weighting system was introduced on 1 August 2006 and will be completed in four stages over a four-year period. The new system ties in more with actual problems, focuses more on disadvantaged pupils who are not from ethnic minorities, prevents segregation and is largely determined by the parents’ level of education rather than by their ethnicity and type of employment (see 4.4.).

### 10.8. Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics have been taken from Key Figures 2004-2008 Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands.

*Kerncijfers 2004-2008 Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap*

#### 10.8.1. Pupils

**Table 10.1 Number of pupils in special education (in thousands)**

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<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<td>special secondary schools (VSO)</td>
<td>27.1</td>
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**Table 10.2 Percentage distribution of pupils**

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<td>95.0</td>
<td>95.2</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
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<td>special schools (primary and secondary level) (SO)</td>
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10.8.2. Schools and staff

Table 10.3 Number of schools

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Table 10.4 Average school roll

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</thead>
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<td>special schools for primary education (SBAO)</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>special schools (primary and secondary level) (V)SO</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>205</td>
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</table>

Table 10.5 Number of staff in FTEs per calendar year (in thousands)

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<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Special schools for primary education (SBAO)</td>
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<td>7.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy head teacher</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special schools (primary and secondary level) (V)SO</td>
<td>17.8</td>
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<td>19.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy head teacher</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
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11. The European and international dimension in education

11.1. Historical background

Europe in education

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 (http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates), led to a great many activities to promote internationalisation at Dutch schools. After these Dutch efforts to catch up with other countries, the focus shifted to improving the programmes’ quality and devoting more attention to specific themes like ICT and citizenship.

Recognition of diplomas and qualifications

There are a number of regulations governing the recognition of diplomas and qualifications within Europe. These include two Council of Europe instruments:

- the Protocol to the European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (1953);

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).

In March 2008 the Netherlands acceded to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. This Convention aims to simplify and improve the recognition of higher education diplomas and certificates by the contracting parties.

The European Union does not oblige member states to recognise diplomas gained in other member states. There are, however, EU initiatives for encouraging mutual recognition, such as the Erasmus programme.

The directive on the recognition of professional qualifications regulates the recognition of vocational qualifications in regulated professions, i.e. professions which can only be practised with the government’s approval (e.g. medical professionals must be registered in the BIG Register; teachers require teaching qualifications). This directive, adopted in 2005, combines and replaces some 15 previously existing directives, and allows for the recognition of all levels of vocational qualification. In the Netherlands the directive was
implemented in the Recognition of EC Vocational Qualifications Act of December 2007. There are more than 100 regulated professions in the Netherlands. For more information on recognition procedures see: www.beroepserkenning.nl.

**Bologna Declaration**

The Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science was among the 29 European ministers who signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999 (see 6.1.4.) with the aim of establishing an open higher education area in Europe (www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/). 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 legislation that entered into force in the 2002/2003 academic year, universities and institutions of higher professional education have the option of introducing a bachelor-master system. Most have since done so, in order to strengthen their position in the international education market and respond more effectively to international trends.

**11.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends**

**Internationalisation agenda for MBO**

In January 2009, the internationalisation agenda for secondary vocational education was presented to the House of Representatives. The agenda sketches the current situation and the goals for the short term (2008-2011) and medium term at national, European and international level. The agenda identifies four main objectives:

- to strengthen the international outlook of secondary vocational education:
  - through implementation of the Internationalisation of Vocational Education Programme (PIB). This is a joint programme of the Ministries of Education, Culture & Science and Economic Affairs, the Secondary Vocational Education Council, the Council for Higher Professional Education and the Royal Association MKB Nederland, which represents small and medium-sized businesses. It aims to enhance and expand the international orientation of both pupils and teachers at MBO and HBO, by increasing the opportunities for international experience;
  - by increasing the number of MBO students, currently some 2,400 primarily at levels 3 and 4, who have an international placement or are following courses abroad. This number should grow to 3,200 in 2010. The number of MBO teachers acquiring international experience through study or work placements should also increase;
  - by removing existing obstacles, for instance concerning residence permits or visas; and
  - by making Dutch grants and loans portable, if possible;

- to attract international students to the Netherlands and encourage Dutch students to spend part of their education abroad;
- to strengthen European cooperation;
- to improve the competitiveness of Dutch secondary vocational education at international level.

In addition to supporting the development of gifted students, policy is geared to increasing the international recognition of the vocational qualifications offered in the Netherlands.
Internationalisation agenda for higher education and research

The internationalisation agenda for policy on higher education and research was sent to the House of Representatives in November 2008. It elaborates on the internationalisation strategy laid down in the strategic agenda for higher education and research published in 2007.

The agenda is based on the principle that internationalisation enhances the quality of Dutch higher education and research, which benefits Dutch students and attracts foreign students, teachers and researchers to the Netherlands. Providing good quality is the best means of strengthening the sector’s international reputation.

Decisions concerning internationalisation will still be made independently by the institutions, students and researchers concerned. The government’s role is to encourage and facilitate their choices. Universities, research institutes and institutions for higher professional education should set out their own vision, plans and objectives, and select their own partners abroad. Students and researchers should have more freedom to decide where they wish to continue their studies or research.

In particular, the government’s role in internationalisation will be to:

- increase Dutch students’ international mobility;
- promote a more international outlook at educational institutions;
- increase ‘brain circulation’;
- make the Netherlands a more attractive location for educational and research institutions.

11.3. National policy guidelines/specific legislative framework

By enhancing international cooperation, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science aims to boost the quality of education in the Netherlands and improve international competences of teachers, pupils and students. The Ministry encourages educational institutions, students and teachers to have an international outlook and engage in international partnerships and international exchanges. It supports organisations and institutions operating at international level by, for instance, signing multilateral agreements on the recognition of professional qualifications, quality assurance and accreditation, and bilateral agreements such as memorandums of understanding which provide frameworks for interinstitutional cooperation. Finally, through its participation in multilateral organisations like the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, the Ministry draws on an international body of knowledge that is useful for Dutch national policy.

The international mobility of students and teachers is a straightforward, measurable parameter which is the subject of an annual report by the Ministry to the House of Representatives. The report, ‘International Mobility in Dutch Education’ (Internationale Mobiliteit in het Onderwijs in Nederland) is published annually by the organisations that implement mobility programmes (NUFFIC, CINOP and the European Platform for Dutch Education).

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.
EURYBASE THE NETHERLANDS

- 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, bilateral and international programmes;
- to advise central government on policy implementation;
- to represent government on the management committees of international programmes;
- to support educational institutions with project applications and fund raising.

For national programmes and initiatives in primary and secondary education, see 11.5. and 11.6.

Centre for Innovation in Training

European Platform voor Dutch Education

NUFFIC (Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education)

11.4.1. Bilateral programmes and initiatives

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.

Flemish-Dutch cooperation

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.

German-Dutch cooperation

The aims of policy in this area 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. The cooperation is based on the Dutch-German ‘Gemeinsame Erklärung’ (Joint Statement) of 25 September 2001 including provisions on the transnational mobility of pupils, students and researchers.

- 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 2010, 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.

French-Dutch cooperation

The Franco-Dutch Academy (www.frnl.eu) grew out of the Franco-Dutch cooperation council established in 2002. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science commissions the Franco-Dutch Academy (FNA) to promote and strengthen cooperation between Dutch and French institutions in relation to higher education, research and student mobility. The FNA’s four main activities are:

- organising meetings;
- providing information;
- mediating in and facilitating partnerships and exchanges; and
- promoting the knowledge of French language and culture in the Netherlands.

United Kingdom

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.

11.4.2. Multilateral programmes and initiatives

Lifelong learning

The new lifelong learning programme for 2007/2013 began on 1 January 2007 (see 7.2.). This programme combines the mobility programmes Erasmus (higher education), Leonardo (vocational education), Comenius (first phase of education) and Grundtvig (adult education) into a single mobility programme, with the aim of increasing synergy between the programmes and simplifying their implementation.

Because the Netherlands strongly favours simplifying implementation and decreasing the administrative burden, there is now one lifelong learning agency (LLL, www.na-lll.nl) responsible for implementing the programme in the Netherlands.

Lisbon process

At the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, the EU set itself the objective of becoming a competitive and socially cohesive knowledge-based economy by 2010. The member states adopted objectives that each country was to achieve in its own way. These include: reducing the number of early school leavers, increasing the number of young people who complete upper secondary level education, and increasing the number of science and technology graduates. The member states also agreed that by 2010, 12.5% of 25-64 year-olds would be enrolled in education or training activities. The Netherlands raised this target to 20%. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has joined forces with other ministries and relevant actors to give a fresh boost to the concept of lifelong learning.

As part of the Lisbon process the EU has invited the member states to participate in ‘peer learning’ clusters, meetings of countries that are willing to share their experience in specific areas with other countries that are
still carrying out reforms or changes in the same field. The Netherlands is taking part in the ‘Mathematics, science and technology’, ‘Social inclusion’, ‘Modernising of higher education’, ‘Teachers and trainers’ and ‘Evidence based policy’ clusters.

Europass

The ‘Europass’ decision was adopted during the Dutch Presidency in December 2004. Europass (see also http://europass.cedefop.eu.int/) is a collection of documents which describes the holder’s qualifications and competences in standard 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 competences of the holder).

11.5. European/international dimension of the school curriculum

The European/international dimension of the school curriculum relates to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that make people able and willing to live and work with foreign individuals and organisations, whether in the Netherlands or abroad. It must not be seen as a separate discipline, but rather as an integral part of education as a whole. Internationalisation of education takes several different forms:

- internationalisation of the curriculum, including:
  - the content: instruction in foreign languages, global orientation, European and international developments and institutions, European and global citizenship;
  - the form: internationalisation of both the subjects that pupils take – including early and intensive instruction in foreign languages, bilingual education and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) – and of learning programmes and examinations, not only for children of internationally mobile knowledge workers and expatriates but also for Dutch pupils (e.g. international schools, International Baccalaureate).
- international contacts (see 11.6.):
  - contacts and exchange of information through the use of ICT;
  - travel to other countries by teachers and pupils.

Internationalisation of the curriculum

Efforts have been made for several years now, and continue to be made, to anchor internationalisation more solidly in Dutch education. The binding statutory frameworks, attainment targets and exit qualifications for both primary and secondary education are structured in such a way that these elements are taught in many forms and at many different times. Besides foreign languages, they include citizenship in a diverse society, social integration and global orientation. The subjects history, social studies, geography and economics provide good opportunities to address them.

Attainment targets and exit qualifications are translated into teaching guidelines, usually by the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO). Teaching guidelines are not compulsory, but offer schools
guidance in organising education and publishers guidance in developing teaching materials. Schools decide themselves – within the framework of the law, the attainment targets and the exit qualifications – what they will teach and what teaching materials they will provide their pupils with. This freedom for schools is in keeping with the philosophy of governance that is applied to education as a whole. Civil society organisations have been and are being involved in every aspect of the process, from attainment targets to teaching materials, from exit qualifications to the way in which pupils absorb what they are being taught. Teaching materials on Europe are available in particular from the Knowledge Network, the SLO (www.europaeducatief.nu) and the European Platform (www.europeesplatform.nl).

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.

**International programmes**

Europe as a Learning Environment in Schools (ELOS) is a Dutch initiative, an educational concept for the entire school. There are already over 200 schools in 15 EU countries involved in it. Grants from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science via the European Platform support the roughly 22 ELOS schools in the Netherlands. The European Commission finances the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the ELOS schools, there are also over 100 bilingual schools that devote explicit attention to a European and international Orientation. Besides additional language instruction, at least one experience abroad (usually an exchange programme) is included in the syllabus. This innovative form of education has existed since 1989, and the number of schools involved continues to grow. Some primary schools offer intensive foreign language teaching or early foreign language education. The most common foreign language taught at primary school is English, followed by German or French. Foreign language programmes usually start in year 1 (at the age of 4).

The European Platform coordinates both ELOS and bilingual education.

There are also International Education (IGO) departments within schools, and international baccalaureate certificates are offered. These programmes are also becoming more popular. Pupil numbers have increased from about 2,500 in 1997 to 4,100 in 2007. Three new IGO schools are due to open in the next few years, including a United World College and a European School.

The Netherlands also has several international schools and foreign schools that provide for the children of expatriates and mobile knowledge workers.

**CertiLingua pilot: label of excellence**

CertiLingua is an initiative run by several different European countries to develop an additional European certificate recognising the multilingual ability and European and international orientation of pupils in pre-university education. The pilot will run for two school years, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. In the future it is hoped that the CertiLingua certificate will be of added value when pupils enter higher education. For example, a pupil with this certificate has a good chance of being exempted from a language test when entering higher education in any of the participating countries.

**Bilingual education**

The European Platform for Dutch Education promotes and coordinates bilingual education in Dutch secondary schools on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The standard term for
bilingual education is CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). In this innovative, integrated approach, the content of subjects such as history and biology is taught and learned through the medium of a second language (usually English). This second language is also used for general communication in the classroom.

Bilingual education was introduced to the Netherlands in 1989. In 1999 the European Platform and bilingual schools set up a national bilingual education network (www.netwerktto.europeesplatform.nl). Once a school has been offering bilingual education for four years it can apply to the European Platform for certification. The certificate is based on standards for bilingual education developed by the Platform together with the national network of bilingual schools. To date (2008/2009) there are 54 certified schools, while 101 schools offer bilingual tuition at pre-university level. In 2008, 25 schools offered bilingual tuition at HAVO level. One school has a bilingual Dutch-German stream, including at VMBO level.

In Friesland, a pilot project in trilingual primary education (De Trijetalige Skoalle) has been running since 1997. At the six schools involved in the project Dutch, Frisian and – in years 7 and 8 only – English are the mediums of instruction for non-language subjects.

Research has shown that this form of teaching is entirely positive in its effects: trilingually trained pupils are much better at English and Frisian than their peers. Moreover, the bilingual approach does not in any way inhibit content learning or the acquisition of Dutch. The greatest obstacles to the further development of bilingual education are the shortage of suitably qualified teachers, and the Primary Education Act (WPO), which stipulates that Dutch should be the medium of instruction in primary education in the Netherlands.

**Early foreign language education (VVTO)**

At the Lisbon European Council (2000) and the Barcelona European Council (2002), the European member states agreed to encourage schools to offer teaching in at least two foreign languages to young children. The number of primary schools offering VVTO has grown in the last few years. The most common languages taught are English, German and French. Some schools also teach Spanish.

**Table 11.1 Primary schools offering early foreign language learning (2009)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Italian/Portuguese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intensive foreign language teaching (VTO)**

The European Platform for Dutch Education also encourages intensive foreign language learning. In addition to the compulsory language lessons on their school timetable, pupils receive extra tuition in a foreign language, for instance from a native-speaker teacher or language assistant. See also the Eurydice publication on bilingual education in Europe, with detailed information about individual countries.

**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 given to increasing transparency and recognising vocational qualifications (the Copenhagen process). During the Dutch EU Presidency in 2004 the Copenhagen process was taken a step further in the form of the Maastricht Communiqué. Agreements include:

- vocational education must, at national level, be made more accessible for target groups that risk being excluded from the employment market;
- the concept of lifelong learning must be further developed;
- recognising non-formal and formal education must be made a priority.

The key elements of the Maastricht Communiqué are:

- the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which ensures that national qualifications are transparent and can be compared with one another. Participation is voluntary;
- the European Credit Transfer System for vocational training (ECVET), a system for the transfer, accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes in vocational education and training, based on the voluntary participation of member states;
- the Europass; this consists of five documents in which European Union citizens can record details of previous training, work placements, qualifications and skills in a uniform manner, ultimately using the EQF (see § 11.4.2).

Beginning in 2006, mobility programmes and Ministry of Education, Culture and Science resources are being integrated into a new scholarship programme, the Huygens Scholarship Programme (HSP), for which up to five million euros a year was earmarked in 2006. The aim of this national programme is to award international competitive scholarships in order to attract talented students, keep them in the Netherlands and send them abroad on assignment. Part of the budget is intended for talented Dutch students who want to study abroad.

11.6.1. Mobility and exchange of pupils/students

Primary and secondary education

There is a great deal of short-term mobility within primary and secondary education. A range of scholarship programmes are run by the European Platform for Dutch Education in order to promote internationalisation in primary and secondary schools. They include EU-funded programmes with a European focus, bilateral programmes and BIOS (Encouraging International Orientation and Cooperation), the national programme funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Some programmes are designed for pupils or for teachers and heads of schools, both prospective and qualified, while others focus on language, teacher training and special projects.

BIOS activities for pupils

This programme aims to enhance the quality of education through direct international contacts or special language activities. The programme is designed for pupils in secondary education and consists of the following activities:

- exchanges between Dutch pupils (classes, groups and/or individuals) and pupils of schools in one or more other countries;
- the participation of Dutch pupils in meetings with pupils from schools in at least two other countries;
- fact-finding visits for teachers in the context of the above activities;
- visits abroad by individual pupils in connection with a training placement or study project.
In principle the visit should last a minimum of 5 days in the exchange country and 5 days in the Netherlands. A shorter stay is possible if valid reasons can be provided.

There are additional programmes aimed at promoting educational cooperation with Germany and Flanders.

**Germany**

There are a range of opportunities for cooperative activities with Germany. They apply to individual pupils, teachers and trainee teachers of German, school classes and groups of pupils and teachers.

- Agreements have been made with nine German Länder about actively linking up primary and secondary schools for partnership activities.
- Pupil exchanges under the BIOS scheme (see above).
- A Euregio project promoting multilingualism at Dutch primary schools and German kindergartens was launched on 1 April 2009. In the Netherlands, the project is implemented by the European Platform. Language assistants will be deployed at schools near the Dutch-German border in order to promote multilingualism. The project will run to 31 October 2011.

**Flanders**

Every year, over 40 Dutch primary school teachers from a pre-selected region attend ‘participatory training’ in Flanders. Participants are also required to assist in coaching Flemish partners in the Netherlands. The selected themes are linked to Dutch-Flemish cooperation at policy level.

**Vocational education**

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the European Commission have set up mobility programmes to promote internationalisation in vocational education. The BAND programme (Bilaterales Austauschprogramm Niederlande-Deutschland) ([www.cinop.nl/projecten/band](http://www.cinop.nl/projecten/band)) fosters partnerships between German and Dutch institutions. The Leonardo da Vinci project aims to promote innovation in vocational education. Only a small proportion of the total number of pupils in adult and vocational education are involved in international activities. There are three possible types of project:

- pupil exchanges;
- fact-finding visits by pupils as well as teachers;
- guest lectureships.

**Higher education**

There are three mobility options in higher education:

- diploma mobility: students complete a course in another country and gain a diploma or degree;
- credit mobility: students earn credits through study in another country, which count towards their course in the Netherlands, usually through a part-time course or placement;
- programme-based mobility: covers other types of study.

Each year the European Union and the Dutch government make grants available for students wishing to take up a placement or otherwise study abroad through various mobility programmes. A summary of the grants can be found on Nuffic’s dedicated website, [www.beursopener.nl](http://www.beursopener.nl).

The following figures give an indication of incoming and outgoing mobility (see 11.7.):

- Between 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 the percentage of foreign students registered in the Netherlands rose from 6.6% to 6.9%, mostly due to an increase in participation in university education.
Key countries of origin in 2007/2008 were: Germany (16,750 students, almost 40% of all foreign students in the Netherlands), China (4,750 students) and Belgium (2,450 students).

According to the most recent survey, some 41,000 Dutch students studied abroad in 2004/2005. More than 13,000 registered for a diploma course at a foreign higher education institution, while 28,000 gained credits abroad.

- More detailed information on the latter group is only available on students who received an EU or government grant; 5,900 students participated in the EU’s Erasmus or Leonardo da Vinci programmes.
- 10,450 students were registered with a higher education institution in one of the 27 EU member states.

The most popular destinations in 2004/2005 were the United Kingdom (4,100 students), Belgium (3,350 students) and Germany (2,100 students).

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.

**BIOS teacher mobility**

BIOS (Encouraging International Orientation and Cooperation) is one of the programmes funded by the Ministry. It was launched in 2008 and will run to 2011. The programme includes the following activities:

- study visits by teachers and head teachers of schools and teacher training institutions;
- in-service training abroad for students at teacher training institutions.

Participants can visit any country which has something to offer the Dutch education system. As a rule, study visits last between five days and three weeks, and have a programme of at least four full days per week. Grants can also be awarded for shorter study visits.

The study visit must make a clear contribution to the professionalisation of the teacher or head of school in question.

**BIOS language programme (bilingual education, intensive foreign language teaching, language assistants)**

The objective of this programme is to improve pupils’ skills in English, French or German (and other modern foreign languages) by encouraging bilingual education, intensive foreign language teaching, early foreign language learning and the use of native speakers as language assistants.

Language assistants receive a monthly grant from the European Platform. Grants are available for the other areas to cover up to 75% of the costs of in-service training for teachers, the purchase of teaching materials, the development of transferable products and instruments, and, in the case of bilingual education, one preparatory coordination session.

**Germany**

Since the 2001/2002 academic year the European Platform and the University of Utrecht/IVLOS Institute of Education have jointly run the programme ‘From language assistant to German teacher’, which prepares...
participants for teaching jobs in Dutch secondary schools. A maximum of ten native speakers from Germany and Austria with university degrees in German Studies or Teaching German as a Foreign Language take part. In the first year of the project, they receive a monthly grant and work as teaching assistants in the German departments of Dutch secondary schools while training for the Dutch qualification of grade one German teacher. In the second year they graduate and move into regular paid work as teachers.

Another programme available since 2006/2007 is the assistant-to-teacher programme run jointly with the INHOLLAND Institution of Higher Professional Education in Amstelveen. The programme enables ten native German speakers who have completed the required courses to train at higher professional education level to become a grade two German teacher.

In addition to this, each school year some 20 native German speakers are brought in as language assistants to support German teachers in primary and secondary schools and in teacher training colleges.

**France**

Each academic year some 20 native French speakers are brought in as language assistants and French teachers to boost the teaching of French in primary and secondary schools and in teacher training colleges.

### 11.7. Statistics

The following statistics are taken from ‘Internationalisation of Education in the Netherlands 2007’ (*Internationalisering in het Onderwijs in Nederland* 2007).

#### 11.7.1. Teacher and pupil mobility in primary and secondary education

**Table 11.2 Number of schools that have received a grant from the European Platform**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total number of schools*</th>
<th>Schools with grants for mobility programmes</th>
<th>Participating schools (as % of total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>primary</td>
<td>secondary</td>
<td>primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>6,986</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>6,970</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>6,941</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* excluding special schools for primary education

**Table 11.3 Participation by Dutch primary and secondary pupils and teachers in activities abroad**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>21,313</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>22,061</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>24,152</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11.7.2. Participation in internationalisation projects (adult and vocational education)

Table 11.4 Outgoing mobility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAND *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outgoing students</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outgoing teachers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonardo da Vinci</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>young employed people</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pupils</td>
<td>1,971</td>
<td>2,646</td>
<td>2,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching staff</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*promotes partnerships between Dutch and German institutions providing vocational education

11.7.3. Higher education mobility programmes

Table 11.5 Total outgoing students (Nuffic-managed programmes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,492</td>
<td>6,424</td>
<td>6,328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*estimated participation in Leonardo

**estimated participation in Leonardo/Erasmus

Table 11.6 Total outgoing students (European mobility programmes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus</td>
<td>4,742</td>
<td>4,623</td>
<td>4,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonardo</td>
<td>1,139</td>
<td>1,139</td>
<td>1,139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*estimated participation in Leonardo

**estimated participation in Leonardo/Erasmus
### Table 11.7 Dutch students taking part in Dutch and foreign mobility programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSB**</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISIE***</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent Programme</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSP-TP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta****</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural treaties</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*estimated

**VSB Fund Grant is awarded to students at universities and HBO institutions, and enables them to pursue studies or research abroad after graduation.

***VISIE scheme: students do all their studies within Europe (ran until 31 October 2003; current students continue to receive funding until the end of their studies).

****Delta: Dutch Education – Learning at Top Level Abroad.

### Table 11.8 Country of origin of incoming students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>9,213</td>
<td>11,898</td>
<td>12,971</td>
<td>16,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>3,903</td>
<td>3,835</td>
<td>3,493</td>
<td>4,750</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2,237</td>
<td>2,176</td>
<td>2,087</td>
<td>2,450</td>
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### Table 11.9 Incoming students on European mobility programmes

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,793</td>
<td>9,929</td>
<td>9,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus</td>
<td>6,842</td>
<td>6,842</td>
<td>6,842</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*estimate
### Table 11.10 Incoming students on Dutch mobility programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IAESTE</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libertas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huygens</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSP-HP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>1,291</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFP</td>
<td>1,364</td>
<td>1,937</td>
<td>1,532</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11.11 Destination country of Erasmus participants

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11.12 Country of origin of Erasmus participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11.13 Erasmus – extent of mobility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incoming students</td>
<td>6,842</td>
<td>6,965</td>
<td>6,842*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outgoing students</td>
<td>4,743</td>
<td>4,624</td>
<td>4,503</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*estimate
**assistentopleiding** (assistentopleidingen): Training at assistant level (vocational education, assistant level). Courses at assistant level last 6 to 12 months and lead to a vocational qualification at level 1. There are four levels, level 1 being the lowest. There are no requirements regarding previous education. Most students are at least 16 years old.

**atheneum**: Modern grammar school. The 'atheneum' is one of three types of school for pre-university education (vwo) and is for pupils aged 12 to 18 years. No Greek or Latin is taught. The other types of vwo school are the "gymnasium" and the "lyceum".

**basisberoepsopleiding** (basisberoepsopleidingen, beroepsopleiding, beroepsopleidingen): Basic vocational training - secondary vocational education. Basic vocational training lasts 2 to 3 years and leads to a vocational qualification at level 2. There are four levels, level 4 being the highest. There are no requirements regarding previous education.

**basisonderwijs** (basisschool, basisscholen): Primary education (mainstream schools). Primary education is provided at primary schools and caters for children from 4 to about 12 years of age. Primary education consists in principle of eight consecutive years of schooling. Since 1998 the term primary education encompasses both ordinary primary schools and special schools for primary education.

**centraal examen**: Het centraal examen is een landelijk afsluitend examen en voor alle scholen gelijk. Het maakt samen met het schoolexamen deel uit van het eindexamen voor voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs (vwo), hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs (havo), voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (vmbo) en het middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (mbo).

**certificaat** (certificaten): Certificate. Certificates are awarded to students who successfully complete a course in a particular subject or obtain a partial qualification. Students with several certificates who have completed a full programme of study are awarded a diploma. Certificates can be obtained in general secondary education.

**deelkwalificatie** (deelkwalificaties): Partial qualification. The exit qualifications in secondary vocational education (secundair beroepsonderwijs) indicate the knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire. Examination syllabuses are based on the exit qualifications and arranged in parts which are equivalent to partial qualifications.

**diploma** (diploma's): Students who successfully complete certain programmes of study are awarded a diploma. This applies to general secondary education (avo), pre-university education (vwo), secondary vocational education (mbo), adult and vocational education.

**educatie** (educaties): Adult education. Adult education aims to help adults play an active part in society. It encompasses adult general secondary education (vavo), courses providing a broad education, courses in Dutch as a second language and courses aimed at fostering social self-reliance.

**eindexamen** (eindexamens): Leaving examination (national examination, internal examination). The leaving examinations for pre-university education (vwo), senior general secondary education (havo), junior general secondary education (mavo old style) and the general subjects in pre-vocational secondary education.

**Eindtoets Basisonderwijs** (CITO-toets, Citotoets, cito-toets): Primary school leaving examination - CITO test. This is a series of tests which schools can use to measure their results and compare them with those of other schools. Almost 90% of all primary schools made use of the primary school leaving examination developed by the the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO).
examen (examens): Examination - national examination. Examinations mark the end of a programme of study or part of a programme of study. Students have completed pre-university education (vwo), senior general secondary education (havo), or pre-vocational secondary education.

expertisecentrum (expertisecentra, regionaal expertisecentrum, regionale expertisecentra, rec, rec’s, regionale expertise centra): The generic term for pools of special schools and secondary special schools (for handicapped children, the so-called 2/3 schools). Each pool/centre must represent at least one of the main categories of special school, i.e. - schools for deaf children, partially hearing children and children with severe speech disorders, who may also be multiply disabled; - 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; - 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). Schools for visually impaired children do not take part in such pools.

getuigschrift (getuigschriften): Certificate. Higher professional education (hbo) and university (wo) graduates receive a certificate stating the name of the programme of study and the subjects studied. In the case of teacher training courses, the level at which the holder is qualified is also stated on the certificate.

gymnasium: Classical grammar school - The ‘gymnasium’ is one of three types of school for pre-university education (vwo) and is for pupils aged 12 to 18 years. Greek and Latin are compulsory. The other types of vwo school are the 'atheneum' and the 'lyceum'.

hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs (havo): Senior general secondary education (havo). Senior general secondary education (havo) is one of three types of secondary education, the other two being pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo from 1 August 1999, replacing gradually vbo and mavo) and pre-university education (vwo).

hoger beroepsonderwijs (hbo, hogere beroepsopleiding): Higher professional education (hbo). Higher professional education lasts four years and is for students aged 18 to 22 years. It provides theoretical and practical training for a range of occupations.

hoger onderwijs (ho): Higher education (ho). Higher education is for students aged from around 18 years and comprises higher professional education (hbo) and university education (wo).

leerwegondersteunend onderwijs (lwoo): Learning support. Learning support: division within pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo) for pupils who have problems to follow the normal teaching programme, and who need more individual support than in the regular pre-vocational secondary education (aimed at obtaining a regular vmbo-diploma).

lyceum: Integrated grammar school. The 'lyceum' is one of three types of school for pre-university education (vwo) and is for pupils aged 12 to 18 years. Greek and Latin are optional. The other types of vwo school are the 'atheneum' and the 'gymnasium'.

middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (mbo, secundair beroepsonderwijs, beroepsonderwijs, BVE): Secondary vocational education. Secondary vocational education follows on from pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo) and is for pupils aged from around 16. There are four levels of training: assistant level, basic vocational level, professional level and middle-management or specialist level.

middenkaderopleiding (beroepsonderwijs): Middle-management training (secondary vocational education). Middle-management training courses last 3 to 4 years and lead to a qualification at level 4, the highest level of vocational qualification. The admission requirements are a pre-vocational education diploma, or succesful completion of the first three years of havo or vwo.

onderwijskundig rapport: Educational report. At the end of their primary schooling, pupils do not receive a certificate or diploma, but an educational report describing their level of attainment and potential. This report is drawn up by the school head following consultation of the teaching staff.
Open Universiteit (OU) : Open University (OU). The Open University is an establishment of higher education offering distance learning courses at university level for people aged 18 and over. The OU caters primarily for persons who are unable or unwilling to study within a regular institution for higher education.

opleidingen Nederlands als tweede taal (Nederlands als tweede taal) : Courses in Dutch as a second language (adult education). Courses in Dutch as a second language are part of adult education provision and are designed to bring the language skills of non-native speakers up to an acceptable level. The courses are open for adults only.

praktijkonderwijs : Practical training For pupils who are not expected to obtain a vmbo diploma even with constant extra support, there is an option of practical training. This is a special form of secondary education preparing pupils for direct entry to low-skilled jobs.

primair onderwijs (PO) : Primary education is provided at mainstream and special primary schools (schools for 'basisonderwijs' and 'speciaal basisonderwijs') and caters for children from (3 or) 4 to around 12 years of age. Primary education consists in principle of eight consecutive years.

regionaal opleidingencentrum (regionale opleidingencentra, roc’s) : Regional institution providing courses within the meaning of the Adult and Vocational Education Act: secondary vocational education courses for students aged 16-18/20 years and adult education courses for adults from the age of 18.

scholengemeenschap (scholengemeenschappen) : Combined school. Secondary schools that offer more than one type of course (vmbo, havo or vwo) are known as combined schools. Very few schools now offer only one form of education.

schoolexamen (schoolexamens) : Internal examination. (national examination, leaving examination). The leaving examinations for pre-university education (vwo), senior general secondary education (havo) and pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo) is divided into two parts: the internal examination and the national examination. The school itself organises the internal examination.

speciaal basisonderwijs (speciale scholen voor basisonderwijs, speciale school voor basisonderwijs) : Special primary education is a form of primary education for children with specific educational needs, aged from 3 to around 12 years. Special primary education is provided at separate schools, for children with developmental difficulties.

speciaal onderwijs (so) : Special education (so) and secondary special education (vso). Special education is provided in schools catering for either the primary or secondary age group or both. It is governed by the Expertise Centres Act and is divided into: - schools for visually impaired children; - schools for deaf children, partially hearing children and children with severe speech disorders, who may also be multiply disabled; - 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; - 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).

spezialistenopleiding : Specialist training (secondary vocational education). Specialist training courses last 1 to 2 years and lead to a qualification at level 4, the highest level of vocational qualification. Applicants must have a professional training qualification for an equal profession or category of professions.

studiehuis (studiehuizen) : Schools as ‘places of study’. From the school year 1999/2000 the concept of schools as ‘places of study’ is introduced in the second stage of secondary education (the fourth and fifth years of all schools for havo and the fourth, fifth and sixth years of vwo). In these ‘places of study’ acquiring knowledge by students rather than offering knowledge by teachers is emphasized.

universitaire lerarenopleiding (ulo) : University-based teacher training course (ulo). For qualifying as a secondary school teacher, university graduates can take a post-graduate teacher training course.
vakopleiding (vakopleidingen): Professional training - secondary vocational education. Professional training courses last 2 to 4 years and lead to a vocational qualification at level 3. There are four levels, level 4 being the highest. The admission requirements are a pre-vocational secondary education diploma or a successful completion of the first three years of havo or vwo.

voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (vmbo): Pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo) On 1 August 1999 a new type of secondary education is introduced, pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo). It consists of learning pathways which replace the old pre-vocational education (vbo) and the old junior general secondary education (mavo).

voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs (vwo): Pre-university education (vwo). Pre-university education (vwo) is one of three types of secondary education, the other two being junior general secondary education (mavo) and senior general secondary education (havo). Pre-university education lasts six years.

voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs (vavo): Adult general secondary education (vavo). Adult general secondary education (vavo) is one of the four types of adult education courses under the 1997 Adult and Vocational Education Act. Vavo courses are for adults who wish to obtain a mavo-, havo- or vwo-diploma.

voortgezet onderwijs (VO): Secondary education (vo). Secondary education (vo) follows on from ordinary and special primary education and is for pupils aged 12 and up. It comprises pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo), senior general secondary education (havo) and pre-university education.

voortgezet speciaal onderwijs (vso): Secondary special education (vso). Secondary special education is provided in schools catering for either the secondary age group. It is governed by the Expertise Centres Act and is divided into: - schools for visually impaired children; - schools for deaf children, partially hearing children and children with severe speech disorders, who may also be multiply disabled; - 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; - 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).

wetenschappelijk onderwijs (wo): University education (wo). University education includes both fundamental theoretical studies and specialised training for particular occupations. Most university degree courses last four years, although some professions require a longer period of training.
LEGISLATION


INSTITUTIONS

Association of Centres of Expertise on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market
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Tel: +31/(0)79 - 352 30 00
Fax: +31/(0)79 - 351 54 78
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Centre for Innovation in Training
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E-mail: info@cinop.nl
Website: http://www.cinop.nl

Cfi (Centrale Financiën Instellingen)
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Website: http://www.cfi.nl

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Website: http://www.hbo-raad.nl

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Fax: +31/(0)30 - 22 02 506
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Website: http://www.mboraad.nl/web/show (23-8-2007)

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Website: http://www.nuffic.nl

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Fax: +31/(0)70-3877429
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Website: http://www.vsnu.nl
http://www.minocw.nl/documenten/eerste_opvang.pdf (24-4-2008)


http://www.nuffic.nl/nederlandse-organisaties/informatie/kerncijfers-mobiliteit (07-07-2008)


http://www.wrr.nl/dsc?c=getobject&s=object&sessionid=11WzcZJjs3tI8jb90WMdxKwqyxTegM35UqYyWRZ1zCSrob8aqys3l14qVxDU@p&objectid=4769&ldname=default&isapidir=/gvisapi (28-04-2009)
http://web.kennisnet2.nl/attachments/session=cloud_mmbase+1747040/4InBalans2008_2+0_webversie.pd fjsessionid=B5E144248AECA243176C49F5B75C9ABD (28-04-2009)

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