

Achieving the Lisbon Goal:
The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems

Country Report: Netherlands

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This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report: **Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET**, prepared by the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium for the European Commission. This report is not intended as an official view. But rather independent insight into specific aspects of National VET systems in Europe.



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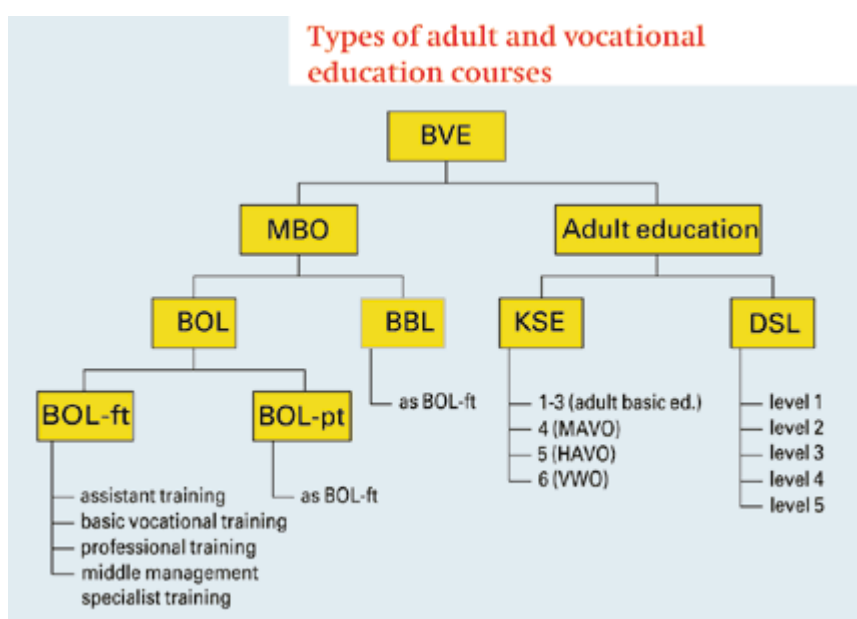
1 Theme 1 - Progress of national VET systems towards meeting the challenges of Lisbon

1.1 Strategies and barriers for improving the status, flexibility and attractiveness of Initial VET (IVET).

1.1.1 Raise the status of IVET?

Short history, structure and developments that affect status/attractiveness.

During the early nineties, the need arose to change the system for education and training towards a more integrated national system. Important factors were: decentralisation, integration of different education and training structures into one national qualification structure, creating regional knowledge centres instead of a huge number of small schools. These priorities were implemented through the WEB Act -the Act on Vocational and Adult Education which came into force in 1996. This Act was the first one to bring together all types of secondary vocational education and adult education. This development aimed to strengthen and further integrate the system of initial and post-initial vocational education, apart from general education. In the Act accessibility and flexibility was emphasized. Moreover, to address to regional needs and development, more local autonomy was promoted.



Five policy priorities for 2003 to 2006

The Minister and Secretary of State responsible for education have formulated five policy priorities for the 2003 to 2006 period. They opt for a

new relationship between government and society and propose more responsibility for education institutions. The five priorities focusing specifically on the VET sector are:

1. *Autonomy and accountability - fewer rules, more education*

In secondary and higher vocational education the administrative load will be reduced. In secondary vocational education the number of approved qualifications will be radically reduced.

A pre-condition in the process to more autonomy is the quality of the outcomes (quality assurance) and accountability.

2. *An attractive teaching profession*

A point of concern is the shortage of qualified teachers. The social partners, schools, institutions and the government will have to tackle this problem. Function differentiation, better career perspectives for teachers and the attraction of people from other sectors are some of the issues. In December 2002, the Minister sent a 'Labour market and personnel policy' action plan to the Second Chamber. It proposed measures to handle the shortage of teachers at regional level. (See also chapter 2.4)

3. *An improved policy for vertical streaming*

The transfer from pre-vocational to secondary vocational and higher professional education is necessary to respond to the demands of the knowledge society. A new pedagogical-didactical approach for all sectors in vocational education is in the development phase to create a smooth transfer. The career of the student is at the centre of this policy and a better cooperation of all government departments concerned should guarantee a lower drop out rate. The pre-vocational education sector needs extra emphasis and support to improve its quality and image. The government also wishes to cooperate with other EU-countries to increase transparency in international vocational education.

4. *Modern facilities*

New teaching methods, powerful learning environments, the new functions and requirements of education and training and the need for small scale environments all demand modern, flexible facilities. A vision on the further integration of ICT in education will be elaborated.

5. *The learner at the centre*

For every learner, an adequate transfer should be guaranteed from pre-I to primary school, from primary to secondary education, from the various forms of vocational education to higher education and from learning at school to learning on the job. Learners leaving the education system should have attained a basic qualification to enter the labour market. A better cooperation between education and trade and industry is essential to make this possible.

In 2003 three themes were at the centre of developments- the qualification structure for vocational education based on competences, practical training and the examination process¹.

¹ Cedefop Info 1/2003

The two-yearly policy document **Koers BVE**² is published in June 2004 and provides an overview of trends, agenda's and action plans in Dutch VET. Regional cooperation is the leading theme. Three action areas are central in the VET-policy for the next years:

1. Room for innovation
2. Room for the learner
3. Room for educational institutions

Specific actions and measures will be mentioned where appropriate in this country-report.

Unravelling Policy, Power, Process and Performance

This evaluation report was published spring 2004 and presents the results of a two-year evaluation study (1999-2001) of the new Dutch Adult and Vocational Education Act of 1996 (WEB). The main objectives of this Act are to provide a variety of customised study programmes at different levels, so that the individual needs of students can be better served, and to improve the match between vocational education and the labour market. The Act prescribed that the Minister of Education must report to the Dutch Lower Chamber on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Act before January 1, 2002.

The central themes of this evaluation study are: the responsiveness of the system, flexibility, the quality of the teaching and learning processes, the regulation of the output and the quality of the self-regulated institutions. The study highlights the classic problem of policy-makers with regard to presenting their visions and ambitions, the dilemmas of implementation, the lack of communication and cooperation, and the power role play according to the Dutch "polder" model. Although a great deal of autonomy and responsibility is given to the players in the VET field to build a VET system that has optimal flexibility and effectiveness, the reality is rather different and the quality debatable.

Attractivity : facts & figures – participation rates

VET- secondary vocational education in the Netherlands – the number of participants is growing in 2003 with 2 % to 454.000. The number of participants in Adult education (mainly immigrants) is 156.000 (October 2003).

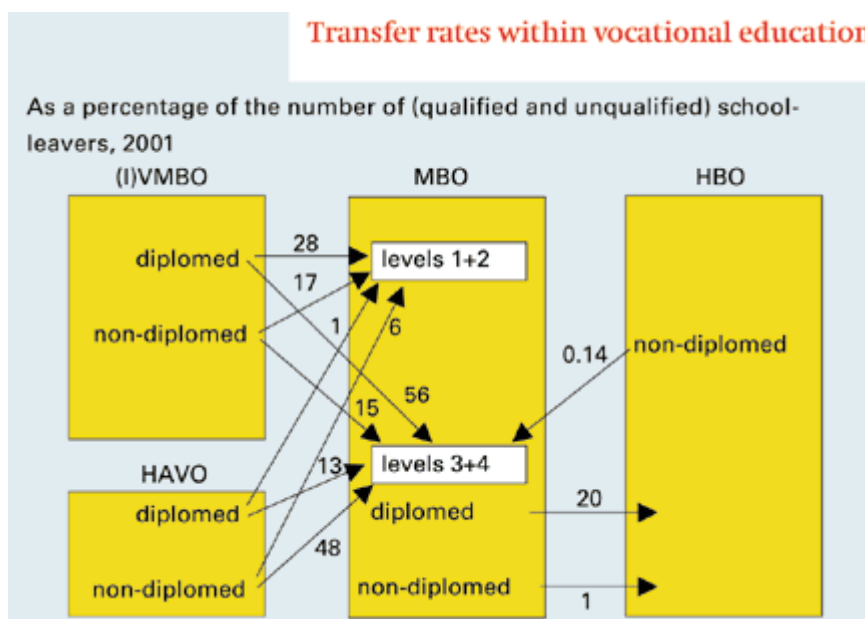
In 2002, a further step has been taken in the development of a new national qualification structure. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has asked the association of national lead bodies (COLO) to develop a new structure matching modern society by emphasising competence based learning.

Also, the ambition to provide school-leavers and employees with a starting qualification (level 2 of the qualification structure secondary vocational education (BOL/BBL) or a secondary general vocational diploma is seen as

² 'Koers BVE- het regionale netwerk aan zet'. The Hague, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2004. <http://www.minocw.nl/koersbve/index.html>. Not available in English.

an important tool to improve the labour market position of groups at risk. (See chapter 1.2)

One of the main policy concerns is the transfer from pre-vocational education to secondary vocational education and to higher professional education, and to create a smooth transfer within the 'vocational education column' next to the general education column. A well established vocational education route is necessary to respond to the demands of the knowledge society.



Transfer rates and number of school-leavers

In 2000, some 187,000 participants left vocational education.

Of the school-leavers, 60 % have obtained a certificate (from the course attended last); 40 % have not obtained a certificate. To calculate the number of students leaving without a certificate, only the course attended last has been taken into consideration. Some of these students may have already obtained a certificate at a lower level in vocational education. Of the participants obtaining a certificate in BOL-ft, almost 30 % move on to HBO in 2000 (in 1999, this was still more than 32 %).

Across the board, almost three out of every four participants that either drop out or obtain a certificate leave school altogether (therefore, vocational education is largely regarded as terminal education). The remaining 26 % transfer to another MBO course (14 %), move on to HBO (8 %) or move on to other types of education (4 %). In 2000, transfer rates to HBO were lower than they had been for years. In 1999, 10 % still transferred to HBO.

Quite a few participants leaving adult education courses transfer to other types of adult education. A limited number of adult education participant's transfers to vocational education. Many institutions are developing policies to encourage these types of transfers. Some institutions are already offering dual programmes.

Labour market position of MBO certificate holders

RUBS

The RUBS study (Registering the Leaving and Destination of School-leavers) that is conducted annually by the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) is aimed at school-leavers from general secondary education, pre-vocational education and the vocational training (BOL) and block or day release programmes (BBL) of secondary vocational education.

Job market for MBO certificate holders

In the last five years, favourable economic development has led to a large shortage in staff. There has also been a severe shortage of MBO certificate holders (upper secondary vocational education students). This shortage is reflected in the low unemployment figures. Less than 2 % of the MBO certificate holders are unemployed one and a half years after graduating. The shortage of staff is also noticeable in a wide range of other fields. Salaries have risen sharply as a result. In 2001, school-leavers earned some 30 % more than school-leavers in 1997. In 2001 this increase was the largest: approximately 10 %. This sharper increase in salaries in 2001 is linked to both the shortage on the labour market and to the increasing inflation. As a result of this shortage, the attraction of the labour market is growing in strength. In 1997, more than 30 % of the MBO certificate holders chose to move on to a subsequent study programme; in 2001 this group was less than one-fourth of the whole.

The labour market for study programmes at levels 3 and 4 looks rosy. Unemployment is very low. The technical study programmes and studies in health care are particularly promising. The salaries are relatively high, the number of flexible contracts is low and many have found a job that fits well with their training. The economic study programmes lag behind this somewhat. Those who have completed BBL at levels 3 and 4 with economic training, for instance, earn some 3 euro gross per hour less than their contemporaries with health care training. A difference, however, is that the quality of the alignment of training and job seems to be much less important for people trained in economics than it is for those trained in health care.

The labour market position of study programmes at levels 1 and 2 is weaker than it is for study programmes at levels 3 and 4. This is not so explicitly expressed in unemployment figures.

Work experience

Although vocational training (BOL) and block or day release programmes (BBL) are intended to give the certificate holders an equal position, considerable differences can be observed in the transition from school to the workplace.

Those who have obtained a BBL certificate tend to find work more quickly, are given a permanent position sooner and earn more than those with a BOL certificate. The work experience gained in BBL is seemingly rewarded by the employer.

On the other side, BBL certificate holders tend to be dissatisfied about the level of their first job. Of all the BBL certificate holders surveyed, only 38 %

think that the level of the study programme fits in well with the job. Among BOL participants, this is 66 %.

Social position of MBO certificate holders, 1997-2001, in percentages

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Paid employment	66	66	68	68	71
Unemployed	2	2	1	1	1
Student	32	30	28	28	24
Other	0	2	3	2	4

Participants in adult education

In the 2001/02 course year, the number of participants in adult education courses totalled 167,000. A significant number (60 %) took Dutch as a second language (DSL) courses (in particular levels 1 or 2).

Over the past few years, the number of participants in adult general secondary education (VAVO) is declining. In 2002, it accounted for only 12 % of the total number of participants in adult education. Priority is given to integration courses, DSL and oldcomers (persons of non-Dutch origin who have been participating in society for a number of years but who do not speak Dutch).

Within adult education, the proportion of immigrants continues to rise. A contributing factor is the compulsory participation of newcomers in the Netherlands.

Image- attractiveness – barriers

- A direct link between legal measures and educational practice is nonexistent
- At political and institutional levels, the main reaction is to establish more and more detailed prescriptions to improve VET delivery. This is counterproductive.
- Institutional behaviour should be changed from prescriptive to supportive to colleges for delivering flexible and attractive VET.
- Educational policy-making is not always a rational procedure and evidence-based³.
- The overall opinion of craftsmanship in general and VET in particular should be raised and embedded in Dutch society. There is a decrease of enrolment of students in technical level-4 courses.
- Problems in society have to be dealt with in education

³ Wim J. Nijhof & Wil van Esch (ed.). Unravelling Policy, Power, Process and Performance : The Formative Evaluation of the Dutch Adult and Vocational Education Act. 's- Hertogenbosch : CINOP, 2004.

- Parents who received a good education have a problem with the fact that their children are in pre-vocational education schools where the social manners differ from general education.
- Social and physical environment of VET is not attractive. Unsafety
- Schools are too big and become monopolists in the region.
- Segregation: black-white schools
- Disability to innovate and negative image intensify the problem
- The educational pathways from VMBO to MBO and HBO need to be improved so students can pass easily from one to the other and the number of early school leavers is kept to a minimum.
- The pre-vocational education sector needs extra emphasis and support to improve its quality and image.

1.1.2 Improve the status-image - attractiveness of IVET?

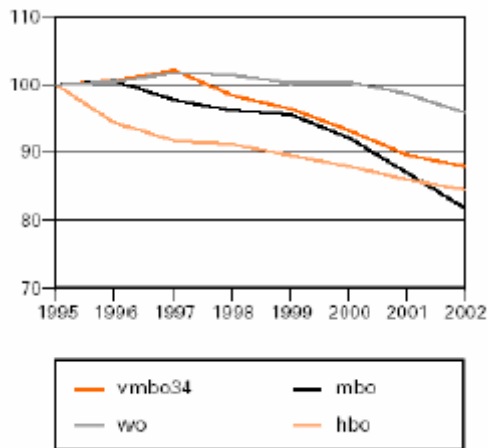
- In spite of budget cuts in other areas, an additional 354 million Euro will be available for education and training in the coming years. The VET priorities include giving autonomy to schools and reducing the administrative load and the number of approved qualifications.
- The innovation arrangement started in 2003 and a specific innovation budget has been made available to stimulate innovation and improve the quality. The old subsidies KeBB and SILO, meant to stimulate innovation, will be integrated in the Innovation Arrangement budget in 2004.
- A new pedagogical-didactical approach for all sectors in vocational education will be developed to create educational pathways within vocational education. The new pedagogical-didactical approach will be designed to respond to this development. The career of the student is at the centre of this policy and a better cooperation of all government departments concerned with youth should guarantee a lower rate of drop outs. Methods and concepts such as accreditation of prior learning and competence based learning are applied to improve transfer between various types of education and to stimulate tailor made education. These experiments have started and will be evaluated in the course of time. (See chapter 2.7 for an overview of this approach.).
- EVC or APL and the use of portfolio are methods to make education more attractive.
- To improve regional/national cooperation and communication, the government has installed [The Platform Vocational education and training](#) (The Platform Beroepsonderwijs – hereafter The Platform). Within Dutch VET, The Platform will be a major player in starting and encouraging activities on profiling best practices, exchange of knowledge and experiences, and enhancing the status and image of VET.

- May 2003 an agreement⁴ was signed between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Platform, social partners and the Labour Foundation (Stichting van de Arbeid). In this agreement, all parties commit themselves to give a joint injection of 25 million euro to vocational education, by stimulating innovative co-operation projects between education and enterprises. These projects will be judged on the innovative character by an independent committee. Selected projects will be awarded a maximum of 1 million euro.

- **Technical education and occupations.**

To stimulate the knowledge economy and participation in technical education and - occupations, the so called 'Deltaplan bèta/techniek'⁵, was published in 2004. In vocational education, the low participation in level 4 technical education is a reason for concern. Within the VET the participation in technical VET is decreased from 35% in 2000 to 32 % in 2002 . Actions proposed in the Deltaplan are among others the introduction of coaches and talent scouts to provide educational guidance for students with technical talents or interest. The objective of the Dutch government is to increase participation in technical education with 15 % over three years, with a focus on female participation. To obtain this objective, a supply chain approach is needed. Jet-Net is one of the initiatives where companies (Shell, DSM, Philips, Unilever and Akzo Nobel) work together with education to stimulate technical interest through excursions, apprenticeship and workshops for students and teachers The lack of supply of placement companies is a problem. (See also 2.2.)

Relative participation in technical education in VET (index 1995 =100)



- A new platform has been launched to implement the Deltaplan. This Platform Betatechniek (the successor of [project Axis](#) that ended on 1/7/2004), will coordinate the funding based on regional initiatives). In 2004, the budget is 6 million euro. After that, the budget can increase to a max. of 60 million euro from 2007.

⁴ Convenant Cooperation on behalf of innovation of vocational education. May 2003.

<http://www.minocw.nl/brief2k/2003/doc/16358a.PDF>

⁵ 'Deltaplan Beta/techniek : actieplan voor de aanpak van tekorten aan bèta's en technici.'

The Hague, MinOCW, 2003. <http://www.minocw.nl/brief2k/2003/doc/57664a.pdf>

- The redesign of technical vocational education has to be stimulated. The budget is one million euro ([Impulse budget](#)), but regional training centres may propose more money for this purpose.
- [Technocentra](#) are intermediates between companies and technical education (VMBO, MBO en HBO). Their aim is to improve the relationship between education and the labour market. In 2003 the starting-up phase of the project Technocentra was evaluated and now the profile of the Technocentra has a sharper focus on the strengthening of the knowledge infrastructure on regional level.
- The government cooperates with other EU-countries to increase transparency in international vocational education.
- At the end of 2005 a consultation process on downscaling in VET will start.

1.1.3 Increase the flexibility of IVET?

With the introduction of the new [Law on Adult and Vocational Education \(WEB, 1996\)](#) and the new national qualification structure for vocational education (1997) and for adult education (1997/1998) it was intended to strengthen the relation between adult education and secondary vocational education, in order to ensure more and better opportunities to transfer from adult education to vocational education. At the same time the qualification structure for vocational education was intended to provide more and more flexible horizontal and vertical pathways in VET. With the introduction of this qualification structure access to VET has no longer any thresholds, due to the introduction of the level 1 or assistant training programmes, for which no entry requirements exist. Students who have taken a level 1 programme and do not want to enter the labour market can continue in a level 2 programme (which is designated as leading to a start qualification). Presently this qualification structure is under reconstruction with the aim to change it into a qualification structure that is based on competencies, which is assumed to better match the developments in the labour market and occupational practice in the 21st. century. The WEB also provided the regional training centres (ROCs) with greater discretionary powers with regard to the design and implementation of the teaching and learning processes thus enabling them to meet the specific demands of the increasingly heterogeneous student population.

Alongside these changes in secondary vocational education, changes were implemented in lower secondary education towards the end of the 1990s. The previously existing prevocational and junior secondary general education were merged into preparatory vocational programmes (VMBO), aimed, on the one hand, on improving the status of prevocational education and, on the other hand, at improving the match between lower secondary education and (upper) secondary vocational education and with that at reducing drop-out in secondary vocational education. The overall goal is to equip as much participants as possible (young people as well as adults) with a least a start qualification. Presently the focus is on the vertical occupational column (lower secondary, upper secondary and tertiary vocational education) in order to

realise ongoing pathways into higher education. Further flexibilisation is sought in output steering (e.g.: determining only the final goals) within the limits of which VET institutions have the freedom to design teaching/learning arrangements and learning environments that best suit the needs of their students.

The development of a new competence based qualification structure has already started in 2002. In addition to this several new actions to enhance flexibility are announced in the policy document [Koers BVE \(June 2004\)](#):

- The [Higher Education Council \(HBO-Raad\)](#) and the [Vocational Education Council](#) (Bve Raad) will make agreements to encourage flexible pathways among which admission in hbo with mbo -3 level. The budget to make this pathway more flexible is 17.5 million from 2007.
- Learning pathways in pre-vocational education (vmbo) will become more flexible and the assistant-route will be introduced in vmbo for students within their institution.
- Flexible pathways between vmbo and mbo will be made easier because of a new way of financing. The Law of Secondary Education will be changed in order for this purpose.
- The qualification structure will provide a programme with general competences for students who cannot make an occupational choice at the beginning of their school career.
- The Vocational Education Council will be consulted on the possibility to offer a pathway to a start qualification through work experience (portfolio, APL)

The action plan of The Platform mentioned before (chapter 1.1.2.) will encourage plans for cooperation between the parties involved (government, the social partners and educational institutions), improved learning environments and teaching methods, uninterrupted learning pathways, greater flexibility, and more, better qualified, staff. Cooperation at regional level will also be encouraged.

In December 2002, the Minister sent the first results of [the monitor vocational pathways](#) to the Second Chamber. A priority was to improve vertical transfer within VET, modernising teaching and learning environments and emphasising the centrality of the role of the learner. A new cabinet, which was installed in 2003, added more priority for their reigning period (2004-2007).

The so called 'Impuls- money' (2004 budget € 31 million) is meant to improve educational pathways and flexibility within the vocational training system (vmbo, mbo and hbo) . The educational institutions are free to choose on which themes they will invest:

- educational guidance
- flexibilisation of programmes/courses
- pedagogic-didactic design

- strengthening regional knowledge infrastructure.
- As a rule, schools (vmbo-mbo; mbo-hbo) tune their activities and cooperate within these themes.

In addition, the National Lead Bodies (KBB's) use Impulse-money for the restructuring of qualifications (competence-based qualification structure) and to encourage workplace training firms to open up for pre-vocational students.

The duration of the Impuls project is from 2002- 2005.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has started a campaign '[OCW Ontregelt](#)' to combat the excessive use of regulations in education to reduce the administrative workload. See also the report of the Education Council on the bureaucracy in education⁶. In June 2005 new measures will be introduced to combat existing measures and regulations.

To measure the new ways of governance that will be introduced, the Ministry will introduce a monitor (BVE-barometer) in 2005- to monitor indicators in VET. Monitoring will start on a limited set of (European) indicators to begin with. First results of the monitoring of educational institutions will be published in 2006.

1.1.4 What are the main barriers to achieving these objectives? Barriers to the realisation of attractiveness and status

See 1.1.

Even though in both lower and upper secondary education 60-65% of each student cohort takes a pathway in VMBO schools or ROCs (or AOCs as their agricultural pendants), the status of (preparatory) VET is low in comparison with secondary general education. This holds for both students and their parents. Apparently only general secondary education (HAVO en VWO) is perceived as a route leading into higher education. The strong emphasis on tertiary education as a lever in reaching the Lisbon goals and the knowledge-based society will not contribute to raising the status of VET.

VET, in particular VMBO (but also ROCs), is associated with the increasing segregation in education; the phenomenon of 'black' and 'white' schools. The fact that the ethnic background of the student population of VET institutions in some regions (in particular the larger cities) actually reflects the ethnic/immigrant background of the population in general in the area concerned, is often neglected. Safety incidents over the last years, including physical violence among students or even against teachers, which have been broadly covered by the press, have further damaged the image of VET.

In general politicians seem to show little interest in VET. If they do show interest in VET it often is a negative interest, following up incidents as mentioned.⁷

⁶ Bureaucratisering in het onderwijs : suggesties voor de beleidsagenda. The Hague, Education Council, 2004. http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/pdfdocs/website_bureaucratisering.pdf

⁷ De nieuwe JOB-norm, Rapport ODIN (yearly survey among students in vocational education); Resultaten campagne 'VMBO', Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst 2003; Onderwijsmeter

Barriers to the realisation of flexibility

- Lack of transparency (institutional /legislation)

The main barriers in the realisation of flexibility are the national qualification structure for VET, institutional barriers between and within institutions and inconsistencies in legislation and regulations.

Concerning the qualification structure for VET the intention was to create a flexible and transparent qualification structure. The development of the qualification structure was and is the responsibility of the National Lead Bodies together with the social partners. In practice this process has resulted in an over detailed qualification structure encompassing too many (about 700) and too specific and small qualification profiles, with substantial overlap between qualifications. This has resulted in a qualification structure that is not transparent; not for participants and not for employers. For the VET institutions this means too many barriers between different pathways; in practice it also means that if a student appears to have chosen the wrong entry, he/she has to start all over again to repair the mistake. With the reconstruction of the qualification structure towards a more competence based one (preferably with a substantial reduction of the total number of qualifications) it is hoped that these shortcomings will be solved. Whether this will be the case, remains to be seen.

Concerning the institutional barriers, the different players still need to get used to their new roles and to the new division of tasks and responsibilities, which in practice result in mutual hostilities, certainly where the introduction of the WEB meant a reshuffling of such tasks and responsibilities. For instance, in the pre-WEB situation the National Lead Bodies were responsible for the guidance of students in a work-based learning track. With the introduction of the WEB this guidance is now the responsibility of the ROCs, whereas the National Lead Bodies remain responsible for the number as well as the quality of the placements. Institutional barriers within institutions concern the amalgamation of formerly independent institutions into ROCs. Even though on paper these are one organisation, differences between units within ROCs (often defined according to sectoral lines) need substantial time to slacken. The still existing differences (cultural but also in terms of educational e.g. teaching and learning policies) can inhibit the flexibility in terms of student transfer between units.

Inconsistencies in legislation and regulations mainly concern the tendency among politicians to re-regulate things. Though the WEB as such is specifically intended as a framework law, leaving as much as possible to the self-regulatory capacities of the involved actors, regulations amending or completing the law often show the tendency to regulate various issues, which according to the WEB should be let to the discretionary powers of these actors. Apparently politicians do not trust their own intention of decentralisation, deregulation and steering at a distance.

2002 (ITS 2002; yearly survey among parents and people in general in secondary education and vocational education);

Evaluation of the WEB- Jittie Brandsma. Facts & Figures 2003:

<http://www.minocw.nl/english/figures2003/060.html>

Finally, the realisation of flexibility form part of the larger innovation process set in motion with the WEB. As known, the full implementation of educational innovations takes a considerable time. VET institutions as well as their staff are still searching for the best solutions in this process⁸.

1.2 Reducing the number of early school leavers

The EU Ministers of Education have agreed to bring the rate of early school leavers down from 20 % to 10% by 2010. The Dutch percentage in 2001 was 15.3 %. (EU-average 19.4 % in 2001)

Dropout rates in the Netherlands concentrate in particular at the lower qualification levels of vocational education. In 1999 18 % of the 15 to 24 year olds had not obtained a qualification at SEDOC-level II and had already left school⁹. In the Netherlands SEDOC level II is defined as the minimum qualification for school leaving.

The numbers of early school leavers seem to have risen during the last years, but this can be partly explained by the fact that the registration has become better; regional registration offices have been set up in recent years to follow all school leavers, whether they continue school, go to work or drop out. In 1999, the action plan early school leaving was launched by the Ministry of Education and Science, stimulating cooperation between the four involved actors: education, youth care, justice and employment. In 2000, an evaluation has been made on the effectiveness of regional cooperation. In the 39 regions, all actors are very willing to cooperate, while the extent to which effective cooperation is realised differs per region. In 2001, the Regional Information and Coordination Act was implemented (Regionale meld- en coördinatiewet). Every youngster under 23 years old leaving education without basic qualification is an early school-leaver. Educational institutions are obliged by law to inform the municipality of all early school-leavers. By registering these names and trying to lead these youngsters back to education, the aim is to reduce the drop out rate. The RMC budget will be increased in 2004.¹⁰

1.2.1 Who leave formal education with low levels of basic skills at age of 15?

1.2.2 Who leave education or training at the earliest opportunity and with few or no recognised qualifications?

Drop-out rates

School drop-out is the primary cause of pupils not earning basic qualifications. School drop-out pertains to a student leaving one type of education without a diploma and without transferring to another type of education. Including the VMBO and MBO-1 certificate holders that do not

⁸ W.J. Nijhof & W. van Esch (2004). Unravelling policy, power, process and performance. The formative evaluation of the Dutch Adult and Vocational Education Act

⁹ Geerligs, de Jong, van der Velden and Wolbers, 2002. Toegankelijkheid en doorstroom naar vervolgonderwijs en arbeidsmarkt.

¹⁰ Country report Netherlands chapter 01. 04 :

http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/ThematicOverviews/

continue in education, the drop-out rates would be approximately 30 % (60 to 65 thousand pupils) of the total number of school-leavers.

The school drop-out rate is not a direct indicator of early school leaving (not known is how many pupils re-enter education later on and complete a study programme at basic qualifications level). But, as the drop-out rate falls, in time so shall early school leaving.

RMC (Regional Registration and Co-ordination Centre) policy

The government policy with respect to early school leaving is geared towards those that have left education without basic qualifications. The schools must report each education participant up to 23 years of age to the local authorities in his or her city of residence who has not yet earned basic qualifications and who has been absent from his or her study programme for one month. These reports are passed on to the Regional Registration and Co-ordination Centre (RMC) in the contact municipality of the region in question. In addition to reporting and registering early school-leavers, the RMC also supervises early school-leavers that are looking to re-enter education. The RMC fulfils a central role in co-ordinating a network of all intermediaries, such as the education world, municipalities, agencies for child welfare and the CWI (Centre for Work and Income), that are involved with the target group. From the latest RMC reports, it seems that in most regions there is a well-functioning network.

The starting point for the individual reinstatement process is the earning of basic qualifications. If this level cannot be achieved by a person, then the maximum achievable position on the labour market forms the starting point. This can also be a study programme level lower than the level of basic qualifications or a route that is more directly oriented towards finding a job on the labour market.

Results

In 2001, Sardes/ITS conducted an extensive analysis of the approach to early school leaving.

The main conclusion was that the approach to early school leaving is continually improving.

Agreements have been reached with 92 % of the adult and vocational education institutions with respect to the reporting of early school-leavers. All enrolments and de-registrations of participants younger than 23 years of age that do not have basic qualifications will be reported to the local authorities in the participant's city of residence, which in turn shall pass this information on to the RMC municipality.

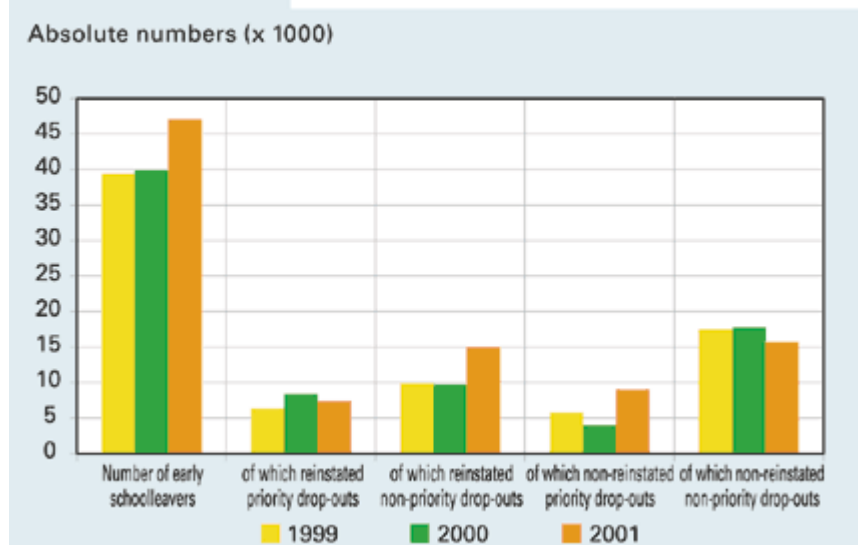
The number of registered early school-leavers in adult and vocational education in the 2000/01 school year amounted to 19,000, 5 % of the total number of participants registered. In the 1999/00 school year, the number of registered early school-leavers in this sector amounted to 6 %.

Of all early school-leavers in secondary education and in adult/vocational education, 48 % are reinstated - 3 % more than in the previous school year and even 13 % more than in the 1997/98 school year. The number of

reinstated priority drop-outs as a percentage of all priority drop-outs decreased by 23 % in comparison with last year and now amounts to 45 %.

In practice, it is not yet possible to achieve a completely seamless reporting and registration of early school-leavers. In order to improve this situation, extra resources have been made available¹¹.

Early school-leaving rates



Percentage of 18-24 year-olds without basic qualifications (early school-leavers)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
	17.6	16.0	15.5	16.2	15.5	15.3

Early school-leavers by education (numbers x 1000)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total	60	65	61	65	65
(V)SO	6	6	6	6	8
MAVO/VBO	20	20	20	21	21
HAVO/VWO	5	5	5	5	5
BOL	18	19	16	19	18
BBL	11	15	14	14	13

¹¹ [Facts & Figures 2003, MinOCW 2003.](#)

Key statistics on early school-leavers, RMC reports

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Numbers (x 1000)				
Number of students enrolled in reference group on 1 October	1,254.5	1,227.8	1,260.8	1,261.0
Secondary education overall	880.5	885.1	891.0	859.5
MBO up to age 23	374.0	342.7	369.9	401.5
Number of drop-outs	41.2	39.4	39.9	47.1
of which priority drop-outs (without at least VMBO qualifications)	13.3	12.1	12.3	16.4
Number of drop-outs reinstated	14.6	16.2	18.1	22.4
In percentages				
Drop-outs as a percentage of the number of students enrolled	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.7
Priority drop-outs as a percentage of total number of drop-outs	32	31	31	35
Reinstated drop-outs as a percentage of total number of drop-outs	35	41	45	48
Reinstated priority drop-outs as a perc. of total number of priority drop-outs	57	52	68	45

1.3 Increasing VET at tertiary level

Associate degree

The discussion on the implementation of the associate degree (short-HBO/shortened-HBO) in the bachelor is very much alive in the Netherlands. Shorter post-secondary courses will almost surely be introduced. The assumption is that this associate degree will be attractive for employees in the scope of lifelong learning and will provide necessary labour force for SME's.¹²

The dual learning concept in higher professional education has been implemented since the 1998/99 year, in a variant for all full-time courses. Dual education is a type of course in which the student is employed by a company in a position which is relevant to the training course he is enrolled in on the basis of an educational labour contract. The figures indicate a clear and increasing need for this type of education (enrolment in dual HBO education was 2000 in 1992/93 and already 6800 in 2000/2001). There is emphasis on supervision of the student, by both institution and employer. The programme is determined by the institution in consultation with student and employer.

1.4 Incentives for updating knowledge & skills

1.4.1 Government

- Financing and initiatives to train employees take place outside of the regular education and training circuit, policy is decentralised.
- The opportunity to acquire a start qualification is as an important precondition of opportunities in the labour market regarded in Dutch policy. The acquisition of diploma's, whether through formal or informal means, makes a significant contribution to the lifelong learning policy.¹³

¹² Kamerstuk 2003-2004, 29410, nr. 12, Tweede Kamer

¹³ Onderwijsraad, 2003, Werk maken van een leven lang leren

- An initiative to implement EVC or APL, is the financing and the establishment of the [Knowledge-Centre for the Accreditation of Prior Learning](#) in 2001 in a co-operative agreement between Stoas, CINOP and the Cito-group (KenniscentrumEVC) by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.
- The foundation of a Platform for Lifelong Learning is scheduled for autumn 2004
- the [Literacy Campaign](#) is a government initiative to reduce the number of illiterates in the Netherlands. The aim is to increase the number of participants with 5 % on a yearly basis.

Incentives - Two negative decisions have to be reported.

- The first is that the general fiscal instrument to support training in companies was cancelled. Only those fiscal incentives related to initial training remained. New measures were added in the framework of combating unemployment, especially for those without a starting qualification. Social partners will certainly come back to this development in their opinion in 2004 about shared responsibilities for lifelong learning. This opinion will be requested in 2004 from the Social Economic Council, in which social partners participate.
- The second is that the new government reduced considerably the support for employee saving accounts. Earlier, this was considered by social partners as a possible instrument to include a component for individual learning accounts. Given government policy, this instrument is out of the picture now.

A short history of ILA and vouchers in the Netherlands:

After initial hesitation enthusiasm to participate in the ILA-experiments has grown, but it remains unsure whether and when it will be implemented.

Within the 8 experiments about one hundred enterprises (SME and LE) in different branches (metal, chemistry, care & health, electrical, retail) are participating. Almost all the 1200 learning accounts have been allocated. Next to the state subsidy 450 EURO a considerable number of employers pay a contribution to the ILA (between 150 to 450 euro). Also in some branches it was already decided to make ILA part of the collective labour agreement. In most cases employer and employee decide together on the basis of a personal development plan, which training is desirable. Especially when the employer contributes to the account he wishes to have a say in the choice of training. It has to be taken into account that within the experiments different models are being developed, to investigate which model or combination of models is most effective and efficient. This means that in some experiments the relation between employer and employee is very tight and in others less.¹⁴

¹⁴ Experiments with the Individual Learning Account in the Netherlands .State of the Art. 's-Hertogenbosch : CINOP, 2001. See also <http://www.cinop.nl/projecten/leerrekening>

A good practice of the use of ILA's was/is the **Vrijhaven project** (2001) in the fitting techniques-branche/metalelektro-industry. From this project it could be concluded that the participation of especially low skilled employees in this project resulted into a higher rate of participation in training. This effect was absent among high(er) skilled employees.

1.4.2 Employers

Government policy towards the training of employees is developed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. They do this in close co-operation with the national employers' and employees' organisations. Government subsidies are above all directed at regular education. Apart from the general subsidies for adult education and the tax deductions for study purposes (until 1 January 2004), training is largely left to the social partners and firms. As a consequence, firms are the most important source for the funding of vocational training. More and more, social partners are involved in or take initiatives at branch or local level by stimulating cooperation between education and training and trade and industry. The leading notion is to improve the relation between the demand and supply of labour force and skilled personnel and to upgrade the skills of the labour force. Employer organizations and employees, through **Central Labour Agreements (CAOs)**, have partly taken responsibility for the provision and funding of continuing training for employees on a relatively large scale and on a voluntary basis¹⁵.

Sectoral training funds (O&O funds)

Social partners and educational institutions can both take the initiative to introduce new occupations or qualifications or renew existing qualifications. Furthermore, social partners have an explicit task to take the initiative to incorporate new occupations or qualifications into the national qualification structure.

An exception is the training policy of the sectors and branches that is organised by the sectoral training funds (O&O funds) and branches and is managed by the respective employers' and employees' organisations. In most sectors a number of organisations are involved in training policy. A precondition of integrated policy is that these organisations co-ordinate their respective policies: sectoral employers' and employees', the training funds, and the national expertise centres for vocational education and labour market (KBB).

Employers can also offer training courses for their employees outside the training funds. This can involve external and in-company training that is organised by the employer or an external training agency.

Stakeholders involved with learning in the workplace.

Since the 1980s, the employers' and employees' organisations in different sectors arrive at collective bargaining agreements that involve training arrangements. The nature of these agreements differ widely between the sectors but they are regulated in sectoral training funds that are financed by

¹⁵ [Country report the Netherlands Refernet chapter 3.03 en 5.01](#)

contributions by the employers on the basis of their wage-bill. The training funds can have the task of stimulating firms to invest in training. The compulsory contribution to the training funds mean that all firms in a particular sector finance the training of employees. This reduces the risk that employers invest in the training of their employees but then find that these employees are subsequently poached by other firms who themselves do little training. Training funds can be expended in different ways. The funds can leave training decisions completely to the discretion of employers by paying them a fixed subsidy for each day involved in training. An entirely free distribution of training facilities involves the danger that the low-qualified will benefit least. This can be prevented by a requirement to arrive at a proportional distribution of the training subsidies for all employees. Training funds can also exercise control over the quality of training by establishing minimum standards for training specific to a sector. It is also possible to allocate vouchers to employees which they can use to purchase training. The experiments with Individual Learning Accounts are one example of this¹⁶. The ILA-instrument is not implemented at this time of writing in the Netherlands.

1.4.3 Please provide examples (if any) of the contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion

According to [Education report 2003](#) (Education Inspectorate) more than half of the educational institutions has no active policy on target groups. The effect of measures for target groups is not monitored structurally. Dropout rates are not specified into target groups. This results in a lack of a specific policy in educational institutions for these groups.

- Redesigning level 1-2 in VET to prevent dropout: alternative routes and modular certificates. Specific examples of these flexible pathways in roc's are to be found at Rijn-IJssel College (project PASVORM), ROC Twente Plus and Albeda College.
- In addition to the existing assistant level 1 qualification, a new sort of basic 'stepping stone' qualification will be developed.
- The Vocational Education Council will be consulted on the possibility to offer a pathway to a start qualification through work experience (portfolio, APL)
- The cooperation of the National Lead Bodies (KBB's) with the Royal Association MKB-Nederland (SME's) hopefully will provide 50.000 training places for vmbo, mbo and groups at risk.
- In cooperation with the National Lead Bodies simulation training places will be provided for groups at risk (2004- 2 million euro).
- To stimulate the cooperation of firms to offer workplace training, the procedures for these firms in particular will be loosened up and also the procedures for apprenticeship in general will be made more flexible.

¹⁶ J.M. Waterreus, O&O-fondsen op herhaling, 2002.

1.5 Meeting the challenges of an aging population

In 2003 39% of people older than 55 (55-64 year) were active on the labour market for more than 12 hours a week, but labour participation of older people is still below the average labour participation of the Dutch population (65% in 2003). After Finland, the Netherlands has the biggest participation of older workers (1998-2002). Nevertheless this level is still below the Stockholm-objective of 50%.

Since 1996, the legal framework for adult education is the Vocational and Adult Education Act (WEB – Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs). The Act relates to the following areas of VET: (initial) secondary vocational education (both the school-based and the apprenticeship track), CVT, and general adult education. The Act is meant to create a more integrated and transparent supply of learning facilities. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible.

In spring 2004, the government reacted¹⁷ on the final report of the Taskforce Older People and Labour¹⁸ which provides recommendations to stimulate longer working careers at an older age.

Measures that are announced in this policy document:

- Stimulation and facilitating the self- responsibility of employees to encourage participation in training. APL as an instrument can be very effective for this means. Another measure is the Schooling Impuls (max. 600.000 euro per project). This subsidy can be used by branches to upgrade the educational level of their employees.
- Other measures useful to stimulate schooling are: Investors in People, the foundation of the Platform Life Long Learning in autumn 2004 and the Individual Learning Account (unsure if and when it will be implemented).
- Within the EU-programme Equal, new instruments will be developed that could be used in the Netherlands. At the end of 2004 the results and best practices of Equal-projects in the EU will be visible so that action can be taken.
- Social partners have the task to give priority to the schooling of older employees through among others O&O-funds. The government's task is to facilitate the attention for this subject Specific measures of the government are aimed at low skilled people.
- Via ESF, schooling can be stimulated to prevent labour incapacity.

1.6 Effectiveness and efficiency of VET

¹⁷ Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (MinSZW). '[Stimuleren langer werken van ouderen](#)', April 2004.

¹⁸ Taskforce Older People and Labour : '[And they worked happily ever after](#)' , December 2003.

1.6.1 In the current national debate, how effective is the system of VET perceived to be?

See also question 1. and answers. Additional to 1:

It becomes clear that the system is lacking information to give a clear picture on the effectiveness of the Dutch VET-system, despite all the efforts. Registration of early school leaving has improved, but there are no clear figures on student's school careers. 43 % of the students left without a start qualification in 2003 in comparison to 37 % in 2002, but what this exactly means remains unclear. It can be assumed that the introduction of the education-number in autumn 2005 will improve the monitoring.

The labour market position of school-leavers is still good, but since 2003 youth unemployment is increasing and it seems that school-leavers (level 1 and 2) are relatively more often employed in sectors that are sensitive to economic fluctuation, such as construction, trades and tourism. To prevent the emergence of another 'lost generation', the [Taskforce Youth Unemployment](#) was installed in 2003. (See also 3.1)

80 % of the VET-students is satisfied with transfer possibilities within vocational education. 85 % of the working school-leavers is satisfied, despite the fact that school-leavers level 3 - 4 more often find a job which fits their education than level 1-2 school-leavers do¹⁹.

1.6.2 In the current national debate, is the VET system seen as offering efficiency/ good value for money?

See above 1.6.1.

1.6.3 What are the main trends in terms of investment in VET (Public investment?)

The trend is public investment with a shift to more market driven tendencies, public private partnerships etc. Educational institutions are also moving into the market with contract-activities: specific educational activities for third parties.

¹⁹ Education Inspectorate ['Education Report 2003'](#).

2 Theme 2 - Innovation in Teaching and Learning Processes

2.1 Improvements in learning processes and contents

Multi-annual programme competence based learning and training started:

By order of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, CINOP (Centre of Innovation of vocational education and training) has started a major reform programme to develop competence based learning and training in senior secondary vocational education in the Netherlands. The timescale: 2002 – 2010.

Projects are being carried out together with regional training centres, institutions in the vocational education and training field, companies offering on the job training and other partners. Aim is to develop a 'practice-theory' with various examples of approaches to design competence based (vocational) education.

How could competence based learning and training be defined? Various aspects can apply to this broad concept: "a combination of working and learning", or "students learn on the basis of real life case studies". In the mentioned programme, two things are essential:

- Competence based education is explicitly aimed at the key issues or problems in professions and careers, and prepares the learner to deal with them; the accent is put on an optimal competence development of the learners, tailored to their personal wishes and possibilities.
- The aim of competence based education is to train people to become competent citizens and professionals. Competences and competence development are the pivot around which content, programming, organisation and pedagogic-didactical design of the educational process should be developed.

Experiences have shown that this development touches upon all these different aspects of the educational organisation and the relation between school and company. Therefore, the integral approach is the key to success. All projects in the framework of the multi-annual programme take into account all aspects of the educational process and look at the relation between:

Structure of the courses, programming of the courses, assessment and examination, organisation of the primary process, didactics, guidance and counselling, conditional aspects such as the cooperation with companies in the region and cooperation within implementation teams are also taken into account.

In 2002, projects started in the technical, economic and health and welfare sector. In 2003, new projects will be started in other sectors such as adult education.

Another part of the multi-annual programme is dedicated to specialised studies. The results of these studies will be used as input in the projects. Examples of studies carried out in 2002 are:

Competence based examination with the use of ICT.

Competence based learning material using ICT.

Guidance of students in an e-learning environment.

Portfolio as an instrument in competence based learning and training.

Development of the role of teachers, and professionalisation of teachers and trainers.

Responsibilities in the process from qualifications to courses.

This programme places the innovation and development of vocational education in the framework of a life long of learning. The aim is to define learning trajectories directed at three aspects: the development of the (professional) identity of the learner, the transfer to higher forms of vocational education and learning in the professional career²⁰.

Changing pedagogic and didactic approaches in vocational education in The Netherlands: from institutional interests to ambitions of students

The main idea is that the career of the student must be central to education, that educational paths must be tailored to that career and that these paths are characterized by a cohesive, vocationally oriented pedagogic-didactic approach which 'captivates and thereby binds' the various students.

Two central key principles can be distinguished in these policy assumptions.

On the one hand there is the perspective of a vocational column, in which the emphasis is placed on increasing internal output and throughput.

On the other hand there is the perspective of a career as a guiding principle for the organisation of learning paths for students that lead to vocational qualifications.

The central assumption of recent policy from a pedagogic-didactic viewpoint is the effort to give shape to forms of activating, authentic and competence-oriented education in such a way that this is flexible and tailored to the student population in the sector. Many of the present experiments in Dutch educational practice that are aimed at innovating learning and teaching processes are also being covered by these principles. The constructivist paradigm on learning therefore appears to be a major source of inspiration for the new basic principles concerning learning and teaching in vocational education. The so-called 'new learning', which is based on the constructivist view, differs from the 'old learning' precisely in this relationship between WHAT and HOW. In the 'new learning' the emphasis is placed on metacognitive learning results (Simons, van der Linden and Duffy, 2000). According to this trend, learning results should firstly consist of knowledge

²⁰ Cedefop Info NL-2003-03

and skills that are sustainable, flexible, functional, meaningful and generalisable. Secondly the new learning results should relate to learning, conceptual, cooperative and regulatory skills, in other words to the metacognitive ability per se.

To achieve these new learning results it is important that there is more space within education for experiential and action learning. Alongside this greater space for experiential and action learning and thereby self-regulated learning by the student, guided learning is also important.

A framework of conceptual building blocks was developed to inspire a re-design of the pedagogic-didactic approach within vocational education. This framework covers:

- (a) the content and main thread of the learning path towards a vocational qualification;
- (b) the pedagogic approach; (career counselling is integrated, communities of practice, personal development)
- (c) the didactic design (an educational-psychological perspective; subject-logical approaches, the perspective of the profession and/or occupational practice, constructive learning (taking action) versus reflective learning), use of broader, wider skills such as communicating, negotiating, planning and organising. This means that authentic, functional learning is involved; differing and varied places of learning form the learning environment within which learning takes place. The workplace is also an essential place of learning; supportive, diagnostic evaluation during the learning track must be involved alongside independent, competence-oriented assessment at the end of the track.)
- (d) the role of teachers and (practical) trainers;
- (e) cooperation with regional players.

In the Netherlands the term 'didactic' is used to refer to the arrangement of teaching and learning processes. Thus 'didactic design' refers to the design of this arrangement, e.g. the choice of learning methods, the selection of learning materials, the starting points of teachers and trainers activities, etc

Role of teachers and trainers in this competence based education

Both from theoretical points of view and from experiences in educational practice with innovations relating to constructivist forms of education it has emerged that teachers and trainers within learning paths leading to vocational qualifications must fulfil a new role. The main building blocks for this new role are:

- (a) redesigning of the role of the teacher and trainers involves a central focus on coaching and diagnostic supervisory activities for the benefit of the learning and development process of the students;
- (b) as part of this new role, teachers and trainers must find a new balance between guidance and 'let go' so that students are given the space to explore and regulate but at the same time do not drown in that space and move on to 'trial and error behaviour' and 'telling stories about it';

(c) in the new approach, teachers and trainers must exercise their roles as 'experts' or 'professionals' in a product-related sense (expertise with regard to the occupational field to which the training leads) and a process-related sense (expertise as counsellor and tutor).

The core principle of the role required of teachers required here is adaptability²¹.

2.2 Improving the integration of different learning sites; integration of formal and informal learning.

- In 2004, an Action Plan Life Long Learning has been drafted, with specific actions to produce measurable results and strengthen the conditions for life long learning. An example is the Action Plan Youth Unemployment, aimed at the realisation of 40.000 extra youth jobs and practical training places for unemployed youngsters.
- Other actions include rising of the number of adults with basic qualification and the number of high trained professionals, the stimulation of informal and non-formal learning, continuing implementation of accreditation of prior learning, promote dual learning. Overall aim is to invest more and more effectively in life long learning²².
- The Vocational Education Council will be consulted on the possibility to offer a pathway to a starting qualification through work experience (portfolio, APL)
- The cooperation of the National Lead Bodies (KBB's) with Royal Association MKB-Nederland (SME's) to provide 50.000 training places for vmbo, mbo and groups at risk.
- In cooperation with the National Lead Bodies simulation training places will be provided for groups at risk (2004- 2 million euro) .
- To stimulate the cooperation of firms to offer workplace training, the procedures for these firms in particular will be loosened up and also the procedures for apprenticeship in general will be made more flexible.
- Dualgate is the electronic system in which institutions and the National Lead Bodies exchange information on apprenticeship. This system will be extended.
- The Platform Lifelong Learning will be installed in autumn 2004. The Platform Vocational Education is working on a database with good practice on all the themes within LLL.

Work-based learning

²¹ Dr. Elly de Bruijn, The pedagogical-didactical approach in vertical streaming in vocational education and training. Building blocks for a redesign. CINOP. 2003 / Dr Elly de Bruijn : Changing pedagogic and didactic approaches in vocational education in The Netherlands: from institutional interests to ambitions of students. To be published in : European Journal for Vocational Training, issue nr. 31

²² [Country report the Netherlands Refernet 11.01](#)

The introduction of the WEB has left a vacuum in several places, because the expertise around work-based learning - counselling by the lead bodies - has disappeared. Although some branches created transitional arrangements, where the lead bodies were still directly involved in the counselling of trainees, an overall loss of expertise cannot be denied. The fact that some divisions of community colleges are giving top priority to external counselling and the relationship with placement companies is a positive development. Employees are specially trained and qualified to operate as work-based learning counsellors. There are an increasing number of initiatives aimed at improving the cooperation between community colleges and lead bodies at a regional level. It remains to be seen, however, if these developments will be able to increase the overall quality of work-based learning.²³

In order to improve the link between learning in schools and learning in the workplace, EVC /APL is a method that can be helpful: skills acquired elsewhere, e.g. through experience in the workplace, can be officially recognised (EVC). This will make it easier to ascertain the

precise training needs of individuals. It will also permit the comparison of competences acquired at school or college with those acquired at work and encourage the sharing of

knowledge between the world of education and the world of work.

To encourage use of this method, the government has set up a knowledge centre for prior learning assessment and recognition (see chapter 1.4. for details).

To stimulate responsiveness and customer service in vocational education, the employers organisation [VNO-NCW](#) proposes government funding for transitional arrangements and more variation and flexibility in organizing these pathways and arrangements²⁴.

In a reaction on Koers BVE in June 2004, VNO-NCW doesn't agree with the assumption that the boundaries between education -working life / IVET - CVET are fading. The fact that employees need training, doesn't imply a blurring of boundaries. VNO-NCW agrees with the government that the concept of lifelong learning needs clarification²⁵.

2.3 Evaluation and quality assurance of VET provision

2.3.1 For the individual (assessment of competences and knowledge)
Assessing competences – acknowledgement. An assessment of the skills and competences can be done, comparing the competences of the participant with a standard describing what someone should know. This

²³ W.J. Nijhof & W. van Esch (2004). Unravelling policy, power, process and performance.

The formative evaluation of the Dutch Adult and Vocational Education Act

²⁴ [Niet vrijblijvende afspraken!.](#) notitie VNO-NCW, June 2004.

²⁵ [Commentaar VNO-NCW op Koers BVE Het regionale netwerk aan zet, 2004.](#)

results in allocation of one or more certificates or a full diploma. Often, the national qualification structure for vocational training acts as the standard. When the standard is determined by a company, company-related certificates can be issued.

Proof of competence

In the new competence based qualification structure, a Proof of Competence demonstrates if the student can perform a core task in an authentic context. This Proof of Competence is pathway independent and can be taken during apprenticeship in a training workplace or after apprenticeship in school. A context is seen as authentic when it meets the preconditions in the assignment of the Proof of Competences. It will be implemented in 2003.

EVC/APL and portfolio

From 1999 onwards, a great deal of attention was given to increasing the opportunities for APL. This entails awarding diplomas or certificates, or granting exemptions for parts of a regular vocational training course. Procedures and instruments have been adopted for a wide range of occupations and training to support the testing of proficiency, portfolio and result assessment.

To encourage use of EVC/APL, the government has set up a [knowledge centre for prior learning assessment and recognition](#). (See 1.4 for details).

2.3.2 For the institution (internal/external quality management)

Quality insurance for educational institutions is regulated through the **Law on Educational Supervision (WOT)**, that came into force 1 September 2002. The WOT doesn't prescribe quality aspects for VET, these are already regulated through the WEB. VET institutions have a great deal of autonomy to design their own quality insurance system. Self-evaluation of the institution is point of departure for the external quality insurance of which the [Education Inspectorate](#) is responsible (see 2.3.3)

Supervision and monitoring by the Inspectorate takes place through yearly visits and is proportional and closely connected to the self-evaluation of the institution. Institutions with a well developed quality system will be monitored less intensive.

The [Education report 2003](#) shows that the quality insurance in VET-institutions is insufficiently developed. The self-correcting function of this system needs improvement. Regional training centres make insufficient use of public accountability to determine their quality and this is a point of action in the overall policy in VET.

An example of good practice on multiple accountability in VET is the regional training centre ROC ASA, which has its quality report and other monitor results published on the website in the [ASA Monitor](#).²⁶

2.3.3 For the system (monitoring and evaluation)

Education Inspection Act

²⁶ Onderwijsinspectie BVE / Onderwijsverslag 2003/Eurydice 'The Education System in the Netherlands 2003'

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

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

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

The [Education Inspectorate](#) is charged with the inspection of education. The right of the authorities to supervise education is derived from article 23 of the Constitution; the details are worked out in various education acts. The Education Inspectorate monitors and promotes the quality of education in Dutch educational establishments, based on a thorough knowledge of individual schools and institutions.

Regular, systematic visits are made to schools and institutions for this purpose. A report of the Inspectorate's findings is sent to the school or institution concerned, to the Minister and State Secretaries, and to parliament. Results are also published on the Inspector's website. The duties of the Inspectorate, as laid down in education legislation, are:

- to ensure compliance with statutory regulations (control);
- to keep up to date with the state of education, e.g. through school visits (evaluation);
- to promote the development of education through consultation with the competent authorities and staff of schools and with the regional and local authorities (promotion);
- to report to and advise the Minister, both at his request and on its own initiative (reporting).

The Inspectorate is responsible for the monitoring of all vocational courses that are included in the CREBO (see below). For non-government-funded courses a different procedure exists.

CREBO

All courses within the qualification structure are entered in the Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO). This register records which institutions provide which courses, what the exit qualifications are, which learning pathway is involved and which of the partial qualifications awarded

are subject to external validation. It also indicates which courses are funded by the government and which bodies are authorised to validate examinations. Anyone who wishes may consult the register to find out what courses are on offer and how they fit into the qualification structure.

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

Introduction of a new examination system

To increase public confidence in the quality of the examinations in secondary vocational education and the value of the diploma, a new, comprehensive examination system is being introduced. The main changes are as follows.

- External monitoring of examinations will be conducted by a single body, the Examination [Quality Centre \(KCE\)](#), instead of by a number of examining bodies and the Inspectorate.

- External monitoring by the KCE and internal monitoring by the institution itself will take place on the basis of national standards, to be drawn up by the KCE. Examinations will therefore have to meet these standards from now on. The KCE will give an independent assessment and issue institutions with a certificate accessible to the public.

- The institutions will be responsible for demonstrating that their examinations meet the standards; this will have consequences for internal monitoring.

- All partial qualifications - not just 51% - will be subject to external monitoring.

- If examinations are not up to scratch, the Minister may withdraw the institution's right to hold them.

- The Inspectorate will supervise the quality of the KCE's work.

- "New-style" examining bodies may also acquire the right to hold examinations, but only if institutions contract examinations out to them. They may of course also provide support services.

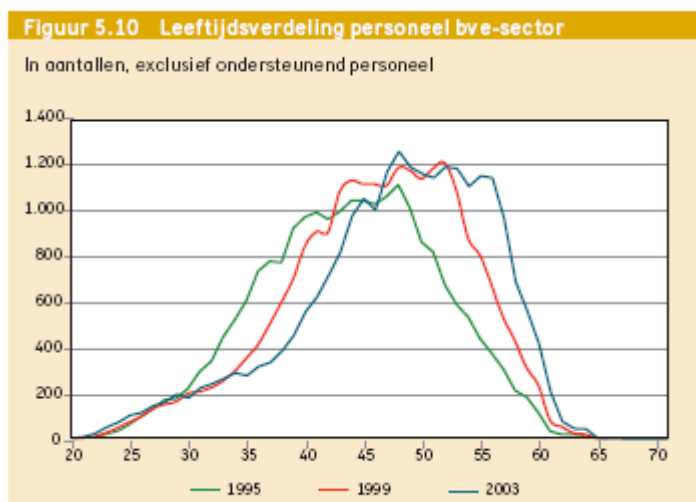
- The aim of the new system is greater involvement of industry, more innovation and greater efficiency. The institutions will in principle remain responsible for the examinations for the courses they provide. But if they contract them out, they will transfer responsibility for them. Institutions may decide to contract examinations out if they cannot guarantee the quality required or, if only a few students attend the course, for reasons of efficiency. Institutions are obliged to contract examinations out if their right to hold them has been withdrawn. Introducing the new system will all for an amendment to the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB). This is planned for 1 August 2004. The national objective is for at least 85 percent of examinations to meet the national standards by 2005. The institutions can use the period up to 1 August 2004 to work towards the new system by participating in incentive projects.

2.4 Professional development and status of teachers and trainers.

Labour market shortages

The gradual rise in teaching staff in VET is continuing (an increase of 1.9 % from 2000). The number of FTEs for non-teaching staff has risen significantly more (an increase of 9.3 %). The percentage of teaching staff (in FTEs) rose in 4 years time from 30 % (1998/99) to 35.2 % (2001/02). The percentage of female teaching staff was 42 %; the percentage of female non-teaching staff came to 52 %. The ageing of the staff increased further in 2001. The average age rose from 45.6 in 2000 to 45.8 in 2001. Incidentally, the rise in the average age was somewhat less large than in previous years. Male employees are disproportionately represented in the age group of 40 to 55 years²⁷.

Figure 5.10 shows the ageing of teachers in VET through the years.



Regional agreements are necessary to cope with the shortage of teaching personnel, especially in the big cities. In April 2002, the social partners in the educational sector, united in the [SBO \(Sectorbestuur Onderwijsarbeidsmarkt – Sectoral Board for the labour market in the educational sector\)](#), have taken the initiative to start a process to reduce shortages of skilled personnel and to revitalise the sector so as to be able to reach the ambitious (European) aims. The shortage of unfulfilled vacancies in secondary education in 2006 will reach 6 000, if there are no policy changes. In Agenda 2006 – involvement of social partners in the educational sector, the sectoral employers' and employees' organisations have formulated an agenda with eight main points:

- focus on the professionalism of trainers and teachers
- the entrepreneurial school,
- professional management,
- strengthening of human resource management policy,

²⁷ [Facts & Figures MinOCW 2003](#)

- training of teachers and other personnel in education,
- competitive conditions of employment,
- attractive working environment and
- developing links with other sectors to attract teachers.

A [national information](#) point has been opened for those wanting to work in the educational sector (in various functions). For people wanting to work in the educational sector as teacher or in another function, special dual training projects have been started as a cooperation between VET institutions and teacher training institutions. The aim is to provide a shortened two-year training course to teach the specific skills needed for working in various functions (assistant teacher, teacher or support staff) to enable a maximum of interested people to work in the educational sector. There are also specific projects financed by the sectoral social partners in the educational sector (SBO-Sectorbestuur onderwijsarbeidsmarkt) aimed at specific target groups such as ethnic minorities.

Within the framework of the decentralisation of responsibilities from government level to the educational institutions, more importance is attached to the management skills of the often very large regional training centres and educational institutions. A great number of in-service training of short term courses are provided by various private training providers. These courses are paid for from the lump sum budgets of these institutions.²⁸

Integral human resource management (IPB)

The responsibility for human resources has shifted from the government to the educational institution and will be implemented on all schools in 2005.

Occupations in Education (Beroepen in het Onderwijs -BIO)

The law proposal on the [Law Occupations in Education \(Wet op de Beroepen in het Onderwijs\)](#) describes the competence profile of teachers and supporting personnel and will be in force in 2004. The framework of competences is developed and will be maintained/updated by teachers under the umbrella of [SBL](#), the organization which coordinates the competence development of teachers. The framework is based on 7 competences (see p. 28) and offers a grid for the translation of the features of good education into responsibilities of teachers.

The new Law prescribes that competences have to be maintained and developed throughout the teachers working career. The employer/educational institute has to establish this in a protocol in the quality report. This protocol will be translated into personal development plans. Competences of management in VET are not regulated through this law.

²⁸ [Country-report chapter the Netherlands Refernet chapter 06.01](#)

OVERZICHT COMPETENTIES	MET LEERLINGEN	MET COLLEGA'S	MET OMGEVING	MET ZICHZELF
INTERPERSOONLIJK	1			
PEDAGOGISCH	2			
VAKINHOUDELIJK & DIDACTISCH	3	5	6	7
ORGANISATORISCH	4			

Voor dit referentiekader bestaat een breed draagvlak in en buiten het onderwijs. Met de definitie van de zeven onderscheiden lerarencompetenties kunnen de kenmerken van goed onderwijs vertaald worden naar de verantwoordelijkheden van de leraar.

A coherent qualification structure and accompanying platform for occupations in the teaching profession will be developed to enhance streaming within the educational professions and improve career perspectives²⁹.

Teacher training in the school means that schools and teachertraining institutes for teacher training have a shared responsibility. To stimulate this cooperation the Project Educational Partnership was set up. It ended in 2004, but the [community website](#) is still active. The website is meant primarily for teacher trainers who want to exchange experiences and information. (See also 2.1. Role of teachers)

²⁹ [Koers BVE, June 2004](#)

3 Theme 3 - Building European Competences for a European Labour Market

3.1 Challenges & policies in relation to the Lisbon employment strategy

3.1.1 What are the main challenges to achieving the Lisbon employment objectives for your country, according to the European Commission 'Kok Report'?

General

The Netherlands has achieved high employment rates for women and men, exceeding the Lisbon targets. Its labour market is characterised by an exceptionally high level of part-time work (about 44% of the workforce). The employment rate of older workers exceeds the EU average but is still far below the EU target.

Unemployment has risen significantly since 2001, although it remains among the lowest in the EU. The employment rate of non-nationals and minorities remains low. The government and the social partners have recently signed an agreement which, among other things, includes a freeze in the development of wages.

Agency work is particularly developed in France, the UK, and the Netherlands, as well as Belgium and Luxembourg. The Taskforce draws particular attention to the examples of Denmark and The Netherlands. They represent two approaches to balancing flexibility with security that have proven their value in practice.

The Dutch approach relies on the availability of different contractual forms, carefully balancing rights and obligations for each individual contract form, while also providing for active measures for the unemployed. An important consideration under this approach is the need to prevent a two-tier labour market – where “insiders” benefit from a high level of employment protection, while “outsiders” are recruited under competing forms of contracts. Long sequences of consecutive fixed-term contracts are considered an abuse. When a working relationship has acquired a more stable nature, legal provisions ensure that this is reflected in the contract. Another important aspect is the equal treatment of workers on different types of contract. Particularly important in this respect is: access to training, entitlement to work-related insurance schemes such as health care or employment services and entitlement to social protection including the transferability of social protection rights.

Promoting temporary agency work In the Netherlands recent legislation (on Flexibility and Security) and collective agreements have allocated new responsibilities to temporary work agencies (TWA), while at the same time

deregulating the TWA market. The relationship between a TWA and a temporary agency worker is to be treated like a normal employment contract, with normal entitlements for the workers to social security, although the first 26 weeks allow for more freedom in hiring and firing. Once the temporary agency worker has worked for 18 months at the same client firm or for different client firms for three years, he or she gets a permanent employment contract with the agency, including dismissal protection that goes with these contracts. The law also stipulates that TWAs no longer need a permit to operate in the labour market and abolishes the maximum period, formerly six months, during which temporary agency workers could be deployed. A collective agreement for the years 1999-2003 introduces a four-phase model in which temporary agency workers gradually acquire more rights, including rights to training, as the length of the employment relationship increases. TWAs in the Netherlands are increasingly involved not only in training and active labour market integration policies but also in the provision of childcare services for their employees or their clients' employees.

Recommendations

- Implement and closely monitor **wage developments** in line with the "Autumn Agreement" between the Government and the Social Partners. Real wage increases have been relatively moderate (at 1% a year), with a few exceptions such as Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the UK, where real wage growth clearly exceeded productivity growth
- Pursue the reform of the **disability benefit system** to ensure a strict assessment of work capacity and propose work-oriented solutions for those capable of working, such as training or sheltered work. (...) **Inactivity traps** for beneficiaries of disability/sickness benefits are particularly serious in some Member States such as the UK with 2.7 million recipients, the Netherlands with 985,000 people and, to a lesser extent, Sweden with 320,000 people on long-term sick leave, and Luxembourg.
- Strengthen preventive and **active measures for adults**: increase effectiveness and provide greater access to active measures for social benefit recipients and inactive people; **facilitate the integration of minorities and non-nationals**. (...) Achieving **better integration of minorities** and immigrants in the labour market is a challenge for all existing and new Member States. Within the EU15, more attention to this issue is especially needed in Belgium, France, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, where the gap between nationals and non-nationals is striking.
- Develop comprehensive strategies for **active ageing**: ensure appropriate incentives to retain workers longer in work and discourage early retirement.
- Further raise **female participation**: encourage women wishing to move from part-time to full-time jobs; address other causes of gender pay gaps. (...) Member States must seek to address the roots of the **gender pay gap**, which is striking in Ireland, Austria, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands as well as Portugal.

- (...)The demand for **childcare services** significantly exceeds the available supply in countries such as the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal and Spain.
- Ensure that the school system takes effective action to **reduce early school leaving**, in particular among minorities.
- Review incentives to develop **lifelong learning** and increase participation in training, especially for the low-skilled and the inactive³⁰.

3.1.2 Please identify any policies and strategies being developed to tackle these challenges

Wage developments

(...)In the Netherlands, the recent “Spring Agreement” between the Government and the social partners called for a freeze in the development of wages for 2004 and a wage development approaching zero for 2005

Early school leaving (see also 1.1.1)

In 2001, the Regional Information and Coordination Act was implemented (Regionale meld- en coördinatiewet). Every youngster under 23 years old leaving education without basic qualification is an early school-leaver. Educational institutions are obliged by law to inform the municipality of all early school-leavers. By registering these names and trying to lead these youngsters back to education, the aim is to reduce the drop out rate. In practice, it is not yet possible to achieve a completely seamless reporting and registration of early school-leavers. In order to improve this situation, extra resources have been made available. The RMC budget will be increased in 2004.

Extra measures have been taken in which the Ministries of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs are cooperating with social partners in the Taskforce Youth Unemployment. These measures to combat early school leaving are closely linked to plans to combat youth unemployment (Operation Young)

A specific measure to prevent early school leaving is the plan to introduce a so called performance-based student grant in VET level 3 -4 (August 2005) to make an appeal on the duty of the student in his/her responsibility to get a diploma.

Disability benefits / reintegration/ inactive people

The reintegration market in the Netherlands is a young and dynamic market and is seen by the government as the final piece of effective reintegration policy. Privatization has been implemented but results are not satisfactory yet. Transparency is needed and for this purpose a quality mark is developed and UWV, the coordinating organization, has implemented 100% no cure-no pay contracts.

Local government has the possibility to use the instrument of wagecost-subsidy within reintegrationbudget.

³⁰ [KOK-report](#) Jobs, Jobs, Jobs. Creating more employment in Europe Report of the Employment Taskforce chaired by Wim Kok. November 2003 p. 8

For the disability benefit scheme, a number of measures will be taken to alleviate the burden on employers and improve benefits for recipients, provided the number of new recipients does not rise above the forecast of 25,000 annually and provided the social partners refrain from negotiating additional pay on top of the legal entitlement of 70% of the wage during the second year of disability.

Additionally, the Government agreed to reinstall the system of automatic alignment of benefits with the general wage developments as from January 2006 and to drop certain adjustments in the unemployment benefit schemes.³¹

Gender-pay-gaps

The government states the fact that gender-pay-gaps can't be tolerated and need measures to fight them. Besides the fact that this sort of discrimination is illegal in the Netherlands, the government supports the policy of the social partners to develop instruments on gendermainstreaming. The government wants to align its policy on gender-pay-gaps with elements from the European agenda on this subject.

Female participation - Employment rates among women

The target set in Lisbon for employment rates among women was 60%. Seven of the present fifteen EU countries already satisfy this norm. A different picture emerges if we count employment rates not in numbers of persons employed, but in full-time units. Part-time jobs are then added together to give a result in numbers of full-time jobs. If we do this, the Netherlands slides from fourth to twelfth place because of its large number of part-time workers.

An example of policy to stimulate female participation in the Netherlands is the Law Labour and Care, the Law on Labour Duration and the measure 'Day Schedule1999' : this measure aimed at the idea that men and women are increasingly sharing caretasks and remove the obstacles to reach that goal have to dealt with, for example aith campaigns such as 'Men in the leading role' and 'Who takes care of what?'

The question remains if the objective that men will account for 40 % of unpaid work in 2010 will be met.

³¹ Ministry of Social Affairs and Employability : http://docs.szw.nl/pdf/35/2004/35_2004_3_5006.pdf
Report RWI on the effectiveness of the reintegration market: 'Naar een werkende arbeidsmarkt
Beleidskader Werk en Inkomen 2004'

Tabel 5.1 Taakcombineren (bevolking 20-64 jaar die minimaal 12 uur per week besteedt aan betaalde arbeid en 12 uur aan huishoudelijk werk, zorg voor huisgenoten en informele zorg voor niet-huisgenoten)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
vrouwen	14	16	21	25	28	39
mannen	14	16	20	19	27	29
totaal	14	16	20	22	28	34

Bron: SCP (TB0)

Working population (> 12 hours) in % of the total population: gender and age, 1987 – 2003.

	Leeftijd	1987	1990	1993	1996	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Vrouwen	45-49	33	38	44	47	56	58	61	64	67
	50-54	25	27	32	36	43	47	49	52	54
	55-59	15	16	18	22	27	31	31	35	34
	60-64	6	5	4	5	6	7	8	7	11
	Totaal 55-64	11	11	11	14	17	20	21	23	24
	Totaal 15-64	35	39	42	45	51	52	54	54	55
Mannen	45-49	86	86	88	88	89	90	90	91	90
	50-54	76	77	79	82	86	85	87	87	86
	55-59	61	61	57	58	65	67	71	73	72
	60-64	24	20	18	18	21	24	22	27	27
	Totaal 55-64	43	42	38	39	45	47	49	53	53
	Totaal 15-64	70	71	71	72	76	77	77	77	75
Vrouwen + Mannen	45-49	60	63	66	68	73	74	76	77	78
	50-54	50	52	56	60	65	67	68	69	70
	55-59	38	38	38	40	46	49	51	54	53
	60-64	14	12	11	11	13	16	15	17	19
	Totaal 55-64	26	26	24	26	31	34	35	38	39
	Totaal 15-64	52	55	57	59	64	65	65	66	65

Bron: CBS, Enquete Beroepsbevolking

Childcare services

Childcare service opportunities are increasing, according to plan. However, there are still only nine places available for each 100 0-4-year-old and less than two places in out-of-school childcare places for each 100 primary school pupils.³² A new law on Childcare services will be in force on 1st of January 2005. Flexibility will be increased because parents are the ones who make arrangements with childcare services, instead of the companies. The government will share the costs³³.

Measures to develop comprehensive strategies for active ageing (see also 1.5)

The main disagreement between Dutch government and social partners in the Spring Agreement 2004 was about tax facilities for early retirement.

- Policy is aimed at financial incentives to discourage early retirement.

³² SCP, 2002. 'Emancipatiemonitor 2002'

³³ <http://www.wbk.nl/website/page.asp?menuid=24>

- Policy is aimed to develop suitable working conditions .
- Stereotype images of older employees are a hindrance for their chances on the labour market. Government will develop policy to change these images. The 'Taskforce Older People at work' has already developed certain instruments.
- Employers are not aware of the consequences of an ageing population for the labour market. Awareness campaigns will be developed.
- Policy is aimed at active support of older people who want to start their own company³⁴.

Integration of minorities

In summary, a great deal has been achieved since 1998. At the time the most persistent problem was the high rate of unemployment amongst the minorities in the Netherlands which, at about 16%, was four times the unemployment rate amongst the indigenous population. The unemployment rate, in part by virtue of the implementation of a number of specific measures and agreements, has now decreased to about 10%.

Integration programmes were also introduced in 1998. These programmes are mandatory for newcomers pursuant to the provision of the Newcomers' Integration Act, and the budget allocated to these programmes amounted to €136 million for 2002. In addition, a large number of structural measures (with funds of €95 million) have been implemented during this Government's period of office that are designed to provide for the integration of what are referred to as 'oldcomers'. A great deal of support being provided for the implementation is focused on customization, the effective reduction of the drop-out rate, and the reduction of the waiting lists. The operations of a special Task Force are beginning to bear fruit, and other countries are exhibiting a great deal of interest in our integration policy. As from 1 January 2002 religious leaders from abroad occupying a temporary post in the Netherlands are also under the obligation to participate in a customized integration course.

The country's anti-discrimination policy has been strengthened on the introduction of more stringent legislation and the provision of support to anti-discrimination agencies. The school performance of members of the ethnic minorities also continues to improve every year. The Social and Cultural Planning Board carried out an analysis of the effects of the integration policy, which in view of the structural improvements being achieved by virtue of the policy led to the Board's recommendation that the Government continues on the present course.

Some measures concerning the integration policy:

- The imposition of a more stringent integration policy will be based on the feasibility of

³⁴ Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), 2004. [Kabinetsstandpunt "stimuleren langer werken van ouderen"](#).

requesting a financial contribution with respect to applications for admission pursuant to

family reunification and family formation;

- Employers will be called to account (possibly also in a financial sense) with respect to their

responsibility for the integration of temporary employees from abroad;

- The introduction of a model contract that municipal administrations will be able to use to oblige oldcomers eligible for participation in an integration programme to take part in that programme;

- The introduction of a deposit to be paid by oldcomers when applying to take part in the integration programme that will be repaid, with a bonus, on the successful completion of the programme. Trials will also be held with other incentives, such as a reward or a guarantee of a job.

In 2004, the government submitted a policy paper on Integration of immigrants, the 'Contourennota inburgering'. It includes proposals for stricter measures on integration for immigrants, such as obligatory integration courses (language learning and citizenship-courses), also for the so called 'oldcomers', measures for a more balanced dispersal of immigrants in cities and requirements for the foundation of schools. At the same time a policy paper on illegal immigrants appeared which included much severe dealing with illegal practises in housing and labour.

A research on the effectiveness of integration policy in the Netherlands through the past decades lead to the adaptation of one (of the eight) recommendations i.e. to let market mechanisms regulate the supply of language courses for newcomers. The committee notes that the proposals not acted on by the government include the recommendation that the available financial resources be bundled, that quality improvement options be investigated, that visitation and benchmarking be applied and that a critical analysis be made of the need for information on a national level.

In the 2003 issue of the periodic report on the integration policy of ethnic minorities³⁵, the government stated that efforts needed to be intensified in a number of policy fields in order to bridge the gap between immigrants and native Dutch people. Government policy was intended to stimulate both the immigrants and the Dutch to take integration into their own hands. "Shared citizenship" and "participation" became key concepts³⁶.

Promoting lifelong learning and increase participation in training, especially for the low-skilled and the inactive.

Increased mobility on the European labour market (New Member States) will result into more competition for especially the low skilled employees on the Dutch labour market. Training for this vulnerable group is therefore needed.

See 1.5 for specific measures.

³⁵ [Rapportage integratiebeleid minderheden 2003](#)

³⁶ The Minister for Urban Policy and the Integration of Ethnic Minorities , 2002. [Integration from the perspective of Immigration'](#)

Youth unemployment

The Netherlands have the fastest increase in Europe of youth unemployment: 65.000 or 14 % of young people under age 23 is unemployed and there are too little jobs. Somewhat more than half of these youngsters has a starting qualification on VET level 2. 40 % has not. Two-third of this group are immigrants and they can't find their way to the labour market. The [Taskforce Youth Unemployment](#) wants to offer 40.000 jobs in 4 year time. The supply of jobs the first quarter of this year was unsuccessful. Only two thousand jobs could be provided. FNV (Dutch Federation of the trade union movement) has developed a plan that implies a supply chain approach between sectors, communities, national government and Europe (ESF). This way they can offer a subsidy of 17.000 euro for each youngster. For this subsidy an employer can offer three months apprenticeship and connecting workplace training during two years. ESF subsidies are not very popular at the moment in the Netherlands, so there's enough room to use ESF for the purpose to combat youth unemployment. An important success factor in this plan is the fact that the youngsters are paid wages conform CAO (Collective Bargaining) so they are paid reasonably well and they receive training and practise their craftsmanship. The assumption is that in a few years time, when the older employees are retiring, these youngsters are ready to enter the labour market full-time.³⁷

3.1.3 Please identify any obstacles standing in the way of reform of VET in relation to achieving the Lisbon objectives.

See chapter 1.

3.2 Involving stakeholders

3.2.1 Please describe the role of stakeholders or social partners in the planning of VET at national, sector and company level

The principle of social partner involvement can be characterised by mainly an advisory and representational role. They are involved in various bodies, councils and boards of institutions and are involved in important new developments (for example the newly established [Innovation Platform](#) to proceed towards a knowledge society).

The related diagram gives an idea of the place and role of social partners in the education and training field, specifically in the process of defining and adjusting education and training curricula, matching labour market needs. At national level, the Social Economic Council (Sociaal Economische Raad - SER) is the main advisory body of the Dutch government on national and international social and economic policy. Its position is anchored by law since 1950 when the Industrial Organisation Act came into force. In its advisory capacity the SER represents the interests of trade unions and industry. Being independent from the government and financed by industry, the SER may give advice, solicited or unsolicited, on all major social and economic affairs. At sectoral level, social partners are represented in the board of Colo, the association of national vocational education bodies. Colo has a tripartite

³⁷ Bondgenoten Magazine July 2004, p. 28-30

board consisting of representatives from employers, employees and the national vocational education bodies (laid down in the statutes of the association). See the diagram for the responsibilities of the various actors with regard to vocational education and training. Social partners are specifically responsible for defining and updating the occupational profiles, which form the basis of the qualification profiles.

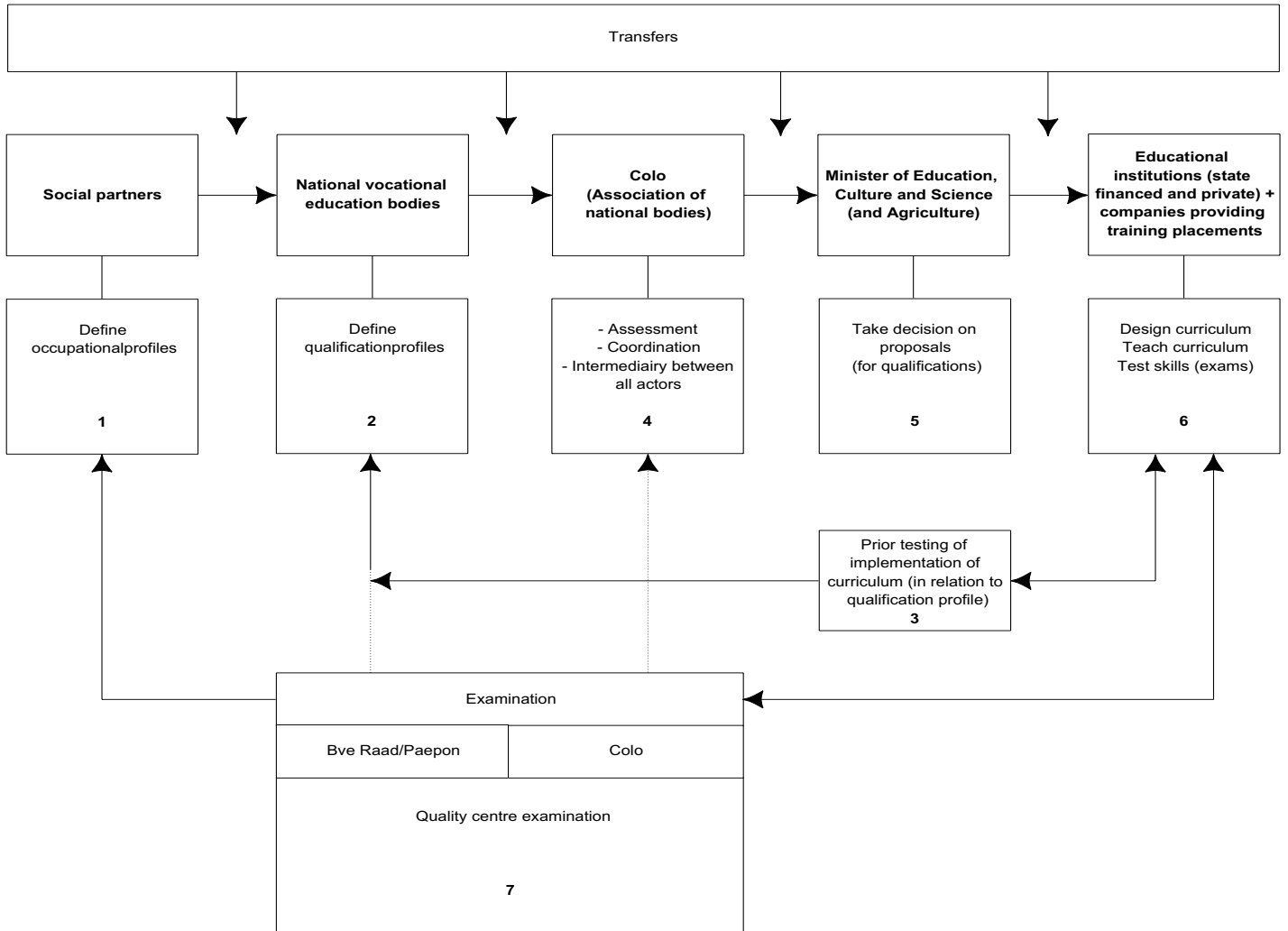
At regional level, most regional training centres (ROC) have a representation of social partners in their supervisory board. More and more, social partners are involved in or take initiatives at branch or local level by stimulating cooperation between education and training and trade and industry. The leading notion is to improve the relation between the demand and supply of labour force and skilled personnel.

There are 20 sector-oriented National Lead Bodies (KBBs) whose purpose, according to the WEB, is: to develop qualifications for secondary vocational education, to monitor the examinations given by education institutes, to recruit new companies offering training places (for practical training) and to monitor the quality of the companies offering training places. On 1 October 2001, there were 167,000 companies offering training places in the Netherlands that were recognised by the Lead Bodies. The adjacent diagram shows which are active for which trade branch and to which sector a trade branch is allocated.³⁸

(See also p. 11- barriers)

³⁸ [Country report the Netherlands Refernet](#)

Diagram I: Cooperation between the involved actors



Source: Colo

3.2.2 Which actions to anticipate and recognise skills and qualifications needs (at national, sector or regional level) for your country do the European social partners identify as important in their recent report?

Lifelong learning and employability are still high on the agenda of the social partners. In the still difficult year 2003, witnessing economic recession, it became clear again that lower qualified employees are very vulnerable on the labour market. Social partners continued to include and improve framework conditions for learning in their collective agreements.

(See also p. 16-Incentives- negative decisions)

Actions taken at national level

- Recognition and validation of competences and qualifications.

In 2003 progress was made, especially in the field of assessment of prior learning (APL). Supported by the national expert centre for assessment of

prior learning, in several branches initiatives have been launched to implement APL.

Actions taken at sectoral and company levels:

The Dutch carpet industry.

Initiated in 2002, now the Association of Dutch Carpet Manufacturers VNTF has an improved training system in operation in 2003, with the following characteristics:

- the content of the courses is developed by the companies and directly related to their needs
- the main learning environment is the company; in addition there is a school component, fitting perfectly with the learning experience in the company
- the employee/student has direct access to all the course material through the internet
- the managers of the employee/student function as coaches and discuss with him/her learning progress and development

The results of the new approach are a higher motivation for learning and the learning is much more effective³⁹.

3.3 Transparency, recognition & mobility

The Education Council advises⁴⁰ to develop a so called 'Europe-competence' and accompanying certificate: the ability to function and participate in Europe. Mobility of students and teachers in Europe also provides a strong impulse to this Europe-competence.

De [Bison-Monitor](#) of international mobility in education (2002) gives insight into the figures on mobility. In 2001 more than 33.000 Dutch students went abroad on a grant, 6.841 (3,1%) in secondary vocational education and 5.902 (5,3%) in higher vocational education.

According to the monitor, mobility in VET increased the last years. 28 % of the graduates in higher vocational training were mobile during their study. To stimulate mobility, the Education Council advises to implement clear objectives within vocational education.

³⁹ Trade unions: FNV (Dutch Federation of the trade union movement), MHP (Trade Union Federation for Intermediate and Higher Employees) and CNV (National Christian trade union federation), members of ETUC . Employers: VNO-NCW (Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers), member of UNICE; MKB-Nederland (Royal Dutch Association of SMEs), member of UEAPME, and LTO Nederland (Dutch Organisation for Agriculture and Horticulture)

⁴⁰ Advice Education and Europe : European influences in the Netherlands. The Hague, Education Council, June, 2004.

3.3.1 To establish credit frameworks

Since 1994 the Netherlands had a national structure in place for evaluating international diplomas. [IDW \(international credential evaluation\)](#) offices provide information about the status of foreign diplomas and courses of study in the Netherlands. This applies to all diplomas, with the exception of teaching certificates obtained outside the Netherlands.

Applications for credential evaluation are handled by one of three expertise centres, depending on the type of education involved: the IB-Groep (secondary education), COLO (adult and vocational education) or NUFFIC (higher education). Within six weeks, the applicant will receive a credential evaluation about the status of his or her foreign diploma or course of study compared with Dutch programmes.

Credit framework

The development and implementation of a credit framework in the Netherlands will parallel the development and implementation of the new qualifications framework and will be in alignment with the recommendations of the technical working group 'Credit transfer in VET'⁴¹. Actors are the National Lead Bodies (Colo) and the Vocational Education Council (Bve Raad)⁴².

3.3.2 To establish or reform a qualifications framework

See page 11 – barriers to flexibility

3.3.3 To implement Europass?

Europass will be launched during the EU conference in Maastricht in December 2004.

For the VET sector, specific targets are to cooperate actively and bring forward European cooperation, to develop an international key competence, to attune initiatives on recognition of qualifications and diploma's or accreditation of prior learning at European level and to further develop the Europass framework in this respect. An overall goal is to stimulate and enlarge international mobility for all students in the VET sector.

European initiatives such as the Europass, European computer driving licence and the European format for curriculum vitae are implemented in the Netherlands. In 2001, the language portfolio has been adapted to the national situation (including the VET sector) and recognised by the Council of Europe as one of the first national portfolios.

At branch level, some instruments are developed to increase transparency of qualifications in international perspective (i.e. euro-certificates, modules implemented in different countries). One example in the metal sector is the creation of the EMU Berufspass. This initiative is taken by the employers' organisation Metaalunie (Metal Union), and is recognised in the metal sector in a number of European countries. The personal Berufspass contains information on the level of competences and skills of the employee and can be updated throughout his or her entire working life.

⁴¹ First report of the technical working group 'Credit transfer in VET', 2003

⁴² Education Council (Bve Raad) mrs. Marijke Dashorst.

A few initiatives have been or are being taken in the border region with Germany to develop bilateral modules for which the students receive two national diplomas (bi-diplomering). For example, a regional training centre in the south developed a bilateral module in the laboratory technic branch and agreed with the Industry- und Handelskammer zu Aachen that the students received both a Dutch and German certificate. A small number of students has benefited from this initiative and it has not been taken further to this date. Other initiatives are being developed in the euregios at the moment, but are in the first stages of development⁴³.

⁴³ [Country report the Netherlands Refernet, chapter 2.01 and 1101](#)