



Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en  
Wetenschap

# **Overcoming School Failure, policies that work**

## **Background Report for the Netherlands**

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## **Overcoming school failure, policies that work**

### **OECD Country Background Report of the Netherlands**

#### **Preface**

*"Settle the basis, raise the bar"*

Every individual has the right to self-determination, and deserves the opportunity to make the most of him and to develop. Every talent will count whether we are talking about youngsters with disabilities, pupils in vocational education who are good with their hands or high-flying university students. The Netherlands aspires to be one of the top five knowledge economies worldwide. To achieve this, we need to improve the quality of education and raise the level of performance. The focus will be on a solid basis and higher standards<sup>1</sup>.

These are some of the statements of the Dutch government about education and development. They are strongly linked to equity: everyone deserves a chance. They also indicate that the government has a strong commitment to reduce school failure and drop out. The dropout rates illustrate this commitment: a reduction from 71.000 in 2002 to 41.800 in 2009. Policy ambition is aimed at a reduction of 25.000 in 2016.

The Netherlands have a fairly good record on equity. Recent PISA scores point out that the weakest Dutch students perform better than their peers in many OESO-countries<sup>2</sup>. Still, in the overall PISA scores Dutch students score mediocre, due to the fact that the more gifted students in the Netherlands perform less than their peers elsewhere. Therefore, actual policy is aimed at substantially improving the performance of the more gifted students, while keeping up the good work on equity and school failure.

To realize these ambitions, a broad range of measures are to be implemented. Basically they are about:

1. Higher achievements in education and a stronger culture of ambition in schools. This is to be made visible in a greater emphasis on excellency of both students and schools, and instruments like diagnostic tests and performance systems.
2. Improving teacher quality and school leadership, towards professional schools pursuing sound HRM policies.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of the Netherlands. Coalition Agreement. Den Haag 2010.

[http://www.government.nl/Government/Coalition\\_agreement](http://www.government.nl/Government/Coalition_agreement)

<sup>2</sup> Centraal Planbureau. Policy Brief 05. Nederlandse onderwijsprestaties in perspectief. Den Haag 2011. <http://www.cpb.nl/sites/default/files/publicaties/download/cpb-policy-brief-2011-05-nederlandse-onderwijsprestaties-perspectief.pdf>

3. To continue the program "Aanval op de uitval", the drive to reduce drop out. The programme is both committed to activities to reduce the number of early school-leavers, as to systemic changes to prevent and overcome school failure.

### **How to read this country report**

This country report is about the Dutch approach on equity, overcoming school failure and reducing drop out. An overview of the content can be found below.

Chapter 5 and Appendix 1 of this report give an overview of actual Dutch policies. Appendix 2 gives an overview of the Dutch drop out program.

### **Chapter 1: Structure and governance**

1.1 Structure of the education system in the Netherlands

1.2 Number of schools and governance structure

### **Chapter 2: Fair and inclusive education**

2.1 Rolling through the system: selection and flow

2.2 Grouping of students

2.3 Free school choice

2.4 Guidance and counselling policies and practices

### **Chapter 3: Fair and inclusive practices**

3.1 Year repetition and delayed completion

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### **Chapter 4: Fair and inclusive resourcing**

4.1 Allocation of educational resources: four flows of funds

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4.3 Policy on persistently low performing schools

4.4. To measure is to know: monitoring progress

### **Chapter 5: Challenges in overcoming school failure**

5.1 Major causes of educational failure: causes and remedies within and without the system

5.2 Challenges in overcoming school failure in the next five years

### ***Appendix 1 Overview of actual Dutch education policies***

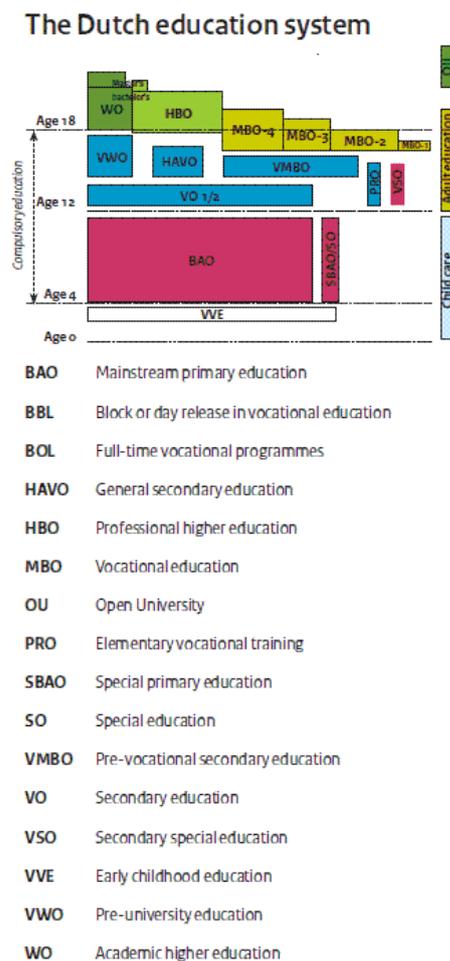
### ***Appendix 2 Brief overview of the program "Aanval op de uitval"***

### ***Literature***

## Section I: Policies and practices to overcome school failure

### Chapter 1: Structure and governance

#### 1.1 Structure of the education system in the Netherlands



#### A few remarks

- The student flows in the system are to be found in paragraph 2.1
- VO½: the first two years of VO. The upper class years of VO are divided in VMBO, HAVO and VWO (to be explained in 2.1.3)
- BBL and BOL both are modes of MBO (to be explained in 2.1.4.)

## 1. 2 Number of schools and governance structure

### 1.2.1 Number of schools

*Number of schools and students, and amount of funding in 2009*

	Schools	Students (x1000)	Amount of funding (x € bln.)
WO	12	231,6	1.283
HBO	36	402,1	2.324
MBO	59	519,2	3.109
VO <sup>3</sup>	644	935,4	6.788
SO/VSO	634	111,8	1.859
BAO	7.516	1548,5	7.656
Total		3.765,6	23.221

*Source: Key figures 2006-2010<sup>4</sup>*

### 1.2.2 Governance structure

Freedom of education and equal funding of both public and privately run schools are the two key features of the Dutch education system and governance structure. Both are established in the Dutch constitution.

The freedom of education implies the freedoms to found schools, to organize the teaching in schools and to determine the principles on which they are based. People have the right to found schools and to provide teaching based on religious, ideological or educational beliefs. As a result there are publicly and privately run (or 'independent') schools.

Equal funding places public and privately run schools on an equal financial footing. The conditions which private schools must satisfy in order to qualify for funding are laid down by law and are in most cases executed by the national government. These are conditions like quality standards, prescriptions on the subjects to be studied, examinations, teacher's qualifications, giving parents and pupils a say in school matters, planning and reporting obligations, as well as supervision and inspection. A recent bill makes it possible for the government to cut off funding to individual schools if the level of education is persistently poor, and to encourage principles of good governance in primary and secondary education.

### 1.2.3 Public competencies: national, regional and local

*National level*

Most public competencies concerning education are executed by the central government. Key actor is the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), who on specific issues collaborates with the Ministries on Health, Welfare and Sports

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<sup>3</sup> VO: VO½ , VMBO, HAVO and VWO together

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Key figures 2006-2010. Den Haag 2011

(VWS), Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), and Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I). Central government creates enabling conditions for education through legislation which apply to both public and privately run institutions, and is responsible for all education matters at national level. Most of the funding is provided by the central government.

An important executive agency on the national level is the Education Inspectorate, responsible for the inspection and review of schools and educational institutions. The Inspectorate executes its responsibility by activities such as assessing the quality of education offered in schools and in the education system as a whole, and publicly reporting about it. Thus, the Inspectorate supplies reliable information which is relevant for both individual schools as for policy purposes.

#### *Provincial level*

The involvement of the provincial authorities is limited to some administrative competencies. On a very occasional basis funding by the provincial government takes place.

#### *Local level: the municipality*

The municipalities do not have as much competencies on education as national government does, but the competencies they have are relevant for equity and the reduction of school failure. To be mentioned are:

- Compulsory liaison between school boards, childcare organisations and the municipal executive within the context of the 'Local Education Agenda' (LEA). Important themes are preschool and early-school education programs; care in and around the school, community schools, coordination between successive educational phases, combating school drop-out, and transitional classes. They are directly or indirectly concerned with combating educational disadvantage;
- Responsible for executing the Acts on Compulsory Education and on Basic Qualification Requirement by compliance with the Acts and keeping a record of early school leavers (RMC).
- The funding of adult education for target groups for those who are insufficiently qualified drop-outs, newcomers and 'oldcomers'<sup>5</sup>. For these reasons, the local authority has the so-called participation budget at its disposal.
- The municipality receives money for general purposes from the national 'municipalities fund'. Many municipalities (especially the bigger ones) use this money for educational purposes.

Though formal competencies on education may be limited, local authorities can also execute informal influence on the policies of schools and school boards, and many

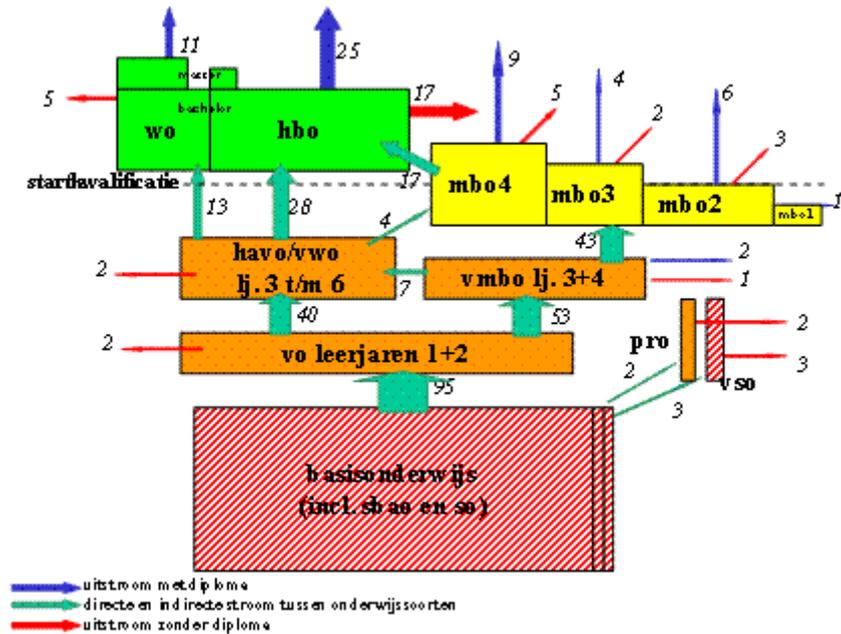
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<sup>5</sup> 'Oldcomers' are first generation migrants who have been living in the Netherlands for quite a while, but who are not sufficiently integrated yet or who lack skills in Dutch language.

municipalities do so with reasonable success. Moreover, as the municipality has formal competencies on 'neighbor-sectors', like sports, culture, social welfare and employment, the municipality is in a 'director's position'. This gives the municipality the opportunity to stimulate and establish partnerships between different sectors that are relevant for learning and developing children and youngsters, based on an inclusive approach.

## Chapter 2: Fair and inclusive education

### 2.1 Rolling through the system: selection and flow



The figure above provides a quantitative overview of the flow of pupils through the Dutch education system. Chapter 2.1 offers a qualitative explanation. A few remarks on the figure itself are useful:

- The figure includes indirect flow; students that temporarily leave the education system but return after a certain period of time (e.g. students who take a gap year);
- Outflows from PRO and VSO are (by definition) unqualified because there are not completed through formal exams;
- MBO students have the opportunity to switch between courses (1, 2, 3, 4)

#### 2.1.1 Childcare and early childhood education (VVE)

Conditions for educational success are for a major part met in early childhood. This implies the importance of parents that have the love and the skills to foster their kids in a safe and stimulating environment. And it requires adequate provisions that support the quality of early childhood. Many children make use of childcare facilities. For children under the age of four, high-quality childcare means that they are better equipped for a start in primary school. Childcare facilities, in the form of out-of-school care, are also available for children of school age. National policy is aimed at increasing and ensuring the quality of childcare, so that an extensive network of high-quality childcare facilities enables parents to combine work and care and also boosts children's development.

Early childhood education (VVE) is a form of education designed to optimize the development opportunities of children aged 2 to 5 from underprivileged backgrounds, who are at risk of educational or language disadvantage. Early childhood education for preschoolers (two to four-year-olds) is provided by

playgroups and, to a lesser extent, day nurseries. Primary schools offer VVE programs for four and five-year-olds. The new government is aiming at higher participation in VVE.

Early childhood education is provided in childcare or playgroups (age 2-4 ) or in primary schools (age 4-5). Actual figures:

Early Childhood Education in 2010	
Childcare/playgroups	18.295
Primary Schools	17.930

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

### 2.1.2. PO (primary education)

#### *Mainstream primary education*

Most children start primary school at the age of four, although they are not required by law to attend school until the age of five. At the end of primary school (at around 12 years) pupils receive an advice which type of educational programme would be the most appropriate, given the school results and capacities of the pupil. The advice is based on the judgment of the primary school teachers about the capacity of the pupil and on the results of an objective test. About 95% of the schools use the national test provided by Cito<sup>6</sup>, the Dutch Testing and Assessment Company. Based on this advice parents and pupils can apply for the school they prefer and that provides the appropriate educational program.

#### *Smoother transitions from PO to VO*

Transition from PO to VO can be abrupt for many children, and may cause discontinuity in the learning process. Measures to make this transition smoother are:

- an obligatory test that gives information on the accomplishment the pupil has reached at the end of primary school;
- the so-called reference levels<sup>7</sup> on language and arithmetic to be introduced, so that a more continuous learning process is ensured, and discontinuity between PO and VO will be diminished;
- Induction classes ('kopklassen') in PO: a special class in which pupils spend a year at the end of primary school receiving additional teaching to prepare them better for the transition to VO. Such a class is meant for children that are not ready yet for VO.
- 'Foot classes' in VO for pupils still being at PO-age but who lie ahead on comparable pupils of their age. In these classes, pupils can get acquainted to the learning process and learning topics in VO.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cito.com>

<sup>7</sup> 'Reference levels' specify the minimum level that pupils and students ought to attain in the different stages of education (PO, VO and MBO). They are to be introduced for both language and arithmetic.

### 2.1.3. VO (Secondary education)

After finishing primary education children can apply for secondary education. Secondary education consists of VMBO, HAVO and VWO. Children with special needs have the opportunity of attending PRO or VSO as will be explained in section 2.1.5. During the first two years of VO there is a curriculum that consists of 7 themes and 58 attainment targets. Schools are free in the composition of the classroom (homo- or heterogeneous) and in the manner they design education towards the attainment standards.

Most schools in secondary education are combined schools, which makes it possible to make the first two years of secondary education as common as possible in so called bridge classes. This makes it easy during these years to switch from one type of secondary education as possible. Combined schools also give better opportunities for switches in the upper levels of secondary education.

After finishing the first years of VO pupils go on in one of the three types of secondary education: HAVO, VWO or VMBO.

#### *Some remarks on selection in VO*

The Dutch secondary education system is divided into several tracks. On the transition from PO to VO, students are distributed across secondary education programmes at varying levels. In schools with transitional classes (*'brugklassen'*) however, selection can be deferred to the second year or, occasionally, the third year of secondary education. About 70% in VO are combined schools, which is in favour of creating common transitional classes.

Although selection might find place at a relatively early stage, there are several ways to correct for wrong choices, should they occur. Important is the opportunity of 'roundabout routes' enabling students to cross over from one route to another, thus piling up certificates. This enables late developers, either from lower socio-economic backgrounds or not, still to participate in higher secondary education tracks. Of particular importance is the route from theoretical pre-vocational education (VMBO-T) to the second phase of HAVO, which give students direct access to programmes that prepare for higher education. And there is the vocational education route, from VMBO through MBO to HBO.

The public and politic debate in the Netherlands has a history of 'touchiness'. An advice of the Dutch Educational Council (Onderwijsraad)<sup>8</sup>, gave support to the notion that the Dutch approach on selection and flow in secondary education is adequate, although the Council mentions some weak spots too. In his reaction, the government agrees with the Council that a generic delay of selection is unnecessary. Early selection is in favour of the more talented pupils. Especially the more talented children perform less well, compared to children in other countries, while the weaker students perform very well. Law gives freedom to schools to make arrangements for a smooth and 'tailor made' transitions of students from PO to VO.

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<sup>8</sup> Onderwijsraad. Vroeg of laat. Den Haag 2010.

<http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/publicaties/2010/vroege-selectie/item3194>

### *HAVO and VWO*

HAVO certificate-holders and VWO certificate-holders can opt at the ages of around 17 and 18 respectively to go on to higher education.

HAVO (5 years) is designed to prepare pupils for higher professional education (HBO). In practice, however, HAVO school-leavers also go on to the upper years of VWO or to MBO. About 1800 Havo certificate holders carry on their school career in VWO (4%).

VWO (6 years) is designed to prepare pupils for university (WO) and in most cases VWO- certificate-holders go on to WO. Some of them though enter HBO.

Just as HAVO and VWO students, MBO certificate-holders can go on to higher professional education (HBO), while HBO graduates may also go on to university for an academic study.

### *VMBO*

VMBO is meant as a preparation for MBO, which are the following studies chosen in most of the cases. In VMBO, pupils can choose between the following pathways:

- basic vocational program;
- middle-management vocational program;
- combined middle-management and theoretical program;
- theoretical program.

These pathways are relevant for the choice between general or vocational education. After completing VMBO most pupils go on to MBO, but those who have successfully completed the theoretical program can also go on to HAVO. To give a clue, this is the case with about 9000 certificate holders, which is about 20% of the population.

For VMBO pupils aged 14 and over, who are experiencing problems with full-time education, a special program can be devised combining education with some form of light work. This "learn- work arrangement" (LWT) is intended for a small group of pupils, who cannot be helped in any other way. The program is a variant of the basic vocational program.

In VMBO, learning support (LWOO) is available for pupils who are lagging behind the rest of the class or have other problems but who are nonetheless deemed capable of obtaining a VMBO certificate. It is tailored to pupils' special needs and can vary in length. Schools get extra money in the lump-sum, according to the number of students that are LWOO indicated.

#### *Smoothing transitions from VMBO to MBO*

Discontinuity between VMBO and MBO is an important source of drop out. Therefore the following measures are in force:

- to discharge the maximum length of stay in VMBO, so that pupils have more time to complete VMBO education;
- arrangements in which VMBO and MBO schools are combined, so pupils in pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) can obtain an MBO-1 or MBO-2 qualification without changing schools;
- admission requirements to be introduced for level 2 MBO courses, in combination with the measures mentioned above;
- active mailing and advertising to VMBO certificate holders to continue their school careers in either MBO or HAVO.

#### **2.1.4 MBO**

After finishing VMBO most students choose MBO. MBO provides both theoretical instruction and practical training in preparation for the practice of a wide range of occupations for which a vocational qualification is necessary or useful. Its main target group is young people from the age of 16. They can choose between four sectors: business, engineering and technology, personal and social services and health care, and agriculture. Within these sectors they can choose, dependent on their ability, between four qualification levels, each of which has requirements in terms of exit qualifications:

- 1: training to assistant level;
- 2: basic vocational training;
- 3: professional training;
- 4: middle-management training and specialist training.

In MBO, students can choose between two pathways, which differ from each other in the proportion of learning and working:

- vocational training (BOL) where education at school takes up the majority of the course and practical training takes the form of an internship;
- block or day release (BBL) where practical training and training on the job takes up the majority of the course (internship).

The majority of MBO certificate-holders enter the labour market. Some of them go on to higher professional education (HBO).

#### **2.1.5 Provisions for children with special needs and problems**

##### *Special education (SO, VSO and PRO)*

For children with such disabilities, or such special needs that they can't attend regular education, special education is provided. Children can be placed into a special school based on an indication given by an indication committee. It's up to the parents to decide whether their child attends a special school or a regular school, given the indication. In the latter case the regular school will get extra

funding through the personal budget which is provided to the parents ('little backpack' )<sup>9</sup>.

There are special schools for the visually handicapped children, for the deaf or the ones with speaking problems, for the physically handicapped and for the children with severe behaviour problems. There is special education for children of primary education age (SO) and special education for children from 12 age onwards (VSO).

For children in VSO a new provision will be developed, the so-called on the job training schools. VSO students are stimulated to combine school with work from age 16 on. This provision is aimed for an adequate labour market perspective of these students.

#### *PRO Practical training (elementary vocational training)*

Practical training is a type of education separate from the four learning pathways in VMBO. It is aimed at pupils who are realistically deemed unlikely to obtain a qualification through one of the learning pathways, even with learning support. Unlike the four learning pathways in VMBO, practical training does not lead on to secondary vocational education but prepares pupils for direct entry to the labor market. The outflow from PRO is by definition unqualified because PRO doesn't work with formal exams. Students leave school with a portfolio that gives insight in their specific skills and knowledge.

### **2.1.6 Don't leave school without a proper qualification**

Due to the program "Aanval op de uitval", the drive to reduce early school leaving, fewer students leave the educational system without a basic qualification. A basic qualification is a qualification on HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 (ISCED 3). The program includes a number of measures, amongst them a more stringent policy on truancy and early school leaving (for a broader overview of the program, see Appendix 2).

A stronger policy on truancy and absenteeism is enforced, because they are often a prelude to drop out. Municipalities, who are in charge of executing this policy, are increasingly eager to do so. If a child of compulsory school age is not enrolled at a school or stays away from school without permission, the parents can be fined or sued. Fines can go up to €3700,-.

Under the Basic Qualification Requirement Act all young people up to 18 years must attend school until they attain a basic qualification. Those under the age of 18 who are no longer in full-time education will be required to follow a full-time program combining work and study, such as block or day release in MBO, until they have attained one of the required certificates. The enforcement of this measure is the responsibility of the municipalities too. For this reason, they collaborate in 39 RMC-regions (RMC: regional collaboration on reporting and registration of early school

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<sup>9</sup> These personal budgets are to be discharged, due to new policies on appropriate education (chapter 4.2)

leavers). This is combined with intensive collaboration with schools, province, youth care and other institutions that are relevant for these purposes.

### **2.1.7 Second chance opportunities**

#### *Channelling back early school leavers*

Early school leavers are channelled back into education or work-study placements by the municipalities which act as regional registration and coordination centres for school drop-out (RMC). The municipalities collaborate with youth care services, educational institutions and Centres for Work and Income in order to create the appropriate conditions for early school leavers to return to school and/or work. The aim is to ensure they acquire at least a basic qualification. Steps are being taken to make it easier for young people to enrol mid-course. Recent figures from Statistics Netherlands<sup>10</sup> show that about a quarter of the early school leavers returns back to school after some time and attain their basic qualification.

#### *Plus schools for overburdened youngsters*

'Nobody loves them'. That is what Pieter Winsemius, member of the Dutch Scientific Council on Government Policy (WRR), said about the so called 'overburdened youngsters'. Overburdened youngsters are early school leavers who are cognitively capable of obtaining a basic qualification, but who face a bunch of problems (in the domestic realm, physical or mental illness, drug addiction, behavioural problems, criminal career) that make it impossible for them to complete their education in a regular study programme or to function normally in society. The WRR<sup>11</sup> advised to create 'plus arrangements' by which these youngsters receive a combined form of assistance in which personal supervision, care and social work services are closely tied to their studies in an individual, customized program. The aim is to obtain a basic qualification eventually. According to this advice the government enables such provisions through the Plus Program. In many cases the plus school is not only a second but also the ultimate chance for these youngsters.

#### *Neighbourhood schools*

Neighbourhood schools (wijk scholen) are also meant for overburdened youngsters but are not necessarily aimed at obtaining a basic qualification. These schools, developed in Rotterdam as part of a national experiment, offer a combination of activities aimed at solving personal problems, orientation on living working and learning, development, achieving work experience, and a context-bound and informal learning process. The neighbourhood school prepares for labour

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<sup>10</sup> Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. Jaarboek Onderwijs in Cijfers. Den Haag/Heerlen 2010. <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/F2761145-AE68-4F43-B29B-B64066EAED8C/0/2010f162pub.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid. Vertrouwen in de school. Over de uitval van 'overbelaste' jongeren. Den Haag 2009. <http://www.wrr.nl/content.jsp?objectid=4769>

participation on MBO level 1 or any vocational course. A recent evaluation<sup>12</sup> of the prototype shows that this provision is more effective than comparable alternatives.

#### *Investing in youngsters*

According to the Law on Investing in Youngsters (Wet Investeren Jongeren) municipalities have the opportunity to impose a compulsory work-study requirement upon young people aged between 18 and 27 who have no basic qualifications, and who apply for social security benefits. Although this law is not exclusively designed for early school leavers, youngsters having neither work nor attending school are subject to compulsory supervision, giving municipal authorities extra opportunities to get them back to school or into work.

#### *Training measures by employers*

Employers are important actors in promoting the professional education of their employees, especially the low qualified youngsters. Employers are stimulated to take responsibility for training these employees by instruments like reductions in tax and social insurance contributions, funds for development and training that are managed by the social partners, or grants from the European Social Fund (ESF).

#### *VAVO and basic adult education*

VAVO is a type of adult education that gives a second chance opportunity to achieve a diploma for VMBO (theoretical pathway), HAVO and VWO. Basic adult education is aimed at elementary skills on language and mathematics (including Dutch as a second language). The municipality is responsible for the funding of these forms of adult education by means of the participation budget.

#### *Lifelong learning and EVC*

Lifelong learning policy is aimed to develop the learning capacity of adults, so they can respond flexibly to changes within society and the world of work. The responsibility for achieving these goals rests with the various partners involved in the learning and working process, but the government creates the enabling conditions. The government offers tax incentives to enterprises to make lifelong learning more attractive and has made grants available to enable prior learning assessment and recognition (EVC) and create training and employment helpdesks. So that skills can be recognized and certified officially.

## **2.2 Grouping of students**

Schools are free to decide on their own internal organization. In primary education, each class may include one or more age groups. At most primary schools the pupils

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<sup>12</sup> Centraal Planbureau (CPB). Evaluatie Wijk scholen Rotterdam. Den Haag 2011.

<http://www.cpb.nl/publicatie/evaluatie-wijk-scholen-rotterdam>

are grouped by age. Others have mixed-age groups or group children according to their level of development or ability. In the latter case, the pupils' position is reviewed each year. There are eight year groups in all schools. Each child begins in year 1 and, in most cases, goes up a class each year until they reach the top class.

In VO, most schools employ the year group system with children of the same age being placed together in the same class. Schools are free to group pupils by type of education (VWO, HAVO or the different learning pathways in VMBO) or place pupils following different types of education in the same class. Combined schools often group their pupils in combined classes in the first year or so. More than half of all first-year pupils are in mixed VMBO/HAVO or HAVO/VWO classes.

In the upper part of VMBO there are specializations in vocational directions like technology, business, care and welfare, agriculture. These specializations also lead to further grouping.

HAVO/VWO pupils have until the end of the 3rd year to choose one of four fixed subject combinations. They are then regrouped in accordance with the choices made. At the end of the 3rd year of HAVO and VWO (and in some cases at the end of the 4th year of VWO), pupils choose one of four subject combinations and are regrouped accordingly. As a result of the different programs the students are grouped by ability. Furthermore, in the upper part of general education there are further specializations on subjects like nature and technology or culture and society.

### **2.3 Free school choice**

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

At VO level, pupils are free to attend the school of their choice, provided they meet certain general conditions. In practical terms, pupil's freedom of choice for VO is limited only by their primary school's advice on the most appropriate type of education and the admission requirements of the VMBO pathways, HAVO and VWO. In MBO, students are free to choose their preferred institution; In most cases this is the one within their own region.

School choice is not tied to residential districts or catchment areas. There have been experiments and agreements on a local level on the spread of disadvantaged pupils, for instance to reduce segregation, but the results show a 'mixed picture'<sup>13</sup>. Still, finding ways to manage school choice is an issue: on a national level a 'knowledge-centre for mixed schools' has been established, and pilots are started in seven cities

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<sup>13</sup> FORUM. Instituut voor Multiculturele Ontwikkeling. Bestrijding van segregatie in het onderwijs in gemeenten. Verkenning van lokaal beleid anno 2008. Utrecht 2009. <http://dare.uva.nl/document/188283>

to identify effective interventions on local level to reduce segregation in education. These measures include school choice procedures and providing information to parents about mixed schools.

## **2.4 Guidance and counselling policies and practices**

### **2.4.1 Pupil guidance in PO and VO**

Schools provide guidance to students in the transition between successive phases of their educational careers: from primary to secondary education and from secondary education to vocational training or higher education. In the transition from primary to secondary education, the focus is on ensuring that students are placed at the right level; providing guidance in the transition from secondary education to further education (vocational training or higher education) is also concerned with the choice of study discipline and, by extension, choice of occupation.

In PO, pupils receive guidance from their class teacher, but they can also receive extra assistance from an internal counselor or a remedial teacher. Remedial teachers help pupils with difficulties. Internal counselors support children with special needs. They counsel parents as well as pupils, so that a child's environment becomes more conducive to learning, and have a coordinating, supervisory and innovatory role.

In VO, schools monitor pupil's progress by means of regular testing. There is growing awareness that school failure and drop out are often the result of wrong choices in an earlier state. Young people find it difficult to make the right choice, or they don't have a clear idea of what the occupation involves or how the job market is. Adequate guidance and coaching, and better advice on the choice of studies and career is an important instrument against school failure and drop out school leaving. Therefore the VO-schools, united in the VO Council, have made a plan to improve the quality of guidance and coaching.

MBO-institutions are obliged by law to take care of an adequate intake of potential students so the choices they make have endurance. The schools have methods and routines at their disposal to guide their students and to monitor their progress. Moreover, there is increasing collaboration between VMBO and MBO schools to increase the quality of the transition process.

#### *Mentoring projects*

In addition to this regular student guidance, mentoring projects operate at several places throughout the country, specifically targeting ethnic minority students. In these projects, ethnic minority secondary school students receive guidance and support from a student in higher education or another person from an ethnic minority group who can serve as a successful role model. Mentors provide different kinds of support: socio-emotional support, study guidance and exploration of further education courses. There are no figures on numbers of students that receive mentoring. Mentoring though is increasingly becoming a regular aspect of the process on education and learning.

## **Chapter 3: Fair and inclusive practices**

### **3.1 Year repetition and delayed completion**

In PO delayed completion of schooling happens about 5% of the pupils (1 out of 20). In VO this kind of year repetition has only a temporarily effect on further school progress. Schools are advised not to take decisions on early school leaving lightly.

Year repetition in VO<sup>14</sup> is the case for about 53.000 students each year, which is about 5 % of the total number of students. Recent statistics pointed out there a many school leavers in HAVO among those who came from VMBO. Measures to reduce this are under consideration.

Although numbers on year repetition and delayed schooling are not very high, measures are taken to reduce this phenomenon, also from a financial point of view. These measures are aimed at accelerating talented pupils, preventing delayed completion of schooling and shortening and intensifying learning trajectories<sup>15</sup>.

### **3.2 Pedagogical approaches**

Schools are responsible for the educational and pedagogical approach. They have a fair freedom in designing and executing it. The Inspectorate sees to it that legal standards are met, for instance that the subject contents are taught, the amount of time spent on education is sufficient, and the didactic practice of schools are in tune with the various needs of pupils. Teachers are supposed to account for differences in respect to weaker and stronger pupils. The Inspectorate also takes in account that schools do have a coherent set of instruments to monitor pupils in their development, and have systematic care for those pupils who are in need of extra support.

Are schools able to notice learning problems, to analyse them and to act adequately? In order to do this effectively, most schools use a 'learning monitoring system', which contains test results, and which is used to monitor pupils in their progress and development. Most schools have tutors, remedial teachers or care coordinators to support teachers in dealing with pupils who need special attendance and care.

For pupils who are indicated for special education, regular schools are stimulated to give them the appropriate education through extra financing and ambulant guidance

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<sup>14</sup> VO ½ , VMBO, HAVO and VWO together

<sup>15</sup> Statistics on year repetition and delayed completion can be distorted, due to a variety on definitions amongst OECD countries. This makes it hard to make good comparisons. The Netherlands therefore participate in a working group on developing a sound indicator on year repetition and delayed completion so it can be used in Education at a Glance and in other comparative analyses.

from the realm of special education. In VO this is done by learning support, so pupils with certain disadvantages have the opportunity to achieve a regular diploma.

In MBO, schools often mix students of various courses from an efficiency point of view; for instance: students from different professional sectors follow the same courses in English or Dutch. It is supposed this will increase, due to the new qualification structure which is 'competency oriented'.

#### *Evidence based practice*

Policy is on stimulating 'evidence based practice'. Experiments and pilots are initiated to increase the quality and 'evidence based' practice of the teaching and learning process. These initiatives are based on intensive collaboration between scientists and schools.

#### *Language and math*

An issue that is high on the policy agenda is strengthening the teaching of Dutch language and math. This fits in with the increased attention for educational quality. 'Reference levels' are to be introduced for both subject areas which specify the minimum level that pupils and students ought to attain in the different phases of education (primary, secondary, secondary vocational). In MBO central examinations are to be introduced for Dutch language and math. The government is giving stronger emphasis on language and math teaching and performance. A greater emphasis on language and the introduction of reference levels is of particular importance for migrant pupils and students, as they often lag well behind the native population, especially in Dutch language.

#### *The teachers' importance*

The quality of the teacher in realizing equity and tackling school failure is by far the critical factor for educational success. As has been pointed out by Mc Kinsey<sup>16</sup> in 2007, the success of the best performing educational systems is only for a small part related tot system characteristics; it's the quality of the teacher that counts. The former government has introduced a broad Action Plan for Teaching Profession in the Netherlands, which will be continued in the next years. An additional action plan has been published in the spring of 2011<sup>17</sup>. This action plan has a generic character and is aimed at improving the quality and professionalism of all current and future teachers. Specific attention will be paid to the role and competency of the teacher in dealing with diversity.

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<sup>16</sup> McKinsey & Company (2007), How the World's Best-performing School Systems Come Out on Top, [http://www.mckinsey.com/client/service/socialsector/resources/pdf/Worlds\\_School\\_Systems\\_Final.pdf](http://www.mckinsey.com/client/service/socialsector/resources/pdf/Worlds_School_Systems_Final.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. Actieplan Leraar 2020. Den Haag 2011 <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2011/05/23/actieplan-leraar-2020.html>

### **3.3 Partnerships in education and learning**

School is not an island. Partnership is important, with parents, sports, culture, youth care, with the world of work and other participants. There is a strong development in partnership between schools and other actors that are contributing to learning and the developing of talent.

#### *Parent-school partnerships*

First and foremost the role of parents is to raise their children. This means children are fostered in all the love their parents are able to give, are well fed, have enough sleep, are supported by their parents in their learning process, for instance by stimulating homework, and to have conversations with the school on a regularly basis. Traditionally, parents play an important role in education in the Netherlands. Parent-involvement is regarded important: it is helpful for the school and supports the learning process, building a strong relationship between the processes of raising and educating. On a local level the municipality gives support for parental initiatives and to care for more information for parents.

The Dutch government is eager to increase the involvement of parents in primary and secondary education. Special attention is devoted to parents from the migrant groups, who are generally more difficult to reach and are less involved in the education of their children. A special 'Ethnic Minority Parents' Platform' was created which takes initiatives to foster the involvement of a growing number of migrant parents. Activities to reach ethnic minority parents include home visits by teachers, creating a room for parents in the school, possibly in combination with the provision of courses for parents (like language), and the creation of parent information points in the school. Many (primary) schools with a high proportion of migrant pupils have developed a vision and a policy aimed at promoting contact with parents, with a view to encouraging parents to support their children's education. On a local level the municipality gives support for parental initiatives and to care for more information for parents on the issue of parent involvement.

#### *Schools and care institutions: support advisory teams*

In support advisory teams (ZAT's or Care and Advice Teams) schools, health services, social services, school attendance authorities, youth care services and the police collaborate, so that help can be given promptly to those who need it. The support provided by the Care and Advice Teams can be focused on students with emotional, behavioural, developmental or learning difficulties, but can also be targeted at their families and the school. Policy is aimed to expand the support advisory teams for pupils with multiple behavioural problems and/or special needs in secondary vocational education. In the future, every school in PO, VO and MBO is supposed to have its own support advisory team.

Youth care is an important participant in these arrangements. The government has the intention to raise the quality of the performance of youth care. Key measure is to make the municipality responsible for youth care instead of the province. This gives better opportunities for collaboration with schools on a local level. Many of the so called Centres for Youth and Family, operating on a local level will also be the front office for youth care.

#### *Community- or extended schools*

Community- or extended schools imply partnerships with other sectors like childcare providers, health and welfare services, sports and institutions in the cultural realm. The purpose of this cooperation is to promote children's development by offering

them help where necessary with problems at school or in their home setting, as well as by offering additional activities (culture, sport) with which they normally have little contact. A community school is, in other words, a network in and around schools, within which teachers not only teach but also work with other professionals to help children develop in all sorts of ways. The concept of the community school comes from an initiative by local actors such as municipalities, school boards and welfare services. In fact, through extended schools, learning time is increased. From a viewpoint of reducing school failure and drop out the development of these extended schools are relevant. The majority of extended schools operate on primary education level.

#### *The world of work*

Work is important as a means to develop professional skills, as a pedagogic setting for those youngsters who preferably 'learn with their hands', and as a means for structuring life, to develop a proper self-esteem and a strong personal and professional identity. Many youngsters, especially those in vocational education learning and training on the job are an important part of their educational career. In the Netherlands, there are about 210.000 'certified training companies', offering youngsters the opportunity for all kinds of practical training (orientation-opportunities, internships, apprenticeships). They cooperate with schools for VMBO and MBO in order to provide adequate working- and training opportunities for each pupil and student. On a national level, the "Dutch National Centre's of Expertise on Vocational Education, Training and the Labor Market" (KBB) are responsible for the quantity and quality of the work placements. The new government aims at strengthening the education system's focus on entrepreneurship and the labor market through partnerships with the business community.

#### *Regional performance agreements on drop out*

Is educational success a joint effort of many participants, this is especially the case when it concerns the reduction of drop out: the involvement of a diversity of professionals from the region is essential to a tailored attack. Therefore, the Ministry of OCW has made performance agreements with municipalities and schools in 39 regions for the period 2008-2011. With these 39 regions, the whole Netherlands are covered. The goal: a substantial reduction of school drop-outs by 2012. Per region, municipalities, schools, care institutions, companies and other relevant partners can themselves decide what measures should be implemented: it is the result that counts.

#### *Collaboration on the combat of low literacy*

Finally, the policies on combating functional illiteracy include broad commitment of schools, employers, trade unions, volunteer's organisations, libraries, welfare institutions, health centres and housing corporations. In the actual Action Plan on Low Literacy<sup>18</sup> this commitment of all is an important component.

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<sup>18</sup> Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. Actieplan Laaggeletterdheid 2012-2015 'Geletterdheid in Nederland'. Den Haag 2011. <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/richtlijnen/2011/09/08/bijlage-1-actieplan-laaggeletterdheid-2012-2015-geletterdheid-in-nederland.html>

## **Chapter 4: Fair and inclusive resourcing**

*The acknowledgement of the importance of equity is reflected in the Dutch funding system. The system holds in account that children and youngsters from low educated or social-economic background, or those with specific problems, need more attention in the educational system. How? That's what this chapter is about.*

*Paragraph 4.1 offers a brief overview of the total funding in education. It gives an idea of the various funding flows. Paragraph 4.2 describes the specific arrangements within the funding system that are designed to address equity and the reduction of school failure.*

### **4.1 Allocation of educational resources: four flows of funds**

Most funding for educational purposes comes from national government (in most cases the ministry of Education, Culture and Science). In regular funding, four flows of funds can be distinguished.

#### *1. Directly to the schools*

Mainstream schools for PO, VO and SO receive a block grant, which is basically related to the number of pupils and students. MBO schools receive a block grant too, based partly on the number of students per course/learning pathway and (for 20%) on the number of certificates awarded per institution. Currently, there are no general exams on a national level; for quality reasons they are to be introduced.

#### *2. Indirectly to the school, via the municipality*

The municipality receives funds from the national government for several purposes. The most important are:

##### *VVE*

The funding of the preschool part of the *preschool and early-school education programmes* (VVE) operates via local authorities. They receive a sum from central government to finance the programmes and have committed to ensure that by 2011 all children who require a preschool place are offered one. Local authorities themselves determine which children are eligible for the preschool programmes; the target group is thus not explicitly defined in terms of socio-economic or ethnic criteria. The funding of the early-school part of the programmes operates via the school boards.

##### *Compensatory policy*

The funding of induction classes for the so-called newcomers operates via local authorities. Induction classes are part of compensatory policy (4.2.1). They are organised by local authorities and school boards in mutual consultation.

##### *Participation budget for adult education*

The central government budget for adult education is allocated to the municipalities. The municipal authorities are responsible for contracting the regional training centre's (ROC's) to offer adult education courses that fit the needs of the local population.

#### *Municipalities Fund*

The municipalities fund is by far the main source of income for the municipalities. It is meant for all the expenses the municipalities have to make. Funding and allocating to municipalities takes place through objective criteria, related to demography, size and other features. Municipalities are free to spend this money according to the priorities of local democracy, which can also be for educational purposes. There is no exact information on the amount of money concerned.

#### *3. Student grants*

Education in primary and secondary education is free until the 18th year of age. After this age fees have to be paid. Schoolbooks in VO are free.

Moreover, parents in the Netherlands receive an allowance for their child up to 18, related to age and the amount of children in the family. The allowance is not related to socio-economic status or school performance.

There are also provisions to help with the costs of education: grants to help towards the costs of studying for VO and MBO students, and student finance for higher education. These grants are dependent on the income of the parents and/or the status of the student (resident or non-resident with parents) and may consist of either a full grant or – in part or in total – of a loan. Student grants are available for all students from age 17 onward. In fact, all students in MBO or higher education receive a grant.

#### *4. Fees*

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science receives school fees from certain categories of students in secondary education and adult and vocational education. Students pay course fees to the institutions. Students on vocational training courses (BOL) pay fees to the Minister and are eligible for student finance. These fees are not linked to socio-economic status.

## **4.2 Equity in funding and allocation of educational resources**

### *1. Compensatory policies*

Compensatory policy seeks to improve the educational achievements and career prospects of educationally disadvantaged children and young people. Basically, compensatory policies are on providing extra funding to schools that have to deal with a 'disadvantaged population'.

#### *PO-schools*

PO schools get extra funding money via a weighting system, based on the educational level of the parents. The 'extra' is part of the block grant. Schools have the freedom to decide how the funds for compensatory policy should be spent. PO-schools are also responsible for preschool education. A small portion of the budget for PO schools goes to the municipalities, allocated by the same criteria and is meant to ensure the necessary conditions on a local level to reduce disadvantages properly.

#### *VO-schools*

In VO the allocation system of compensatory policy has a similar basis as in PO, though technically different. Schools receive extra funding if at least 30% of their pupils come from deprived neighborhoods or areas (via ZIP-codes). The aim is to provide tailor-made solutions, to improve pupils' performance by promoting policy on learning Dutch and to prevent early school leaving by strengthening the network around the school. Schools can decide for themselves how they will spend the money, though they have to consult with the municipal authorities on the matter at least once a year. Another part of the budget is meant to help schools cope with immigrant newcomers.

#### *MBO*

MBO institutions receive an extra budget for preparatory and supporting activities (VOA). MBO institutions receive an extra budget for preparatory and supporting activities (VOA). This is destined for students who need extra support to complete their courses successfully. The funds are allocated in relation to the number of students in MBO levels 1 and 2.

### *Educational policy for migrants?*

As has been pointed out in the Country Note for the Netherlands on Migrant Education<sup>19</sup>, Dutch policy for migrant education emphasizes universal policies to improve education for disadvantaged students. Immigrant students with non-Western background are expected to benefit from educational policies to improve equity including extra funding to primary schools with students from disadvantaged background and to secondary schools for students living in deprived areas. There are also pre school and early school programmes targeting children from disadvantaged background, as well as policies to correct for early selection into different school types at age 12 and to ensure that students achieve basic qualification. And the impulse to raise the level of language and arithmetic skills is beneficial for all pupils and students, whether from migrant background or not. So the majority of policy measures have a generic character.

There are some exceptions though. Specific measures for migrant education include funding to secondary schools for newly arrived immigrants, agreements to reduce segregation between native Dutch and immigrant students in primary schools, induction classes offering intensive Dutch lessons to newly arrived immigrant students and the creation of specific platforms for ethnic minority parents. And, although generic policies and funding on educational advantage are mainly 'colour-blind', local authorities and schools are free to account for diversity and 'cultural contrasts' in their educational policies and practices.

## *2. Appropriate education*

The system of appropriate education is meant for children that need extra care. The system is based on considerations on whether such a child is to be cared for in regular education or in special education. And, if the former is the case, whether extra money has to be funded regarding these children.

Funding of appropriate education is as follows:

1. Each regular school and each special school participates in a regional alliance. There are 234 alliances on PO level, and 84 alliances on VO-level. Each alliance is funded, based on assumptions on how many pupils need extra care. Participating schools in the alliances decide together how the funding is allocated. These alliances are on dealing with 'light care' pupils. Actual policy is aimed at reducing the amount of alliances.
2. Regional Expertise Centra are aimed at 'heavy care pupils'. Each school for special education participates of one of these 34 REC's. 'Heavy care pupils' can – based on the decision of a Indication Committee- become funded through a personal budget (backpack). Parents can choose whether they spend this budget either in a special school or a regular school.

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<sup>19</sup> OECD 2010. Thematic Review of Migrant Education. Country Background for the Netherlands. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/8/21/42485352.pdf>

At this moment the system on appropriate education is under serious change, due to heavy criticism and because the budget which is necessary to support the system is exploding. There are serious questions about the culture of 'labeling' and 'medicalisation' of behavioral problems, which is an unintended impact of the system. Therefore, new policy is aimed at reducing the impact of the indication system, raising quality of education, professionalization of staff, strong involvement of parents, and budget management. A budget cut of €300 mln. is involved.

### *3. Learning support*

Learning support (LWOO) is available for pupils in VMBO who are lagging behind the rest of the class or have other problems but who are nonetheless deemed capable of obtaining a VMBO certificate. It is tailored to pupils' special needs and can vary in length. Schools get extra money in the lump-sum, according to the number of students that are LWOO indicated.

### *4. Overburdened youngsters: the Plus Programme*

The plus program is intended for young people between the ages of 12 and 23 who are cognitively capable of obtaining a basic qualification but who face an accumulation of problems that make it impossible for them to complete their education in the customary manner in a regular study programme or to function normally in society (2.1.6). The aim of the plus programme is to get young people back on track, bringing a basic qualification within their reach. Plus schools are financed by the government by means of a *Temporary Plus Programme Funding Scheme*. Those RMC regions that have the most serious problems will get the largest share. The Plus program will be continued in the years ahead.

### *5. Youth Benefit Decentralisation Scheme (Decentralisatie Uitkering Jeugd)*

Recently, 35 larger municipalities may make use of funding provided through the *Youth Benefit Decentralisation Scheme*. By means of this scheme, launched by the minister of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), local authorities will benefit from measures to prevent young people from dropping out of society: a comprehensive approach giving them a better chance to obtain a qualification and leading independent lives may prevent them from spending an extended period of time on benefit. Basically, the allocation of this money is based on the same principals as in the *Temporary Plus Programme Funding Scheme*.

### *Synergy between the Plus Program and Youth Benefit*

Although the one program is aimed at schools and the other one is aimed at municipalities, the programmes described above are complementary. By giving schools one-off funding on the one hand (*Plus Programme*) and large municipalities long-term funding on the other hand (*Youth Benefit*), schools and local authorities are encouraged to collaborate on programmes at RMC regional level or to expand any such programmes that already exist. Schools and local authorities can use existing consultation structures created under the terms of the Implementation Scheme for Combating School Drop-outs and within the context of the RMC organisations to make regional agreements. Thus, a most efficient use of the one-off school funding and long-term local funding is enforced.

### *6. Funding according performance agreements on drop out*

Any school that manages to reduce its drop-out rate will receive € 2.500,- for each drop-out less than the number it had in 2005-2006, the reference year. A drop out is defined as someone between the age of 12 and 23 years old who leaves education without a basic qualification. Basic qualification means either a diploma HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 at least.

Furthermore, additional funds are available for educational programs aimed at reducing drop-out rates. At the end of the term of these arrangements (2012), an analysis will be made of which measures have had an impact. For the period 2012-2016 new arrangements will be made.

#### *7. Excellence: 'Leonardo' education*

School failure is not just on drop out, but also on the risk of underachievement, especially in the case for children with more than average talent. For this reason, Leonardo education involves teaching highly gifted children in classes that are entirely separate from those in which the other children in a school are taught. The term 'Leonardo school' is sometimes used, but the separate lessons are usually given within ordinary primary schools. Children with an IQ of 130 or higher may be selected for these classes.

In 2011 a start is made with the master plan "Wide berth for talent"<sup>20</sup>. It is aimed at stimulating pupils and students with talent on science and technology, in combination with targets that are recognizable for schools like language and arithmetic, community school and talents of children.

VO schools too can be selected to offer programs for highly gifted children. For a broader category of smart children (5 %) the differentiated Dutch secondary school system offers the opportunity to choose for the gymnasium (a specific form of VWO) or for bilingual education, both offering an enriched VWO. In other aspects gifted children can attend schools combining education and top sport, schools and culture (like dance and music). In the realm of science and technology the JetNet project is noteworthy, which is a collaboration of VO schools, universities and big companies like Philips and Akzo.

In MBO, excellence is stimulated by participation of students in contests like Euro-skills and World-skills.

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<sup>20</sup> Platform Betatechniek. Ruim baan voor talent. Den Haag 2010

### *Expenditure on equity and overcoming school failure*

*Total spending on combating disadvantage in 2008 amounted to EUR 701 mln. To put this amount in perspective, government spending on PO, VO and MBO education amounted to around EUR 19 billion. Besides some fluctuations expenses did not change substantially since 2001.*

Table: Government spending to combat disadvantage in primary and secondary education (ISCED 0/1, ISCED 2, ISCED 3), 2001-2008 (x EUR million)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Weighting system disadvantageded pupils (primary schools)	267	280	286	280	294	305	316	314
Additional funding weighting system	0	0	0	0	2	12	12	13
Non-native speakers special primary education/special education	27	30	32	35	36	36	36	36
Municipal educational compensatory policy (preschool and early-school education programmes, induction classes)	184	213	191	218	191	155	171	171
Additional funding preschool and early-school education	0	0	0	0	1	12	11	0
Additional funding induction classes	0	0	0	1	4	1	2	2
Educational chances policy	9	9	9	9	8	3	0	0
Minority Language teaching primary/secondary education	67	72	75	47	0	0	0	0
'Learning plus' arrangement secondary education(formerly ethnic minorities), including spending for newcomers.	55	65	71	70	46	41	72	72
total spending to combat disadvantage	611	676	670	667	586	570	625	612
Combating school drop-out secondary education							52	89

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

### **4.3 Policy on persistently low performing schools**

The Inspectorate plays a crucial role in the policy of low performing schools<sup>21</sup>. The supervision of the Inspectorate is aimed at noticing a decrease in quality as soon as possible. Once it turns out that this quality is below standards the Inspectorate uses for basic quality, the school will be considered low performing or persistently low performing ('weak' or 'very weak'). Such schools are put under intensified supervision, and the reports and results of these schools are published on internet.

The period of intensified supervision lasts for a maximum of two years. During these years the school is monitored and supported in improving quality to such extent that

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<sup>21</sup> Inspectie van het Onderwijs. Toezicht op zwakke en zeer zwakke scholen – zo werkt het. Utrecht 2010.

the school can get rid of the status weak or weak. The school is supposed to make a plan of action and execute it. The Inspectorate works according to a supervision plan in which the actions to be taken by the school are described, as well as the monitoring and supervision actions by the Inspectorate. Consultation between the parties at stake takes place on a regular basis.

In most cases this procedure leads to a preferred situation, which means that the school isn't considered weak anymore. Sometimes however the procedure doesn't lead to results. In those cases supervision is even more intensified which means intensive conversations between the school board and the Inspectorate and the obligation to make an emergency plan. Further on, the school might receive an official warning by the Inspectorate. The ultimate step is a notice to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, who can decide to take administrative or financial measures. In extreme cases, the minister can quit funding the school. In fact this means that the school will be closed.

Recent figures from the Inspectorate point out that the number of persistently low performing schools in primary education has been reduced by half in the last few years: from 100 to 49. The government has the intention to make this policy more stringent: instead of two years, persistently low performing schools will have one year to improve their quality on a sufficient level.

#### **4.4. To measure is to know: monitoring progress**

##### **4.4.1 Monitoring student performance**

*PO*

PO schools need to have an insight into the progress made by their pupils. This is part of the quality assurance system. Progress is measured at intervals using a 'pupil monitoring system'; the exit level achieved at the end of primary school is often measured by means of a test. Roughly 85% of primary schools use the pupil monitoring system and test devised by the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), but is in fact free to select their own pupil monitoring system and test.

The results of the test are used mainly for individual pupils and their allocation to the different levels of secondary education (ISCED 2). Schools which administer the test also receive a report of the average score for that school. The score achieved by primary schools in the final test is one of the starting points for the opinion issued by the Education Inspectorate on primary school performance. The Inspectorate uses a relative standard for this: are the learning achievements of a school in line with the performance of other schools with a comparable pupil population.

At national level, the learning achievements in the various primary school subject areas (e.g. Dutch language, arithmetic/mathematics, English) are monitored in more detail via a system of Periodic Assessment of Educational Achievement (PPON). These assessments are held at intervals of several years in different subject areas, and attention is also devoted to the performance of different groups of pupils.

The government also (indirectly) finances a number of longitudinal research programmes in primary and secondary schools which track the learning achievements and socio-emotional functioning of pupils (formerly the PRIMA cohort study and VOCL cohort study, now the COOL 5-18 cohort study). These studies play

an important role in monitoring the success of the educational disadvantage policy, and the learning achievements of disadvantaged pupils form an important element in that exercise.

*VO*

National examinations are also used to measure VO school student performance. In addition, there exist several tests for the schools to measure progress of students. The participation by migrant students in the different tracks of secondary education, combined with their pass rates in the examinations and the marks they achieve in the examination, provide a picture of the educational achievement of migrant students in secondary education. The examination results are published in the annual reports of the Dutch Education Inspectorate and by Statistics Netherlands (CBS)<sup>22</sup>. Also, COOL 3-18 measures the learning outcomes in grade 9 on a national level. Moreover, the Netherlands participate in international projects like Timms and PISA.

#### **4.4.2 Personal identification number**

An important source for research and monitoring is the Personal identification number (PGN). This number has been issued to every child in the country over the age of 3½. Commonly referred to as the education number, it is the same as the tax and social insurance number (SoFi number). Schools pass on the PGN, together with certain other data on pupils, to DUO. These data are increasingly used for purposes such as monitoring pupils' school careers, school attendance or drop out.

The PGN is very useful in the action plan against drop out, because it offers complete and reliable figures on dropout rates nationally, regionally and at the municipal and district levels. When linking these data to socio-economic data (including demographics, native Dutch citizens, ethnic minorities, unemployment, people entitled to benefits, etc.) per region, city and district, a wealth of information at hand for implementing policy and adjusting is obtained. Is something working in Amsterdam but not in Maastricht? Is a measure proving fruitful or not? We can make adjustments. We are monitoring the results and keeping constant track of what works and what doesn't, using facts and figures and exchanging good practices between the regions.

#### **4.4.3 Important institutions on international level**

*OECD*

Important sources of information are OECD reports, like Education at a Glance. They offer feedback and benchmarks on the Dutch Education system. This is even more the case with the recent PISA report, which in the Netherlands had the impact of a wake up call. For the new government the PISA scores worked as an extra impulse to give more focus on language and arithmetic's in the curricula of primary and

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<sup>22</sup> Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. Jaarboek Onderwijs in Cijfers. Den Haag/Heerlen 2010.  
<http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/F2761145-AE68-4F43-B29B-B64066EAED8C/0/2010f162pub.pdf>

secondary education. These measures are described in the Action Plans PO, VO, MBO and Teachers<sup>23</sup>

#### *United Nations*

UN-institutions form other important sources of information on educational performance. The recent Unicef Report "The children left behind"<sup>24</sup> shows that the Netherlands belong to a small group of countries where inequality between poor and rich children is low, if it comes to material well-being, education and health. Compared to other OECD countries the Netherlands score very high on equality in material well being and health, though on education the Netherlands are on the 8<sup>th</sup> position in the league table.

#### *European Union*

Keeping up, or even getting ahead with the countries in the European Union, is a Dutch ambition. So EU data on how the Netherlands score in this respect are important, especially if it comes to the Lisboa treaty and the negotiaton on new targets for 2020. Especially for the attack on drop out the Lisboa treaty has been an important stimulus.

#### **4.4.4 Important institutions on a national level**

##### *Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS)*

Statistics Netherlands (CBS) has a legal responsibility for collecting and processing data in order to publish statistics to be used in practice, by policymakers and for scientific research. The information CBS publishes incorporates a multitude of societal aspects, from macro-economic indicators such as economic growth and consumer prices, to the incomes of individual people and households. Education is an important issue for CBS: on an annual base CBS publishes a report on education. The most recent Annual Report on education<sup>25</sup> showed a strong decrease of disadvantaged pupils since 2000, growth of secondary education pupils to tertiary education, that drop out correlates with delay in school careers and coming from a low income background, and that about a quarter of early school leavers re-enters education after a few years.

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<sup>23</sup> For information about these Action Plans, see Appendix 1 and the literature overview

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. Report Card 09 The children left behind. A league table of inequality in child well-being in the world's rich countries. Florence 2010. [http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc9\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc9_eng.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. Jaarboek Onderwijs in Cijfers. Den Haag/Heerlen 2010. <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/F2761145-AE68-4F43-B29B-B64066EAED8C/0/2010f162pub.pdf>

### *Inspectorate of Education*

The Dutch Inspectorate of Education is responsible for the inspection and review of schools and educational institutions. Besides assessing the quality education offered in schools and encouraging schools to maintain and improve the education they offer, the Inspectorate is also an important source of information. The Inspectorate:

- reports publicly on the quality of individual institutions i.e. in the case of underperforming schools;
- reports publicly on the educational system as a whole;
- provides information for policy development;
- supplies reliable information on education

The annual report of the Inspectorate on The State of Education<sup>26</sup> is an important source for public and political debate on education. In addition, the Inspectorate makes researches on specific theme's that are held important.

### *Research institutes*

There is range of research-institutes on education in the Netherlands. They are linked to higher education institutes (HBO and WO) or are independent from them. They can be publicly financed, privately financed or both. And they can either work on theory driven, practice based or policy oriented research. At the moment the government considers a more coordinated en comprehensive approach on educational research, by means of a national provision.

### *The Dutch Education Council (Onderwijsraad)<sup>27</sup>*

Established in 1919, the Education Council is an independent advisory body. The council makes recommendations to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and to the Parliament. The council's works is based on 5 statements, which, from a viewpoint of equity and overcoming school failure, are particularly relevant:

1. Education cannot start early enough!
2. Young people today do not learn enough
3. Education in the Netherlands needs more innovation
4. Schools should teach citizens to live together
5. Education could be better organised

### *Media*

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<sup>26</sup> Inspectie van het Onderwijs. De staat van het onderwijs. Onderwijsverslag 2009-2010. Utrecht 2011.

<http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/binaries/content/assets/Onderwijsverslagen/2011/Onderwijsverslag+2009+2010+printversie.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/english/item187>

Information on the quality of education has a public character. This gives media the opportunity to use these data to make charts on how individual schools perform. This gives parents, student or consumers in general the possibility of comparing schools on dimensions that are important to them. The results of these charts, but as the methods to make these charts has given rise to discussions on fairness: is it fair to judge schools by their results in terms of diploma's, or should school composition be taken into account. In general there seems to be common sense about the notion that schools should be judged by added value. This notion is to be explored in actual education policy.

#### **4.4.5 Digital Absence Portal**

Sound processes on report and registration absenteeism are a major condition to tackle drop out adequately. To support municipalities and schools, a 'Digital Absence Portal' is available, making the process of report and registration on absenteeism easier and faster. Schools register on a daily basis the pupils who are absent by reference of their 'education number'. This information is automatically sent to the right municipality and the school attendance officer. After absenteeism of more than 16 school hours in 4 weeks, the officer gets in touch with the school and the parents. So the most priority can be given to what are really important, keeping youngsters at risk of dropping out on track. All schools in secondary education are supposed to make use of this provision. In the future, this will also be the case for primary and special education.

The Digital Absence Portal is part of DUO<sup>28</sup>, the executive organisation of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. In monthly reports, DUO makes available information on absenteeism for municipalities and schools, so they have a good insight on absenteeism in their own local or regional situation. These reports can be an impulse to action.

#### **4.4.6 Monitoring and publication on drop out**

Several publications are made to give a good insight on actual developments on drop out (VSV)<sup>29</sup>:

1. The VSV-Atlas (atlas on drop out), containing data on the most recent school year, the development over the school years before, and information behind the data. This is an annual report, which is also sent to the parliament. The atlas is a treasure on (intern) national, regional en local developments on drop out, and on background characteristics;

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.ib-groep.nl/particulieren/default.asp>

<sup>29</sup> Most publications on the Dutch approach on drop out ar in Dutch. For information in English click to <http://www.aanvalopschooluitval.nl/english.php>

2. The VSV-Explorer makes it possible for regions and schools to compare with each other on their results on tackling drop out. It shows actual and historic data on national, regional, local and school level.

The Atlas and the Explorer both have the impact of a benchmark.

## **Chapter 5: Challenges in overcoming school failure**

### **5.1 Major causes of educational failure: causes and remedies within and without the system**

*Causes for educational failure seem to be universal and have been object of abundant research. So are the remedies. Therefore, this section is limited to a few remarks, which are open for discussion.*

#### **5.1.1 Messing into educational failure**

Children grow up in a variety of situations and circumstances, each of which are more or less favourable for developing talent and for achieving the knowledge, skills and self esteem that are crucial for life, labour and society. What is the family atmosphere you grow up in? What is the education level of your parents? Do they have regular jobs or not and what does that mean for their socio-economic status? Does your family participate in society or do they have a more isolated life, due to for instance language problems or ethnic isolation? What is the quality of the neighbourhood you grow up? Do you profit from out of school stimuli like sports, culture, youth-activities, friends and peers? Do you have the inner strength or willpower to compensate for unfavourable circumstances, or do you need help to overcome these? These are just a few of the circumstances that play an important role in the shape and quality of anyone's starting position, either favourable or detrimental.

Opportunities for growth and development are a matter of both nature and nurture. It is said that about 50% of your opportunities are genetic (like character and intelligence) and the other is determined by the circumstances you grow up in. This limits the opportunity of influencing development. Moreover, many of the circumstances themselves are hard to change. So, opportunities to compensate for an unfavourable take-off position seem to be marginal. At least, they require a considerable amount of endurance.

#### *Two sides of education*

These background circumstances become manifest in education, and are – if unfavourable- causes of school failure. Learning biographies of successful people coming from disadvantaged circumstances show that education can have two faces; on the one hand, these people remember their teachers as the principal actors who stimulated them to become what they are. But on the other hand, the number of drop outs amongst successful people is significant; they became successful despite school.

Education therefore is rightly seen as a powerful means to overcome the disadvantages that are determined by unfavourable circumstances. But being so, at least one condition has to be met: self-reflection in the educational realm on how education itself contributes to educational failure and on its own role in reproducing disadvantages. Going from this point there are several policies that enforce equity in education, and a learning culture that brings forth the best out of all children.

#### **5.1.2. Strengthening equity and overcoming school failure: key factors**

##### *A good start is crucial*

At least one thing has become clear: if you want to compensate for disadvantage, you have to start early. This is the rationale behind high quality childcare, parent support and the development of preschool education (VVE). Language is a very

important component in VVE, because many children who attend these programs come from (mostly migrant) families that lack adequate language skills. Combined with provisions outside the educational realm (like parent support, nursery, youth care, health care), preschool education can be an important supporting power in 'a village to raise a child'.

#### *The importance of basic skills*

Language and mathematics are necessary conditions anyhow, because the success of your career in education, labour market and knowledge society depends much on an adequate language and arithmetic skills. This does not necessarily mean that other skills are less important. But - in actual Dutch educational policy- math and language are seen as the 'oxygen' of education, without which it would be hard to develop skills that are necessary for society, labour market and the 'pursuit of happiness'.

#### *It's the teacher stupid!*

The quality of an education system can not exceed the quality of its teachers. This statement of the McKinsey report, mentioned earlier (3.2), on the quality of educational systems underlines the crucial role of the teacher. High performing school systems not primarily do so because of their system characteristics, but because of the high quality of their teachers. Therefore, increasing quality, professionalism and responsiveness of teachers have great priority, and are a major component in actual educational policy in the Netherlands. Teacher quality is pre-eminently important for disadvantaged pupils; especially when it concerns the teacher's perceptions of the potential of these pupils. Do teachers take a certain performance level for granted, or do they put their expectations at such a level so that their students perform at their utmost? Good teachers do the latter.

#### *A culture that welcomes excellency and initiative*

This is also a matter of culture and attitude. Although positive exceptions can be found, Dutch culture is not characterised by strong eagerness on excellency, so it seems. "Act normal" seems to be the creed that shapes national character. This is frustrating for those who want to bring forth the best out of himself. If the education system is also infected by this 'modest' attitude, which seems likely, then education becomes part of the problem. It's here that education can learn from other more ambition oriented sectors, such as sports, arts and entrepreneurship.

#### *Joint ventures*

Finally, as school is not an island, neither is the education system. Therefore, it is essential that the education system doesn't operate in a vacuum, but collaborates with relevant sectors like youth and family care, the health system, culture, sports, libraries, media, housing organisations and the labour market. The education system can be crucial in overcoming school failure, even more if it profits from the cooperation and support from other sectors. Thus, education is 'weaved in' in society.

### *An inclusive approach: Southside Rotterdam*<sup>30</sup>

One promising example of this approach is offered by a National Program that is designed for a 'Quality Leap' of the southern part of Rotterdam. This area is recognized by the government as the most disadvantaged of the country, in respect of economics and labour market, education, housing and physical infrastructure. The aim of the program is to transform this city-area in one in which it is attractive to live, work, raise your children and to run your company. A principal ingredient of the program is the concept of a children's zone like the one in Harlem, New York. The program is robust and integral and is an acknowledgement of the fact that this leap is not a matter of quick solutions; it takes the commitment for 20 years of effort.

### **5.1.3 Dutch achievements on equity and overcoming school failure**

#### *A Dutch approach?*

The Dutch seem to do fairly well on equity and on overcoming school failure. Figures from the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Analysis (CPB), based on Pirls en Pisa, show that the better Dutch students perform less well than their peers in many other countries<sup>31</sup>. They also point out though that the weaker students in the Netherlands perform better than their peers in most other OECD countries. These findings are the rationale for a strong emphasis in actual educational policy on the performance of the more gifted and talented children to excellency. Section 5.2.2 of this country-report provides information on these new policies.

The conclusion however that the weaker Dutch students perform that well in international perspective, is from an equity perspective worth noticing. The conclusion is consistent with recent findings of Hanushek and Woessmann<sup>32</sup>, who presented an international comparison that shows the Netherlands have the lowest educational inequality in a range of 18 OECD countries. Further, according to recent PISA figures the Netherlands belong to the OECD countries with a below average impact of social economic background in performance<sup>33</sup>. And finally, according to a

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<sup>30</sup> Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties. Zuid Werkt! Nationaal Programma Kwaliteitsprong Zuid. September 2011. <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/convenanten/2011/09/19/zuid-werkt-nationaal-programma-kwaliteitsprong-zuid.html>

<sup>31</sup> Page 9, figure 2 of Centraal Planbureau. Policy Brief 05. Nederlandse onderwijsprestaties in perspectief. Den Haag 2011. <http://www.cpb.nl/sites/default/files/publicaties/download/cpb-policy-brief-2011-05-nederlandse-onderwijsprestaties-perspectief.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Figure 8 of Hanushek and Woessmann. The economics of international differences in educational achievement. Cambridge 2010. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15949>

<sup>33</sup> Page 58 of OECD. PISA 2009 Results: Overcoming Social Background. Equity in learning opportunities and outcomes. Volume II. Paris 2010.

recent study by order of OECD the Netherlands belong to the countries with the lowest youth employment<sup>34</sup>.

So the Dutch seem to do well on equity. How come? It is not in selection policy, because selection in the Netherlands takes place at a fairly early stage. And if it comes to grade repetition in the Netherlands, there is certainly room for improvement. Apparently, these shortcomings seem to be counterbalanced by other circumstances or policies that are in favour of equity. Is it the Dutch compensatory policy providing extra funding for schools in disadvantaged areas? Is it the equal funding of both public and privately run schools which mitigates segregation? Is it the Dutch approach on drop out? Or is it due to the strong moral commitment on equity, based on cultural values, and expressed in equity policy that for years has suffered from democratic impatience? To the Dutch, all these questions are open for research and debate.

## **5.2 Challenges in overcoming school failure in the next five years**

*This section gives an overview of the most important challenges for the next five years on equity an overcoming school failure. And it describes actual Dutch policy, in which there is a strong emphasis on 'raising the bar'.*

### **5.2.1 Challenges**

According to the new government, the Netherlands should be one of the 5 best achieving knowledge economies in the world. This is a major challenge, since the Netherlands appear on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> position in the PISA statistics. These findings are an extra drive for the Dutch government to improve the quality of education, to give greater priority to key subjects like language and math and to improve the quality and professionalism of teachers. In addition at least two other major challenges have to be met.

#### *Budget cuts on appropriate education*

In the first place, the financial crisis makes budget cuts in public finance inevitable. Although cuts in education are moderate compared to cuts in other sectors, concern on the impact on these cuts is legitimate. Especially budget cuts on appropriate education (€300 mln.) are under public debate. These budget cuts imply that many children with a range of behavioural problems have to be dealt with in regular education. Though there is still room for improving teacher quality, especially on dealing with diversity, there is debate on whether the speed of this improvement will make up for the speed of the appropriate education budget cut.

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<sup>34</sup> Scarpetta, S., A. Sonnet and T. Manfredi (2010), "Rising Youth Unemployment During The Crisis: How to Prevent Negative Long-term Consequences on a Generation?". OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 106, OECD Publishing. [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/rising-youth-unemployment-during-the-crisis\\_5kmh79zb2mmv-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/rising-youth-unemployment-during-the-crisis_5kmh79zb2mmv-en)

### *Teacher shortage*

This brings us to a second challenge education policy is facing: do we have enough and adequately qualified teachers in the future? A serious threat is that of a teacher shortage in a quantitative sense. It might be obvious that these are important reasons to continue the policies on teacher quality and quantity.

### *Continuing drop out reduction: a tougher job*

As drop out is being reduced during the next years, it is obvious that we will be confronted with a 'hard core' of early school leavers. These will be the youngsters with such problems that more efforts and a persistent approach are necessary. This implies an extra appeal on all the partners that are in charge on tackling drop out: schools, police, care institutions, municipalities, companies, parents and the like. Further, it requires the development of (preferably research based) approaches to adequately deal with these youngsters. And it's likely that the necessity of arrangements like the Plus Program will become even clearer. Anyhow, the government continues the Plus Program and reserves an extra €30 mln. for this purpose.

## **5.2.2 Actual Dutch educational policies**

This paragraph offers a brief overview of actual Dutch policies. More detailed information is to be found in appendix 1.

### *Goals and targets*

The educational policies of the new government can in short be put like this: settle the basis, raise the bar. This means keeping up the good results of the weaker students in the Netherlands, and raise the school results of the more talented and gifted children. As a result this implies raising the average level of achievement in at least Dutch, English, math and science. Excellency is a key word, both for the performance of the students as for the schools in the Netherlands. Reducing school failure by means of the program on drop out will be continued.

These goals are to become manifest in the targets described below. For the exact figures, see appendix 1.

- The average CITO<sup>35</sup> score (at the end of PO) is going to become higher. The same applies to the CITO scores of the best students in PO. The CITO score is the result of the test most children pass at the end of primary school. It is an important indicator for school performance, and an important factor in determining school choice to VO.
- The average PISA score on math, reading and science are going to become higher. This is a challenge for both PO and VO schools.
- The maximum dropout rate will be 25.000 in 2016

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<sup>35</sup> The Dutch testing and assessment company. [www.cito.nl](http://www.cito.nl)

### *Policies*

The policies on reaching the goals and targets above can be categorized by four. Here too, appendix 1 gives more detailed information.

#### *1. In search for excellence: towards a higher level of ambition*

Basically, this is about developing an ambitious learning culture, by setting ambitious goals and tailor made education for gifted en talented students, from primary to higher education. Excellent en gifted students have a stage for their performance en are able to show al their best High performing schools are to be awarded as 'excellent'. Also, a significant reduction of low performing schools is an important target.

#### *2. Changes in the amount, the intensity and the quality of learning time*

These measures are on lengthening learning time, through early childhood education and through extra learning time in PO. Learning time is also an issue when it comes to the transfer between VMBO and MBO, and intensifying en shortening of courses in MBO. Quality of learning time will be increased by professionalization of the teacher. On adult level, learning time will be enhanced according an Action Plan on Low Literacy<sup>36</sup>.

#### *3. Learning from results and a performance oriented culture in schools*

Systemic changes, supporting a more ambitious learning culture, are to be implemented in the schools. These include a significant increase of the so-called performance oriented schools, an obligatory test at the end of PO and a student's monitoring system in all schools. This also about making performance agreements: with parents and on school board level, and on a national level. A notion to be explored is the idea of added value, so that schools are not solely rewarded by their output, but also by the efforts it takes to attain it.

#### *4. Improving teachers quality, competent school leaders professional schools*

These policy measures are perhaps the most crucial. They include requirements such as the ability in offering tailor made education, performance orientation, teaching for diversity, preparation for vocational training and a strong knowledge base, features that at the moment see to lack by many teachers. It also includes the quest for more teachers on a master's level. All teachers have to participate in a professional register which supposes a sufficient professional quality of its members. These ambitions have strong implications for both initial and post initial teacher training effort and quality.

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<sup>36</sup> Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. Actieplan Laaggeletterdheid 2012-2015 'Geletterdheid in Nederland'. Den Haag 2011. <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/richtlijnen/2011/09/08/bijlage-1-actieplan-laaggeletterdheid-2012-2015-geletterdheid-in-nederland.html>

What counts for teacher's counts for school leaders as well. All school leaders in PO, VO and MBO will have to meet the requirements and standards to be applied in the near future. Therefore, challenging schooling programs on leadership are to be designed and implemented.

It's obvious that these ambitions will have implications for a professional school culture, characterized by sound HRM policies. There will be experiments on payment by results. The findings of these will be taken in consideration when structural policy on payment by results is to be implemented.

#### *5. Appropriate education*

The current system of appropriate education is running out of hand because of its bureaucratic procedures and because of its open end character; apparently the indication system is too inviting to label children as having behaviour problems that necessarily need medical treatment, and that justify higher funding. A budget cut of €300 mln. will take place which implies that more of these children are to be dealt with in regular education. This places high demands on the schools and on the teachers' ability to deal with diversity. This is an important aspect of teacher professionalization.

#### *6. Reducing drop out*

Reducing school dropout has been and will be a key policy goal in the Netherlands. The program "Aanval op de uitval", the drive to reduce drop out, will be continued, though with a more ambitious target. The former government set the goal to decrease by half the number of dropouts by 2012 compared to the number in 2002, which is 35.000. The actual government has set the target on 25.000, to be achieved in 2016. An overview of the Dutch drop- out program is to be found in appendix 2.

## Appendix 1 Overview of actual Dutch policies

### Targets

<i>Target</i>	<i>current</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2018</i>
Average CITO score PO	535	537	
CITO score 20% best students in PO	543	545	
Average PISA score on mathematics VO	526	536	
Average PISA score on reading VO	508	516	
Average PISA score on science VO	522		531
Maximum drop out rate	41.800	(in 2016) 25.000	

### Policies

#### 1. In search for excellence: towards a higher level of ambition

	<i>Current</i>	<i>Midterm (2011-2015)</i>	<i>Long term (2016-2020)</i>
Towards a culture of ambition		A growing number of schools and school boards sets before ambitious goals, supported by a performance system	
Transparency		Accessible information on school performance, supported by a performance system and a stronger sense of the school customers demand	
Tailor made education for gifted en talented students		To be realized in all schools, from primary to higher education, by means of €30 mln. extra funding in PO and VO, an all covering network of school for the talented, joining together support provisions, early attending of high giftedness, a strong knowledge base and research on excellency.	
Fostering student excellency		Excellent en gifted students have a stage for their performance en are encouraged to show al their best, for instance through contests	
Praising school excellency		High performing schools are to be awarded 'excellent '	
Ambitious learning culture		A growth of VO students that pass the exam in more courses than required	
Reduction of very low performing PO schools	57	35	
Reduction of low performing PO schools on language and math	238	119	

## 2. Learning from results and a performance oriented culture in schools

	<i>current</i>	<i>Midterm (2011-2015)</i>	<i>long-term (2016-2020)</i>
Percentage of performance oriented PO schools	30%	60%	90%
Ibid VO	20%	50%	90%
Obligatory test at the end of PO and SO		For all PO and SO students	ibid
Students monitoring system		All schools in PO and VO use a student monitoring system, in VO combined with a half term diagnostic test	ibid
Added value		Experiments on added value, to result in a plan for implementation at large	Implementation based on experiments' results
Smalls schools quality (PO)		Educational quality in small schools to be improved	ibid
Performance agreements		More school boards make agreements on math and language performance (PO)	ibid
Parent agreements		More schools make agreements with parents about their contribution to learning results PO Parent involvement	ibid
National performance agreement		Performance agreements on a national level with the VO school sector are to made	ibid
Reference levels		Reference levels on math and language, , to be implemented throughout the school system	ibid
MBO exams		Exam quality in MBO will become higher	ibid

### 3. Changes in the amount, the intensity and the quality of learning time

	<i>current</i>	<i>Midterm (2011-2015)</i>	<i>Long-term (2016-2020)</i>
Early childhood coverage		More children profit from early childhood education	ibid
Early childhood performance		Higher results of early childhood education	ibid
Quality of learning time		More effective application of time spent on education PO	ibid
Quantity of learning time		A growing amount of children profits from extra leaning time: by means of summer schools	ibid
Parent involvement		Promote performance agreements between schools and parents	ibid
Length of stay in VMBO		The maximum length of stay in VMBO (being 5 years now) will be discharged.	
Access to MBO 2		The 'thresholdless intake' into MBO is to be discharged	
VMBO-MBO projects		The projects will be expanded and be put in a legal framework	
Entrance courses MBO		Entrance courses are to be introduced in MBO, instead of the current MBO 1 courses. They will be separately funded and linked to individual performance agreements	
Reduction of qualifications and course in MBO		To be realised by simplifying the Qualification Structure for Vocational Education, a regional supply of courses, and by collaboration VMBO, MBO, HBO	
Deliberate choices		More emphasis in the curriculum VO for courses that are relevant voor flow in higher education	
Removing dead ends in VO		A simplified profile structure in upper secondary education	
Adults low literacy		Action plan on Low Literacy	

#### 4. Improving teachers quality, competent school leaders professional schools

	<i>current</i>	<i>Midterm (2011-2015)</i>	<i>Long term (2016-2020)</i>
<i>Teachers quality and teacher training</i>			
Professional teachers in PO, VO and MBO		Teacher training on deficiencies in teaching for diversity, in offering tailor made education, 'performance orientedness', and in preparation for vocational training	Deficiencies are fixed
Teachers grant		The budget for the teachers grant is to be exclusively applied for bachelor and master courses, and for achieving doctoral degrees	
Professional teachers register		Teachers in PO, VO and MBO can apply for the professional register	All teachers participate in the register, and the register has social en legal impact.
Teacher training			All the knowledge bases and national tests are implemented in HBO initial teacher training
Teachers with an adequate knowledge base		A system of externally legitimized knowledge tests is implemented	
Improvement of teacher training for PO and VO teachers	Agreements are made with teacher training institutions (on PO and VO level) on improving quality, with involvement of the PO and VO schools		
Dealing with (v)mbo students		Teacher training institutes will increase the teacher's competencies to better prepare students in VMBO and MBO for a vocation	
Teacher at master level	A considerable increase of the number of master educated teachers		
Specialization on type of children		All PO teacher training institutes (PABO) offer a specialization on the younger and the older child	
Quality higher education teachers			Higher-education institutes have implemented for their staff the system of basis- and senior qualifications
Educative minor on vocational education	An educative minor is implemented in the bachelor higher education, so that more higher education students are interested in teacher ship in VMBO and MBO		
Tackling quantitative teacher shortages	The current measures on tackling teacher shortages are to be continued and the experiments of the Innovation Impulse are to be executed		
<i>Performance oriented school leaders</i>			

Requirements and standards on leadership			All school leaders in PO, VO and MBO will meet the requirements and standards to be applied
Professional register			All school leaders will take part in professional register for school leaders
<i>Professional schools with high quality HRM policies</i>			
Function and salary mix	Implementation of the function mix in PO and VO, and the salary mix in MBO		
Payment by results		Experiments to learn about the effects of 'payment by results' on students, teachers and schools. Payment by result is linked to school performance	Implementation of 'payment by results', considering the results of the experiments
HRM policy			All schools execute good and effective HRM policies
Peer review		Peer reviews between schools, by school leaders and teachers	
Teachers position		Implementation of the law on strengthening the teachers position	
Supervision on teachership		Teacher ship will be object for supervision by the Education Inspectorate	

## **Appendix 2 Overview of the program "Aanval op de uitval"**

### *Preventing drop out*

Too many youngsters experience problems in their learning careers, which makes them leave school too early, thus depriving themselves from at least a basic qualification. A basic qualification is the least that is necessary for a proper perspective on the labour market and an up to the par position in society. This has important benefits both for the individual youngster as for society and economy. In Dutch drop out policy drop out is defined as someone between the age of 12 and 23 years old who leaves education without a basic qualification. Basic qualification means either a diploma HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 at least.

### **Philosophy**

The program is based on these supporting principles:

1. Preventing drop out is preferred above curing. Measures to tackle drop out are preventive and aimed at dimensions like: beginning with the source of drop out, smooth transitions between school types, keeping pupils eager to learn, and using work as a learning environment.
2. Regions are in charge. This means that participants in the region (schools, municipalities, companies, care institutions etc.) have the freedom and responsibility to find solutions that fit the specific regional circumstances. The government has an activating role: to secure regional performance agreements with clear targets, through financial incentives, through the involvement of national 'practice oriented' account managers, and through a comprehensive and catching communication strategy.
3. Tackling drop out is not just about systemic changes, but requires a more 'organic' approach in which every youngster is valued in his own personality, potential and talent. This implies an environment in which he or she is fostered and stimulated to grow towards his own identity and to develop his potential. This may be a stimulus for innovation in existing educational routines.

### **Measures and actions**

- Persistent attention to the transfer from VMBO to MBO;
- More tailor-made educational programs to prevent drop out;
- More and better special needs provision at school;
- More room for students who prefer to 'learn with their hands';
- Better career orientation and guidance, study choice and counselling;
- More attractive education with sports and culture to keep young people in school;
- The Plus program which provides provisions for 'overburdened youngsters';
- 20,000 programmes for school drop-outs in the age group from 18 to 23 for 'prior learning accreditations' and agreements with large employers aimed at obtaining basic qualifications.

### **Regions to take action**

#### *Regional performance agreements*

The involvement of professionals from the region (schools, municipalities, youth services, the business community, etc.) is essential to a tailored attack on dropping out. Therefore, the Ministry of OCW has made agreements with municipalities and

schools in 39 regions for the period 2008-2011, set down into covenants. The goal: to reduce the number of school drop-outs by half by 2012. Per region, municipalities, schools and care institutions can themselves decide what measures should be implemented: the measures already mentioned or possibly new measures. It is the result that counts.

*€2500,- bonus scheme*

Any school that manages to reduce its drop-out rate will receive € 2,500.00 for each drop-out less than the number it had in 2005-2006. Furthermore, additional funds are available for educational programs aimed at reducing drop-out rates. At the end of four years, an analysis will be made of which measures have had an impact.

*Educational programs*

As an extra stimulus to reach the agreed performances, the ministry of OCW makes additional financial support available for educational program's that may be beneficially for reducing drop out. The experiences with these programs are to be integrated in the regular primary processes, so their impact will be sustainable.

**Actual state of affairs**

Actual results are in phase with the policy goals. In school year 2008-2009 41.800 youngsters left school too early, which is according the set schedule, 35.000 in 2010-2011. We are also well on the way to achieve the EU target, which is to reduce the overall group of school drop-outs to 8%. In the Netherlands, that percentage decreased from 15.5% in 2000 to 12% in 2007.

*New school dropouts, 2001/02 to 2010/11*

	2001/02	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	10/11 <sup>1</sup>
New school dropouts	71 000	60 500 <sup>2</sup>	54 100	52 700	48 300	41 800	35 000

1 - target

2 - break in series as a result of the switchover to a different way of registration (as from 2004/05, the figure is based on 'education number' records)

Still, there is room for better achievements. For example, according to a recent ROA report<sup>37</sup> there is still to reduce drop out through improvement of coaching and guidance: wrong educational choices are for about 27% of the population reason for leaving school too early. With a more adequate policy on guidance this could be prevented. Also, the merits of the Plus Program are reason to continue the program in the next years.

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<sup>37</sup> ROA Voortijdige schoolverlaters. Aanleiding en gevolgen. Maastricht 2010

### **New policies**

The new government has decided to continue the current program, and to set a new and more stringent target: a maximum 25.000 dropouts in 2016. Moreover, the Plus program will be continued; the government has reserved €30 mln. for this purpose.

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