

OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes

Country Background Report for the Flemish Community of Belgium November 2010

This report was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Training and the University of Antwerp Edubron Research Group as an input to the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes. The document was prepared in response to guidelines the OECD provided to all countries. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the national authority, the OECD or its Member countries. Further information about the OECD Review is available at www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy

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Foreword

This Country Background Report (CBR) is written with the participation of the Flemish Community of Belgium in the OECD Review on *Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes* in mind. It aims to provide in-depth analysis of the context, key factors and pending issues in the Flemish Community regarding evaluation and assessment at four different levels: system evaluation, school assessment, teacher appraisal and student assessment. Also the current points of view from the main stakeholders on evaluation and assessment are included in the CBR.

The CBR is firstly intended for the OECD, its member and observer countries and the team of external reviewers who will visit the Flemish Community in January 2011, but it also provides information for everyone interested in evaluation and assessment of education in the Flemish Community. The focus of the CBR is limited to primary and secondary education. Where necessary also links to nursery education or higher and adult education were included.

The CBR is the result of the co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Training and the Edubron Research Group of the University of Antwerp. It was written by Maarten Penninckx in co-operation with Jan T'Sas and under the promotion of prof. dr. Peter Van Petegem and prof. dr. Jan Vanhoof.

Edubron adopted a diverse methodological approach in order to obtain a comprehensive view on the current state of evaluation and assessment frameworks, on pending issues and on stakeholder views. First of all existing Flemish and international literature was consulted. Examples are websites and relevant policy documents of the Flemish Parliament, the Ministry of Education and Training as well as year reports of the Inspectorate, publications with statistical data, academic research reports, international research reports, websites and publications from all relevant stakeholders and websites of newspapers. Interviews with 14 policy-makers and stakeholders were also held. Annex A provides an overview of those interviews. The steering group established by the Ministry of Education and Training provided the research team with valuable feedback and recommendations at different times during the process.

Finally, the report was also enriched by the recommendations provided by the OECD representative and several representatives of stakeholder organizations during the preliminary visit of OECD in October 2010. We explicitly would like to thank the members of the steering group and the consulted stakeholders for their contribution to this CBR.

We hope this Country Background Report will turn out to be a thorough and inspiring working basis for those taking part in the OECD review and for those interested in the Flemish evaluation and assessment frameworks in general.

The authors
November 2010

List of Acronyms and Glossary

International acronyms

CELE	Centre for Effective Learning Environments
CERI	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency
EU	European Union
FIMS	First International Mathematics Study
ICCS	International Civic and Citizenship in Education Study
ICP	International Comparison Program of the World Bank
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
INES	International Indicators of Educational systems
ISUSS	International Survey of Upper Secondary Schools
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SICI	Standing International Conference of Inspectorates
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Flemish Community acronyms

AGION	Agency for Infrastructure in Education	Agentschap voor Infrastructuur in Onderwijs
AGODI	Agency for Educational Services	Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten
AHOVOS	Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study financing	Agentschap voor Hoger onderwijs, volwassenenonderwijs en studiefinanciering
AKOV	Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training	Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming
AOC	Agency for Educational Communication	Agentschap voor Onderwijscommunicatie
ASO	General Secondary Education	Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs
BSO	Vocational Secondary Education	Beroepssecundair Onderwijs
CAO	Collective Agreement on Professional Conditions	Collectieve Arbeidsovereenkomst
CIPO	Context, Input, Processes, Output framework	
CLB	Centre for Pupil Guidance	Centrum voor Leerlingbegeleiding
DBO	Ministry of Education and Training's Vocational Training Department	Dienst Beroepsopleiding Departement Onderwijs en Vorming
DBSO	Part-time Vocational Secondary Education	Deeltijds Beroepssecundair Onderwijs
DISO	Diagnostic Instrument for Secondary Education	Diagnose-Instrument voor Secundair Onderwijs
DVO	Department for Educational Development	Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling
ECEGO	Centre for Experience based Education	Expertisecentrum Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs
EVG	Examination Board of the Flemish Community	Examencommissie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap

FOPEM	Federation of independent emancipatory method schools	Federatie van onafhankelijke emancipatorische methodescholen
GIP	Integrated test	Geïntegreerde Proef
GO!	Flemish Community education	Gemeenschapsonderwijs
GOK	Policy on Equal Educational Opportunities	Gelijke Onderwijskansenbeleid
GON	Integrated education	Geïntegreerd Onderwijs
IAVA	Internal Audit of the Flemish Administration	Interne Audit van de Vlaamse Administratie
IPCO	Council of governing bodies of Protestant-Christian Education	Raad van Inrichtende Machten van het Protestants-Christelijk onderwijs
IWT	Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology	Agentschap voor Innovatie door Wetenschap en Techniek
IZES	Instrument for Self-evaluation of Schools	Instrument voor Zelfevaluatie van Scholen
KSO	Secondary Arts Education	Kunst Secundair Onderwijs
LOA	Centre for Careers through Education and Job Market	Steunpunt voor Loopbanen door Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt
LVS	Student Monitoring System for Flanders	Leerlingvolgsysteem voor Vlaanderen
OBPWO	Educational Scientific Research for Policy and Practice	Onderwijskundig Beleids- en Praktijkgericht Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek
OKO	Consultation Body of Small Education Providers	Overleg Kleine Onderwijsverstrekkers
OVSG	Educational Secretariat for Cities and Municipalities of the Flemish Community	Onderwijssecretariaat voor Steden en Gemeenten van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
PGO	Practice-oriented Educational Research	Praktijkgericht Onderwijsonderzoek
POV	Provincial Education Flanders	Provinciaal Onderwijs Vlaanderen
SAM-scale	Scale for Attitude Measurement	Schaal voor AttitudeMeting
SERV	Flemish Socio-Economical Council	Socio-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen
SFP	School Feedback Project	School Feedback Project
SFS	School Feedback System	School Feedback Systeem
SiBO-research	School Careers in Primary Education-research	Schoolloopbanen in het Basisonderwijs - onderzoek
SONAR	Study of the Transition from Education to the Job Market	Studie van de Overgang van Onderwijs naar Arbeidsmarkt
SSL	Centre for 'Education and School Careers'	Steunpunt voor Studie- en Schoolloopbanen
TADD	Temporary appointment with continuous duration	Tijdelijke aanstelling van doorlopende duur
TSO	Technical Secondary Education	Technisch Secundair Onderwijs
VIA	Flanders in Action Policy Plan	Vlaanderen in Actie Beleidsplan
VLOR	Flemish Education Council	Vlaamse Onderwijsraad
VOOP	Flemish Education Consultation Platform	Vlaams Onderwijs Overlegplatform
VRIND	Flemish Regional Indicators	Vlaamse Regionale Indicatoren
VSK	Flemish Student Council	Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel
VSKO	Flemish Catholic Education Secretariat	Vlaams Secretariaat van het Katholiek Onderwijs

Glossary

ASO-TSO-KSO-BSO	Educational programmes organized in the second and third stages of secondary education: general education (ASO), technical education (TSO), arts education (KSO) and vocational education (BSO)
Attainment targets and developmental objectives	Minimal required achievements for students imposed by the Flemish Government on subsidized and financed schools. The attainment targets and developmental objectives are also called the 'core curriculum'.
Curriculum	Comprises content and targets for schools. Each curriculum contains at least the available attainment targets and developmental objectives.
Freedom of education	Constitutional right implying any natural or legal person is allowed to start a school and that parents/students can subscribe in the school of their own choice.
Governing body	Body that is responsible for the running of one or more schools. This may be the Flemish Community, provincial or municipal authorities or independent organizations, institutes or persons.
Ministry of Education and Training	Administrative body responsible for policy support and execution of policy. Divided across the Department of Education and Training and several executive agencies.
School Advisory Services	Organized within each umbrella organization, the School Advisory Services ensure professional support to schools. Schools can call on them for educational and methodological advice.
Teacher's Union	Teacher's unions represent personnel interests in policy discussions. All personnel staff member in education (i.e. not only teachers) can voluntary join one of the teacher's unions.
Umbrella organization	Representative organization in which a number of governing bodies are associated (in the case of community education: only one governing body, namely the Flemish Community).

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Executive summary

Belgium is a federal country. Since 1991, except for a small number of constitutional regulations, educational policy is devoted to the Communities. This report focuses on evaluation and assessment within the Flemish Community.

The constitutional Freedom of education has a wide impact on evaluation and assessment frameworks in the Flemish Community. Freedom of education has a double meaning: it implies on the one hand that every natural or legal person is free to start a school (freedom of organization) and on the other hand that every parent can choose freely in which school to enrol his child in. Especially the 'freedom of organization' is of major importance in the light of the subject of this Country Background Report: schools are free to develop their own policy regarding education quality within the boundaries set by the regulatory framework. Schools are the key actors in evaluation and assessment, but the Flemish government sets out boundaries to the Freedom of education by imposing minimal quality conditions.

System evaluation

The Minister of Education and Training, supported by the Ministry of Education and Training is tasked to develop educational policy relying on systematic information on the state of the educational system. Several publications by the Ministry of Education and Training and by the Flemish government contribute to an information-rich environment.

Furthermore a wide array of research is conducted on the state of education. The Flemish Community is eager to participate in international benchmarking surveys, e.g. PISA, TALIS, PIRLS and TIMSS. Most – but not all – of these surveys concentrate on student performances.

The Flemish Government imposes minimal standards of educational quality by means of the attainment targets and developmental objectives ('eindtermen en ontwikkelingsdoelen'). The curricula of schools include minimally these targets and objectives. As a means of system evaluation the Ministry of Education and Training organizes wide-scale tests (the National Assessment Programme, 'Peilingen') to screen whether or not the attainment targets and developmental objectives are obtained by the students. The results of the National Assessment Programme serve as a basis to critically question the feasibility and quality of the attainment targets and developmental objectives and to gain insight in the way schools have implemented those targets and objectives. The National Assessment Programme may serve as a basis for adjustment of the attainment targets and developmental objectives. Other possible reasons for adjustments are the recommendations stemming from scientific research and compliance with Flemish policy or international reports based on changing circumstances and expectations towards education.

The National Assessment Programme is not intended to be or to become a system of central examination. The Flemish Community has decided not to impose central examinations with civil effect. The main stakeholders in the education sector agree that central examinations would not contribute sufficiently to the overall evaluation and assessment framework to outweigh the wide array of perceived disadvantages.

School assessment

Freedom of education implies schools are allowed to set out their view on quality within the framework imposed by the Flemish government. Since the Decree on Quality of Education (2009), schools are the key actors in quality assurance. Other key partners are the School Advisory Services (to support the schools in their efforts to improve their quality), AKOV and the Inspectorate. The latter one is tasked to perform external inspections in order to check whether the schools comply with the regulations for recognition and financing or subsidizing, whether the schools comply with the

regulations concerning school-specific policy and whether the schools systematically monitor their own quality.

To meet the obligation to self-monitor their quality, schools may perform self-evaluations relying on one of the available tools developed by academic institutes or umbrella organizations.

The 'policy-making capacities' of schools is a key concept in self-evaluation, defined as "*the extent to which schools use the available room for policy-making to come to a continuous process of retaining or changing their work in order to improve their educational quality and attain both the external and self-imposed objectives*". The impact of self-evaluation does depend largely on the school's policy-making capacities, but also on the perspective the school had adopted for the purpose of the self-evaluation (accountability versus development). The School Advisory Services support schools in their self-monitoring processes.

A notable feature of the external inspection is the 'differentiated approach' adopted by the Inspectorate in 2009. Rather than performing a comprehensive inspection of the entire school, the Inspectorate selects a limited research focus. The focus is determined separately in each school, relying on the issues in schools that could serve as a lever for further school improvement and on the objective data in which the school discerns itself from other comparable schools in either positive or negative manner. The external inspection makes schools account for their efforts to develop and ensure quality education, but is at the same time development-oriented. A process with the purpose to motivate schools to improve on their deficiencies is started with schools with a negative evaluation. Therefore a negative evaluation does not imply immediate closure or other sanctions. Nevertheless, when given a second consecutive negative evaluation, the school loses its recognition and subsidies or financing. The differentiated approach has only recently been implemented and is still under continuous internal and external assessment and adjustment.

There certainly is an impact of external inspection on school improvement according to stakeholders, but the extent has currently not yet been researched systematically.

Since the adoption of the differentiated approach the relationship between internal evaluation and external inspection is best described as 'communicating vessels'. The Inspectorate intensifies the frequency and intensity of the external inspection in case of insufficient internal quality assurance systems; schools with strong self-evaluation capacities and schools that adjust their policies and practices according to the findings of the self-evaluation, need less frequent and intense external inspection.

The main challenge for the Inspectorate remains to balance between fulfilling its responsibility to control schools on the one hand, but respecting the Freedom of education and adopting a development-oriented approach on the other hand.

Finally schools are under continuous assessment by means of a number of imposed (or strongly recommended) co-operation structures with other schools (local consultation platforms, school communities) and internal consultative bodies (e.g. school council with parents, personnel, local community and for secondary schools also students).

Teacher appraisal

Whereas the other forms of evaluation are quite strongly inter-related, teacher appraisal is more on its own. Until two decennia ago, teacher performances were screened by the Inspectorate. Since the Inspectorate started focusing more on schools instead of individual teachers, an interval was created regarding teacher appraisal that lasted until 2005. The last five years saw the gradually imposed implementation of individualized job descriptions for teachers and the adoption of the teacher appraisal cycle. The purpose of this cycle is to strengthen teacher's performance. The cycle comprises maximally four years and contains at least one appraisal discussion. The last part of the teacher appraisal cycle is a formal evaluation discussion after which an evaluation report is drafted. A positive conclusion has no effect regarding salary or other advantages. If conducted well however, the cycle

will contribute to the professional development and well-being of teachers. An unsatisfactory conclusion may lead to sanctions. Depending on the status of the teacher, dismissal may be the result after one, or two consecutive or three non-consecutive unsatisfactory evaluations.

This system is relatively new and the Ministry of Education and Training has commissioned an academic institute to make the first evaluation. The main stakeholders (umbrella organizations, teachers and school principals) approve with the rationale of the teacher appraisal cycle and its development-oriented approach. Unfortunately, in reality the high administrative workload related to the teacher appraisal mechanism and the high number of teachers that have to be evaluated by the same person is often hampering a successful implementation.

The cycle for teacher appraisal is implemented at the same time for school principals, with only some minor adjustments. School principals are evaluated by a representative of the governing body of their school.

Student assessment

As mentioned before, based on a long tradition and an analysis of advantages and disadvantages, the education sector in the Flemish Community is reluctant towards the organization of centrally imposed examinations with civil effect on the students' study career. Apart from the disadvantages agreed by all stakeholders, centrally imposed examinations would not sit well with the Freedom of education granted to schools.

Schools carry a large responsibility in student assessment. They have to develop an evaluation policy. Certificates (in primary education) and diplomas (in secondary education) are generally awarded by schools. A small number of students opt to obtain their certificate/diploma via the Examination Board of the Flemish Community.

Although there is only limited research available on student assessment practices, there seem to be large differences between primary and secondary education. In primary education large steps have been taken towards the adoption of the 'broad assessment culture'. Some of the main features of the broad assessment culture are that evaluation is conceived as a part of the learning process, the focus is on formative assessment rather than on summative testing, alternative assessment methods are used, competences rather than knowledge are evaluated and students may be more involved in the evaluation process. The traditional evaluation culture (evaluation of knowledge by means of summative written tests) is still more common practice in secondary education.

Student assessment practices are implicitly testing whether the attainment targets and developmental objectives have been achieved by the students. The evaluation methods provided with textbooks or educational methods are based on the curricula of the umbrella organizations, which in turn include minimally the attainment targets and developmental objectives. Teachers are often unaware of the overlap between their teaching and assessment practices and the attainment targets and developmental objectives.

At present, a diploma of secondary education, irrespective of the educational programme, allows the student to enrol in higher education.

The importance dedicated to formative tests that contribute to study career counseling has recently increased. Strengthening the efficiency of study career counseling is one of the major challenges that is believed to turn down the high retention rates.

Chapter 1. The school system

1. In Belgium, powers for education lie with the communities. Since government reforms in 1991 the Flemish, French and German speaking communities each have their own educational system. Within the Flemish Government, the Minister of Education is responsible for almost all aspects of education policy, from nursery schools to university education. Nevertheless, the federal authorities are responsible for some educational issues:
 - Determination of the start and the end of compulsory education;
 - Definition of the minimum conditions for obtaining a diploma;
 - Determination of the pensions of educational staff.In this chapter we will focus on education in the Flemish Community.

1.1 General principles

1.1.1 Compulsory education for all children from six to eighteen

2. Under the Belgian constitution, every child has a right to education. In order to guarantee this right to education, compulsory education was introduced. Compulsory education starts on 1 September of the year in which a child reaches the age of 6, and lasts 12 full school years. A student has to comply with compulsory education until the age of 18¹.
3. Compulsory education ends on the child's eighteenth birthday or on June 30 of the calendar year in which the pupil reaches the age of 18. If a pupil stops going to school on his 18th birthday and does not finish the current school year, he does not have a right to a certificate or diploma which is awarded upon completing the course. For students who obtain a diploma of secondary education before the age of 18, compulsory education stops at that moment. In principle, all schools are mixed sex as a school is not allowed to refuse pupils on grounds of gender.
4. The Belgian Constitution provides that access to education is free of charge up to the end of compulsory education. Although Flemish nursery education does not come under compulsory education, access to it is also free of charge. In nursery and primary education parents do not have to pay for school materials and activities which are vital to pursuing developmental objectives and to achieving attainment targets. For secondary education, school expenses must be effective, demonstrable and justified. They must be in proportion to the characteristics of the target group of secondary education.

1.1.2 Freedom of education

5. 'Freedom of education' is a constitutional right² in Belgium. Freedom of education has a double meaning: it implies on the one hand that every natural or legal person is free to start a school (freedom of organization) and on the other hand that every parent can choose freely in which school to enrol his child in. Parents and students must have access to a school of their choice within a reasonable distance from their home (freedom of school choice). Especially the 'freedom of organization' is of major importance in the light of the subject of this Country Background Report: schools are free to develop their own policy regarding education quality within the boundaries set by the regulatory framework.

¹ From age 15 on, only part-time compulsory education is applicable. Some students opt for a combination of part-time vocational schooling and working.

² Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution.

6. Governing bodies enjoy considerable autonomy. They are entirely free in choosing teaching methods and are allowed to base their education on a certain philosophy or educational view. They can also determine their own curriculum and timetables as well as appoint their own staff. However, schools that want government recognition and financing or subsidizing must meet the attainment targets and developmental objectives and comply with a set of government regulations. Within the boundaries of these regulations all schools are given considerable autonomy to implement the pedagogical plan of their choice and to manage their education praxis.

1.1.3 Equal opportunities in education

7. The Decree on equity of educational opportunities³ contains three major provisions:
 - The right to enrolment: each student has the right to enrol in the school of his/her (parents') choice. Only in a strictly limited number of cases may a school refuse an enrolment or refer a newly enrolled student to another school.
 - The establishment of local consultation platforms to ensure, amongst others things, the right of enrolment and to co-operate in implementing a local policy on equal opportunities in education.
 - Extra support for additional needs provision in schools with additional teaching periods or additional teaching hours per teacher.
8. The policy on equal opportunities is commonly known as the 'GOK'-policy ('Gelijke Onderwijskansen', Equal Educational Opportunities)
9. Equity of opportunities is one of the major spearheads of the previous and current Minister of Education, who has recently stressed that enforcing equity of educational opportunities does not mean that investments on lesser-able or deprived students are at the expense of the other students: equity of opportunities means: "give every child as much opportunities as possible".

1.2 Central concepts

1.2.1 Governing bodies

10. The 'governing body' (or school board) is a key concept in Flemish education. The governing body is responsible for one or more schools and is comparable to a board of principals in a company.
11. About 1500 'governing bodies' ('inrichtende machten') provide recognized education in the Flemish Community. A governing body is defined as 'the legal person or institution that is responsible for one or more schools'.

1.2.2 Educational networks

12. The governing bodies are divided over three 'educational networks':
 - Community education (also called financed education);
 - Officially subsidized education;
 - Privately-run subsidized education.

³ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs (2002). *Decreet betreffende gelijke onderwijskansen [Decree on equity of educational opportunities]*. Decree adopted at June 28, 2002. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13298>

13. The governing body for all the schools organized by the Flemish Community is the ‘Community Education Council’. This governing body is commissioned to ensure freedom of school choice in Flanders and in Brussels. The schools have to be neutral and respect all religious, philosophical or ideological beliefs. Those schools have to offer the choice for students regarding their ‘religious education’: they can attend education in one of the acknowledged religions or for non-confessional moral.
The operational function of the governing body of the schools of the Flemish Community is situated at meso-level: the schools are organized in ‘school groups’ who decide on the operational education policies of the schools.
Schools organized by the Flemish Community are referred to hereunder as ‘community schools’.
14. Official Subsidized schools are organized by either the provincial authorities or by the city or municipal authority.
15. Privately run subsidized education comprises ‘subsidized denominational schools’ and ‘subsidized non-denominational school’. The first group are mostly catholic schools. A small number of schools are adherent to another religion. The governing bodies of catholic schools are dioceses, orders, congregations or other organizations. In addition to these denominational schools, there are schools which have no affiliation with a particular religion, e.g. Freinet schools, Montessori schools, Steiner schools etc.
16. Historically, the ‘financed’ community schools received more resources per pupil from the government than the ‘subsidized’ schools. This was often the subject of discussion, until 2007, when the Decree on the Financing of Education⁴ was agreed. Since then, schools of all educational networks are treated equally. Only pupil characteristics have an impact on different resource-pupil ratios.
17. A small number of schools in Flanders are not recognized by the government. These are ‘private schools’. They do not receive financial support from the government. The Ministry of Education and Training cannot impose minimal expectations (e.g. attainment targets or developmental objectives) on these schools and can’t assure their quality.

1.2.3 Umbrella organizations

18. An umbrella organization is a representative association of governing bodies. It not only represents schools as partner for the government and the Ministry of Education and Training in policy discussions, but also supports schools by e.g. drawing up a curriculum and timetables based on the imposed attainment targets and developmental objectives (see sub-section 84). There are several umbrella organizations:
 - Community education is represented by the public body called ‘GO! Education of the Flemish Community’ (short: ‘GO!’) (‘Het GO! Onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’).
 - Municipal education as well as provincial education each have their own umbrella organizations: the Educational Secretariat for Cities and Municipalities of the Flemish Community (OVSG, ‘Onderwijssecretariaat voor Steden en Gemeenten van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’) and the Provincial Education Flanders (POV, ‘Provinciaal Onderwijs Vlaanderen’).
 - Catholic schools are associated in the umbrella organization called Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education (VSKO, ‘Vlaams Secretariaat Katholiek Onderwijs’).

⁴ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2007). *Decreet betreffende de studiefinanciering van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap [Decree on financing of education in the Flemish Community]*. Decree adopted at July 8, 2007.

- Six other subsidized denominational schools are clustered into IPCO (Council of Governing Bodies of Protestant-Christian Education). The small number of other denominational schools has not established an umbrella organization.
- Subsidized non-confessional schools are associated in FOPEM (Federation of Independent Pluralistic Emancipatory Method Schools - 18 schools), the Federation of Steiner Schools (25 schools) and VOOP (Flemish Education Consultation Platform - 12 schools).
- IPCO, FOPEM, Federation of Steiner Schools and VOOP have established OKO (Consultation Body of Small Education Providers, 'Overleg Kleine Onderwijsverstrekkers') as discussion partner with the government and the Ministry of Education and Training.

Figure 1 provides an overview of all the recognized schools in the Flemish Community, with their educational network, governing body and umbrella organization. Private schools (without recognition of the Flemish Community, see home education in sub-section 25) are not included in the figure.

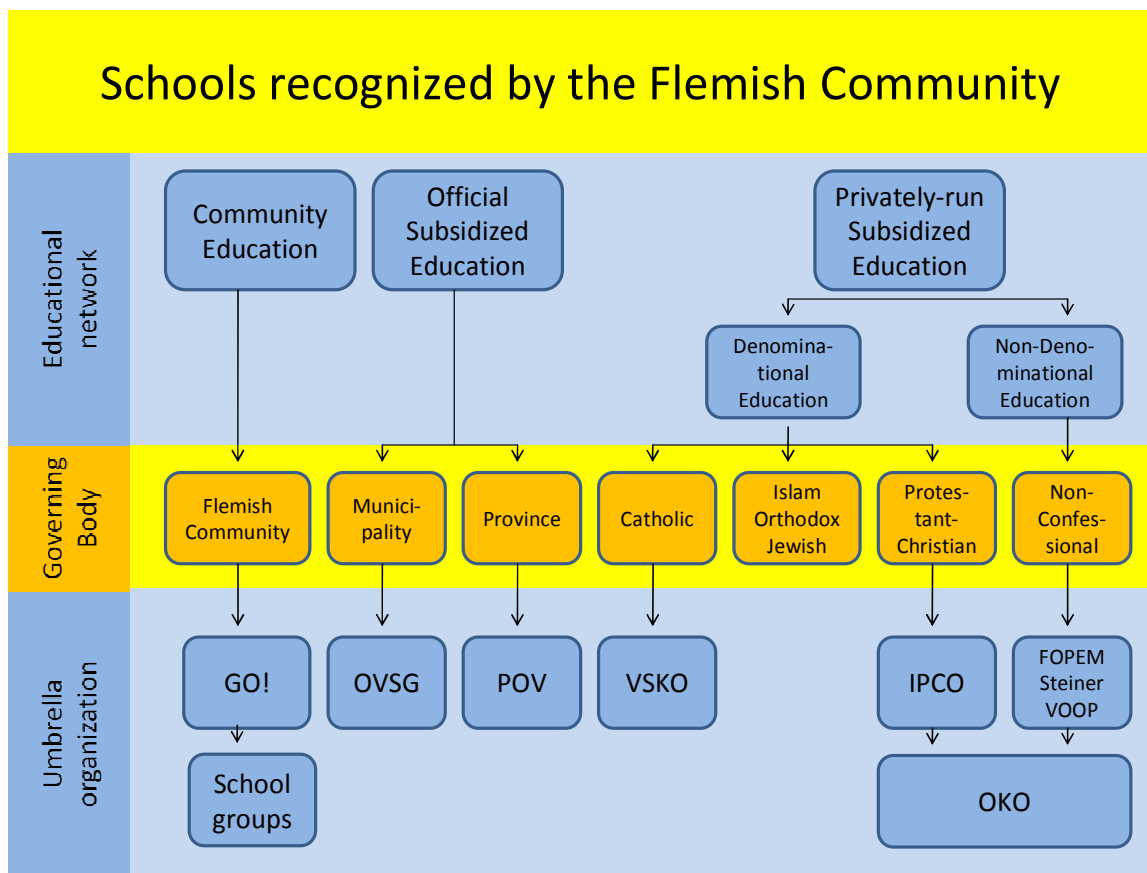


Figure 1. Educational networks, governing bodies and umbrella organizations of recognized schools in the Flemish Community

- Each educational umbrella organization has its own School Advisory Service ('Pedagogische begeleidingsdienst'), which ensures professional internal support to schools. Schools can call on them for educational and methodological advisory services (e.g. innovation projects, self-evaluation projects, support initiatives). School advisors work across schools for the in-service training and support of school principals and school teams. They also support and stimulate quality assurance mechanisms in the schools. There has been a shift from supporting individual teachers towards support at the system level.

1.2.4 Pupil Guidance Centres

20. The Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB, Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding) is a service financed by the government. In Flanders, there are 73 centres, which each belong to one of the three educational networks. However, a CLB works across the educational networks and thus can also accompany schools belonging to another educational network. Students, parents, teachers and school management teams can call on the CLB for information, help and guidance. CLB guidance is free of charge and is based on four key pillars:
 - Learning and studying;
 - The school career;
 - Preventive health care;
 - Social and emotional development.
21. CLB's provide multidisciplinary guidance. To this end, a CLB co-operates with welfare and health institutions. In a CLB, medical doctors, social workers, educationalists, psychologists, psychological assistants and nurses are employed. Depending on the local needs and on the circumstances, also speech therapists and physiotherapists are active in CLB's. The guidance only starts when a student or parent has taken an initiative in this respect. If a school asks the CLB to supervise a student, the centre will always first ask for the parents' consent (for a student under the age of 12), or the student's consent (from the age of 12).
22. Guidance by a CLB is only compulsory in the case of truancy. The CLB also organizes mandatory medical examinations. The CLB provision focuses particularly on students at risk of dropping out due to their social background and problematic living conditions. The CLB guarantees confidentiality of student data and works independently. CLB's work towards equal opportunities in education for all young people.
23. The CLB is also the body which refers students to special education if necessary. It has a pivotal function and signposts students to appropriate assistance. That is why the CLB is a major partner of Integrated Youth Assistance. Integrated Youth Assistance is a system of co-operation between different sectors of youth care in order to ensure alignment and increase efficiency. The six partners in Integrated Youth Assistance next to the CLB's are the organizations for General Welfare, the sector of Specialized Youth Care, the Centres for Mental Health Care, the Preventive Child Health Care organizations, the Centres for Integral Family Care and the Flemish Agency for Persons with a Handicap.

1.2.5 Organization of the school year

24. The school year in primary and secondary education starts on September, 1 and ends on August, 31. However, because of the summer holidays (July, 1 up to and including August, 31), the school year ends at the end of June in practice.

1.2.6 Home education

25. Compulsory education does not mean compulsory school attendance. Children do not necessarily have to go to school to learn. Parents may opt for home education and must inform the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training about their choice. The increasingly growing sector of home education is divided into two parts:
 - Students who actually study at home (taught by one of their parents);
 - Students who attend private non-recognized schools.The Ministry of Education and Training is not allowed to impose measures on these private schools or parents. The Belgian constitution only allows the Ministry of Education and Training to control whether the children's rights are being respected and whether all talents and aspects of students are being developed at individual student level.

1.3 Educational levels

26. Compulsory schooling comprises primary and secondary education, but also other forms of education are included in this paragraph.

1.3.1 Elementary education

27. 'Elementary education' comprises both nursery and primary education. There is mainstream and special nursery and primary education.
28. Elementary schools provide both nursery and primary education. Some autonomous nursery schools only provide nursery education. From a structural point of view, nursery and primary education are separate. To facilitate a smooth transition, new schools for mainstream education must organize both nursery and primary education from 1 September 2010 onwards.
29. Nursery education is available for children from 2.5 to 6. Between the ages of 2.5 and 3, children can start mainstream nursery education at 7 moments during the school year: on the first school day after each holiday period and the first school day in February. Nursery education is not compulsory but highly recommended. Once the child has reached the age of 3, he can start school at any time during the school year. Over 90 percent of the children attend nursery education at the age of three. Mainstream primary education is aimed at children from 6 to 12 and comprises 6 consecutive years of study. A child usually starts primary education at the age of 6 (the age when he is subject to compulsory education).
30. Although nursery education is not compulsory, almost all children attend nursery education in Flanders. Nursery education works on a multifaceted education of children and encourages their cognitive, motor and affective development. In mainstream nursery education, the educational provision covers at least, and if possible, in a co-ordinated way, the following subject areas: physical education, expressive education, Dutch, environmental studies and initiation into mathematics.
31. The Ministry of Education and Training has imposed developmental objectives on nursery schools. These developmental objectives describe what is desirable for children to learn at school⁵.
32. Mainstream primary education builds on the educational provision of nursery education and works on the same subject areas, again in a co-ordinated way, where possible. However, 'mathematical introduction' is replaced by real 'mathematics' and also 'French' as a second language is obligatory. In mainstream primary education attention is also focused on cross-curricular topics such as 'learning to learn', 'social skills' and 'ICT'.
33. Since 1 September 1998, attainment targets have been applicable in mainstream primary education. Those are minimum objectives, which the government considers necessary and attainable for primary school children.
34. In nursery and primary education, parents have a number of explicit rights set out in Decrees passed by the Flemish Parliament. For example, parents are given free choice of school for their child. At any moment during the course of the school year, parents are allowed to change their child's school.

⁵ For more information on attainment targets and development objectives, see chapter 2, sub-section 84.

35. Special nursery and primary education receive children who need special help, be it temporarily or permanently. This may be due to the children's physical or mental disability, serious behavioural or emotional problems, or serious learning difficulties. There are eight types of special nursery⁶ and special primary education, tailored to the educational and developmental needs of a particular group of children.

Table 1: Types of special education

- Type 1: Children with mild mental handicap
- Type 2: Children with moderate or severe mental handicap
- Type 3: Children with severe emotional or behavioural problems
- Type 4: Children with physical disability
- Type 5: Children admitted to hospitals or residing in preventoriums on medical grounds
- Type 6: Children with a visual disability
- Type 7: Children with aural disability
- Type 8: Children with severe learning disabilities

36. Special primary education lasts seven years. Apart from that, there is also Integrated nursery and primary education (GON, 'Geïntegreerd onderwijs'). GON results from the co-operation between mainstream and special nursery and primary education. Disabled children or children with learning or educational difficulties attend classes or activities in a school for mainstream education, with assistance from special education. This may be temporary or permanent and may concern some of the lessons or all subject matters.
37. A special school statement by the CLB (or in some cases a medical doctor) is required for all admissions to special education. This must avoid all unnecessary referrals to special education. However, parents have the right to send their child to a mainstream school although he has been referred to special education.

1.3.2 Secondary education

38. Since 1989, full-time secondary education has been organized in a uniform system. This uniform structure comprises three stages, four education programmes (see sub-section 40) and several study areas. Each stage comprises two grades, with the exception of the final stage in vocational study areas, which comprises three grades. Students only make a final choice of study areas in the second stage so that they are first introduced to as many subjects as possible.
39. Almost 85% of the students are enrolled in the A-stream in the first stage of secondary education (see table 4). The majority of teaching periods in the first stage of the A-stream are devoted to the core curriculum. Mainly students who did not previously achieve the certificate of elementary education are registered in the B-stream of secondary education. After the first grade of the B-stream students are allowed to enter either the second grade of the B-stream or the first grade of the A-stream.
40. From the second stage of secondary education four different education programmes are distinguished. The certificate of the first stage of the A-stream of secondary education allows students to enter the education programme of their choice.
- General secondary education (ASO, 'Algemeen secundair onderwijs') places an emphasis on broad education. Students are not prepared for a specific profession. ASO provides a firm foundation for passing on to higher education.
 - Technical secondary education (TSO, 'Technisch secundair onderwijs') places a special emphasis on general and technical/theoretical subjects. This education also includes practical classes. After TSO, students can exercise a profession or pass on to higher education.

⁶ In nursery education only 6 types (2 to 7) are organized.

- Secondary arts education (KSO, ‘Kunst secundair onderwijs’) combines a broad general education with active arts practice. After KSO, students can exercise a profession or move on to higher education.
 - Vocational secondary education (BSO, ‘Beroepssecundair onderwijs’) is a practice-oriented type of education in which students learn a specific occupation in addition to receiving general education. Students generally pass on to the job market although their diploma also allows them to enter higher education. Students who enrol in the second grade of the B-stream (the ‘vocational preparation year’) will automatically be referred to BSO from the second stage onwards.
41. Within each one of these education programmes, the student opts for a particular study area. In the second and the third stage, there is a common and an optional specific part. In the optional part, the core curriculum is supplemented with a broad range of possible subjects. In the third stage, the specific training component can be narrowed down again with a view to facilitate the ultimate career choice or the possible educational pathways in higher education.
 42. From the age of 15 or 16, pupils can transfer to part-time education. Part-time learning is available in three ways:
 - Through part-time vocational secondary education (DBSO, ‘Deeltijds beroepssecundair onderwijs’);
 - Through apprenticeship (organized by Syntra Vlaanderen);
 - Through part-time training programmes.
 43. A student is awarded the diploma of secondary education after successfully completing six years of ASO, TSO or KSO or seven years of BSO.
 44. The structure of secondary education as described above is currently under discussion. The Minister of Education has issued a proposal on the reform of the structure of secondary education which is being discussed with several stakeholders⁷.
 45. Some students are hampered in their physical, psychological, social or intellectual development by a disability or by learning or behavioural difficulties. They temporarily or permanently need special assistance and education tailored to their needs. Special education provides an educational provision tailored to the needs of these student. The years in special secondary education (BUSO, ‘Buitengewoon secundair onderwijs’) rarely coincide with the school years in mainstream secondary education. Indeed, a student only passes on to the next ‘learning stage’ when he is ready for to do so.
 46. The types of education that exist in special nursery and primary education are the same as those in secondary education, except type 8 which is not organized in secondary education.
 47. Additionally four education forms (see table 2) are distinguished according to the possibilities of the student.

Table 2: Education forms in special secondary education

- Form 1: Social training for students who are not able to live an independent life.
- Form 2: Social training as preparation for a sheltered working and living environment.
- Form 3: Social and vocational training as preparation for the regular job market.
- Form 4: Mainstream secondary education with adapted educational methods.

⁷ Smet, P. (2010). *Mensen doen schitteren. Eerste oriëntatienota hervorming secundair onderwijs.* [Make people shine. First orientation memorandum on the restructuring of secondary education]. Published at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2010/bijlagen/20100913-hervorming-so.pdf> (Dutch only)

48. A small number of study areas in TSO and KSO have a so-called Se-n-se: 'Secondary education after secondary education'. Se-n-se is a specialization grade for students that previously graduated in the sixth grade of a specific study area.

1.3.3 Higher education

49. The following higher education programmes are provided in the Flemish Community:
- Higher Vocational Education
 - Bachelor programmes (Professional bachelor and Academic bachelor);
 - Master programmes;
 - Further training programmes;
 - Postgraduates and updating and in-service training courses;
 - Doctoral programmes.
50. Higher professional education exclusively consists of professionally-oriented bachelor courses, which are only organized at Institutes for Higher Education. Academic education comprises bachelor and master courses, which are provided by universities. Institutes for Higher Education belonging to an association are also allowed to provide academic education. An association is an inter-institutional co-operation between one university and one or more Institutes for Higher Education. Associations improve interaction between education and research. There are five associations in Flanders.

1.3.4 Part-time arts education

51. Part-time arts education (DKO, 'Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs') is education which supplements school education and is aimed at children, young people and adults. Participants enrol voluntarily and pay an enrolment fee. They learn to approach and experience all art forms critically and can practice them themselves. They do so individually or in group (e.g. in an orchestra, dance group, or theatre company). Part-time arts education prepares young people thoroughly for a professional artistic career in higher education in the arts.

1.3.5 Adult education

52. Adult education is entirely separate from the initial educational pathway. Courses delivered in this type of education may lead to a recognized qualification. Adults aged 18 or older and young people who have complied with full-time compulsory education, may enroll. Depending on the course chosen, there may be specific entry requirements.

1.4 Data concerning schools, teachers and students

53. Table 4 includes relevant figures on education in the Flemish Community⁸. Those figures are valid for the school year 2010.
- Some notable facts:
- Most schools belong to the educational network 'privately-run subsidized education'. Except for a small number of non-confessional schools and schools from another religion, all these schools are Catholic schools.
 - Consequently, Catholic education has also the highest number of students. Two out of three students are enrolled in privately-run subsidized schools.
 - The majority of students in the first stage of secondary education (84,2 % of the students in mainstream education) enrolled in the A-stream. 15,8 % of the students opted for the B-stream.

⁸ Source: Beleidsdomein Onderwijs en Vorming (2009). *Vlaams onderwijs in cijfers [Flemish Education in Figures]*. Published at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsstatistieken>

- In the second and third stage of secondary education, four out of ten students entered general education (ASO, 40,1 % of the students in mainstream education). A considerable share of the student population entered either TSO (32,1 %) or BSO (25,6 %), leaving only a small share of students (2,1 %) who opted for KSO.
- A significant share of the students (4,39 %) was enrolled in special education.

1.5 Budget for education

54. The budget share of the Flemish government spent on education is about forty percent of the overall expenditure, as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Budget spent on education

	Budget in millions of euros	Percentage of entire budget of the Flemish government
2010	9,702	38,9 %
2009	9,287	36,8 %
2008	9,801	41,1 %
2007	8,859	39,9 %
2006	8,470	40,5 %

Source: Beleidsdomein Onderwijs en Vorming (2009). Vlaams onderwijs in cijfers [Flemish Education in Figures]. Published at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsstatistieken>

Table 4. Data on students, teachers and schools school year 2009-2010

Number of students by educational level and educational network

	Community Education	Officially subsidized education	Privately-run subsidized education	Total number of students
Mainstream nursery education	35,855	57,761	156,775	250,391
Special nursery education	609	183	1170	1,962
Total nursery education	36,464	57,944	157,945	252,353
Mainstream primary education	53,232	86,626	240,339	380,197
Special primary education	16,758	4,533	6,414	27,705
Total primary education	69,990	91,159	246,753	407,902
Mainstream secondary education	73,003	33,017	323,725	429,745
Special secondary education	4,445	2,432	12,138	19,015
Total secondary education	77,448	35,449	335,863	448,760
Total number of students	183,902	184,552	740,561	1,109,015

Number of students in the first stage of secondary education by educational programme and educational network

	Community Education	Officially subsidized education	Privately-run subsidized education	Total number of students
A-stream	17,152	5,558	92,432	115,142
B-stream	5,226	3,061	13,297	21,584
Total	49,616	23,248	215,436	228,300

Number of students in the second and third stage of secondary education by educational programme and educational network

	Community Education	Officially subsidized education	Privately-run subsidized education	Total number of students
ASO	18,746	2,890	94,201	115,837
TSO	12,080	8,482	71,846	92,426
KSO	1,235	1,906	3,029	6,170
BSO	17,555	9,970	46,342	73,867
Total	49,616	23,248	215,436	228,300

Number of full-time equivalent teachers by educational level

	Number of teachers		Number of teachers
Mainstream elementary education	46,806	Mainstream secondary education	56,585
Special elementary education	6,005	Special secondary education*	5,921
Total elementary education	52,811	Total secondary education	62,506
		Total	115,317

Number of schools by educational level and educational network

	Community Education	Officially subsidized education	Privately-run subsidized education	Total number of schools
Mainstream elementary education	352	519	1450	2,321
Special elementary education	34	32	124	190
Total elementary education	396	551	1,574	2,511
Mainstream secondary education	222	71	671	964
Special secondary education*	20	17	74	111
Total secondary education	242	88	745	1,075
Total number	638	639	2,319	3,586

* A small number of schools provides both mainstream and special secondary education. Those schools are counted with 'mainstream secondary education'.

Source: *Beleidsdomein Onderwijs en Vorming (2009). Vlaams onderwijs in cijfers [Flemish Education in Figures]. Published at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsstatistieken>*

Chapter 2. The framework for evaluation and assessment

55. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and outline the major assets of the evaluation and assessment frameworks within the Flemish Community. Evaluation and assessment mechanisms operate at different levels. At several levels initiatives are undertaken to establish an information-rich environment. Evaluation and assessment allows the education system and schools to look at how effectively they contribute to the strategic objectives set by the Minister of Education and the development of students in the light of the attainment targets and developmental objectives set by the government.

2.1 Freedom of education

56. As covered in sub-section 5 the Freedom of education principle grants schools the right to develop a school-specific vision on quality of education within the boundaries set by the Flemish government and the Flemish parliament. This vision is elaborated in a school-specific curriculum and school-specific teaching and assessment practices.
57. The Ministry of Education and Training is not supposed to organise schools, nor does it have to account for the practices in individual schools. The Ministry of Education and Training is, however, responsible for the quality of the educational system. It fulfils this task by imposing a regulatory framework on schools in exchange for recognition and financing or subsidizing. The regulatory framework needs to promote the quality of education and to allow control over the quality provided by schools and teachers with respect for the local autonomy of schools. This implies that a regulatory framework for quality assurance is developed that fits the local situation and policies of schools. This also entails large investments in professionalisation of schools concerning self-evaluations, teaching schools to collect data on all aspects of education and taking initiatives to motivate schools to increase the quality of student and teacher evaluations and of school self-evaluations.

2.2 Actors in quality assurance, evaluation and assessment

2.2.1 Schools and teachers

58. Schools have a crucial role in quality assurance. Not only are they required to define what they perceive as ‘quality education’ (in respect with the Freedom of education principle), moreover the Decree on Quality of Education (2009)⁹ requires schools to provide quality education. Schools carry the main responsibility for the quality of education, rather than the Ministry of Education and Training or the supporting services of the umbrella organizations. Moreover, schools also have the duty to monitor their educational quality. Therefore schools are the key partners in the network of quality assurance in the Flemish educational system, working within the boundaries set by the regulatory framework imposed by the Ministry of Education and Training.
59. In order to provide quality education, schools’ policy-making capacities are becoming increasingly important. While, traditionally, schools depended largely on initiatives of the umbrella organizations, they are now responsible for monitoring their own quality. Schools that are able to establish a strong policy on educational quality are more likely to have effective quality assurance mechanisms.

⁹ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2009). *Decreet betreffende de Onderwijskwaliteit [Decree on quality of education]*. Decree adopted at May 8, 2009. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=14129>

60. Teachers have a crucial role in the implementation of school policy. They are the key actors in ensuring that students meet the attainment targets and developmental objectives (see subsection 84) and the objectives set by the school. They are also perceived as important participants in the school's policy evaluation and development.

2.2.2 The policy domain education

61. The Minister of Education heads the 'policy domain education'. He is supported by the Cabinet of Education. The Minister and the Cabinet are the 'political' side of the policy domain education. Their work is inspired and supported by the 'administrative' side, comprising the Ministry of Education and Training, the Inspectorate and VLOR (Flemish Education Council, 'Vlaamse Onderwijsraad') as shown in figure 2.

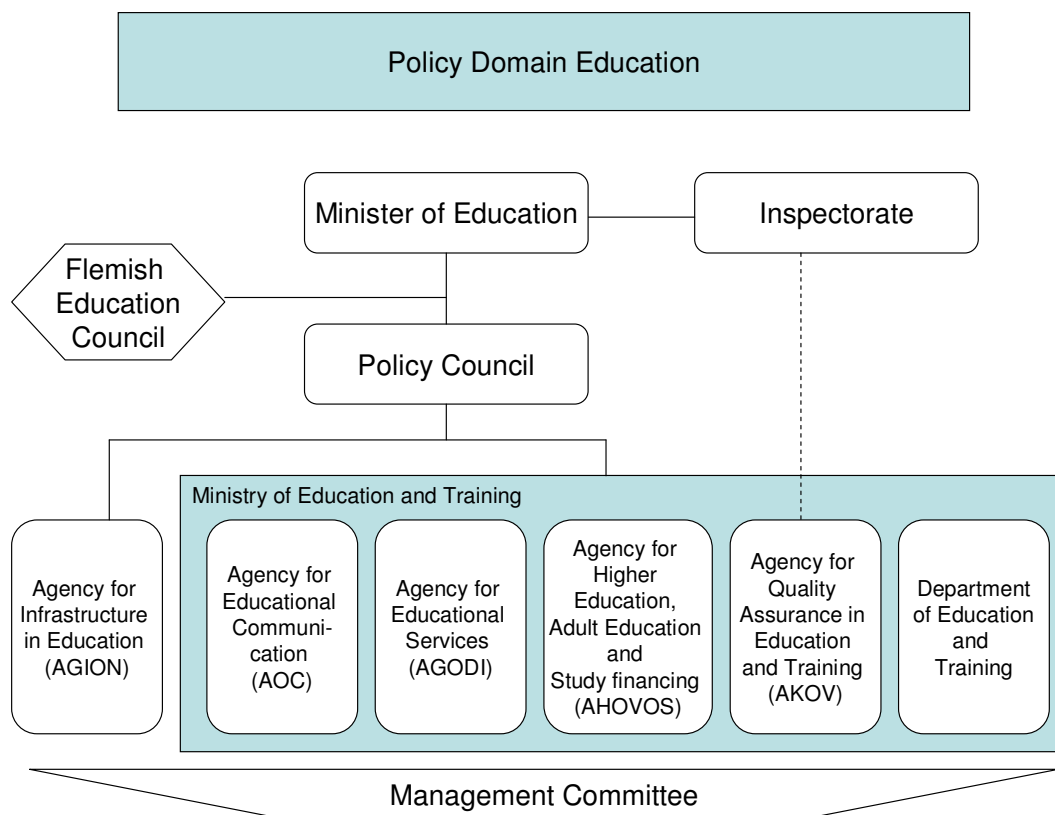


Figure 2. The Policy Domain Education

62. The most important policy decisions within the 'policy domain education' are taken by the Management Committee and the Policy Council.
- The Management Committee consists of the heads of the Department of Education and Training and of the executive agencies. It aims to establish a network within the Ministry of Education and Training and to increase the coherence of the Ministry's overall policy. The Management Committee decides on the subjects that are on the agenda of the Policy Council.
 - The Policy Council is a meeting with both political (the Cabinet of the Minister of Education) and administrative representatives (from the Ministry of Education and Training). The Policy Council supports the policy development at high level and functions as a forum for integration and co-ordination of the overall education policy. The Policy Council is supported by the Secretariat General of the Department of Education and Training.

63. The Ministry of Education and Training comprises of five autonomous organizations: the Department of Education and Training, chaired by the secretary-general, which is responsible for policy preparation and policy evaluation, and four executive agencies, chaired by an administrator-general, responsible for the executive branch of education policy. Additionally the executive agency AGION is also part of the ‘policy domain education’.

64. The Department of Education comprises ten policy units:
- Unit for Strategic Policy Support;
 - Unit for Institutes and Pupils Elementary Education and Part-time Arts Education;
 - Unit for Institutes and Pupils Secondary Education and Adult Education;
 - Unit for Labour Condition Policies;
 - Unit for Higher Education;
 - Unit for Support of Policy Development;
 - Unit for International Relationships in Education;
 - Unit for European Programmes and Life-Long Learning;
 - Staff Services;
 - Management Supporting Services.

The Department of Education’s ambition is to support policy development and policy execution in co-operation with the executive agencies and a range of actors, with the objective of facilitating and ensuring good quality education and training for everyone not only in order to provide everyone with the opportunities for balanced development, but also in order to keep ensuring sustainable development of the society. This implies that the Department of Education – and especially its Unit for Strategic Policy Support – is crucial in the evaluation framework of the education sector in the Flemish Community.

65. The five agencies for policy execution are:
- Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV);
 - Agency for Educational Services (AGODI);
 - Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study financing (AHOVOS);
 - Agency for Educational Communication (AOC);
 - Agency for Infrastructure in Education (AGION)¹⁰.

The first two agencies are the most relevant ones within the scope of this OECD research.

66. AKOV, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV, ‘Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming’) is an important actor in the evaluation of the educational system in the Flemish Community. AKOV was set up at the end of 2009 in order to enhance the systems and processes for quality assurance of all educational programmes leading to a formal qualification in the national qualification framework. All services related to quality improvement of education fall under the jurisdiction of AKOV: determining and adjusting the attainment targets and developmental objectives, ensuring clear processes for certification, ensuring quality of educational institutions, organizing the National Assessment Programme (see sub-section 144), ensuring coherence between the attainment targets and developmental objectives of compulsory schooling and competences of teachers taught in the Institutes for Initial Teacher Education, organization of the Examination Board of the Flemish Community (see sub-section 544), outlining criteria for recognition of prior learning, etc. AKOV also has a supporting role towards the Inspectorate.

67. AGODI is tasked with informing and supporting schools in their administrative and financial tasks and checking the correct use of financial resources by schools. AGODI is also expected to contribute to the realisation of the educational policy and the evaluation of the educational

¹⁰ AGION belongs to the policy domain Education, but not to the Ministry of Education and Training. AGION is a separate legal entity.

policy by providing information to other executive agencies and to the Department of Education and Training.

68. Although connected to the Ministry in its proceedings, the Inspectorate functions independently from the Ministry of Education and Training under direct jurisdiction of the Minister of Education. The Inspectorate is a key actor in school assessment but also contributes directly to system evaluation and indirectly (through the inspection of schools' policies and coherence in practices) to student assessment and to teacher appraisal.
69. VLOR is an autonomous consultation and advisory body independent from both the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education and Training. The advice of VLOR is mandatory when a draft decree is being prepared for the Parliament. VLOR may also issue advice on its own initiative. Representatives of all stakeholders participate in VLOR:
 - Governing bodies of schools and education centres in different educational networks: GO!, VSKO, OVSG, POV and OKO;
 - School principals;
 - Staff (teacher's unions and 'experts');
 - Students (Flemish Student Council) and parents (GO!, VSKO and OVSG have their own representative parent organization);
 - Centres for Pupil Guidance (CLB);
 - Social-cultural and socio-economic organizations.

2.2.3 Umbrella organizations

70. Due to the Freedom of education granted to schools, umbrella organizations of the governing bodies of schools carry a large responsibility in quality assurance and evaluation mechanisms in education. The umbrella organizations are involved in policy preparation processes concerning a wide array of issues (e.g. issues concerning school evaluation, teacher appraisal and student assessment). Umbrella organizations have an impact on policy development through VLOR but also by means of direct communication with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Cabinet of the Minister of Education. They are invited to participate in policy discussions but are also likely to put issues on the policy agenda on their own initiative.
71. Most schools depend on the umbrella organization for its curriculum. This curriculum includes the objectives that should be reached by the students at the end of certain stage. These objectives comprise minimally the attainment targets and developmental objectives set by the Flemish government (see sub-section 84).
72. The School Advisory Services of the umbrella organizations are among the most important partners of schools in quality assurance. They provide support to schools regarding school self-evaluation, teacher appraisal and student assessment.

2.2.4 Main stakeholders and their representative organizations

73. Students, parents and teachers can have an impact on the evaluation policy at local level. By means of several consultation bodies imposed by Decree their input into schools' policy development is assured. Apart from several participation bodies (student council, parent council, personnel council) the school council (with all of those stakeholders including the local community) has an official advisory or consultative role for the school's policy.
74. In addition to an advisory role via the consultation body VLOR, representative organizations of teachers, students and parents also have direct communication with the Ministry of Education and Training or the Cabinet of the Minister of Education.

- The teacher's unions (representing not only teachers but all educational staff including school principals and administrative personnel), e.g. their involvement in the policy discussion on the teacher appraisal system. Besides the teacher's unions there are separate associations for school principals, mostly organized by educational networks. These associations have a supportive role towards their members rather than a representational one at policy level.
- The parent organizations. The three largest umbrella organizations (GO!, OVSG and VSKO) each have their own parent organization, which work closely together and coordinate their points of view.
- The previous and current Minister of Education attach great importance to the involvement of students in policy discussions. Therefore particularly the Flemish Student Council (VSK)'s advice is often requested by the Cabinet of the Minister of Education for its advice on prioritised topics by the Minister like the reform of the structure of secondary education. But VSK is also allowed to put subjects on the agenda on its own initiative, like student counselling, student participation and equal treatment of students. VSK is currently organizing a survey with 5000 students on 'relation with teachers and other school staff'. To VSK's own opinion, one of the reasons that its input is highly regarded by the Cabinet of the Minister of Education lies in the fact that it is the only pluralistic (across educational networks) stakeholder organization in the education sector.

2.2.5 International institutions and organizations

75. Several international partners of the Flemish 'policy domain education' contribute to an informed basis for system evaluation or have an impact on the evaluation mechanisms. Most important in this framework for an information-rich environment are OECD, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and the European Union (EU).

2.2.6 Academic institutes

76. Academic institutes fulfil the role of neutral evaluators and in some cases 'critical friend' of the Flemish government. By means of scientific research they provide the Ministry of Education and Training with critical analysis of the current education and evaluation frameworks and recommendations for further development. Academic institutes are often commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Training to conduct an evaluation on the implementation of a certain policy in order to prepare future adjustments.

2.2.7 Press

77. The press is becoming a more and more important actor in evaluation of education. By means of critical analysis of policy proposals or news articles on the implementation of a certain policy the press raises public awareness on the efficiency of the evaluation and assessment frameworks within the education sector. Recently the press paid attention to the current state of DBSO (part-time vocational secondary education), the relation between denominational and other courses in compulsory education, the problem of early school leavers and low success rates in higher education and the Minister of Education's proposal for the reform of the structure of secondary education.
78. The press often refers to the Ministry of Education and Training and holds it incorrectly accountable for practices in schools. The Ministry of Education and Training is however not always able to respond to these practices or act upon them because of the Freedom of education. The relationship between central quality assurance mechanisms and confiding in internal evaluation mechanisms within schools is under continuous assessment.

2.3 Financial investment in evaluating education

79. It is impossible to oversee a comprehensive view on the financial investment of all initiatives that contribute to evaluation in education. As an example, the planned budget for 2010 for the Inspectorate¹¹ equals 16,703,000 €. The planned budget within the Ministry of Education and Training for several research initiatives on evaluation in the education sector (including the budget for the National Assessment Programme¹², OBPWO-research¹³, International comparative research¹⁴ and the ‘Centre for Education and School Careers’¹⁵) equals 4,444,500 €.¹⁶
80. The budget for 2010 that the Ministry of Education and Training has made available for quality assurance and enhancing the impact of evaluation on school improvement through the School Advisory Services of the several umbrella organizations equals 20,739,000 €.

2.4 Definition of educational quality¹⁷

81. Evaluating the quality of education implies a definition of ‘quality of education’. The Flemish Community’s education sector has a long-standing tradition of applying a pedagogical-didactic approach to looking at quality of education. This approach means that differences are possible and even desirable, because every school will find strategies to enhance the outcomes regarding its own location, tradition and students. It allows schools to provide education adapted to the needs of their students which is supposed to create the desired outcomes. Therefore schools are key actors in quality assurance of education.
82. During the last decades however society has started to critically question the educational system and to what extent it contributes to nationally accepted outcomes. As a result of increasing pressure from the society urging the Ministry of Education and Training to account for the quality of the educational system, schools are increasingly asked to account for their processes and outputs. The importance of external quality assurance has increased. The implementation of attainment targets and developmental objectives (1998) has to be seen in this perspective. These targets are a means for the Flemish government to guarantee the minimum desired quality of education.
83. A generally accepted starting point to define ‘educational quality’ is that it means ‘to realise expectations commonly shared by all stakeholders in an adequate manner’. Due to the versatile expectations of stakeholders, concrete definitions may differ widely. The starting point implies that three aspects are important in defining the quality of education: valuable objectives, efficient strategies and effective outputs.
- The objectives have to be valuable for both the ‘users’ of education (students, parents) and for the Flemish society. Therefore determining valuable objectives is not an easy task. Several stakeholders influence the nationally imposed attainment targets and developmental objectives, but also the objectives in the curricula of umbrella

¹¹ For more information on the Inspectorate, see sub-section 234.

¹² For more information on the National Assessment Programme, see sub-section 144.

¹³ For more information on OBPWO research, see sub-section 194.

¹⁴ For more information on international comparative research, see sub-section 168.

¹⁵ For more information on the Centre for Education and School Careers, see sub-section 196.

¹⁶ The total planned budget for 2010 for Education & Training was 9.702.474.000 euro.

¹⁷ Relying on: Standaert R. (2000). *De verleiding van het simplificeren. Een pleidooi voor integratie van interne en externe kwaliteitsbewaking* [The temptation to simplify. A plea for the integration of internal and external quality control]. In: Letschert, J. (ed). *Op de schouders van de voorgangers*. Enschede: Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling. P 65-96.

And on: Vanhoof, J. (2007). *Zelfevaluatie binnenstebuiten. Onderzoek naar zelfevaluaties in scholen* [Self-evaluation inside-out. Research into self-evaluations in schools]. Mechelen, Belgium: Wolters Plantyn.

organizations and possible additional objectives set by individual schools. Participation of all stakeholders is the best guarantee of a dynamic and well-balanced set of objectives that determine the quality of education.

- The processes and strategies developed by the educational system, by schools and by individual teachers supported by national and international research, umbrella organizations, several providers of educational support or educational materials etc are a second aspect of the quality of education. Neither the Ministry of Education and Training nor the Flemish government have any means of direct control over the strategies developed by schools, but schools have to account for their efforts to monitor the quality of their own processes.
- The third aspect of quality is the output of education: effectiveness and productivity of the processes towards reaching the objectives. The Ministry of Education and Training's quality assurance system is mainly focused on output indicators. Also quality control of schools by the Inspectorate emphasizes the importance of the schools' achievements.

2.5 Attainment targets and developmental objectives

84. At present, the Ministry of Education and Training does not write comprehensive curricula. It does however write out attainment targets and developmental objectives ('eindtermen en ontwikkelingsdoelen'), which are to be the basis for each curriculum. The attainment targets and developmental objectives are also called the 'core curriculum'. The attainment targets and developmental objectives are imposed on schools by the Flemish government. AKOV is the agency within the Ministry of Education and Training responsible for drafting and adjusting the attainment targets and developmental objectives. The current availability of attainment targets and developmental objectives is summarized in table 5. A few examples of attainment targets are included in annex B¹⁸.

Table 5. Availability of attainment targets and developmental objectives

Nursery education Developmental objectives

Primary education: Attainment targets

Primary special-needs education:

Type 1, 2, 7 and 8: developmental objectives

Type 3, 4, 5 and 6: not available.

Secondary education

	A-stream	B-stream
First stage	Attainment Targets	Developmental objectives
	ASO	TSO, KSO, BSO
Second stage	Attainment targets	Attainment targets 'general courses'
Third stage	Attainment targets	Attainment targets 'general courses'

There are currently no attainment targets for the technical, art or vocational courses in TSO, KSO and BSO. This will be part of the development and implementation of the Flemish Qualification Structure (see sub-section 95).

Secondary special-needs education

Education forms 1 and 2 Currently processing development objectives

Education form 3 Development objectives available

Education form 4 Attainment targets available

Source: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/DVO>

85. Attainment targets and developmental objectives are imposed in order to
 - Assure the minimum level of quality in schools regarding student outcomes
 - Increase transparency of the educational system
 - Support schools in their responsibility to provide meaningful and fair education.
86. Schools have a ‘result obligation’ towards the attainment targets: they have to be reached by students at a certain point in their study career. Schools have a ‘pursuing obligation’ towards developmental objectives; schools only need to account for their efforts to reach those goals.
87. In respect with the Freedom of education schools are allowed to draw up their own curriculum. Through the attainment targets and developmental objectives the Flemish government and the Ministry of Education and Training define the basis of the curricula taught in all recognized schools, to which schools may add extra contents and objectives (either for all students, or only for the students who need more challenges than provided by the attainment targets). The Inspectorate inspects whether or not the submitted curriculum complies with this regulation.
88. Although schools have the responsibility to develop a curriculum based on its school-specific pedagogical plan, curricula are generally developed at the level of umbrella organizations. This implies that most schools work with either the curriculum of catholic education, community education or municipal or provincial education. Although there are considerable differences between those curricula, the attainment targets do assure minimal alignment and quality assurance. The differences in curriculum pose no insuperable problems for students that change to a school from a different educational network between two grades.

2.6 Current trends

2.6.1 Focus on indicators and output measurement

89. The importance of numerical indicators for evaluating educational quality has gained importance in the most recent decade. Numerical data provide the educational system and schools with an informed basis for assuring their quality, for assessing their efficiency and for development and adjustment of policy and practices. Numerical indicators also increase the transparency of evaluations at system, school, teacher and student level.
90. The increased emphasis on output measurement relies on several factors:
 - International (European) tendencies towards output measurement and learning outcomes within qualifications.
 - Working closer towards the job market (and thus increased co-operation with enterprises in profit-sector)
 - Other Policy Domains within the Flemish Community (e.g. Culture; Youth; Sports) depend more on output measurement than the education sector
 - The availability of the attainment targets and developmental objectives had created an environment that facilitates output measurement.
 - Practical reasons: output measurement is easier, less time-consuming and more cost-effective than assessment of processes.
91. There are, however, no ranking or comparisons based on numerical data, because the Ministry of Education and Training and all stakeholders are convinced that increased competition between schools or teachers would not contribute to the quality of the educational system, in respect with the culture of the pedagogical-didactic approach towards quality of education (see sub-section 81).

¹⁸ The attainment targets and development objectives are available at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/DVO>

92. The shift towards output measurement has been most clear at the levels of system evaluation and school assessment.
- The educational system increasingly has to account for its performances, mostly measured by means of student outputs.
 - During the external inspection of schools by the Inspectorate the ‘output’ is the most prominent component in deciding whether a school meets the obligation to provide quality education. ‘Output’ is the key component in the CIPO-Framework (Context, Input, Process, Output) used by the Inspectorate during the external school inspection. The output created by a school is the basis for a positive, restricted positive or negative recommendation about the school (or a component of the school). Context, Input and Process are underlying components that provide information on how the output was achieved: the Inspectorate assesses the extent to which the school manages to develop and monitor efficient processes relying on the school-specific context and input variables in order to increase the results on the output indicators¹⁹.
 - At teacher level the shift towards output measurement is less pronounced. Especially teachers themselves are reluctant to allow their outputs at student level to be taken into account as part of the teacher evaluation.
 - Student assessment – which traditionally focused on student output – is currently making an opposite shift. Although the broad assessment culture (sub-section 551) is not yet common practice, the efforts to assess students’ processes, efforts and personal progress rather than merely ‘awarding quantitative scores to performances’ are notable and significant.

2.6.2 Evaluation in accountability perspective and development perspective

93. In general, evaluation and assessment frameworks are established and conducted to serve a double purpose: on the one hand evaluation makes the educational system, schools and teachers account for their efforts to provide quality education; on the other hand the educational system, schools and teachers are motivated to strengthen their policies and practices relying on findings of evaluation. Researchers have identified an ‘accountability perspective’ and ‘development perspective’. The evaluation perspective has consequences for both the objectives of quality assurance and the way evaluation is implemented as part of quality assurance as shown in figure 3.
94. Both perspectives can be discerned at the different levels of evaluation:
- The educational system collects information for both purposes: the education sector is increasingly asked by the society to account for its efforts, but evaluation also contributes to continuous improvement.
 - At school level external evaluations were traditionally regarded as ‘control’ and thus ‘accountability’, while self-evaluations were undertaken to improve the schools’ policies and practices. This difference has recently been blurred: the Inspectorate tries to focus more on schools’ improvement processes and schools start to perform self-evaluations from an accountability perspective.
 - Teachers have to account for their functioning at least once every four years, but the teacher appraisal cycle imposed on all schools is developed from a rationale to support teachers in their professional development.
 - Student assessment was traditionally merely conceived to control students’ knowledge. Influenced by the broad assessment culture, the focus is increasingly on evaluation to promote further growth.

¹⁹ For more information on the CIPO-framework, see sub-section 9.



Figure 3. Accountability and development perspective²⁰

2.6.3 The Flemish Qualification Structure

95. The Decree on the Flemish qualifications structure was approved by the Flemish Parliament at 30th April 2009.²¹ It lays down the qualifications framework and the level descriptors, the kinds of qualifications as well as the procedures to recognize them.
96. The Flemish qualifications framework provides a skeleton to which qualifications will be added. This skeleton can be split into eight levels. They can be distinguished on the basis of the generic characteristics of competences. Per level, the required knowledge and skills are described, as well as the context and the level of autonomy and responsibility which the competences imply.
97. The Decree distinguishes between professional and educational qualifications. A professional qualification is a set of competences allowing an individual to exercise a profession. An educational qualification is a set of competences an individual needs to participate in society, to start further education and/or to exercise professional activities. The educational qualifications contained on the levels one to five comprise combinations of attainment targets and specific attainment targets or recognized professional qualifications.

²⁰ Nevo, D. (2002). Dialogue evaluation: Combining internal and external evaluation. In D. Nevo (Ed.), *School-based evaluation: An international perspective*. Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.

Vanhoof, J., & Van Petegem, P. (2007). How to match internal and external evaluation? Conceptual reflections from a Flemish perspective. *Studies in educational evaluation*, 33(2), 101-119.

²¹ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2009). *Decreet betreffende de Kwalificatiestructuur [Decree on the Qualification Structure]*. Decree adopted at April 30, 2009.

2.7 Impact on school improvement

98. Evaluation and assessment in several forms are conducted with different objectives in mind:
- To check whether minimal standards have been achieved (by the system, schools, teachers or students).
 - To assess the efficiency of the current approach (e.g. for the system to appraise its support mechanisms for schools; or for the teacher to evaluate his teaching).
 - To develop and adjust the current policy.
99. Different initiatives have been undertaken in order to evaluate the educational system, schools, teachers and students and to increase the quality of education. Although there is almost no research available on the impact on each of those initiatives, it is commonly accepted that those initiatives provide a reliable basis for building improvement plans concerning the performance of education in the Flemish Community.
100. Recently the academic world questioned however to what extent school inspections, attainment targets and developmental objectives, new curricula, development of policy-making capacities in schools, appraisal discussions with teachers, schools' self-monitoring evaluations etc contribute to better outcomes of the students' learning activities and advocated more meta-evaluation of all evaluation initiatives.²²

2.8 Links between forms of evaluation

101. The different systems of evaluation have been developed independently, although efforts have been made by the Ministry of Education and Training to oversee several developments and initiatives and to align evaluation and assessment practices.

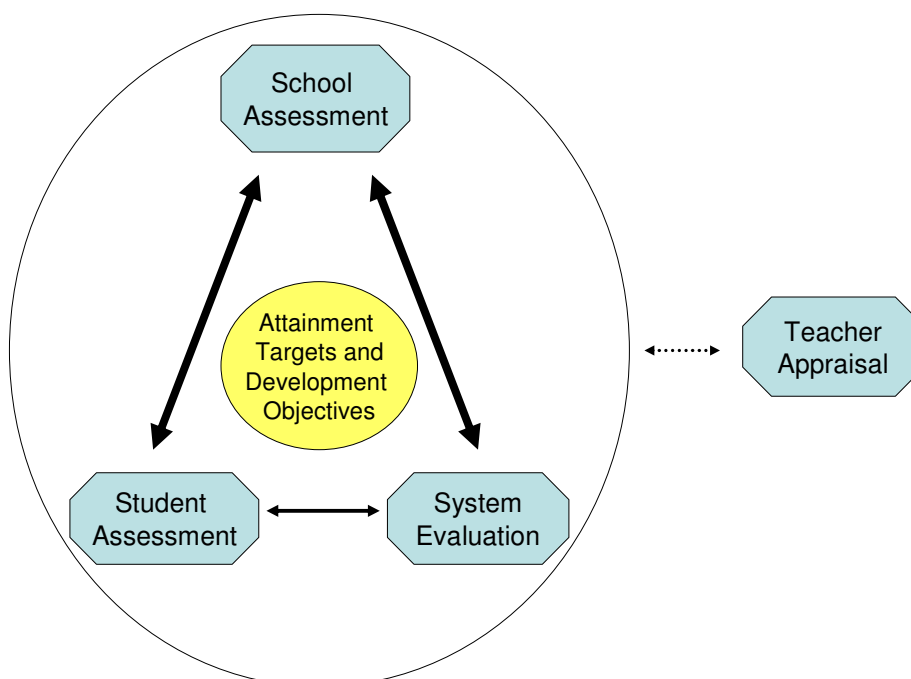


Figure 4. Inter-relationship between forms of evaluation and assessment

²² Vandenberghe, R. (2007). Beleidsvoerend vermogen van scholen helpen te ontwikkelen: een uitdaging voor de pedagogische begeleiding. In: Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (2005). *Beleidsvoerend vermogen van scholen ontwikkelen: een verkenning*, p. 21-46. Antwerpen, Apeldoorn: Garant.

102. Traditionally student performances inform both school and system evaluations: the students' achievements are perceived as reliable data for the performance of the school and of the educational system. The attainment targets and developmental objectives are in the centre of evaluation at each of those three levels:
- The purpose of student assessment is to measure to which extent students have achieved the curriculum objectives, which minimally comprise the attainment targets and developmental objectives.
 - Schools are considered to be functioning optimally when their policy and practices are established in a manner that students are able to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes set out in the attainment targets and developmental objectives.
 - The educational system is considered to be functioning optimally when the attainment targets and developmental objectives are valid and when the educational system is capable of guiding students towards achievement of those learning outcomes.
103. The link between school assessment and system evaluation is obvious as several methods and tools for system evaluation are also important for school assessment (e.g. the Data warehouse of the Ministry of Education and Training, or the school-specific reports of national and international research on the educational system). Likewise, the results of school inspections do not only inform schools on their quality, but also contribute to the information-rich environment for the Ministry of Education and Training on the state of the educational system.
104. Student assessment and school assessment are also closely connected. Student achievements constitute an important output indicator for the Inspectorate during external school inspections. The Inspectorate screens whether schools have established an evaluation policy that allows them to assess if students have achieved the attainment targets and developmental objectives. Several tests that help schools to evaluate students also contribute to the information-rich environment for self-evaluations at school level.
105. The absence of centrally imposed examinations is a commonly shared notable issue of the Flemish education sector that has an impact on the rationale of system evaluation, school assessment and student assessment.
106. The system for teacher appraisal is relatively separated from the other forms of evaluation. Although a number of common characteristics (e.g. focus on development perspective) can be discerned the teacher appraisal system stands apart. Unlike other forms of evaluation, output measurement is very seldom used in teacher evaluation. Also the importance of attainment targets and developmental objectives on teacher appraisal is rather limited.

2.9 Pending issues

107. On the one hand 'Freedom of education' means that schools are allowed to conduct their own policy regarding quality of education. On the other hand the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education and Training are increasingly required to account for the quality of education and to ensure the quality of all education providers. These two premises imply that the Ministry of Education and Training has to maintain a continuous balance in assessing to what extent it can steer schools in their development of quality education. The Ministry of Education and Training has to position itself on the continuum between the extremes of 'merely providing financial resources' and 'closely watch schools implementation of quality'. Currently the Ministry of Education and Training takes an in-between position, respecting the autonomy of schools but also steering schools through e.g.
- Imposing a regulatory framework on financed and subsidized schools (e.g. attainment targets and developmental objectives leading to qualifications).
 - Providing support systems for quality assurance (e.g. Parallel Versions of the National Assessment Programme).

- External inspection on several quality indicators included in the Inspectorate's CIPO-framework, recognized by a recent Government Resolution²³.
 - Indirectly influencing schools' priorities (e.g. by communication in 'Klasse', a magazine issued by the Ministry of Education and Training for teachers, students and parents).
108. A related challenge is to find the balance between conducting external inspection and recognising internal evaluation processes. This challenge is mainly under discussion at school level which leads to several questions, e.g.:
- To what extent does the Inspectorate have to take internal evaluations, self-imposed paths of improvement and priorities into account? To what extent would the inclusion of self-evaluations as source for external evaluation lead to schools that perform self-evaluations merely from an accountability perspective? To what extent would the Inspectorate by adopting self-evaluations deviate from its responsibility to check the quality of schools?
 - Should the Inspectorate limit its role to a 'control' function, or should it contribute to the internal development processes of quality in schools? Currently the Inspectorate aims to ensure the quality of education by school inspection but at the same time also aspires to provide schools with stepping stones towards further school improvement.
109. Another challenge related to the accountability of the Ministry of Education and Training towards quality of education is the issue how it can control the quality of non-recognized schools (who fall under the system of 'home education', see sub-section 25). Most of those schools have explicitly chosen not to belong to an educational network and not to follow the directions of the Ministry of Education and Training (in exchange for recognition and financing or subsidizing) and to maximise its autonomy granted by the Freedom of education principle.
110. The Ministry of Education and Training has only recently imposed a system for teacher appraisal on schools. The system is currently subject to evaluation and adjustments based on the first experiences. Comprehensive evaluation of the teacher appraisal system is expected when the results of current and future scientific research will be available.

²³ Vlaamse Regering (2010). *Uitvoeringsbesluit bij het decreet over de kwaliteit van onderwijs met betrekking tot het CIPO-referentiekader van de inspectie [Resolution to implement the CIPO-framework of the Inspectorate in the light of the Decree on quality of education]*. Resolution adopted at October 1, 2010.

Chapter 3. System evaluation

111. This chapter seeks to provide an answer to the question how the Flemish Community aims to assess its educational system. The number of ways in which system evaluation is informed has grown considerably in the last decades. The Ministry of Education and Training sets up different initiatives to collect information and feedback conducted by the Department of Education and Training or by one of the executive agencies. Other initiatives are entrusted to external institutions in order to create an information-rich environment for the Ministry of Education and Training. The impact of regional, national and international surveys and reports on the system evaluation is also elaborated in this chapter.

3.1 General Framework

3.1.1 Policy tools of the Flemish Community

112. The strategic and operational objectives set by the Minister of Education have to fit into the framework of the overall policy of the Flemish government, e.g. the ‘Flanders in Action’ (VIA, ‘Vlaanderen in Actie’) policy. VIA is a comprehensive policy tool aimed at maintaining Flanders’ current high-level position in international rankings on health care, economy, education etc for the next decade. In 2009 VIA was aligned by the ‘PACT 2020’²⁴ containing 20 targets for the Flemish government. One of these targets is directly related with the education sector, namely the objective of reducing the number of early school leavers without diploma or with a diploma that does not provide them extensive opportunities for the job market, through 1) an increase of the number of students who successfully graduate in secondary education, 2) an increase of the number of students who continue in tertiary education and 3) increased student participation in programs for lifelong learning. A further elaboration of PACT 2020 containing indicators and determining tools and processes for progress measurement is currently being developed by VIA.

113. The strategic and operational objectives set by the Minister of Education also have to fit in the Flemish governments’ ‘Governance Agreement’. The Governance Agreement is based on an elaborate background analysis of the current state of education and the quality of educational policies and practices. The targets for the education sector in the current Governance Agreement²⁵ stress the importance of continued efforts for equal educational opportunities for every student irrespective of his background. Education has to meet and develop the talents of every single student. School career counselling is regarded as an important means for combating the high drop-out rates. The Governance Agreement sets clear targets for the education sector concerning drop-out rates: “*The share of unqualified early school leavers has to be decreased by the end of the legislation to a level under 12 percent and preferably under 10 percent*”²⁶.

²⁴ PACT 2020 was written in collaboration between the Flemish Government and all the major community stakeholders (employer’s organizations, trade unions, representative organizations of the civil society etc). A brief summary of PACT 2020 is available at: <http://www.flandersinaction.be/nlapps/docs/default.asp?fid=206>; The full text is available at [http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/nlapps/data/docattachments/Nulmeting_Pact_2020_Alle_indicatoren\(1\).pdf](http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/nlapps/data/docattachments/Nulmeting_Pact_2020_Alle_indicatoren(1).pdf) (Dutch only)

²⁵ Vlaamse Regering (2009). *De Vlaamse Regering 2009-2014. Een daadkrachtig Vlaanderen in beslissende tijden. Voor een vernieuwende, duurzame en warme samenleving [The Flemish Government 2009-2014. A decisive Flanders in crucial times. Towards an innovating, sustainable and warm society]*. Brussel: Vlaamse Regering.

²⁶ id, p 24.

114. Policy development and system evaluation in the Flemish Community are influenced by international agreements, tendencies and reports. The European Union and the Council of Europe have an impact on the educational system in the Flemish Community. This is covered further from sub-section 179 onwards.

3.1.2 Policy tools of the Minister of Education

115. Within the frameworks set by the Flemish government the Minister of Education determines the strategic and operational objectives for education for the duration of his legislation in a policy memorandum, currently the policy memorandum 2009-2014²⁷. These objectives set the challenges and standards for the policy in compulsory schooling in the Flemish Community as well as for other forms of education (nursery education, tertiary education, adult education and part-time arts education).

116. The Ministry of Education's strategic objectives for the current legislation are:
- To create open-minded, versatile and strong personalities;
 - To offer opportunities to every talent;
 - To support Dutch mother tongue and foreign languages in order to prepare students for a role in the globalised society
 - To prepare students for a successful start on the job market;
 - To acknowledge the teacher as key person in the development of open-minded, versatile and strong personalities;
 - To enhance the interaction of education with local, regional and international networks;
 - To ensure that every school is able to provide top quality education;
 - To invest in sustainable and modern infrastructure.

Each of these strategic objectives is set out in more detail in a number of operational objectives.

117. These objectives are imposed by the Minister of Education on the Ministry of Education and Training. Determination of those objectives is, however, not an isolated task. The priorities set by the Ministry of Education and Training inspired the Minister of Education's policy memorandum. Influence is therefore not merely in one direction, but the policy is the result of systematic consultation.

3.1.3 Policy tools of the Ministry of Education and Training

118. The Ministry of Education and Training is entrusted to prepare, implement and evaluate the policy in the education sector. Therefore the Ministry of Education and Training is the main actor in system evaluation. The Ministry of Education and Training comprises of the Department of Education and Training and four executive agencies (see sub-section 62).
119. The Department of Education and Training's Unit for Strategic Policy Support's role is to support strategic policy options for the education sector. The Unit for Strategic Policy Support relies on developments and tendencies in the Flemish and international context and promotes scientific research on education. Furthermore, the Unit for Strategic Policy Support prepares the input of the Ministry of Education and Training for the Governance Agreement and assures the alignment of the Minister of Education's policy letters with the Governance Agreement and with his policy memorandum. Finally, the Unit for Strategic Policy Support informs the policy of the Minister of Education by collecting information and by commissioning and co-ordinating research on the gaps within the current state of knowledge on education and education policy. The Unit for Strategic Policy Support is responsible for

²⁷ Smet., P. (2009). *Policy Memorandum on Education and Training 2009-2014 [Beleidsnota Onderwijs en Vorming 2009-2014]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/beleid/nota/2009-2014.pdf> (Dutch only).

the co-ordination of monitoring and evaluation of the current education policy. Therefore it oversees all the initiatives included in this chapter that contribute to collecting information on the performance of the Flemish educational system, collecting views of stakeholders of benchmarking information from an international context.

120. Apart from reports on the current state of education, national and international tendencies, the expectations from stakeholders and findings from scientific research, the policy support development is also the result of continuous judgment on the balance between ‘steering education’ and ‘guaranteeing freedom to educational practitioners (e.g. schools and teachers)’.

121. The Ministry of Education and Training has converted the operational objectives of the Minister of Education’s policy memorandum into 64 ‘policy projects’. The three projects that are most relevant in the light of this report are:

- Strengthening internal quality care of institutions (e.g. schools);
- Strengthening external quality care;
- Developing an information-rich environment.

Other policy projects are e.g.:

- Strengthening the coaching and support of students;
- Establishing a system for care for students with specific needs;
- Reforming the structure of secondary education;
- Establishing a policy regarding recognition of ‘earlier achieved competences’;
- Intensifying learning foreign languages;
- Promoting a language policy;
- Developing arrangements for the implementation of the Flemish Qualification Structure;
- Strengthening vocational studies;
- Developing policy to attract and keep teachers;
- Strengthening school communities;
- Belgian presidency of the European Union (July-December 2010).

These projects can be considered the main current challenges for the Flemish education sector regarding compulsory education. They are monitored by means of a project management system.

122. The Policy Council (see sub-section 66) that brings together the Ministry of Education and Training and the Cabinet of the Minister of Education is the forum in which the strategic objectives are elaborated and policy projects are established.

123. The Policy Council also evaluates to what extent the policy initiatives and projects have been successful. The Minister of Education systematically renders accounts for the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Training for attaining the targets established by the policy memorandum by means of the annual publication of a ‘policy letter’²⁸.

124. The Department of Education and Training is responsible for system evaluation and its Unit for Strategic Policy Support was established to co-ordinate all initiatives related to system evaluation. This Unit has defined ‘policy evaluation’ as the *‘qualitative or quantitative study in which the feasibility of achieving of a certain policy target or the realisation itself is assessed in a valid, reliable and objective manner. Policy evaluation may regard the effects of a certain policy measure, but as well the processes, the means or the feasibility of a*

²⁸ This regulation is valid all policy domains under the jurisdiction of the Flemish Community. The definitions of policy memorandums and policy letters stems from the Circular Letter VR/2007/11 concerning ‘Co-operation in the Flemish Parliament’. Available at: http://www.wetsmatiging.be/fileadmin/user_upload/Koppeldocumenten_voor_website/Regelgevingsagenda/regelgevingsagenda_rondzendbrief_VR2007_11.pdf (Dutch only)

measure. A policy evaluation always takes the form of an analysis in which the data are evaluated against clear criteria; this analysis results in a judgment.' Criteria are, for example, acceptability, capacity, coherence, consistency, efficiency, effectiveness, cost effectiveness, sustainability, integration, timeliness, feasibility, relevance and accuracy.

125. The Unit for Strategic Policy Support supports the Minister of Education and the Department of Education and Training by:
- Outsourcing and monitoring scientific policy evaluations and evaluations by external actors in co-operation with other units within the Department of Education and Training. The Unit for Strategic Policy Support also co-ordinates and assures the quality of those surveys.
 - Ensuring communication about scientific evaluations. All scientific evaluations are public unless the Minister of Education explicitly decides to have an evaluation treated confidentially.
 - Supporting other units within the Department of Education that conduct partial evaluations.
 - Planning policy evaluations and report about current and terminated evaluations to the Management Committee and Policy Council.
 - Co-ordination of policy evaluations and ensure alignment between several evaluations.
126. Every unit of the Department of Education (responsible for policy preparation) may have a role in policy evaluation as described above, by the evaluation and adjustment of Decrees, policy texts. Therefore staff members of every Unit within the Department of Education have received training on system evaluation.

3.1.4 System level education based on output evaluation and predetermined indicators

127. System-level evaluation is an important part of the overall educational assessment framework of the Flemish Community. The importance assigned to system evaluation has increased during the last decade, which has resulted in the undertaking of different initiatives aimed at providing data on education at system level.
128. The need for clear indicators in education has recently grown. Education in the Flemish Community aspires to strengthen its focus on the outcomes and effects of education, e.g. student performance and participation at the job market. Information on the relative performance of the educational system (measured against internal and international standards) enables the Flemish Community to assess how effectively education is provided in Flemish schools and to which degree the educational system is meeting strategic objectives.
129. Student achievement is the most important indicator for the quality of the educational system. Whether students reach the attainment targets and whether students achieve good scores in an international context, is traditionally the subject of most forms of system evaluation. This is believed to be the core indicator of effective education. Additionally, the capacity of the educational system to provide equal opportunities to every student is increasingly being perceived as an important quality indicator of the educational system. In addition to these two main indicators, many other topics of the educational system are also assessed, such as financial efficiency, school control mechanisms and the transition to higher education or the job market.

130. Policy decisions need to be informed by reliable and valid knowledge on the current situation and effectiveness and efficiency of education practices. Rather than a comprehensive systematic evaluation of the educational system, evaluation at system level is conducted through a range of different methods. Using different methods the Ministry of Education and Training aims to collect data which provide an evidence base for informing system-wide policies and programs.
131. Aside from a control function, these processes of system evaluation fulfil the function of a decision-making aid and management tool. System evaluation tools seek to address both formative and summative objectives. The goal of system evaluation is both accountability and improvement. The data collected by these methods inform new policy directions.

3.1.5 System level education based on information-rich environment, stakeholder views and international reports

132. Figure 5 provides an overview of the key elements regarding system evaluation. Each one of these elements is covered more into detail further on in this chapter.

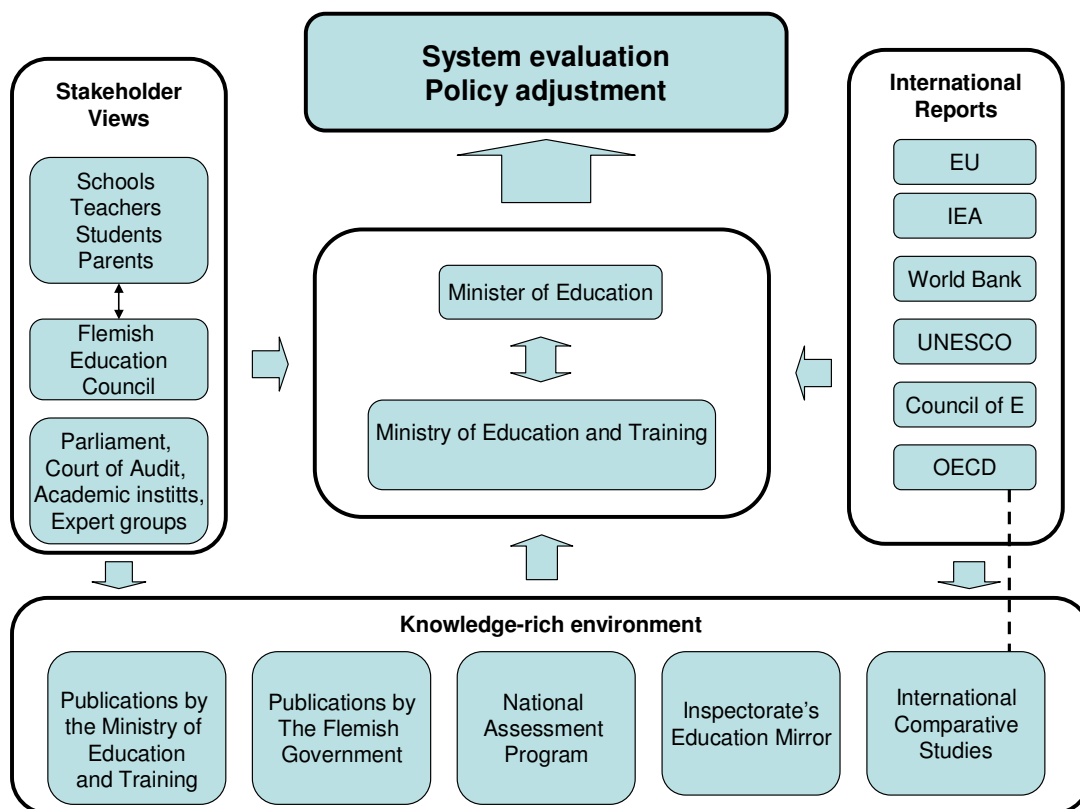


Figure 5. System evaluation based on an information-rich environment, stakeholder views and international reports.

133. The Minister of Education will decide on policy adjustments based on discussion with the Ministry of Education and Training. The Unit for Strategic Policy Support oversees all initiatives that lead to system evaluation.
134. Several sources contribute to the information-rich environment as the basis for system evaluation. Publications by the Ministry of Education and Training, the National Assessment Programme, international studies and the Inspectorate's annual publication 'Education

Mirror' inform the Ministry of Education and Training and the Minister of Education on the state of education.

135. Representative organizations of schools, teachers, parents and students have direct communication with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Cabinet of the Minister of Education and are also represented by the Flemish Education Council (VLOR). Through research and memoranda on their own account, they also contribute to the information-rich environment. Also the Flemish Parliament, the Court of Audit, academic institutes and expert groups have a double role: on the one hand they have a direct contribution to system evaluation, on the other hand they contribute to the information-rich environment. Finally, also reports from international organizations and institutes have an impact on the discussions between the Ministry of Education and Training and the Minister of Education. At the same time, they also contribute to the information-rich environment.

3.2 Data collection by the Ministry of Education and Training and Agencies for Education and Education Policy

136. The Ministry of Education and Training invests considerably in collecting data to inform and support educational policy in its accountability and development. This results in different publications containing data and statistics on the current state of education. Additionally, the National Assessment Programme and evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate are two important sources of information for evaluation of the Flemish educational system's performance.

3.2.1 Collection of internal data and statistics

137. The Flemish government and the Ministry of Education and Training both support the tendency towards accounting for its performances by providing data and statistics to the public. This tendency is still quite recent: the first publication on the performance of the Flemish educational system on different indicators was issued by the Ministry of Education and Training in 1993²⁹.
138. The Agency for Educational Services (AGODI, 'Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten') was established in April 2006 (see sub-section 67). AGODI is an important actor in supplying information and data on the state of education, e.g. the numbers of schools, teaching staff and students in the different education levels. AGODI's annual reports provide data on the operational resources and other forms of subsidies granted to schools as well as the financial context framework for teaching staff as a means of assessing educational efficiency. Other school statistics included in the annual reports are (non-exhaustively) the number of restructured or merged schools, study areas requested by schools, financial cost for transport from and to school and of the application of the Financing Decree. At teacher level, AGODI presents statistics on the number of teachers and full-time equivalents, on teacher diplomas and on the wages awarded to teachers. Also specific items like data on 'sickness leave' and 'maternal and parenting leave' and number of job-related accidents are stated in the annual AGODI report. AGODI also presents statistics about students (attendance and truancy).
139. The current global financial-economic crisis and the structural shortage of skilled teachers gave rise to the need to perform a systematic assessment of the 'educational job market'. Since 2008 AGODI publishes monthly issues of the newly established report 'Job Market

²⁹ Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap – Departement Onderwijs (1993). *De school op rapport: het Vlaams onderwijs in internationale context [School Report: Flemish education in an international context]*. Kapellen: Pelckmans.

Barometer Education' ('Arbeidsmarktbarometer')³⁰ in order to report on the indicators of the actual shortages of teachers and a prognosis for future developments on the job market.

140. Besides the publications of AGODI, the Ministry of Education and Training also compiles statistical data into two annual publications: 'Statistical Year Book of Flemish Education' (Statistisch Jaarboek van het Vlaams onderwijs) and 'Flemish Education in Figures' ('Vlaams onderwijs in cijfers'). 'Flemish Education in Figures' provides data on the number of students, schools and personnel and on the budget at different educational levels, as well as statistics on cross-level data such as study scholarships, student transport and the Examination Board of the Flemish Community. Graphs and diagrams of the same data are available in the accompanying report 'Flemish Education in Images' ('Vlaams onderwijs in beeld'). More or less the same statistics are reviewed in the 'Statistical Year Book of Flemish Education', which additionally contains a chapter on international comparison of these data³¹.
141. The Ministry of Education and Training has also published a number of issues of 'Flemish Education Indicators in International Perspective' ('Vlaamse Onderwijsindicatoren in Internationaal perspectief'), the most recent in 2005.³² This report provides information and benchmarks on context, input, process and output factors of the education sector in an international context. The report's focus was in line with the key challenges established by the Minister of Education's policy memorandum.
142. Another source of information on education data is the website of the Research Unit of the Flemish Government, compiling data in different categories: internationalisation programs, staff, students, educational outcomes, transition to the job market, subsidizing and financing, accessibility and lifelong learning.³³ The same data are also compiled annually by the Research Unit of the Flemish Government in the Flemish Regional Indicators (VRIND, Vlaamse Regionale Indicatoren). This comprehensive report contains one chapter on education (in addition to sections on sectors like agriculture, economy, environment and welfare). In the most recent report an overview of the most recent data available at the website of the Research Unit was included with additionally statistics on equal educational opportunities.³⁴
143. All these reports contribute to system evaluation because they provide clear data as source for evaluating education policy and education practices and (possibly) allow comparisons to be made in an international context. Moreover compiling these data (and possibly comparing them in an international context) entails a form of system evaluation in itself.

3.2.2 National Assessment Programme³⁵

144. An important means for the Ministry of Education and Training to assess and improve the quality of education in the Flemish Community is the National Assessment Programme ('Peilingen'). The National Assessment Programme, established in 2002, is commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Training to an academic institute under the supervision of the agency AKOV (see sub-section 66). The National Assessment Programme aims to

³⁰ This publication is available at the website of AGODI:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs/agodi/nieuwsbrieven-rapporten/arbeidsmarkt/default.htm> (Dutch only)

³¹ These publications are available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsstatistieken> (Dutch only)

³² The 2005 report is available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/eDocs/pdf/257.pdf> (Dutch only)

³³ Available at: <http://www4.vlaanderen.be/dar/svr/Cijfers/Pages/Excel.aspx> (Dutch only)

³⁴ Chapter 2.1 is the chapter on education. The full report is available at <http://www4.vlaanderen.be/dar/svr/publicaties/Publicaties/vrind/vrind2010/2010-10-28-vrind2010-volledig-blw.pdf> (Dutch only).

³⁵ Information on the National Assessment Programme and the reports on the findings can be found at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/peilingen/index.htm> (Dutch only)

collect information on the extent to which the attainment targets and developmental objectives (see sub-section 84) imposed by the Parliament have been obtained in reality. Information on the share of students that succeeds in a test on a number of attainment targets can indicate strengths and weaknesses of the educational system. The programme aims to provide reliable information on the validity and feasibility of the attainment targets, on the outputs of the school system regarding those attainment targets and on the effectiveness of processes used in the current school system to achieve these outputs.

145. Another aim of the National Assessment Programme is to reveal the relationship between school, class and student characteristics and achievements in the tests. To conduct an 'equal opportunities policy' implies that school results are relatively equal: students with the same abilities should obtain the same results on the attainment targets, independent of their school choice. Individual schools and the educational system are informed by student, class or school characteristics that show clear correlation with student achievement. This enables schools and the educational system to identify priority areas for further development.
146. The National Assessment Programme is organized as a wide-scale test taken in a stratified sample of schools. Not all schools participate in the National Assessment Programme. Primary schools are selected to form a representative sample according to school size, educational network and province. For secondary schools the research team aims for a representative sample regarding school type, educational network and degree of urbanization. Each sample contains at least 1500 students.
147. The test development process contains four phases:
 - Development of the test framework and test items based on the attainment targets and developmental objectives involved and also based on information from other sources (curricula, text books, other tests, international examples, previous tests etc). The test items are developed by teachers and teacher trainers under the supervision of an academic research team.
 - Pilot Studies: in an initial study external assessors (teachers, teacher trainers, members of the Inspectorate, policy-makers and staff of the School Advisory Services) provide advice on the relevance and the quality of the proposed items. In a second study feedback is obtained by means of a try-out with a small number of students (pilot test-taking). Relying on the outcome of this research, the test items are revised and optimized in consideration of the actual survey.
 - Calibration phase: a representative sample of students is requested to pre-test the final test questions. Based on their results the difficulty level of each of the questions is determined. A measuring scale is developed for each cluster of attainment targets. Every student can now be situated on the 'ladder' of the measuring scale by means of the chances that are determined as to whether or not a student will be able to solve each item.
 - The measurement scale takes into account the possibility that a skilled student can answer an easy test item incorrectly. Moreover, relying on the measuring scale the test items are divided into survey and parallel test items. The parallel test can serve as an instrument for self evaluation for schools that have not participated in the survey (see Parallel Versions of the National Assessment Programme, sub-section 325).
 - Determination of the standard or 'cutting score': a number of external experts (containing the same groups of people as during the pilot phase) decides what position on the 'ladder' of the measuring scale corresponds to having sufficiently achieved the attainment targets. Furthermore an analysis is made of the required knowledge and skills to correctly solve the test items situated 'under' the cutting line, and of which extra knowledge and skills students need to be able to also solve the complementary test items (above the cutting line) correctly.

148. The test itself may comprise both written and practical tests. The practical tests are taken from a smaller number of students. The content of the practical tests is expected to be valid but exemplary for the content domain. There is no cutting score for practical tests.
149. Together with the standardised test students, parents, teachers and school principals are also asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire of the National Assessment Programme in 2010 contained the following topics:
- Students have to answer questions regarding their family situation, their perception of school and the lessons of the courses involved. Also their study motivation, self confidence and appraisal for the course involved are assessed by means of the questionnaire.
 - Parents were asked about possible learning disabilities of their children, about their family background characteristics and on their parental involvement in the school.
 - Teachers were asked to answer questions regarding didactic aspects of their lessons and general teaching practices and regarding their opinion on students, classes and the school. Teachers are also requested to estimate which students have reached the attainment targets involved.
 - Finally, the school principals were asked about the school policy regarding homework, criteria for class grouping, the facilities and infrastructure for teaching the courses involved. Also information on the tasks of the school principal and his idea on the pedagogical climate of the school is collected through the questionnaire.
150. After test taking and analysis of the results, a report is written including:
- Percentage of students who reached the attainment targets (per cluster of attainment targets);
 - Analysis of differences between students, classes and schools; (before and after correction for input and some context characteristics);
 - Analysis of factors correlating with differences found (student, teacher, class and school characteristics).

Although correlations are noticed, the reports never establish causal relationships between characteristics and students' achievement of the attainment targets. As an example, a small set of the results of the National Assessment Programme on mathematics in 2009 are included in figure 6.

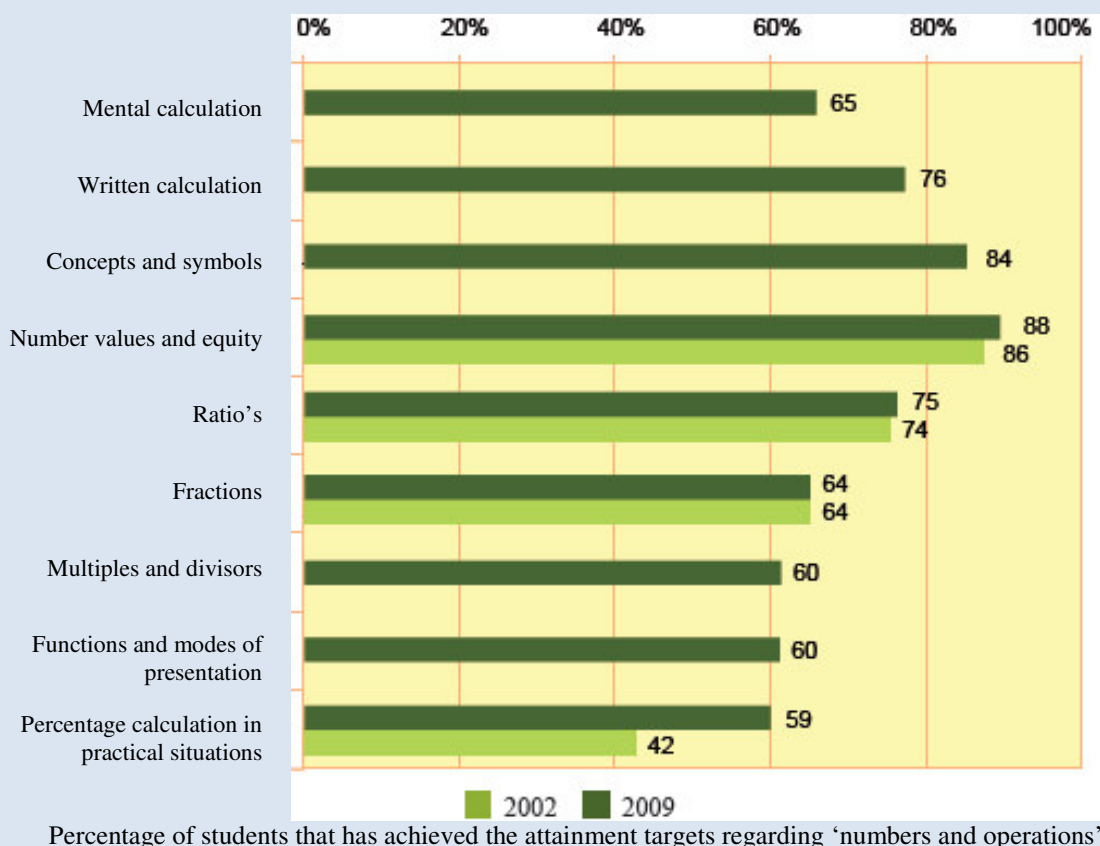
Due to the small number of students that participate and the nature of the tasks, in the practical tests, only descriptive results are provided for these tests.

151. The attainment targets involved in the first version of the National Assessment Programme in 2002 were 'mathematics' and 'Dutch language: comprehensive reading', followed by several topics at both primary and secondary educational level. An overview of the conducted and planned National Assessment Programme for the period 2002-2013 is included in annex C. Follow-up tests are organized in order to gain longitudinal results at system level.³⁶ Reiteration allows the Ministry of Education and Training to investigate whether the ascertained quality was continued and whether weaknesses were adequately addressed.
152. The subjects of the National Assessment Programme have already been established until 2013. The research team aims to assess attainment targets at different educational levels (final stage of primary education, and each stage of secondary education), in different study areas (for secondary education) and in different domains.

³⁶ The reiteration cannot provide longitudinal results at student level, because the second test is conducted with other students, namely students who are at the moment of the follow-up test in the same grade as the students used to be during the first assessment.

153. Based on the outcomes found through the National Assessment Programme, underlying causal factors for stronger and weaker achievements have to be determined. All stakeholders are invited to discuss how to increase the quality of the Flemish educational system. The Ministry of Education and Training informs the educational stakeholders on the results of the National Assessment Programme by means of a colloquium, a brochure and the Ministry's website. Until recently all relevant stakeholders were asked for feedback on the results, but in 2010 the Ministry of Education and Training wishes to involve those stakeholders (School Advisory Services, Inspectorate, Institutes for Initial Teacher Education, academic experts, publishers etc) more actively in this process. After these consultations an open conference is organized to discuss possible levers for conserving or enhancing the quality of education. The final step is that the Ministry of Education and Training and other stakeholders engage in concrete actions based on the results of the National Assessment Programme and the discussion with stakeholders. Possible improvements are
- Updating of the attainment targets;
 - Development or adjustment of curricula or teaching materials;
 - Adjustments in initial teacher training;
 - Adjustments in teacher coaching;
 - Adjustments in school policies;
 - Adjustments or new initiatives in the support mechanisms for specific target groups of students.

Figure 6. Example of the results of the second National Assessment Programme on mathematics in primary education (2009)



Source: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/peilingen/basis/Brochure_peiling_wisk_bis.pdf

154. The Inspectorate reports in its 2006 year report that the National Assessment Programme is widely appreciated among educational stakeholders³⁷. The Inspectorate advised the authorities and all actors involved to participate in complementary research and open debate on those attainment targets that are only seldom attained by students.
155. The OBPWO-project regarding 'in-depth research on the results of the National Assessment Programme with respect to the consultation of tables and charts' conducted research on the basis of literature study and empirical research. The aim of this study was to interpret the results of the national assessment data at a content-level on the basis of the task components and the knowledge, sub-competences and strategies that students have to apply to solve specific items.
156. The method of the National Assessment Programme is currently the subject of evaluation in order to enhance the process and the results obtained. Results of this evaluation are expected by the end of 2010. The evaluation is conducted by AKOV and the Strategic Policy Support Unit of the Department of Education and Training. The process involves self-evaluation of the external research team, scientific evaluation by external experts and an evaluation by the Ministry of Education and Training and by the Inspectorate.
The government of the Flemish Community has already decided to continue the National Assessment Programme, but adjustments to modalities for further organisation of the National Assessment Programme may depend on the outcomes of this evaluation.

The Flemish Community chooses not to organise nation-wide examinations

157. The Ministry of Education and Training stresses that the National Assessment Programme is not a forerunner of possible centrally organized examinations in the future. The objective of the National Assessment Programme is to be generally informed on the quality of education in the light of the attainment targets and developmental objectives. The Programme provides a 'snapshot' of the Flemish educational system. Not all schools are assessed, but only a stratified sample comes within the scope of the National Assessment Programme. Invited schools are free to join in the National Assessment Programme.
158. The National Assessment Programme is not designed to measure individual student's progress. The tests will not result in consequences for individual schools or teachers, nor is there any effect on the students' school career. Results are treated confidentially. Only schools will be informed by the research team about their own school results as a potential support in internal quality assurance. No feedback at school, individual teacher or student level is passed on to the authorities or other stakeholders.
159. The reluctance of the Flemish education sector towards compulsory national examinations for all schools with civil effect on student's study career is based on a long-standing tradition. The Flemish educational system has been developed following a pedagogical-didactic approach of striving towards quality of education. This approach means that schools are free to determine their own definition of 'quality of education' and that differences between schools are possible and even desirable. This approach contradicts the 'economic view' of education, in which all schools are perceived as institutions that produce the same (measurable) outcomes. Although the importance of imposed minimal quality indicators (e.g. attainment targets and developmental objectives), external quality control and output measurement has increased during the last decades, the absence of central examinations still depends on this cultural tradition.

³⁷ Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/onderwijsspiegel/spiegel/2005-2006.pdf> (Dutch only)

160. It is very unlikely that central examinations will be implemented in the near future. Although there are several advantages to central examinations (e.g. high content validity and reliability, quality assurance of student assessment and of diplomas), neither the Ministry of Education and Training nor almost any stakeholders favour imposed examinations with civil effect on students' study career. According to researchers³⁸ and interviews with policy-makers and stakeholders the rationale for this approach lies in the following potential disadvantages and undesirable side-effects of central examinations at system level³⁹:
- Central examinations contradict with the Freedom of education principle by which schools are allowed to set more objectives than the targets imposed by the Flemish government. Central examinations can only assess to what extent the attainment targets have been achieved. Complementary objectives added (and often highly valued) by the schools or umbrella organizations cannot be assessed by central examinations, which implies the risk for 'teaching to the test': more attention will be paid to the objectives that would be tested through central examinations.
 - Central examinations reduce education to the measurable outputs, motivating teachers to limit their efforts to the teaching of measurable knowledge and to neglect skills and attitudes.
 - Central examinations create the possibility of output information being abused by media in the form of the drawing up of listings ranking schools from 'best' to 'worst' schools. The Flemish government is not keen on rankings because oversimplified rankings merely based on student performances without taking into account schools' context and input factors lead to unfair and undesirable competition between schools. Increased competition might lead to decreased cooperation, standardization and increased inequality between schools.
 - National testing paves the way for judgments on school quality based on student performances in a test regarding the achievement of the attainment targets. Although it is an important indicator, student performance is only one of the criteria that should be taken into account when assessing the educational quality of a school (in addition, for example, to safety and hygiene, preparation for subsequent forms of education or job market, student and staff satisfaction,...). Moreover, quality judgments based only on student achievements would tempt schools to engage in selective student admissions and to the expulsion of difficult students.
 - Central examinations contradict the tendency to set sustainable objectives: knowledge, skills and attitudes are important for life, not merely for the test moment.
 - Finally, a number of practical objections support the absence of central examinations, e.g. the financial cost and organizational issues.

3.2.3 Data collection and system evaluation by the Inspectorate

161. Although its main responsibilities are in school assessment, the Inspectorate conducts (partial) system evaluations at regular times. The Inspectorate investigates specific topics and draws conclusions and recommendations for the policy level. The focus of this partial system evaluation may be determined by the Inspectorate itself or imposed by the Minister of Education. The Inspectorate reports on its findings by means of the Education Mirror ('Onderwijsspiegel')⁴⁰. This annual report contains information on the school inspections and on the additional evaluations at system level in the past year.

³⁸ Vanhoof, J. & Van Petegem, P. (2005). *Kwaliteit van scholen (openbaar) vergelijken? Het zwart-wit denken voorbij [Comparing school quality? Beyond black-or-white thinking]*. Mechelen: Wolters Plantyn.

³⁹ Apart from this argumentation at system level, a number of disadvantages at student level are also important factors in the reluctance with regard to central examinations. This is covered in more detail in chapter 6, sub-section 499.

⁴⁰ All editions of the 'Education Mirrors' are available on the Inspectorate's website: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/onderwijsspiegel> (Dutch only)

162. The latest issue of the Education Mirror (2009) provided schools, Pupil Guidance Centres ('Centra voor Leerlingbegeleiding') and authorities with recommendations on student school career coaching and counselling. These recommendations were based on research conducted by the Inspectorate into school principals, teachers, parents and students in the schools that were visited for external school inspection (see chapter 4 for the role of the Inspectorate in school evaluation), including 346 primary schools and 147 secondary schools. The 2009 issue of the 'Education Mirror' also discussed the findings of the Inspectorate's investigation on the implementation of job descriptions for teachers and other school staff, which will be discussed in chapter 5 (see sub-section 457).
163. The 2010 Education Mirror will include findings of the Inspectorate's research into the language policy of schools. Screening of this subject was requested by the Minister of Education.

3.3. System evaluation and data collection by international organizations and institutes

164. This paragraph focuses on contributions to (partial) system evaluation provided by international cooperation. The Ministry of Education and Training is an eager participant in international research.

3.3.1 International co-operation

165. The Flemish education sector actively participates in the OECD's networks to enhance and benchmark educational outcomes. The Ministry of Education and Training is represented in the OECD Education Policy Committee. The Ministry of Education and Training participates in OECD's International Indicators of Educational systems (INES) project 'Working Party', hence its interest in cooperating in the coordination of statistical work and the development of indicators and qualitative analysis. The collaborative efforts of the Flemish and other governments result in the annual publication of 'Education at a Glance'. This detailed publication aims to be a key instrument for governments to assess their policy, as well as for the general public looking for information on the progress of its educational system. The following statistical data are collected and processed in 'Education at a Glance':
- The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning. This chapter in 'Education at a Glance' is an important source of structural information for the Ministry of Education and Training on items such as student attainments, the economic benefit of education for students (increase of income after graduation with level of education) or the impact of educational level on social indicators (e.g. health, interest in politics and interpersonal trust).
 - Financial and human resources invested in education, containing amongst others information on expenditure per student, on public versus private expenditure and on area of expenditure of resources.
 - Access to education, participation and progression. This chapter provides information on student characteristics, students' international mobility and students' success of moving from education to work.
 - The learning environment and organization of schools, containing information on the time students spend in the classroom, student-teacher ratios, teacher salaries, time teachers spend for teaching, availability of effective parental choice between schools and the influence of parents on education.
166. Within the framework of the INES Working Party, the Ministry of Education and Training is also following a number of specific working groups, amongst others:
- The INES Network for the collection and adjudication of system-level descriptive information on educational structures, policies and practices. This network collects data and indicators at system level on teacher salaries, teaching time, policymaking processes in education, ... The network aims to become a crucial player in the

collection and provision of educational data in order to facilitate the evaluation of the OECD members' educational system.

- The INES Network for data development on job market and social outcomes of education. This network monitors existing data by ensuring reliability and validity of data, conducts research and feasibility studies for potential new data collections and collates, reviews, analyses and summarises the results from cross-country comparisons, identifying trends and patterns among countries.

167. In addition to the INES Working Party, the Ministry of Education and Training is a member of the governing board of two institutes under the wings of OECD:

- The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). This Centre aims to research future developments and scenarios for educational innovation with a particular concern with emerging trends and issues.
- The Centre for Effective Learning Environments (CELE), focusing on quality improvement of school infrastructure.

3.3.2 International comparative surveys

168. Belgium has a long-standing tradition of participation in international comparative research.⁴¹ A considerable volume of information for system evaluation is collected through benchmarking (mostly of student achievements). Comparative data from international surveys provide a reference framework that helps the Ministry of Education and Training, different stakeholders and society in general to determine strengths, weaknesses, needs for further research and opportunities for further development.

169. The Flemish Community has recently participated (and is currently participating) in a range of international comparative studies on student achievement: the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2000, 2003, 2006), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2006) Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 2003), the International Civic and Citizenship in Education Study (ICCS, 2009) and the European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC 2011). Furthermore, Flemish education is monitored by means of participation in the International Survey of Upper Secondary Schools (ISUSS, 2001) and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2008) Unlike the more commonly known PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS, these latter two surveys do not focus on student outcomes. The participation in PISA, TALIS and ISUSS is a result of the membership of the INES network. PIRLS, TIMSS and ICCS are organized by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), while ESLC is a European Commission Research Project.

170. The PISA 2006 research⁴² indicated that the 15-year-old students from the Flemish Community score just below the top group of countries on science and reading skills. For mathematics the Flemish Community is in the top group. Both students with a high socio-economic status and less advantaged students obtain better results than their international peers, but the achievement gap between those two groups increased in the period between 2003 and 2006. Immigrant students also score significantly lower than students with Flemish parents.

⁴¹ Belgium (at that point education was still under the jurisdiction of the federal government) was a first-time participant in OECD's First International Mathematics Study (FIMS) from 1963 to 1969.

⁴² De Meyer, I. (2007). *Wetenschappelijke vaardigheden voor de toekomst. De eerste resultaten van PISA 2006. [Scientific skills for the future. The first results of PISA 2006]*. Gent: Universiteit Gent.

Full report of PISA 2006 available at

http://www.oecd.org/document/2/0,3343,en_32252351_32236191_39718850_1_1_1_1,00.html#News_releases

171. The achievement gap was already indicated in the previous PISA research in 2003. In 2004 the former Minister of Education answered to this finding by implementing an ‘equal opportunities policy’. *“International surveys like PISA give me a better view on the strengths and weaknesses of our educational system. Therefore I have called my policy memorandum ‘Today we are champion in mathematics, tomorrow we will be champions in equal opportunities.’*”⁴³ The current Minister of Education continues the focus on ‘equal educational opportunities’ established by his predecessor.
172. TIMSS 2003⁴⁴ confirmed the top position of the Flemish community in mathematics for both primary and secondary education, although the overall result has decreased since the previous participation in TIMSS in 1995. Students’ performance for science was slightly lower than for mathematics but still better than average. Boys obtain better test results than girls in both mathematics and science. TIMSS 2003 showed this gap has increased since 1995. Students with low-educated parents score significantly lower than students whose parents have attended higher education.
173. PIRLS 2006⁴⁵ indicated that primary school students from the Flemish Community are situated in the group just below the top group on their reading skills. A remarkable result is the small gap between the best and the less-able readers. The review also pointed out that the guidance and achievement of non-Dutch-speaking students in Dutch-language education is still problematic.
174. The initial findings of ICCS 2009⁴⁶ are currently only partially available. This includes information on student achievement on knowledge and competencies in civic and citizenship education, as well as information on teacher style and school governance and climate. The general findings show remarkably disappointing results regarding the citizenship of Flemish students. The Ministry of Education and Training has not yet actively disseminated these results because it is awaiting the results of the ‘European module’ of ICCS 2009. The European module contains specific research oriented towards and relevant for European countries. The final results are expected in November of 2010.
175. ESLC 2011 measures the knowledge and skills of secondary school students on foreign languages using the scales of the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). For the Flemish Community, French and English language come within the scope of ESLC. Preliminary research has been processed in 2010, but the main survey will be conducted in 2011. Results are expected in 2012.
176. Unlike the previously mentioned surveys, ISUSS 2001⁴⁷ did not focus on student achievement. One of the most highlighted conclusions of this comparative study was that there is a high computer-per-pupil ratio in Flemish schools, but a relatively low teacher use of computers, internet and email. This survey also pointed towards the small number of unqualified teachers in comparison with other countries.
177. Also TALIS 2008⁴⁸ focused more on school processes than on outcomes. The research focused on the recognition, evaluation and rewarding of teachers, school leadership, teacher’s practices, attitudes, opinions and their professional development. Flemish teachers showed a relatively high job satisfaction, favoured a constructivist way of looking at

⁴³ Vandenbroucke, F. (2004). *Beleidsnota Onderwijs en Vorming [Policy Memorandum on Education and Training, p 10.*

⁴⁴ Report available at <http://timss.bc.edu/timss2003i/mcgdm.html>

⁴⁵ Report available at http://timss.bc.edu/pirls2006/intl_rpt.html

⁴⁶ Report on the general findings available at <http://iccs.acer.edu.au/index.php?page=initial-findings>

⁴⁷ Report available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/47/27446844.pdf>

⁴⁸ Report available at http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_38052160_1_1_1_1,00.html

education and often engaged in professional development activities, although they spent relatively limited time on these initiatives.

178. Rather than providing conclusive answers, these international comparative surveys raise policy questions regarding the educational system's accountability and development. The current Minister of Education stated his ambition to strengthen the link between internationally available comparative information and the Flemish educational policy.

3.3.3 *European Union*

179. The European Union (EU) has no responsibility for education, which falls under the jurisdiction of the member states. As in other areas where it has no responsibility, the EU applies the 'open method of coordination'. This implies that member states will jointly identify and define objectives, establish measuring instruments (e.g. statistics and indicators) and benchmark performance results. Each member state has to provide its statistics on certain indicators to the EU, which compiles annual progress reports. Although there is no direct form of assessment, the benchmarking reports mean that the outcomes of the Flemish educational system are indirectly evaluated.
180. Evaluation can also be based on reports of the EU containing data and statistics on education in different countries. A recent example, relating to the system of teacher's professional development, is the report 'Teachers' Professional Development: Europe in international comparison'⁴⁹ (2010), which elaborates on the results provided by TALIS 2008.
181. The EU's Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) collects and disseminates information on different programmes from the EU. EACEA publishes the Key Data Series, with the 'Key Data on Education in Europe 2009' as the most recent issue. EACEA also manages the Eurydice Network, an information network on education in Europe that conducts comparative thematic research into various aspects of educational systems and policies, mainly relying on descriptive and qualitative data backed up by quantitative data. These quantitative data are procured by Eurostat. In 2010, comparative research reports on gender differences in educational outcomes and on online safety in schools were published at the EACEA website⁵⁰, while topics in 2009 included arts and culture education and the national student assessment policies.
182. Also the EU's initiatives to foster staff and student mobility within Europe⁵¹ and over the European boundaries⁵² may be seen as information sources of system evaluation, as the Flemish educational system is at a more informal level benchmarked and compared to educational systems from abroad.

3.3.4 *UNESCO*

183. UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS) also provides internationally comparable statistics on education (among other sectors). Although UIS' thematic reviews usually focus only on developing countries, statistics from high-income countries (including Belgium) on student characteristics, student enrolment, student/teacher ratio, student retention, student persistence within primary and secondary education, student attainment, teacher characteristics and

⁴⁹ Report available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc1962_en.htm

⁵⁰ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_studies_en.php

⁵¹ For example the Comenius Project. Information available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/comenius/doc854_en.htm

⁵² For example the cooperation project with industrialized countries in America, Oceania and Asia. Information available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc74_en.htm

public and private expenditure were considered and compared in the Global Education Digest (2008).⁵³

3.3.5 World Bank

184. The International Comparison Program (ICP) of the World Bank compiles statistical information in reports and papers on different topics. An overview of the 160 countries' government expenditures on education (compared to other sectors) is part of the comprehensive ICP 2005 Global Report.⁵⁴

3.3.6 Council of Europe

185. Unlike the EU, UNESCO and the World Bank the Council of Europe does not provide comparative data on the performance of educational systems. The Council of Europe's documents like 'Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE)', the Declaration of the Committee of The Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education on 'Education for Sustainable Democratic Societies: the Role of Teachers' and policy documents on, for example, history teaching and intercultural education provide objectives and ambitions that serve as a framework for the evaluation and the adjustment of the policy in the Flemish education sector.

3.4. Data collection and system evaluation by Belgian organizations and institutes

186. The Ministry of Education and Training tries to create an information-rich environment as basis for evaluation of the educational system at different levels. Furthermore internal and external stakeholders contribute directly or indirectly to evaluation and adjustment of the educational system.
187. Some organizations and institutes are legally obliged to provide advice to the Policy Domain Education including statements on the quality of the educational system (e.g. VLOR, Parliament, Court of Audit). Other organizations were asked by the Ministry of Education and Training to provide information or to conduct assessments (e.g. academic institutes), still others provided information on their own initiative (e.g. teacher's unions, Flemish Student Council and socio-economic organizations).

3.4.1 Parliament of the Flemish Community

188. Every representative in the Flemish Parliament has the right to submit formal questions to the Minister of Education. In the first year of the current legislation (2009-2010), the Minister of Education received 329 formal questions, varying from general to very specific questions on different levels (student, teacher, school, system).

3.4.2 Court of Audit

189. The Court of Audit is a collateral body of Parliament. It exerts an external control over the budgetary, accounting and financial operations of a number of public authorities in Belgium. The Court of Audit has the formal responsibility to conduct reviews on the adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency of resource management within the educational system and in new or ongoing programmes.

⁵³ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2008). *Global Education Digest. Comparing Education Statistics Around the World*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

⁵⁴ International Comparison Program (2008). *Global Purchasing Power Parities and Real Expenditures*. Washington D.C.: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

The Court of Audit conducts an annual review of each of the policy domains of the different Parliaments in Belgium, most of which are partial evaluations with a small focus. In its most recently published annual overview⁵⁵, the Court of Audit informed the public that with regard to enrolment fees for examinations (e.g. for the Examination Board of the Flemish Community, see sub-section 544) all revenues had been processed correctly.

190. Beyond these yearly reports the Court of Audit also issues reports on thematic evaluations within different policy domains. The most recent evaluations in the education sector are listed below, together with a selection of the main recommendations towards the Minister of Education.
- The evaluation report on ‘Pedagogical and administrative support for primary and secondary schools’ (2010)⁵⁶ stated that the system of allocating support to schools is transparent but not based on any needs measurements. The system allocates more funds to secondary than primary schools, resulting in complaints about shortages in primary schools. There is also room for improvement in the control mechanisms.
 - The report on ‘The implementation of the management contract with the Agency for Educational Services (AGODI)’ (2010)⁵⁷ concludes that although the preparation of management contracts and implementation reports requires significant efforts from the Flemish authorities, these tools are hardly used for steering, monitoring and justification purposes. *“Using management contracts as tools for a remote steering of the agencies is currently being compromised by the lack of clearly defined objectives, indicators and target values. As a result, the implementation reports are, in general, purely descriptive.”*
 - The review on ‘Regulation regarding the staff structure in secondary education’ (2010)⁵⁸ evaluated the regulatory framework concerning the allocation of teacher time over secondary schools. It was reported that the framework does not meet the needs of schools, that the implementation of teacher appointment within schools is often not connected to this framework, and that there is a lack of data for monitoring and evaluation.
 - The report on ‘Equal Educational Opportunities in mainstream primary and secondary education’ (2008)⁵⁹ assessed the outcomes of the policy on Equal Educational Opportunities (GOK, Gelijke Onderwijskansenbeleid) that has been established by the Flemish Government since 2002 (see sub-section 7). This policy allocates additional funds for teachers in order to increase outcomes of students with deprived backgrounds. The evaluation by the Court of Audit stated that, although a number of positive effects can be found, the lack of clear goals and outcome indicators prevents a comprehensive assessment of the effect of the GOK-policy on students’ attainments.
191. The Minister of Education is obliged to respond to the conclusions and recommendations of the Court of Audit’s reports. This response is included in the public report together with the findings and recommendations of the Court of Audit.

3.4.3 Internal Audit of the Flemish Administration

⁵⁵ Available at http://www.ccrek.be/docs/Reports/AnnualReports/rekeningenboek_2008_v1_g.pdf (Dutch only)

⁵⁶ Available at http://www.ccrek.be/docs/Reports/2010/2010_21_AdmOndersteuning.pdf (Dutch only).

Abstract in English available at http://www.ccrek.be/DOCS/REPORTS/2010/2010_21

[ADMONDERSTEUNING_ABSTRACT.PDF](#)

⁵⁷ Available at http://www.ccrek.be/docs/Reports/2010/2010_20_BeheersovereenkomstAOD.pdf (Dutch only).

Abstract in English available at http://www.ccrek.be/DOCS/REPORTS/2010/2010_1X

[BEHEERSOVEREENKOMST_ABSTRACT.PDF](#)

⁵⁸ Available at http://www.ccrek.be/docs/Reports/2010/2010_03_OmkaderingGVSO.pdf (Dutch only). Abstract

in English available at http://www.ccrek.be/DOCS/REPORTS/2010/2010_03_OMKADERINGGVSO

[ABSTRACT.PDF](#)

⁵⁹ Available at http://www.ccrek.be/docs/Reports/2008/2008_20_GOKBeleid.pdf (Dutch only). Abstract

available in English at: http://www.ccrek.be/DOCS/REPORTS/2008/2008_20_GOKBELEID_ABSTRACT.PDF

192. IAVA (Internal Audit of the Flemish Administration, 'Interne Audit van de Vlaamse Administratie') is an independent partner in managing financial, legal and organizing risks in order to create an added value towards the development of an efficient, effective, quality-oriented and ethical organization. IAVA is commissioned to evaluate the internal control mechanisms within the different Ministries of the Flemish Community to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, quality and integrity and to provide recommendations for improvement. IAVA conducts audits on finances, alignment, operational issues, ad-hoc items and forensic themes. Based on the results of risk assessments and alignment with the planning of the Court of Audit IAVA prioritises domains for specific audits. In 2010, the independent agency AGODI was subject to an audit by IAVA.

3.4.4 Scientific research by academic institutions

193. The tendency of international organizations and institutions to base policy decisions more on comparable indicators and benchmarks has clearly had an effect on the educational sector in the Flemish Community. The Ministry of Education and Training promotes and supports academic institutes with regard to the conduct of scientific educational research in order to assess current policy and practices and eventual innovation projects, as well as to provide the policy-makers with well founded proposals for further policy development.

194. The Educational Scientific Research for Policy and Practice (OBPWO, 'Onderwijskundig Beleids- en Praktijkgericht Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek') is a fund for the preparation, implementation, evaluation and adjustment of educational policy and practice. The Ministry of Education and Training invests in OBPWO projects as a means of integrating the results of scientific research into policy processes. This ambition corresponds to the international tendency towards evidence-based educational policy.

195. The Minister of Education establishes a certain number of research topics every year after consultation with the Inspectorate and the Flemish Council of Education (VLOR). The topics have to guarantee the continuity of research projects and have to contribute to current policy and to policy evaluation. The research is conducted by universities, possibly in cooperation with either an institute for higher education or a school community. In 2009 eight OBPWO-projects were assigned to scientific institutes. Among those projects are the following titles: 'Evaluation the educational staff appraisal system'; 'Experimental School Laboratories and their contribution to educational innovation' and 'Feasibility study for a monitoring system for anti-social behaviour and feelings of insecurity at school'. Also the chapters on teacher appraisal and on student assessment include examples of OBPWO projects that contribute to the quality of those evaluation systems.

196. Another recent initiative aimed at gathering information for improving the educational policy is the establishment of the 'Centre for Education and School Careers' (SSL, Steunpunt voor Studie- en Schoolloopbanen). SSL is the successor of LOA, the Centre for Careers through Education and Job Market (Steunpunt voor Loopbanen door Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt), which was established in 2001. SSL is an independent institute consisting of different research groups within universities with the objective to construct knowledge about school careers from the start of education to entering the job market, and to study the impact and effectiveness of policy measures and educational innovations on these transitions. SSL also focuses on differences between students, for instance related to their social background. The Centre is financed by the Flemish government. SSL aims to:

- Construct data (or make existing data available) allowing to explore the path followed by students from nursery school until their entry on the job market;
- Conduct longitudinal policy research;
- Provide services in the field of scientific research.

197. The main current projects of SSL are SiBO and SONAR. SiBO (School Careers in Primary Education, Schoolloopbanen in het Basisonderwijs) is a longitudinal research started in 2002

following a group of 6000 children in the last grade of nursery education from about 200 schools throughout their study career in elementary education. It is obvious that being able to monitor these children, including repeaters and children from special education may be particularly valuable for policy, certainly regarding the achievement of the attainment targets and the charting of the learning gains realised by the children and their schools. The SiBO research also examines whether repeaters ultimately achieve the attainment targets and what the actual effect is of having to repeat a year.

SiBO not only set out to describe the student careers, but also seeks for an explanation for differences between students and for effects of school and system policies. Measuring the influence of individual and student background factors on the school career will lead to the determination of protecting and risk factors for a successful study career in primary education.

Finally, SiBO will result in proposals for a possible future policy on the basis of the data collected and in a database that makes it possible to conduct numerous analyses with regard to the educational careers of children throughout primary education and to answer concrete questions from the government in that area.

198. SONAR (Study of the Transition from Education to the Job Market, Studie van de Overgang van Onderwijs naar Arbeidsmarkt) is a database with data from research conducted by LOA, SSL's predecessor. The database brings together information from six different surveys of the study and professional career of students born between 1976 and 1980. The database is still incomplete and a quality control of data is currently being processed. The database will also be enlarged with extra surveys on the 1980 birth cohort. The SONAR-database will be available for different purposes that contribute to the accountability and improvement of the Flemish educational system.

3.4.5 Expert groups

199. Expert groups are organized ad hoc when the Minister of Education or the Ministry of Education and Training wants to conduct an assessment of a limited part of the educational system.
200. The former Minister of Education appointed a group of experts tasked evaluating the current system of secondary education and formulating new structural ideas based on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The starting point was the contention that Flemish secondary education focussed too strictly on the cognitive development of students. The Committee-Monard, chaired by the former secretary general of the Ministry of Education and Training, was given the task by the Ministry of Education and Training to: *"maintain the current strength of the Flemish secondary education, aspire towards 'broad education', work towards skill-oriented education with attention for the right attitudes, for the applicability of the lessons, for thoroughness and for linking with young people at the start of the 21st century."* Creating readiness for innovation and enhancement of competence-oriented education are key challenges for secondary schools.⁶⁰
201. The high degree of students attending school and the strong (cognitive) student outcomes in international research were among the positive indicators that the committee aimed to conserve. Among of the challenges the committee faced were the wide gap between student achievements, the high degree of student retention and the high number of students who are 'tired of going to school'. The report of the Committee-Monard mentioned three factors that are due to these weaknesses:

⁶⁰ Commissie Monard (2009). *Kwaliteit en kansen voor elke leerling. Een visie op de vernieuwing van het secundair onderwijs. Voorstel van de Commissie Monard. [Quality and opportunities for every student. An opinion about the revision of secondary education. Proposal of the Committee-Monard]*. Published at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2009/0424-visienota-SO-Monard.htm> (Dutch only)

- The transition from primary to secondary schools is often too abrupt;
- Students' choice of study area is too often based on socio-cultural background, instead of talents and interests;
- Secondary education lacks active practice of competences.

The Committee-Monard concluded with a proposal for a fundamental review of the structures of secondary education, replacing the current educational programmes (ASO-TSO-KSO-BSO)⁶¹ with a 'job-market-oriented stream' and a 'higher-education-oriented' stream, in addition to a strengthened role for middle schools that are more closely connected to primary education. The Minister of Education has recently issued a proposal for a renovated structure of secondary education⁶², which builds on the foundation provided by the Committee-Monard.

3.4.6 Internal stakeholders

202. System evaluation is also undertaken by a number of stakeholders, each one aiming to improve educational policies and to influence education policy by assessing the quality of the educational system in the Flemish Community.
203. The Flemish Council for Education (VLOR) is an institute in which all relevant stakeholders participate. The activities of VLOR involve a continuous assessment of the educational system within the Flemish Community. In all major policy issues the Minister of Education is obliged to obtain advice from VLOR – and thus all relevant stakeholders need to evaluate and reflect on each important step in Flemish education policy.⁶³
204. The recommendations of VLOR are assembled in annual reports. The 2009 report advocates more systematic and scientifically supported policy evaluation within the education sector.
205. In 2007 the Flemish Education Council (VLOR, Vlaamse Onderwijsraad) was commissioned by the Minister of Education to start the project Practice-Oriented Educational Research (PGO, *Praktijkgericht Onderwijsonderzoek*). The general idea behind the project is to strengthen the connection between researchers and educational practice. Practice-Oriented Educational Research is described by VLOR as any 'systematic creation of knowledge based on needs which emerge in school practice about learning and teaching.' VLOR considers Practice Educational Research as an important form of educational research. It must not only increase theoretical knowledge about learning and teaching but also translate this knowledge into everyday's practice. Three reports have resulted from PGO:
- A review on the effects of homogenous versus heterogeneous class compositions in terms of student performances, with separate focus on student's age, sex and socio-economic and cultural-ethnic background.
 - A study on school leadership in the framework of school communities and local consultation platforms (LOP's, see sub-section 348), resulting in a chart for school principals to cope with the increasingly more complex reality of school leadership.
 - A review on the professional development of teachers and the impact it has on student performances.
206. Although they do not contain research data, the cooperative memorandum written by the four teacher's unions⁶⁴ and the memorandum of the Flemish Student Council⁶⁵ (VSK,

⁶¹ For more information on ASO-TSO-KSO-BSO, see chapter 1 sub-section 40.

⁶² Smet, P. (2010). *Mensen doen schitteren. Eerste oriëntatienota hervorming secundair onderwijs [Make people shine. First orientation memorandum on the restructuring of secondary education]*. Published at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2010/bijlagen/20100913-hervorming-so.pdf> (Dutch only)

⁶³ For more information on the composition and proceedings of VLOR, see chapter 2 sub-section 69.

⁶⁴ Available at http://www.cov.be/hoofdba/hoofd11_2009.pdf (Dutch only)

‘Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel’) also contain clear focus points based on the experiences of teachers or students, thus contributing to the system evaluation of education in the Flemish Community. Both teacher and student representative organizations are regularly asked for their advice and involved in policy discussions. Representatives from the parent organizations claim that the opinion of parents is not sufficiently taken into account when parts of the educational system are being (informally) assessed.

207. Finally, the reports and memoranda issued by the different employers organizations (VOKA, VBO, ...) contribute to continuous system evaluation by providing an image of the quality of the educational system concerning the degree to which education prepares students for junior positions in the job market. Both employer and employee organizations participate in the Flemish Socio-Economical Council (SERV, ‘Socio-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen’). SERV provides socio-economic advice on demand of different Ministers or on own initiative. In 2009, SERV issued 11 detailed recommendations on educational matters.

3.4.7 Innovative schools

208. A recently developed initiative allowed school to contribute directly to system evaluation. By means of the ‘Experimental School Laboratories’ (‘Proeftuinen’) schools are encouraged to try out innovations as a response to tendencies and data delivered by regional or international reports. The Experimental School Laboratories are small-scale and time-limited experiments during which innovations are tested. The innovations seek to address a need or shortcoming that has been indicated through the means of system analysis described above. The initiative for establishing an Experimental School Laboratory is taken by individual schools or by a group of schools. The schools are also responsible for determining the focus and the scope of their innovation. Innovations that are found to be effective for enhancing educational quality will be discussed and eventually they may influence the future educational policy. Every primary or secondary school (or group of schools) with the ambition to implement a defined innovation in a limited time could apply to start an Experimental School Laboratory.

209. Schools that were granted approval by a selection committee (including members of the Inspectorate, staff of the Ministry of Education and Training and external experts) received a small grant to support the innovation process. The schools were also allowed to request exceptions on the imposed regulations on schools, in the event:

- The purpose of the Experimental School Laboratory is oriented at the preparation of an adjustment to the regulatory framework with the aim to innovate education, to develop specific measures for certain groups of students, or to enhance the organization of education,
- And the exceptions are necessary to realize the objectives of the Experimental School Laboratory.

There was however no exception possible regarding

- The regulations on enrolment rights of students;
- The attainment targets and developmental objectives;
- The regulations on the minimal lesson plan;
- The regulations on the minimal number of lessons per week;
- The regulations on participation;
- The regulations on efficiency of management.

3.5 Impact of regional, national and international indicators on policy level and educational practices

⁶⁵ Available at <http://www.vsknet.be/info/standpunten/memorandum> (Dutch only)

210. Not much research has been done to assess to what extent the studies and publications summarized in this chapter are effective in their impact on the education policies and practices in the Flemish Community. A group of researchers found in 2004⁶⁶ that international publications (Education at a Glance, Key indicators on education in Europe) are hardly used by educational policy-makers. The publications are collected and classified by documentary services but only a small set of highlights is known to most of the stakeholders at policy level. The regional publication ‘Flemish Indicators in International Perspective’ resorted more effect with policy-makers: data and graphics from this publication found their way to policy documents; the finding that this latter publication was more used may be due to the fact that its contents are in line with the key challenges established by the policy memorandum of the Minister of Education.
211. Due to the emphasis put on the use of data and statistics of the current and former Minister of Education (since 2004), it is plausible to suppose that in recent years these reports have gained importance and impact at policy level. The current Minister of Education stated in his policy memorandum his ambition to increase the use of international benchmarks for the Flemish educational policy. On the subject of the comparative surveys conducted by the OECD the policy memorandum stated: “*As these results are important for promoting educational policy, my aim is to continue investing in these surveys. In order to guarantee effective monitoring of educational policy and educational innovation, I will ensure strong representation during ministerial conferences, the educational committee, the Board of Management of Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), the most important OECD-networks and expert groups. I want to encourage the sharing of expertise through the organization of seminars and inviting international delegations of experts.*”⁶⁷ Further on in his policy memorandum, the Minister of Education also states his aspiration to continue the investments for follow-up of projects, reports and study groups at the EU and UNESCO.
212. No comprehensive recent scientifically based research, however, has been conducted to confirm the thesis that statistics and data are currently having more impact on educational policy than found in 2004.
213. Additionally relevant research was conducted by the OECD in 2008 measuring the impact of PISA surveys on educational policies.⁶⁸ This evaluation research studied the relevance, the effectiveness and sustainability and the unexpected impacts of PISA in participant countries and economies. Policy makers, academics, media, representatives of the educational networks and school principals were surveyed. However, no country report on the Flemish Community has been written because of the limited number of respondents.
214. International research is also adopted by several stakeholders, who use the results for evaluation and improvement of their practices. They report, however, that outcomes should be treated cautiously, as context factors and more output factors (instead of mostly student achievements) should be taken into account in order to obtain a comprehensive image of the quality of Flemish educational quality.

3.6 Evaluation of the attainment targets and developmental objectives

⁶⁶ Deneire, A., Vanhoof, J., Van Petegem, P. (2004). Internationale onderwijsindicatoren in een beschrijvend, beleidsvoerend en Vlaams perspectief [International education indicators in a descriptive, policy-making and Flemish perspective]. *Tijdschrift voor Onderwijsrecht en Onderwijsbeleid*, 2003-2004, 155-167.

⁶⁷ Smet, P. (2009). *Beleidsnota Onderwijs en Vorming 2009-2014 [Policy Memorandum on Education and Training 2009-2014]*, p 44. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/beleid/nota/2009-2014.pdf> (Dutch only).

⁶⁸ OECD Directorate for Education. Programme for International Student Assessment. Governing Board (2008). *External evaluation of the policy impact of PISA*. Published by OECD, document EDU/PISA/GB(2008)35/REV1

215. As - apart from the guidelines included in the regulatory framework for recognition of schools - the attainment targets and developmental objectives are a crucial means for the Ministry of Education and Training to align the quality of education, not only assessment as to whether these targets have been attained by students (through the National Assessment Programme, see sub-section 144), but also systematic evaluation of the adequacy and feasibility of the attainment targets and developmental objectives themselves are indispensable. AKOV, the agency responsible for drawing up these targets, makes adjustments based on information collected by the National Assessment Programme, based on policy concerns or priorities, relying on scientific research and finally due to harmonization with other targets that have changed.
216. In 2009, the findings of the National Assessment Programme lead to adjustment of the attainment targets for 'environmental studies: nature' in primary education and for biology and science in the first stage of secondary education, A-stream. Subsequently, adaptations are being made as well to the attainment targets for the second and third stage (harmonization).
217. The Minister of Education may instruct AKOV to adjust attainment targets and developmental objectives in line with policy priorities. Currently the importance of 'language education' is strongly emphasized and consequently a number of attainment targets in both Dutch language and foreign languages have been adapted. AKOV expects that the attainment targets and developmental objectives regarding 'entrepreneurship' and 'green (environment-friendly) skills' will need adjustments in the near future based on comments and pressure from different stakeholders.
218. The Minister of Education's instructions may also be based on international reports and documents: when the attainment targets in language education were updated, they also became more aligned with "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages"⁶⁹, a document issued by the Council of Europe and inspired by ESLC 2011 (see sub-section 175). This document provides a common base for developing lessons, curricula, exams and school books for the teaching of foreign languages all over Europe. It provides an exhaustive description of what language learners should learn in order to use the language for communication purposes. It also describes which knowledge and skills language learners should develop in order to function in society using that language, in addition to information on the cultural context of language. Finally, the Common European Framework defines skills levels by means of which the progress of a language learner can be measured during each phase of his learning process.
219. The Flemish Community also took the initiative to benchmark attainment targets of secondary education (study area ASO) through a comparison with the targets set by the Dutch educational system⁷⁰.
220. There are also different examples of changes to the attainment targets and developmental objectives relying on scientific research. By means of an OBPWO-project evaluative feedback from 949 teachers, 57 school principals, 5955 students and 168 other stakeholders on the cross-curricular attainment targets was collected and analyzed⁷¹. The findings of this

⁶⁹ Council of Europe (2009). *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Published at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

⁷⁰ Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling & Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling (2003). *Vergelijkende analyse van de Nederlandse profielen tweede fase VWO/HAVO met Vlaamse polen en specifieke eindtermen ASO [Comparative analysis of the Dutch profiles for the second phase VWO/HAVO with the Flemish poles and specific attainment targets ASO]*. Brussel: Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs. (Dutch only)

⁷¹ Elchardus, M., Op de Beeck, S., Duquet, F. & Roggemans, L. (2008). *Vakoverschrijdende eindtermen in het secundair onderwijs. Een onderzoek naar de relevantie en de haalbaarheid van de vakoverschrijdende*

research led in 2010 to structural changes in the cross-curricular attainment targets. The adapted attainment targets are more feasible for students to accomplish and adjusted to changed circumstances and expectations of society, both locally and internationally. Schools are granted more autonomy in putting these cross-curriculum attainment targets into practice, which also promotes the policy-making capacities of schools (see sub-section 244).

221. The Ministry of Education and Training tasked two universities with another OBPWO project to evaluate primary school teachers' and school principals' dispositions towards the attainment targets and developmental objectives and the way they are conceptualised in schools. Teachers were found to respond fairly positively towards these targets. Teachers who adhere the social-constructivist approach of education, and teachers with a high degree of result-orientation seem to regard the attainment targets as more valuable than other teachers. There is a clear positive correlation between the perceived value of the attainment targets and the extent to which these attainment targets are being used as an inspiration and guiding source for the teacher's practices.⁷²

3.7 Articulation with other forms of evaluation

222. The evaluation at system level fits into the overall rationale of evaluation frameworks in the Flemish Community. System evaluation is increasingly reliant on output measurement of predefined indicators.
223. System evaluation is predominantly based on the extent to which schools manage to guide students towards the attainment targets and developmental objectives. The attainment targets and developmental objectives are also important indicators for external school inspection. Furthermore, the Inspectorate's reports and recommendations for the policy-makers based on the findings of school inspections and additional surveys of school and teacher practices are important sources of information for system evaluation. Different tools of system evaluation (Data warehouse, National Assessment Programme, international studies, scientific research) contribute to school assessment by providing individual school feedback reports.
224. The attainment targets and developmental objectives are also the common starting point between system evaluation and student assessment. Another notable issue that is shared between those two forms of evaluation is the absence of central examinations, based on arguments at system evaluation and student assessment level.
225. The link between the rationale for system evaluation and the system of teacher appraisal is less obvious. The meta-evaluation of the teacher appraisal system is the subject of a form of system evaluation itself by means of a current OBPWO-study.

3.8 Policy initiatives and pending issues

eindtermen in het secundair onderwijs [Cross-curricular attainment targets in secondary education. Research on the relevance and feasibility of Cross-curricular attainment targets in secondary education]. In opdracht van de Vlaamse Minister voor Onderwijs en Vorming, in het kader van het 'OBPWO-programma'. Brussel: V.U.Brussel (Dutch only).

⁷² Van Petegem, P., Engels, N. & Rymenans, R. (2008). *De perceptie van eindtermen en ontwikkelingsdoelen in het basisonderwijs van leerkrachten en directies Onderwijskundig onderzoek [Perceptions of attainment targets and development objectives by teachers and school principals in primary education].* OBPWO-project 04.03. Brussel: Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (Dutch only).

226. As discussed in sub-section 156, the National Assessment Programme is currently being evaluated. This evaluation may have an impact on a number of modalities of the organisation of the National Assessment Programme.
227. AKOV is pending whether it is feasible and meaningful to organize a large-scale needs-analysis to investigate what kind of tools schools want to have to perform self-evaluations.
228. There are currently no attainment targets or developmental objectives established for the technical, art and vocational courses in the educational programmes TSO, KSO and BSO.
229. Furthermore the success rates of students in higher education are often taken into account in national publications on the state of compulsory schooling. Success rates give an indication on the quality of the educational system to the extent that it prepares students for higher education. It is however more complex to collect data on students who prefer to find a job instead of pursuing higher education, which implies it is difficult to assess to what extent the educational system prepares its students for the job market.

Chapter 4. School assessment

230. This chapter reports on both external and internal evaluation processes in schools. The specific method adopted by the Inspectorate and the need for schools to develop their policy-making capacities in order to efficiently use their pedagogical freedom are key elements within this chapter.

4.1 General Framework

231. Education in the Flemish Community traditionally gives considerable responsibility to schools. Quality of education is defined at school level: in respect with the Freedom of education principle every school is granted the right to develop its own curriculum, in accordance with its school-specific vision, local context, tradition and students. This system allows schools to provide education adapted to the needs of their students which is supposed to create the desired outcomes. Within this tradition, schools are the main actors in the quality assurance of education.

During the last decades the role of external inspection has become more important. Society started to critically question education and to what extent it contributes to nationally accepted outcomes. Schools were increasingly asked to account for their processes and outputs. The implementation of attainment targets and developmental objectives has to be seen in this perspective.

232. The Decree on Quality of Education (2009)⁷³ states that each school has a responsibility to provide good quality education and to support educational processes in an optimal manner. Each school defines ‘quality education’ according to its own pedagogical plan. This means that ‘quality’ might differ from school to school. However, the school’s conceptualisation of ‘quality education’ is restricted by the setting of attainment targets and developmental objectives (for more information on school’s result obligation for attainment targets and pursuing obligation towards developmental objectives, see sub-section 86).
233. Subsequently ‘schools’ are the central actors in the framework for school assessment, and their efforts to account for and improve their quality is the central theme in school assessment.
234. External inspection aims for both improvement and accountability through the continuous cycles of evaluation conducted by the Inspectorate. The Decree on Quality of Education assigns following tasks to the Inspectorate:
- Providing advice on the inclusion of institutions in the recognition;
 - Conducting inspections of institutions;
 - All other orders which are granted by decree or order of the Flemish Government.
- The inspection by the Inspectorate is therefore compulsory for every school as a condition to recognition by the Flemish government.
235. The Inspectorate formally has an advisory role. Its recommendations have to be confirmed by the Flemish Government in order to become valid and operative.

⁷³Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2009). *Decreet betreffende de Onderwijskwaliteit [Decree on the quality of education]*. Decree adopted at May 8, 2009. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=14129>

236. The Inspectorate is an autonomous organization functioning within the power granted to it by the Flemish government to monitor and promote the quality of education. The Inspectorate aims to:
- Contribute to a social and democratically inspired education;
 - Guarantee reliable judgments about the quality of education in schools;
 - Inform the public and the Flemish government about the quality of the educational system.
- Although closely connected to the Department of Education and Training and to AKOV (the Agency for Quality Care in Education and Training), the Inspectorate does not operate under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Training.
237. Schools in the Flemish Community have no long-standing tradition of school development based on clearly defined indicators. Schools used to develop their quality on subjective perceptions rather than on (scientifically based) research on relevant factors like the achievement of student performances. The awareness of the effectiveness and efficiency of school development initiatives based on regular assessment of expected outcomes (in measurable indicators) has recently gained importance.
238. Although, formally, self-evaluation is not mandatory for schools in the Flemish Community, schools need to be able to account for their efforts to monitor and enhance their quality. Nowadays schools receive more and more autonomy. This implies that schools need to develop their policy-making capacities in order to make use of their relative freedom to create an open, positive, efficient and innovative education environment.
239. Schools that receive funds within the framework of the Equal Educational Opportunities Policy (GOK, 'Gelijke Onderwijskansenbeleid') are obliged to perform a self-evaluation in order to draw up plans for the effective application of the extra resources. The Decree on Equal Educational Opportunities⁷⁴ also gives the Inspectorate the task of performing specific inspections to check whether schools correctly implement those regulations.
240. Figure 7 gives an overview on the key factors related to school assessment. The school is the key actor and whether or not its efforts to monitor and improve its quality, depends largely on their policy-making capacities (see sub-section 244). The Inspectorate is responsible for external inspection.
241. The Ministry of Education and Training has written out attainment targets and developmental objectives, which are to be the basis of both internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. Both internal evaluation and external assessment of schools depends on the information-rich environment created by the Ministry of Education and Training. The GOK-policy (see sub-section 7) implies schools have to perform systematic self-evaluations.
242. Furthermore, figure 7 includes the school-specific imposed (or highly recommended) structures that contribute to continuous assessment as will be discussed from sub-section 347 onwards. Finally, also the umbrella organizations and their School Advisory Services are key actors in accountability and improvement of the educational quality delivered by schools.
243. For more information on the mutual influence between internal evaluation and external inspection, see sub-section 342. The impact of internal evaluation on external assessment is put into question by stakeholders, as will be discussed in sub-section 386.

⁷⁴ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2002). *Decreet betreffende Gelijke Onderwijskansen [Decree on Equal Educational Opportunities]*. Decree adopted at June 28, 2002. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13298>

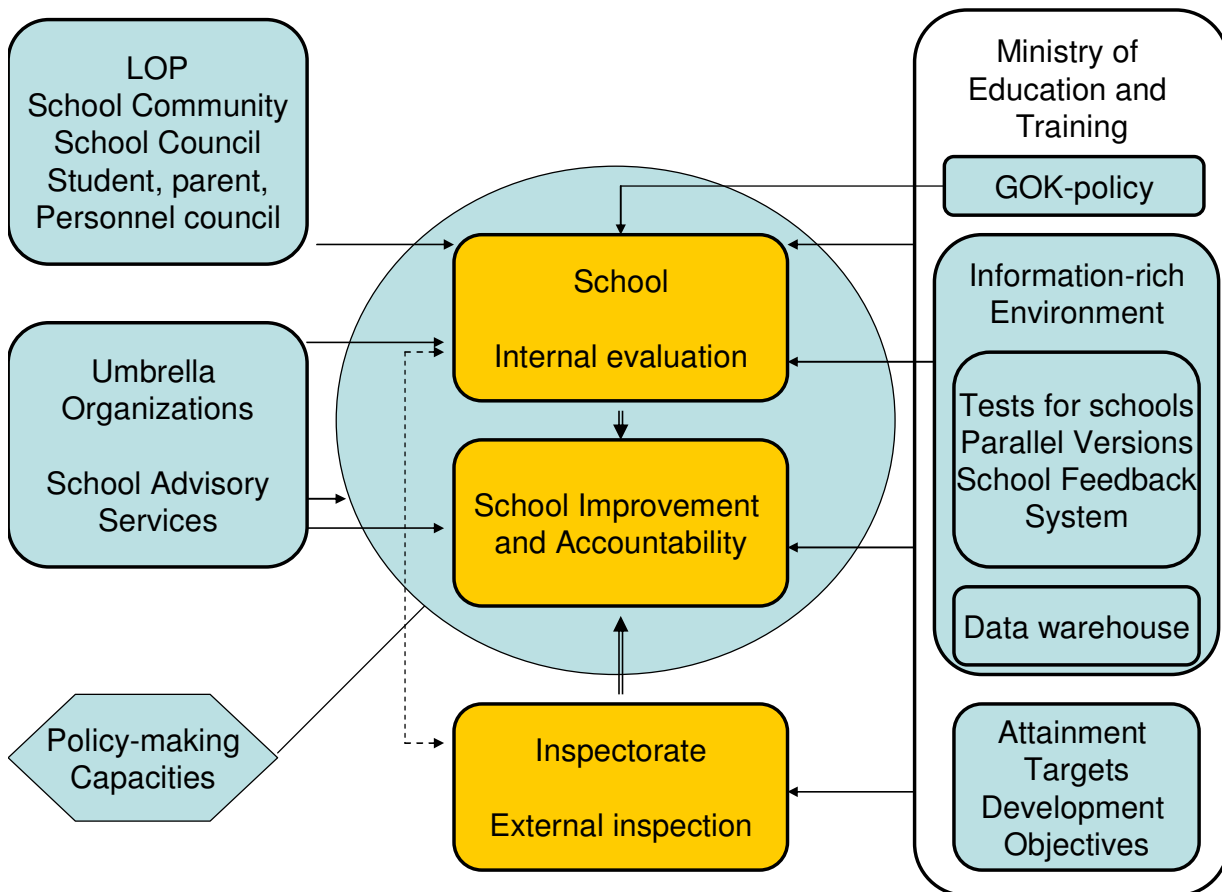


Figure 7. School assessment in a nutshell

4.1.1 Policy-making capacities of schools

244. Schools are granted large responsibilities in defining the concept ‘quality education’ and in how they organize themselves in order to obtain their objectives. The Decree on Quality of Education (2009) gives schools, rather than counselling or governing institutions, the task of providing good quality education. This implies schools that have a large responsibility in defining and in developing quality education.
245. Schools that successfully procure this autonomy, tend to have high scores in research on different indicators: efficient communication, orientation towards supportive relationships and cooperation, orientation towards involvement by shared leadership, orientation towards shared goals, responsiveness towards internal and external expectations, orientation towards innovation, integration of different policy initiatives and reflective capacity.⁷⁵ These indicators are all related to the ‘policy-making capacities’ of schools. These indicators rely on a number of capacities that are mostly of a sustainable character. There is a strong belief that these capacities are ‘learnable’ for individuals and for groups.

⁷⁵ Van Petegem, P., Devos, G., Mahieu, P., Dang Kim, T., & Warmoes, V. (2006). *Hoe sterk is mijn school? Het beleidsvoerend vermogen van vlaamse scholen [How strong is my school? The policy-making capacities of Flemish schools]*. Mechelen: Wolters-Plantyn.

246. The concept of ‘policy-making capacities of schools’ is defined by academics as “*the extent to which schools use the available room for policy-making to come to a continuous process of retaining or changing their work in order to improve their educational quality and attain both the external and self-imposed objectives.*”⁷⁶ This definition implies that self-evaluations and the establishment of quality assurance mechanisms are the result of a natural process in schools with a strong policy.
247. During the last decade researchers have stressed the need for schools to develop their ‘policy-making capacities’ in order to fulfil their responsibility in a meaningful way. It has recently become a key concept in the educational policy of the Flemish Community:
- The concept was first explicitly mentioned in a policy document by the former Minister of Education in his policy memorandum⁷⁷ in 2004. The policy memorandum indicated that more autonomy for schools implied that schools had to develop the capacity to adapt to new challenges and to self-monitor their quality.
 - Also the policy of the current Minister of Education states that ‘the strengthening of policy-making capacities of schools’ is a major challenge. “*Both the school board and the principal need to be able to translate their vision of good quality education into adequate leadership and professional employership.*”⁷⁸
 - The committee-Monard⁷⁹, a group of experts set up to prepare the evaluation of secondary education, indicated in its final report⁸⁰ that the policy-making capacities of schools were an important improvement challenge.
248. Most schools are still in the learning phase and are developing their policy-making capacities. Traditionally schools were most concerned about practical issues, rather than on policy-related issues. Teachers are mostly occupied with direct and short-term work, while school principals seem to invest all their time in daily management tasks. This tendency is slowly changing, as schools start to see the importance of a strong school-specific policy. A considerable number of schools, however, still needs external coaching to continue developing towards self-managing schools with a strong policy.
249. Consequently, coaching of policy-making capacities has recently become an important topic for the School Advisory Services of each of the umbrella organizations.
250. As will be shown in the remainder of this chapter, policy-making capacities are crucial to the success of both external inspection and internal evaluation and to the impact of both evaluation methods on school improvement.

⁷⁶ Van Petegem, P. and Vanhoof, J. (2009). *Zelfevaluatie als motor voor schoolontwikkeling. Succesfactoren en valkuilen. [Self-evaluation as engine for school development. Success factors and stumbling blocks]*. Mechelen, Belgium: Wolters Plantyn.

⁷⁷ Vandenbroucke, F. (2004). *Beleidsnota Onderwijs en Vorming [Policy Memorandum on Education and Training]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/beleid/archief/2004-2009.pdf> (Dutch only)

⁷⁸ Smet, P. (2009). *Beleidsnota Onderwijs en Vorming 2009-2014 [Policy Memorandum on Education and Training 2009-2014]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/beleid/nota/2009-2014.pdf> (Dutch only)

⁷⁹ For more information on the Committee-Monard, see sub-section 200.

⁸⁰ Commissie Monard (2009). *Kwaliteit en kansen voor elke leerling. Een visie op de vernieuwing van het secundair onderwijs. Voorstel van de Commissie Monard. [Quality and opportunities for every student. An opinion about the revision of secondary education. Proposal of the Committee-Monard]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2009/bijlagen/0424-visienota-SO.pdf> (Dutch only)

4.2 External inspection

4.2.1 Approach until 2008

251. Before 1991 the Inspectorate looked at schools as ‘the sum of courses, individual teacher performances and learning areas’. Interdisciplinary efforts were not taken into account. Since the Decree on Inspection, Department for Educational Development and School Advisory Services (1991)⁸¹ a more holistic approach was adopted. The focus of the external inspection was moved from the individual teachers towards the school as a whole. External school inspection is carried out with respect to vertical and horizontal coherence within the school’s curriculum, cooperation between teachers, interdisciplinary efforts, and the social, interactive and experience-based nature of learning processes.
252. The Decree on Inspection, Department for Educational Development and School Advisory Services (1991) appointed three institutions to ensure that schools deliver good quality outcomes: the Inspectorate for external control over the schools, while the School Advisory Services (‘Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten’) of the umbrella organizations were assigned to support and coach the schools of their educational network. The Department for Educational Development (DVO, Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling) had the responsibility to determine attainment targets and to provide supportive instruments for the Inspectorate.
253. An external audit by Andersen Consulting in 2001⁸² acknowledged the strength of this partition of tasks, but also advocated a strengthened role for schools. The audit recommended that schools should be the institutions with the final responsibility for educational quality. Therefore the audit report suggested that on the one hand schools should enjoy a wider autonomy in their choices for support and coaching. On the other hand the authorities have the responsibility to strengthen those schools in the development of their policy-making capacities and their self-evaluating capacity.

4.2.2 New approach since 2009: development and rationale

254. The Decree on Quality of Education (2009) builds on the previous Decree (1991). Apart from the recommendations of the Andersen Consulting audit, some general trends also influenced the viewpoints of the new Decree:
- There is nowadays a strong belief, shared by all relevant stakeholders, that schools need to be able to develop their own policy in order to ensure quality of education;
 - The focus on output indicators has increased since the Decree of 1991. The importance of ‘output measurements’ and ‘benchmarking’ has mounted;
 - The society expects that results of inspections are open for public.
255. The Decree on Quality of Education (2009) appoints three main actors in quality of education: schools, School Advisory Services and the Inspectorate/AKOV. The schools carry the responsibility for providing good quality education; School Advisory Services (belonging to the umbrella organizations of the different educational networks) are appointed to provide external support to the schools; The Inspectorate’s task is to perform an external quality control on the schools. These three actors are called the ‘triangle of quality’.

⁸¹ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (1991). *Decreet betreffende inspectie, Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling en pedagogische begeleidingsdiensten [Decree on Inspection, Department for Educational Development and School Advisory Services]*. Decree adopted at July 17, 1991. Available at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=12308>

⁸² Andersen Consulting (2002). *Doelmatigheidsanalyse van de Inspectie van Onderwijs, de Pedagogische Begeleidingsdiensten en de Dienst voor Onderwijsontwikkeling. Eindrapport: globale analyse en aanbevelingen (in opdracht van het departement Onderwijs) [Feasibility study of the Inspectorate of Education, the School Advisory Services and the Department for Educational Development. Final report: global analysis and recommendations (commissioned by the Department of Education)]*. Brussel: Andersen Consulting.

256. The main difference from the ‘previous triangle’ established by the Decree of 1991 is that schools are now explicitly mentioned and recognized in their crucial role with respect to quality of education. The tasks concerning development of supporting tools for the Inspectorate previously assigned to the Department for Educational Development (DVO) have become part of the Inspectorate’s responsibilities; other tasks previously belonging to DVO (e.g. reflection on minimum standards of quality education by drawing up the attainment targets and developmental objectives) have been given to the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV, ‘Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming’).
257. Since the Inspectorate adopted the holistic approach to school inspection in 1991, each school has been fully inspected at least twice: these were the first two ‘cycles of Inspection’. In order to reform and enhance the inspection process for the ‘third cycle’, the Inspectorate analyzed information from the following sources:
- Feedback from schools that had recently been inspected;
 - Input of external stakeholders;
 - Results of scientific research on experiences and expectations of external inspection.
258. An analysis of the information drawn from these sources led the Inspectorate to four recommendations for its ‘third cycle’ that started in 2009:
- On the one hand the need for an equal treatment of schools, a comprehensive approach, but on the other hand an approach that takes accounts of the specificity of each school;
 - Quality is a dynamic process: not just results, but also learning and developing processes and the efforts undertaken to reach ‘good quality education’ should be inspected;
 - Schools do not favour a public mathematical ranking of educational quality. Quantitative scores are not likely to take account of the school’s specific context and dynamics;
 - Schools do, however, request information of (inter-)national tests and research in order to (internally) benchmark their results and processes.
259. Furthermore, the Inspectorate analyzed the individual school inspection reports from the first and second cycle (1992-2008), searching for an explanation as to why some institutions were always able to present good to excellent results, while others systematically scored less on the different indicators. This analysis indicated that the quality of education in the schools located at the extreme of this continuum is proportional to the school’s policy-making capacities. For the 60% schools in the middle group, however, the reports did not provide sufficient relevant information to notice distinguishing features with respect to the educational quality of every single school.

4.2.3 New method of inspection: Differentiated Approach

260. Based on the findings obtained during the preparation of the third cycle, the Inspectorate decided on a ‘differentiated approach’ towards school inspections. This method of control was already suggested by the Audit of Andersen Consulting in 2001.
261. The ‘differentiated approach’ allows the Inspectorate to adjust the focus of the inspection to the differences between school’s policies and proceedings regarding quality care and quality improvement.
- Differentiation in intensity of inspection addresses the need to provide schools with a deeper understanding of their quality and their compliance with the regulatory framework. Therefore instead of a full inspection of all aspects of the school, a deeper investigation into a limited set of processes, study areas, ... is conducted.
 - Differentiation in frequency of inspection.

262. The Decree on Quality of Education states that each school has to be inspected at least once within a period of ten years. Previously every school was inspected once every six to seven years, but since the adoption of the differentiated approach some schools will be inspected more frequently than others within the period of ten years. The Decree allows the Inspectorate to decide on the frequency of school inspections based on the school's profile emerging from a number of objective quality aspects and on the previous inspection reports. In the event of serious complaints, an additional inspection may be requested by the Flemish government or by the Minister of Education.
263. The school inspection following a differentiated approach is implemented into three phases: the preliminary investigation followed by the actual inspection resulting in the report containing the recommendation to the Flemish government.
264. The *preliminary investigation* is a preliminary assessment of 'risks' and consists of two activities. First, the inspectors collect and analyse all relevant, recent and reliable data: the figures that schools give to the Ministry of Education and Training, the data collected by the Inspectorate on the basis of a short written questionnaire, all previous inspection and monitoring reports as well as reports on equality of educational opportunities and finally complaints received during the past few years. After the data analysis a team of two inspectors visits the school for one day for refinement through observation, interviews and document analysis. Self-evaluations performed by the school can also be part of this process. These two inspectors determine the focus of the school inspection (either a course, a discipline, a curricular field or any other quality aspect) in relation to the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school. The preliminary investigation is conducted comprehensively on all relevant school aspects. There is no differentiation yet between different school inspections during this phase.
265. The criteria applied by the Inspectorate to determine the scope of the differentiated inspection, are to be summarized as:
- All processes and courses that could function as a lever for school improvement;
 - All processes and courses in which a school differs from similar schools in either positive or negative way.
266. Schools have a large responsibility for the success of the inspection: they have the 'moral duty' to inform the inspectors correctly on the problems they are struggling with and the bottlenecks that prevent them from increasing their educational quality. Apart from these inhibitory factors, it is also important that they indicate how they managed to reach their current state of quality.
267. During the second phase, the *actual inspection*, the inspectors closely watch the focus determined at the end of the first phase. They collect and organize their findings according to the CIPO (Context, Input, Processes, Output) framework⁸³. The duration of the actual inspection phase (minimally three days, maximally six days) and the composition of the inspection team (at least two inspectors, possibly supported by one or more experts) depend on the size of the institution and the scope of the inspection focus. Usually school principals and teachers are involved during the actual inspection phase.
268. The findings of the inspection team are then compiled in a *report*. This report includes a summarized quality profile of the inspected school, results on the research focus, general strengths and weaknesses. The Inspectorate pays attention to 'positive findings', 'findings that can be improved', and 'findings that should be improved'. The report concludes with a final recommendation: either 'positive', 'positive restricted in time' or 'negative'. This recommendation on the prolongation of the school's recognition is sent to the Flemish

⁸³ For more information on the CIPO-model, see sub-section 287.

government. The recommendation can relate to the entire school or to one or more components.

269. The Decree on Quality of Education (2009) stipulates the exact meaning of these three recommendations:
- A 'positive' recommendation means a school is considered to have the competencies and preparedness to continue working in an optimal manner. No follow-up needs to be scheduled.
 - The recommendation 'restricted positive' means a second inspection is required. During this follow-up the school's progress in a number of deficiencies is re-inspected. The school is free to decide whether it will address the shortcomings observed on its own or whether it will ask support from the School Advisory Services of the educational network involved. In practice, almost all schools with the recommendation 'restricted positive' rely on external support. The second inspection results into a second recommendation, either 'positive' or 'negative'. If during the follow-up inspection new deficiencies are observed, the inspection team covers these points in an additional report.
 - When schools show structural deficiencies, or when deficiencies are non-structural but the school is not judged to have the necessary policy-making capacities to tackle these deficiencies, it is given a 'negative' recommendation. This means that a procedure for revoking the recognition of the school (or a structural component of the school) is started. At the same time however the school is granted the opportunity to strengthen its practice. Therefore the school may request the suspension of proceedings to revoke its recognition by submitting an improvement plan. If the Flemish government approves the improvement plan, it sets a period during which the procedure is to be suspended. This period of suspension is at least one school year and up to three school years. If the Inspectorate rules that this is indispensable, the school is obliged to cooperate with external support (mostly from the School Advisory Services of the educational network concerned) in order to obtain the self-imposed results of the improvement plan.⁸⁴
A second school inspection is conducted two months after the first inspection (if the school did not submit an approved improvement plan) or during the last three months of the suspension term. The members of this second school inspection team are different from the first team. The second inspection results into a recommendation to the Flemish government related to the entire school or structural components thereof, either 'positive' (the school/components receive recognition), 'restricted positive' (the school/components receive recognition if a certain number of conditions are met in a defined period of time) or 'negative' (the school/component definitely loses its recognition).
270. The rationale behind giving malfunctioning schools the opportunity to avoid immediate withdrawal of their recognition is called 'development-oriented sanctioning'. The Ministry of Education and Training and the Inspectorate argue that students in poorly functioning schools do not benefit from the closure of their school, but neither are they helped with a 'soft approach' in which schools are only urged to change certain practices. Therefore a mandatory process of improvement is imposed to the school when the school does not show sufficient policy-making capacities.
The 'development-oriented sanctioning' encourages a weak school to take up an active responsibility; it has to take the initiative to receive the status of 'temporary recognition'. This temporary recognition can only be achieved by the development of an improvement plan and cooperation with external support.

⁸⁴ The policy-making capacities of schools are the criterion for the Inspectorate to judge whether or not a school needs external support.

271. During the first and second cycle of inspection (1992-2008), the Inspectorate found that the school's ability to evaluate its own processes and to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses was a key indicator in predicting if the school would comply with all the requirements. Therefore it is commonly accepted that schools that received a 'negative' recommendation lack the policy-making capacities necessary to improve their quality⁸⁵. Consequently, in practice almost all 'negatively' inspected schools will be assigned appointed obligatory external support. This support is usually tasked to the School Advisory Service of the relevant umbrella organization.
272. The School Advisory Services of the umbrella organizations are not in favour of 'mandatory support'. The reasons for their reluctance towards this obligation are summarized below:
- School Advisory Services indicate that mandatory support does not respect school's autonomy;
 - Furthermore, they indicate that support is only efficient when it is requested by schools (or when schools volunteer to join an initiative of the School Advisory Services) and when there is a certain degree of 'trust' between school and School Advisory Service;
 - Finally, the School Advisory Services argue that support can only be effective when schools acknowledge the deficiencies and the underlying causal factors, which is often not the case in the schools involved.
273. Apart from the arguments mentioned during the preparation of the third cycle, the differentiated approach is conceived to have the following advantages:
- The inspection needs to take the differences in competencies and dynamics into account, as well as differences regarding the school's development processes towards quality. The differentiated approach is an adequate response to this need.
 - Quality care is perceived as more than just 'quality control' because it also aims to strengthen schools in developing quality. The differentiated approach with a focus on the points where the school meets the most challenges, complies with both the accountability and improvement rationale.
 - Previously, schools with a 'weak' policy were usually diagnosed with a long list of deficiencies, making it difficult for them to prioritise. This frequently led to a large number of improvement plans. Due to the lack of a clear vision and of a systematic approach in those schools, these plans were often not finished or not substantially integrated. More limited but more time-spread or frequent inspections will help 'weaker' schools to work on realistic improvement plans.
 - Schools that had excellent results in previous inspections do not need an integral inspection. Those schools benefit more from an inspection of some specific features. By focusing on the long way that some schools have gone through to come to excellent quality, hidden obstacles and difficulties can be determined. This will help 'weaker' schools to recognise these examples of good practices and to discover how these practices might be realistic for them too.
 - Some schools develop gradually, while other schools develop in sudden larger steps (for instance in the event of a change of leadership or structural changes). Schools that recently took giant leaps towards quality benefit more from an investigation of a small number of inhibitory factors and some aspects that could serve as lever towards further enhancement.
 - Difference in frequency of inspection addresses the need of some schools for more external inspection, compared to schools with strong policy-making capacities. The Inspectorate uses the motto "*Be more present where it's necessary and less present where it's possible*".

⁸⁵ Exceptions to this rule are possible, for example when recently a new school principal has recently been appointed who seems to be able to address the deficiencies without imposed support.

274. The differentiated approach implies that schools policy-making capacities are becoming more important for the external inspectors. Some of the policy decisions may, however, be delegated to the school communities. Therefore the Inspectorate is currently organizing the school inspections of different schools in the same geographical area at the same time. This also allows the Inspectorate to get a better view on co-operation between schools.
275. According to the School Advisory Services, most schools seem to agree with the differentiated approach, although some schools indicate that the whole-school inspection did better acknowledge the efforts schools have made to improve their quality. Some schools have reported that the decision process in arriving at the right research focus lacked transparency. Since the current school year, in order to address this need for transparency the Inspectorate has provided a more explicit and detailed explanation of the reasons for its choice of the research focus.
276. Another negative effect of the differentiated approach noticed by the School Advisory Services is that some schools are obliged to leave their own ‘path of quality improvement’ because the focus chosen by the external inspection (and the improvement points indicated in the inspection report) does not fit into this school-specific development path. In these cases, the schools have to give up their own priorities for quality improvement and adopt the priorities set by the Inspectorate’s focus instead. According to the School Advisory Services, accountability towards the Inspectorate may be an obstruction for the school’s development.⁸⁶
277. Finally, School Advisory Services note that teachers whose courses are in the inspection focus, tend to be more cautious and on their guard, resulting in a less open disposition in discussions with the inspectors.

4.2.4 Focus of external inspection

278. The Flemish government establishes the framework used by the Inspectorate for school inspections by means of the Decree on Quality of Education (2009). During a school inspection, the Inspectorate checks:
- whether the school respects the regulatory framework for recognition and subsidizing or financing⁸⁷, including the application of regulations on:
 - i. Organization under the jurisdiction of a school board;
 - ii. Hygiene, safety and habitation conditions;
 - iii. Education structure complying with legal framework;
 - iv. Pedagogic unity;
 - v. Availability of adequate teaching materials and school equipment;
 - vi. Educational language and staff’s language skills;
 - vii. Allowing the Inspectorate to perform school inspections;
 - viii. Teaching time;
 - ix. Achieving attainment targets through approved curriculum;
 - x. Cooperation with Pupil Guidance Centre;

⁸⁶ The determination of the focus of inspection does not depend on schools’ self-evaluations or improvement plans. This is covered more into detail in sub-section 340.

⁸⁷ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (1997). *Besluit van de Vlaamse regering betreffende de erkenning, de financiering en subsidiëring van scholen in het gewoon en buitengewoon basisonderwijs [Resolution of the Flemish Government concerning the recognition, financing and subsidizing of schools in mainstream and special elementary education]*. Resolution adopted at July 8, 1997. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=12228>
 And Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2002). *Besluit van de Vlaamse regering betreffende de organisatie van het voltijds secundair onderwijs. [Resolution by the Flemish Government concerning the organization of full-time secondary education]*, Resolution adopted at July 19, 2002. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13329>

- xi. Universal human rights and child rights;
 - xii. Policy on smoking ban;
 - xiii. Programmatic and rationalisation norms;
 - xiv. Specific regulations for educational network (officially financed, officially subsidized, privately-run subsidized) or educational level.
- Whether the school complies with the regulatory requirements in terms of its school-specific policy related to:
 - i. Equal Educational Opportunities;
 - ii. Support and guidance for students;
 - iii. Languages;
 - iv. Career orientation of students;
 - v. Student assessment;
 - vi. Priorities to optimize personnel deployment and support;
 - vii. Professional development of staff;
 - viii. Stakeholder participation.
 - Whether the school systematically monitors its quality.
279. The Inspectorate does not inspect how schools organize their school proceedings (in respect with the Freedom of education principle), but monitors whether schools achieve their social tasks. The focus of external inspection is output-based.
280. The focus on output does not mean that context, input and processes of the schools are neglected. There has however been an important shift in the way the Inspectorate looks at context, input and process variables. Until 2008, these variables showed the relativity of the outputs. These factors provided an informed basis and a framework for the interpretation of the outputs. Since the implementation of the differentiated approach in 2009 though the Inspectorate does not treat context, input and processes in a relativizing manner. Instead the Inspectorate inspects to what extent schools have made informed choices for the development of processes (in staff policy, education and evaluation policy) regarding their context and input in order to maximize outputs. Subsequently:
- The focus on output has even been strengthened (data on output indicators are not seen as relative data);
 - The policy-making capacities of schools are becoming increasingly important. The Inspectorate explicitly evaluates the extent to which the school has assumed responsibility for developing efficient processes taking account of its context and input.
- This new tendency towards a different use of context, input and processes is not yet clear for schools. The Inspectorate expects that it will probably take some years before schools are able to adopt this new way of looking to their quality.
281. The idea of making schools accountable for their system for adapting their processes to the context and the input of the school (in the light of the enhancement of outputs) fits into the tendency to make schools responsible for their quality assurance system. Furthermore, in order to bridge the gap between high- and low-performing students and schools, the school system has to step beyond the toning down of outputs in the light of possibly unfavourable context and input variables.
282. Since the implementation of the differentiated approach, the Inspectorate's inspection on activities regarding compliance with the regulatory framework concerning hygiene, safety and habitation conditions has been conducted separately from the rest of the inspection. During the regular school inspection, the Inspectorate only notes whether the school have established a clear policy on these topics, whether the required control documents from control by external experts are available (e.g. the fire brigade and the Federal Agency for Food Safety) and whether there are obvious shortcomings regarding safety or hygiene. It is

up to external agencies to perform in-depth inspections on the school's hygiene, safety and habitation conditions.

283. The Inspectorate is not responsible for monitoring the completion of the pedagogical plan, or the inspection of the educational, pedagogical, artistic or coaching methods. Neither does the Inspectorate provide an assessment of the role of the school board or individual teachers.
284. The Inspectorate is also not responsible for supervising the teaching of denominational subjects. This falls under the jurisdiction of the official bodies of the recognized religions (Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Protestant Christian, Anglican Christian, Jewish and Islam) and the association of the non-confessional community.
285. As mentioned above, the Inspectorate inspects whether the school respects the relevant regulations and whether it systematically monitors its quality. The Decree on Quality of Education (2009) states that in the event of a 'negative' recommendation, the Inspectorate inspects whether or not the school is capable of independently setting up a policy to enhance its quality and to address the shortcomings found by the Inspectorate: therefore the so-called 'policy-making capacities of schools' are explicitly evaluated in the event of a 'negative' recommendation. When the Inspectorate asserts that the school disposes of insufficient policy-making capacities on its own, the school improvement plan will only be approved if the school accepts external support appointed by the Inspectorate. The concept of 'policy-making capacities' is covered from sub-section 244 onwards.
286. The Inspectorate will not make explicit judgments on the 'policy-making capacities' of schools that received either a 'positive' or 'restricted positive' recommendation. Implicitly the policy-making capacities are assessed anyway:
 - Inspecting whether the school complies with the regulatory requirements in terms of their school-specific policy concerning the topics mentioned in sub-section 278, implies a de facto judgment on schools' policy-making capacities. Not merely whether or not the school has developed a policy, but also the extent to which different actors in the school are operating in a coherent manner (e.g. do teachers act in accordance with the official school policy?) is subject of inspection.
 - Policy-making capacities are screened as well when the Inspectorate evaluates whether the school complies with its obligation to monitor its own quality.

4.2.5 CIPO framework

287. Since the Decree on Inspection and Pedagogical Counselling Services (1991), the Inspectorate uses the CIPO-model for performing school inspections. The use of this model with its focus on the components Context, Input, Processes and Output was recently confirmed when the Flemish government approved the Resolution of the Decree on Quality of Education concerning the Inspectorate's CIPO-framework (2010).⁸⁸ Each of the four components is further developed into a number of indicators. These indicators rely on parameters that are found (by means of research or experience) to have an impact on quality of education. The indicators have been chosen from the perspective of the government. This means that not all variables that may have an effect on quality of schools are included in the CIPO-model.
288. 'Output' is the most prominent component of the school inspection. The focus on 'output' was already established by the Decree of 1991, but was reinforced by the policy memorandum of the former Minister of Education in 2004: "Output indicators have to direct

⁸⁸ Vlaamse Regering (2010). *Uitvoeringsbesluit bij het decreet over de kwaliteit van onderwijs met betrekking tot het CIPO-referentiekader van de inspectie [Resolution to implement the CIPO-framework of the Inspectorate in the light of the Decree on quality of education]*. Resolution adopted at October 1, 2010.

the school inspection: citizens and society have the right to know if schools use their resources in an effective and efficient manner”. An example given by an inspector in an interview with the teacher’s magazine ‘Klasse’ illustrates that this tendency towards output measurement has even strengthened since the start of the third round of inspection in 2009: “During the school inspection we focus more on output than we did before: what are the results of what teachers do?”⁸⁹ This is related to the recently developed new way of looking at context, input and processes as explained in sub-section 280.

289. The accountability of schools is not merely directed at how schools are educating their students, but also at how explicit social challenges have led to concrete results through the schools’ educational processes. It is one of the strengths of CIPO that it allows the Inspectorate to focus on output supported by the process indicators without resulting in a process evaluation. This way, the autonomy of the school, its pedagogical project and pedagogical proceedings are respected, while the output realised by the school can be judged within the specificity of each school.
290. The number of concrete indicators in the CIPO-model has considerably decreased for the application of the differentiated approach. Output includes four indicators which all have an equal value in the inspection process:
- ‘Student performance’ (do students achieve the attainment targets, how does the school account for its efforts to guide every student to acquire the developmental objectives?);
 - ‘School career’ (student’s progress and effective enrolment);
 - ‘Outcomes’ (towards subsequent educational programmes and towards the job market);
 - ‘Satisfaction’ (of students, staff and partners).
291. In different issues of the Education Mirror, the report issued annually by the Inspectorate, inspectors report that a considerable number of schools, especially in primary but also in secondary education, are still lacking a clear output-oriented policy.
292. The three other components, context, input and process, were previously merely factors that were used to declare success or failure in the output indicators. Since the implementation of the differentiated approach, the way schools develop processes taking account of their context and input variables in order to increase output, is perceived as an important part of the quality assurance mechanisms of the school (see sub-section 280). The context includes ‘identification’, situational location’, ‘history’ and ‘regulatory framework’; Input covers staff and student characteristics, while the component ‘Process’ is more detailed, distinguishing between four main categories:
- ‘General’, with indicators ‘leadership’, ‘development of school vision’, ‘decision making processes and procedures’ and ‘quality assurance’;
 - ‘Personnel’, with indicators ‘staff management’ and ‘professional development’;
 - ‘Logistics’, with ‘infrastructure and equipment’ and ‘well-being’ (safety and physical and mental health of staff, students and others);
 - ‘Educational policy’, with ‘Curriculum’ (study areas and school organization), ‘Coaching and counselling’ (inter-relationship with other partners, study-related student guidance, career guidance and socio-emotional student counselling), and ‘Evaluation’ (containing both evaluation practices and reporting practices).

⁸⁹ Klasse (2009). *Inspectie nieuwe stijl. Ze sluipen niet meer vermomd naar de speelplaats* [Inspection new style. They are not sneaking disguised to the playground anymore]. *Klasse voor leraren*, 199, 22-23.

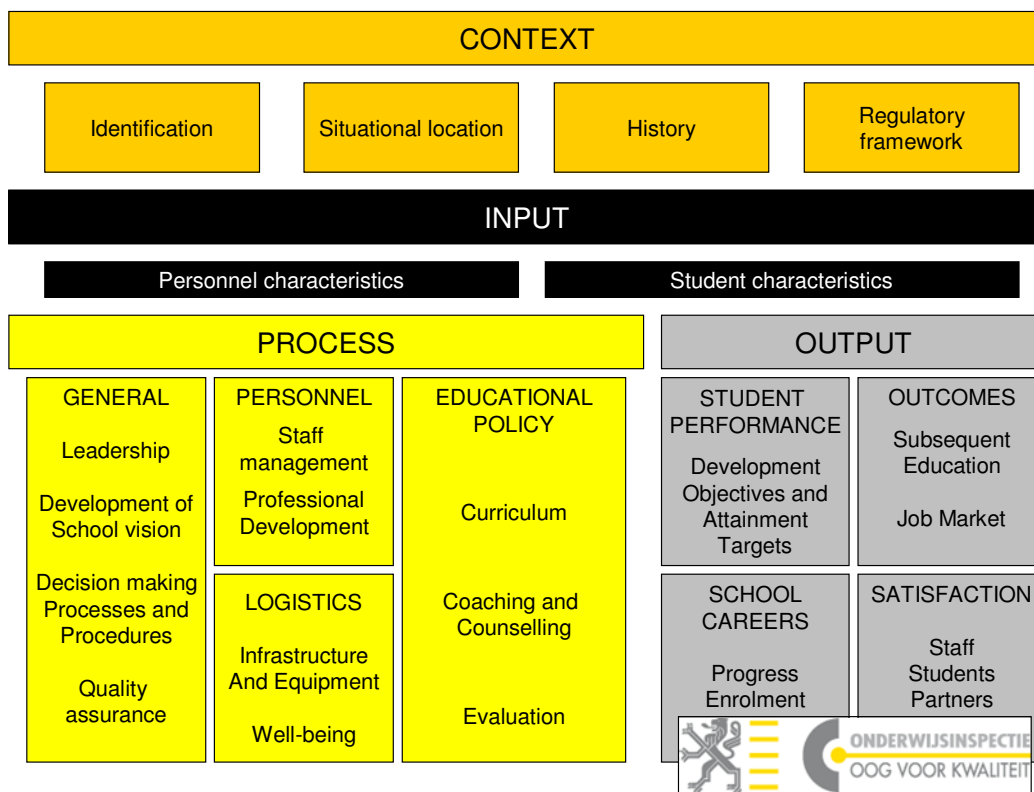


Figure 8. CIPO-framework

293. Moreover, the CIPO-model allows the investigation of the connections between the different components, namely how the school has adjusted its processes relying on school-specific context and input in order to strengthen its output. Figure 8 provides an overview of the CIPO-framework.⁹⁰
294. The CIPO-model is supportive to the current tendency towards both accountability and development. The model allows the Inspectorate to take new developments into account efficiently through the indicators. As such, it challenges the best schools to keep on improving. This means that the risk that schools are confirmed by the reference model in their existing situation, which would inhibit a development-oriented objective, has been reduced.

4.2.6 Quality indicator model

295. As a complement to the CIPO-model, the third cycle of inspection saw the introduction of a 'Quality indicator model' ('Kwaliteitswijzer'). The Quality indicator model is a way of allowing the Inspectorate to map differences between schools regarding the Process indicators. The Quality indicator model supports judgments on the quality of the schools' processes without making exhaustive descriptions. The model contains four inter-related aspects of quality perceived as minimal conditions to the systematic performance of self-monitoring of the quality of school processes, without making any judgment on how the school implements its policy of quality care.

⁹⁰ Source of figure 8: Inspectorate.

296. The four aspects of the Quality indicator model are:
- ‘Result-orientation’: setting clear and concrete objectives and the ability to account for these objectives;
 - ‘Support’: material and structural support in addition to support in terms of human capacity for good quality processes aimed at achieving objectives;
 - ‘Efficiency’: accountability for how the school processes contribute to achieving these objectives;
 - ‘Development’: attention for continuous development and quality improvement.
297. The use of the Quality indicator model has increased the conformity of inspections. It fits into the rationale of screening to what extent the processes contribute to the output in the light of the school-specific context and input.

4.2.7 Digital monitor and reference groups

298. During the first phase of the inspection process (the preliminary investigation) the Inspectorate uses the Data warehouse system provided by the Ministry of Education and Training. This Data warehouse system contains data for each school on numbers of students, student retention, students from deprived background and changes in personnel staff turnover. The Inspectorate has built two important applications within the Data warehouse system namely the digital school profile and the reference profile.
299. The Inspectorate worked out a digital monitor at meso level (each individual institution) based on secondary data from the administration. Each year institutions have to submit data to the administration about their students, their personnel, their infrastructure and their teaching activities. Based on these data institutions are financed and subsidized. The Inspectorate uses these data to construct an individual school profile with relevant educational indicators linked to the quality of education. This individual school profile contains indicators concerning output (school performances, school career and outcomes), input (amounts of students spread out over the educational programmes, the SES-context of the students, personnel and their educational career) and context (infrastructure, location, recruitment, ...). It also contains an evolution of these indicators over the last six years.
300. Each individual institution is also positioned within a spread diagram of comparable institutions (institutions with the same teaching activities, geographical situation, student characteristics; ...) and this is done for each indicator of the individual school profile. These groups of comparable institutions are the so called “reference groups”. The reference profile is the report that presents for each individual indicator of the school profile the spread diagram of the same indicator from all the comparable institutions. This application permits the benchmarking of schools with similar schools and supports the Inspectorate in determining the focus of the further inspection.

4.2.8 Publication of school inspection reports

301. Since the passing of the Decree on ‘Transparency of Governance’⁹¹ (2004) the inspection reports of individual school inspections are available to the public. Until 2007 however the authorities maintained a policy of ‘passive publicity’, implying that an explicit request had to be made before being allowed to look into a report.

⁹¹ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs (2004). *Decreet op Openbaarheid van Bestuur [Decree on Publicity of Policy Management]*. Decree adopted at March 26, 2004. Available at: http://www3.vlaanderen.be/openbaarheid/document.php?document_id=1

302. In 2007, after three newspapers published a ‘school report’ containing a summary and analysis of the inspection reports, the authorities changed their policy towards ‘active publicity’: all recent inspection reports have since been available on the Internet without restrictions⁹².
303. The Inspectorate notices several potential risks with the policy of active publicity. The most important perceived disadvantage is the risk of rankings or (mathematical) comparison between schools. Policy-makers as well as main stakeholders in Flemish education are convinced that an educational system should not be based on a market model with rankings, as has been discussed in sub-section 160.
304. Therefore, it is important that not only information on school outputs is included in the inspection report. It is a challenge for the Inspectorate to focus also on the ‘added value’ schools realize on the performance of their students. Inspection reports do not mention quantitative scores, but only descriptive information.
305. Other potential difficulties are the risk of a biased reading of the reports and the risk of misuse by schools. Furthermore, active publicity limits the possibilities of integrating possible internal self-evaluations (not meant for publication, but for use by the school in development perspective) into the overall external inspection. Also VLOR is in favour of making an exception of the regulatory framework for a clearly established number of documents (e.g. self-evaluations).
306. Another discussion that had stemmed from the active publicity of inspection reports is whether the report should be written for the school’s accountability and development, or rather for the public. Different stakeholders feared that the content will not be as valuable for the school’s development when the Inspectorate’s report is written not just for the school, but also for other readers. The current compromise is that the Inspectorate writes its report for the purpose of the schools and to enhance the schools’ quality, but includes a summary that aims to inform parents and students.
307. On the other hand, active publicity meets the parents’ right to have correct and clear information on schools in order to make a well-informed choice between different schools: ‘freedom of school choice’ makes sense only to the extent to which parents clearly know which objectives a school pursues and how efficient it is in reaching those objectives. Parent organizations do additionally request that schools themselves actively communicate about the findings in the inspection reports to at least the members of the participation bodies (school council, parent council, see sub-section 357 and 360) but preferably to all parents.
308. Researchers have also revealed several advantages perceived by different stakeholders⁹³:
- Publicity encourages schools to more critical self-evaluations and quality management;
 - Publicity increases parents’ involvement towards the school and increases parents’ active participation in school policy;
 - Publicity makes it easier for parents to follow the school’s development.
309. An unexpected positive side effect that came from the active publicity of inspection reports is that it indirectly raised the quality of external inspections. The Inspectorate tried to make the reports more aligned but found that there were large differences between the Inspectorate processes and practices at different levels of schools (primary versus secondary); at that time, the Inspectorate of primary education was still functioning independently from the

⁹² All reports are available at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/doorlichtingsverslagen/>

⁹³ Vanhoof, J. & Van Petegem, P. (2005). *Kwaliteit van scholen (openbaar) vergelijken? Het zwart-wit denken voorbij [Comparing school quality? Beyond black-or-white thinking]*. Mechelen: Wolters Plantyn.

Inspectorate for secondary education. This finding led to initiatives to increase the conformity of the Inspectorate's processes, thus enhancing the quality and transparency of the external school inspections.

4.2.9 *Quality care within the external school inspection*

310. The differentiated approach has only been recently implemented. The Inspectorate currently goes through a learning path of continuous reflection, refinement and improvement. This learning phase has not yet been finished, learning processes are still ongoing. Feedback is frequently collected through questionnaires and feedback conferences from all stakeholders in the inspection process. It is expected that these data will lead to further adjustments in the near future.
311. The Inspectorate recently appointed a professional quality coordinator to ensure the quality of processes and procedures within the Inspectorate.
312. To guarantee the quality of school inspections by individual members of the inspection teams, candidate inspectors need to have eight years of teaching experience before they are allowed to apply. During the application process candidates have to pass two tests: a written test, measuring generic competences and an interview (possibly complemented with additional tests) assessing specific competences. Each new member of the Inspectorate needs to follow a personal 'learning path'.
313. There are also generic training courses for all members of the Inspectorate, for instance in the training phase on the 'differentiated approach' for the third cycle of Inspection.
314. Quality of the inspection reports is ensured by the establishment of an internal reading group. Reports follow standard formats. Clear inspection instruments (e.g. structured interview guides) are available. For the most important and prevailing procedures, standard procedures have been drawn up.
315. A new step in the inspection procedure implemented since the third round is that at the end of the actual inspection phase, the inspectors briefly inform the school principal and teachers of their findings. This immediate feedback allows the school to give extra information on possible problematic issues, which considerably strengthens the quality of the final report. Furthermore, it is easier for schools to contextualize the findings of the Inspectorate, because the results are communicated immediately after the research and because there is a possibility to have the findings explained during this discussion.
316. In addition, the Inspectorate also tries to guarantee the quality of their members and services by membership of The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI), an international organization that aims to '*provide services geared at developing the professional expertise of inspectorates and their staff, and to contribute to the understanding of education developments in different countries*'⁹⁴.

4.2.10 *Results of recent school inspections*

317. Table 6 provides an overview of the recommendations awarded by the Inspectorate to the 777 schools that have been inspected since the adoption of the differentiated approach. Data from the second semester of the school year 2008-2009 and the entire school year 2009-2010 are included.

⁹⁴ <http://www.sici-inspectorates.org/web/guest/welcome-description>

318. A majority of schools received a ‘positive’ evaluation without any restriction. Over 40 % of the schools received the recommendation ‘restricted positive’. In only 3 schools the Inspectorate issued a ‘negative’ evaluation.

Table 6. Recommendations from the Inspectorate since January 2009

	Total	Positive	Restricted Positive	Negative
Mainstream elementary education	482	322	160	0
Special elementary education	49	37	12	0
Mainstream secondary education	210	76	132	2
Special secondary education	21	3	18	0
Part-time secondary education	15	1	13	1
Total	777	439 (56,5 %)	335 (43,1 %)	3 (0,4 %)

Source: Inspectorate

4.3 Internal evaluation

319. There is no general obligation for schools to perform self-evaluations. Schools are however inspected on whether or not they can account for their efforts to establish a comprehensive system of quality assurance, which in reality implies that regular self-analysis is required.
320. In order to establish a system of quality assurance, schools require ‘policy-making capacities’ (see sub-section 244). Having policy-making capacities is increasingly seen as a predictive factor for the quality of schools and for the assurance of policy and practices towards school improvement. Policy-making capacities determine whether or not the school conducts a self-analysis, the effectiveness and efficiency of the self-analysis and whether the school is able to increase its quality relying on the self-analysis.
321. During the last decade, a number of self-evaluation tools have been developed that allow schools to investigate and compare some process data with a reference group (e.g. PROZA⁹⁵ and IZES⁹⁶). Umbrella organizations have also developed tools for self-analysis of schools (e.g. DISO⁹⁷ and BIOS⁹⁸ by VSKO and ISA⁹⁹ by OVSG), which can only be used in a process of complementary coaching by the School Advisory Services. An increasing number of schools choose to apply these instruments for performing self-evaluations.

4.3.1 Information-rich environment

322. An important condition for schools to successfully manage their quality is the existence of an ‘information-rich environment’. Schools have different tools and tests that help them obtain an informed view on the quality of their processes and outcomes. Additionally, in order to develop a policy aimed at quality outcomes by benchmarking their processes and outcomes schools need to have information easily available on their school and on schools with a comparable context and input.

⁹⁵ PROSE, 2000.

⁹⁶ Instrument voor Zelfevaluatie van Scholen (Instrument for Self-evaluation of Schools), Van Petegem, P., 1997 (for secondary education); Van Petegem, P. & Cautreels, P. (for primary education).

⁹⁷ Diagnose-Instrument voor Secundair Onderwijs [Diagnostic Instrument for Secondary Education], Pedagogische Begeleidingsdienst Katholiek Onderwijs [School Advisory Service Catholic Education].

⁹⁸ Buitengewoon Onderwijs – Instrument – Ontwikkeling van Scholen [Special Education – Instrument – Development of schools], developed by VSKO.

⁹⁹ Interne Schoolanalyse [Internal School Analysis], developed by OVSG.

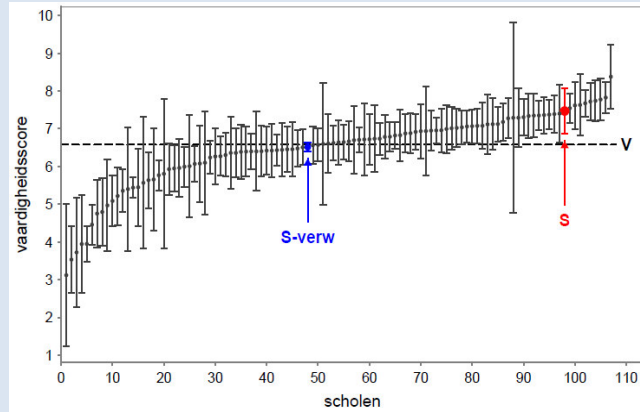
323. The current Minister of Education wants to make the school data at the Ministry of Education and Training's Data warehouse system available for schools and their internal quality care. This application currently used by the Inspectorate to support the decision on the inspection focus would allow schools to benchmark against schools with similar context and input variables (see digital monitor and reference frameworks, sub-section 298). In his policy memorandum the Minister also expressed the ambition of creating a 'knowledge centre' within the Ministry of Education and Training that will provide information to all education partners.¹⁰⁰
324. Participating schools in the National Assessment Programme receive a school feedback report. This report allows schools to evaluate its students' performance in comparison with collating schools.
325. Schools with strong policies are requesting reliable and valid tools calibrated through wide-scale data to assess to which degree they are successfully meeting the demands of the society and the government. To address this need the Parallel Versions of the tests used in the National Assessment Programme are developed under the supervision of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV) as a means for schools to gain information on their student performance outcomes concerning the attainment targets. The Parallel Versions are equivalent to the National Assessment Programme (see sub-section 144), with different but similar questions. The Parallel Versions enable schools to assess whether they succeeded in realising the attainment targets and to compare their outcomes with the average and with collating Flemish schools. Each school can voluntarily use the Parallel Versions without any further obligation. The Parallel Versions are administered yearly in the period of May-June (near the end of the school year, when attainment targets should be reached).
326. Participating schools will receive a feedback report. This report provides a general image of the extent to which the schools succeeded in achieving the selected attainment targets. It also provides schools the possibility to benchmark their results with other schools with a comparable student population (by means of the 'expected score', see the top graph in Figure 9). The added value obtained by the schools is also shown in the feedback report and compared to the added value of other schools (the bottom graph in Figure 9). Moreover, for secondary schools separate results for students of the different study areas are provided. Figure 9 provides some example fragments of a school feedback report.
327. The Parallel Versions aim to provide an informed basis for school analysis and AKOV stresses that it is not meant to become a tool for student assessment. Therefore the feedback report does not provide data on individual student performances.
328. Several tests are currently available for both primary and secondary schools (for primary education tests regarding mathematics and Dutch language; for the first stage in the A-stream of secondary schools French language and mathematics)¹⁰¹. It is expected that the number of available tests will increase in the following years.

¹⁰⁰ Smet, P. (2009). *Policy Memorandum on Education and Training 2009-2014 [Beleidsnota Onderwijs en Vorming 2009-2014]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/beleid/nota/2009-2014.pdf> (Dutch only)

¹⁰¹ Available at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/toetsenvoorscholen> (Dutch only)

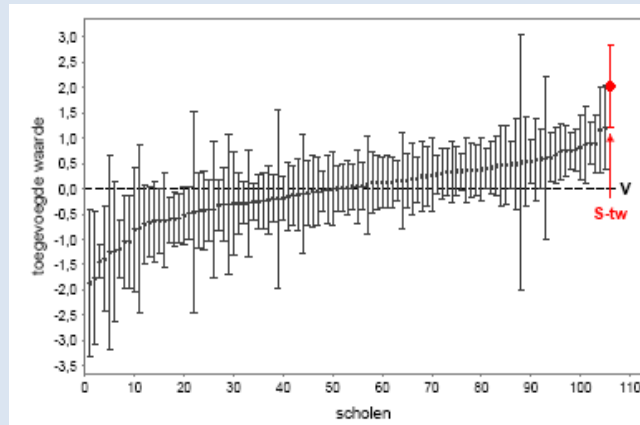
Figure 9. Fragments of an example school feedback report

School result



This figure shows the schools (horizontal ax) and the mean ability score of their students on a certain test (vertical ax). Also the confidence interval is indicated. 'S' is the result of the participating school, 'S-verw' is the result that could have been expected relying on student characteristics. V represents the Flemish mean ability score. The students in this fictive example school have obtained better results than expected.

Added value of the school



The difference between 'S' and 'S-verw' in the figure above gives an idea of schools' 'added value' (with its confidence interval). The figure left lists all schools on their added value ('S-tw'). The school in this fictive example has a larger added value than any other school in the reference data set of the National Assessment Programme..

Source: AKOV

329. The Parallel Versions are, however, not supported by all stakeholders. School Advisory Services argue that:
- There are methodological problems with this kind of school evaluation. The National Assessment Programme is a tool developed for evaluation at system level and it is not correct to use it for evaluation at other levels.
AKOV and the academic research team developing the Parallel Versions denounce this allegation, as to their opinion there is sufficient information to assess at the school level, provided that some 'warnings for the interpretation' that are explained in the feedback report are taken into account (e.g., it is a snapshot measurement, the measurement precision is dependent on the number of pupils taking the test (but is considered acceptable for regular class sizes), etc.).
 - The Parallel Versions provide only partial measurements of the curricula developed by individual schools or their umbrella organizations. These curricula are mostly more comprehensive than the attainment targets and development objectives).
To address the second comment AKOV explicitly indicates that the Parallel Versions are only one of the potential tools for schools to collect information on their students'

performances. Complementary information is necessary in order to obtain a comprehensive view.

- The Parallel Versions do not provide insight into causal factors of the results obtained. Addressing the third comment, the research team points to the analyses on the impact of background and process variables in the National Assessment Programme, which can be used to interpret the school results based on the Parallel Versions as well. Nevertheless, the school specific interpretation is indeed the responsibility of the school itself.
330. The feedback system of the Parallel Versions is assessed by means of feedback collected from schools on the user-friendliness, efficiency and prospective use of the reports and the feedback system. AKOV is considering whether it will organize a more in-depth evaluation of the Parallel Versions, including the cost efficiency of the system.
331. Another recent initiative comes from the School Feedback Project (SFP). SFP is a research and development project from three Flemish universities. It aims to develop a School Feedback System (SFS) as source of information for schools, research institutes and the policy level in education. The project is financed by the Flemish Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT, Agentschap voor Innovatie door Wetenschap en Techniek), an agency established and financed by the Flemish government.
332. SFS wants to become a means for schools to gather reliable information on their students' learning outcomes and progress, to assess the effects of an implemented innovation on the students (or on a specific group of the student population), to support the realisation of equal opportunities between students and to support the establishment of quality education. SFS will process both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, e.g. the student well-being and the dispositions towards study and school. The system could also be used as a tool to provide feedback on specific projects, e.g. truancy prevention projects.
333. From the start until now, different components of the SFS have been developed and integrated gradually. The individual school feedback collected from the start in 2006 until now is currently only available for the participating schools. The SFS will be the first tool that addresses schools' demand to benchmark not only student outputs but also the other parts of the CIPO-model, namely context, input and processes.
334. The website created by the Ministry of Education and Training called 'Tests for Schools' ('Toetsen voor Scholen')¹⁰² provides three kinds of tests that can support schools in their internal quality care processes. On this website, in addition to the Parallel Versions of the National Assessment Programme discussed above, the screening instrument SALTO and a student monitoring system LVS are available for registered schools. Both instruments are set up to strengthen student assessment (and are therefore covered in chapter 6, sub-section 577 and 580), but also provide information for schools on their students' performances and progress. SALTO is an instrument that measures the Dutch language skills of students at the start of primary education. The 'Student Monitoring System for Flanders' LVS ('Leerlingvolgsysteem voor Vlaanderen') enables schools to follow the progress of its students and to compare the student outcomes with reference groups of comparable students. This system contains tests for both nursery and primary education.
335. Also the OVSG- and VSKO tests (covered in sub-section 574), organized by the umbrella organizations to support schools' student assessment practices, contribute to the information-rich environment of schools. Moreover, generic shortcomings of students in a school may lead to a coaching process by the School Advisory Service of the involved umbrella organization.

¹⁰² <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/toetsenvoorscholen/> (Dutch only)

336. Other sources of information for schools depend on participation in local, national (Flemish) or international comparative research aimed at evaluation at system level. Participating schools will mostly receive an individual school feedback report on their students' performance or progress.

4.3.2 Self-evaluation in the light of the 'equal opportunities policy'

337. The Flemish policy on equal opportunities (GOK, 'Gelijke Onderwijskansenbeleid') is set out in the Decree on Equal Education Opportunities (2002)¹⁰³. Schools with a high number of students from deprived backgrounds¹⁰⁴ receive extra personnel resources to address additional needs. Schools enjoy a large degree of freedom with regard to the use of these extra funds, but they are obliged to perform a 'self-analysis' in order to guarantee efficient expenditure in two of the following domains:

- Prevention and remediation of development or learning delays;
- Language education;
- Intercultural education;
- Student flow and orientation;
- Socio-emotional development;
- Pupil and parent participation.

The clusters 'language education', 'prevention and remediation of learning delays' and 'socio-emotional development' were the most popular topics chosen by schools.

338. Resources allowed for GOK are granted for three years. Both at the end of the first cycle (2002-2005) and at the end of the second cycle (2005-2008) the Inspectorate was tasked to assess the school's use of the extra resources. In the second cycle, only the schools that did not receive GOK-funds in the first cycle were evaluated in addition to the schools that obtained the score 'positive after deliberation' or 'negative' in the first cycle's inspection. Schools that scored 'positive' in the first cycle were considered not to benefit from another inspection and consequently left out of this evaluation cycle.
339. From the schools inspected in 2008, 85% attained a 'positive' recommendation on their GOK-policy. Almost 15% received 'positive after deliberation' and 15 schools (2,5%) 'negative'. Although it was initially planned that the latter schools would be excluded from extra GOK-funds for the next cycle (2008-2011), the Education Decree XVIII established that those schools would keep fifty percent of their extra funds on the condition they agree with externally imposed support for improving their policy and practices related to GOK. This decree was inspired by the principle of 'development-oriented sanctioning' discussed in sub-section 270. After one year the Inspectorate re-inspected the school's GOK-policy. 14 out of the 15 schools with the result 'negative' agreed with these terms in exchange for extra funds.
340. In the schools that were diagnosed with several shortages in the previous inspection (2005), the Inspectorate found considerable improvement. The recommendations given by the Inspectorate had fostered schools towards more policy-oriented reflection and practices. This shows the effect of regular inspections on the quality of education.

¹⁰³ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs (2002). *Decreet betreffende gelijke onderwijskansen [Decree on equity of educational opportunities]*. Decree adopted at June 28, 2002. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13298>

¹⁰⁴ Indicators to align the concept of 'students with deprived backgrounds' are: students with no fix abode, mother without diploma of secondary education, living without family, living with family on substitute income, living with non-Dutch-speaking family.

4.3.3 'Collegial Visit'

341. A relatively new and unique form of external evaluation is 'collegial visit'. Much like the Inspectorate, a team of teachers from one school performs a quality check in another school, using a scientifically valid set of criteria. After visiting the school the team writes a report which concludes with concrete 'collegial' advice. The subject school decides autonomously to what extent it will take this advice into account. So, unlike the Inspectorate, the collegial visitation team has no formal status and can not force the school to take action. The concept of collegial visit is still very immature in Flanders, but research already proves that visited schools learn a lot from this alternative kind of inspection.

4.4 Mutual influence between internal evaluation and external inspection

342. While traditionally external inspections were regarded as 'control' (in accountability perspective), self-evaluations by schools were conducted in the light of the development perspective. In recent years, this strict division has faded or even tamped out. The Inspectorate is convinced of its role to control but also to help schools develop their policies and practices to become better performing institutes.
343. The Inspectorate uses the term 'communicating vessels' to explain the relationship between internal evaluations and external inspections. Since the adoption of the differentiated approach the Inspectorate will intensify the frequency and intensity of the external inspection in case of insufficient internal quality assurance systems; schools with strong self-evaluation capacities (and adjusting their policies and practices according to the findings of the self-evaluation) need less frequent and intense external inspection. The Inspectorate is trying to balance:
- On the one hand the expectation of the government (and of the students and parents, the 'users of education') that schools have to account for their quality;
 - On the other hand the Freedom of education and the respect for the internal processes of quality care and policy-making capacities in the schools.
- An important condition to finding such a balance is 'maturity':
- The maturity of the inspectors to have confidence in the schools' quality assurance systems;
 - The maturity of the schools to take their responsibility
 - By looking at their quality in a systematic way;
 - With involvement of different stakeholders;
 - And leading to processes of quality improvement.
344. Within the differentiated approach adopted by the Inspectorate for external inspections, it seems logical that self-evaluations carried out by the school are taken into account. A well performed self-evaluation leading to improvement plans shows the school's policy-making capacities. The self-evaluation can also deliver indications for the areas on which the schools would benefit most from an evaluation through 'external glasses'.
345. The Inspectorate, however, refrains from taking over the results of the self-evaluation or to letting the scope of the differentiated inspection depend partially or entirely on the outcomes of the self-evaluation because of the following reasons:
- Taking over self-evaluations would encourage schools to perform self-evaluations with the underlying goal of having an influence on the external inspection rather than for its own quality development (accountability instead of development perspective).
 - It would also mean that the results of school self-evaluations would become public through the external inspection report. Therefore results of the self-evaluation are never included in the inspection report, even when these results have informed the inspection findings or contributed to the determination of the inspection focus.

- The fact that a school has flagged a defect itself does not always imply that the problem has been adequately dealt with or that it can be left out of the scope of the external inspection.

The influence of self-evaluations on the external inspection is therefore more implicit.

346. External inspections also influence schools' internal evaluations. The Inspectorate screens whether the schools monitor their own quality, which in most cases means conducting a self-evaluation. The Inspectorate also advocates the strengthening of the policy-making capacities of schools, which should allow schools to enhance their quality assurance system. The development-oriented rationale of the external inspection leads schools to take initiatives to take up a more active responsibility towards enhancing the quality of education. Therefore the result of an external inspection might be that schools set up a system of self-evaluation and reflection on the underlying processes leading to certain (positive or negative) outputs shown by the external inspection.

4.5 Continuous assessment through predefined co-operation structures

347. In addition to formal external inspection and school self-evaluations, schools policies and proceedings are continuously assessed by means of co-operation with other schools or co-operation with its own main stakeholders.

4.5.1 Local consultation platform

348. In Flanders 70 Local Consultation Platforms (LOP, 'lokaal overlegplatform') have been installed in order to watch over equal opportunities in education. The platforms are spread over the entire region. There are platforms for primary and secondary education and every school is connected to one. Each LOP consists of: the principals of all schools and involved authorities, the Pupil Guidance Centre, representatives of school staff, parents and students, local socio-cultural and economic organizations, organizations concerning immigrants and poor people, integration centres, reception desks for newcomers and school-based community education.
349. Each platform acts according to the objectives formulated in the Decree for Equal Educational Opportunities (GOK-decreet).¹⁰⁵ Through various initiatives it tries to enhance social cohesion, tolerance, open-mindedness and respect. It strives for education devoid of discrimination and for maximum learning and development opportunities for all pupils/students. Its mission is to investigate ways to implement this and to give advice. The LOP plays a specific role in the implementation and the use of the right for enrolment. Finally, each platform has a mediatory entity which can be consulted by parents who are experiencing difficulties in having their child enrolled in a school.
350. LOP's contribute to systematic continuous assessment of schools by reflection on their policy but as well by the 'environment analysis' that is conducted by each LOP.

4.5.2 School communities

351. School communities are established in Flemish education by means of different Decrees and Circular Letters.¹⁰⁶ A school community consists of a group of schools¹⁰⁷ that ensures the

¹⁰⁵ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2002). *Decreet betreffende Gelijke Onderwijskansen [Decree on Equal Educational Opportunities]*. Decree adopted at June 28, 2002. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13298>

¹⁰⁶ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (1997). *Decreet Basisonderwijs [Decree on Elementary Education]*. Decree adopted at February 5, 1997. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=12254> (Dutch only)

provision of education within a defined geographical area. The Ministry of Education and Training motivates schools to establish a new school community together with neighbouring schools or to join an existing school community. The Ministry has defined clear criteria and responsibilities for school communities and awards a number of advantages to school communities that proceed in line with these criteria. The main advantages are financial benefits (extra teaching time) and for secondary schools also organizational rewards (e.g. more favourable rationalization norms for installing or continuing a study area; or maximal use of infrastructure). The school communities are allocated resources in support of their operation. These resources for staffing are calculated on the basis of the number of pupils within the school community.

352. An individual school can, however, choose not to be included in any school community. School communities may be organized among schools of the same governing body, of different governing bodies and even of different educational networks.
353. School communities in primary education aim to increase the policy-making and organizational capacities of schools through increased co-operation. School communities in secondary education serve a double purpose: on the one hand enhanced transparency of study areas including improved student career counselling and orientation, on the other hand more efficient use of financial resources.
354. School communities in primary education are entitled to decide on e.g. the use of financial resources for teachers in the light of ICT and ‘care policy’, job descriptions and teacher appraisal policies. The schools’ governing bodies, however, decide together whether they delegate their decisive responsibilities on each of those subjects to the school community or whether each school keeps its autonomy.
355. The most notable responsibilities of school communities in secondary education are:
 - Rationalization of the study areas provided (eliminating unnecessary or inefficient overlaps) in order to increase the efficiency of expenditure and in order to increase transparency for students and parents;
 - Co-operation regarding personnel policy, including arrangements on staff recruitment, appraisal and evaluation;
 - Discussing agreements for division of available teaching time over schools;
 - Providing recommendations on investments on infrastructure.
356. Although participation in a school community is not mandatory, most schools have joined in order to enjoy the financial and organizational rewards, but also because they are convinced of the added value of cooperation between schools for their internal quality improvement

Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2005). *Omzendbrief scholengemeenschappen basisonderwijs [Circular Letter school communities nursery and primary education]*, June 30, 2005. Available at:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13620> (Dutch only)

Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (1998). *Decreet houdende diverse maatregelen met betrekking tot het secundair onderwijs en tot wijziging van het decreet van 25 februari 1997 betreffende het basisonderwijs - Titel VIII Scholengemeenschappen [Decree on several arrangements regarding secondary education and regarding adjustments to the Decree of 25 February 1997 concerning primary education – Title VIII School communities]*. Decree adopted at July 14, 1998. Available at:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=12982#148039>

Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (1999). *Omzendbrief scholengemeenschappen secundair onderwijs [Circular Letter school communities secondary education]*, April 30, 1999. Available at:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13001>

¹⁰⁷ Not taking in account a number of exceptions in which one secondary school is allowed to form a ‘school community’ in itself. This report however does not elaborate on the criteria for establishing a school community. Additional information regarding this subject can be found in the Circular Letter on school communities in secondary education mentioned above.

processes. Cooperation implies continuous evaluation and adjustment of school policies. Currently, only 118 schools are not part of a school community (see table 7), because of different reasons¹⁰⁸:

- A majority of those schools provide special education. They often do not see how co-operation with mainstream schools might have an added value for their school.
- Also a number of schools providing mainstream education choose not to join a school community because they are not convinced it will contribute to the quality of their school. Other reasons may be that they feel sufficiently supported by the governing body of their school (and thus do not need the stimuli provided by the Ministry of Education and Training for schools in a school community), that they already have a number of established co-operations with schools or other institutions (often at the same campus), or that their pedagogical project or their study areas are so specific that co-operation is hard to be put into practice.
- Finally, a small number of schools is not allowed to join in a school community, mostly because they are perceived by other schools as ‘schools in need of extra students or extra resources’, or because they are situated in a very isolated geographical area so that co-operation would be difficult and less meaningful.

<i>Table 7. Share of schools in a school community</i>				
	schools associated in a school community		schools not associated in a school community	
primary mainstream education *	2,290	98,7 %	30	1,3%
primary special education *	175	88,8 %	22	11,1 %
secondary mainstream education **	950	98,0 %	19	2,0 %
secondary special education **	64	57,7 %	47	42,3 %
total number of schools	3,479	96,7 %	118	3,3 %
* most recent data from 2009.				
** most recent data from 2010.				

4.5.3 School council

357. The school council is a discussion platform at individual school level involving parents, personnel, representatives of the local community and (for secondary education) students. The school council is a mandatory participation body for each school installed by a Decree in 2004¹⁰⁹.

358. The school council’s role depends on the discussion topic involved:

- The school council has an advisory role towards the governing body regarding the school principal’s profile, organization and installation of study areas, external cooperation, student transport, staff professionalisation and experiments or projects. The governing body has to account for the reasons of its decision in case it does not follow the school council’s advice.

¹⁰⁸ Devos, G., Van Petegem, P., Delvaux, E., Feys, E., & Franquet, A. (2010). *De evaluatie van scholengemeenschappen in het basis- en secundair onderwijs [The evaluation of school communities in primary and secondary education]*. OBPWO-project 07.02.

¹⁰⁹ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2004). *Decreet betreffende participatie op school en de Vlaamse Onderwijsraad [Decree on participation at school and the Flemish Education Council]*. Decree adopted at April 2, 2004. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13504> (Dutch only).

- The school council has a consultative role concerning school regulations, financial contributions by parents, the school development plan, the contract and cooperation with CLB (Pupil Guidance Centre), activities outside the school, adjustments to the infrastructure, the criteria for employment of teaching time, the policy regarding well-being and safety and the length and timing of internships. Arrangements agreed by all members of the school council automatically turn into decisions for the school policy. If the school council does not reach an agreement, the school's governing body is responsible for taking a final decision.
 - Finally, the school council has to agree with the school's pedagogical project.
359. By means of the school council the governing body's and the school's policy is continuously being assessed with regard to expectations of parents, staff, local community and eventually students. VSK (Flemish Student Council) tries to guide students who participate in the student council but at the same time pleads for a structure that allows more intensive coaching of those students.

4.5.4 Parent council, personnel council, student council

360. Furthermore, the same Decree states a school has to establish a parent council if this is requested by at least ten percent of the parents¹¹⁰. The same applies to a personnel council as well as a student council in secondary education¹¹¹. Primary schools establish a student council if ten percent of the 11-year old or older students support the request. These councils are advisory bodies concerning all decisions where respectively parents/personnel/students are involved. The school principal has to inform these councils on all relevant decisions. They also have the responsibility to mandate representatives for the school council. Neither parent councils nor student councils, however, are allowed to make judgments on individual teacher's performance.
361. VSK (Flemish Student Council) has reported that the subjects discussed in student councils are often limited to typical issues with limited impact (e.g. benches on the playground, activities for good causes etc). VSK tries to promote student councils to ask participation in more important decisions of the school (e.g. infrastructure, examination regulations etc), as it has found that student councils currently do not often use their right to put subjects on the school's policy agenda on their own account.
362. Additionally some schools are organizing ad hoc so-called 'parent parliaments' in which parents are invited to share their opinion. This is often the case when policy decisions are pending that concern parents. Mostly practical issues are the subject in such informal meetings (e.g. changes to the time table of the school).

4.6 Impact of evaluation on quality improvement

363. Both external inspections and internal evaluations serve the goal of the school's accountability and the schools quality development.

¹¹⁰ The parent councils are supported by and represented through the parent associations of their respective umbrella organizations in the Flemish Student Council (VLOR).

¹¹¹ Most of the secondary schools (about 80 percent) currently have a student council. Student councils are supported by represented through VSK (Flemish Student Council, Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel) in the Flemish Education Council (VLOR).

4.6.1 Impact of external inspection

364. The obligation for school principals to share the findings of the inspection report during a formal meeting with the personnel in the school is explicitly mentioned in each of the school inspection reports. Teacher's unions, however, claim that this is far from common practice.
365. Although the School Advisory Services focus above all on prevention, they also have an important role after the external inspection of schools by the Inspectorate. The School Advisory Services may be called on to address possible shortcomings noticed by the Inspectorate. Whenever the Inspectorate finds it necessary to allocate mandatory external support to a school in order to address shortcomings and improve its policy-making capacities, the School Advisory Services are commissioned with this task (see 271).
366. There is, however, no recent research available on the impact of inspections by the Inspectorate on the improvement of educational quality. The Inspectorate itself also refrains from measuring its output because of the difficulty of such a research:
- School inspection has direct, but also many indirect effects: it fosters schools' awareness of their autonomy and of their accountability in order to improve their own quality;
 - Most of the improvement processes are not due to one single action or actor, but mainly inspired by an interplay of several – both controlling and supporting – actors.

4.6.2 Impact of self-evaluation

367. Recent research has shown that the impact of self-evaluations is often not as high as expected¹¹². Quality of self-evaluations is higher in schools with shared ownership, in which different stakeholders partake in the decision-making processes. The schools often lack a clear commonly shared goal. While school leaders consider self-evaluation as a tool for policy development, many teachers aren't convinced of the importance of self-evaluation for the development of their school; it is often seen as something threatening their autonomy and as a form of social control. Although teachers agree that self-evaluation can create valuable results, self-evaluation is not popular among teachers.
368. Besides the lack of commonly shared goals, the interpretation phase of self-evaluation is often an obstruction in the success of schools' self-evaluation processes. While the first steps of self-evaluation (defining a clear goal, deciding on a method, implementing a tool and even describing results) are mostly passed smoothly, schools do not get successfully through the phase of 'interpreting results' and determining underlying factors for the results. Therefore it is hard for schools to draw up improvement plans relying on the results of its self-analysis.
369. It seems that especially the perception of the process of self-evaluation is due to this: teachers and staff members indicated that self-evaluations are time-consuming, subjective rather than objective and difficult to carry out.¹¹³ Other research indicated that the timing of the self-evaluation, and whether or not is mandatory, determined its quality. Therefore the researchers advocate for flexibility in the implementation of self-evaluations.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Vanhoof, J., P. Van Petegem, and S. De Maeyer. (2009). Attitudes towards school self-evaluation. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 35, 21-28.

Vanhoof, J., Van Petegem, P., Verhoeven, J.C. & Buvens, I.. (2009). Linking the Policy-making Capacities of Schools and the Quality of Self-evaluations: the view of school leaders. *Education Management Administration & Leadership*, 37 (5), 667-686.

¹¹³ Idem.

¹¹⁴ Van Petegem, P., Verhoeven, J. Buvens, I & Vanhoof, J. (2005). *Zelfevaluatie en beleidseffectiviteit in Vlaamse scholen: het gelijke onderwijskansenbeleid als casus [Self-evaluation and policy effectiveness in Flemish schools: the case of the equal educational opportunities policy]*. Gent, Belgium: Academia Press.

370. Another researcher's opinion is that in order to increase impact of self-evaluations, the following conditions are crucial:¹¹⁵
- Schools need to be supported to develop a clear policy about what the school thinks is important, thereby keeping the focus on its priority tasks: providing teaching and learning activities. The activities conducted by the teacher in interaction with students are in the centre of the school's quality policy.
 - Schools have to be able to support effective professional development of teachers and therefore need the capacity of schools to judge external in-service training initiatives.
 - Schools need to have the capacity to make an evaluation of its current structures and eventually create new structures to support the educational activities.
 - Schools need to be supported in their capacity to evaluate external initiatives or obligations regarding their own school-specific policy, strengths and challenges (e.g. asking themselves what they want to achieve by joining a school community, rather than just joining a school community because of the extra benefits it brings). Also the decision whether or not to implement an externally proposed innovation needs to rely on the school's own policy.
 - Finally, schools need to be strengthened in their capacity to reflect on the four previously mentioned capacities and evaluate to what extent they are currently already sufficiently present in the school.
371. The primary schools that participated in the SiBO-project¹¹⁶ each got an individualised report on the performances of their school. Research on the use of school performance feedback provided by SiBO has demonstrated that schools handle this feedback in many different ways.¹¹⁷ The research showed that in some schools evaluation reports are hardly even read by the school principal and possibly a selected number of participants. Sometimes teachers were intentionally not asked to be involved in reading the reports. Occasionally, the feedback reports led to discussion between the school principal and the special care coordinator, possibly with the support of teachers; this discussion was often informal and unplanned. This, however, did not lead automatically to changes in policy or practices: most schools found it hard to successfully give interpretation to the data available in the feedback report. Only a few school principals set up initiatives to identify strengths and weaknesses and underlying causal factors for the school report's findings.
372. The same research on use of school feedback by primary schools indicated that school feedback was particularly used in a symbolic way: the report was perceived as a useful instrument in highlighting existing opinions and underlining various problems in the school's functioning that were already informally assumed before (by the school principal). In some schools, the feedback information was used to motivate teachers and school staff, which sometimes implied that results were only partially presented. Lower performance results were used by some school principals to help teachers motivate to address the established shortcomings, whereas other school principals kept the results private in order not to discourage their team.
373. Another finding was that the reports were used in an 'accountability' perspective (for the purpose of demonstrating efforts and results in the light of an external school inspection by the Inspectorate) rather than in a 'development' perspective (with the purpose of school improvement).

¹¹⁵ Vandenberghe, R. (2007). Beleidsvoerend vermogen van scholen helpen te ontwikkelen: een uitdaging voor de pedagogische begeleiding. In: Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (2005). *Beleidsvoerend vermogen van scholen ontwikkelen: een verkenning*. Antwerpen, Apeldoorn: Garant. p 21-46.

¹¹⁶ SiBO (School Careers in Primary Education, Schoolloopbanen in het Basisonderwijs) is a longitudinal research started in 2002 in about 200 schools. SiBO is established as a means to contribute to educational system evaluation and is therefore described in chapter 3, sub-section 197.

¹¹⁷ Verhaeghe, G., Vanhoof, J., & Valcke, M., & Van Petegem, P. (2010). Using school performance feedback: perceptions of primary schools principals. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 21, 167-168.

- 374. School Advisory Services of different umbrella organizations have developed short-term training initiatives of school principals and middle management in order to strengthen the school's policy-making capacities.
- 375. Also different issues of the Inspectorate's Education Mirror state that the self-evaluating capacity of schools still needs to be enhanced in order to make self-evaluations a substantially contributing method to the quality of education provided by schools.
- 376. School Advisory Services agree that self-evaluations may be efficient if the process is supported by the school principal, teachers and other school staff. Although statistics are not available the School Advisory Services of different umbrella organizations indicate that a considerable number of schools are able to draw up improvement plans based on preceding steps of self-evaluation, in addition to schools that conduct self-evaluations merely from an accountability perspective with limited active involvement of teachers.
- 377. Finally, the Inspectorate argues that the impact of self-evaluations on school improvement processes would increase if also parents and local communities would be involved in the process of self-analysis. This is currently however hardly ever the case.

4.7 Articulation with other forms of evaluation

- 378. Output indicators bear the most important information for external school inspection. Therefore the system of external school inspection clearly fits into the rationale of evaluation of the Flemish educational system.
- 379. School inspections have impact on evaluating education at system level through the annually issued 'Education Mirror' containing a summary and analysis of last year's school inspections by the Inspectorate and additionally extra research on predefined topics in those schools.
- 380. System evaluation also informs the method of school assessments. Attainment targets and developmental objectives (continuously adjusted by evaluation at system level) have large impact on the school evaluations: schools have to account for their results and efforts towards the attainment targets and developmental objectives. The differentiated approach adopted by the Inspectorate is the result of an evaluation at system level to find distinguishing school characteristics in order to determine success factors. Also the predefined structures of continuous school assessment (LOP's, school councils and school communities) are inspired by system evaluations.
- 381. Schools' self-evaluations often eagerly use the feedback they receive from national and international comparative surveys and data: the Data warehouse-system, the PISA (and other) international surveys and the National Assessment Programme all provide data and statistics on school's performances and processes. Furthermore the Parallel Versions of the National Assessment Programme is available for schools' self-evaluations.
- 382. With 'student performances', 'outcomes' and 'student career' as three main groups of indicators in the CIPO-model under the title 'output', it is clear that the evaluation and results obtained by students have an important influence on school inspections performed by the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate will check whether the school has a 'student evaluation policy' that allows the school to monitor whether the students have achieved the attainment targets. Results from students in tools for student assessment (e.g. OVSG or VSKO-tests, LVS and SALTO) are important sources of information for internal school assessment.

383. Since the adoption of the holistic approach by the Inspectorate in 1991, there is less evidence for the link between school and teacher evaluation. The school, however, has to account for its efforts to monitor its quality, which means the school has to build a policy of teacher appraisal complying with the predefined regulations.

4.8 Policy initiatives and pending issues

384. More than other forms of evaluation, school assessment is currently under discussion. Several issues are currently being questioned, either by the Ministry of Education and Training or by the Inspectorate itself, either by some of the stakeholders.
385. The major shift in rationale of the external inspection process since 1991, namely investigating the performance at school level rather than individual teacher's performances, is widely accepted by all stakeholders. It has however created a need to develop another system for teacher appraisal which has only recently been addressed (see chapter 5).

4.8.1 Impact of internal evaluation on external inspection

386. The differentiated approach of the Inspectorate is the result of a long process. One of the sore subjects was to what extent schools themselves and their self-evaluations are allowed to determine the focus of the external inspection. From a development perspective, it seems opportune to align external inspection with internal processes.
387. The Inspectorate has, however, chosen not to let the focus of external inspection depend on eventual self-evaluations. A number of reasons summarized in sub-section 345 endorses this policy (e.g. to avoid that self-evaluations are conducted merely for accountability purposes). It is, however, not clear to what extent this official policy is currently already common practice during school inspections. The policy line entails the risk that current improvement plans and prioritized themes by the school may be undervalued.
388. Schools and School Advisory Services advocate use of self-evaluations by the schools during the inspection's preliminary investigation phase. As such, the school can bring its current sore subjects and possible levers for school improvement into the research focus. The Inspectorate however fears it will not be able to fulfill its responsibility towards the Minister of Education and the society to ensure external control, if self-evaluations are taken into account in the decision of the inspection focus.

4.8.2 Differentiated approach

389. The recent shift towards a differentiated approach is still subject of discussion both between the Ministry of Education and Training and stakeholders, as inside the Inspectorate itself. The Inspectorate has only limited experience with this new approach and is still in a process of continuous improvement of the inspection processes. The first feedback from schools on the differentiated approach is rather positive. A number of difficulties are summarized below:
- The main remark from mainly secondary school principals was that the underlying basis for the choice of the scope of inspection should be made more explicit. This need was already addressed by means of the more elaborate motivation for the research focus since this school year (see sub-section 275).
 - Another difficulty already discussed before is the mandatory coaching by the School Advisory Services. The efficiency and effectiveness of mandatory support is questioned by the umbrella organizations, but also by the Ministry of Education and Training itself. A purely demand-driven support is, however, not desirable, according to the Ministry of Education and Training, as mainly schools with strong policy-

making capacities and high educational quality are likely to ask for external support, rather than the schools which are more in need of assistance.

- Furthermore, the Flemish government has a crucial role when it comes to judging the quality of the improvement plan submitted by schools that received a ‘negative’ recommendation. Schools with an approved improvement plan are allowed to continue functioning, while a disapproved improvement plan leads to a consequent school inspection and possibly closure of the school. In spite of the importance of this decision by the Flemish government, currently no clear criteria are yet available to inform this decision.
- Finally, the Inspectorate has to guard that its inspections serve the principle of ‘equal treatment of all schools’. Therefore the Inspectorate can not merely focus on the negative aspects of the school’s functioning, but should include all ‘distinct’ factors of the school quality in the inspection focus and report.

390. The Ministry of Education and Training as well as the Inspectorate seek advice from international point of view on the current state of school inspections and to what extent it effectively contributes to school improvement. A pending issue is to what extent the current policy and practices can have an impact on the quality provided by schools, taking into account that schools are allowed to develop their own definition of ‘quality education’ and establish a policy of quality improvement regarding this school-specific definition (in respect with the Freedom of education principle). Systematic reviews on the processes and results of external school inspections are lacking.

4.8.3 Policy-making capacities

391. Another pending issue is to what extent the Ministry of Education and Training is allowed to assess the increasingly important policy-making capacity of schools, as this often runs parallel with the ‘school principal’s capacities’. The evaluation of schools’ policy-making capacities more or less implies an evaluation of the school principal’s functioning. Judging on staffs’ capabilities is, however, not under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Training, but is the schools’ governing bodies’ responsibility. In chapter 7 from sub-section 630 onwards the evaluation of school principals is discussed.

392. It has already been discussed that several schools do still need a long coaching process before they will be able to define their own policy and act according to this policy. According to the Inspectorate especially small-scale schools are vulnerable for this lack of policy-making capacities. For these schools it is hard to monitor their quality or to perform comprehensive quality measurements. School Advisory Services are aware they carry long and difficult responsibility to strengthen schools’ policy-making capacities.

393. Based on the two previous premises – namely the increased importance of school principal’s managing skills on the one hand and the vulnerability of many schools on the other hand – has raised once again the discussion on certified training for school principals. The teacher qualification that is currently sufficient to be appointed as a school principal is being called into question.

4.8.4 Evaluation of actors contributing to school improvement

394. Whether or not school evaluations lead to school improvement depends largely on the schools’ policy-making capacities, but also on the quality of the coaching School Advisory Services. The School Advisory Services are obliged to monitor their own quality, but until now their quality of school coaching has never been subject to external evaluation. This is, however, planned to change in the near future. The plans for this evaluation are covered more into detail in sub-section 639.

395. Related with the evaluation of the School Advisory Services, the Ministry of Education and Training aspires to assess the quality of training courses given to schools and school teams by individual training providers, which are often not part of the education sector. It is, however, yet unclear how this aspiration can be put into practice.

4.8.5 Home education

396. An issue that recently arose is the need to clarify to what extent the Ministry of Education and Training can control the quality provided in 'home education'. The increasingly growing sector of home education is divided into students who actually study at home (taught by one of their parents) and students who attend private non-recognized schools.
397. The Belgian constitution allows the Ministry of Education and Training to check whether the children's rights are being respected and whether all talents and aspects of students are being developed at individual student level. The main question for the Ministry of Education and Training is how this latter condition can be assessed on a collective basis (for private non-recognized schools) rather than on individual basis, in order to ensure the 'learning rights' of every child under compulsory schooling.
398. It is, however, a contradiction to impose private non-recognized schools (which have chosen not to be part of the official or recognized school system) to be inspected by the Inspectorate, which is an integral important part of the regular school system. The Freedom of education principle grants those schools the right to conduct education on their own terms.
399. Another difficulty in this discussion is that increased inspection would entail an increased expectation of accountability towards the Ministry of Education and Training regarding the quality assurance of these private non-recognized schools.
400. The question to increase the control over private non-recognized schools is supported by the Flemish Child Rights Committee.
401. Another group of students who are officially under 'home education' consists of the minors who are being detained in a youth prison or centre for specialised youth care. These minors receive education which is organized and supervised by the Ministry of Welfare. The Ministry of Education and Training is currently pending to what extent they have to ensure quality of these forms of education.

4.8.6 Student and parent involvement

402. VSK (Flemish Student Council) and the representative organizations for parents complain that students and parents are not systematically involved during external inspection of the school. The Inspectorate is currently pending how it can increase involvement of those groups. As 'satisfaction' of students/parents is one of the output indicators in the CIPO-model, it is important that there are methods available to map students' and parents' overall opinion. These methods are currently not yet available, but the discussion is on-going. It is, however, not easy to perform a survey with a representative sample of parents/students within the tight timeframe of an external school inspection.
403. One of the possible methods to involve parents and students would be to take over results of eventual self-evaluations in which those groups were questioned. This is currently not the case but the relationship between self-evaluation and external inspection is under continuous assessment (see sub-section 342). It is, however, doubtful if including self-evaluations in the results of the external inspection would substantially increase parent/student involvement: the scope of schools' self-evaluations is often limited to the school principal and staff.

404. The parent organizations of the different umbrella organizations are currently preparing the implementation of the quality label ‘parent-friendly schools’, inspired by existing practices in the Netherlands. This label will be awarded by a committee involving education practitioners, parents and members of the Inspectorate to schools with systematic parent involvement in policy discussions and good quality two-way flow of information between the school and parents.

4.8.7 Denominational subjects

405. Finally, also the control of the quality of denominational courses currently remains a challenge. As written in sub-section 284, this inspection of denominational courses falls under the jurisdiction of the recognized bodies of the acknowledged religions. The Ministry of Education and Training aspires to establish a strengthened and more transparent framework for inspection of the quality in these courses.

Chapter 5. Teacher Appraisal

406. This chapter will discuss the current legally established procedures for staff appraisal, as well as the way these measures are implemented at school level. There is no long tradition in the Flemish Community regarding teacher appraisal, which implies that not much expertise is available in this domain. Due to the Freedom of education principle schools are responsible to conduct staff evaluations, although a regulatory framework is imposed on them. Furthermore the quality assurance of teacher appraisal, different forms of teacher performance evaluation and methods for recruitment of teachers are included in this chapter.

5.1 General Framework

407. The constitutional 'Freedom of education' granted to schools implies that schools are responsible for teacher appraisal and evaluation of their personnel. Schools therefore enjoy large autonomy concerning their personnel policy. By means of Decrees and Ministerial Circular Letters¹¹⁸ the Flemish authorities have imposed a four-year assessment cycle comprising feedback and evaluation based on individual job descriptions. This framework aims to encourage schools to develop an active and stimulating staff policy.

408. The current regulatory framework is rather new. Until 1991 the Inspectorate assessed the performance of individual teachers in order to get a view on the school's performances. This rationale was, however, left for a more holistic approach in which the school as a whole is assessed (see sub-section 251). This shift in rationale left teacher evaluation as a blank field for at least a decade. In 2007 job descriptions were imposed as a tool for all schools to enhance teacher appraisal. At the same time cyclical evaluation became mandatory for secondary schools. Primary schools are only imposed to organize the teacher appraisal cycles since 2009.

409. The regulatory framework is a result of elaborate discussion with organizing bodies of schools (via umbrella organizations) and teachers (via teacher's unions).

5.1.1 Teacher appraisal as a continuous and development-oriented process

410. Teacher evaluation has been defined by means of a decree as a constructive and positive policy tool enabling schools' governing bodies to conduct an autonomous personnel management aimed at the provision of quality education.

411. Every teacher is formally evaluated at least once every four year, but the evaluation process is broader than only the final formal evaluation interview. Evaluation is perceived as a cycle of maximum four years involving continuous planning and improvement. The four-year cycle comprises both appraisal and evaluation interviews. The evaluation process does not

¹¹⁸ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (1991). *Decreet betreffende de rechtspositie van bepaalde personeelsleden van het Gemeenschapsonderwijs*. [Decree on the legal status of certain personnel in Education organized by the Flemish Community]. Decree adopted at March 27, 1991. Available at:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=12528>

Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (1991). *Decreet betreffende de rechtspositie van sommige personeelsleden van het gesubsidieerd onderwijs en de gesubsidieerde centra voor leerlingenbegeleiding*. [Decree on the legal status of certain personnel in subsidized education and subsidized Centres for Pupil Guidance] Decree adopted at March 27, 1991. Available at:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=12657>

Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2007). *Omzendbrief Functiebeschrijving en evaluatie* [Circular Letter on Job Description and Evaluation], October 29, 2007. Available at:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13932>

only result in judgments on teachers' performances but is more regarded as a process providing support and coaching to the individual teacher.

412. Evaluation allows school principals to express appreciation and to make adjustments to the teachers' practices, but is also an important part of the school's self-assessment. The development-oriented cycle contributes to both schools' and teachers' continuous assessment and improvement.

5.1.2 Job Descriptions

413. The individual teacher's job description provides the reference framework for the teacher appraisal cycle. Job descriptions aim to be development-oriented tools, motivating and supporting teachers towards professional development. Job descriptions enhance the dialogue between school principals (or middle management) and teachers, clarifying mutual expectations, increasing teachers' involvement in the school policies and guiding the teacher's professional development.
414. Since 2007 schools' organising bodies are obliged to make an individual job description for each teacher appointed for at least 104 days during one school year. The job description is the result of a mutual agreement between the first evaluator (see sub-section 425) and the individual teacher. In the event of a conflict the governing body of the school has the responsibility to decide on the issues were no agreement can be reached.
415. The Ministry of Education and Training refrains from imposing a model job description, allowing schools to draw up job descriptions accounting with the local context and expectations. The umbrella organizations of the different educational networks have developed exemplary models in co-operation with the teacher's unions. As each job description is an individual agreement between a teacher and his first evaluator, these models need to be adapted to the school policy and the staff expectations.
416. The central topic of each teacher's individual job description is 'teaching'. 'Teaching' covers not just the lessons, but also the planning and preparation of lessons, the within-class student counselling, student assessment (by means of tests, exams and specific assignments), professional development and cooperation with school principal, with colleagues, with the Centres for Pupil Guidance (CLB) and with parents. In addition to these main tasks, a limited number of specific assignments may be included apart from the teaching responsibilities (e.g. course responsible, organization of socio-cultural activities, coaching new students, coordination tasks, replacement of colleagues etc). Job descriptions mostly contain general and specific objectives, assignments and expected results, and competences required to attain those results. Often also a plan for professional development through attending courses and a number of personnel development targets are included in the job description.
417. The job description is valid for the entire four years of the appraisal cycle. Intermediate change is only possible when it is based on agreements made during an appraisal interview or in the event of a mutually agreed important shift in the teachers' assignment.
418. The job descriptions of teachers in religion or non-confessional moral need to be approved by the recognized body of the acknowledged religions (Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Protestant Christian, Anglican Christian, Jewish and Islam) or the association of the non-confessional community.

5.1.3 Professional profile and basic competences

419. Job descriptions are generally influenced by the generic 'professional profile' and 'basic competences'.

420. In 1998 the Ministry of Education and Training had an official professional profile of teachers written out. An update of this profile was published in 2007.¹¹⁹ The professional profile describes the knowledge, skills and (professional) attitudes which an experienced teacher is expected to have in general. It describes the teacher's competences as an educator, as an expert in his subject, as a learning coach and as a professional in seven other 'typical functions'. Drawing up professional profiles falls under the responsibility of the executive agency AKOV (Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training).
421. From the generic professional profile the basic or core competences of starting teachers¹²⁰ have been deduced in nursery education, primary education and secondary education respectively. Moreover, these basic competences form the backbone for the curricula used in the Institutes for Initial Teacher Education.

5.1.4 Teachers' Legal Status

422. The legal status of teachers in Flemish education is established by the Decrees mentioned above. Notable characteristics are:
- A teacher's career generally starts with a few years of supply teaching or temporary teaching. His status is called 'temporary appointment for a limited period of time'.
 - After minimally 720 days of seniority of which he has worked 600 days effectively in the position concerned, a teacher can ask for a 'temporary appointment for a continuous period of time (TADD)'. This status gives the teacher more job security. Moreover he/she can now apply for a 'permanent appointment', which holds even more social benefits and job security.
 - In order to get a permanent appointment a number of conditions have to be met. Apart from general legal requirements (e.g. nationality, mother tongue, certificate of good conduct...) these are:
 - i. The teacher must have the official qualifications for the job (diploma, certificate ...), see sub-section 475;
 - ii. On 30 June of the school year before he is to be permanently appointed the teacher must have 720 days of seniority of which he has worked 360 days effectively in the position concerned;
 - iii. His last evaluation report, if any, must be positive;
 - iv. On 31 December before he is to be permanently appointed the teacher must have a 'temporary appointment for a continuous period of time' for the job he is to be permanently appointed in;
 - v. Teaching must be his main profession.
 Depending on the competent authority the teacher's school belongs to, extra conditions may be put forward, such as the obligation to send in an appointment file.
423. Dismissal of staff with permanent appointment is only possible in a limited number of cases and after following strict procedures.

¹¹⁹ Vlaamse Regering (2007). *Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering betreffende het beroepsprofiel van de leraren* [Resolution by the Flemish Government concerning the professional profile of teachers]. Resolution adopted at October 5, 2007. Available at

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13942>

¹²⁰ Vlaamse Regering (2007). *Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering betreffende de basiscompetenties van de leraren* [Resolution by the Flemish Government concerning basis competences of teachers]. Resolution adopted at October 5, 2007. Available at

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13952>

5.2 Formal evaluation cycle

5.2.1 First and second evaluator

424. The Circular Letter on Job Descriptions and Evaluation in Education¹²¹ obliges the governing bodies of the schools to appoint two evaluators to every teacher (except for schools organized by the Flemish Community where this task is delegated to the school principal). Often the evaluators are the same for every teacher in a school.
425. The first evaluator belongs to the same school as the teacher (for schools organized by the Flemish Community) or to a school of the same governing body as the teacher's school (for officially subsidized and privately-run subsidized education). The first evaluator has a higher position in the hierarchical order of the school organization than the teacher involved. The first evaluator is responsible for conducting the appraisal cycle: drawing up the job description in consultation with the concerned teacher, conducting appraisal interviews, coaching the teachers, conducting evaluation interviews and finally writing the evaluation report. The evaluation report includes a conclusion on the teacher's performance during the four year cycle, either 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory'.
426. The second evaluator has at least the same hierarchical position as the first evaluator, or he is a member of the governing body. At least one of the two evaluators is the school's principal or deputy principal. Unlike the role of the first evaluator, the task of the second evaluator is less established by the Circular Letter mentioned above. The second evaluator's task is to control the quality of the evaluation process. Both the assessed teacher and the first evaluator may decide to call on him for support during the process. The second evaluator, however, is not allowed to autonomously conduct appraisal interviews or evaluation interviews, nor can he change the conclusion of the first evaluator.
427. Teachers of religion or non-confessional moral courses are evaluated by the first evaluator for the general part of their job description. For input on the performance of course-specific issues, the first evaluator depends on the recognized body of the religion concerned. The first evaluator has the responsibility to decide on the conclusion relying on all available data. Nevertheless the recognized body of the acknowledged religions needs to provide a recommendation for every teacher. No clear criteria are imposed on the acknowledged religions for provision of those recommendations. Although recommendation has been awarded, this can be withdrawn at any time.

5.2.2 Process of evaluation

428. The cycle of the evaluation process starts with appointing the evaluators and drawing up the individual job description. One cycle comprises maximum four years but a school may also choose to increase the intensity of the teacher appraisal process.
429. The cycle contains one or more appraisal interviews. Appraisal interviews can be requested by the first evaluator or by the concerned teacher and serve the purpose to coach the teacher. During this discussion the first evaluator and the teacher are equal partners. Appraisal interviews clearly fit into the development objective of teacher evaluation.
430. The evaluation interview aims to assess the teacher performance with respect to the objectives established in the job description. The formal evaluation interview concerns not merely a snapshot of the teacher's performance. The evaluation report provides an overview

¹²¹ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2009). *Omzendbrief Functiebeschrijving en evaluatie [Circular Letter on Job Description and Evaluation]*, October 29, 2007. Available at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13932>

of the teacher performance during the whole appraisal cycle, indicating performance but also professional development and growth. Moreover, the focus is not just on the current and the past (the last four years) but also on the future professional career of the teacher. This latter recommendation indicates that the evaluation interview aims to contemplate both teacher accountability and development.

431. The longitudinal dimension is, however, limited to the extent of the appraisal cycle only. Neither the evaluators nor the teacher involved are allowed to take performances from before the start of the cycle into account.
432. The evaluation cycle results in an evaluation report including a formal conclusion, either 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory'. This report is processed by the first evaluator and is available for the assessed teacher, for both evaluators and for the school's governing body.
433. All relevant documents contributing to the evaluation of an individual teacher are kept in an evaluation file. The teacher involved has the right to consult this file and to obtain copies of these documents at any time.
434. This process is the same for all teachers. The process allows no differentiation regarding the level of teaching or teaching experience, because it is a generic model that serves accountability and improvement for all teachers. The content of the job description and the included expected results may of course differ considerably.
435. Neither parent councils nor student councils are allowed to issue judgments on the performance of individual teachers.

5.2.3 Consequences of evaluation

436. A satisfactory evaluation allows the teacher to continue teaching without further restrictions. There are, however, no rewards in the event of 'satisfactory' evaluations: because Flemish education has no system of incentives based on performance measurement, the evaluation can not lead to financial rewards, increased salary, higher chance on promotion, larger opportunities for professional development, higher responsibilities or public recognition.¹²² The current teacher appraisal system does not reward efficient teachers providing good quality education in a formal way.
437. The system of teacher appraisal promotes the professional development of teachers. The further development of the professional career and professional skills of teachers (and consequently their well-being) may depend on the outcomes of appraisal or evaluation interviews.
438. Depending on the legal position of the teacher, an unsatisfactory evaluation might lead to sanctions. Sanctions vary from exclusion from a number of personnel advantages to definite dismissal. For teachers who are 'temporary appointed for a limited period of time', an unsatisfactory evaluation automatically leads to dismissal. Teachers with the status of TADD or with a permanent appointment will be re-assessed after twelve months. If this second evaluation also results in a formal 'unsatisfactory' conclusion, the teacher is automatically dismissed. The same sanction counts for a permanently appointed teacher who receives three non-consecutive 'unsatisfactory' evaluations throughout his career. Dismissal as consequence of two consecutive or three non-consecutive unfavourable evaluations is a general rule for Flemish civil servants also applied in other sectors than education.

¹²² The only way teachers can receive higher salaries than prescribed by their base salary scale and experience, is a supplemental incidental payment in the event of teaching more classes or hours than required by full-time contract.

439. If a teacher works in more than one school, possible sanctions based on an unsatisfactory evaluation only count for the school in which the teacher has received the evaluation.

5.2.4 Appeal procedure

440. A teacher who received an ‘unsatisfactory’ conclusion can appeal this decision at the Chamber of the Board of Appeals. There are three Chambers of the Board of Appeals: for official financed education (organized by the Flemish Community), officially subsidized education (organized by provinces or municipalities) and privately-run subsidized education. The Chamber consists of one president, two vice-presidents and twelve other members. Six of these members are appointed by the umbrella organizations and the other six by the teacher’s unions.
441. The Chamber of the Board of Appeals controls whether the school complied with the regulations for teacher evaluation, whether the teacher’s rights are not infringed and whether the final conclusion is supported by objective reasons. The Chamber of the Board of Appeals does not have the authority to change the final conclusion as outcome of the evaluation process, but only to confirm or nullify the existing conclusion pronounced by the school.
442. A teacher who does not agree with the judgment of the Chamber of the Board of Appeals, can appeal at the Council of State (for official financed and officially subsidized education) or at the Court of Labour (for privately-run subsidized education).
443. The appeal process entails the definite evaluation result is postponed and no sanctions are yet in force. Schools in official education, however, may preventively suspend teachers in expectation of the final judgment.
444. The appeal procedure is not often used: from the start in 2008 until August 2010 only 18 teachers appealed the decision of their evaluator at the Chamber of the Board of Appeals. On the one hand it is expected that this number will increase in the future because the first four-year cycle is not yet finished in secondary education and even only started up one year ago in primary education. On the other hand it is also likely that governing bodies that were unsatisfied about a (permanently appointed) teacher for long time but had no means to act against unfavourable practices have now used this newly imposed appraisal cycle to fasten the process towards dismissal.
445. There is no appeal possible against the decision of the recognized bodies of the acknowledged religions to withdraw the recommendation for a teacher to teach the concerned religion.

5.3 Quality care of teacher appraisal

446. The Flemish government financially supports the School Advisory Services of the umbrella organizations for the training of the evaluators. In-service-training on teacher evaluation is systematically offered by the School Advisory Services for school’s governing bodies, school principals and school teams. Various topics are tackled during these training courses: techniques and theory for appraisal and evaluation interviews, communication skills for evaluation interviews, coaching teachers towards professional development, coaching teachers towards self-reflection, etc. Training courses may be limited to one day, but more elaborated programs are also available. The school advisors may or may not act as intermediates to bring these training courses under the attention of their schools.
447. School’s governing bodies, school principals and school teams are, however, free to decide whether or not to pursue training courses on teacher appraisal. The School Advisory Services

highly recommend to attend these trainings for development purposes (increase the quality of teacher evaluations) but also for accountability purposes: if a teacher would appeal the decision of his non-trained evaluator, the Chamber of the Board of Appeals might rule that the evaluator was not prepared for his task and consequently wasn't able to make an appropriate judgment.

448. The School Advisory Services of most umbrella organizations have established a long-term training programme for newly appointed school principals. Conducting evaluation and appraisal interviews and promoting professional growth are important modules within these training courses. For newly appointed principals in the schools organized by the Flemish Community, this training course is mandatory. For school principals of other educational networks, the training is not mandatory but highly recommended. Furthermore 'teacher evaluation' is also a key issue in the discussions of the formal networks of school principals. These networks are set up by the School Advisory Services in order to increase peer support between school principals. Finally, direct coaching in the implementation of the four-year cycle of teacher appraisal may be requested by individual school principals or governing bodies.
449. Additionally, most School Advisory Services have also developed brochures or guide books on principles and implementation staff management. Several training institutions offer training courses for evaluators.
450. Finally, the School Advisory Service of VSKO (Catholic Education) has developed checklists that help evaluators screen quality during class observations.
451. The teacher's unions have contributed to the quality care of the teacher appraisal process by providing minimal criteria and points of attention to the school principals and local representatives of the teacher's unions.
452. The Ministry of Education and Training actively supports the quality of teacher appraisal through encouraging academic institutes to conduct scientific research that allows both the Ministry and schools to enhance the teacher appraisal system. Recently an OBPWO-project on 'the evaluation of the teacher (and educational personnel) evaluation system' was commissioned to a group of academics. This research aspires to investigate the proceedings and effects of teacher assessment in secondary education. By means of a written survey and interviews it will look into characteristics of the teacher appraisal system, how this system is perceived by different stakeholders, and to what extent it has an impact on the improvement of the quality of education.
453. It is to be expected that in the near future the implementation of the teacher appraisal system in primary education will also be assessed by means of scientific research.

5.4 Teacher appraisal following the formal evaluation cycle in practice

454. As schools enjoy a considerable degree of freedom in their responsibility to organise and conduct a system of teacher appraisal, the implementation of teacher appraisal may differ considerably across schools in the Flemish Community.
455. In general, both scientific research and comments by stakeholders confirm that the extent to which the teacher appraisal cycle is implemented successfully, is rather limited. Three facts seem to be due to this finding:

- Schools do not have a tradition of conducting teacher assessments;
 - In spite of the efforts by School Advisory Services schools still lack adequate expertise to perform teacher appraisal;
 - The formal teacher appraisal cycle is too time-consuming for schools and school principals.
456. Following research by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2003¹²³, most of the schools had already implemented a system of evaluation and appraisal interviews before this date. Especially schools organized by the Flemish Community (GO!) had already a tradition of working with job descriptions at that time. The research mentioned above noticed that job descriptions were regarded by the majority of schools as useful tools for quality improvement, although in some schools – especially when the principal had drafted the job descriptions without consultation of teachers or other staff members – the result was very limited. Most principals had undergone training regarding job descriptions or evaluation techniques. The differences between the job descriptions of individual teachers were found to be rather small. In most schools job descriptions contain a generic part and additionally a limited individual part.
457. Job descriptions were imposed on schools in primary education from 2007. When the Inspectorate assessed the implementation in primary education in the school year 2008-2009¹²⁴, it found a vast majority of schools used job descriptions, mostly following one of the available models. About 75% of the teachers reported, however, that job descriptions had been drafted without discussion between the school principal and the individual teachers. Only one third of the job descriptions were individualised. The Inspectorate also argued that schools should include more development-oriented goals in the job descriptions. Teachers were found to experience stress because of high number of tasks listed in their job description.
School principals think they should have more tools to reward good teachers and feel that because of the long appeal procedure, malfunctioning teachers with permanent appointment are almost unassailable. Finally, both principals and teachers critically questioned the double role assigned to the first evaluator, who is both the teachers’ coach and their assessor.
458. Although the umbrella organizations have praised the current system of teacher appraisal for taking into account both the development-oriented and accountability-oriented focus, their School Advisory Services report that in large schools the high number of professional expectations and tasks of the school principal do not allow to conduct the four-year cycle of teacher appraisal in a qualitative manner. This is the case especially in nursery and primary schools, where no structure of middle management and only limited administrative support is available. This threat for the implementation of the teacher appraisal cycle is confirmed by the organizations for school principals.
459. School Advisory Services and school principals’ organizations have also questioned the many administrative obligations towards the four-year cycle of teacher appraisal. This does not only lead to extra tasks for the evaluators, but also enlarges the chances of procedural mistakes in the event of an unsatisfactory evaluation.

¹²³ Bollen, M. (2003). *Bevraging over de invoering van de functiebeschrijving in het onderwijs. Analyse en resultaten van de bevraging [Research on the implementation of job descriptions in education. Analysis and results of the research]*. Brussel: Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming.

¹²⁴ Findings of this research were published in Education Mirror 2009. Onderwijsinspectie (2009). *Onderwijsspiegel [Education Mirror]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/onderwijsspiegel/spiegel/2008-2009.pdf> (Dutch only)

460. School principals' organizations complain that eventual dismissal is only valid in the school in which the concerned teacher received his unsatisfactory evaluation. This implies that teachers who have built their seniority in several schools often still enjoy priority in one of the other schools of the same governing body or the school community (see priority regulations from sub-section 478 onwards).
461. Corresponding findings were found by the TALIS¹²⁵ research in 2008: 19 percent of the involved teachers reported that they had never been formally assessed or had received feedback. An additional 34 percent did not receive any feedback during the last year from his evaluator. 25 percent of the teachers reported annual feedback or evaluation, 18 percent of the teachers received feedback more than once a year and 3 percent of the teachers even at least once every month. Furthermore many teachers did not know which criteria were assessed during evaluation or appraisal interviews. Finally, TALIS 2008 noticed that the relevance and rationale of teacher appraisal mechanisms was not clear for teachers. Four out of ten teachers declared that teacher assessment only happened because of administrative reasons (instead of accountability and development).
462. Another notable finding of TALIS 2008 was that only 53 percent of the teachers think 'student performances in tests' is an important criterion in judging their teacher performance (compared to scores over 70% for criteria as 'relationships with students', 'cooperation with school principal and colleagues' and 'class management'). This finding indicates that teachers are currently not yet deeply convinced of the importance of output measurement, although this tendency is increasingly important within the Flemish educational system and the assessment procedures at system and school level.

5.5 Other forms of teacher assessment

5.5.1 Disciplinary problems or incompatibility

463. In addition to the obligation to implement the regular four-year cycle assessing the teacher's performance, the school also has the authority to sanction a teacher in the event of disciplinary problems. The consequences for a teacher who does not comply with the regulations of his profession (disciplinary problems) are either an official blame, temporary dismissal, reduction of wage, demotion to a lower function or definite dismissal. The teacher can appeal this decision in the Chamber of the Board of Appeals of the umbrella organization involved.
464. Although the difference between the regular cycle (for evaluation and enhancement of teacher performances) and this additional specific authority for the school is clearly distinct, in practice it is often difficult to distinguish whether malfunctioning stems from incompetence (a teacher who is not capable of performing better) or disciplinary problems (a teacher who does not want to carry out his profession correctly).

5.5.2 Informal and formative teacher appraisal

465. In most schools especially new and young teachers are evaluated both formally and informally. Informal evaluation mostly comes down to feedback on their performance in the classroom, during projects etc. They receive this feedback from the school principal and their colleagues but also from such people or instances as the technical advisor, the subject department, the school advisor, the grade coordinator and possibly the middle management.

¹²⁵ Teaching and Learning International Survey, organized by OECD. For more information, see sub-section 177.

466. In some schools new teachers are assigned a ‘mentor’ as their personal coach. The so-called ‘mentorship’ was officially implemented in 2006. From that year on schools were given extra resources to organize ‘mentorship’. Experienced teachers were appointed a few hours per week in order to coach starting teachers and prospective teachers by means of coaching interviews and individual support. Although the mentorship was officially discarded owing to budgetary reasons in 2009, some school communities and individual schools are continuing ‘mentorship’ on their own account.
467. A quite new and unique form of external evaluation is ‘collegial visit’.¹²⁶ A small number of schools has also implemented a similar system of teacher appraisal inside the school: teachers are asked to visit their colleagues during their lesson practice and to give formative feedback afterwards. This may lead to either formal or informal processes of mutual coaching between colleagues on an equal basis.

5.5.3 Self-evaluation

468. There is no formal obligation for teachers to perform self-evaluations. The ‘basic competences’ (the set of competences that is expected from each starting teacher, see sub-section 419) state that every teacher should be capable of performing continuous self-analysis and should be aware of the benefits of this act. Through self-reflection teachers are continuously challenged by changing expectations and different student groups with divergent backgrounds and study motivation. Reflective teachers regard teaching as continuous adjustment to different factors and systematically ask themselves how they can provide maximum opportunities to every student and as such avoid being set in their habits. The ‘reflection cycle by Korthagen’¹²⁷ is taught in the curriculum of many of the Flemish Institutes for Initial Teacher Education.
469. A specific asset of self-evaluation is that it could include student feedback in the process of teacher appraisal (in a development perspective). Teacher evaluation by students is a relatively new and non-official aspect of quality care. In 2000 VSK (the Flemish Student Council) convinced 13 secondary schools to take part in an experiment in which pupils evaluate their teachers. Teachers were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. Using a fixed set of criteria pupils judged their teachers’ classroom behaviour, after which the teachers discussed the results with them. Although the initiative was highly appreciated it was only last year that a research group designed LLL (‘Leraren Leren van Leerlingen’, Teachers Learn from Pupils), a scientifically valid tool for student-teacher evaluation¹²⁸. Until now, this kind of evaluation remains voluntary.
470. VSK itself has recently developed a set of 25 instruments for teacher evaluation by students. Several methods of evaluation are available for students of different ages. VSK expects that this set of instruments will be published in January of 2011 under the title ‘Ssht... the teacher learns’ (‘Ssht.. de leraar leert’).

¹²⁶ Because the recently developed concept of ‘collegial visit’ mainly aims to support evaluation and development at school level, it is covered more into detail in chapter 4, sub-section 339.

¹²⁷ F.A.J. Korthagen developed the Reflection Cycle in 1993, based on D. Kolb’s Learning Cycle. The Cycle consists of four phases: A retrospective view to what happened during the lesson – Awareness of crucial aspects – Formulation of alternatives – Act.

¹²⁸ Van Petegem, P., Deneire, A. & Cautreels, P (2009). *Leraren Leren van Leerlingen. Instrument voor zelfevaluatie door leraren [Teachers learn from pupils. Instrument for Teacher Self-evaluation]*. Mechelen: Wolters-Plantyn.

5.6 Impact of teacher appraisal on quality of education

471. Only little is known to what extent the teacher appraisal cycle has an impact on the improvement of educational quality in Flemish schools. The TALIS research in 2008¹²⁹, however, took this question into its research scope. Results indicated that there was a small effect of evaluation and feedback mechanisms on teacher behaviour inside and outside the classroom. Depending on the teacher's self-perceptions there was an impact on (in order of importance) their class management skills, their student assessment practices, their dealing with disciplinary problems, their course-specific didactic knowledge, their teaching to students with specific needs, their course-specific content knowledge, their professionalisation plans and, to a lesser degree, their teaching to students in a multicultural setting.
472. The impact on quality of education is believed to correlate with the policy-making capacities of schools. The quality of job descriptions and of the process of teacher evaluation depends largely on the policy-making capacities of the school. Job descriptions are most effective in schools with an open policy and communication style, in schools with broad involvement of personnel in policy-making processes and with the explicit ambition to provide quality education through continuous reflection and self-assessment. Teacher evaluation does not lead to improved quality of education in schools where job descriptions are the sole responsibility of the school principal or where staff members limit their efforts to what is written down in their job description.
473. Furthermore the same TALIS research noticed that the impact of teacher appraisal practices on school development was relatively small.

5.7 Recruitment of teachers

474. Methods used for teacher recruitment may differ considerably between schools. Schools' organising bodies are free to set up a recruitment policy. However because of the increasingly complex regulatory framework that governing bodies have to take into account regarding recruitment of teachers their autonomy is rather limited.

5.7.1 Overall requirements for teachers

475. A candidate has to meet a number of conditions to be selected as a teacher:
- Belgian nationality or nationality of the European Union or the European Free Trade Organization (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland) or dispose of exemption of the nationality requirement signed by the Flemish government.
 - Dispose of civil and political rights or dispose of exemption signed by the Flemish government.
 - Dispose of a certificate of good moral behaviour.
 - Comply with the language regulations. The language skills of candidate teachers who did not obtain their diploma in a Flemish institute and do not dispose of other certificates that sufficiently prove their language skills are examined by means of a test. This test is organized by the Centres for Adult Education, supported by the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV). Candidate teachers have to prove their Dutch language skill and additionally for primary education their French language skill as second language.
 - Dispose of a required or sufficient qualification (with exception in case no qualified teacher is found) and certificate for teaching competence.
 - Comply with the regulations on liability for military service.

¹²⁹ Teaching and Learning International Survey, organized by OECD. For more information, see sub-section 177.

476. Additionally teachers of religion courses need to have a recommendation from the recognized body of the religion concerned.
477. Apart from conditions at the start of the teaching career no other requirements are imposed during the teachers' subsequent career.

5.7.2 Priority regulations

478. As discussed in sub-section 422, teachers with a permanent appointment enjoy 'job security'. This means that in case there are not enough students in the school, the redundant teacher will be placed on a reserve list and possibly be 're-assigned' in another school. An governing body that wants to recruit a new teacher is obliged to give priority to teachers in the system of 're-appointment' ('re-affectatie'): it is not possible for the governing body to appoint a teacher without permanent appointment, if someone with permanent appointment is also eligible.
479. Priority regulations also count for teachers without permanent appointment, but with a seniority of minimally 720 days of which he has worked 600 days effectively in the position concerned. These teachers have the status of 'TADD', a temporary appointment with continuous duration ('tijdelijke aanstelling van doorlopende duur'). Available teachers with TADD status in the schools of the same governing body (for officially subsidized and privately-run subsidized schools) or of the same group of schools (for official financed education) enjoy priority over teachers with no or lower seniority.
480. This regulatory framework is based on the rationale that teachers should enjoy considerable job security and that seniority gives the right to prioritised appointment. The disadvantage of this system is that the autonomy of schools is limited and that newly starting teachers lack job security for a considerable time of their career. Often it is difficult for them to teach in only one school: most teachers start with short teaching stints in different schools as supply teachers until permanently appointed teachers or teachers with higher seniority take their place.
481. In addition, the relationship between a teacher's diploma and the course he will be teaching is another criterion important for teacher recruitment, especially in secondary education. Three types of qualifications are discerned: 'required', 'sufficient' or 'other' qualification.
- 'Required qualification' means that the candidate teacher has studied to teach those courses.
 - 'Sufficient qualification' means that the candidate teacher has studied related courses which allows to teach the course involved within reasonable boundaries (e.g. a Master in mathematics is supposed to be able to teach physics).
 - 'Other qualification' means that the candidate teacher cannot directly prove by means of his diploma that he is suitable to teach this course. Teachers with 'other qualifications' may only be appointed in case no teachers with required or sufficient qualification are available.
- A teacher cannot gain seniority for his teaching with 'other qualification' (although in the event the teacher does obtain a sufficient or required qualification for the course he has taught previously with an 'other qualification', the previous teaching is taken into account to calculate his seniority).
482. Differences in qualification do not automatically overrule the priority regulations: the permanently appointed or TADD teacher with a sufficient qualification has priority on the teacher with lower seniority, even if the latter one has a required qualification.

483. Especially for French, mathematics, several science courses and the practical courses in vocational training it is currently hard to find teachers with required or sufficient qualification.
484. Until now, the Ministry of Education and Training decides on the boundaries between required, sufficient and other qualifications. This, however, came under discussion because of the increasing complexity and versatility of the diplomas in higher education. The Ministry of Education and Training is pending to give schools autonomy to decide on the limits between the qualifications. The Teacher's unions however oppose to this idea. Further discussion on this topic between the Ministry of Education and Training with the main stakeholders is planned for March 2011.

5.7.3 School-specific recruitment policies

485. In spite of this complex system, most governing bodies still try to establish a recruitment policy and develop tools and tests to assess teachers before appointing them in their schools. They do so on their own account. School Advisory Services provide indirect support but will not be part of an eventual selection committee. No regulations or tests are imposed on schools regarding teacher recruitment. Practices do differ widely among schools.

5.8 Articulation with other forms of evaluation

486. While system and school evaluation fit clearly into the rationale of evaluation oriented at output indicators, this is only to a lesser degree true for the system of teacher appraisal. Expected results may be part of the individual job descriptions of teachers, but mostly in addition to a number of process indicators. The result indicators are more often written in terms of professional development than in terms of student achievements.
487. It is unclear to what extent student performances or the individual teacher's assessment practices are taken into account in the appraisal of teachers. TALIS 2008 found that teachers did not perceive student achievements as one of the most important criteria to value their teaching performance. More elaborate scientific research (by means of currently running OBPWO project) will provide more information on the link between teacher appraisal and student assessment.
488. Although it is commonly accepted that the quality of teacher performances is crucial for the quality of the educational system, the link between teacher and system evaluation is not that strong. The most notable link are the generic job profile and basic competences, two tools informed by system evaluation that are important means of inspiration for teachers' individual job descriptions.
489. The 'teacher appraisal policy' is one of the process indicators in the CIPO-model used by the Inspectorate for school inspections. Although this is (as process indicator) not the most prominent viewpoint for the Inspectorate, there is a clear link between teacher appraisal and the school's policy-making capacities.
490. The continuous assessment and improvement process included in the four-year cycle of teacher appraisal (e.g. by means of appraisal interviews) allows teachers to give feedback on school's processes and outcomes. This input may be used as an important source of information for internal school evaluation, although TALIS 2008 found that the impact of teacher appraisal on school improvement processes was rather small.

5.9 Policy initiatives and pending issues

491. The teacher appraisal cycle is the result of intensive discussion between the Ministry of Education and Training and the most important stakeholders (e.g. umbrella organizations as representative of organizing bodies and teacher's unions). Therefore all stakeholders involved do agree on the potential quality for teacher improvement of the teacher appraisal cycle, although practice shows that the implementation is not easy: often lack of time of the first evaluator is the reason that the cycle is not yet successfully implemented.
492. To make the process of teacher appraisal more feasible, the original idea to impose teacher appraisal cycles of maximum three years was left for four-year cycles. This was the result of a compromise between umbrella organizations (in favour of shorter cycles) and teacher's unions (favouring longer cycles).
493. One of the potential solutions supported by the umbrella organizations is to allow not only hierarchically positioned persons to conduct evaluations, but to allow also more experienced 'equally positioned' persons (e.g. more experienced teachers) to take up the role of first evaluator. Teacher's unions are, however, very reluctant to this idea as it would inflict conflicts between teachers.
494. The consequences of unsatisfactory evaluations are also a topic for discussion between teacher's unions and umbrella organizations. The question whether or not to make possible sanctions valid for the whole school community, is currently being discussed.
495. Teacher evaluation by students is still limited although it is recently becoming more common practice. Most schools recognize that systematic student involvement would increase the quality of teacher appraisal, they argue that lack of time restrains them from conducting such surveys. VSK (Flemish Student Council) asks to impose the evaluator to question students on their teacher's performance.
496. Parents are currently not involved in the process of teacher appraisal, but neither the schools nor the parent organizations think that this is desirable. The parent organizations do, however, plead for a strengthened signal function for parents.
497. The School Advisory Services have indicated that the teacher appraisal system should also lead more to two-way communication: the evaluator coaches the teacher, but the teacher should also be granted the opportunity to analyse strengths and weaknesses of the schools' functioning. As such the teacher appraisal cycle would contribute more effectively to school improvement.

Chapter 6. Student assessment

498. This chapter discusses the current situation of student assessment in the educational system of the Flemish Community. Several international reports indicate that Flemish schools have a large impact on the practice of student assessment and on the decision to award diplomas to students compared to surrounding countries.¹³⁰ There are no central agencies that evaluate the performances of all the students. Assessing whether a student meets the attainment targets established by the Flemish government, falls under the jurisdiction of individual schools. The Freedom of education granted to schools implies that student assessment practices may differ considerably across schools.

6.1 General Framework

499. No standard national examinations are imposed on schools by any legal regulation. Although the cabinet of the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education and Training recognize that nation-wide exams can be useful to enhance reliability and equity of student assessment, too many disadvantages are discerned that outweigh the advantages. The absence of central examinations is supported by almost all stakeholders. In chapter 3, sub-section 160, the disadvantages at system level are covered. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Training and different stakeholders (parents, schools, School Advisory Services, ...) also cite a number of reasons at student level that support the policy not to organise central examinations:

- A decision on the study career of students should rely on more than just output measurement: also context factors (situation at home, language at home etc) should also be taken into account. Test results always need to be interpreted in the light of the context variables of the student.
- A central test is limited in its possibilities to measure skills and attitudes. Some skills and attitudes are hard to measure, especially by means of a standardised written test. This contradicts with the efforts to implement a 'broad assessment culture' (see sub-section 551).
- Central examinations take a snapshot of the students' performances, but give no indication on students' progress.
- Furthermore, there are questions about the reliability of any test: context factors (stress, sickness, home situation etc) might have an important influence at a test moment. Several tests at different test moments provide a more reliable basis for decision on student careers.
- Schools may establish higher entrance conditions or may dismiss weak-scoring students in order to obtain a high 'average school score'.
- Finally, the stress that is put on students with central tests with civil effect on their further study career is also an important argument not to implement central examinations.

500. Some schools would, however, favour national examinations because it would dismiss them from their responsibility to take decisive judgments on students' study careers. These schools argue that complaint procedures would also be avoided. This is, however, only a very marginal number of schools; most schools hold on to their autonomy regarding student evaluation.

¹³⁰ Most recent study by the Eurydice network of the EU: EACEA (2009). *National testing of pupils in Europe: Objectives, Organization and Use of Results*. Available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/109EN.pdf

501. VSK (Flemish Student Council) is the only stakeholder on national level which is more neutral on the issue of central examinations, but on a dual condition: first, that the central test provides added value on the tests that are already imposed on students by the schools, and second that the test results are used as complementary (and not sole) information for the deliberation of students. VSK thinks that central examinations could provide useful and reliable information additional to the information that is already available for the class committee. The added value of central tests could be that central examinations would help students to gain insight in their competences and in their further possibilities at the job market or higher education. Therefore, VSK's point of view is to set up central tests from a development-oriented approach rather than an evaluation with civil effect.
502. The absence of central examinations does not mean that schools are completely free to decide what aspects they will evaluate (and thus teach). The attainment targets and developmental objectives provide schools with a minimum set of goals that ensures that schools provide quality education.
503. The tests of the National Assessment Programme implemented since 2002, are centrally organized tests of students on a large scale. The objective of the National Assessment Programme is to assess to what extent the educational system succeeds in guiding students towards achieving the attainment targets and developmental objectives, rather than investigating individual student's progress. Results of individual students are not published. Therefore the National Assessment Programme is not part of the 'student assessment policy' and it is not discussed in this chapter. The same holds for the Parallel Versions of the National Assessment Programme, which are tools for self-evaluation at school level. National Assessment Programme and Parallel Versions are discussed in respectively chapter 3 (sub-section 144) and chapter 4 (sub-section 325).

6.1.1 Obligation for schools to develop an evaluation policy

504. The curriculum developed by an individual school needs to be approved by the Ministry of Education and Training by means of the Inspectorate. The curriculum has to provide students the knowledge, skills and attitudes established by the attainment targets and developmental objectives¹³¹, but may also include other objectives. In reality, schools often depend on the umbrella organization of their educational network for the development of their curriculum.
505. Schools are obliged to monitor their educational quality, which implies that each school must minimally assess the extent to which students acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes described in the attainment targets and developmental objectives. In this respect it goes without saying that each school must have an evaluation policy which includes an output-based monitoring of the achievements of its students/students. If asked by the Inspectorate, the school must be able to present this policy.
506. Furthermore, schools are obliged to assess whether the students have attained the objectives of the school curriculum to a sufficient degree. There is, however, no regulation imposed on the methods that should be used for this task.

6.1.2 Primary education

507. Transitions within nursery and primary education are not linked with obtaining a score on a predefined test¹³². At the end of a school year the class committee of each school

¹³¹ For more information on attainment targets and developmental objectives, see sub-section 84.

¹³² With exception for access to primary education for 5- or 6-year-old students who did not attend Dutch language nursery education beforehand. This exception is discussed in sub-section 512.

autonomously decides whether or not a student has successfully completed the school year, allowing him to proceed to the next school year. The class committee consists of a team of teachers and is chaired by the school principal or his delegate.

508. At the end of primary education, the class committee decides autonomously whether or not students receive a 'certificate of elementary education'. The class committee's decision relies on the school's own evaluation data. The decision assesses whether the objectives of the curriculum, which comprise the attainment targets and developmental objectives for primary education, have been achieved. It is important to note that achieving the attainment targets and developmental objectives is not sufficient to obtain the certificate of elementary education, as the objectives of the school curricula are mostly more comprehensive than the targets imposed by the Flemish government.
509. There are two exceptions on the class committee's decisive responsibility. The decision on the transition from nursery to primary education and the decision on transition from primary to secondary education (after attending seven years of primary education, independent from certificate of elementary education) are under the jurisdiction of the student's parents, on the condition that the students comply with a number of entrance conditions for primary/secondary education. The school and the involved Centre for Pupil Guidance (CLB) give advice to the parents, but this advice is not binding.¹³³
510. Retention in primary education is limited by the Decree on Elementary Education (1997)¹³⁴: students can attend primary education for a maximum of 8 years or until the age of 14.
511. Schools decide on the class groupings autonomously. Although most primary schools are organized in a six-grade structure, this isn't formally imposed. No formal regulations concerning the transitions in nursery and primary education (other than the two exceptions covered in 509) have been imposed on schools. Decisions on student retention or on passing over a grade are made by the schools. Schools are of course allowed to discuss the decision with the parents or to even pass this responsibility on to the parents.
512. Schools are obliged to monitor the progress of each student and report on their observations to the parents. Schools are not restricted by any regulations on how to implement this progress monitoring or reporting. All relevant agreements on monitoring and evaluation have to be included in the school development plan and in the school regulations. At the start of the school year each parent signs the school regulations for agreement.
513. The multidisciplinary committee is a nursery and primary school-bound consultation body that consists of the class teacher, the school principal, a member of the Pupil Guidance Centre and the special aid teacher. Also a parent may participate in the multidisciplinary committee. The committee meets approximately three times a year. During these meetings the committee may discuss all relevant student matters: the student's development, well-being, involvement, specific situation etc. Parents are regularly informed of the findings and decisions of the committee.

¹³³ Parents' responsibility in the decision on enrolment in primary education is limited by an age restriction: the student needs to be 5, 6 or 7 years old.

¹³⁴ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (1997). *Decreet Basisonderwijs [Decree on Elementary Education]*. Decree adopted at February 5, 1997. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=12254> (Dutch only)

6.1.3 Admission test for access to primary education

514. Until 2009 access to primary education was only restricted by an age limitation: the student had to be five, six or seven years old to be accepted in primary education. Since the current school year (2009-2010) new terms have been formulated by the government concerning the students' acquaintance with Dutch language. Students who did not attend a Dutch language nursery school the year before for at least 220 half days must prove their knowledge of the Dutch language by means of a test before being allowed to primary education. The Flemish government determines the content of this language test. The organization of this test is under the supervision of the CLB (Pupil Guidance Centre) supporting the school in which a student wants to enrol, or under the supervision of the school itself. Seven year old students are dispensed from this test and are allowed to start in the first grade of primary education unconditionally.
515. Students that pass the language test are allowed to enter primary education. 6-year old students who do not have the required skills in Dutch language either have to follow one year of Dutch-language nursery education, or have to subscribe in primary education in another language (e.g. French, organized by the French Community of Belgium).
516. The Flemish government has taken this measure based on the finding that whereas most children are enrolled in nursery education, especially in the group of foreign non-Dutch speaking families a considerable share of children is not registered in nursery education. The measure serves a double purpose:
- To motivate parents to let their children attend a nursery school, because participation in nursery education is a notable predictive factor for a successful school career.
 - To strengthen language skills of students in order to prepare them for primary education. Language delay is a key factor of delays in different study areas (not just language, but also other courses) in primary education. Students who did not regularly attend Dutch-language nursery education on average obtain low success rates in primary education. This finding was confirmed by several international comparative studies (see sub-section 168) and by different reports of the National Assessment Programme (see sub-section 144).
517. This measure will be evaluated in the near future. First data on the number of participants and their success rate will be available at the end of 2010.

6.1.4 Secondary education

518. Students who have obtained a certificate of elementary education are allowed in the A-stream of secondary education (although they may prefer to enter the B-stream). Students without this certificate usually join the B-stream, although the 'admission class committee'¹³⁵ may decide autonomously on entrance of these students to the A-stream of secondary education.
519. In secondary education the 'deliberative class committee' decides whether or not students pass or fail. The deliberative class committee consists of the school principal or his delegate and all members of the teaching staff who provided education to the student during the current school year. Each of these members has one vote. The committee may be assisted by the deputy school principal, a technical advisor, support staff and staff who are involved with the psychosocial or educational support of the students. These persons have an advisory role and are not allowed to vote.

¹³⁵ For more information on the admission class committee, see sub-section 525.

520. The deliberative class committee's decisions rely on concrete data from the file of the student. This file contains at least:
- The decisions, findings and opinions of the guidance class committee.
 - Results of tests or examinations conducted by the teachers
 - Results of the eventual 'integrated test' (GIP, 'Geïntegreerde Proef', see sub-section 589).
521. Transition from one school year to the next is regulated by three types of certificates:
- An A-certificate implies the student has completed the school year successfully.
 - A B-certificate means the student is admitted to the next school year but excluded to some education forms and/or courses of study. The student can, however, choose to repeat the school year. B-certificates can not be issued at the end of the first grade of the B-stream, the fifth grade ASO, TSO or KSO or in the sixth grade of BSO¹³⁶.
 - A C-certificate, meaning the student must repeat the school year.
522. Unlike the deliberative class committee, the 'counselling class committee' has a formative purpose. The counselling class committee is obliged to monitor the students' performances and assess their progress. The committee is staffed by teachers who actually teach to the involved students. The school principal, deputy principal, technical advisor, members of the CLB and others may also be asked to participate in meetings of the guiding class committee, e.g. to give advice. According to government regulations the guiding class committee is not qualified to decide whether a student passes or fails a school year or to take decisive disciplinary measures like refusing students to attend school during the next school year. This decision is made by the deliberative class committee.
523. The counselling class committee must perform the following actions on a regular basis:
- Analyse and discuss the students' school results as well as their attitudes;
 - Provide students with proper counselling if necessary, e.g. as soon as learning difficulties have been diagnosed;
 - Reduce failure rates by advising students to alter their course of study or – for future reference - to determine the course of study that fits them most.
524. In most cases the deliberative class committee's decisions result from the preceding counselling class committees. The difference between both committees is in reality often not that strict as in theory.
525. Finally, an 'admission class committee' may be organized. The admission class committee rules on e.g.:
- Admission to the A-stream of secondary education for students without certificate of primary education;
 - Admission to mainstream education for students who previously studied in special education;
 - Admission in ASO/TSO/KSO for students who previously studied in BSO;
- The Ministry of Education and Training nor any other authority imposes criteria on the admission class committee as a basis for its decisions.
526. There are no entrance tests for secondary education, except for a small number of study areas in mainly KSO (secondary arts education). Those tests are under the jurisdiction of the schools.
527. Schools in secondary education may spend only 30 days per school year for evaluation purposes (including both examinations and deliberation meetings). Formative tests or smaller tests during the lessons are not taken into account for this regulation.

¹³⁶ For more information on ASO, TSO, KSO and BSO, see chapter 1 sub-section 40.

6.1.5 Diploma of secondary education

528. The diploma of secondary education is generally awarded by schools (with exception of diplomas awarded by Examination Board of the Flemish Community, see sub-section 544). The diploma of secondary education means that students have reached the objectives set by the curriculum of the school. Attainment of these objectives implies that the attainment targets have also been sufficiently achieved.
529. The diploma of secondary education allows entrance to all forms of higher education at either Institutes for Higher Education or at universities. Possible restrictions by means of entrance exams (e.g. medicine or art studies) are generic and do not depend on the study area or educational programme (ASO-TSO-KSO-BSO) in which the diploma of secondary education was obtained.
530. High drop-out rates and low study success in the first year of higher education have made that this general entrance is currently being questioned. The success rates are much higher for ASO students, who obtain better results than TSO and KSO students, who in turn achieve better results than BSO students. Especially the latter students are not well prepared for studies in higher education, as their background in vocational training is oriented towards direct entrance at the job market. The current policy discussion paper for the reform of the structure of secondary education plans to limit entrance possibilities in higher education. Students who graduated in secondary schooling preparing for the job market, will first have to attend a one year preparation course before being allowed in higher education.
531. No overall data available that oversee schools' performances regarding the study success of their graduated students in subsequent education. Most secondary schools do, however, request this information from the different Institutes for Higher Education and universities as input for internal school evaluation (or in some cases for more commercial purposes). The Inspectorate may ask secondary schools whether it has statistics on the performance of their students in higher education. Although these numbers are not sufficient to measure outcomes of the schools (as statistics of students who successfully entered the job market are much harder to obtain), it may be useful for the Inspectorate to know whether or not the school has requested these data in order to assess its self-monitoring capacities.

6.1.6 Special Education

532. For education form 4 of special secondary education attainment targets have been established.¹³⁷ Whereas developmental objectives for education form 3 are already written out, the Ministry of Education and Training is currently preparing developmental objectives for education form 1 and 2. In primary education developmental objectives are available for the education types 1, 2, 7 and 8. For the other types, one can select developmental objectives available for other types.
533. Schools must take the government's developmental objectives as a base to work out individual and/or group intervention plans. These individual and group intervention plans may also include some or all of the attainment targets of mainstream education.
534. As in mainstream primary education schools for special education may award a certificate of primary education to their students, although the conditions to do so are restricted: the certificate can only be awarded to regular students who have completed special primary education and who have achieved the learning goals of an intervention plan which the Inspectorate has given equal qualification to the attainment targets in mainstream primary

¹³⁷ For more information on education types and education forms in special education, see sub-sections 35 and 47.

education. Whenever a special school wants to award a certificate to one or more of its students the school principal must send a report to the coordinating inspector. In this report the reasons for awarding the certificate have to be summed up and motivated.

535. For each of the four forms of special secondary education regulations differ as far as awarding certificates or diplomas is concerned.
- Education form 1 and 2: A certificate of special secondary education can be awarded to all regular students who have taken part in all relevant activities.
 - Education form 3: When a student has finished this education type a qualification committee decides whether he is awarded a certificate for the entire educational level, or only a certificate for acquired competencies within a completed segment of this educational level and which can be used in a job.
 - Education form 4: In this education type the same regulations are applied as in mainstream secondary education. The students can obtain the diploma of secondary education.

6.1.7 Appeal procedures

536. In primary education there is no appeal procedure against the decision of the school because the most important transitions (from nursery to primary education, and from primary to secondary education) are under the jurisdiction of the parents. The only exception is the appeal procedure organized by schools when parents do not agree with the decision not to award a certificate of elementary education. There is, however, no central regulation imposed by the Ministry of Education and Training on the organization of the appeal procedure. The Decree on Elementary Education (1997) only stipulates that the appeal procedure has to be communicated by means of the school regulations. Although no data are available this procedure is only very seldom used. The 'admission class committee' of secondary education may decide to allow students without the certificate of elementary education to the A-stream anyway.
537. In secondary education students or parents can appeal the decision to award a B- or C-certificate. The appeal procedure consists of an interview with the president of the deliberative class committee or with a representative of the school's governing body (mostly the school principal). If this person admits the claim is susceptible and that complementary information has been added that may have an impact on the original decision, the deliberative class committee will meet in order to investigate the complaint or newly revealed information and make a new judgment based on all available information. The class committee awards a new certificate (A, B or C). This may or may not entail a confirmation of the original certificate.
538. If the student/parents still do not agree with the deliberative class committee's decision, they can start a procedure at the Appeal Committee. The Appeal Committee is organized by the school's governing body. Except for the school principal it has no members of the deliberative class committee among its participants. The Appeal Committee has an advisory role towards the school's governing body. The governing body does not change the awarded certificate, but rules whether the deliberative class committee has to reassemble to consider all information in order to confirm or adjust its earlier judgment.
539. A final possibility for students/parents is to appeal with the Council of State. The Council of State judges either that the decision by the deliberative class committee is well-founded, or that the decision is insufficiently motivated or unreasonable relying on the available data. In the latter case, the Council of State will nullify the original decision, thereby obliging the deliberative class committee to assemble once again. This last step in the appeal procedure is time-consuming and the decision by the deliberative class committee is not suspended for the term of the procedure.

540. At any time, the decision to award a certificate remains under the jurisdiction of the deliberative class committee. It is mandatory for schools to include the different steps of the appeal procedure in their school regulations.
541. As the appeal procedure is entirely organized within the school (with the exception of the possibility to appeal at the Council of State), there are no clear figures to what extent the appeal procedure is commonly used. An informal small-scale survey conducted by the Department of Education and Training's Unit for Secondary and Adult Education indicated that per school on average only once a year a decision is appealed by students or parents.
542. Parent organizations and VSK (Flemish Student Council) argue that the appeal procedure lacks strength because it is entirely organized within the school and the final decision remains the responsibility of the deliberative class committee. They advocate the establishment of an institution for appeal that is not only able to nullify the original decision but also to overrule the class committee by imposing another decision.
543. Additionally, VSK has the following demands regarding the appeal procedure:
- Clarification of the role of the school principal who currently fulfils a double role: on the one hand he is mostly the president of the deliberative class committee, on the other hand he mostly is the contact person who takes the first decision in the appeal procedure (namely on susceptibility of the complaint);
 - Provision of more clear information on the internal appeal procedure;
 - Shortening of the length of the internal appeal procedure.

6.1.8 Examination Board of the Flemish Community

544. Certificates of primary education and diplomas of secondary education can also be obtained through the Examination Board of the Flemish Community (EVG, 'Examencommissie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap').
545. The certificate of elementary education can be obtained through the EVG by every student who is at least 9 years old. Most participants who apply at the EVG for this certificate are students who fall under 'home education', either educated at home or enrolled in a non-recognized school.¹³⁸
546. In each Flemish province the Flemish Government appoints one official and one privately-run subsidized primary school to serve as an Examination Board. Applicants at the EVG choose between these two schools. The Inspectorate controls the organization and composition of the examinations in those schools.
547. The EVG also allows students to achieve a diploma for either the first, second or third stage of each study area in (full-time) secondary education. Students can participate in these exams for each school year and each study area. No prior conditions have to be met. The diploma of secondary education awarded by the EVG is equivalent to the diploma of secondary education handed by a secondary school. It provides access to all forms of tertiary education.
548. Applicants for examinations of secondary education at the EVG can choose between examinations based on the curriculum of the EVG itself or examinations based on the curriculum of a secondary school. In the latter case, the student provides curriculum and tables indicating the number of lessons per subject to the EVG. Participants can choose all

¹³⁸ For more information on home education, see sub-section 25.

disciplines that are organized in any financed, officially subsidized or privately-run subsidized school for (full-time) secondary education.

549. The participants in examinations for secondary education are allowed to enter complete or partial examinations. A partial exam consists of some of the subjects for which the student can obtain a certificate after succeeding. Complete examinations cover all subjects of a study area. Participants passing the complete examinations of the final stage of secondary education obtain the diploma. The EVG issues either an A-certificate (passed) or a C-certificate (not passed); it does not issue B-certificates.
550. Unlike the examinations for the certificate of elementary education, the EVG is itself responsible for organizing and drawing up examinations for secondary education.

6.2 Shift from test culture to broad assessment culture¹³⁹

551. The changing view on learning and education which has characterized the education policy over the last decade entails a change of view on evaluation. The shift from the traditional 'test culture' towards a 'broad assessment culture' has recently gained importance. The broad assessment culture relates to the implementation of 'active learning methods'. Students are no longer perceived as passive subjects, but they are involved in the assessment of their performances and progress, and may even be involved in the assessment of their classmates.
552. In the broad assessment culture evaluation is not just the last part of the learning process, but instead an integrative part of learning. The formative function of evaluation is strongly emphasized within the 'broad assessment culture': evaluation not merely serves the goal of judging students, but also (and more importantly) to guide students to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes through feedback mechanisms. This means that evaluation is conducted continuously, because both teachers and students need up-to-date information on individual performances in order to create effective learning environments. Evaluation as part of the learning process helps students in their development of holistic competences: next to assessment of cognitive performances, also dynamic-affective, relational and motor aspects are continuously assessed.
553. The broad assessment culture naturally entails different evaluation methods than only the classical tests: observation, portfolios, reflection sheets, peer- and self-assessment are only a few examples of the wide range of assessment possibilities. The teacher needs to consider which assessment method contributes most to guiding his students to the aspired objectives. Student assessment methods need to be realistic, adjusted to the student characteristics, fostering student activity and integrated in the learning processes.
554. The norm for student assessment changes with the implementation of the broad assessment culture: within this view it is more important to provide information on the progress of a student compared to his previous achievements, than answering the question 'what grades did this student achieve on a pre-determined scale from one to ten, or compared to his classmates?' The norm in the broad assessment culture shifts from pre-determined or peer-

¹³⁹ A lot of academic research as well as practical textbooks have been published at the broad assessment culture. Some examples of useful resources:
Dochy, F., Schelfhout, W., Janssens, S. (2003). *Anders evalueren. Assessment in de onderwijs-praktijk [Evaluate in a different way. Assessment in the education practice]*. Tiel: Lannoo.
Van Petegem, P. & Vanhoof, J. (2002). *Evaluatie op de testbank. Een handboek voor het ontwikkelen van alternatieve evaluatievormen [Evaluation on the test. A manual for the development of alternative assessment methods]*. Mechelen: Wolters Plantijn.

group norms to an individual norm (without losing the pre-determined attainment targets and developmental objectives out of sight).

555. The job profile and basic competences required from teachers emphasize that teachers should be competent in implementing the broad assessment culture.
556. There is, however, opposition towards this shift. The debate is not just on student assessment, but on the broader ‘active learning’ theory, more specifically on the difficulty of measuring achievements and progress of skills and attitudes and on the relationship between cognition and skills. Some teachers, parents and stakeholders claim that more and more students are ‘missing the boat’: their general knowledge is decreasing because schools are becoming less demanding as far as cognition is concerned and have been putting too much emphasis on the training of skills. For example in schools and among teacher trainers the rumour was spread that language teachers must dedicate 60% of their lessons to skills and 40% to cognition. In 2006, when the debate was at his highest, the former Minister of Education formally denied this rumour: *“The 60/40- ‘rule’ was put forward during informal discussions between school advisors and members of the Inspectorate, but it has never been a ‘law’” (...)* *One cannot separate cognition and skills from one another and throw them on a balance, as you do with vegetables at the grocer’s. Today we must emphasize the interaction between both. (...) In order to find out what students know and which skills they have we organize, both in primary and secondary education, the National Assessment Programme. (...) The results show that students find it very hard to combine knowledge with skills.*¹⁴⁰

6.3 Quality Assurance: preparing teachers for conducting student assessment

6.3.1 Basic competences of a teacher

557. The basic competences (see sub-section 419) for both primary and secondary school teachers include the expectation that a recently graduated teacher *“is able to choose and draw up tasks and assignments using different evaluation methods, in respect with the objectives. In the light of ‘broad student assessment’, the teacher is able to use observation instruments in co-operation with colleagues and knows how to give concrete and personal feedback to parents. Based on the results of the evaluation prospective teachers can adjust their educational handling and implement methods for differentiation between students.”*¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Source: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/archief/2006/2006/1214-vernieuwen.htm>

¹⁴¹ Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2006). *Een nieuw profiel voor de leraren basisonderwijs. Hoe worden leraren daartoe gevormd? Informatiebrochure bij de invoering van het nieuwe beroepsprofiel en de basiscompetenties voor leraren [A new profile for nursery and primary education teachers. How are teachers being trained for this? Information brochure on the implementation of the new professional profile and basic competences for teachers]* p 23.

Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2006). *Een nieuw profiel voor de leraren secundair onderwijs. Hoe worden leraren daartoe gevormd? Informatiebrochure bij de invoering van het nieuwe beroepsprofiel en de basiscompetenties voor leraren [A new profile for secondary education teachers. How are teachers being trained for this? Information brochure on the implementation of the new professional profile and basic competences for teachers]* p 26.

Both brochures are available at

<http://ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/leraar/basiscompetentiesenberoepsprofiel.htm> (Dutch only)

6.3.2 Initial teacher training

558. The Institutes for Initial Teacher Education were restructured by the Decree on Teacher Training in 2006.¹⁴² The Institutes' curricula need to guide prospective teachers towards the basic competences providing them an integrated mixture of knowledge, skills and attitudes, including student assessment skills.
559. In spite of the efforts from the Institutes for Initial Teacher Education, the Inspectorate found in 2007¹⁴³ that starting teachers experienced the drafting of an adaptive or alternative assessment system as one of their most difficult tasks. Starting teachers indicated that they did not feel prepared for this task when graduating from initial teacher training.

6.3.3 In-service teacher training and coaching

560. After graduating from initial teacher training, teachers continue to learn and to professionalize by means of in-service training. Courses on assessment are an important part of the wide range of in-service training possibilities. It is common practice to invite experts on various items (e.g. student assessment) to provide training opportunities for the teachers. The schools and teachers are however free to determine the content of their professionalization courses, so it is unclear to what extent teachers choose to improve their student assessment methods through in-service training.
561. In many schools drafting tests and other tools for student assessment happens in consultation with colleagues, enabling the starting teacher to become gradually competent in assessing students' progress and performances.

6.3.4 Quality improvement by School Advisory Services

562. The umbrella organizations try to have an impact on quality improvement of student assessment, e.g. by including a chapter on 'student assessment' in each of the curricula used by the schools.
563. School Advisory Services motivate and support schools to draw up an 'evaluation and reporting policy'. Of course, School Advisory Services may be asked to give support to schools to put this hand-out into practice. The School Advisory Service of GO! has decided to make the 'enhancing of secondary schools' evaluation policies' a prioritised theme for this school year. The objective is to strengthen the development of teaching practices based on continuous assessment of student characteristics and performances. Prioritisation of this topic was informed by the finding that the share of C-certificates awarded to students is higher in community education compared to other educational networks. It is however important to note that the input and context of community schools (a relative high number of schools with BSO-study areas) may be partially due to this fact. Additionally, the annual focus of the School Advisory Service of OVSG for 2011 will be on the 'broad assessment culture'. This will lead to a hand-out for schools to develop a school vision of student assessment and providing examples of 'good practices' with respect to the broad assessment culture.

¹⁴² Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming (2006). *Decreet betreffende de lerarenopleiding in Vlaanderen* [Decree on teacher training in the Flemish Community]. Decree adopted at December, 15, 2006.

¹⁴³ Onderwijsinspectie (2007). *Onderwijsspiegel* [Education Mirror]. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/onderwijsspiegel/spiegel/2006-2007.pdf> (Dutch only)

564. The OVSG-test (see sub-section 574) actively aims to support the broad assessment culture through inclusion of different assessment methods, adoption of self-evaluation, inclusion of skills that are harder to measure (e.g. creativity), a student report containing both numerical and descriptive results etc.
565. The School Advisory Services also motivate schools to question the quality of its class committees and to promote the involvement and responsibility of parents on communication of talents and deficits of the students (especially on transition of primary to secondary schools, because schools are not allowed to transfer student information due to privacy reasons).

6.4 Student assessment in practice

566. Schools are allowed to develop their own assessment policy. In most schools, teachers enjoy a considerable freedom in terms of student assessment. Consequently, within the Flemish educational system, there is a wide range of practices with large differences between schools and there is no uniform method of assessment. Even within schools there may be considerable differences between student performance assessments conducted by different teachers.
567. In general, although individual teachers and schools have taken commendable initiatives the broad assessment culture described above is not yet common practice in primary nor in secondary schools. There is, however, not much scientifically based research available to confirm this perception.
568. The use of curricula does not restrict schools when it comes to choosing school books and learning methods. School books are mostly written by teachers and published by commercial publishers. As publishers guard the implementation of the curricula of different umbrella organizations into schoolbooks meticulously, schools are usually quite confident that, using a book or method, they meet the requirements of the curriculum.
569. Teacher manuals attached to the education method or school books often supply test materials ready for use. Those tests (most often in primary education) are eagerly used by teachers. According to several stakeholders this practice is problematic for a double reason:
- Some teachers rely too much on the idea that these manuals and included evaluation tools are covering all attainment targets in a sufficient way without further questioning. They fail to account to what extent their teaching and assessment practices contribute to guiding the students towards the attainment targets and developmental objectives.
 - As publishers try to sell their school books in all different educational networks, in addition to the attainment targets and developmental objectives also the additional goals of different umbrella organizations are covered by the school books. Teachers who follow the book irrespective of the objectives set by their schools' (or umbrella organizations') curriculum and without elimination of the non-relevant contents in the light of the schools' curriculum will present their students too much contents and will try to achieve more objectives than feasible. This in turn will have an impact on the depth of the achievements on the attainment targets and developmental objectives: too much quantity leads to decreased quality of student performances.

6.4.1 Practices in primary education

570. Written tests are the most commonly used assessment method in primary education. Teachers test small or large units on a very regular basis in order to assess to what extent the pre-set objectives have been attained by the students and to evaluate the efficiency of their teaching. Schools determine autonomously if they use these tests only for formative or also

for summative purposes. In addition to self-created tests, teachers commonly use tests developed by their school advisors or tests that are included in the teacher's manual of the education method (often developed by specialist centres).

571. Attainment targets comprise of knowledge, skills and attitudes. To assess the latter, observing student behaviour is an assessment method frequently used by primary school teachers. It allows teachers to comment on the attitudes of students systematically. In addition, also self-evaluation by students is increasingly used.
572. The Inspectorate, however, reported in *The Education Mirror* 2006¹⁴⁴ that primary schools are far from developing tests based on the attainment targets and/or curricula. "*For school teams the attainment targets and developmental objectives are a source of information or inspiration rather than a frame of reference by which they can outline and assess their education.*"¹⁴⁵ The fact that teachers often rely heavily on textbooks (see sub-section 569) is an important causal factor for this finding. On top of that schools often find it difficult to assess certain fields of learning within the attainment targets and developmental objectives.
573. Primary schools eagerly make use of standardized summative tests for their students in the sixth grade offered by the umbrella organizations OVSG and VSKO (see sub-section 18). The umbrella organizations usually offer these tests as a service to schools belonging to their own network, but service may extend beyond that. As such, they provide reliable information for each student's competences, but also a point of reference for schools and teachers to determine the quality of their education. The tests have no direct effect on students' school career, although the test results provide complementary information to the data collected by the school for the decision whether or not to award a certificate to their students. The tests are not mandatory but most schools opt to participate.
574. The OVSG-test (for school organized by municipalities and cities) is organized yearly for students at the end of the sixth grade of primary education. The test content is based on the curriculum of this umbrella organization (including the attainment targets) for the sixth grade. It is, however, not the purpose of the OVSG-test to offer a comprehensive and representative test of all targets: recently implemented targets may be consciously overvalued in the test in order to motivate schools to include new objectives in their teaching practices. The test includes the study areas mathematics, Dutch language, environmental studies, arts education and French. In addition to written tests also six practical tests (Dutch speaking skills, French speaking skills, physical education, technology, arts education and traffic safety) are included, with clear criteria for teachers to assess students' process and result.
575. The VSKO-test also serves examination of student performances in the sixth grade of primary education. It is drawn up for schools that use the curriculum of Catholic education and assesses to what extent students have achieved the targets of the curriculum (including the attainment targets) in mathematics and Dutch literacy. The test consists of multiple choice questions and a spelling test (fill-in dictation). Most primary schools from the Catholic network join in these tests.
576. OVSG and VSKO agree that results on this test may contribute to the decision on whether or not to award a certificate of elementary education, but both umbrella organizations stress that the results are to be used complementary to other sources of information collected by the class committee.

¹⁴⁴ Onderwijsinspectie (2006). *Onderwijsspiegel [Education Mirror]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/onderwijsspiegel/spiegel/2005-2006.pdf> (Dutch only)

¹⁴⁵ Onderwijsinspectie (2006). *Onderwijsspiegel [Education Mirror]*, p. 16.

577. The Ministry of Education and Training made the SALTO-test available for primary schools at the website ‘Tests for Schools’ (Toetsen voor scholen)¹⁴⁶. SALTO is a test instrument that measures the language skill of students at the start of primary education. Teachers get an indication whether or not individual students have the necessary language skills needed for primary education. The test is no means for selection of students, but serves the formative purpose to enhance the efficiency of individual coaching of students. SALTO does not indicate what the reasons are for any shortcomings that might be found. For low-performing students further investigation is required in order to make an informed diagnosis and to decide on a remedial method.
578. There are also measurement tools available for measuring the students’ involvement and well-being in the classroom. The most commonly known and used tool is the instrument developed by the Centre for Experience based Education (ECEGO, ‘Expertisecentrum Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs’) with which schools can estimate the involvement and well-being of primary school students on a 5-points scale. The scale to assess student’s well-being in the classroom is built on five criteria:
- Students must enjoy being at school and performing activities;
 - Students feel relaxed and at peace;
 - Students act spontaneously and have an open mind to whatever comes their way;
 - Students feel self-confident;
 - Students feel close to ‘their own self’, their own experiences, their own functioning.

6.4.2 Student monitoring systems in nursery and primary education

579. A student monitoring system allows the school (i.e. mostly the teacher) to keep track of the development and progress of individual students throughout their study career by means of several repetitive tests. It allows to compare students’ performances with their earlier results and with the ‘results expected based on previous performances’. It may also give teachers insight in the student’s well-being and his/her involvement in school activities. Student monitoring systems also provide information to the multidisciplinary council. In addition, the student monitoring system may give the school a good idea of its educational quality.
580. There are different examples of student monitoring systems available for schools. On the website Tests for Schools (‘Toetsen voor Scholen’) created by the Ministry of Education and Training the ‘Student monitoring system for Flanders’ LVS (‘Leerlingvolgsysteem voor Vlaanderen’) is available for registered schools. It contains several tests to measure and benchmark student achievements on Dutch language and ordening in nursery education and spelling and technical reading in primary education. This student monitoring system is based on the Dutch CITO-student monitoring system which is widely used in the Netherlands.
581. The Pupil Guidance Centres of the privately-run subsidized education network developed their own student monitoring system. It consist of, among other tools, tests by means of which teachers can find and signal certain problems, e.g. learning problems for various subjects in primary education. For technical reading, spelling and mathematics further analyzing tools are provided in order to pinpoint the exact problem and determine swift courses of action.
582. The tools of ECEGO to measure students’ involvement and well-being (covered above in sub-section 578) are also often used to add information to the student monitoring system.

¹⁴⁶ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/toetsenvoorscholen/> (Dutch only)

6.4.3 Practices in secondary education

583. Students are mostly assessed by means of tests and examinations, organized by the individual specialist teacher under the ultimate responsibility of the school's competent authority.
584. Despite all attention paid to the broad assessment culture by educational experts and School Advisory Services, a study carried out in 2002¹⁴⁷ in secondary schools has pointed out that the traditional test culture still prevailed at that moment. Apparently, the shift from an evaluation culture to an assessment culture seems mainly theoretical. In practice the focus of evaluation is still to a large extent based on the summative approach of judgment and measurement. The formative functions of assessment (guidance, redirecting...) appear to be of minor importance. The researchers concluded that only 18% of the teachers frequently evaluated their students in a process-oriented manner. The use of alternative assessment methods is rather low. Giving a mark with a short commentary is the most common practice in secondary education.
585. The anecdotal comments collected by VSK ('Flemish Student Council') confirm these findings. Involvement of students in the evaluation policy or self-assessment practices is not common practice, as students are hardly ever informed about the targets of the curriculum. Even when a score or appraisal is given to students' attitudes, evaluation remains mainly based on cognitive aspects. Students' progress and learning processes are not often evaluated or taken into account.
586. The Inspectorate's report Education Mirror 2006¹⁴⁸ concluded even that student assessment practices are the weakest link in the students' learning process towards the attainment targets and developmental objectives. Innovative methods like self-evaluations were hardly ever applied in the evaluation practices. Assessment focuses largely on knowledge reproduction. Furthermore the Inspectorate reported about the need for improvement of reliability and validity of tests and exams used in secondary education.
587. Furthermore the Inspectorate reported that A-, B- and C-certificates awarded to students often lack adequate written motivations. For many schools, this contributes to them receiving the recommendation 'restricted positive' instead of 'positive' as result of the external school inspection.
588. Parents have claimed that student assessment often lacks transparency, in spite of the mandatory attention for student assessment in the school regulations. According to parent organizations it is too often unclear which contents are evaluated and which assessment methods will be used.
589. A more positive example of evaluation practices in secondary education is the integrated test (GIP, 'Geïntegreerde Proef'). In the sixth grade of TSO, KSO and BSO¹⁴⁹ students must pass a GIP. This test can be considered as a personal project by which students prove that they are able to apply their knowledge, skills and attitudes in a broader social and economic context. By doing so, students are encouraged to 'integrate' their competences of different courses and grades and to transfer them to a realistic situation. Depending on the study area, the content of GIP's may differ considerably. Some examples are enumerated below:
- Development of a garden table (study area welding – construction)

¹⁴⁷ Verhoeven, J., Devos, G., Bruylant, W. & Warmoes, V. (2002). *Evalueren in Vlaamse secundaire scholen [Assessing in Flemish secondary schools]*. Antwerpen/Apeldoorn: Garant.

¹⁴⁸ Onderwijsinspectie (2006). *Onderwijsspiegel [Education Mirror]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/onderwijsspiegel/spiegel/2005-2006.pdf> (Dutch only)

¹⁴⁹ Students of BSO have to pass two GIP's: both in the sixth and seventh grade.

- Automatic steering of traffic lights (study area electrical installation)
- Development of a water clearing installation (study area industrial sciences)
- Development of a menu in three languages (study area hotel)

Recently GIP's were also used to motivate students of the first grade of secondary education to choose for a technical or vocational study area.

Teachers and schools have to find innovative methods for evaluation of the GIP:

- GIP is a project that runs through most of the school year. Not only the final result needs to be evaluated, but the process is also taken into account (although it is up to schools to decide to what extent they include process evaluation).
- The GIP is assessed by the teachers who teach the courses and by experts of the relevant qualifications.
- The evaluation is often a combination of different assessment methods (evaluation of result, self assessment, presentation, ...)

590. As teachers experience difficulties with the assessment of the non-cognitive performances of their students, e.g. attitudes, well-being and involvement, several specific evaluation instruments have been developed by various institutions (educational centres, academic institutes, umbrella organizations etc). Some are used quite widely and frequently, others rather sporadically and in a limited number of schools or education forms. The most commonly known tool for assessment of non-cognitive performance is the SAM-scale (Scale for Attitude Measurement; 'Schaal voor AttitudeMeting'). The SAM-scale has been developed to assess, guide, stimulate and orientate students and focuses on their attainment of attitudes. By means of this tool a teacher can determine to what extent a pupil scores high or low for certain attitudes, e.g. flexibility, diligence and responsibility.

591. The SAM-scale is available at the website www.competento.be. The Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training (Vlaams Agentschap voor Ondernemersvorming) supports this website which provides a non-exhaustive overview and links to screening tools for both education and non-education objectives (e.g. self-tests for students to evaluate their learning style).

592. There are no student monitoring systems (as described for primary education in sub-section 579) available for secondary education yet.

6.4.4 Practices in special education

593. In special education no attainment targets must be achieved (except for education form 4 in special secondary education). Schools must take the government's developmental objectives as a base to work out individual and/or group intervention plans. What these plans look like and which goals they focus upon depends entirely on what the student or the group of students need, what abilities they have etc.

594. The class committee maintains close contact with the parents of each student. Both keep tabs on the development of each pupil and if necessary the intervention plan is adjusted.

595. Consequently, evaluation in special education is very broad, in that it spreads its focus over various domains: cognitive, motor, social, emotional etc. The intervention plans also require continuous assessment. The prime goal of evaluation is development, not awarding certificates or diplomas. Differences in assessment practices depend on the individual or group intervention plans.

596. Continuous monitoring of students' progress in the light of the intervention plans, implies de facto that student monitoring systems (as described for primary education in sub-section 579) are widely used in special education.

6.4.5 CLB-dossier

597. A so-called ‘CLB dossier’ is kept on each student, i.e. a multidisciplinary student file which contains information collected by the CLB (Pupil Guidance Centre, ‘Centra voor Leerlingbegeleiding’)¹⁵⁰. The information is quite versatile, e.g.: administrative information, information about compulsory support and preventative health care and a chronological overview of all contacts and interventions of the CLB. Information about demand-driven support is added as well. Information about the student’s learning progress and school results is only added when this is relevant for the information mentioned earlier.
598. Whenever a student moves to a school which is supported by another CLB than his previous school, the former CLB has to pass on the multidisciplinary file to the new CLB.
599. The student file is strictly confidential and – in that respect – subject to government regulations. Parents and students (12+) have the right to consult the file whenever they want to although some information may be restricted, e.g. information which has been provided confidentially by another person.

6.5 Study career counselling

6.5.1 Importance of study career counselling

600. Strengthening the mechanisms for study career counselling within secondary education and for the transition of secondary education to higher education is currently high on the political agenda (see Governance Agreement, sub-section 113). Inappropriate choices in students’ study careers are perceived as main causes for two long-standing problems in education:
- High retention rates in secondary education, high number of early school leavers and the so-called ‘waterfall syndrome’: parents tend to send their children to what is generally considered as the most demanding form of education (ASO). After failing ASO these students move ‘down’ to less prestigious educational programmes (TSO, KSO, BSO).¹⁵¹
 - Low success rates and high drop-out in the first year of higher education. Students often choose a study area in higher education that does not meet their expectations or competences.
601. Study career counselling is perceived as more than merely providing information at key moments when decisions on further school careers are taken by students. Study career counselling comprises of:
- Providing information on the different options.
 - Supporting the students in clarifying their clear self-concept.
 - Guiding students towards the competence to make well founded choices.
- These objectives are embedded in the attainment targets and developmental objectives (for secondary education mainly the cross-curricular attainment targets). Therefore the schools carry the responsibility to develop a policy on study career counselling. The CLB’s are commissioned with a subsidiary responsibility. Continuous formative assessment of students and giving feedback to students on their skills and talents, as well as giving them insight in their own expectations and interest through informal testing are perceived as effective methods of study career counselling.

¹⁵⁰ For more information on CLB’s, see sub-section 20.

¹⁵¹ For more information on ASO, TSO, KSO and BSO, see sub-section 40.

602. The current proposal for the reform of secondary education (see sub-section 617) plans to spend more systematic attention to study career counselling at different stages of the study career.

6.5.2 Study career counselling in practice

603. The Inspectorate reported in 2009¹⁵² that most schools organized a wide range of activities in the light of student career counselling, but they often lacked a clear 'student career counselling policy'. The different initiatives were not interrelated nor did they fit into a comprehensive framework. Schools were not able to present an overview of their initiatives, which implies that not many schools systematically evaluated their student career counselling policy and practices.

604. Initiatives in primary education mainly focused on clarifying the students' self-concept, their talents and competences, while in secondary education most initiatives related to provision of information. The Inspectorate advises schools to enlarge the focus of their efforts. This is the case especially for secondary education for which students, parents and CLB's point to the shortcomings of the current school practices. This demand is likely to be (partially) met through the reform of the structure of secondary education (see sub-section 617).

605. Because the increasing importance dedicated to study career counselling, it is expected that the Ministry of Education and Training will stress the evaluation of study career counselling initiatives in the near future.

606. VSK (Flemish Student Council) argues that teachers often lack a comprehensive view on the different study options available in the school or in neighbouring schools. VSK advocates the development and implementation of tests that inform students at different stages of their study career on their competences and expectations, and on how these competences and expectations match different study areas. VSK also requests a mandatory but non-binding orientation test at the end of secondary education for students that move to higher education in order to clear out their personal competences and to what extent they suit the required competences for several study areas.

6.6 Student retention

607. Despite all efforts, many students have to repeat one or more school years. Retention already starts in the first grade and retention rates increase per year. Amongst non-Belgian primary school children retention is extremely high (44,78%), most of which can be explained by the lack of nursery education language arrears. The admission test for primary education (see sub-section 514) is been introduced since this year to address this problem. It is, however, still too early to see the impact of this measure.

608. Retention rates even increase in secondary education. In the sixth grade of secondary education 40% of the boys and 25% of the girls have lost one or more years on their way to higher education or to the job market. One of the leading retention mechanisms is the so-called 'waterfall syndrome' (see sub-section 600). Not only do these students lose a year, but they also lose their motivation for studying, which even increases retention rates, as well as the number of early school leavers (students that drop out of the educational system without qualification of secondary education).

¹⁵² Findings of this research were published in Education Mirror 2009. Onderwijsinspectie (2009). *Onderwijsspiegel [Education Mirror]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/onderwijsspiegel/spiegel/2008-2009.pdf> (Dutch only)

609. The currently pending reform of the structure of secondary education (see sub-section 617) is expected to decrease the number of students with retention, as well as the number of early school leavers.

6.7 Articulation with other forms of evaluation

610. Unlike other levels of evaluation, the focus on output in student assessment is based on a long-standing tradition. While at other levels the focus on output measurement has increased, the opposite is true for student assessment.
611. Student assessment is closely linked to school evaluation: the student evaluation policies and practices are important quality indicators in the light of both internal and external school assessment. Test results provided by umbrella organizations or by the Ministry of Education and Training are important means of information for both student and internal school assessment.
612. The connection between student assessment and evaluation of education at system level is established through
- The absence of central examinations with civil effect on the student's career;
 - The attainment targets and developmental objectives, defined for quality assurance of the educational system have large impact on the content of student assessment.
613. Finally, the ability to perform qualitative student assessments is included in both the 'job profile' and 'basic competences' of teachers, implying student assessment practices may have an impact on teacher evaluation. This is, however, – as discussed in chapter 5 – not often the case in teacher appraisal practices.

6.8 Policy initiatives and pending issues

6.8.1 Basis of certificates and diplomas

614. Achieving the certificate of elementary education and the diploma of secondary education currently depends on the extent to which the objectives set by the curriculum of the school or umbrella organization have been acquired. These objectives minimally comprise the attainment targets and developmental objectives, but are mostly more ambitious.
615. This system potentially leads to problems in case students achieve the attainment targets but not the additional objectives of the curriculum. They are denied the certificate/diploma whereas in another school (with a different curriculum) a student with the same competences might have obtained the same certificate/diploma. Therefore the requirements for obtaining a certificate/diploma are currently under discussion.
616. The governing bodies of schools, however, argue that certificates/diplomas should remain based on the curriculum of the school in respect with the Freedom of education principle: if only the attainment targets and developmental objectives would have a civil effect the additional objectives would lose its importance, according to the umbrella organizations.

6.8.2 Reform of the structure of secondary education

617. A large-scale reform of the structure of secondary education is currently being discussed by all stakeholders. The current proposal by the Minister of Education¹⁵³ is inspired by the

¹⁵³ Smet, P. (2010). *Mensen doen schitteren. Eerste oriëntatienota hervorming secundair onderwijs. [Make people shine. First orientation note on the restructuring of secondary education]*. Published at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2010/bijlagen/20100913-hervorming-so.pdf> (Dutch only)

conclusions of the Committee-Monard¹⁵⁴ (see sub-section 200) and the recommendations of VLOR related to these conclusions.

618. The reform of secondary education includes the intention to leave the structure with the educational programmes ASO-TSO-KSO-BSO for 'domains of interest' in an attempt to counter the 'waterfall syndrome'. It seeks to address the high retention rates, the high number of early school leavers and the large differences between student performances, but at the same time faces the challenge to retain and even strengthen the strong student performances found by international comparative research.
619. It is important to note that all the ideas below are still under consideration. It is not yet clear to what extent and in which timeframe these ideas will be realized.
620. The first challenge is the improvement of the transition between primary and secondary education. The reform aspires to strengthen the flow of information from primary to secondary schools in order to continue coaching of the development processes of each individual student. Therefore better use of student monitoring systems and student achievement portfolio's will be required.
621. The value of the certificate of elementary education will increase considerably. Currently students without this certificate can join the A-stream with permission of the admission class committee (see sub-section 525). It is, however, hard for the admission class committee to assess the capacities of the students and some schools prove to be more lenient than others. Therefore - according to the current proposal - the reform of secondary education will entail that only students with a certificate of elementary education are allowed to enrol in the regular first grade of secondary education. Students without this certificate will be referred to a 'linking stage'. This measure would imply that the primary schools' class committees' decision whether or not to award the certificate of primary education would have a stronger civil effect on the student's study career. Subsequently the appeal procedure in primary education will probably need to be further elaborated.
622. Furthermore a screening of knowledge of Dutch language at the start of secondary education is likely to be imposed in the near future. It would not be the purpose of this test to deny access to students, but to provide extra courses to address the specific language needs of the individual student.
623. Study career counselling is expected to become more important than it currently already is. According to the current proposal:
 - The efforts to support students' ability to make well-founded choices would be strengthened;
 - Important choices in the study career would be phased in different steps;
 - The implementation of student monitoring systems in secondary education would be strengthened.
624. The C-certificate (implying student retention, see sub-section 521) will include the competences that the student has achieved in each of the courses. This measure proposed by the Minister of Education would make eventual exemptions during the retention year possible, which is currently already common practice in higher education. This would limit the courses that students have to take again. In addition, students who decide not to continue

¹⁵⁴ Commissie Monard (2009). *Kwaliteit en kansen voor elke leerling. Een visie op de vernieuwing van het secundair onderwijs. Voorstel van de Commissie Monard. [Quality and opportunities for every student. An opinion about the revision of secondary education. Proposal of the Committee-Monard]*. Available at: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/nieuws/2009/bijlagen/0424-visienota-SO.pdf> (Dutch only)

education would be able to show their achieved competences at the job market or later when they want to join adult education.

625. Furthermore, according to the current proposal the deliberative class committee (see subsection 519) would be able to impose additional training or coaching during the next school year for all students (irrespective of their A-, B- or C-certificate).
626. After six years of secondary education every student would be awarded the diploma of secondary education. Unlike the current situation not all diplomas would allow access to higher education. A preparatory stage would be mandatory for students who studied a 'labour-market-oriented' study area. This would imply that different diplomas of secondary education will have discerning values.
627. Finally, it is expected that the enlarged focus on the development of personal, social, professional and scientific competences as synthesis of knowledge, skills and attitudes will endorse the use of alternative evaluation methods and will thus support the implementation of the broad assessment culture.

6.8.3 Competences for teacher trainers

628. Basic competences have been drawn up for primary and secondary teachers in order to ensure the quality of teaching and evaluation. There are currently however no likewise instruments for the persons who provide the initial training to prospective teachers.
629. Therefore another pending issue in the quality assurance of student assessment is the question whether it is feasible to draw up basic competences for teacher trainers in the Institutes for Initial Teacher Education.

Chapter 7. Other forms of evaluation and assessment

7.1 Evaluation and recruitment of school principals

630. In the light of the responsibility of schools to provide quality education and the increasing importance dedicated to schools' policy-making capacities in order to ensure educational quality, the school principal has become a key person in the framework of quality assurance and school improvement. The schools' policy-making capacities depend largely on the extent to which school principals are able to establish an open communication and shared leadership, their responsiveness towards internal and external goals, their efforts to stimulate the reflective capacity of the staff members etc. A well functioning system of evaluation and coaching of school principals is therefore indispensable for every school in the Flemish Community.
631. It is important to point out that the governing bodies in both elementary and in secondary education are responsible for determining the responsibilities of the school principal. The autonomy of the governing body fits in with the principle of Freedom of education. It is only within community education that the school principal's responsibilities are pre-determined.
632. The appraisal system for teachers is also valid for evaluation of school principals. The main features of the appraisal cycle are enumerated below:
- Evaluation in cycles of maximum four years;
 - Individualised job descriptions, adapted to local expectations;
 - Appraisal discussions;
 - Evaluation discussion and evaluation report including the 'positive' or 'unsatisfactory' conclusion;
 - Appeal procedure in Chamber of the Board of Appeals.
633. The appraisal system for school principals differs in only one way from the system for teachers, namely that there is only one evaluator instead of two. The evaluator is a representative of the school's governing body.
634. Just like for teachers, a school principal who was not permanently appointed as school principal and who received an unsatisfactory evaluation is dismissed from his current function. However, he is allowed to take up his teaching responsibility if he was before permanently appointed as a teacher.
635. School principals in community schools have a probationary period of one year. They are evaluated after one year. If unsatisfactory, this evaluation can lead to dismissal.
636. In schools of community education, the role of the governing body is delegated to the school group. In schools of provincial and municipal education, the local magistrate for education will be the principal's evaluator. In Catholic schools (and other privately-run subsidized schools) the governing bodies comprise mostly of volunteers. According to the principals' organizations especially in these latter schools a problem may occur, as these volunteers might lack the professional knowledge and required skills to be an effective coach and evaluator.
637. The Flemish Student Council (VSK) advocates more consultation of students (through the local student council) in the cycle of school principal appraisal.

638. The recruitment process of school principals may differ in practice from the recruitment of teachers:
- A recent trend is that external consultancy agencies are involved in the process of recruitment of principals. More and more schools' governing bodies think the role of the school principal is so crucial that professional support in screening candidates is required.
 - The School Advisory Services support governing bodies in the preparation of the recruitment process for a new school principal. Depending on the umbrella organization the involved School Advisory Service may or may not be part of the selection committee.
639. School Advisory Services indicate that schools face increasing challenges in the recruitment of school principals. According to the School Advisory Services, the perceived work load for school principal, the high amount of tasks for the school principal (with increasingly more organizational and administrative tasks, leaving little space for pedagogical improvement) and the absence of a middle management structure in nursery and primary schools are due to the decreasing number of candidates for vacancies of school principals. These problems are confirmed by the teacher's unions and the organization for school principals.

7.2 Evaluation of the School Advisory Services

640. A first-time evaluation of the School Advisory Services is planned in the near future. Just like schools, School Advisory Services (belonging to the different umbrella organizations) are expected to monitor the quality of their services. Until now, neither their functioning nor whether they comply with the mandatory self-monitoring has been externally inspected. There is also no view on the policy-making capacities of School Advisory Services.
641. The Ministry of Education and Training is still pending to what extent it can impose to School Advisory Services a definition of 'qualitative school guidance', in respect with the Freedom of education principle which allows the umbrella organizations to autonomously define what they perceive as qualitative school guidance. Inspection of the School Advisory Services may therefore focus on whether or not they comply with predetermined regulations and whether or not they monitor their own quality, just like the rationale for external school inspection. This is, however, still under discussion.
642. Another pending issue is whether the School Advisory Services will be assessed in their functioning as a whole, or whether the screening of the quality delivered by individual school advisors is also part of this evaluation.

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<i>Inspectorate</i>	http://www.onderwijsinspectie.be
<i>Flemish Education Council</i>	http://www.vlor.be
<i>AGODI</i>	http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs/agodi
<i>AKOV</i>	http://www.akov.be

Organizations and institutions

<i>Umbrella organizations:</i>	http://www.gemeenschapsonderwijs.be http://www.ovsg.be http://www.pov.be http://www.vsko.be http://www.oko.be
<i>Teacher's Unions</i>	http://www.acodonderwijs.be http://www.coc.be http://www.cov.be http://www.vsoa-onderwijs.be
<i>Parent Organizations</i>	http://www.koogo.be http://www.vcov.be http://www.g-o.be/ouders
<i>Flemish Student Council</i>	http://www.vsknet.be
<i>Court of Audit:</i>	http://www.ccrek.be
<i>Research Unit Flemish Government</i>	http://www3.vlaanderen.be/jacom/organogram/term/521
<i>Flemish Parliament</i>	http://www.vlaamsparlement.be
<i>IAVA</i>	http://www2.vlaanderen.be/doelbewustmanagement
<i>Council of Europe</i>	http://www.coe.int
<i>European Union</i>	http://europa.eu
<i>ICP Program of World Bank</i>	http://www.worldbank.org/data/icp
<i>IEA</i>	http://www.iea.nl
<i>OECD</i>	http://www.oecd.org
<i>UIS UNESCO</i>	http://www.uis.unesco.org
<i>SICI</i>	http://www.sici-inspectorates.org
<i>Centre for 'Education and School Careers' (SSL)</i>	http://www.steunpuntloopbanen.be
Specific topics	
<i>Attainment targets and developmental objectives</i>	http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo
<i>Data and statistics</i>	http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsstatistieken
<i>Education Mirror</i>	http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/inspectie/onderwijsspiegel
<i>National Assessment Program</i>	http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/peilingen/index.htm http://www.peilingsonderzoek.be
<i>OBPWO</i>	http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/obpwo
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Annexes

ANNEX A. Overview of interviews

Interviews conducted in order to collect information on points of view and on pending issues.

Oct 19	School Advisory Services OVSG	Jan Degreef, Head of the Development Services Elementary Education Michel Vanhee, Head of the School Advisory Services Elementary Education Johan Vanwynsberghe, Co-ordinator Elementary Education
Oct 21	Ministry of Education and Training Department of Education and Training – Unit for Support of Policy Development	Evi Verduyck, Adjunct of the Director
Oct 21	Ministry of Education and Training Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training	Willy Sleurs, Educational advisor Els Ver Eecke, Educational advisor
Oct 21	Ministry of Education and Training Department of Education and Training - Unit for Institutes and Pupils Secondary Education and Adult Education	Chris Dockx, Adjunct of the Director
Oct 25	Flemish Student Council	Maarten Mommaerts, Co-ordinator
Oct 26	School Advisory Services VSKO	Jan Saveyn, Director
Oct 26	School Advisory Services GO!	Luc De Man, Advisor Co-ordinator
Oct 27	Inspectorate	Martine Vranken, Co-ordinator Inspector
Oct 27	Ministry of Education and Training Department of Education and Training Unit for Institutes and Pupils Elementary Education and Part-time Arts Education	Veronique Adriaens, Adjunct of the Director
Oct 29	COV (Teacher's union)	Marleen Coopman, Adjunct of the General Secretary Hilde Lavrysen, Head of the Legal Department
Oct 29	Unit of Special Education of VSKO	Koen Scheurweg, Staff for Policy Support
Oct 29	Parent organizations of VSKO and GO!	Kim Bogaerts, Staff responsible for Education (parent organization VSKO) Kenneth Lasoen, Director (parent organization GO!)
Oct 29	Ministry of Education and Training Department of Education and Training -Unit responsible for labour condition policies	Steven Heyman, Advisor Marc Leunis, Advisor
Oct 29	Ministry of Education and Training Department of Education and Training – Unit for Strategic Policy Support	Micheline Scheys, Secretary-General of Department of Education (previously Principal of Strategic Policy Unit) Miekatrien Sterck, Adjunct of the Director

ANNEX B. Examples of attainment targets

Cross-curricular attainment targets for 'social skills' for primary education

1 Social skills – ways of relating

1 Ways of relating

- 1.1 The pupils are able to introduce themselves assertively.
- 1.2 The pupils are able to demonstrate respect and appreciation in their relations with others.
- 1.3 The pupils are able to care for others or other things.
- 1.4 The pupils are able to ask for help and allow themselves to be helped.
- 1.5 In group tasks the pupils are able to lead the group or cooperate under the leadership of a fellow pupil.
- 1.6 The pupils can be critical and formulate their own point of view.
- 1.7 The pupils are able to relate to their peers and adults with signals which are understandable and acceptable to others.
- 1.8 The pupils are able to act discretely.
- 1.9 The pupils are able to admit that they are wrong or incapable, listen critically and learn from this.

2 Social skills – conversation conventions

2 The pupils are able to observe a number of verbal and non-verbal conversation conventions in practical situations.

3 Social skills – cooperation

3 The pupils are able to cooperate with others, without distinction in terms of social background, gender or ethnic origin.

Source: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/DVO>

1 Content attainment targets

1.1 Number theory

1.1.1 Concept formation/knowledge of facts

The pupils

1 can associate natural, whole and rational numbers with realistic and meaningful contexts;

2 know the symbol rules for whole and rational numbers;

3 know that the properties of the operations in the set of natural numbers remain valid and can be expanded in the sets of whole and rational numbers;

4 distinguish and understand the various notations of rational numbers (fractional and decimal notation);

5 use the appropriate terminology in relation to operations: addition, sum, terms of a sum, subtraction, difference, multiplication, product, factors of a product, division, quotient, dividend, divisor, remainder, percent, square, square root, power, base, exponent, opposite, reciprocal, absolute value, average.

1.1.2 Procedures

The pupils

6 apply arrangements relating to the order of operations;

7 correctly perform the main operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) in the sets of natural, whole and rational numbers;

8 calculate quickly using the properties and calculation rules of operations.

9 use a calculator effectively;

10 order numbers and use the appropriate symbols (\leq , $<$, \geq , $>$, $=$, \neq);

11 calculate powers using bases 10 and 2 with whole exponent. Here, they apply the calculating rules of powers;

12 can:

- estimate the result of an operation;
- round off a result sensibly;

13 use percentage calculations in meaningful contexts.

1.1.3 Cohesion between concepts

The pupils

14 interpret a rational number as a number which defines the place of a point on a numerical axis;

15 can explain the connection between addition and subtraction, multiplication and division;

16 recognise two quantities as directly and indirectly proportional in tables and in everyday life;

17 can calculate the arithmetical average and the median (for non-grouped data) from tables containing figures and derive relevant information from them.

1.2 Algebra

1.2.1 Concept formation/knowledge of facts

The pupils

18 use letters as a means of generalising and as unknowns.

1.2.2 Procedures

The pupils

19 can add up and multiply binomials and trinomials and simplify the result;

20 know the formulae for the following remarkable products: $(a+b)^2$ and $(a+b)(a-b)$; they can justify them and use them in both directions;

21 can solve equations of the first grade with one unknown;

22 can solve simple problems which are to be derived to an equation of the first grade with one unknown.

1.2.3 Cohesion between concepts

The pupils

23 discern regularity in simple patterns and diagrams and can describe it using formulae;

24 can express directly proportional connections from tables using formulae;

25 can make functional use of simple charts, figures, tables and diagrams.

1.3 Geometry

1.3.1 Concept formation/knowledge of facts

The pupils

26 know and use the geometrical concepts of diagonal, bisector, altitude, perpendicular bisector, radius, diameter, opposite angles, adjacent angles, contiguous angles, midpoint angles;

27 recognise parallel position, perpendicular position and symmetry in flat figures and recognise uniformity and congruence between flat figures;

28 recognise figures on the flat which have been achieved by a shift, a reflection or a rotation;

29 know that information is lost in a two-dimensional presentation of a three-dimensional situation;

30 recognise a cube, bar, straight prism, cylinder, pyramid, cone and sphere using a sketch, drawing and similar;

31 know geometrical properties such as the sum of the angles in triangles and rectangles, properties of equilateral and isosceles triangles, properties of sides, angles and diagonals in rectangles.

1.3.2 Procedures

The pupils

32 choose suitable units and instruments to measure distances and angles or to construct with the desired accuracy;

33 use the concept of scale to calculate distances in geometrical figures;

34 calculate the circumference and surface of a triangle, rectangle and circle and the surface and volume of a cube, beam and cylinder;

35 can:

- determine the image of a simple flat geometrical figure through a shift, reflection, rotation;
- determine and axes of symmetry of flat figures;
- construct perpendicular lines, perpendicular bisectors and bisectors;

36 from various flat reproductions, can form an image of a simple spatial figure using all kinds of concrete material.

1.3.3 Cohesion between concepts

The pupils

37 describe and classify the types of triangle and the types of rectangle using properties;

38 define points on the flat using coordinates;

39 graphically present directly proportional connections between quantities;

40 understand a given simple argument relating to properties of geometrical figures.

2 Skills

The pupils

41 understand and use mathematical language in simple situations;

42 apply communicative skills in simple mathematical situations;

43 apply problem-solving skills, such as:

- reformulating a task;
- making a good sketch or suitable diagram;
- introducing notes, choosing unknowns;
- analysing simple examples.

3 Attitudes

The pupils

44 develop independence and perseverance in approaching problems;

45 develop self-regulation: guidance, planning, monitoring, self-testing and reflection;

46 develop a critical attitude towards the use of all kinds of figures, tables, calculations and graphic presentations;

47 learn to realise that, in mathematics, not only the final result is important, but also the way in which the answer is achieved.

Source: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/DVO>

Developmental objectives for mathematics for the first grade secondary education B-stream
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1 Visual

The pupils can

- 1 correctly copy drawings from the board;
- 2 recognise, complete, compose and arrange figures.

2 Perceptual-locomotor

The pupils can

- 3 draw a two-dimensional drawing reduced and enlarged, using a grid;
- 4 rotate a two-dimensional drawing about a vertical and a horizontal axis, using a grid;
- 5 expand a three-dimensional body.

3 Insight into numbers

The pupils have

- 6 an insight into the relationship between fraction, decimal number and percentage.

4 Basic operations

The pupils can

- 7 perform basic operations with natural numbers, including zero difficulty;
- 8 add and subtract fractions, where the result is a fraction whose denominator is smaller than or equal to 16;
- 9 perform basic operations with a decimal number and a natural number.

5 Mathematics in practical situations

The pupils can

- 10 apply the basic operations in various situations;
- 11 estimate quantities and results of operations and round them off meaningfully;
- 12 solve and check a sum;
- 13 work with relationships and percentages in practical situations.

6 Pocket calculator

The pupils can

14 add, subtract, multiply and divide using a pocket calculator;

15 estimate the results to be achieved beforehand and check them afterwards;

16 find the percentage of a number using a pocket calculator;

17 use a pocket calculator effectively.

7 Quantities and units

The pupils

18 can compare and order two or more similar objects without using a unit of measure;

19 know the terms circumference, surface, volume, content, mass, time, temperature and angle;

20 know the most important units and can use their symbols correctly;

21 see the connection between the change in the unit and the change in the measurement number in derivations;

22 can solve simple problems relating to circumference, surface, content, mass, time, temperature and angle;

23 can make a well-founded choice between instruments in a measuring assignment;

24 can measure and calculate quantities.

8 Lines

The pupils

25 know various types of line and can draw them;

26 can draw a line section;

27 can accurately measure the length;

28 recognise the mutual position of straight lines and can draw straight lines whose mutual position is described.

9 Angles

The pupils can

29 indicate and name the elements of an angle;

30 indicate and classify angles (zero angle, acute angle, right angle, obtuse angle, straight angle, full angle);

31 measure and draw angles.

10 Flat figures

The pupils can

32 divide figures into flat figures and spatial figures;

33 divide figures into polygons and figures which are not polygons;

34 classify polygons according to the number of angles and sides;

35 classify triangles using the number of equal sides or angles as criteria;

36 draw triangles for which a number of conditions relating to the equality of sides or angles are given;

37 classify rectangles using the criteria of the number of equal sides, the number of pairs of parallel sides, the number of equal angles, properties of diagonals;

38 draw rectangles for which a number of conditions are given relating to the equality of sides or angles;

39 calculate the circumference and surface of a triangle, square and rectangle;

40 draw a circle;

41 calculate the circumference and surface of a circle using a given formula.

11 Spatial figures

The pupils

42 recognise a cube and a bar;

43 recognise a pyramid, cylinder, cone and sphere;

44 can calculate the content of a cube and a bar using a given formula.

12 Information processing

The pupils

45 can retrieve information from graphs, tables, diagrams, maps and scale models;

46 can work with street maps and plans;

47 understand the concept of scale;

48 can calculate an arithmetic average;

49 can work to scale using drawings and models.

13 Money

The pupils can

50 calculate with money in real situations.

Source: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo>

ANNEX C. Overview of the subjects assessed by the National Assessment Programme

Year	Primary education	Secondary education	
2002	Mathematics Dutch language: comprehensive reading		
2004		Acquiring and processing information	Stage 1, A-stream
2005	Environmental Studies: nature and investigating skills		
2006		Biology and investigating skills	Stage 1, A-stream
2007	Dutch language: comprehensive reading(*) and listening skill	French language: reading, listening and writing skill.	Stage 1, A-stream
2008	French language: reading, listening, writing and speaking skill	Mathematics	Stage 1, B-stream
2009	Mathematics(*)	Mathematics	Stage 1, A-stream
2010	Environmental Studies: Time, space, society and use of information resources	Dutch language: reading, speaking and listening	Stage 3, ASO, TSO, KSO
2011		Acquiring and processing information (*)	Stage 1, A-stream
		Mathematics	Stage 2, ASO
2012	Acquiring and processing information and ICT	French language: listening and speaking	Stage 3, ASO, TSO, KSO
2013	Dutch language; comprehensive reading(**) and listening(*)	Acquiring and processing information	Stage 3, BSO

(*) Reiteration of a previous National Assessment Programme

(**) Second reiteration of a previous National Assessment Programme

Source: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dvo/peilingen/overzicht/peilingenkalender.htm>