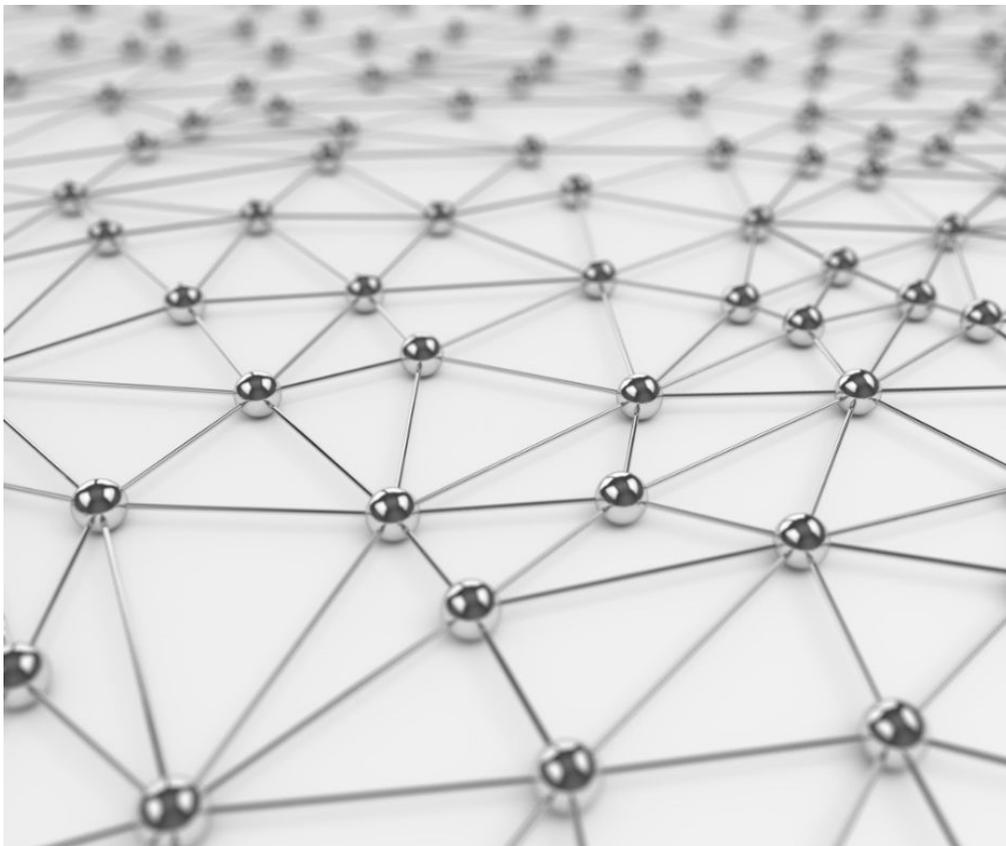




TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:

Country Background Report of the Flemish Community of Belgium for the OECD TPL study



This report was prepared by the Flemish Department of Education and Training as an input to the OECD Teachers' Professional Learning Study. The OECD and the European Commission (EC) have established a partnership for the Project, whereby participation costs of countries which are part of the European Union's Erasmus+ programme are partly covered. The participation of the Flemish Community of Belgium was organised with the support of the EC in the context of this partnership. The document was prepared in response to guidelines the OECD provided to all countries. The opinions expressed are not those of the OECD or its Member countries. Further information about the OECD Study is available at www.oecd.org/education/teachers-professional-learning-study.

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The school networks and their umbrella organisations play an important role in assisting their member schools in organisational and pedagogical matters, such as curriculum design and the professional development of teachers, about which schools – within the general outline provided by the legislation – can decide autonomously.

Part 2 covers the **features of the teaching profession**. The quality of education depends to a large extent on teaching quality. Teacher education is the first step in the teachers' professional continuum and was reformed in September 2019. Since the reform, teacher education programmes have been more focused on creating pathways for side entrants. ITE focuses on teachers' [basic competences](#), the reference framework for knowledge, skills and attitudes that every graduate must have in order to be able to start work as a fully-fledged teacher. Access to the teaching profession is based on the 'open recruitment' principle. As school boards are the employers of teachers, they decide on the recruitment and assignment of teachers but have to respect the legally defined recruitment conditions in terms of qualifications, as well as the statutory rights of their teaching staff, especially regarding members of staff who have tenure. There is no general regulation on career progression in terms of roles and responsibilities. As the Flemish Community of Belgium faces an increasing teacher shortage, schools, especially in larger cities, encounter more difficulties to recruit experienced teachers. The Flemish government determines the **certificates of competence** ('bekwaamheidsbewijzen') for each level of education. A certificate of competence consists of a basic diploma, a certificate of pedagogical competence (teacher training) and/or experience. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, teachers and school leaders are evaluated on the basis of their individual job description. Teacher appraisal is regulated by the top-level authority.

Part 3 elaborates on the key features of teachers' professional development. The teachers' professional continuum starts with teacher training and induction, and further entails continuous professional learning. The basic competences and [professional profile for teachers](#) can serve as a guideline for the professional development of every teacher and enables teachers and schools to respond to evolving societal needs. In general, continuous professional learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium is conceived as an active learning and development process of education professionals to strengthen their professional expertise and commitment to improve the quality of their education for learners, as well as to implement innovations. It can take various forms: more traditional forms like courses or seminars or more collaborative forms within and among school teams. Other classifications include individual vs collaborative, external vs internal, face-to-face vs digital (or in between like blended learning) formats. Teachers can make use of different forms of CPL activities. Professional development goes hand in hand with school development and schools' HR policies and needs to be embedded in their strategic policy.

Due to the **devolved nature of the Flemish education system**, schools have a high autonomy regarding CPL policy. The government sets out the regulatory framework (the so-called 'what', e.g. targets), but it is up to the schools to determine how this is translated into a pedagogical project (the so-called 'how'). Schools are responsible and accountable for its implementation. In terms of CPL, the Reference Framework for Quality in Education stresses the expectations concerning the development of a school's professionalisation policy. Additionally, schools are autonomous in shaping their policy on CPL and HRM and can rely on support from the pedagogical guidance services (PBD) and other providers. The schools are inspected by the Education Inspectorate. The outcome of the Education Inspectorate's evaluation determines whether schools retain their recognition or not. It is possible that the outcome of the evaluation contains the obligation to address shortcomings. Schools have the option of appealing the Inspectorate's decision to search external guidance. An evaluation can however oblige schools to seek external guidance as a provision for retaining recognition.

The challenge is to provide sufficient support to all school leaders, including those who are less strong. As a consequence, professional leadership development is crucial. The development of a **competence framework for school leaders** in collaboration with stakeholders was announced in the 2019-2024 Policy Note. This competence framework will constitute the basis for the further development of a school leadership training course.

Not only school leaders should and can display leadership. It is a matter for everyone with a leading role in the school (e.g. Department chairs and other staff members) can also stimulate CPL and implementation of the learning results. **Shared leadership** and internal capacity to support teachers' needs to be strengthened. This evolution prompts reconsideration of the traditional organisation of schools.

This Country Background Report ends with **Chapter 8**, which identifies **challenges** the Flemish education system faces with regards to CPL. The challenges focus on the need, content, format and quality of CPL. They demand a holistic and coherent approach and cannot be read separately. Underlying these challenges, there is a need for defining the vision of 'being a teacher' and on teachers' CPL. Most challenges require actions from multiple actors: teachers, schools, CPL providers and policymakers. Finally, re-thinking teachers' CPL cannot occur in isolation but must be embedded in reflection about the teaching profession as a whole and about teachers' working conditions.

In this Country Background Report, the following challenges are identified:

Challenge 1: Creating a sense of urgency and acknowledging teachers as professionals

Challenge 2: Strengthening CPL with effect on teachers' practice

Challenge 3: Strengthening collaborative and school-based CPL

Challenge 4: Supporting sustainable transfer

Challenge 5: Strong leadership for teacher learning

Challenge 6: Toward tailored and evidence-informed CPL activities

- Tailored to the teachers' needs and context
- Timely supply and innovation oriented
- Evidence-informed approach on content and format

Challenge 7: Intensifying the collaboration among providers

Challenge 8: Enhancing coherence and quality assurance

- Towards a general and updated overview of CPL activities
- Towards a common framework for quality of CPL initiatives

Challenge 9: Supporting the data literacy of teachers and school leaders

Challenge 10: Providing sufficient CPL opportunities in the context of multiple reforms and financial cuts.

1 CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

This chapter describes in three parts the Flemish education system. First, it addresses the school system. In the second part, it elaborates on the key features of the teaching force and finally, the characteristics of teachers' professional development in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

1.1 PART 1: KEY FEATURES OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Part 1 elaborates on the specific features of the school system in the Flemish Community of Belgium, the key characteristics of the teaching profession and teachers' professional development.

1.1.1 Responsibilities of local, regional and central authorities

As the **Flemish educational** system is devolved, all education institutions have a high level of autonomy.

1.1.1.1 Educational competence

In Belgium the **Communities** are responsible for education, with the exception of three competences which remain a **federal** matter:

- the determination of the compulsory education age,
- the minimum requirements for the issuing of diplomas,
- the legislation of retirement for employees in the educational system.

Education in each community is provided in the official language of the community in question. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the Ministry of Education and Training is competent for all stages of education and training starting from pre-primary education. Childcare is a competence of the Flemish Ministry of Wellbeing, Public Health and Family.

1.1.1.2 Freedom of education and school choice

'Freedom of education' is a constitutional right in Belgium¹. This 'freedom' has a double meaning: it implies on the one hand that every natural or legal person is free to start a school (freedom of organisation) and on the other hand that every parent can choose freely in which school to enroll their child. This freedom of choice includes the (legal) guarantee that all children must have access to a school of their choice within a reasonable distance from their home. Schools are free to develop their own policy and educational approach within the boundaries set by the regulatory framework. Similarly, schools are also autonomous in their staff hiring decisions.

¹ Art. 24 of the Belgian Constitution.



The vast majority of schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium (serving more than 2/3 of the school population in general and near to 3/4 of mainstream secondary education) is government-aided privately run, while nevertheless publicly recognised, funded and regulated. A small number of schools (less than 1%) are not recognised by the government. These private schools do not receive government or public funding.

The educational networks consist of **umbrella organisations**, in which school boards can unite. This association represents the school boards in government consultations and offers services to their schools such as drafting the curricula (based on the final objectives, see further) and timetables.

GO! Education	GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
Catholic Education The Flemish Community of Belgium	Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen
Umbrella organisation of Local authorities Education	Onderwijskoepel van Steden en Gemeenten vzw
Provincial Education The Flemish Community of Belgium	Provinciaal Onderwijs Vlaanderen
Federation of Steinerschools	Federatie Steinerscholen
Federation of Independent Pluralistic Emancipatory Methodology schools	Federatie Onafhankelijke Pluralistische Emancipatorische Methodescholen
Council Schoolboard Protestant-Christian Education	Raad Inrichtende Machten Protestants-Christelijk Onderwijs
Flemish Education Consultation Platform	Vlaams Onderwijs OverlegPlatform

Table 1: A list of community education (GO!) and the umbrella organisations and a link to the websites

The school networks and their underlying umbrella organisations play an important role in supporting their member schools in organisational and pedagogical matters, such as curriculum design and professional development of teachers, for which schools – within the general outline provided by the legislation – can make autonomous decisions.

Communities of schools

Communities of schools are collaborative partnerships between schools from the same geographical area, created in 1999 for secondary education⁷ and in 2005 for primary education.⁸ Schools can form these communities voluntarily and receive funding by the Flemish government by way of additional staff or other resources.

⁷ [Codex Secondary Education](#)

⁸ [Decree of 25 February 1997 on primary education](#)



The ‘competences’ of communities of schools are defined by decree: communities can be created to consult and collaborate on matters such as course offer, pupil guidance, personnel (and professionalisation), and infrastructure. School communities are normally formed for a period of 6 years.

The (financial) incentives proved successful: 96% of all secondary schools are part of one on of the 116 secondary school communities for secondary education. 328 communities for primary education represent 98% of the primary schools. On average, a school community is made up of 6 to 12 schools. An evaluation of the school communities revealed the variation in practices of school communities (Devos et al., 2010). Some have elaborated the concept and created a position for a full-time coordinating director of the community while other communities are rather minimalistic.

1.1.1.4 Curriculum

On the level of the education system, **attainment targets and developmental objectives** are legally defined as learning outcomes and descriptors to guide (mainstream) schools on the minimal levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes that children should acquire in school. As these attainment targets and developmental objectives represent the societal expectations towards the education system, they are enshrined in legislation and voted by the Flemish Parliament. Attainment targets should be reached by all children; developmental objectives should be strived for.

The first attainment targets and developmental objectives are implemented in 1997. Currently, the Flemish government is **reforming and updating the educational curriculum** (in terms of attainment targets and developmental objectives) **in compulsory education, starting in secondary education**. After the introduction of new attainment targets in the 1st year of the 1st stage of secondary education in September 2019, new attainment targets for the 2nd year and 2nd and 3rd stage of secondary education are defined in 2021. These attainment targets will be implemented in the second stage on 1st of September 2021 and in the third stage on 1st of September 2023. New attainment targets for primary and adult education will be developed as well.

The new attainment targets are developed based on 16 key competences, covering almost all areas. They are no longer ordered by subject or discipline. The school governing boards decide on the connection between the attainment targets and specific subjects. Nearly all attainment targets have to be reached at the level of the complete student population. The attainment targets on basic literacy (Dutch, mathematics, digital and financial competences) have to be reached by the end of the first stage by every pupil individually.

Since 2002, a **system of yearly assessments** (“peilingen”) has been put in place to see which share of the pupils reaches the attainment targets.⁹ Every school year, a representative sample of pupils in primary (always in grade 6) and in secondary (can be in grade 8, 10 or 12) is asked to complete a standardised test. In principle all subjects can be part of these assessments. The results are used for evaluation at system level (not at the level of the school or the pupil). International comparative large-scale assessments such as TIMSS or PISA are considered to complement Flemish assessments.

The Flemish government proposed in the 2019-2024 Policy Note that **standardised and validated tests** will be taken at 4 moments in the educational career of pupils.

⁹ Information on these assessments and the policy research centre for test and assessments: <https://peilingsonderzoek.be/>



This instrument is intended to measure three aspects: the extent to which pupils achieve the attainment targets, the learning gains of individual pupils and the learning gains at school level. These tests are not intended to be used to rank schools, but to increase learning gains. Schools whose pupils achieve significantly lower learning gains from these validated and standardised tests will enter into a freely chosen guidance pathway to improve the quality of their education.

Box: updated information since OECD visit in January 2021

The new attainment targets for secondary education are the result of a participatory process. In development committees in which representatives of the various education providers, teachers and scientific experts were represented, the content of the new attainment targets was discussed for a long time. In the meantime, the new attainment targets for the 2nd and 3rd stage of secondary education have been adopted by the Flemish Parliament in February 2021. However, during the approval process, concerns about the feasibility of these attainment targets in relation to the available teaching time and the specific training, and about the extent to which the attainment targets still leave enough room for the schools' own pedagogical project arose in the educational field.

For this reason, in school year 2021-2022, a **practice committee** will be set up to address the concerns that exist in the field. The practice committee will consist of a diverse group of teachers who, based on the practical implementation of the new attainment targets in the 2nd grade, can formulate recommendations and proposals for adjustments to the attainment targets of the 2nd stage, but also to the (specific) attainment targets of the 3rd stage. Certain education providers find that the practice-based commission does not sufficiently respond to their concerns and has therefore taken the step to the Constitutional Court.

1.1.1.5 Quality assurance

The **decree of 8 May 2009 on the quality of education**¹⁰ stipulates that schools have the task of ensuring quality education in an autonomous way. Each school is responsible for the quality of the education they provide. As already outlined, quality education means: respecting the education regulations and meeting the quality expectations, as stipulated in the Reference Framework for Quality in Education, by the Flemish government.

As such, schools are obliged to monitor their own quality. Schools are free to decide how to shape their internal quality system and how to demonstrate the quality of the education they offer, e.g. via self-evaluation. The Education Inspectorate makes no direct use of the school self-evaluation or other form of internal quality assurance. However, if the Inspectorate notices problems, it will take into account the ability of the school to monitor its quality in order to determine whether the school is capable to make the necessary improvements, with or without external support.

The task of the Education Inspectorate and the pedagogical guidance services is to ensure - together with the school- the quality of education, each from its own specific point of view.

¹⁰ [Decree of 8 May 2009 on the quality of education](#)

The Education Inspectorate examines the quality of schools and the pedagogical guidance services supports schools. The “Reference Framework for Quality in Education” sets out the expectations for good quality education.

Reference Framework for Quality in Education

The **Reference framework for Quality in Education** (‘Referentiekader Onderwijskwaliteit’¹¹) sets out expectations for good quality education (as of school year 2015-2016). These are expectations on which there is a general agreement. The framework applies to all levels and forms of education, with the exception of higher education.

This Reference Framework for Quality in Education describes a number of context and input characteristics which schools should take into account in the organisation of education. The starting point of every action is the ‘development of the learner’. The core of the Reference Framework consists of 37 quality expectations. They are divided into four categories: ‘results and effects’, ‘development of learners’, ‘quality development’ and ‘policy’. The Reference Framework for Quality in Education resulted from a collaboration of all major umbrella organisations and the Education Inspectorate.

Education Inspectorate

The Education Inspectorate has an independent status within the educational landscape and assesses and stimulates the quality (development) of education. It is responsible for both primary and secondary education, as well as for part time arts education, boarding schools, centres for pupil guidance, adult education and adult basic education.

The Education Inspectorate audits all (financed and subsidised) schools with an average interval of six years. The Inspectorate sees to it that attainment targets and developmental objectives are respected and pursued. In its annual report called Mirror on education (‘[Onderwijsspiegel](#)’), the Inspectorate compiles the various evaluation results into a number of general conclusions and reports on their research of topics that were examined in greater depth that school year.

With the adoption of the decree of 14 March 2018 on “Education Inspection 2.0”, a new audit approach was introduced and the Education Inspectorate recognises the quality triangle, i.e. school – Education Inspectorate – pedagogical guidance services. Each partner plays its own role in the realisation of quality education for each pupil or student. The schools’ internal quality assurance has a central place.

After the school audit, the Education Inspectorate formulates an advice on the recognition of the school. Two advice are possible, both of which have two variants.

Favourable opinion:

- Favourable opinion without major shortcomings.
- Favourable opinion with the obligation to address the shortcomings. There is no deadline and no follow-up by the Inspectorate. For the next audit the shortcomings can be mentioned in the audit focus.

¹¹ <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.be/en/ok-reference-framework>

When successfully finishing the first grade of the B-stream pupils can move to the first grade of the A-stream or they can continue with a pre-vocational second grade.

From the second stage onwards, four different **types of education** are offered. In the Flemish Community of Belgium a pupil chooses a course of study within one of the following types of education:

- 1 **General secondary education** (gse/aso), which focuses on broad general education. It does not prepare pupils for a specific profession, but rather lays a firm foundation for higher education.
- 2 **Technical secondary education** (tse/tso) focuses on general and technical-theoretical subjects. After tse, a pupil may enter the labour market or transfer to higher education, depending on the course of study. This type of education also contains practical training.
- 3 **Secondary arts education** (sea/kso) combines a broad general education with art practice. After secondary education in the arts a pupil may enter the labour market or transfer to higher education.
- 4 In **vocational secondary education** (vse/bsv) the pupil receives general education but the primary focus is on learning a specific profession. After successfully completing the third stage, pupils can enter the labour market or transfer to higher education (HE only after completing the full third stage).

In Belgium, a qualification of upper secondary education grants unrestricted access to higher education.

In the third stage it is also **possible** to enrol in a 3rd year, the **7th school year**. For example, in vse a 7th year is necessary in order to be granted a certificate of secondary education and both gse and sea offer a preparatory year for higher education. In technical secondary education and secondary arts education, labour market oriented programmes can be organised within the second grade of the third stage. Since 2009-2010 these programmes are grouped under the heading of **Secondary-after-Secondary** (*Secundair-na-secundair*, Se-n-Se). Se-n-Se programmes last one to three semesters and are organised by secondary schools. A pupil can only start the programme after obtaining a qualification of secondary education in the same study area, although exceptions are possible. After successfully completing a Se-n-Se programme, a pupil is granted a certificate.

A school can offer one or more stages. Offering only the second or third grade or only the first and third grade is not allowed since the purpose is to allow a pupil as much as possible to pass through an entire secondary study pathway in one school.

In order to offer all pupils the best education tailored to their talents, interests and possibilities, secondary education is now being reformed. On 1 September 2019 the **gradual implementation of the renewed system of secondary education** started in the first stage¹⁶. From 1 September 2020, the modernisation of secondary education will continue and will be rolled out in the second year of the first stage. In the second year of the first stage, pupils will make a first choice of study through the choice of a basic option or package. These basic options include economics and organisation; classical languages; arts and creation; modern languages; society and wellbeing; sports, STEM and others. In 2B (B-stream), pupils can also choose a combination of up to 3 basic options and/or packages. In this way, the 2nd year of the 1st stage prepares pupils for their transition to the 2nd stage where they will make a deliberate choice for a field of study and a domain of study.

¹⁶ <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/waarom-moderniseren>

Additionally, as already mentioned, the Flemish government is **reforming and updating the educational curriculum in secondary education**. After the introduction of new attainment targets in the 1st year of the 1st stage of secondary education, new attainment targets for the 2nd year and 2nd and 3rd stage of secondary education are defined. All SE courses of study must meet either the needs of the labour market or the initial qualifications of higher education, or both. The complete SE supply of courses is brought together in one simple and uniform table which gives parents and pupils a clear overview of all possible courses of study. This table includes both the matrix developed by the government with the domains of study, finals and forms of education (artistic, general and vocational education) and the basic options and packages of the first stage.

The renewed system of secondary education allows pupils to make a more transparent and motivated choice of study on the basis of their interests and capacities. A better transition to higher education or the labour market is intended.

System of alternating learning and working

At the age of 15 or 16 a pupil may enter a system of alternating learning and working. All pupils in part-time education are obliged to take part in learning and working for at least 28 hours a week. Part-time learning and working is organised in:

- a centre for part-time education
- a centre for apprenticeships¹⁷

Since 2016, a gradual reform of part-time vocational secondary education and apprenticeship systems has been launched on the basis of a number of pilot projects and as of 2016, pupils in the participating schools can opt for dual learning.

This pathway lets young people from the age of 15 combine workplace learning with learning at school, a Syntra training centre or a Centre for part-time education. In other words, they obtain a professional or educational qualification as they prepare for the labour market. It is a fully-fledged learning pathway. In order to support teachers in teaching in the new dual system, the Flemish Community of Belgium developed the SRSP project: 'Dual Learning in the Flemish Community of Belgium : Professionalisation of Teachers' in 2019 with support from the EC. This project provided technical assistance to set up a professionalisation trajectory that meets the training needs of teachers in dual learning in vocational education.

Since 1 September 2019 dual learning has been fully implemented and a total of 186 (out of 1,060) schools offer 79 courses, including healthcare, electromechanical techniques, management of green areas and gardens and painting. In addition, the Flemish Parliament adopted a decree which allows for dual learning within special needs secondary education (Buitengewoon Secundair Onderwijs/BuSO). Finally, dual learning will be extended to higher and adult education (currently being explored through 14 pilot projects).

¹⁷ In a Centre for part-time Education pupils take classes for 15 hours a week. These classes are supplemented with a working experience which matches the programme unless they are not ready yet in which case they follow additional training. Apprenticeships are organised in a SYNTRA training centre. In the case of an apprenticeship pupils enter in a formal learning agreement which provides four days of practical training in a small to medium-sized enterprise or with a self-employed person, and one day of theoretical training a week.



Higher education

Higher education offers programmes and courses of study that result in the degree of bachelor, master and doctor. Higher vocational education leading to a short cycle higher education degree or associate degree is also part of tertiary higher education.¹⁸

Bachelor's degree programmes in the Flemish Community of Belgium may be both professionally oriented and academically oriented. Professionally oriented bachelor programmes are primarily aimed at practicing a profession and offer a direct access to the labour market. Academically oriented Bachelor's degree programmes focus on a broad academic education or an education in the arts. They aim to offer access to a master's degree programme or to the labour market. Both professionally and academically oriented Bachelor's degree programmes comprise at least 180 credits. In theory a student takes 60 credits a year, but variations are possible.

Master's degree programmes focus on advanced scientific or artistic knowledge or competences which are needed for the independent practice of science or arts, or for practicing a profession. They are completed by a master's thesis. A master's degree programme comprises at least 60 credits. An institution of higher education can, in addition to a general master, also offer a research master, which comprises 120 credits.

Lifelong learning

Part-time education in the arts

Part-time education in the arts (Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs - DKO) is an extracurricular education and is targeted at children, youngsters and adults. Participants may register on a voluntary basis and need to pay enrolment fees. DKO aims at the artistic training of children and adults. The DKO-reform brought about important changes of which we highlight the most important ones. In addition to the new final goals and updated structure, children from the age of 6 can now also join in for music and word art drama. Before the reform, children from the age of 6 used to be able to follow only dance or visual art. Above that, an academy can choose to work in the 1st grade (6 and 7 year olds) either cross-domain or domain-based. More information see [link](#).

Adult education

Adult education is complementing the initial educational career. Course participants may obtain a recognised qualification or certificate in adult education. Adults of at least 18 years old and youngsters under 18 that have completed compulsory education may enroll in adult education. Adult basic education is a specific form of adult education in which semi- and low-skilled adults learn basic competences at the level of primary education and the first stage of secondary education. Areas of learning can be, for example, Dutch, mathematics and societal orientation.

11.2.3 Pupil guidance centres

Pupils, parents, teachers and school boards of elementary and secondary schools may address a pupil guidance centre ('Centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding', CLB) for guidance, information or advice. The services of these centres are free and can be primarily situated within the following four domains:

- Learning and studying
- School career

¹⁸ On 1 September 2009 higher vocational education (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs - HBO5) was introduced in the Flemish educational system. HBO5 programmes are professionally oriented programmes situated between secondary education and professionally oriented bachelor programmes.

- Preventive health care
- Socio-emotional development and psychological wellbeing

Pupil Guidance Centres are financed by the government. All [58 centres](#) are independent but each can be attributed to one of the three educational networks.

The recent decree of 27 April 2018 on **pupil guidance** in elementary and secondary education and centres for pupil guidance defines the roles and the tasks of the various actors in order to optimise pupil guidance. Important changes include:

- School support is no longer a task of the CLB.
- The CLB will have to cooperate increasingly across networks as of 2023.
- Schools are obliged by law to develop and implement a policy on pupil guidance. The school has the final responsibility for this policy. Schools need to appoint one or more staff members in charge of pupil guidance

11.2.4 Special needs education

Special needs education (*'buitengewoon onderwijs'*) is organised for children who need **temporary or permanent specific support** because of a physical or mental disability, serious behavioral or emotional problems or severe learning disabilities.

On 12 March 2014 the Flemish Parliament approved a parliamentary act on measures for pupils with specific needs (*'M-decreet'*) with the aim to make education more inclusive. The act contains measures which allow pupils with specific educational needs to participate fully, effectively and on equal terms in mainstream schools and classrooms that are bound to provide for reasonable adaptations to cater for students with special needs.

In school year 2017-2018, a new support model for pupils with specific educational needs (**'support network'**, *ondersteuningsnetwerk*) was launched in mainstream elementary, primary and secondary schools and in part-time vocational secondary education centres. This support model replaced previous systems. Schools for mainstream education that require an extension of care¹⁹ or that have a pupil following an individually adapted curriculum can call on extra expertise from special education. Not only the needs of the pupil are central to this support; there is also more focus on teacher- and team-oriented support.

The starting point of the support model is the equality in which mainstream and special education schools combine their expertise in co-creation to support pupils with specific educational needs and the teachers (teams).

Depending on the type of education in which support is needed, either bilateral cooperation between a mainstream school and a special needs school or the regional support network to which both types of schools belong, is called upon. The mainstream school, in cooperation with the parents and the CLB, determines the support needs and formulates its support questions based on those needs. The support offered can be pupil-, but also teacher- or team-oriented. The aim is to support teachers (teams) in mainstream education to act (more) effectively in their teaching of children with specific educational needs. An evaluation in 2019 found that the support provided is still mainly pupil-oriented. Good steps are being taken in the area of teacher- and team-oriented support, but there is certainly still room for growth.

¹⁹ Care expansion is the third phase in the care continuum. Phase 1 is basic care, phase 2 is increased care.



The education Policy Note (2019-2024) announced the replacement of the M-decree by a **guidance decree** ('begeleidingsdecreet'), in order to give every pupil a place in the education system that best suits its needs.

1.1.2.5 Equal opportunities in education (GOK)

The Parliamentary Act on equal educational opportunities²⁰ contains three major provisions:

- The right to enrolment: each student has the right to enroll in the school of their (parents') choice. Only in a strictly defined, 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.

The policy on equal opportunities is commonly known as the 'GOK'-policy ('Gelijke Onderwijskansen', Equal Educational Opportunities). The current education policy note (2019-2024) includes measures to guarantee equal opportunities: lowering the compulsory school age from six to five years, the installation of an uniform and standardised cross-network and cross-umbrella screening for all five to six-year olds. Based on the results of language screening, pupils who do not have a sufficient command of Dutch will have to follow a Dutch language integration course. This includes a language immersion class or a fully-fledged alternative that leads to the same results. Another measure is the provision of language integration pathways for children with a limited knowledge of the Dutch language.

1.1.3 Number of schools and pupils

In the Flemish mainstream education there are 162 autonomous pre-primary schools, 2,114 schools with both pre- primary and primary education and 940 fulltime secondary education schools. In special needs education there are 75 schools for primary education, 123 schools which offer both pre-primary and primary education and 126 schools for secondary education. Schools in secondary education can offer both vocational and general education, or opt to only offer one type of education. The Flemish government does not collect data on the schools' offer. More detailed data on the number of schools can be found in Annex 1. Table 2 provides an overview of the distribution of students across levels and programmes in 2019.

²⁰ Decree of 28 June 2002 concerning equal education in pre-primary and primary education.

The resources are integrated, in secondary education, schools receive separate resources.



Students who have already obtained a (domain) master's degree and intend to teach subjects within the field of this degree, can follow a shortened educational master's degree course. This course focuses on teaching and requires 60 credits. Of these, at least 30 credits are for the practical component.

The educational graduate programmes and the educational bachelor's programmes for pre-school and primary education offer shortened pathways as well. However, the provisions for these paths are not laid down by decree. Most of them are only accessible to those with relevant prior education.

1.2.2 Entering into the teaching profession

1.2.2.1 General conditions of admission (Decrees of 27 March 1991)²¹

The Flemish legislation formulates the following admission requirements for those who aspire to be appointed as staff members in education:

- to be a citizen of the European Union or the European Free Trade Association (exceptions are possible and defined);
- to be in possession of their civil and political rights;
- to meet the language requirements. Dutch is the official teaching language (however, the Flemish government may grant an exemption). Teachers working in the third stage of primary education must have a good knowledge of French.
- to be of impeccable quality as evidenced by a certificate of good character issued not more than one year previously;
- to be medically fit (i.e. not to pose any danger to the students);
- to have a certificate of competence for the position (or subject) in question.

As long as candidates fulfil these conditions, schools are free to recruit those they consider suitable (taking into account the priority rules applicable to permanent and temporary staff who are entitled to a temporary assignment of indefinite duration).

1.2.2.2 Certificates of competence

The Flemish government determines **the certificates of competence** ('bekwaamheidsbewijzen'), for each level of education. These certificates take into account the basic competences for teachers. For teachers in secondary education, the certificates are defined down for each office, subject, degree and type of education (gse, tse, vse, sae). A certificate of competence consists of a basic diploma, a certificate of pedagogical competence (teacher training) and/or experience.

There are three types of proof of competence, namely 'required', 'deemed sufficient' and 'other':

- **'Required'** means a person has followed a specific training in accordance with the subject to be taught. The requirements set for the diploma in terms of level depends on the type of subject, the degree, the type of education, the module and/or the training.
- A certificate of competence is **'deemed sufficient'** if a person holds a basic diploma of the same level as the certificate of competence required but not on the specific topic to be taught.

²¹ [Decree of 27 March 1991 on the legal status of certain members of the staff of Community education.](#)

- Exceptionally, the school may deviate from this general rule and appoint a person with an ‘other certificate of competence’. In this case, the person holds a basic diploma of a certain (minimum) level. For some subjects, three years of ‘useful experience’ is sufficient. Assignments under an ‘other certificate of competence’ are limited in time and compensations are lower.

Having a **certificate of pedagogical competence** (teacher training) is a necessary condition for a ‘required’ and ‘deemed sufficient’ certificate of competence. The ‘open recruitment’ system guarantees the school board’s freedom to choose between candidates with a ‘required’ or a ‘deemed sufficient’ certificate of competence at the time of recruitment.²² In principle, schools should always give priority to someone with a ‘required’ or a ‘deemed sufficient’ certificate of competence.

1.2.2.3 Entry into the profession: recruitment and assignment of teachers

Access to the teaching profession is based on the ‘open recruitment’ principle. School boards recruit staff members. If the staff member meets a number of specific requirements – laid down in the aforementioned decrees on legal status – the Flemish government will finance or subsidise this staff member.

School boards decide on the recruitment and assignment of teachers but have to respect the legally defined recruitment conditions in terms of qualifications, as well as the statutory rights of their teaching staff, especially regarding members of staff who have tenure. As the Flemish Community of Belgium faces an increasing teacher shortage, schools, especially in larger cities, encounter more difficulties to recruit experienced teachers. This has encouraged some cities such as Brussels or Antwerp to launch local recruitment campaigns resulting in a specific recruitment platform, job days, network events (e.g. teachers at the movies) and other measures.:

Assignment of tasks

Assignment of teaching and other tasks to teachers is the decision of the school. There is no general regulation on stages in a career in terms of roles and responsibilities. The roles and responsibilities besides teaching, such as coordinating work, mentoring, etc. can indeed be taken up by teachers according to the needs of each school.

1.2.3 Key features of teacher policies

1.2.3.1 Contract types and employment status

Teachers can have a fixed term contract or a contract of indefinite duration (permanent contract). The career of a temporary teacher always starts with a fixed-term contract. The maximum duration of the appointment is one school year (or shorter in the case of a replacement). The school board can renew the contract for the temporary teacher in the following school year. After a minimum of two school years and 580 days of service (of which at least 400 are actually performed) and a positive review from their first evaluator, the temporary teacher is entitled to a contract of indefinite duration.

²² Provided the priority rules with regard to the rights of teachers with tenure or with an assignment of permanent duration were applied.



Once the temporary teacher is entitled to a contract of indefinite duration he can apply for a permanent appointment (tenure) if he fulfills the following conditions:

- meet a number of personal requirements (i.e. general conditions of admission);
- have at least 690 days seniority, including at least 360 days in the office that the teacher is appointed to;
- have an appointment of indefinite duration prior to the permanent appointment (tenure);
- have not been evaluated as 'insufficient' during the most recent appraisal.

Box: updated information since OECD visit in January 2021

From 1 September 2021 :

- a temporary teacher will be entitled to a contract of indefinite duration after a minimum 290 days of service (of which at least 200 are actually performed) and a positive review from their first evaluator.
- teachers will be eligible for a permanent appointment sooner, i.e. after 360 days of performance, whereas this currently requires 690 days of performance.

1.2.3.2 Statutory working time

The Flemish government sets out the number of teaching hours or teaching time for a full-time assignment per educational level and per office. The assignment is expressed in the form of a fraction, where the numerator represents the required number of teaching hours. The denominator expresses how many hours a full-time teaching assignment covers per week. The salary is based on this fraction.

In addition to teaching, a teacher's assignment consists of other tasks, too. These include meetings, drawing up reports, correcting, grading, supervising and participating in continuous professional development. This set of tasks is imposed by the school board that took the appointment decision (GO!) or agreement (other networks). This is part of the teacher's job description.

Box: updated information since OECD visit in January 2021

Institution-specific tasks no longer belong in the job description. The job description will only include the core tasks for all staff categories from 1 September 2021 on. Legislation will not define the time spent on these additional tasks. They are considered as an integral part of the teacher's assignment

1.2.3.3 Career structure

The Flemish Community of Belgium has a flat career structure, i.e. a **single level career structure** for teachers. Nevertheless, there are some opportunities for task and function differentiation within schools. For many teachers however, a career in education de facto means a flat career, unless the teacher leaves the teaching profession and takes a position of deputy director, school leader, technical advisor, inspector, pedagogical supervisor or advisor.

In higher secondary education most teachers hold a master's degree. However, it is also possible to teach in secondary education without a bachelor's or master's degree. This sometimes occurs for practical subjects in vocational programs (e.g. plumbing). Table 4 represents the distribution of diplomas of the teachers and school leaders in secondary education (FTE - fulltime equivalents).

	Male	Female	Total
Professional Bachelor in Education	7,505	15,800	23,305
Other (including other bachelor degrees)	6,014	4,282	10,296
Master	7,416	13,016	20,432
Total (FTE)	20,935	33,098	54,033

Table 4: FTE of teachers and school leaders in secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3) by diploma on January 2019
Source: <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/documenten/bestand.ashx?nr=12197>

1.2.5 Main trends and dynamics shaping the teacher workforce

1.2.5.1 Participation in teacher education

Figure 1 shows the number of students that started an ITP programme from the academic year 2006-2007 up to 2017-2018. The average number increased between 2006 and 2011. However, in the last five years, a general decline in the number of students in ITP programmes can be observed. The Bachelor's degree for Secondary Education in particular saw a sharp decline in the number of students. In 2019-2020, the ITP programmes were reformed. Adult education centres no longer offer 'specific teacher education programmes', which could result in a further decline in the number of applicants.

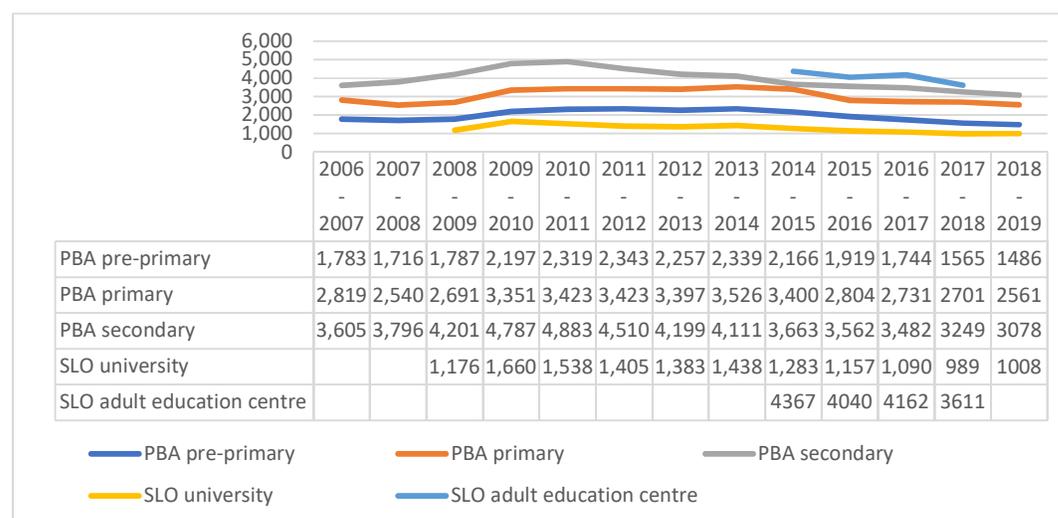


Figure 1: The number of students who started an ITP programme for the first time (2006-2018)
Source: Department of Education and AHOVOKS;
<https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/download-file/30960>

An insecure or part-time position might be viewed as insufficient to comply with these expectations and aspirations.” (Struyven and Vanthournout, 2014, p. 43).

It is estimated that in school year 2016-2017, 145 teachers retired in pre-primary education, 582 in primary education and 1573 in secondary education. This corresponds with 0.6%, 1.3% and 2.0% of the total number of teachers in these educational levels respectively.

1.2.5.4 Teacher shortage

In order to assess whether future teachers shortages are likely to emerge, the ‘tension ratio’ is used as a proxy indicator. This indicator is the number of teachers seeking employment available per job vacancy. If the number is high, it is easier to recruit teachers. If the number is low, it is likely that there are teacher shortages. As can be seen in Table7, the tension ratio has been declining over the past four years. This is also the case for the Flemish average tension ratio – although to a lesser extent.

Tension ratio	(pre-) Primary	Secondary	Flemish average (all occupations)
December 2016	6.7	9.3	7.1
December 2017	5.8	7.4	5.6
December 2018	3.5	3.7	4.1
December 2019	2.4	2.8	3.8

Table 7: Tension ratio for teachers and other occupations (2016-2019)
Source: <https://www.vdab.be/trends/beroeopen>

Annex 2 shows tension ratios at the level of ‘arrondissementen’ (i.e. between the provincial and municipal level). The tension ratio is particularly low in (urban) regions such as Antwerp, Aalst and Halle-Vilvoorde (surrounding Brussels). Other data sources suggest that it is particularly difficult to find sufficient numbers of teachers in large cities such as Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels (VDAB, 2020, p. 23). While the working conditions are generally more challenging in these areas (for example, because a higher number of pupils do not speak Dutch [language of instruction] at home), salaries are the same throughout the Flemish Community of Belgium. This might (partly) explain why fewer teachers are willing to teach in cities²⁷.

Another proxy indicator identifies for which subjects it is hardest to find candidate teachers. This indicator is the number of substitute teachers appointed with ‘other certificate of competence’. These teachers do not meet the qualifications ‘deemed sufficient’ or ‘required’ (see above). Table 8 shows the number of substitute teachers with the qualification ‘other’ by subject (top 10). These absolute figures show that many common subjects score high: Dutch, French, English, mathematics and Catholic religion. However, the percentages are not that high for these subjects (ranging from 5 to 8 per cent), meaning that it is likely that the ‘high demand’ is caused in part by the scale on which these subjects are taught. There are other subjects such as electricity, woodwork, mechanics and care that score relatively high in both absolute FTE’s as well as in percentages, suggesting that it is particularly difficult to find good candidates for these subjects.

²⁷ Flemish Parliament (Vlaams Parlement) (2019)<http://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1466710>

VDAB (2020) Bottleneck professions in the Flemish Community of Belgium (VDAB (2020) Knelpuntberoepen in Vlaanderen).
<https://www.vdab.be/sites/web/files/doc/trends/Knelpuntberoepen%202020.pdf>

		FTE with 'other qualification'	% with 'other qualification'	% with 'sufficient qualification'	% with 'required qualification'
1	French	63,9	8%	23%	69%
2	Electricity	52,0	29%	25%	46%
3	Dutch	51,8	5%	28%	67%
4	Mathematics	50,4	7%	34%	60%
5	Woodworking	38,6	30%	37%	33%
6	Home economics	35,3	14%	31%	55%
7	Mechanics	34,0	22%	33%	44%
8	Catholic religion	31,6	6%	20%	74%
9	English	31,4	7%	18%	76%
10	Care	24,2	21%	35%	44%

Table 8: substitute teachers (in FTE and %) by subject and type of qualification in secondary education (average of situation in January 2018 and 2019)

Source: <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/download-file/30960>

1.2.6 Recruitment and requirements for school leadership roles

1.2.6.1 Recruitment and selection

The school board decides autonomously who they select and recruit as school leader. Flemish legislation stipulates however that the member of staff appointed as school leader must meet a number of appointment requirements. The school leader should:

- be in possession of a 'required' or 'deemed sufficient' certificate of competence for the post of school leader. Depending on the level of education, this is a bachelor's or master's degree, combined with a certificate of pedagogical competence;
- have received a 'positive' evaluation, i.e.: the last evaluation of the staff member cannot have been an evaluation with final conclusion 'insufficient';
- comply with the general appointment conditions that apply to all staff members in education (see the part 'General conditions of admission'²⁸);
- in community education (GO!) a candidate school leader must obtain a training certificate before he or she can be appointed.

In community education (GO!) a staff member who meets the appointment conditions must always go through a 12-month probation period before they can be permanently appointed as school leader. In subsidised education, a member of staff who meets the appointment conditions can be appointed permanently immediately.

In the 2019-2024 Education Policy Note the minister announced the development of a **competence framework for school leaders**, to be developed in collaboration with all stakeholders. On the basis of this framework, possible selection criteria and a professionalisation and assessment policy for school leaders can be developed. This competence framework constitutes the basis for the further development of a specific school leadership training course.

²⁸ Decree of 27 March 1991 on the legal status of some staff members of the subsidised education and the subsidized centra for pupil guidance: Decree of 27 March 1991 on the legal status of some staff members of the community education

1.2.6.2 Pre- and in-service training

School leadership-training is not compulsory. In practice, most pedagogical guidance services have their own training courses for novice leaders²⁹. These training courses are often conceived as in-service training courses staff members can follow after they have been appointed as school leader. Increasingly, the pedagogical guidance services provide pre-service activities for school leaders as well.

Community education (GO!) regulation stipulates that prospective school leaders must obtain a training certificate before they can be appointed (see Article 46 of the decree on the legal status of certain staff members in community education). Community education offers its own training. Other organisations also offer professional development courses for school leaders.

Until 2015, there was a specific fund for the professional development of school leaders. This fund was managed by the PBDs. In 2015, the fund was abolished and the resources were added to the professionalisation budget of the schools. Until 2018-2019, umbrella organisations could apply for funding to support the further professional development of their school boards.

1.2.6.3 Towards shared leadership

In Flemish schools, leadership is not exclusively a matter of school leaders exercising the formal office of school leader. Rather, everyone who has a leadership role at school takes on part of this shared responsibility. Increasingly, teachers are taking on leadership tasks in schools (teacher leadership) and school communities. These include, roles like pupil guidance coordinator, IT coordinator, head of department, etc.

Box: updated information since OECD visit in January 2021

The corona crisis has reinforced the need for strong school leaders. Partly because of this, the Flemish government decided to focus on both a pre-service and an in-service training for school leaders.

-The pre-service training concerns a project on **job shadowing for future school leaders**, which started on 1 March 2021 and (provisionally) ends on 31 December 2022.

Through this project, the Flemish government makes it possible for a school board to offer a candidate for the position of principal – which can be an already selected candidate or a potential or interested candidate – the opportunity to participate in a job shadowing programme. This job shadowing allows the candidate to shadow one or more experienced principals for a certain period of time and allows them to watch, observe and ask questions about the job of principal. The staff member can see "in real life" what the job entails and can experience what the work demands and how the experienced principal deals with it.

Job shadowing is offered in primary and secondary education, adult education, part-time arts education, adult education and in pupil guidance centres.

Based on an evaluation of the project, the Flemish government will examine whether and how this job shadowing can be anchored in the selection and recruitment procedure for school leaders.

²⁹ Except the small umbrella organizations, grouped in OKO.



Form 1 September 2021 onwards, teachers will also be eligible for a permanent appointment sooner, i.e. after 360 days of performance, whereas this currently requires 690 days of performance.

1.2.9 Specific measure on teacher induction

Context

The relative low retention rates of highly-motivated, well-qualified teachers remains a challenge in the Flemish Community of Belgium as well as all over Europe. Research shows the following reasons for this relatively high dropout rate:

- First-time teachers experience the transition from the initial teacher training to the classroom as too abrupt. Teachers realise that being a teacher entails more than just teaching – for example, the administrative burden is experienced as quite heavy in the Flemish Community of Belgium (Veenman,1984; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Ooghe et al., 2016).
- Novice teachers do not feel supported and report a lack of induction training or guidance.
- The precarious employment during the first years of employment encourages first-time teachers to explore other professional pathways (Struyven et al., 2014).

Additionally, there is an increasing **tension on the teacher labour market**. By 2024, the Flemish Community of Belgium will need up to 7,000 new teachers every year (pre-primary to secondary educational level). The Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) has formally added teachers to its list of bottleneck professions: primary teacher since 2020 and secondary teacher since 2018.

Even though organising induction was not mandatory prior to 2019, many schools already offered some form of initial guidance. This can be seen in the TALIS 2018 results showing that, according to school leaders, half of primary school teachers have access to formal initial guidance, which was organised for all new teachers in the school. Most Flemish primary school teachers (87.2%) have access to informal initial guidance activities in the school. Initial guidance is even more established in the first stage of secondary education.

Compared to other countries and based on the school leaders' answers, the Flemish Community of Belgium has a relatively high proportion of schools that provide access to (particularly informal) initial guidance. The responses of the teachers give a somewhat different picture, but this might be due to the number of older teachers who were recruited when induction was less common. Of the Flemish teachers, 15.7 % participated in formal initial guidance programmes at their current school and 14.2 % during their first employment. Compared to other countries, Flemish primary school teachers participate less, and Flemish first stage secondary school teachers more, in the initial requirements than teachers in the comparison countries (Van Droogenbroeck, 2019).

There is a wide variety of initial guidance activities. The most common initial guidance activities are planned formal meetings (PE: 76.1%; SE 1st st.: 86.4%) and supervisions with the school leader and/or (experienced) teachers (PE: 74.1%; SE 1st st.: 82.3%). For both educational levels, participation in courses or seminars is the third most common initial guidance activity (PE: 68.7%; SE 1st st.: 71.5%). This is followed by collaboration with other new teachers and the administrative introduction.

1.3 PART 3: KEY FEATURES OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, continuous professional learning (CPL) is conceived of as an active learning and development process for education professionals to strengthen their professional expertise and commitment with the aim of improving the teaching quality. CPL can take various forms: more traditional forms like courses or seminars or collaborative forms like lesson study. Other classifications include individual vs collaborative, external vs internal, face-to-face vs digital (or in between like blended learning) types of learning. Professional development goes hand in hand with school development and the (development of) the school's HRM policy.

1.3.1 System-wide data collection on teachers' involvement in continuing professional learning

TALIS and other targeted studies constitute the source of information on professionalisation. The following studies are considered:

- The Teaching And Learning International Survey (TALIS): the Flemish Community of Belgium takes part in this survey, which is organised every 5 years and focuses on the working conditions and the environment in which teachers teach.
- National assessments of pupils: every year, surveys assess whether Flemish students achieve the final Flemish attainment targets. The teacher questionnaire that is conducted as a part of this survey provides the researchers with information on the professional background of teachers (e.g. experience and specific diploma), instruction and evaluation practices and to other aspects of their teaching practice.
- The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international comparative study initiated by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and is takes place every three years. The school questionnaire is completed by the school leader and assesses the proportion of teachers at school who have participated in a 'professionalisation program' in the last three months.
- In the 2017 Time Usage Survey of teachers in primary and secondary mainstream education and special needs education, teachers reported their use of time. This report provides data on professional consultation³² (internal / external).
- Additionally, many policy and practice oriented studies focus on the professionalisation needs but also on the effects of staff. This is either research that is outsourced by the Department of Education and Training or carried out by research institutes. These studies often contain more content-specific data related to professionalisation³³.

32 Consultation or information exchange on pupils, lessons, dual learning traineeships, workplace learning, intra/extramuros activities or school functioning with work contacts; staff meeting, class council, multidisciplinary consultation, specific subject consultation meetings, school council, pedagogical council, pupil council, parent council, management board, parent committee; participation in official participation bodies and union functioning; preparation, processing, follow-up of meetings and consultation, e-mailing and informal consultation.

33 E.g. in the context of inclusive education (Struyf et al., 2020), [evaluation in schools](#) (Ysenbaert, et al, 2018), [equal educational opportunities](#) (Franck et al., 2017).

As stipulated in the Quality Decree of 8 May 2009, the school must draft a **coherent annual professionalisation plan** based on a needs analysis. The professionalisation plan is to be approved by either the local committee³⁴ or, in their absence, the general staff meeting.

In order to professionalise a teacher team, a school may organise **pedagogical seminars** throughout the school year. For this purpose, the teaching activity is suspended for all pupils or for a group of pupils. In elementary primary education, a school has up to 3 half days per school year to spend on these activities, in secondary education this is one day per school year.³⁵

Each year, the Flemish Community makes in-service training resources (professionalisation resources) available to the schools in order to implement their professionalisation plan (see decree on Quality of Education, 8 May 2009). The amount of the resources that each institution is entitled to, is calculated pro rata based on the number of teaching positions in the school on 1 February of the previous financial year, taking into account the education level for which the resources are intended. In addition to these funds, schools may use their own operating resources to participate in professionalisation activities.

The government has no system-wide view on the CPL activities followed by the school staff, as schools can opt to invest their own resources in professionalisation. There is no reporting obligation on this type of spending. These costs strongly depend on a school's strategic management choices (see below).

School communities and school groups can invest in the professionalisation of their staff, in line with their strategic policy. This encourages the facilitation of learning communities between member schools. Research shows that professionalisation within a school community can be strengthened through the exchange of knowledge between experienced and new school leaders. Cooperation within school communities can also be strengthened by jointly organised professionalisation activities and short exchanges.

³⁴ The local committee is the local consultative or negotiating body responsible for working conditions and staff matters.

³⁵ <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/pedagogische-studiedagen>



(c) provision of subsidies, one-off or recurrent

This kind of provision involves all kinds of resources awarded to organisations through a grant or agreement.

The objective is professionalisation on a particular topic and/or to encourage innovation and innovative practices. Examples include the development of dyslexia software, the launch and production of educational games, resources for STEM, the implementation of the new decree on part time arts education (DKO), civic education, language courses (e.g. FORMACOM; FORMAPRIM).

Beneficiaries of these grants include, but are not limited to the following organisations:

- **The Higher Institute of Education** ('Hoger instituut voor opvoedkunde', HIVO)
 - In the Flemish Community of Belgium, 8 Higher Institutes of Education are operational. Their task is to enable teachers and school leaders to acquire a broad pedagogical and agogical vision and to deepen and broaden the competencies of all teachers. This is a 3-year program.
 - Participants obtain a certificate (GHOS after 2 years) or diploma of higher educational studies (DHOS after 3 years), issued by a higher institute of pedagogy recognised by the Flemish Community. The certificate as well as the diploma entitle the graduate to an unacquired salary scale³⁹. Despite the name, these institutes are not part of tertiary higher education. The government grants the HIVO's an annual subsidy since 2008.

- **Regional Technology Centres** ('Regionale technologische centra', RTC)

5 regional technology centres receive an annual subsidy. Among other things, they contribute to the professionalisation of teachers by encouraging collaborations with the industry in terms of technological infrastructure and equipment. RTCs target primarily 3rd stage vocational and technical secondary education teachers (both non-dual and dual pathways). Along with the PBDs, the RTC examines how they can support subject-related technical content, networking and cross-sectoral sharing of expertise across schools.

- **The King Baudouin Foundation** ('Koning Boudewijn Stichting', KBS)

The Foundation is an actor of change and innovation in Belgium at the service of the general interest and social cohesion. Every year the foundations funds specific projects. One example is the project '[Small Children, Great Opportunities](#)' which was organised by the KBS in collaboration with the Department of Education and Training. This project strengthens the professional competences of novice teachers and students in (pre-) primary education training regarding child poverty and underprivileged children.

(d) Pilot projects

The Ministry increasingly organises and often subsidises pilot projects, allowing schools to implement new policies, for example on dual learning or part time arts education.

An example of such a (non-funded) initiative are the *pilot projects on differentiation* in the last stage of primary education and the 1st stage of secondary education which started in 2018 and ended in June 2020. Within their regular operation and resources, PBDs supported different schools on the topic of 'differentiation'. The aim of the pilot projects was to allow as many pupils as possible to reach the final attainment targets through different models of differentiation. Schools have the time and space to develop, implement and evaluate new practices.

39 cf. circular [PERS/2005/19 of 21 September 2005](#) in connection with unacquired salary scales for staff members in education.



Support networks ('Ondersteuningsnetwerken')

During school year 2017-2018, a new support model for pupils with specific educational needs was implemented in all mainstream schools (see earlier). This support model replaced previous systems (GON, ION, guarantee scheme).

Schools for mainstream education that require an extension of care or that have pupils following curricula tailored to their needs can call on the expertise of special education (support) staff.

The needs of the pupil as well as those of the teacher are taken into account, and team-oriented support (see earlier) can also be provided.

Teacher training departments

The teacher training courses at universities, university colleges, and Schools of Arts⁴⁰ train candidate teachers to become fully-fledged teachers. The guiding principles here are the basic competencies (see earlier). Additionally, the teacher training institutes have a role in the initial guidance of beginning teachers and as professionalisation institutes thereby creating a professional continuum.

The teacher training programmes offer access to the Bachelor-after-Bachelor 'Special education' and the Bachelor-after-Bachelor 'Care Broadening and Remedial Learning' programmes.

Teacher associations

Teacher associations (for example the Association for Geography Teachers, Association of Teachers of Ancient Languages, Belgian Association of Teachers of French), unite teachers in their field and offer professional added value to their teaching practice. These associations are not set up by the government but are private initiatives that provide general support to their members.

Another form of teacher association are the unions (COV, COC, ACOD, VSOA). They also have a role in professional development of teachers, e.g. through publications and the organisation of conferences and seminars.

Other organisations, such as private CPL providers, publishers, non-profit organisations

While the government sets up initiatives for professionalisation, these activities are often very specific or limited in terms of scale. Schools can also use their in-service training resources to collaborate with a private provider on the market. Teachers and school leaders can do so to tailor their professionalisation to their own needs and/or school context. Each person or organisation can support a teacher (team) in their professional development process, no admission or restriction conditions are imposed. Publishers also organise CPL activities.

Additionally, other levels of government or other policy areas (such as welfare, environment, etc.) fund professional development initiatives.

(Educational) researchers

(Educational) researchers contribute to the development of evidence-informed practices and thus to permanent professionalisation and innovation.

⁴⁰ <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/waar-kan-je-studeren-voor-leraar>

1.3.5 Recent and planned policy reforms and innovations affecting the overall CPL system

Several initiatives are taken or are being developed to change and reinforce teachers' CPL. Additionally, the implementation of different policy measures such as the modernisation of secondary education also requires CPL activities. In this section, we list the initiatives concerning CPL.

Replacing the term 'in-service training' ('nascholing') with 'professionalisation' or 'professional development' ('professionalisering')⁴¹ ensures:

- Regulatory uniformity in regulations regarding terms already included in coalition agreements, policy notes, vision texts, etc. so this specific vocabulary is legally anchored.
- A vision of what 'professionalisation' means: the term 'in-service training' implies a traditional view in which professional development is primarily regarded as the transfer of knowledge and skills, offered by an external expert. The term 'professionalisation' refers to a broad understanding of CPL incorporating school internal and external initiatives (see above).

Adapting the concept of 'priority in-service training by the Minister'

Priority INSET, initiated by the Minister was planned to run for one year. However, during working visits, final reports and consultations with the organisations, it became apparent that a one-year duration is insufficient. Consequently, from 2018-2019, onward, the priority projects run for two school years. This extension allows organisations more flexibility with regards to the specific learning needs of schools. Another innovation includes putting more effort into disseminating results to the broad field of work.

Teacher induction (see above)

Teacher induction has been introduced as a right (for novice teachers) and obligation (for schools to offer). From 2019 onwards, resources will be provided for teacher induction. It is therefore key to first consolidate and evaluate the current policy, as well as to focus on knowledge sharing and cooperation.

Reform of the PBD (see above)

The 2019-2024 Policy Note announces a reform of the PBD in order for them to focus on their core tasks, as indicated above.

Reform of the program for policy and practice oriented educational research, initiated by the Flemish government

The renewal of the program for policy and practice-oriented educational research (OBPWO), initiated by the Flemish government, can help ensure all education stakeholders make better use of the available scientific research. This will be achieved by involving stakeholders when scoping topics, by encouraging them to participate in steering committees and by paying attention to dissemination and exploitation of knowledge earlier on in the research process. The in 2020 updated programme will also subsidise practice-oriented research.

Support to teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has brought about challenges for the Flemish education system. Teachers and learners needed to adapt quickly to a new way of teaching, learning and evaluating.

⁴¹ This initiative is part of education decree XXXI.



2.2 INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT IN CPL

As CPL is a responsibility of teachers, they are mostly in charge of the choices they make regarding their participation: apart from the obligation to participate in school-wide CPL activities, teachers enjoy a great deal of autonomy to participate in CPL. **Few incentives or rewards exist for participating in professional development activities.** This was confirmed in the OECD review on school resources in the Flemish Community (2015) pointing out the lack of a link between the outcome of the assessment and career development. Formal assessment is not used to identify or reward good performance through career development.

A limited number of certificates and diplomas leads to a salary supplement (unacquired salary scale)⁴². This is often only applicable to specific positions (often in special needs education) and the diploma or certificate do not lead to a higher salary when one applies for another position.

Apart from the training courses mentioned above, participation in professionalisation activities does not lead to remuneration in the sense of pay increases, promotion, etc. Moreover, certificates of competence in the Flemish Community of Belgium do not always lead to the recognition of professionalisation of teachers. For example, primary school teachers are paid as a Bachelor, even if they hold a master's degree.

The possibility to appoint and reward teachers with a master's degree in primary education in the Flemish Community of Belgium has been explored in the study. This study shows that enabling teachers to acquire additional diplomas and higher salaries can be an extra incentive for them to participate to professional development activities or follow a master's programme in primary education (Struyve et al., 2019). Other research does however show that some teachers use their participation in additional courses as a strategy for career advancement (Mombaers et al., 2020).

In some schools, professionalisation is organised in order to get the school team familiar with innovations and the specific educational vision of the school. The latter is the case in schools that have a distinct pedagogical method or project (Steiner, FOPEM) and do not have their own teacher training programmes. It is conceived of as training on the job. Professionalisation makes it possible to get to know the specific educational method and translate it to didactic practice.

In conclusion the extrinsic incentives for teachers to engage in CPL are low. However, research shows that teachers are more likely to participate, if this can help teachers in **their daily practice**. Additionally, Merchie et al. (2015) indicate that the mandatory nature of professionalisation initiatives can influence the success of CPL. Teachers who feel obliged to participate, tend to be less motivated.

42 Examples are

- A bachelor after bachelor special education diploma (60 credits, minimum duration = 1 year);
- A diploma of the bachelor after bachelor care broadening and remedial learning (60 credits, minimum duration = 1 year);
- A diploma in pedagogical sciences;
- A diploma in psychology;
- A certificate or diploma of education from a higher institute of education. The training corresponds roughly with 40 credits (for the 2-year course) or 60 credits (for the 3-year course);
- A certificate of thorough knowledge of the compulsory second language French (only valid in primary education in the Brussels-Capital Region or in one of the border and language municipalities and is extinguishing).

Although TALIS 2018 shows that almost all Flemish teachers participated in at least one professional development activity (PE: 97.8%; SE1st st.: 97.1%) 12 months prior to the survey and participated in three to four different professional development activities, teachers experience many **obstacles** to participate. These include the high cost of professional development (PE: 37.7%, SE 1st st.: 26.6%) and the lack of a relevant professional development offer (PE: 19.1%, SE 1st st.: 29.5%). Other – more practical obstacles – will be explored in chapter 3 (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2019).

After participation in a CPL activity, most providers ask their participants to evaluate the activity (see also chapter 5). This evaluation is usually used by the providers to improve the quality of their activities. There is no system-wide overview that compiles the results of these evaluations. Therefore – apart from TALIS – we **lack general insight into the motivation and satisfaction with the availability of CPL-activities** (organised by either public or private organisations)⁴³.

In 2013 and 2018 the PBDs were evaluated by the Monard Commission. The commission formulated several findings and challenges regarding CPL:

- In order to collect information on teachers' CPL-needs and motivation, a more direct dialogue with teachers (teams) needs to be maintained. Sometimes, school leaders and middle management still appear to be an go-between.
- CPL activities need to pay more attention to the needs of the teachers and the reality in the classroom.
- More coordination is needed between the needs and objectives of individuals and the needs and objectives of the school.
- Satisfaction with a professional development activity depends to a large extent on the familiarity of the individual provider with the (substantive and pedagogical-didactical) topic and on their skills and knowledge.

The same concerns emerge from informal discussions with participants of INSET by the Minister. The limited willingness of teachers to participate in some initiatives can be explained by the following observations:

- The topic does not always match the needs of teachers and their classroom practice.
- The content of these initiatives can be interesting in theory, but sometimes difficult to link to the teachers' work in their own context and classroom.
- Teachers often want ready-made material or clear guidelines that they can immediately apply and use in their practice.
- CPL activities were often (in the past) short-lived. There is not always enough time for (support of) transfer of the learning experiences.

Teachers as well as CPL providers stress the importance of **transfer of the learning experiences to the own daily (classroom) practice**. This is the case for 'external CPL' as well as for self-initiated CPL.

Recent research shows the lack of satisfaction of both school leaders and teachers about a number of external in-service trainings. Teachers claim that external training not always contributes to the **improvement of their practice**. In most cases, they identify external and one-shot training courses as too academic, and too hard to transfer to their practice (Tuytens & Devos, 2017; Ysenbaert et al., 2018). Nevertheless, as TALIS 2018 shows, the participation rate for these activities is high.

43 This is also the case for private and commercial providers who operate under the 'free-market' principle.

Teachers also value the support of **external experts to support their practice** positively, e.g. regarding supporting pupils with special needs. Support can take the shape of consultations, sharing research findings and theoretical frameworks, encouraging reflection, supporting the development of vision- and school-based policies, ... (Struyf et al., 2018).

CPL can also emerge from forms of **school internal cooperation**, e.g. team teaching. For example, Meirsschaut and colleagues (2018) describe a school that organised a literature study on team teaching after which they decided to introduce team teaching in order to improve pupil guidance. CPL through cooperation with external partners can enhance professional growth of teachers and school development (De Smet et al., 2020).

A school's human resources management (**HRM**) is a powerful instrument to influence teachers' engagement and to reward their learning activities. Again, this strongly depends on school leadership. Recent Flemish research shows that the degree of orientation towards learning processes within the school team (motivation) has an effect on the extent to which schools pursue strategic HRM⁴⁴. In schools with a strong strategic HRM, it is observed that more teachers are willing to engage in professional learning. The same researchers underline the importance of providing positive feedback, assigning challenging projects or creating development opportunities as ways to unlock teachers' intrinsic motivation (Tuytens et al., 2020). Another study demonstrates that school leader's **feedback** can stimulate teachers' interest to participate in CPL (Tuytens & Devos, 2011). The perceived usefulness of feedback significantly influences professional learning activities, yet the correlation relationship is weak (Tuytens & Devos, 2011). However, the Education Inspectorate states that in a limited number of schools all team members receive regular formal and informal feedback on their work. Often the coaching and evaluation is focused on starters or dysfunctional team members (Education Inspectorate, 2020).

44 Difference is made in the extent to which HR practices are aligned with school's strategic planning and individual needs of teachers. Moderate strategic HRM schools are schools characterised by the alignment of 2 or less HR practices with schools strategic planning and individual needs of teachers. Excellent strategic schools are characterised by the alignment of 3 or more HR practices with school's strategic planning and individuals needs of teachers.

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In 2015, a generic saving was made on the subsidies listed in the table above. The budgets were reduced by 10% with the application of a zero index. From then on, no index has been applied to these subsidies (including the INSET by the Minister).

In addition to the Flemish government, **other organisations or policymakers provide** subsidies to schools for innovative projects and projects focused on CPL. An example of this is the King Baudouin Foundation, which annually launches calls on various topics (not limited to education). There is no data registered of the number and type of schools benefitting from such additional funds.

In the past, subsidies were awarded for professionalisation of school leaders. These resources were eventually added to the general in-service training resources for schools. Funds were also provided for the professionalisation of school boards for many years. However, the subsidy was abolished in school year 2019-2020.

As already mentioned, schools can use additional resources of their operational budget in order to organise CPL in school or to support teachers to participate in external courses. Increasingly, networks or school boards of schools jointly organise CPL activities for their schools. This not only reduces the cost but also offers opportunities to learn within and between schools of these networks. [E.g. some school communities organise collective CPL activities as well as collegial consultations and observations.](#)

In general, the schools' budget for professionalisation is relatively modest. The possibilities with a budget of 67 Euro in (pre-) primary education and 97 Euro in secondary education per full time equivalent per year are rather limited.

3.2 BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS TO ACCESSING CPL OPPORTUNITIES

3.2.1 Barriers for (individual) teachers

TALIS 2018 indicates that the **main barrier** to participate in CPL activities is the challenge to balance them with teachers' work schedules (PE: 43.8%, SE 1st st.: 45.6%). Additionally, a high cost price (PE: 37.7%, SE 1st st.: 26.6%), family commitments (PE: 30.2%, SE 1st st.: 33.1%) and the lack of incentives to participate (PE: 20.1%, SE 1st st.: 25.7%) as well as to engage in relevant professional development activities (not tailored to the needs or the (urban) context in which teachers work) (PE: 19.1%, SE 1st st.: 29.5%) are factors that contribute to low participation.

Compared to their colleagues in other comparable countries, Flemish teachers experience **fewer obstacles** to participate in professional development activities. Flemish teachers in both educational levels experience fewer financial, family and work-related obstacles compared to teachers in other countries. They also experience significantly more support from their employer compared to the other countries (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2019). Other research shows that another barrier is related to whether or not the **format and content** of the offer match with the beliefs of the teachers. It indicates that participants find it difficult to participate and to learn from a collaboration that clashes with their own views (De Smet et al., 2020).

School culture and leadership can be experienced, both as a barrier or a facilitator for the professional development of teachers. Recent case study research on strategic HRM (Tuytens et al., 2020) shows a correlation between learning opportunities and the degree of implementing a strategic HRM policy. In schools with excellent HRM strategies different learning opportunities are perceived, while teachers in the majority of moderately strategic schools experience rather limited learning opportunities. Schools with limited learning opportunities mainly focus on external professionalisation initiatives and internal learning opportunities are rather limited too, for example, a pedagogical conference. In schools where an excellent HRM policy has been implemented, different learning opportunities are initiated, e.g. working groups, team teaching, peer consultation (Tuytens et al., 2020).

3.2.2 Barriers for specific groups of teachers

TALIS 2018 shows that the extent to which barriers are experienced does not vary according to the gender and teaching experience of teachers. Nor do the barriers experienced by teachers appear to be related to the school population of the school in which they teach.

According to TALIS 2018, teachers in the first stage of secondary education indicate more often than their primary school colleagues the absence of relevant CPL activities (respectively 29.5% compared to 19.1%) and of incentives to participate (25.7% compared to 20.1%). Significantly fewer teachers in first stage secondary education than in primary education indicate that professional development is too expensive (26.6% compared to 37.7%).

Barriers are mostly experienced equally over schools regardless of their degree of diversity of their pupils (in terms of socio-economic, migration status and special needs profile of pupils). Only in the 1st stage of secondary education, teachers in schools with more pupils from a migrant background experience more barriers for CPL compared to teachers with less pupils from a migrant background. There are also differences when it comes to the participation in types of CPL: Self-observation and observation by colleagues or following courses leading to a diploma or certificate are less applied in schools with pupils with parents with a lower-educated background (Spruyt et al., 2020).

3.2.3 Barriers regarding specific forms of CPL

The TALIS 2013 report has shown that Flemish teachers rarely share their teaching practice openly and, likewise, rarely observe or provide feedback to each other (OECD, 2014).. Based on TALIS 2018, we can see an increase in the observation rate, but a comparison between the two surveys is difficult to make due to a different operationalisation of the concepts.

3.2.4 Overcoming barriers for schools

Recent studies on Flemish schools stress the following important conditions to enable the participation in CPL to overcome barriers for CPL (see e.g. De Smet, et al., 2020; Vekeman et al., 2020):

- structural provision of time, both for participation in the activity itself and for transfer;
- availability of financial resources;

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- availability of infrastructure;
- culture of learning, working and researching together in schools;
- leadership;
- alignment of staff and professionalisation policy with strategic school policy;
- the existence of professional learning communities at school;
- finding substitute teachers for teachers that participate in CPL activities. In the context of workplace learning of teachers in companies, class replacement activities are provided in the absence of teachers. However, this opportunity is not always used.

3.3 SUPPORT TO FULFIL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

Legislation does not formulate any requirements regarding the support of CPL opportunities. **Schools** and teachers are free to shape these, depending, among other things, on the strategic and organisational choices of the school. Most teachers indicate that they did not have to pay anything. Also, transport costs can be paid for the teachers, this is the autonomy of the schools. With the exception of two countries, Flemish teachers pay the lowest costs associated with their own professional development, according to TALIS 2018.

Research emphasises the importance of **strong leadership for supporting teachers** (Backers et al., 2020; De Smet et al., 2020; Vekeman et al., 2020). **Feedback** can initiate processes of professional learning (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2020). However, according to the Education Inspectorate (2020), this is not yet the case in every school.

Schools deal with this in different ways: on the one hand, in some schools individual teachers are often given opportunities to participate in CPL activities according to their interests and needs and are free to choose. On the other hand, the school board, the school leader or the school communities/group (with part of the team) initiate certain professionalisation initiatives such as pedagogical workshops/ study days and oblige teachers to participate. The school leader thus has an important role in creating opportunities for the team's professional learning. The way school leaders approach this, appears to be an indication of the school's development as a learning organisation (Devos, 2019).

The challenge is to provide sufficient support to school leaders with less policy making capacities (Staelens, 2015; Vanhoof et al., 2015; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2019). This creates the need for additional support for schools with weak management that do not always find their way to the right support. To counteract this, the Policy Note 2019-2024 stipulates that underperforming schools must be supported.

Government support usually takes the shape of financial resources or replacement opportunities. TALIS 2013⁴⁷ indicates that an important form of support includes the free scheduling of teachers during working hours. There is a significant difference between primary (69%) and secondary education (61%). The proportion is significantly higher than the respective TALIS averages. In no other country, the proportion of teachers who receive a salary supplement or a non-financial form of support for off-hours activities in primary education, is as low as in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

In addition, the government stipulates that schools can organise a pedagogical seminar for their staff, giving pupils a day free of class.

47 Due a lack of data in Flemish report TALIS 2018 on this topic, we refer to data of the Flemish report 2013.



Support is also provided through **guidelines and tools**. Schools can consult the Reference Framework for Quality in Education in which the expectations regarding quality professionalisation policy are explicitly stated. In addition, the providers, PBDs and educational researchers also offer various manuals and tips on professionalisation and specific contents. Content can also be shared on KlasCement (see chapter 1).

PBDs support school leaders and schools in initiating and implementing educational innovations, as well as in the field of school development and professional development. Pedagogical counsellors work across schools and provide in-service training, on site guidance and support of school leaders and school teams. They also support and stimulate the (further) development of quality assurance mechanisms in schools and school development. There has been a shift from supporting individual teachers towards support at school level. Both foci ask for different approaches, going from CPL courses to long term guidance trajectories. One of the tasks of the PBDs is providing support to teachers in the implementation of innovations at school and classroom level (see also Chapter 5: 'Transfer of CPL content to classroom and school').

The 'workability monitor 2004-2019'⁴⁸ also assesses the professionalisation opportunities of teachers: formal or informal opportunities to develop competences. A positive trend can be observed: the percentage of teaching staff with insufficient learning opportunities decreased from 8.4% in 2004 to 6.1% in 2019. Flemish teachers have significantly more learning opportunities compared to the average Flemish worker (Bourdeaud'hui et al., 2020).

3.4 DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION ABOUT CPL OPPORTUNITIES

Information about CPL activities is disseminated through various channels:

- School leaders in schools disseminate the information (via mails/boards/teachers' room, ...). The school leaders' offer can be non-compulsory or mandatory;
- The communication channels of the providers (including PBDs and trade unions);
- Government channels such as Klasse, KlasCement or the newsletter for teachers and school leaders.

Teachers and other professionals can individually subscribe to mailing lists, targeting specific schools. Local support systems by local communities can also target specific schools. These mailing lists are developed and hosted by the organisations themselves. In general, schools and teachers need to subscribe to these lists themselves.

In the 'in-service training register', nascholingsrepertorium, available on KlasCement, all organisations offering in-service training can register and share their offer. No quality labels are awarded to the organisations. A viewing guide supports schools and teachers to find the organisation or course that best fits their needs. However, the overview is not exhaustive and teachers are not always familiar with this instrument. This register is not used intensively.

While there is a lot of communication, the report of the Monard Commission shows that teachers are not always aware of the CPL opportunities. As already outlined, some teachers could not contact the PBD directly, but had to go through their school leaders (Monard Commission, 2019).

48 Measures the quality of the jobs of different professions every three years. it calculates how jobs score in terms of work stress, motivation, learning opportunities and work-life balance. Workable work or the degree of workability is the percentage that does not score problematically for both work stress and motivation and learning opportunities and work-life balance. There are separate analyses of the education sector.



4 CHAPTER 4: PROVISION: HOW AND BY WHOM IS CPL PROVIDED

This chapter concerns the different formats in which professional learning opportunities are provided by a diverse range of actors them. In addition to being recipients, teachers can be providers of CPL, both individually (e.g. as coaches, mentors and team teachers) and collectively (e.g. via networks).

4.1 TIME FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To find out how much **time** is spent on CPL, we refer to TALIS 2018 and the recent research on teachers' time use in the Flemish Community of Belgium (Minnen et al., 2018). The time use research shows that teachers working full-time spend on average 1h13m per week⁴⁹ (2.23% of weekly working time) on training in primary education and 1h21m per week⁵⁰ (2.54% of weekly working time) in secondary education. This mainly concerns in-service training activities and to a lesser extent reading professional literature (Minnen et al. 2018), findings which are in line with the TALIS 2018 results. TALIS 2018 shows that full-time employed Flemish teachers spend on average 0.9 hours⁵¹ (PE) and 0.8 hours (SE) per week (2.01% for both levels) on professional development. This amount of time is significantly less than international colleagues who participate on average 1.3 hours (EU-5 countries) and 1.5 hours (PISA-6 countries) on professional development. Flemish teachers also spend less time on cooperation and consultation with colleagues within their schools compared to their international colleagues (both PE and SE = 2.3 hours; EU-5 = 3.2 hours; PISA-6 = 2.7 hours).

4.2 FORMATS OF CPL ACTIVITIES

4.2.1 Overview of formats

TALIS 2018 shows that CPL activities with the highest participation in both primary and the first stage of secondary education are **courses and seminars** (PE: 92.7%; SE 1st st.: 88%), followed by reading professional literature (PE: 79.2%; SE 1st st.: 81.2%).

In primary education, half of the teachers participate in educational conferences, compared to 37.6% in the first stage of secondary education. In addition, one third of teachers took part in self-evaluation processes or peer observation (PE: 35.6%; SE 1st st.: 34.4%) and more than a quarter participated in a network of teachers in primary education and almost one third in first stage secondary education (PE: 27.3%; SE 1st st.: 32.7%).

Less common professional development activities are observations in other schools (PE: 22.5%; SE 1st st.: 18.5%), online courses (PE: 7.4%; SE 1st st.: 14.5%), training leading to a diploma or certificate (PE: 15.0%; SO 1st st.: 12.8%) and learning visits to companies or public services (PE: 7.6%; SO 1st st.: 11.4%).

49 Weekly working time of full-time employees in primary education: 50h56m

50 Weekly working time of full-time employees in secondary education (all stages): 47h59m

51 Working time (hours) of full-time employees during the most complete calendar week: 44.6 (PE) 39.7 (SE)



There are striking differences between education levels in the Flemish Community of Belgium. For example, primary school teachers are more likely to take part in ‘courses or seminars’, ‘educational conferences’ and ‘learning visits to other schools’ than teachers in the first stage of secondary education. This last group participates more often in online courses or study days, learning visits to companies and public services, and a network of teachers regarding professional development (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2019).

TALIS 2018 shows that Flemish teachers at both levels of education participate more often in offline courses and seminars and read professional literature more frequently than teachers in other countries. On the other hand, teachers in the EU-5 countries (+29.2 percentage points), the EU-14 countries (+14.4 percentage points), and PISA top 6 countries (+23.1 percentage points) participate more often in online courses and seminars (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2019) than Flemish teachers.

According to TALIS 2018, teachers tend to participate in **rather traditional forms of professionalisation such as courses** (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2019). However, research shows the importance of CPL activities, **tailored** to teachers’ or schools’ specific needs and context (Merchie et al., 2015). School based in-service training offers added value if team members have a shared vision and a clear shared sense of purpose (De Smet et al., 2020).

In general, a trend towards tailor-made CPL activities in which **training and guidance go hand in hand** can be observed in the Flemish Community of Belgium. Increasingly, schools make use of long term and school-based guidance. PBDs and other providers increasingly make use of integrated guidance activities to support the implementation of new content. Examples are:

- Several professional development projects integrate different levels; i.e. objectives at the level of school leaders and objectives at the level of the teams and even individual teachers. These projects are developed by different schools, school communities and external providers, e.g. PBD, priority INSET projects by the Minister.
- Other professionalisation activities work both at the level of individual schools as well as at the level of the school network (to which the participating schools belong).

4.2.2 Teachers as providers of CPL

Schools are free to draft teachers’ duties and timetables, based on the regulation, needs and context of the school. Based on school priorities, teachers can be encouraged to develop further as mentors, coaches, ... Some schools make use of coaches working on specific topics and themes (e.g. reading coaches). Increasingly, Flemish schools appoint **expert teachers** that can act as sources for CPL. Recent research in primary education shows that through practices such as team teaching or subject anchor working,⁵² formal and informal cooperation is developed, as several teachers share responsibility over several class groups. Through collaborations, knowledge sharing between teachers becomes possible, both in terms of content and pedagogical-didactical approaches (e.g. collaboration between less and more experienced teachers) as well as in the field of socio-emotional knowledge about pupils (e.g. Subject anchors) (Struyf et al., 2016).

As of September 2019, school-based coaches (or mentors) can offer initial guidance. **Mentoring** is a form of support in which more experienced teachers assist less experienced or novice teachers. Mentors can act as a point of contact for novice teachers as well as for the entire teacher team (see a.o. Thomas et al., 2020; März & Kelchtermans, 2020).

⁵² A teacher in primary education who teaches the same subject to several class groups.

Although research highlights the potential benefits of these mentoring projects for the whole school, TALIS 2018 shows that primary school leaders indicate that only four out of ten schools have such a programme in place and in only 10.1% of primary schools all teachers have access to mentoring. This contrasts sharply with secondary education, where mentoring is organised in 75 % of all Flemish schools. 14.8 % of teachers in secondary education have access to mentoring. Compared to the EU-5 countries, school leaders report that it is more difficult for Flemish primary school teachers to access mentoring programmes (-24.1). In the first stage of secondary education, the pattern is reversed: Flemish teachers have access to a mentoring programme more often than average (compared to the EU-14 and PISA top 6 countries). Only a limited number of teachers reports being formally appointed as mentor (PE: 6.7%; SE 1st st.: 7.7%). Compared to the EU-5 countries there are significantly fewer teachers appointed as mentors in Flemish primary education.

4.2.3 Collaborative CPL formats

The Reference Framework for Quality in Education underlines the importance of internal expertise sharing in schools. In general, there is **a trend toward increasing collaborative learning**.

Different types of school-related learning networks offer opportunities to learn together, and teachers can play an active role in their own and their colleagues' professional development using existing structures, such as subject departments or working groups. Additionally, new (temporary or structural) collaborations are increasingly being set up in Flemish schools.

The Education Inspectorate notes that cooperation between colleagues within the school is not yet common practice in every school. In secondary schools, and even within schools, major differences between the teachers' approaches, types of education and subject departments (Education Inspectorate, 2020) can be observed. Some schools are characterised by an 'island culture': team members work independently and opportunities for exchange are insufficiently explored and exploited. In other schools, there is an intense cooperation between classes, stages and degrees. TALIS 2018 gives insight into the frequency of Flemish teachers' participation in simple and complex forms of collaborative learning. Flemish teachers in the first grade of secondary education indicate that all forms of cooperative activities (except for the exchange of teaching materials) are used more frequently in 2018 compared to 2008. Although Flemish teachers are catching up, the absolute frequency of cooperative activities remains lower than in the EU-5, EU-14 and PISA top 6 countries. Among the simple forms of cooperative activities, attendance at team meetings has seen the strongest increase. Between 2008 and 2018 the proportion of teachers indicating that they attended a team meeting at least once a month rose by 8.9 percentage points. Among the more complex forms of cooperation, teaching together is the strongest. Over a period of ten years, the proportion of teachers who admitted to having taught with a colleague at least once a month rose with 10.2 percentage points (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2020).

Schools can provide opportunities for informal and formal forms of collaborative CPL. Teachers share materials and literature, they can discuss and give feedback on each other's lessons and make lesson preparations together. A teacher can also act as a coach or mentor to other teachers, e.g. in the context of initial guidance or when transferring knowledge acquired during professionalisation activities. Most (informal and formal) collaborative learning takes place inside the school, but cross-school professionalisation also occurs.

These activities enable knowledge transfer, support sustainability and encourage the development of a collective learning culture (Struyf et al., 2016; Struyf et al., 2020; Van Droogenbroeck, 2019)).

4.2.4 Digital learning and online resources⁵⁵

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, every school can decide based on its own needs and requirements which digital platform they would prefer to use to support their pupils and teachers⁵⁶.

As a result of the Covid-19-crisis, digital professionalisation has increased. The pandemic and health measures have accelerated the provision of online support. **Various organisations** such as the government (Toll-net, Klasse), PBDs, private organisations (such as Microsoft, Google (Fourcast), DTEeach, publishers) have now shifted their focus to digital professional development. Providers have made use of digital and interactive tools (webinars, MOOCs, interviews, Facebook live, blended learning), and presentations and seminars are being recorded so they can be consulted afterwards. There are no differences in terms of formal conditions (actors, organisation) between digital and face-to-face forms of professionalisation.

However, before the Covid19-crisis, different organisations were already using digital or blended forms of CPL. Teachers already made use of the OER digital platform that KlasCement created (see chapter 1 and above).. Users and providers of learning resources can share materials online on the KlasCement-platform. Additionally, Toll-net, a KlasCement subsite, offers both supply and demand driven training programmes based on the Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu). International research ([Deloitte and IPSOS, 2019](#); Howard et al. (2020) indicated that teachers do not feel competent to create digital content.

During the Covid-19-crisis, the PBDs noticed an **evolution in the demand for support** and CPL. At the beginning of the crisis, there were multiple questions regarding CPL related to the availability and technical use of concrete tools and platforms for distance learning. PBDs, KlasCement, and other organisations collected and offered targeted information.

As the health crisis and distance learning continued, more questions popped up about how to organise live online sessions. School were looking to implement distance learning in a more structured way. In most schools, a lot of informal collective CPL took place: e.g. schools made screencasts to show teachers how to deal with digital distance learning or created websites to support teachers in their teaching practice and communication with pupils.

The current concern relates to structurally embedding this new way of working in schools: how to (jointly) develop digital teaching material, how to collaborate digitally, how to teach and evaluate digitally? How to organize blended learning?

⁵⁵ See annex 6 Digital CPL

⁵⁶ During the Covid-19 crisis educational digital platforms such as Smartschool were under considerable pressure. Before the crisis, these platforms were evaluated mostly in terms of functionality and value for money, but during the crisis it became clear that performance and scalability were important criteria too. Smaller and local learning platforms found the situation especially difficult, compared to bigger companies and organisation providing general solutions such as Microsoft Teams or Google G Suite. Microsoft office offers other possibilities such as Sway, Onenote, Classnotebook, Sharepoint, ... In addition, some PBDs are taking a closer look at the effectiveness of other learning management systems (Canvas, Odooh).



4.3.3 Profile of trainers providing CPL

There is no formal job description for trainers (or counsellors in PBDs) who provide professional development activities. This is part of the internal quality assurance of the providers. It is expected that the trainer has adequate knowledge of the subject on which the priority in-service training is focused. In the framework of Merchie et al. (2015) the quality of the trainer is one of the conditions for effective knowledge transfer.

Counsellors in PBDs differ in terms of qualifications (Bachelor's, Master's, PhD), the subjects in which they specialise, teaching experience and professional background.

An appointment in a PBD can be directly either as a permanent (with a maximum of 85%) or a temporary appointment.

In addition, the PBD also employs staff members who are seconded from the education sector.

The Monard Commission (2019) states that the counsellors' quality and competence are crucial for effective CPL; participant satisfaction depends largely on the familiarity of the provider with the topic as well as on their skills and knowledge.

The Commission recommends to pay more attention to recruitment and selection as well as on the evaluation of the counsellors. Feedback from the schools is indispensable.

Each PBD drafts a job description for their employees. They also provide the training and further professionalisation for the counsellors. In its evaluation, the Monard Commission (2019) also recommends PBDs to pay more attention to the professionalisation of their staff.

Professionalisation initiatives by the Ministry (e.g. conferences, seminars) often address pedagogical counsellors and teacher educators as target groups, with the aim of encouraging professional dialogue among the actors in the professional continuum.

The recruitment of **teacher educators** is part of the autonomy of teacher education institutions. The profile of teacher educators in the Flemish Community of Belgium is therefore quite diverse⁵⁷. Also teacher educators differ in terms of qualifications (Bachelor's, Master's, PhD), the subjects in which they specialise, teaching experience and professional background. In order to be appointed as a teaching member of staff at a university college or university, candidates must meet the conditions set out in the Higher Education Codex, Part 5, Staff Regulations. The Flemish government allocates funds for initiatives that improve the quality of teacher education and/or promote cooperation between teacher education institutes (Codex Hoger Onderwijs, Article II.110).

For example, from 2017 until 2020, the Flemish government has provided a subsidy for the professional development of teacher educators.

Finally, VELOV, the professional association for teacher educators in the Flemish Community of Belgium, aims to support primarily teacher educators at universities, university colleges, as well as anyone else involved in the training, supervision and in-service training of teachers. VELOV has different functions: it is a platform and communication channel that focuses on innovation and development and provides a study service.

⁵⁷ <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2012-12-07-EVALO.pdf>

Box: updated information since OECD visit in January 2021

Professionalisation project appealing to partnership between different actors in the professional continuum.

In September 2021, several two-year projects aiming to strengthen the initial teacher education programmes and their collaboration with the wider educational field will start. The projects focus on (1) effective teaching methods for the subjects French, Dutch, STEM and “project algemene vakken”⁵⁸, and effective teaching methods for the stimulation of reading skills, (2) flexible study pathways and (3) strengthening teacher competences in dealing with different educational needs.

The projects will take the shape of a partnership, consisting of one or more teacher education programme, several school teams, one or more CPL providers and a research partner. The projects challenge partnerships to develop new working methods, to strengthen the competences of (aspiring) teachers and teacher educators, and to strengthen the collaboration between different partners within the professional continuum. The partnerships are expected to disseminate their practice, research and acquired expertise at the end of the projects to the wider educational field.

⁵⁸ Project Algemene Vakken: refers to a combination of different general subjects.



5 CHAPTER 5: CONTENT OF CPL

This chapter focuses on the process by which the contents of CPL are selected and developed and how various stakeholders are involved in this process. In particular, it considers how CPL contents are aligned to respond to needs identified or forecast at different levels of the system.

5.1 NEEDS FOR CPL

5.1.1 General overview

TALIS 2018 shows that Flemish teachers, compared to the EU-14 and PISA top 6 countries, report a **lower need for professional development**. The need for professional development also decreased compared to the previous surveys (2008 and 2013). Flemish teachers indicate they would benefit most from professional development aimed at teaching pupils with specific educational needs, ICT skills, methods for individualised learning, pupil behaviour and classroom management, as well as teaching in multicultural or multilingual settings. Only for professional development concerning pupil behaviour and classroom management, primary education teachers report a higher need in the Flemish Community of Belgium compared to the EU-5 countries⁵⁹ (Van Droogenbroeck, et al. 2019).

This is in line with the OECD's analysis of school resources in the Flemish Community of Belgium (2015), i.e. that not all teacher education and CPL adequately prepare teachers for subject teaching, teaching in a multicultural environment, differentiation of instruction, supporting language learning in all subjects and teaching students with specific educational needs. However, given the changing student demographic and the shift towards greater inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools, the need to be able to respond to these challenges is growing.

Additional analyses of TALIS 2018 show that Flemish teachers indicate that they do not feel well prepared for teaching in heterogeneous environments. They report this topic was lacking during their teacher training. Nevertheless, they do report to believe their own skills and competences to be sufficient to teach well for diverse class groups and they do not feel the need for more professionalisation activities regarding this specific issue (Spruyt et al., 2020).

Finally, according to the TALIS 2018 survey, teachers report **content-related** barriers to participate in CPL: Flemish teachers in first stage of secondary education (29.5%) report a higher absence of relevant CPL activities than their primary school colleagues (19.1%). However, compared to their international colleagues, Flemish teachers experience fewer content-related obstacles to participate in CPL. 37% primary teachers in EU-5 countries report no relevant CPL activities, for first stage secondary education in EU 14 that is 37.2%, and for PISA-6 countries 32.7%.

59 For primary education, we make a comparison with the five countries available from our above-described selection of 14 EU countries. These are Denmark, England, France, Spain and Sweden, which we further call the EU-5 countries.

The Monard Commission (2019) advises the PBDs to intensify these processes and to organise these consultations systemically. The Commission recommends schools to collaborate and encourage direct contact with and between teachers, next to school leaders. The PBDs are currently developing methods and platforms to collect and share the needs of the demand-based guidance. The Monard Commission (2019) also encourages the PBDs to develop a clear policy to reach schools that do not ask for support. The Policy Note on Education (2019-2024) also underlines the importance of involving all schools and teachers.

5.1.3 Tools for identification and alignment of CPL needs

Each teacher can decide which instruments they use to identify their professionalisation needs. Various **self-reflection tools** are available, depending on the topic of the professionalisation activities. Organisations, institutions, teachers, school leaders have the autonomy to decide whether or not to make use of such instruments⁶⁰. Given the multitude of tools available, it is not always easy for teachers and schools to find the right instrument.

Schools and teachers are autonomous in choosing professionalisation activities tailored to their needs and context. Therefore, it is important to have a good insight into these needs. Schools are expected to map teachers' professionalisation needs as part of their professionalisation policy, including initial guidance. Mapping these needs can be done in various ways, such as during a staff or department meeting, via a questionnaire, as part of performance interviews or appraisal processes. Here, too, differences can be identified in terms of approach (see a.o. Tuytens & Devos, 2017).

Often the school's policy priorities, the available budget, the cost of participation in (external) professionalisation and the available time affect who participates in CPL activities: teachers (teams), department or school heads, other stakeholders involved with the school community or group, ...

Schools and teachers can rely on **data** to identify their CPL needs, e.g. pupil results, dialogues with pupils, feedback from pupils and parents, colleagues, feedback from the school leader,) (see a.o. Merchie et al., 2015). However, other research indicates that in the Flemish Community of Belgium the opportunities of data-use for CPL can be improved (Vanhoof et al., 2014; Van Gasse, 2018). Various initiatives to improve school staff's and school leaders' data literacy are being set up. The Ministry also takes initiatives to this end, for example through pilot projects on differentiation as well as through Dataloep. This government tool gives school leaders access to data about their own school(s) such as pupil characteristics, attendance and school progress. These data can be a starting point for schools and school networks to develop adequate and context-related policies. Additional data (e.g. on standardised tests, see below) might provide opportunities to work even more data-driven in the future.

⁶⁰ We list some examples:

- Guidelines drawn up by the pedagogical guidance services in supporting schools in drawing up a professionalisation plan:
- GO!: professionalisation at school: learning to excel together (Valcke, 2019).
- Catholic Education The Flemish Community of Belgium : customised professionalisation within a range of opportunities (Van Looveren, 2015)
- Reflection instrument for the starting teacher: starting power!
- A support instrument for a powerful start in your job as a teacher at the Artevelde University College
- Reflection instrument for STEM
- Personal development plans



In other schools, the professionalisation policy is focused – to a limited extent – on the needs of the team members and the school’s medium- and long-term planning (Onderwijs Spiegel, 2020).

Increasingly, PBDs address multiple learning needs by **school-based support system**. This way, individual questions and needs are translated into schoolwide guidance. This enhances the sustainability of the implemented changes and fosters the collective learning processes in schools. Nevertheless, this can lead to unanswered questions individual teachers might (also) still have. In order to answer the different needs the Monard Commission (2019) recommends the PBDs to re-define their role, e.g. by taking up a broker’s role or by focusing on the concept of ‘train the trainer’ (see earlier).

5.2.2.2 Policy on professionalisation as part of HRM policy

A school’s professionalisation policy needs to be coordinated and aligned with other policy areas in order to ensure coherence with the overall school’s policy. Such an integrated, strategic HRM policy that connects different interlinked practices (e.g. recruitment policy, professional development, teacher evaluation) often lacks in Flemish schools. Most schools do invest in the professionalisation and evaluation of their staff, but these actions and activities often turn out to be isolated initiatives without direct links and/or impact to other school policy decisions (Tuytens et al., 2020). In almost three quarters of the surveyed schools, professional development is attuned to the strategic policy of the schools and the individual needs of teachers, but the different staff practices are not yet attuned to each other nor to the strategic goals of the schools (Tuytens et al., 2019).

In their evaluation of primary and secondary schools’ HRM- and professionalisation policies in primary and secondary schools, the Education Inspectorate evaluated these topics in both educational levels as ‘fairly positive’ (Onderwijs Spiegel, 2020). The selection and recruitment processes and the initial guidance are generally of high quality. Coaching, assessment and professionalisation face more challenges. In primary education, the Education Inspectorate has identified opportunities for learning from and with each other and recommends setting up formal structures to facilitate this. The Education Inspectorate identified a number of professionalisation initiatives, but sometimes there is a lack of coaching and management of teachers in the classroom. Often professional development plans do not contain a guide- and timeline, nor are they attuned to a well-thought-out policy. Because of this lack of direction, cooperation within and between schools does not fulfil its potential with regards to strengthening educational practice and school functioning according to the Education Inspectorate.

5.3 TRANSFER

5.3.1 Upscaling of CPL contents and practices

There is a growing amount of inspiring school practices based and team-oriented CPL practices. However, these often only relate to the specific context of one school. A system wide overview of these practices does not exist. However, more attempts to share good practices are being undertaken: PBDs and the government disseminate examples of good and inspiring practices via Klasse, KlasCement, and during seminars, workshops and conferences. In the projects of the priority INSET, participants are asked to share their materials via KlasCement⁶¹.

⁶¹ See link for an example: <https://www.klascement.net/lesmateriaal/organisatie/24411/>

The Education Inspectorate often reports on cooperation within schools, but due to a lack of direction, this does not always strengthen educational practice and/or school development (Education Inspectorate, 2020).



7 CHAPTER 7: LEADERSHIP

Quality education not only requires excellent teachers, but also a strong professional school policy with a strategic long-term vision and HRM policy. To achieve this, the competence of the school leader is crucial. They must develop and implement an integrated and coherent school policy that supports and strengthens the school vision and it's a pedagogic plan. School leaders also play an important role in the well-being, competence and professional development of the school team and they have a major impact on the development of educational innovations and thus indirectly influence pupils' learning.

The importance of (shared) leadership is a common thread in the previous chapters of this report. In this chapter, we present recent evidence on the role of leadership in Flemish's CPL policy.

7.1 MULTIFACETED LEADERSHIP IN THE FLEMISH COMMUNITY OF BELGIUM

Leadership is multifaceted: apart from administrative and system leadership, instructional leadership⁶², transformational leadership and shared leadership are required to successfully lead a school⁶³. The TALIS 2018 study shows that a school leader take on **different roles** on a daily basis - such as managing human resources, the school budget and communication with parents (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2020).

There is a growing call for **shared instructional leadership** (Verbiest, 2014), this is when a school leader works to transform teaching practices, encouraging teachers to develop themselves professionally and work together. Different Flemish studies show the importance of the leadership role for innovation, see for example the implementation of inclusive education (Meirsschaut & Ruys, 2018; Struyf et al., 2018).

In a recent study on stress and wellbeing of school leaders, a lack time to implement instructional leadership is reported (Devos et al., 2018). According to TALIS 2018, in primary education three-quarters (78.5%) of Flemish school leaders received a training or course on **instructional leadership**. However, one-quarter of the school leaders in that education level experiences a shortage of time for instructional leadership. This differs strongly from school leaders in the first stage of secondary education and in the EU-5 (respectively 8.8% and 8.5%).

The most frequently reported form of instructional leadership in the Flemish Community of Belgium concerns the establishment of a school-based professional development plan (PE: 63.1%; SE 1st st.: 52.8%). On average, Flemish primary school leaders draw up a professionalisation plan more frequently than school leaders in other countries.

62 In literature, also the term 'educational leadership' is used.

63 Instructional leadership focuses on improving the curriculum and the instructional process in the school. With transformational leadership, the school leader is seen as an entrepreneurial leader who, based on a vision, sets out the course of the school, binds employees to it and, through activities and processes in all kinds of areas (structure, culture, supervision and professionalisation), develops the school and tries to realise the chosen course (Verbiest, 2014). Shared leadership is more than leadership exercised by others than the formal leader and refers to the realisation and distribution of leadership activities in an interactive web of leaders, followers and situational aspects, such as tools, procedures and routines (Spillane, 2006). Administrative leadership entails following up and carrying out more administrative tasks and procedures. System leadership refers to initiatives aimed at strengthening relations between the school and its surroundings (e.g. parents, school leaders from other schools) (see a.o. TALIS, 2018).

In primary education, school leaders in the EU-5 countries more often observe classroom activities (+13.9 percentage points) and provide feedback based on observations (+9.8 percentage points) than in the Flemish Community of Belgium. In the first stage of secondary education, there are hardly any differences when it comes to direct forms of instructional leadership compared to other countries. An exception is the observation of classroom activities (the Flemish Community of Belgium: 27.8%, PISA-6: 37%) (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2020).

Different school leaders offer different (or a different number of) learning opportunities to their staff. In some schools both external and internal professional development initiatives are available to teachers, such as working groups, team teaching, and peer consultation (Tuytens et al., 2020).

Recent Flemish research indicates the importance of instructional leadership for facilitating professional learning communities: it has a significant positive relationship with deprivatised practice from experienced teachers (Vanblaere et al., 2014). Leaders who explicitly pay attention to the instructional process, encourage teachers to do the same. As for reflective dialogue, both transformational and instructional leadership are needed. School leaders have an important role in encouraging teachers to participate in learning communities, to engage in dialogue with each other, and to cooperate, formally and informally (Valckx et al., 2018). To encourage teachers to do so, Devos (2019) points out the importance of a school leader who truly embodies the school vision in their actions and communication.

School leaders play an important role in promoting a collaborative environment⁶⁴. Several Flemish studies emphasise the need for **transformational leadership** in order to encourage teachers' participation in CPL (see a.o. Vanblaere, 2017; Vekeman, et al., 2020). Half of the school leaders who participated in TALIS 2018 indicated to support collaboration between teachers to develop new teaching practices (PE: 52.9%; SE 1st st.: 51.4%), to ensure that teachers take responsibility for improving their skills (PE: 49.5%; SE 1st st.: 49.4%), or to ensure that teachers feel responsible for student performance (PE: 51.4%; SE 1st st.: 57.4%) through their leadership.

TALIS 2018 shows that school leaders think that teachers have more opportunities and possibilities to participate in the decision-making process than the teachers themselves think. For example, school leaders almost unanimously indicate (PE: 99.3%; SE 1st st.: 99.5%) that their staff has the possibility to actively participate in the decision-making process concerning school policy, while this is estimated to be considerably lower among teachers (PE: 89.5%; SE 1st st.: 76.2%). School leaders report systematically higher percentages than teachers for most statements regarding collaborative school culture (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2020).

Leadership is not limited to the role of school head, but extends to every member of staff that exercises a leadership role in the school. There is an evolution towards **shared leadership**. This is also true for the Flemish Community of Belgium. A growing number of teachers is taking up leadership tasks in schools (teacher leadership), individually or in a team. These roles include, for example, those of pupil guidance coordinator, ICT coordinator, teachers who temporarily take on a leadership role, staff members who work in support of the school community and departmental leadership.

64 This is also confirmed by other recent research on collaborative learning in Flemish schools. This research identified 6 relevant factors for strengthening collaborative learning processes (De Smet et al., 2020): (1) common goal, (2) acknowledging each other's input, (3) connection and identification with each other, (4) learning perspective, (5) learning skills and (6) return effect. The school leader has a clear impact on each factor.



8.2 CHALLENGE 2: STRENGTHENING CPL WITH EFFECT ON TEACHERS' PRACTICE⁶⁷

There is a common need for direct support, resulting in changes in the classroom practice.

While teachers and CPL providers can point out numerous examples of classroom support provided by colleagues and experts, they still report this support is insufficient and needs to be provided more frequently and intensively. Not all CPL activities meet these teachers' needs: teachers often experience CPL as too academic, too short, too little opportunities to translate the insights into change in teachers' practices, ...

However, all stakeholders stress the importance of teacher-oriented support at classroom level. They also point to the development of crucial conditions (e.g. time, leadership, collaboration, ...) that need to be fulfilled in order to have a larger impact on teacher professionalism, and to offer targeted and practice-oriented support.

8.3 CHALLENGE 3: STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIVE AND SCHOOL BASED CPL

Schools are not only places where pupils can learn, but are ideally environments where teachers can develop too. Research shows that on site professionalisation in schools, with peers, can have apparent and positive effects. This depends on the willingness of teachers to share their practice, a culture of learning together, and structural working conditions (e.g. time).

Collaborative participation in CPL activities creates room for reflective dialogue, feedback and helps to develop context-specific implementation strategies. Despite a positive evolution, CPL in The Flemish Community of Belgium still remains an activity that teachers perform individually. Practical barriers for collaborative participation need to be reduced in order to strengthen the collective learning processes. All providers and facilitators at all levels are challenged to overcome these barriers and to encourage team-oriented CPL.

In The Flemish Community of Belgium, there is a tendency towards collaborative teaching e.g. team teaching and different forms of cooperation through project-based work or cross-school learning networks. Collective learning processes and activities, such as professional learning communities, are also cautiously finding their way to Flemish schools. However, this is not the case in all schools and not always leads towards effective learning. Moreover, TALIS 2018 shows that straightforward forms of cooperation (e.g. exchanging teaching materials with colleagues and attending team meetings) are more common than complex activities (e.g. teaching alongside other teachers in the same classroom or observing lessons from other teachers and providing feedback). The latter requires more in-depth (and time-consuming) collaboration between teachers.

The conditions for collaborative and in-depth learning need further development. This requires time as well as other structural and cultural resources in order to work and learn collectively. Collaborative learning also requires a strong HRM- and CPL policy as well as carefully composed teacher-teams. Complementary teacher profiles (e.g. experience, interests, competencies, ...) can encourage collective learning. Teacher (teams) need to be motivated and supported to collaborate and schools' internal professionalisation capacity needs to be strengthened.

⁶⁷ Practice embedded support: all kinds of support so that professionalisation has maximal impact on the classroom.



8.10 CHALLENGE 10: PROVIDING SUFFICIENT CPL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTIPLE REFORMS AND FINANCIAL CUTS

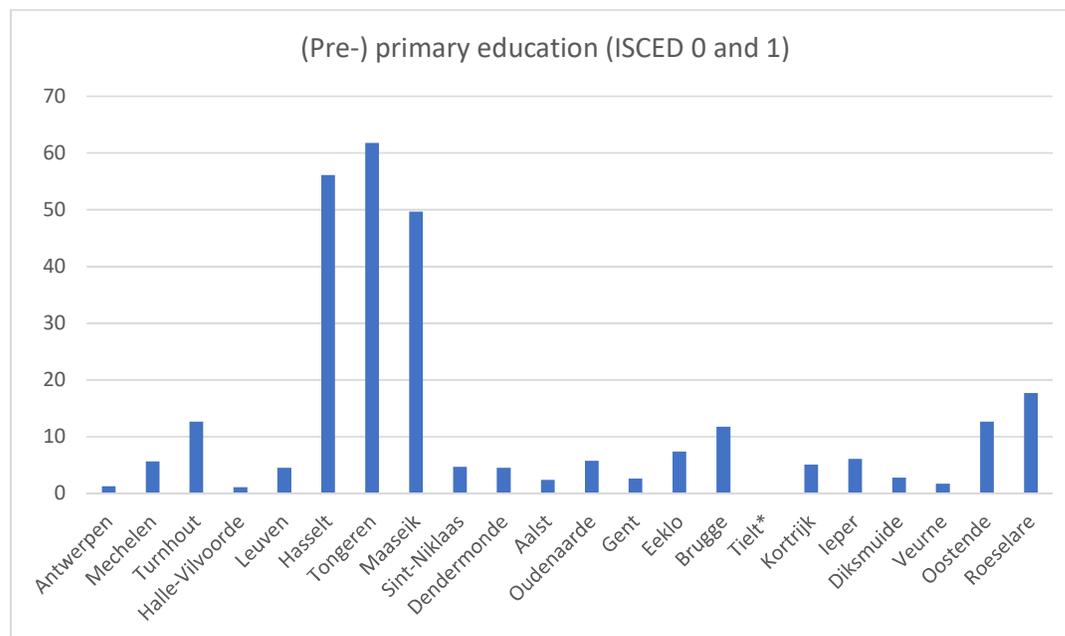
All stakeholders report a lack of resources for the professionalisation – this is not surprising, given the challenges the education system experiences when implementing innovations and the budget cuts that some stakeholders have been confronted with.

In sum, a sense of urgency for teachers CPL for quality education needs to be created at all levels: the level of: ‘the individual teacher’, ‘the school’, ‘the providers of professionalisation’, ‘the policymakers’, ... This will contribute to a strong teaching force.

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ANNEX 2: Tension ratios for each arrondissement

In this annex, we highlight the tension ratios for each arrondissement (see Chapter 1).



*No data available

Figure 2: Tension ratios by area (arrondissement) for teachers in (pre-) primary education (ISCED 0 and 1)

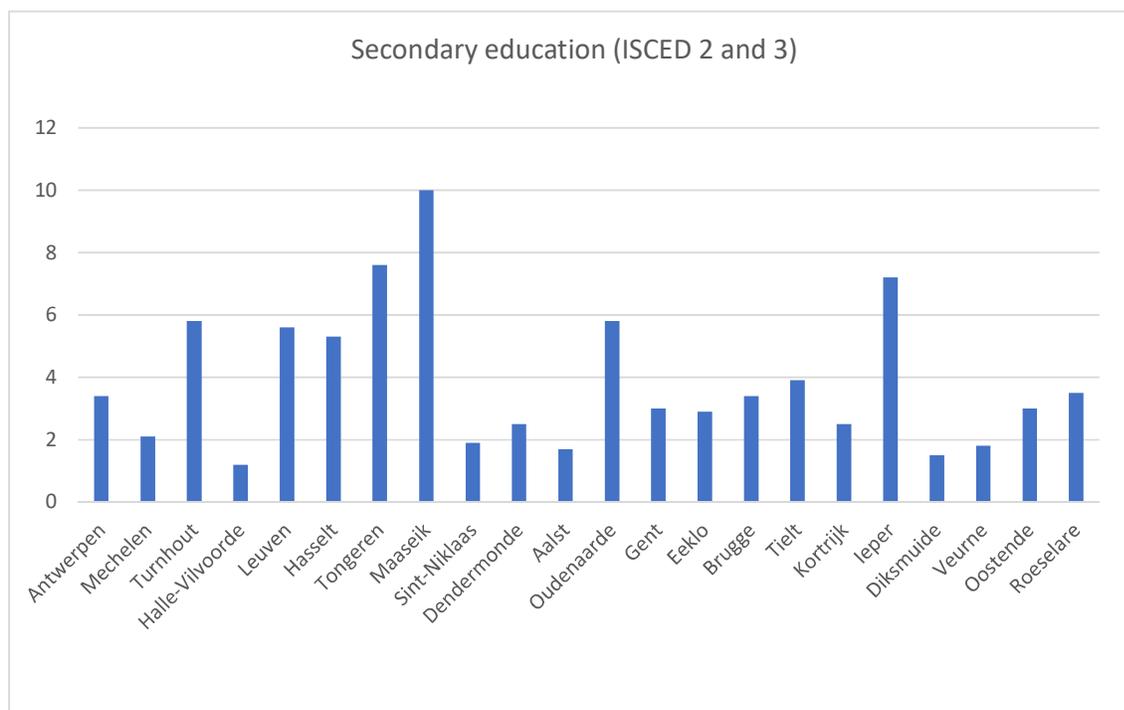


Figure 3: Tension ratios by area (arrondissement) for teachers in secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3)
Source: <https://www.vdab.be/trends/beroepen>; November 2019

ANNEX 4: Different communication channels to promote professional learning

Klasse is a multimedia communication platform that aims to increase the commitment of teachers, school leaders, parents and pupils in education through positive journalism. Klasse also shares information regarding seminars and possible professionalisation activities.

Through **KlasCement**, educational professionals and organisations inspire and support each other by sharing materials, practical experiences and questions. This creates an active professional network. Information regarding seminars and possible professionalisation activities is shared via this platform as well. In order to unite various actors and target groups, the government provides an instrument called 'the in-service training register', which can be consulted on KlasCement (see chapter 3). All organisations offering professional development activities tailored to schools can register and present their services. The government does not award a quality label to the organisations and their services. It has, however, developed a viewing guide that supports schools and teachers in their search for the appropriate organisation or specific training. Last year the overview page of the directory was consulted 12,664 times.

Canon Cultuurcel has several initiatives to communicate, raise awareness and professionalise teachers (in training) on cultural education. Examples are a network on reading at school, a network for cultural education for teacher education and 'culture days' for teacher in training. Additionally, they provide expert training in 'Cultuur in de spiegel' and organise a platform 'Cultuurkuur', where culture and school meet.

The macro-context refers to the way education systems work, education policies and reforms, the working conditions of teachers and (historical) visions of appropriate professional development.

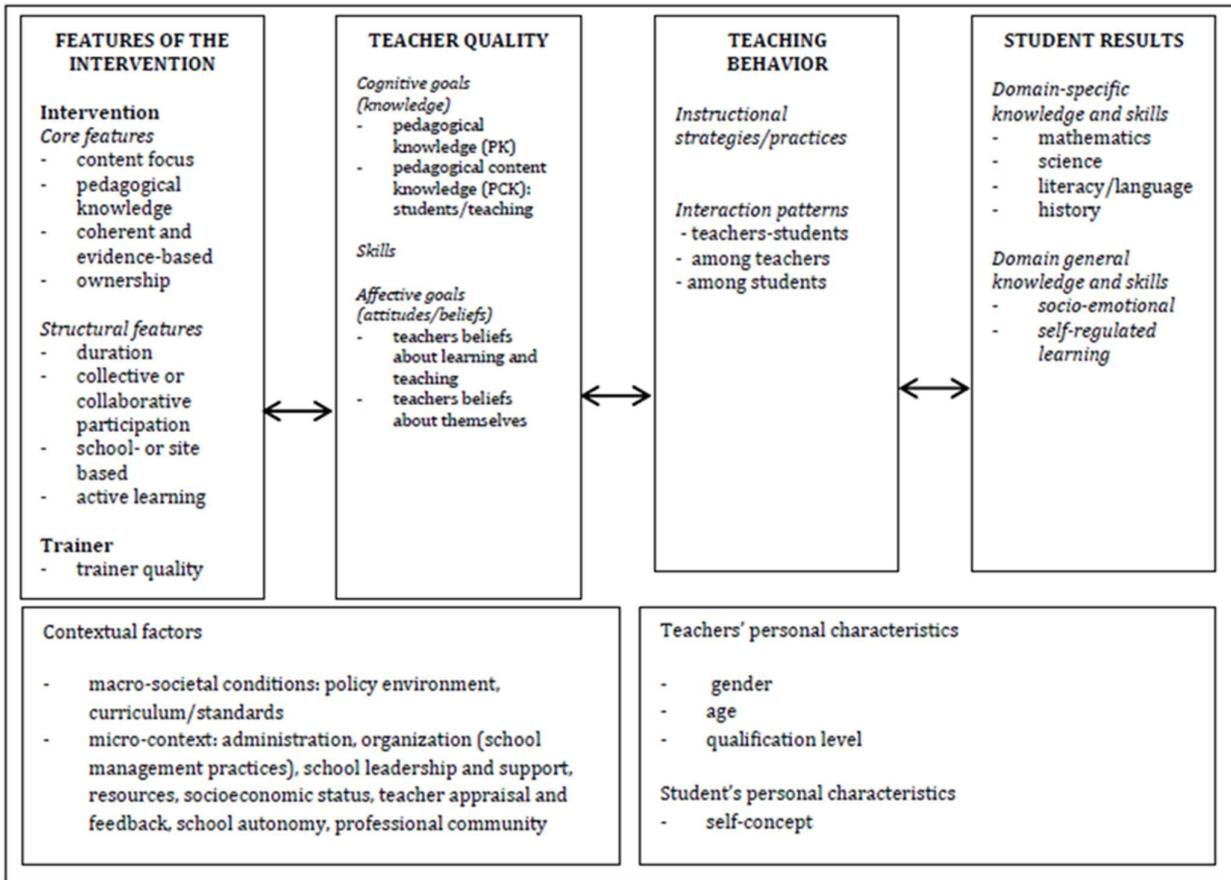


Figure 4: Refined conceptual framework for transfer effects of professionalisation initiatives.

ANNEX 6 : Digital CPL

This section provides information on the monitoring and conditions for digital CPL.

The ICT Monitor (Mictivo) analyses four indicators in primary and secondary schools: ICT infrastructure, ICT integration, competences, and perceptions regarding ICT use at school. The **survey** is taken by school leaders, teachers and pupils and gives an overview of the situation regarding ICT and use of new media in Flemish education pre-Covid-19. The [Mictivo survey](https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/monitor-voor-ict-integratie-in-het-vlaams-onderwijs-mictivo-2018) was conducted several times and the results of 2012 and 2017 can be compared (see <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/monitor-voor-ict-integratie-in-het-vlaams-onderwijs-mictivo-2018>).

In June 2020, the Department of Education and training conducted a short survey of 10 educational and private organisations that have provided a total of 797 webinars (March-July 2020) and reached 27,139 teachers. The findings provide an indicative and partial overview of the impact of the pandemic on the Flemish education system but they observed a specific evolution in the request of support and TPL during the different phases of the COVID crisis. At the beginning of the crisis (March 2020), most questions for CPL focused on the availability and technical use of concrete tools and platforms for distance learning. In the second phase (April-May 2020) more questions were asked on how to organise online live sessions. At the end of the crisis CPL topics most requested where on online collaboration.

During the Covid-19 crisis KlasCement (see chapter 1) was one of the organisations capable of **adapting to the new situation** and scaling up very quickly. This resulted in high performance indicators, incl. 22,000 new subscribers. KlasCement developed and provided information, examples of good practice and thematic files to various target groups. The webportal offered effective digital teaching resources (e-learning opportunities) in an accessible and structured way. The portal also has its own webinar platform.



ANNEX 7: List of abbreviations

ACOD	Algemene Centrale der Openbare Diensten	Socialist Teachers' Union
AGION	Agentschap voor Infrastructuur in het Onderwijs	Agency for Educational Infrastructure
AGODI	Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten	Agency for Educational Services
AHOVOKS	Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen	Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Allowances
ASO	Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs	General Secondary Education
BANABA	Bachelor na Bachelor	Bachelor after Bachelor
BAO	Basisonderwijs	Elementary Education
BO	Buitengewoon Onderwijs	Extraordinary Education
BSO	Beroepssecundair Onderwijs	Vocational Secondary Education
BuSO	Buitengewoon Secundair Onderwijs	Special Secondary Education
BVLF	Belgische Vereniging voor Leraren Frans	Belgian Association of Teachers of French
CANON	CANON Culture Cell	CANON Cultuurcel
CAO	Collectieve Arbeidsovereenkomst	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CBR	Country Background Report	Landenrapport
CLB	Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding	Pupil Guidance Centre
COC	Christelijke Onderwijs Centrale	Christelijke Onderwijscentrale
COV	Christelijke Onderwijsverbond	Christian Teachers' Union
CVO	Centrum Voor Volwassenenonderwijs	Centre for Adult Education
DBSO	Deeltijds Beroepssecundair Onderwijs	Part-time Vocational Secondary Education
DKO	Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs	Part-time Art Education
DHOS	Diploma Hogere Opvoedkundige Studiën	Diploma of Higher Education Studies
EPALE	Elektronisch Platform voor Volwasseneneducatie in Europa	Electronic Platform for people working in adult education
EVC	Eerder Verworven Competenties	Previously Acquired Competences
EVK	Eerder Verworven Kwalificaties	Previously Acquired Qualifications
ERK	Europees Referentiekader voor Moderne Vreemde Talen	European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
Federatie Onafhankelijke Pluralistische Emancipatorische Methodescholen	Federatie Onafhankelijke Pluralistische Emancipatorische Methodescholen	Federation of Independant Pluralistic Emancipatory Methodology schools

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