The State of Education in the Netherlands

Highlights from the 2013/2014 Education Report

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Foreword

In this document we report on the state of education in the Netherlands for the 2013/2014 academic year. Since 1817 we have reported annually on achievements in the education sector and points for improvement. The aim of the Inspectorate of Education is to contribute to the continuous improvement of the quality of education in the Netherlands. We will present The State of Education in The Netherlands to the Upper and Lower House, but the report is also, and particularly, intended for pupils, teachers, school principals and governors.

Freedom of movement

Over the last two centuries, views on education have changed considerably. One constant, however, has been the ongoing discussion about education. Rightly so: it is one of the most significant aspects of Dutch society.

The Dutch Constitution was amended nearly a hundred years ago, in 1917. Article 23, often summarised as the article defining the freedom of education, allows for a multiform education system with a high degree of autonomy for school governing boards. The Dutch education system is unique in this respect. The freedom provided demands a sense of responsibility on the part of school governors, principals and teachers as well as a large degree of self-awareness from schools. What do I want to achieve? What am I good at? What should I do better? We have seen an increase in self-awareness at schools and study programmes over the past year. Many fruitful initiatives are based on the inherent opportunities within the education system. There is growing interest in experimentation in education, and regulation and supervision often prove to offer more opportunity for this than anticipated.

The fact that there is no central, all-encompassing definition of education quality makes it all the more important that schools define their own ambitions. Good and excellent education has many facets. Ideas on good education are born in the dialogue between teachers, students, parents, governors, academics and society. With this Education Report, the Inspectorate seeks to nurture the dialogue on good education. Sharing information on the state of education increases our joint understanding of where the successes and challenges in education lie. This is not because we have a monopoly on truth – there is no single truth about education – but because our inspectors visit many schools and higher education institutions every year. This experience enables us to make a valuable contribution to the dialogue.

The state of education

Looking at developments in education over the 2013/2014 academic year, three things strike us.

Transitions and school careers

First of all, we notice that pupils' and students' perspectives are changing. Individual pupils or students make their own choices, plotting their own course within the possibilities the education system offers them. We see that pupils increasingly have to deal with selection procedures, more targeted study programme placements, and requirements to complete their study programmes more quickly. After that, they are less likely to start a higher-level programme. There seems to be a trend towards the middle levels in the education system. While an increasing range of excellence programmes is available, the effects are not yet apparent.

What does this mean for pupils, and for the country at large? Is this a natural reaction to years of ever growing numbers of graduates, or are we actually denying pupils and students opportunities to make the most of their school or academic careers?

These are questions which schools and study programmes can only answer if they are prepared to look beyond the boundaries between the various education sectors and, at the same time, to take a closer look at their own role. The Inspectorate will do the same. Only by working together will we be able to offer students and pupils the best possible school careers.

Focusing on quality

A second noticeable development is the increased focus, on the part of teachers, principals and governors, on quality and quality control, the results of which are also emerging in the classroom. In the 2013/2014 academic year, special secondary education in particular saw marked quality improvements. Schools and study programmes are also focusing more strongly on quality assurance with a view to maintaining education quality. It is good to see that efforts in this regard have increased, particularly in senior secondary vocational education.

Quality assurance becomes all the more interesting when, in addition to safeguarding quality, it also leads to better education. This happens when the focus on quality is prioritised, supported by quality assurance measures. Indeed, the result is often good or even excellent education. Ensuring that the focus on quality actually leads to improvements in the classroom remains a challenge for many schools and study programmes. This demands time, perseverance and continuous attention.

Large differences and professionalisation

Lastly, we are also struck by the substantial differences between the various schools and study programmes. These differences are apparent in all areas: in pupil motivation and satisfaction, the quality of lessons, pupil and student placement, success rates in further education and/or on the labour market, and job satisfaction among teachers. How can we encourage schools and study programmes to learn from each other rather than reinvent the wheel time and again? And when do these differences become unacceptable? What do we think of the huge differences between the various teacher-training programmes, for example, where satisfaction, turnover and alignment with the labour market vary considerably?

In day-to-day practice, we see many good schools and study programmes where both pupils and teachers are quite motivated. These schools and study programmes often combine a close-knit team and a good principal and/or governor. Many also have an open culture geared toward improvement, a shared vision, and a staffing policy to match. I would wish for everyone to attend or work at such a school.

This State of Education in the Netherlands provides insight into some of these differences. We believe that the public interest and the quality of education must remain paramount and should not be secondary to innovative ideals or visions. Indeed, it is where public interest and educational quality merge that we see excellent education and motivated pupils, students and teachers.

In conclusion

Education is in a constant state of flux. Our interest is caught by the various innovations that schools and study programmes are embracing and the types and methods of education they are willing to experiment with. Schools are increasingly distinguishing themselves in this regard and variety in education is growing. This is a welcome development which will offer greater freedom of choice and avoid mediocrity. Innovation also helps schools and study programmes develop into learning organisations. However, as collective stakeholders we must continue to assess what quality we consider acceptable and what we would like to improve. This is important as it will allow us to avoid inadequate responses in the face of new challenges, such as suitable education, citizenship education and demographic contraction. So let us share what works in classrooms and lecture halls, while also ensuring that the interests of pupils and students remain paramount. School boards and alliances could create the necessary conditions for this, but would also be well advised to seek collaboration inside and outside their own education sector. The Inspectorate is pleased to make an active contribution, as it will benefit the education provided to pupils and students.

Monique Vogelzang
Inspector-General of Education

Utrecht, 15 April 2015

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The state of education

Transitions and schools

Faster graduation, more targeted placement and fewer upward transfers

In recent years school careers have grown shorter. Pupils and students work through their programmes more quickly and need less and less time to reach their final achievement level. Fewer primary and secondary school pupils repeat a year. Improved success rates are also evident in senior secondary vocational education (MBO) and at research universities (WO). The shorter school careers can be explained in part by the fact that secondary schools and MBO institutions have become more effective at admitting pupils at their expected attainment level. In addition, schools and study programmes increasingly set selection and placement criteria. This has had a restrictive effect on transitions between and within sectors.

As a result, the diversity offered by secondary education is declining. Consequently, there are now fewer pupils in the basic vocational track of preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO-B) but also fewer pupils in pre-university education (VWO). Intake figures at research universities appear to be falling. In addition, after obtaining their diploma, more pupils are moving directly from preparatory secondary to senior secondary vocational education (i.e. VMBO to MBO) or from senior general secondary education (HAVO) to higher professional education (HBO). Upward transfers and diploma stacking are becoming less common among pupils and students.

Due in part to the economic climate, the alignment of education with the labour market has worsened for higher education and MBO graduates, as well as for newly qualified teachers.

One striking feature of all these developments are the huge differences between study programmes and between schools: differences in terms of intake, placement, chances of success and (labour market) prospects.

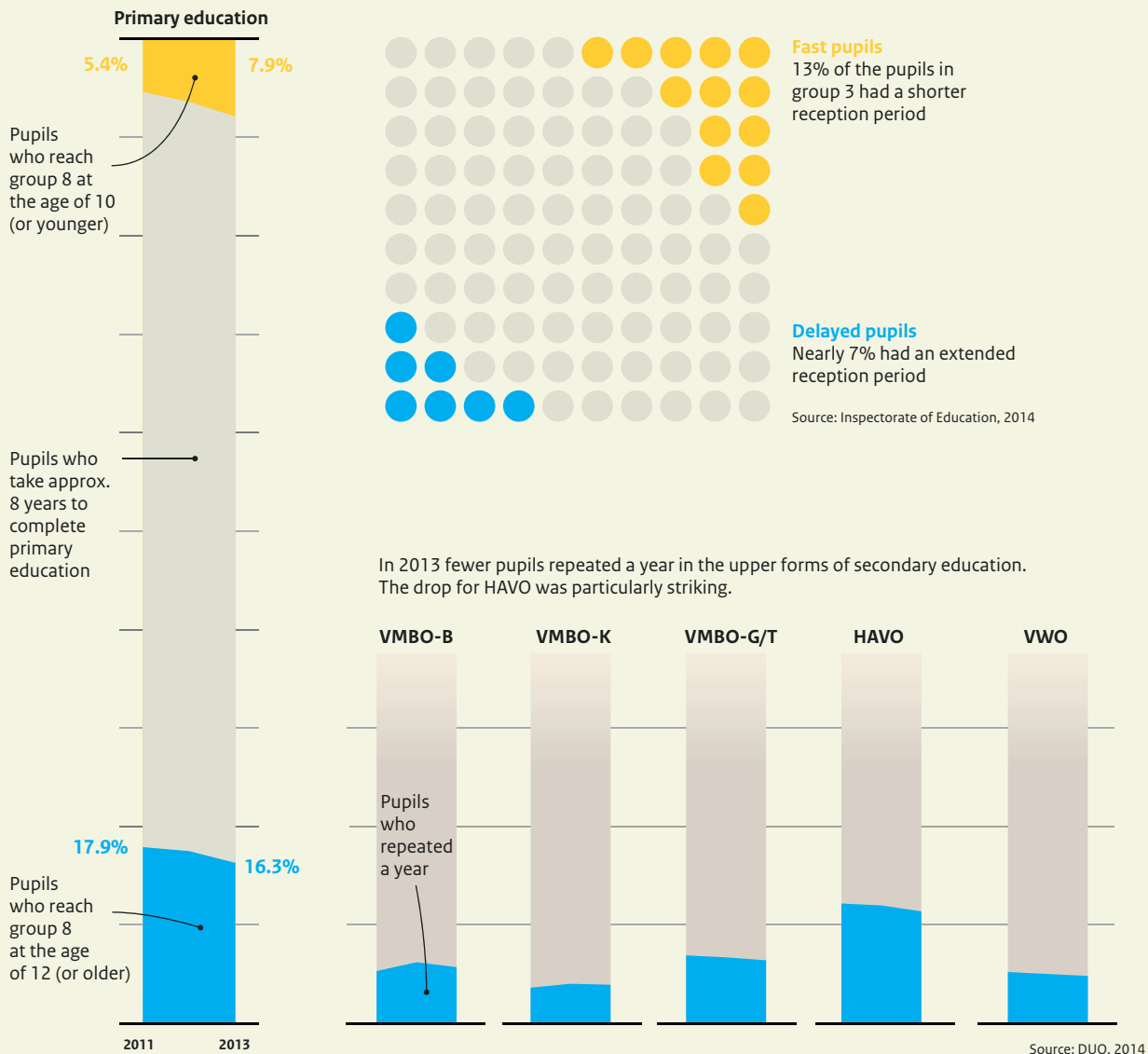## 1.1 Pupils and students finish education more quickly

Fewer pupils repeat a year • Pupils in the Netherlands repeat a year more often than in other countries[1] but the percentage is falling. Infographic 1 illustrates that the percentage of pupils delayed in finishing primary education fell from 18% in 2011 to 16% in 2013. More pupils move up to group 3 at the age of 5 and fewer pupils repeat a year in groups 5 to 8. The number of pupils who repeated a year also dropped in the senior years of secondary education in 2013. At HAVO level the percentage has been falling since 2012.

More selection in lower years of secondary education • The drop in the number of pupils repeating a year in secondary education is linked to stricter placement criteria and more selection in the lower years. The percentage of homogeneous transition classes is rising, and the past three years have seen more pupils in the lower years transfer down rather than up. For example, a quarter of all children with a HAVO recommendation transfer down to the combined/theoretical track of VMBO-G/T. The stricter placement criteria have resulted in the percentage of pupils moving to pre-university secondary education falling over the last two years.

Higher success rates for MBO • Success rates are also rising in MBO; ever more students obtain a diploma and the percentage of drop-outs continues to fall. Students also increasingly obtain a diploma that corresponds with the level of their prior education. Nearly half the diplomas awarded in 2013 (43%) were level 4 diplomas;

1 Vuuren, D. van, & Wiel, K. van der (2015). *Zittenblijven in het primair en voortgezet onderwijs. Een inventarisatie van de voor- en nadelen.* CPB Policy Letter 2015/01. The Hague: CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis.

Pupils finish school more quickly

Primary education

5.4% 7.9%

Pupils who reach group 8 at the age of 10 (or younger)

Pupils who take approx. 8 years to complete primary education

17.9% 16.3%

Pupils who reach group 8 at the age of 12 (or older)

2011 2013

Fast pupils
13% of the pupils in group 3 had a shorter reception period

Delayed pupils
Nearly 7% had an extended reception period

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2014

In 2013 fewer pupils repeated a year in the upper forms of secondary education. The drop for HAVO was particularly striking.

VMBO-B **VMBO-K** **VMBO-G/T** **HAVO** **VWO**

Pupils who repeated a year

Source: DUO, 2014

Infographic 1

this is one percentage point higher than in 2012. After achieving their MBO diploma, many students go on to study for an additional diploma at a higher level. However, we are seeing a decline in this direct transfer within MBO.

More appropriate placement in MBO • In all, 70% of the MBO students with a VMBO diploma are on a programme at a level commensurate with their prior education: 16% are studying at a lower level and 14% at a higher level. The percentage of students on programmes commensurate with their academic level is slightly higher than it was two years ago. In particular, students

with a combined/theoretical track diploma often start their MBO career at a lower level (25%). Students who enter a higher-level MBO programme are slightly less successful than students who study at or below their expected attainment level, and they also tend to drop out slightly more often after a year.

Large differences between placement criteria of MBO institutions • In MBO, appropriate placement depends on the domain and institution where a student attends a particular study programme. The percentage of students enrolled at a level appropriate to their prior education within any one domain can vary between 15% and 85%.

If I don't get any grades, why should I do my best for a subject that doesn't interest me?
(secondary school pupil)

Higher success rates in WO ● The success rates in research-oriented education (WO) continue to rise. Fewer students drop out and fewer students switch to a different study programme within the first year. The average duration of study is also decreasing. Students with a pre-university (VWO) diploma currently take around four years to complete their three-year study programme. The average study duration is now six months shorter than it was five years ago. However, students who previously achieved a diploma at a university of applied sciences increasingly take longer to complete a programme at a research university.

Lower success rates in HBO ● The success rates in higher professional education (HBO) continue to fall. While fewer students are dropping out than in previous years (as in WO), more students are deciding to switch programmes. Those who do graduate do so at the same pace as before: a full-time Bachelor's student takes around 4.5 years to obtain their degree certificate.

1.2 Transitions between schools and institutions

Transitions under pressure ● The higher success rates in many schools and institutions are placing pressure on student transitions between schools and institutions. Every transition within the system poses a risk for the pupil concerned and can result in an inefficient school career and suboptimal education results.[2] For every transition to a different sector, between a quarter and a third of the pupils concerned are placed at a level higher or lower than expected. While this may offer these pupils additional opportunities, in other cases opportunities seem to be lost.[3]

Transition from primary to secondary education ● During the transition from primary to secondary education, a quarter of the pupils do not enrol at the expected level of education: in year three, 15% are at a lower level and 10% are at a higher level than originally anticipated. Children of highly educated parents are more likely to receive a recommendation for higher-level secondary education. Several trends can be identified. Pupils are increasingly given a single-school recommendation at the end of primary school. The number of homogeneous transition classes is rising, and during the lower years of secondary school, more pupils transfer down rather than up.

Large differences between secondary schools with regard to placement ● Schools can differ considerably in terms of intake and placement. Some schools place pupils in a higher level than recommended, while other schools may place pupils almost a full level lower. Although the reasons for these differences are unclear, the Inspectorate has observed that schools that allow pupils to transfer up are a little more likely to have pupils repeat a year than schools that allow pupils to transfer down.

Transition primarily within special education ● Special secondary education (VSO) is growing. This is due partly to more pupils entering from mainstream education and partly to an increase in the number of pupils progressing from special primary education. In 2013/2014 fewer pupils progressed from special primary education to mainstream secondary education than in the previous year. Many VSO pupils choose an educational subject cluster and increasingly obtain a diploma, usually at VMBO level. Two fifths of the pupils subsequently progress to MBO or higher education.

Transition from MBO to HBO ● The percentage of students with a level-4 MBO diploma transferring to HBO had fallen in recent years, but increased in 2013. The transition is not always smooth; MBO students are initially less successful in higher professional education. Nearly twice as many post-MBO students as post-HAVO students drop out of a HBO programme. The number of MBO students that drop out has fallen, but not as sharply as for HAVO students. However, former MBO students that do successfully complete the first year subsequently do better than former HAVO students: they obtain their diploma more often and more quickly.
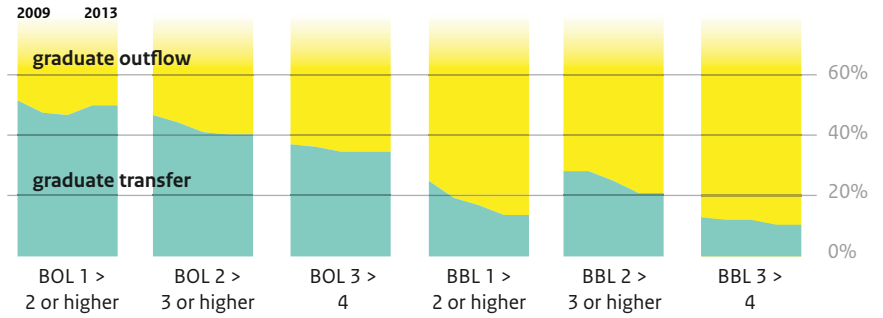
Success of MBO students in HBO ● The choice of HBO institution is an important one for MBO students. At some HBO institutions very few MBO students drop out during the first year, while at others nearly a third of the students stop within a year. The percentages of students that obtain a diploma also differ considerably between institutions, and there are clear differences between sectors: in Language and Culture, relatively few MBO students drop out after the first year and a relatively large number obtain their diploma in four years.

[2] Fettelaar, D., Leest, B., Eck, E. van, Verbeek, F., Vegt, A.L. van der, Jongeneel, M. (2013). *Selectiemechanismen in het onderwijs.* Nijmegen: ITS; Amsterdam: Kohnstamm Instituut; Utrecht: Oberon.
[3] Education Council (2014) *Overgangen in het onderwijs.* Advisory report. The Hague: Education Council.

Infographic 2b
Graduate transfer within MBO

The percentage of graduates that transfer within MBO is falling.

2009   2013

graduate outflow

graduate transfer

60%
40%
20%
0%

BOL 1 >
2 or higher

BOL 2 >
3 or higher

BOL 3 >
4
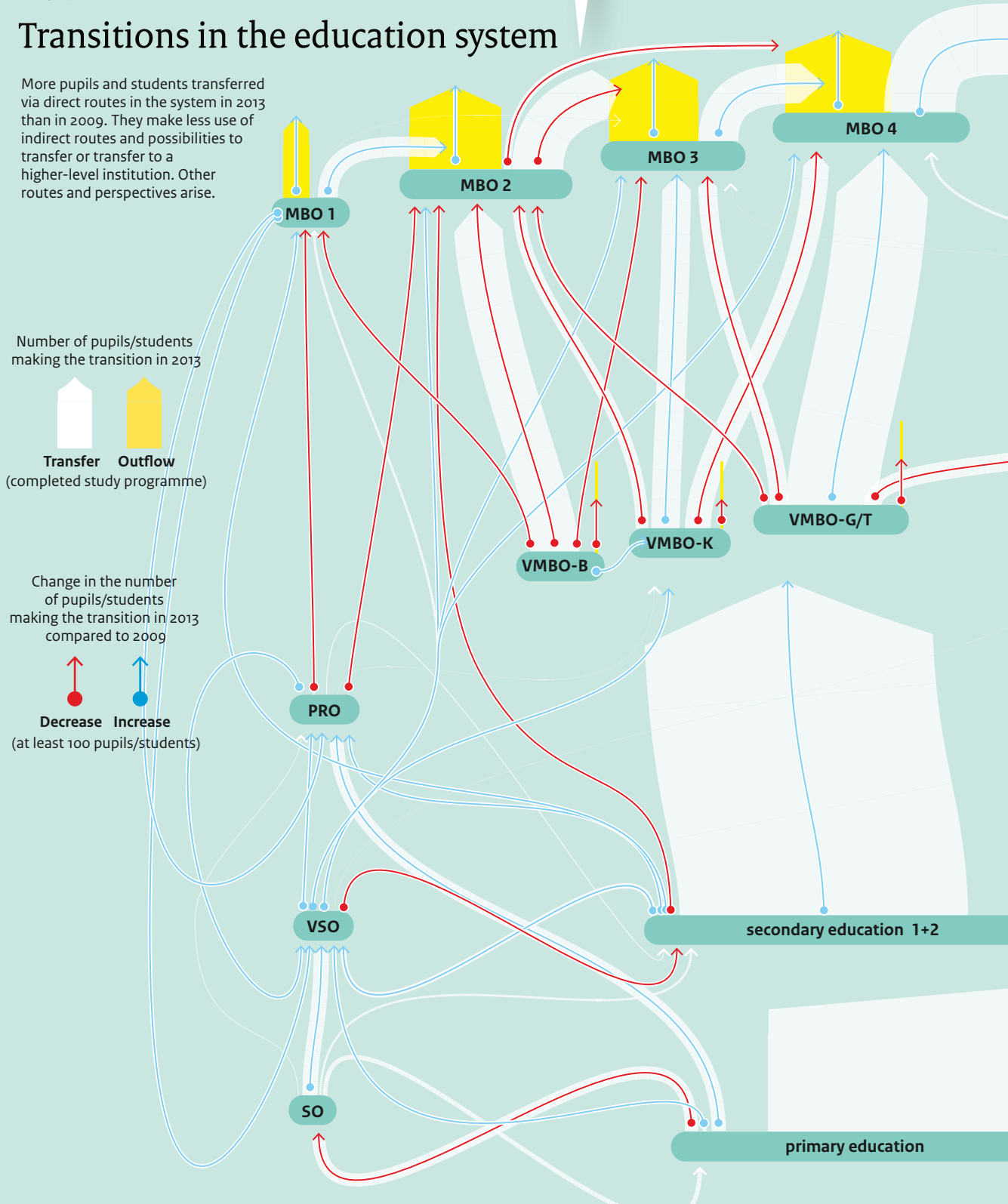
BBL 1 >
2 or higher

BBL 2 >
3 or higher

BBL 3 >
4

Source: OCW, 2014

Infographic 2a

Transitions in the education system

More pupils and students transferred via direct routes in the system in 2013 than in 2009. They make less use of indirect routes and possibilities to transfer or transfer to a higher-level institution. Other routes and perspectives arise.

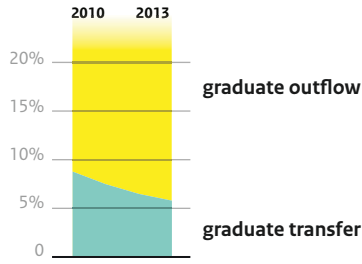Number of pupils/students making the transition in 2013

Transfer   **Outflow**
(completed study programme)

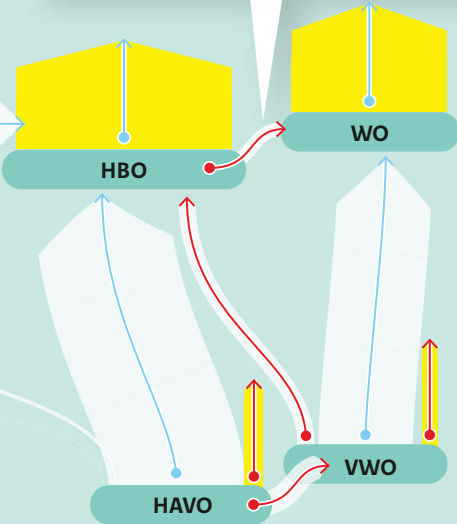Change in the number of pupils/students making the transition in 2013 compared to 2009

Decrease   **Increase**
(at least 100 pupils/students)

MBO 1
MBO 2
MBO 3
MBO 4

VMBO-B
VMBO-K
VMBO-G/T

PRO

VSO

secondary education 1+2

SO

primary education

Infographic 2c
Graduates transferring from HBO to WO

The percentage of students with an HBO diploma, except first-year graduates, that transfer directly to WO (Bachelor's and Master's) fell.
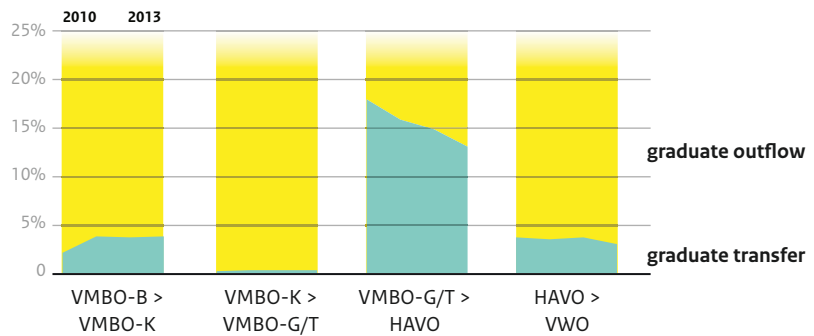
2010 2013

20%
15%
10%
5%
0

graduate outflow

graduate transfer

Source: DUO/OCW, 2015

HBO

WO

VWO

HAVO

Source: DUO / OCW, 2015

Infographic 2d
Graduate pupils transferring within secondary education

The percentage of pupils with a VMBO-G/T diploma who transfer up to HAVO fell significantly.

2010 2013

25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0

VMBO-B > VMBO-K | VMBO-K > VMBO-G/T | VMBO-G/T > HAVO | HAVO > VWO

graduate outflow

graduate transfer

Source: DUO / OCW, 2015

Infographic 2e
Shift in the distribution of pupils in the third year of secondary education

VMBO-G/T grows, VWO and VMBO basis fall

105 Index 2010 = 100

VMBO-G/T
HAVO
VMBO-K
100
VMBO-B
VWO
95

2010   2013

Source: OCW, 2015

15

The differences between the various institutions are largest in the Education sector.

Corresponding curriculum helps • HBO institutions achieve better results with post-MBO students who enrol in a subsequent study programme that corresponds with their prior education than with students who choose a study programme that does not continue on from their prior education. Institutions are more successful at preventing students who continue their studies in a related sector from dropping out within a year, and more students achieve a diploma after four years. This is in keeping with the new Higher Education (Quality in Diversity) Act [*Wet Kwaliteit in verscheidenheid hoger onderwijs*], which allows HBO institutions to refuse MBO students who choose an HBO study programme that does not match the MBO programme for which they obtained their diploma.

Additional admission criteria • The number of study programmes for which additional requirements or admission criteria apply has increased in all sectors. This applies for transfers within secondary education (where pupils are sometimes not allowed to repeat a year or to transfer up), the influx into MBO (following the abolition of the no-threshold intake at MBO level 2) and the influx into higher education (where intake is increasingly restricted by enrolment quotas). There are noteworthy differences in admission criteria between study programmes and institutions.

1.3 System trends

Dynamic system • The improved efficiency of schools and institutions and the pressure on transfers between schools and institutions are leading to shifts in the Dutch education system. These are shown in Infographic 2a.

Fewer VWO pupils • The distribution of pupils across the various types of secondary school is changing (see Infographic 2e). After having grown for decades, the percentage of pre-university pupils is now decreasing. The percentage of pupils in year 3 of the basic vocational track of VMBO has also been falling for several years. In contrast, the percentage of pupils on the combined/theoretical track has been rising.

Diploma stacking in secondary education not uniform • The percentage of pupils transferring from VMBO-G/T to HAVO after obtaining their diploma fell from 18.5% in 2009 to 13% in 2013 (see Infographic 2d). Transfers from HAVO to VWO have also fallen. Therefore, fewer VMBO-G/T and HAVO pupils continue secondary education. This does not apply for pupils on the basic

vocational track of VMBO, however. Indeed, the percentage of these pupils who transfer to a higher learning track is rising.

More transfers directly from secondary education • Upon achieving their secondary education diploma, more pupils transfer to a follow-on programme. For example, more pupils with a VMBO-G/T diploma transfer to MBO. A similar trend is evident among HAVO pupils: on obtaining their diploma a relatively large number of HAVO pupils transfer to HBO. Likewise, a larger percentage of successful VWO pupils transfer directly to university (and a slightly smaller percentage to HBO).

MBO-HBO and HBO-WO transfers • Transfers within MBO (see Infographic 2b) and from MBO to HBO had fallen over recent years. However, in 2013 more pupils obtaining a level-4 MBO diploma opted to transfer to HBO (39%) (see Infographic 2a). Before their MBO programme, most of these students had obtained a combined/theoretical VMBO diploma. Transfers from HBO to WO have been falling for several years (Infographic 2c). This may have something to do with the fact that since the 2013/2014 academic year, research universities have been allowed to set admission criteria for students with a first-year certificate from an HBO institution.

Lower intake into higher education • The growth of the intake into HBO and WO is stagnating. While for years intake figures of universities of applied sciences and research universities had been growing, they now appear to be levelling off. The number of enrolments peaked in 2013; 2014 was the first year we saw enrolments fall relative to the previous year. Nevertheless, the number of enrolments in 2014 was still higher than in 2012. 2013 saw the first drop in the number of enrolments for Master's degree programmes.

Fewer early leavers and drop-outs • Another noteworthy trend is the lower percentage of early school leavers. Most notably, the MBO drop-out rate fell significantly to 5.7% in 2012/2013. After having risen for many years, the drop-out rate for HBO and WO fell slightly in 2013. Around 16% of HBO students and 8% of WO students dropped out.
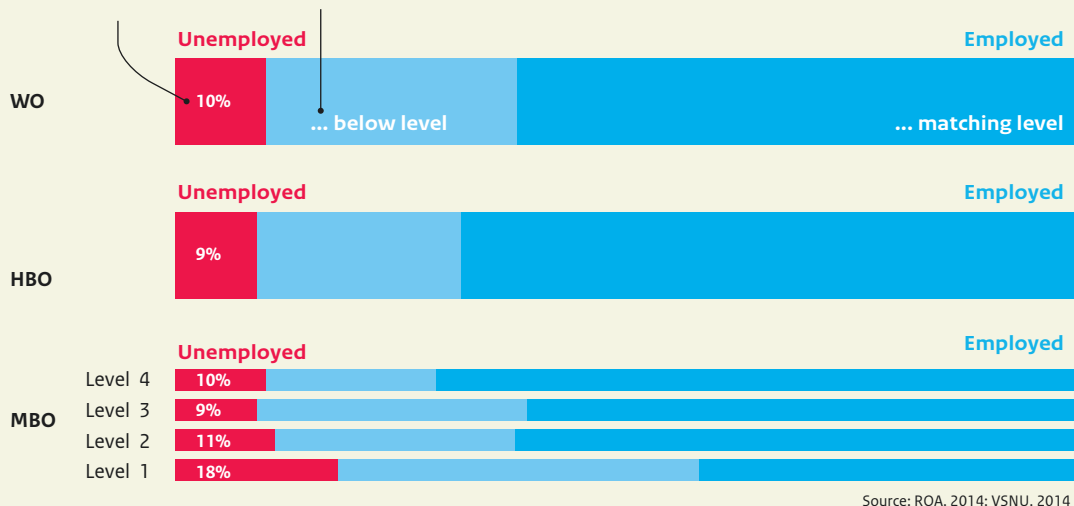
1.4 From study to work

Less effective alignment with the labour market • Certainly not all graduates are able to find work at the level for which they have been educated (see Infographic 3). The chances of finding a job, and of finding a job at the appropriate level, have fallen in all sectors, partly due to the poor economic climate.

From study to work

Proportion of graduates in 2011/2012 who were unemployed at the end of 2013.

Proportion of graduates who are employed but do not work at a level that matches their education.

	Unemployed		Employed
WO	10%	... below level	... matching level
HBO	9%		
MBO Level 4	10%		
Level 3	9%		
Level 2	11%		
Level 1	18%		

Source: ROA, 2014; VSNU, 2014

Infographic 3

Employment opportunities for VSO pupils under pressure • Rising unemployment makes it more difficult for special secondary schools (VSO) to find employers who are willing to provide work placements and to offer young people opportunities, in sheltered employment or otherwise. Special schools generally make a good effort to prepare their pupils for the labour market, through work placements, sector-oriented job training, their own job-training centres and work experience placements or by participating in initiatives set up by other schools or the municipality. An effective school network and a 'warm transfer' are key to the pupils' chances of finding a suitable job.

Fewer jobs for MBO students • The number of students graduating from MBO who are able to find a job has fallen. Approximately 90% of the students who graduated in 2011/2012 had a job within eighteen months, compared with 94% four years earlier. The Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) estimates that approx. 17% of the students who completed a school-based route (BOL), are still unemployed after eighteen months.[4] This is 7% higher than among graduates in 2007/2008. Students with a higher-level MBO diploma are more likely to find a job. Students who completed a work-based route (BBL) more often have a job than BOL students.

Rise in unemployment among higher education graduates • Unemployment figures are also rising among higher education graduates. Approximately 10% of the graduates in research-oriented education from 2011/2012 are currently out of work, while four years ago only 5% of those who graduated at that time were unemployed.[5] Among recent graduates from universities of applied sciences (HBO), unemployment rose from 6% in 2009/2010 to nearly 9% in 2011/2012.[6] These figures vary for the different sectors, as shown in Infographic 4a for HBO and WO. Declining employment has impacted students graduating from the HBO Behaviour and Society sector most severely; only half are employed at a level that corresponds with their study.

Students' labour market opportunities vary between institutions • Students from some universities of applied sciences are more likely to find employment than others in the same sector (Infographic 4b). In the Behaviour and Society sector, unemployment rates vary between 5% and 17%. The percentage of graduates who found a job at a level appropriate to their study programme also varies between institutions. These differences have increased since 2009.

4 ROA (2014). *Schoolverlaters tussen onderwijs en opleiding 2013.* Maastricht: Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA).

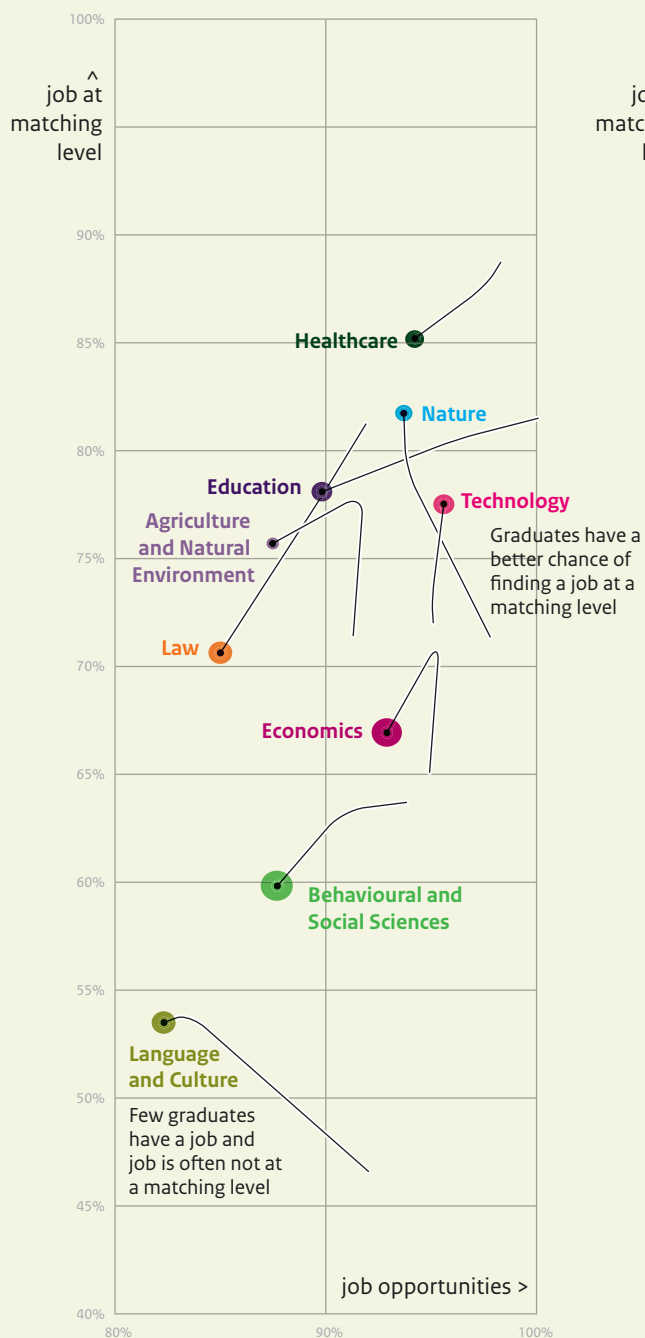5 VSNU (2014). WO-monitor 2013. Via: http://www.vsnu.nl/f_c_master studenten_arbeidsmarkt.html.

6 Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (2014). *Facts and figures. HBO-Monitor 2013: De arbeidsmarktpositie van afgestudeerden van het hbo.* The Hague: Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences.

Labour market opportunities vary between sectors...

Higher education graduates have more difficulty finding employment. This is reflected in the chance of finding a job and the level at which graduates are employed. Eighteen months after graduating, graduates do not always have a job or a job at a level that matches their education.

2007/ 2008   2011/ 2012

Sector scope

WO graduates

job at matching level

Healthcare

Nature

Education

Agriculture and Natural Environment

Technology

Graduates have a better chance of finding a job at a matching level

Law

Economics

Behavioural and Social Sciences

Language and Culture

Few graduates have a job and job is often not at a matching level

job opportunities >

Source: VSNU, 2014

HBO graduates

job at matching level

Education

Technology

Economics

Healthcare

Agriculture

Art, Language and Culture

Behavioural and Social Sciences

Fewer and fewer graduates have a job at a matching level and fewer are employed
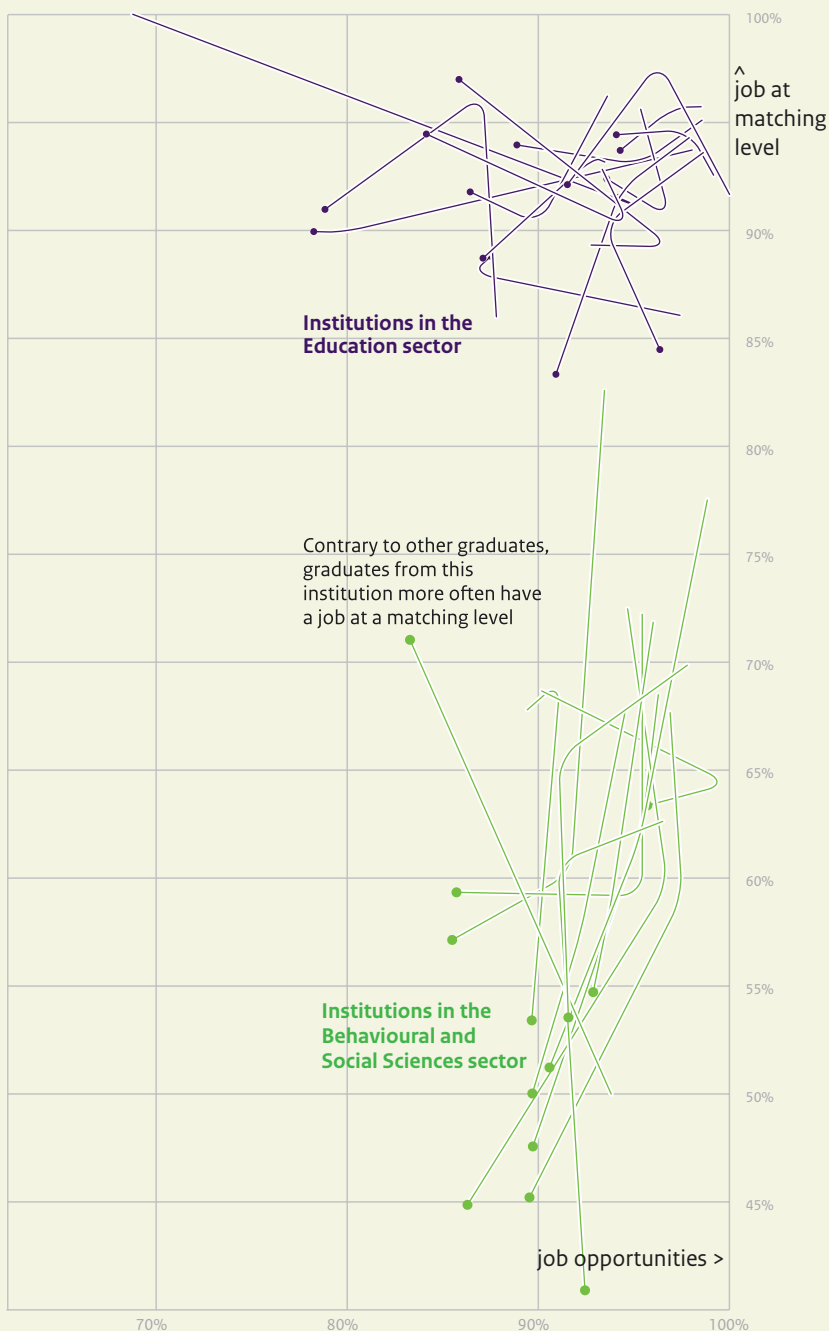
job opportunities >

Source: ROA, 2014

Infographic 4a

... and per institution

Graduates from some institutions within a particular sector are more likely to have a job than other graduates.

2007/ 2008	2011/ 2012

HBO graduates

Institutions in the Education sector

Contrary to other graduates, graduates from this institution more often have a job at a matching level

^ job at matching level

Institutions in the Behavioural and Social Sciences sector

job opportunities >

Source: ROA, 2014

Infographic 4b

Fewer jobs for recently qualified teachers • Employment opportunities for newly qualified teachers have also declined. This particularly applies for graduates from primary education teacher-training colleges (PABO). Of the PABO graduates in 2011/2012, 71% had a job within a month, compared to 87% three years earlier. Eighteen months after graduating 86% are employed, albeit sometimes in a different field. Many teachers graduating from a Bachelor's degree programme with a teaching qualification, first level, are likewise unable to find a job straight away, though most do have work within eighteen months. Circumstances are better for graduates with a teaching qualification for secondary education, second level. They are more likely to find a job commensurate with their study programme straight away.

1.5 In conclusion

Learning from differences • A smooth transition from one type of education to another improves pupils' and students' chances of obtaining a diploma. Across the system, however, pupils may end up somewhere very different than was initially expected. This may work out very well for some pupils as if offers them an opportunity to achieve a higher qualification, or perhaps because it avoids them having to push themselves to the limit. The majority of pupils and students transferring to a higher level do manage to graduate at that level. However, the performance of the different schools, institutions, domains and sectors in this respect is remarkably divergent. Their admission and placement policies as well as the education and guidance offered influence pupils' school careers significantly.[7] This calls for comparison with other schools and programmes as well as regular evaluation of the institutions' own policies.

More efficiency but pressure on transitions • Schools and institutions are seeking to make efficiency improvements, increasing the pressure on the transitions between schools and institutions. This is not detrimental to the final achievement levels for VMBO pupils and MBO students, which have continued to increase. It is apparently detrimental to HAVO, VWO and WO, however: the proportion of VWO diplomas in secondary education is declining and higher education intake levels are also evening out.

[7] See also Wolf, Inge de (2014). *Pak een hamer en doe mee! Onderzoek naar het onderwijssysteem in de Academische Werkplaats Onderwijs*. Inaugural lecture on 9 October 2013, Maastricht University.

Learning achievements and motivation

Learning achievements stable, motivation below average

Dutch pupils are highly educated and perform well compared to pupils in other countries. Performance levels have been stable over recent years. While relatively few pupils have low achievement levels compared to other countries, there are also relatively few exceptionally high-performing pupils.

At school, pupils develop the social and societal competencies that they need to associate and communicate with others. In this way, education helps to promote active citizenship and social integration. The aspect of social quality requires ongoing focus. There is a wide range of education on offer but there is little insight, as yet, into the results and the effectiveness of the various activities. Primary education is at the forefront in this respect; more and more schools in this segment do have insight into social rewards.

Stakeholders throughout the education sector, including teachers and pupils, regard a lack of motivation to learn as a pressure point. The greatest lack of motivation can be seen in secondary education and the general subjects of professional education. Schools that do have well motivated pupils characteristically have high-quality principals and teaching staff, often in combination with a culture strongly geared toward improvement and a flexible approach to organising their curricula and teaching activities.

2.1 Learning achievements: stable

General achievement level: satisfactory to good •
The Dutch are good at reading, maths and problem solving.[8] Dutch pupils also perform well compared with pupils from other countries. While relatively few pupils have low achievement levels, there are also few exceptionally high-performing pupils.[9]

Performance in primary education: stable •
Performance levels in reading and maths at the end of primary school have been more or less stable in recent years.[10] Pupils' maths and reading skills are of the same standard as they were last year. Only their vocabulary appears to have declined somewhat. They do have more competencies however by the end of primary school than they did when this was first monitored seven years ago. The Netherlands has relatively few pupils with poor reading or maths skills and their number appears to be falling.

Interim performance levels: improved • While in recent years final achievement levels in primary education have stabilised, pupils' interim performance levels rose during the most recent academic year – especially at larger schools. Schools are devoting more attention to improving interim performance levels in language and maths. Pupils and parents can also be seen to focus more on improved results during interim tests, especially tests which influence the transition to secondary school.

[8] Buisman, M., Allen, J., Fouarge, D., Houtkoop, W. & Velden, R. van der (2013). *PIAAC: Key competencies for life and employability. Results of the Dutch Survey 2012.* ´s-Hertogenbosch: Centre of Expertise for Vocational Education and Training (ECBO).

[9] Kordes, J., Bolsinova, M., Limpens, G., & Stolwijk, R. (2013). PISA Results 2012. *Practical knowledge and competencies of 15-year-olds. The Dutch results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in the field of mathematics, science and reading in 2012.* Arnhem: Cito.

[10] Hemker, B.T. & J.J. van Weerden (2015). *Jaarlijks Peilingsonderzoek naar het Onderwijsniveau Peiling van de rekenvaardigheid en de taalvaardigheid in jaargroep 8.* Arnhem: Cito.

Secondary school examination marks • In 2012 and in 2013, when the amended pass/fail rule came into force, secondary school pupils achieved higher marks for their national examination. In 2014 the marks for HAVO and VWO fell slightly but were still higher than before the legislative changes came into effect. Having increased for several years, the pass rate for HAVO and, more markedly, for VWO fell in 2014. The proportion of pupils in HAVO and VWO exam classes who do not sit examinations is also increasing. The pass rate for VMBO pupils continues to rise. The number of pupils in exam classes of the VMBO basic vocational track who sit examinations has also increased.[11]

Maths tests in VO and MBO • Secondary school pupils sat the obligatory maths tests for the first time in 2014. The pass rate for VWO pupils was nearly 90%, but for other school types it was significantly lower: between 40 and 60%. Remarkably, fewer HAVO pupils passed their test than pupils in the combined/theoretical track of the VMBO. The differences within HAVO are considerable: 82% of the pupils in the Nature and Technology subject cluster passed, compared with just 12% for the Culture and Society subject cluster. There were also differences between the subject clusters among VWO pupils.[12] The differences between MBO pupils were likewise considerable. At level 4, a narrow majority of students passed the maths test; at levels 2 and 3 roughly third a passed.

Maths lessons • Schools and institutions are working hard to shape maths education. The organisation of maths teaching is an ongoing process at many VO schools and MBO programmes. Schools and departments are investing in methods and in the professionalisation of teachers, but the speed with which they do so varies. The differences between groups of pupils and students do not seem to be taken into account sufficiently and the quality of the lessons varies considerably. Effective coordination between VMBO and MBO requires the schools to cooperate in this respect.

2.2 Social rewards

Social quality • The social quality of schools is an essential component of education quality. Successful social development is vital to pupils' lives going forward and is linked to education success, opportunities on the labour market and avoidance of delays and drop-out.[13] At school, pupils develop the social and societal competencies which they need to associate and communicate with others. This is why promoting active citizenship and social integration is a statutory task of the education system. Social quality is also essential for a school to function properly. A positive climate at school is beneficial to learning.

Citizenship • The vast majority of schools promote citizenship in compliance with the minimum requirements. The material is provided in different ways, often incorporated into subjects that are suitable for this purpose, in projects or through excursions and in corresponding teaching practices. In many cases, the schools' efforts in this respect still lack structure, with only a limited focus on clearly defined learning targets. The organisation of teaching is often inexplicit in this respect and its further development is a slow process.

Societal diversity • As an element of social and community education, schools also devote attention to the diversity of Dutch society. Most schools highlight to the various kinds of diversity (e.g. cultural, ethnic, religious and sexual) at least several times a year, and often every month or week.

Social rewards • While schools generally indicate that they have a good idea of the rewards of education in the social sphere, many do not actually have any objective data to support this. Primary education is an exception in this respect; in recent years there has been a rapid increase in the number of schools that collect such information. Approximately two in every three primary schools have standardised data on their pupils' social competencies.
There is very little evidence of this at present in secondary education. Teaching practices are primarily governed by broad intentions without any clear insight into whether the education provided meets the pupils' learning requirements.

[11] DUO (2014). *Examenmonitor VO 2014*. Zoetermeer: DUO.
[12] The Board of Examinations [College voor Toetsing en Examens] (2014). *Tussenrapportage centraal ontwikkelde examens MBO en Rekentoets VO, 2013–2014. Introduction of central testing and examination reference levels for Dutch language and maths.* Utrecht: The Board of Examinations [College voor Toetsing en Examens] (2014).
[13] Dijkstra, A.B. (2012). *Sociale opbrengsten van het onderwijs*. Inaugural lecture on 14 June 2012, University of Amsterdam.

> **I hope that every pupil has a personal motivation of some kind, but it is up to the teacher to bring it out.**
> (secondary school teacher)

2.3 Motivation is lagging

Lack of motivation • Compared with pupils in other countries, Dutch pupils have little motivation to learn. A lack of motivation can result in them having to repeat a year, transferring down to a lower level of education or leaving school without any qualifications. Several studies have revealed a strong connection between motivation and educational performance.

Less satisfied with teacher motivation • Approximately 40% of teachers in lower secondary school education feel unable to motivate uninterested pupils. Compared with their colleagues in other countries, Dutch teachers' scores on this point are poor.[14] Even pupils who are otherwise positive about their teachers judge their motivational skills less favourably. Asked 'Are you satisfied with whether and how your teachers motivate you?', 42% of secondary school pupils responded positively, 19% negatively and the rest were neutral.[15] Responses in higher education were similar; less than half the students are satisfied about the inspiration they receive from their lecturers.

Motivation in primary and secondary education • Pupil engagement and motivation vary for the different sectors. Primary school pupils are often actively engaged, and only insufficiently engaged in one in every ten lessons. In large groups, i.e. classes of thirty or more, the level of engagement may be lower. Generally speaking, the levels of engagement at secondary schools are lower than at primary schools: there is insufficient engagement in 18% of secondary school lessons. There are no differences between the various subjects, but VWO and HAVO pupils are more motivated than VMBO-G/T pupils.

Motivation in special (secondary) education • Social and emotional problems can greatly influence the engagement of pupils in special (secondary) education. Various school-related factors have a positive effect on pupils' motivation: the favourable (ortho)pedagogical climate, task focus on the part of teachers, goal-oriented practical lessons, small groups and the motivational role of the mentor. Teachers can further enhance pupil motivation during theory lessons by, for example, tailoring the lessons to suit the pupils' specific learning needs.

Motivation in MBO • Students are more motivated to learn vocational subjects than more general subjects such as Dutch or maths. Lessons which require structured cooperation between students also lead to more engagement. We often see lower levels of engagement when lessons are not commensurate with students' level and interests.

2.4 In conclusion

From average to excellent • Over the past years, pupil and student performance levels have remained stable. Is that good enough? Or is there space for improvement, and perhaps for excellence? In any event, the range in programmes being offered to excellent pupils and students is increasing. This will result in greater differentiation and, in turn, in more motivated pupils and students.

Good examples • There are good examples of schools and departments where pupils are more motivated than at other schools. In many cases, these are schools that constantly seek to develop and improve, and where the teachers and principals make pupils realise that they come to school to learn. These schools have teams of motivated teachers, often under an inspiring team leader, head teacher or a principal with a strong background in education.

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[14] Boom, E. van der, & Stuivenberg, M. (2014). *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). National Report Netherlands.* Client: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science [S.l.: s.n.].

[15] LAKS (2014). LAKS monitor 2014. *The Student Satisfaction Survey for students in secondary education.* Nijmegen: ResearchNed; Amsterdam: LAKS.

Quality and improvement culture

A culture geared toward improvement: more quality guarantees

Over recent years, teachers, principals and school boards have greatly improved their quality control and assurance. The efforts to improve study success are beginning to bear fruit, and there are signs that lessons are indeed improving. The quality of education is better at schools and study programmes with effective quality assurance.

Most schools have insight into key developments at their institutions and have implemented a quality control system to help them understand these developments. This is a major step forward and is most evident in senior secondary vocational education (MBO). A dynamic culture geared toward improvement and better education often develop at schools and study programmes that use a quality control system to improve the lessons as well as the quality of their respective institutions. They offer good quality and their pupils enjoy going to school.
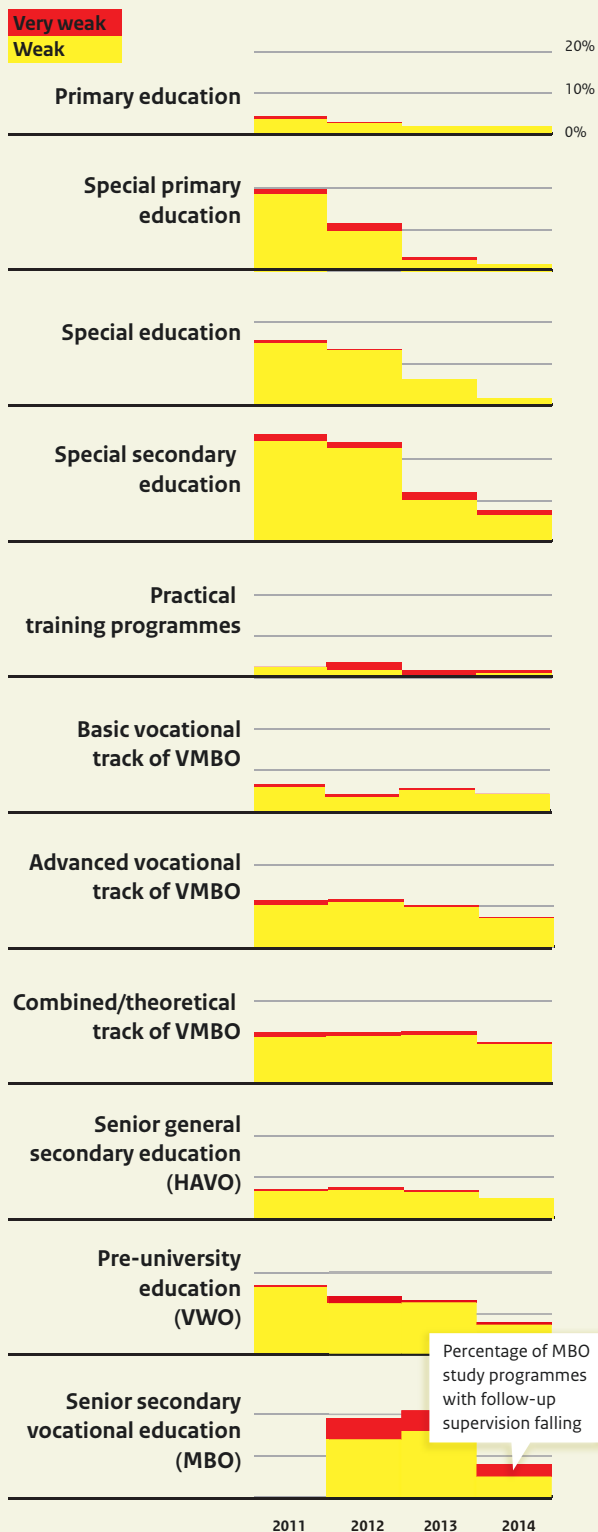
Sometimes, however, quality assurance is restricted to general matters only and fails to generate actual improvements in the classroom. The schools concerned do not draw on the acquired insights to improve their quality, preferring instead to use simple, measurable indicators and external accountability as management tools. Schools that do succeed to improve quality in the classroom often have a culture geared toward improvement in combination with a good team. Quality assurance at these schools is also linked to the professionalisation of teachers and principals.

3.1 Quality control and assuring the quality

Fewer (very) weak schools • Many schools and institutions seek to improve their quality. They have ever more insight into their pupils' or students' needs and future careers. Schools and institutions increasingly use information on pupils and students to gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of their own education, and make improvements accordingly. Partly as a result of this, the percentage of weak and extremely weak schools and study programmes has dropped sharply in most sectors over the past years (see Infographic 5). The marked decrease in poorly performing special secondary schools (VSO) in recent years is particularly striking.

Greatest improvements in MBO • Quality assurance is improving in practically every sector. Schools and institutions with effective quality assurance have a clear idea of any weaknesses and, consequently, of what improvements are needed. MBO institutions, in particular, have made significant progress in terms of embedding quality assurance. In 2014, twice as many MBO institutions and programmes had effective quality assurance as in previous years (see Infographic 6). Boards attach more importance to quality assurance and conduct internal and external audits. They are also more aware of what the Inspectorate takes into consideration when assessing quality assurance. Developments are slower in other sectors, where over the past few years only certain elements have been improved. Primary schools have been able to embed quality control more effectively, for example, but there have been few developments in other areas.

Fewer (very) weak schools/ study programmes

Very weak
Weak

Primary education

Special primary education

Special education

Special secondary education

Practical training programmes

Basic vocational track of VMBO

Advanced vocational track of VMBO

Combined/theoretical track of VMBO

Senior general secondary education (HAVO)

Pre-university education (VWO)

Senior secondary vocational education (MBO)

Percentage of MBO study programmes with follow-up supervision falling

20%
10%
0%

2011   2012   2013   2014

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2014

Infographic 5

Quality assurance may be a problem ● Quality assurance improvements are not always visible. Genuine quality assurance, i.e. completing and using the quality cycle to realise improvements, could be strengthened in many schools. For example, those concerned fail to comply with quality assurance arrangements or procedures, or the arrangements may not apply for certain key elements, such as examinations and teacher quality. There is room for improvement in this area at schools and study programmes in all sectors (also see Infographic 6). At present, quality-based management is insufficiently utilised and embedded, and tends to offer insufficient benefit to pupils. In MBO quality assurance is relatively weak when it comes to the quality of examinations. Note that it is not always clear why quality assurance works effectively at some schools and less so at others. The sense of urgency, support base and the qualities of the school principal are all key success factors in this regard.

Quality control primarily at school level ● Over the past few years, the improvement of quality care focused primarily on the school or study programme levels. Schools and study programmes invested mostly in quality control systems which they subsequently used as management instruments to assess their own quality and to initiate improvement measures. Schools and study programmes cannot make real improvements unless they are able to evaluate their own quality thoroughly and systematically. This calls for more than collecting data; it also means drawing the right conclusions and incorporating them into school policy. While many schools already do this competently, it is an approach that all schools should embrace. VSO in particular would benefit.
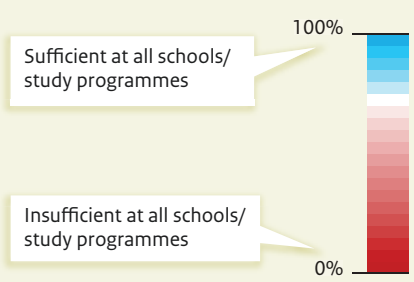
From quality assurance to improvement culture ● School principals and governors have increased their focus on quality, which has led to better quality assurance. At the same time, school principals and governors are more aware of the Inspectorate's requirements with regard to quality control and quality assurance. They therefore aim for adequate quality assurance. Some school principals and governors are more ambitious and are opting for a permanent culture geared toward improvement. These schools and institutions use quality assurance as a means of achieving or maintaining good or excellent education.

Quality control and quality assurance

Primary education

	2012	2013	2014
Insight into education demand of the population	86	84	87
Evaluation of results	75	77	81
Evaluation of learning process	68	65	68
Structured improvement activities	86	85	86
Quality assurance of learning process	77	77	85
Accountability to stakeholders	88	88	87

100%

Sufficient at all schools/ study programmes

Insufficient at all schools/ study programmes

0%

Secondary education

	2013	2014
Evaluation of study success	93	94
Goal-oriented approach towards study success	79	79
Evaluation of educational process	72	81
Goal-oriented approach towards educational process	88	82
Quality assurance of educational process	48	46

Special secondary education

2014	
85	Insight into education demand of the population
44	Evaluation of results
26	Evaluation of cross-curricular learning
61	Evaluation of learning process
43	Evaluation of educational support
85	Structural improvement activities
52	Quality assurance of learning process
67	Accountability to stakeholders
89	Quality assurance of assessments

Quality assurance has improved considerably in MBO.

Senior secondary vocational education (MBO)

	2012	2013	2014
Quality area Quality assurance	27	28	53
Focus	54	66	88
Planning	49	68	89
Information	85	94	100
Continuity	93	93	96
Assessment	46	53	75
Monitoring	63	73	96
Evaluation	50	53	75
Improvement and embedding	42	36	60
Improvement-oriented approach	59	47	74
Promotion of expertise	95	90	99
Embedding	49	39	67
Dialogue and accountability	91	87	93
Internal	94	90	97
External	93	94	97

Special education
Statistics for special education in 2013 reflect a similar situation as for special secondary education.

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2014

Infographic 6

Quality control • To determine whether quality control at a school or institution meets the required standard, the Inspectorate assesses certain elements of the quality control system. For example, it assesses the extent to which:

- the school systematically evaluates success rates;
- the school adopts a goal-oriented approach towards improving success rates;
- the school systematically evaluates the educational process;
- the school adopts a goal-oriented approach towards improving the educational process;
- the school warrants the quality of the educational process.

In my view the pupil's voice is essential and I believe every teacher should be open to feedback from pupils.

(primary school teacher)

3.2 Connection between quality assurance and the quality of education

Indications of improvements in the classroom • The evaluation cycle is penetrating the system further and has reached the level of teachers and teams. Efforts to improve success rates, for example, are becoming more and more common in both primary and secondary education. In particular, the extent to which primary schools systematically monitor and analyse pupils' progress and the effects of the support provided is more often considered satisfactory than was previously the case.

Secondary schools too are increasingly monitoring pupils' performance systematically. They are also increasingly setting targets aimed at preventing pupils from lagging behind. The improvements are particularly visible at the school level and have not yet resulted in actual improvements in all of the teaching provided. However, the practice of differentiation has slightly increased among primary school teachers compared with previous years. In MBO, the tailored approach to monitoring pupil progress has developed positively over the years.

From system improvement to team and class improvement • Fully implementing improvements so that they reach the classroom and the actual teaching remains a challenge. This calls for the correct interpre-

tation of information and the implementation and evaluation of improvement measures. This applies to all sectors. One interesting example is the rise in the number of lessons observed by internal support coordinators and team leaders in special (secondary) education.

MBO: better education thanks to quality control • School boards in MBO are increasingly implementing quality assurance. In MBO, quality control at the level of individual programmes is often linked to quality assurance at the institutional level. If institutions plan, monitor, evaluate and improve, their study programmes will often do the same, resulting in better education for students. This is also reflected in the higher success rates. Adequate quality assurance also safeguards the quality of examinations.

Relationship between quality assurance and quality of education • Schools and institutions that implement a full quality control cycle (monitoring, analysis, evaluation, target-setting and accountability) and have embedded that cycle, also have a higher quality educational process. The quality of lessons and pupil support more often meet requirements at such schools. This applies to special secondary schools as well as to primary and secondary schools. The key issue in the former sector is the lack of quality control at weak and very weak schools. These schools must learn to set concrete, measurable targets commensurate with the educational and support needs of their pupils.

3.3 In conclusion

Improvement culture • The strong management focus on quality is a positive development as it places more emphasis on educational quality. If this is underpinned by a shared culture geared toward improvement, the quality of the education will also improve, with schools and study programmes often becoming good or excellent. This motivates pupils and teachers alike.

Completing the quality control cycle • Over the past few years, school principals have greatly improved their insight into the quality of their institutions. However, the challenge is to apply this information in efforts to improve all aspects of education. At schools and study programmes that implement a full quality control cycle and have a quality assurance system in place, teachers and principals will further develop the quality themselves. They use the information to their advantage, to learn from it and realise further improvements. Their insight into strengths and weaknesses is beneficial not only to further development, but also to teacher professionalisation and to assessment and examination policy.

Learning from what works • The Inspectorate hopes that over the coming years, more schools and study programmes will be able to demonstrate how focusing on quality contributes to a shared culture geared toward improvement and that more schools will become learning organisations. Schools and study programmes where this is already the case may expect more explicit appreciation from the Inspectorate. We also aim to help by sharing good examples.

Teachers

Professionalisation of teachers and staffing policy

For many teachers, the teacher-training programme is the first stage of their career. The various teacher-training programmes differ significantly, for example in terms of student satisfaction and turnover. Special attention should be paid to the transition from teacher-training to teaching a class: important factors during the early stages are good supervision, room for further development and suitable groups of pupils or students. As teachers raise their standards of professionalisation during the course of their career, feedback and a good staffing policy become crucial. We see some very distinct differences between schools in this respect.

Pupils and students benefit from education tailored to their stage of development, and teacher-pupil interaction is very important in that respect. Some teachers struggle with competencies such as differentiating, providing feedback and motivating pupils. Teacher-training programmes also differ considerably as regards the extent to which they train their students in these competencies, and newly qualified teachers often struggle to further develop these skills during their first years of teaching. We did identify some good examples at schools that maintain contact and collaborate with teacher-training programmes, and where schools and/or school boards have good staffing policy in place.

Huge differences between schools are evident in respect of job satisfaction, absenteeism and teacher turnover. Some schools have highly motivated teachers who play an active part in creating attractive education. At most of these schools, both teachers and principals recognise the importance of professionalisation. They have a good staffing policy in place and the teachers form close-knit teams whose members share a common educational vision.

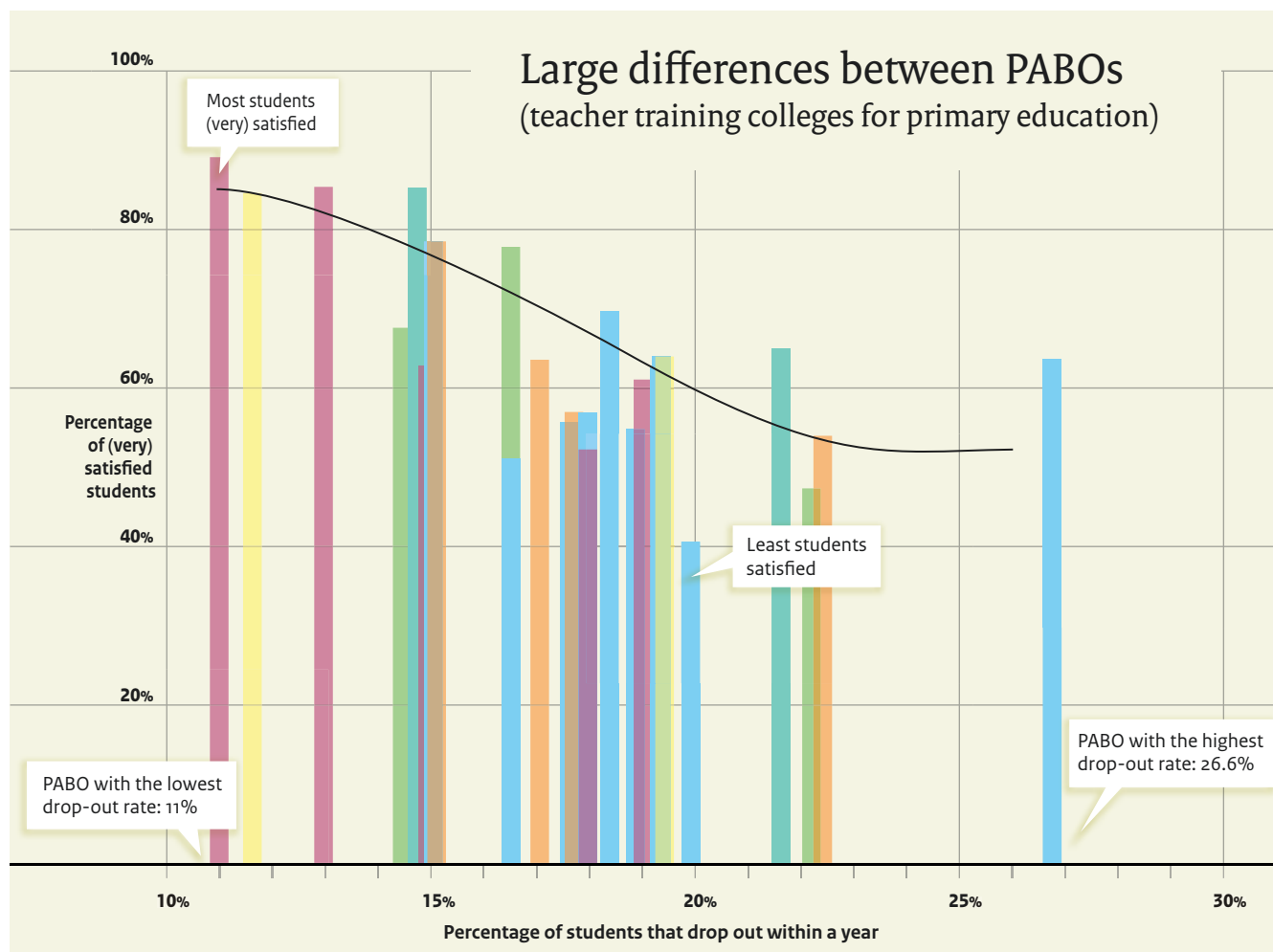## 4.1 Teacher-training programmes and career start

Differences between the teacher-training programmes • Teachers benefit greatly from good training and the ability to professionalise during their career. For most teachers, the teacher-training programme is the first stage of their career. Does the programme equip the teachers sufficiently? Are the preconditions adequate to enable teachers to continue learning at the beginning of their career and to continue professionalising their skills thereafter? There are notable differences between the various teacher-training programmes. The drop-out rate for teacher-training for primary education (PABO) varies between 11% and more than 26% (see Infographic 7). The percentage of satisfied students varies from 50% to 89%. These striking contrasts may point to differences in the quality of the various teacher-training programmes. The satisfaction and drop-out percentages are correlated. PABOs with few dissatisfied students have very low drop-out rates. Although graduates from most teacher-training programmes have taken longer to find a job in recent years, there are some teacher-training programmes where a high percentage of graduates found employment quickly in the last few years (see Infographic 4b, page 21).

Newly qualified teachers • Most graduates from teacher-training programmes proceed to work in education, but a large percentage of them leave the education sector within a few years. Of all newly qualified teachers, between 12% (primary education) and 22% (secondary education) leave teaching within a year.[16] The teaching provided by newly qualified teachers is not as good as the teaching provided by experienced

[16] OCW (2014). *Outflow of newly qualified teachers.* Fact sheet. The Hague: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

Large differences between PABOs
(teacher training colleges for primary education)

Most students (very) satisfied

Percentage of (very) satisfied students

Least students satisfied

PABO with the lowest drop-out rate: 11%

PABO with the highest drop-out rate: 26.6%

100%

80%

60%

40%

20%

10% 15% 20% 25% 30%

Percentage of students that drop out within a year

Infographic 7

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2014; NSE, 2014

teachers. And again, newly qualified teachers are less good at differentiating than their more experienced colleagues (although new teachers do clearly improve in this respect during the first three years of teaching). Nevertheless, nearly half the school principals said that they allocate new teachers to combination classes, where teaching is decidedly more complex and demands more differentiation skills.

Supervision of newly qualified teachers • A good induction and supervision programme is important to new teachers. During the early stages of their career, it is important that new teachers acquire differentiation skills rather than simply develop routine in the competencies already acquired. Only then will they develop into complete professionals. Good supervision and further professionalisation during the first years of teaching is by no means a matter of course, however. In primary education, 28% of all new teachers said they received no supervision of any kind whatsoever, compared

with 14% of new secondary school teachers.[17] While the head teachers are a little more optimistic, one in ten of the primary school head teachers said they offered newly qualified teachers (very) little supervision – and they said so twice as often when it concerned new teachers with temporary appointments.[18]

[17] Boom, E. van der, Vrielink, S. & Vloet, A. (2014). *Loopbaanmonitor 2013. Supervision of newly qualified teachers.* Survey conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Utrecht: MOOZ; Tilburg: CentERdata.
[18] Witteman-van Leenen, H., Bergen, C.T.A. van, & Dekker, B. (2014). *Onderwijs Werkt! Report of a survey among teaching staff in PO, VO, MBO and HO. Measurement 2014.* Amsterdam: Regioplan.

If it is true that teachers are the engineers of education, they have big shoes to fill!

(secondary school teacher)

Supervision varies from school to school • The number of hours of supervision schools offer newly qualified teachers varies considerably. This is an average of approx. 5.5 hours a month, but 16% of schools offer less than three hours a month. Six per cent of newly qualified teachers receive more than ten hours super-vision a month. The main focus in supervision is on class management, while interaction with parents received the least attention.

4.2 Teacher-pupil interaction

Quality of lessons • During lessons, the teachers usually create a favourable learning climate, explain things clearly and create a task-focused atmosphere (see Infographic 8). We observed less evidence of the teaching being tailored to differences between pupils. Teachers who do differentiate gave their pupils targeted feedback and adjusted the instructions, assimilation or time for the pupils or students as necessary. In these lessons the pupils were more engaged and there was more teacher-pupil interaction. The pupils at schools where teachers tailored their lessons to the differences among pupils are motivated, are less likely to lag, and learn more. What is important in this respect, however, is that the differen-tiation takes place within the group or class and not outside of it. The feedback given to pupils proves to be particularly essential.[19]

Differences between sectors • More and more differentiation is seen in primary school education. Teachers apply variation in time in practically all lessons, and also in the method of instruction in two thirds of the lessons. Tailoring and differentiation have yet to be further developed in secondary and special secondary education. It appears to be more difficult for teachers to tailor their teaching to individual pupils' needs in these sectors. Differentiation and tailoring often occur outside the classroom (for example, in the form of debating competitions and additional lessons in 3D printing or Chinese). Special (secondary) schools are also beginning to attach more importance to variety in terms of

instruction and method, but again the process is not yet mature at many schools. One requirement for effective differentiation is that teachers have a good insight into the development of their pupils and students and are capable of tailoring their lessons accordingly. Some schools have developed this to a further degree than others.

Feedback generates motivation • Giving pupils feedback is a key element of differentiation. Pupils themselves also indicate that feedback from the teacher motivates them to learn. That makes it all the more remarkable that pupils hardly receive any feedback in a quarter of the lessons. There is little difference between the education sectors in this respect.

Learning differentiation skills • Most teachers do not develop differentiation skills until they have mastered the general didactic skills.[20] Differentiation skills are not always easy for them to master. While PABO students and graduates feel that they have acquired sufficient basic pedagogical-didactic skills at teacher-training college, they are relatively dissatisfied about the degree to which they have learned to differentiate and about the level of training. They especially feel they are inadequately equipped to systematically monitor and analyse pupils' progress to be able to offer customised care and extra attention to suit pupils' needs. School principals endorse this opinion: 38% feel that PABO graduates are inadequa-tely capable of systematically analysing pupil progress. Half the newly qualified teachers say they have not learned enough to be able to tailor the curriculum to the needs of pupils lagging behind (43%) or shooting ahead of (53%) the rest of the class.[21]

4.3 Job satisfaction and staffing policy

School environment is important • On average, Dutch teachers are as satisfied with their job as teachers in other OECD countries[22], but there are large differences among Dutch teachers. They indicate that the culture at school is key to their job satisfaction and motivation. At some schools, practically all the teachers enjoy their job, while teachers at other schools are clearly less motivated.

[19] Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible Learning for Teachers. Maximizing Impact on Learning*. London/New York: Routledge.

[20] Van de Grift, W., Van der Wal, M., & Torenbeek, M. (2011). Ontwikkeling in de pedagogisch didactische vaardigheid van leraren in het basisonderwijs. *Pedagogische Studiën* (88) 416-432.
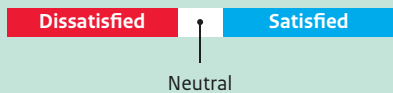
[21] Inspectorate of Education (2015). *Newly qualified teachers reflect. Survey among graduates Part 1, the PABO*. Utrecht: Inspectorate of Education.

[22] Idem 14

Infographic 8

Quality of lessons

Students' evaluation of teachers

Dissatisfied		Satisfied

Neutral

Senior secondary vocational education (MBO)

60% of MBO students are satisfied with the **quality of the teachers** in general.

Quality of lecturers (general)

Source: JOB, 2014

60%

Dissatisfied **Satisfied**

Task-oriented working climate/effective structure
Lessons are effective and well-structured.

08.45 rekenen
09.30 dictee
10.15 topografie

Clear explanations
Teachers have an attractive and interactive manner of explaining.

Respectful interaction
Teachers ensure interaction is respectful.

Active involvement
The pupils are active and concentrated.

Inspectors about the lessons

2013/2014 academic year

Inadequate		Adequate

Could not be assessed

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2014

Primary education

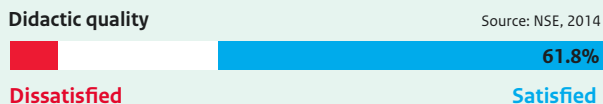|	
Respectful interaction with pupils	99%
Clear/comprehensible explanation	91%
Task-oriented working climate	94%
Pupils actively involved	90%
Instruction	64%
Alignment — Assimilation	73%
Teaching time	74%
Feedback	66%

Higher professional education (HBO)

52% of full-time HBO Bachelor's students are satisfied, or very satisfied, with the didactic quality of the lecturers.
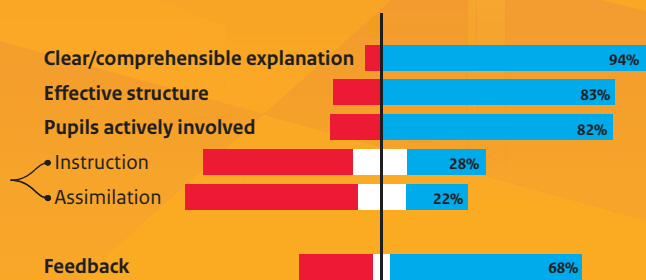
Didactic quality
Source: NSE, 2014
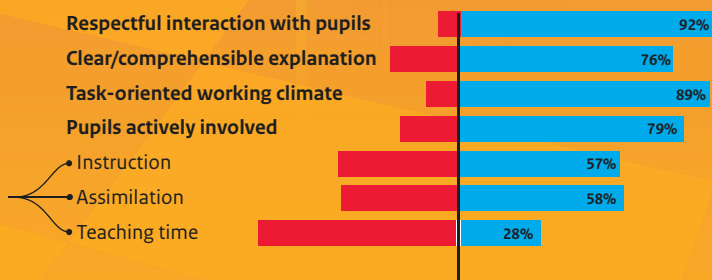
51.9%

Dissatisfied   **Satisfied**

Research-oriented education (WO)

62% of full-time WO Bachelor's students are (very) satisfied with the didactic quality of the lecturers.

Didactic quality
Source: NSE, 2014

61.8%

Dissatisfied   **Satisfied**

Tailored
Teachers tailor lessons to differences between pupils.

Feedback
The teachers give pupils effective feedback.

Secondary education

Clear/comprehensible explanation	94%
Effective structure	83%
Pupils actively involved	82%
Instruction	28%
Assimilation	22%
Feedback	68%

Special secondary education

Respectful interaction with pupils	92%
Clear/comprehensible explanation	76%
Task-oriented working climate	89%
Pupils actively involved	79%
Instruction	57%
Assimilation	58%
Teaching time	28%

Examples of strong teacher teams • Every sector has good examples of schools and study programmes with motivated teachers. Excellent schools have teachers who are not only very good at their job and motivated as individuals, but also form a close-knit team with a consistent vision. These schools are often frontrunners in terms of pupil motivation, quality of education, learning achievements and innovation. They tend to be characterised by a positive culture and, overall, by a good atmosphere between teachers, who often cooperate towards quality and quality improvement. They are motivated and reflect a passion for the job, the pupils, each other and the school. Another notable feature is that teachers at good schools not only think about what they would like to teach, they also have the confidence to experiment with curriculum alternatives, the organisation, timetables and tests.

School principal with vision and staffing policy • Most schools and study programmes that have a strong team of teachers also have good principals. These principals generally have a clear and consistent vision of teacher and education quality and have the capacity to translate this into staffing policy. They attach importance to the supervision and professionalisation of teachers, provide targeted support to help teachers develop and create the conditions to enable them to further improve their teaching. Teachers also learn from each other: they attend each other's lessons and exchange views and experiences. The profile of a good school will usually go hand in hand with the profile of a good teacher.

Differences between teachers • While most schools and study programmes will have their own examples of excellent teachers, some teachers lack important skills or competencies. While these differences between teachers will be known in the school, the principals and the teachers themselves often consider them a fact for the school to simply accept. Teachers whose performance is less than optimal receive little feedback and it is by no means a given that training will meet teachers' development needs. Typically, teams at effective schools include very few, if any, poor teachers.

Differences between schools as regards absenteeism and turnover • Schools are also different in terms of absenteeism and staff turnover. Both are higher, on average, at schools and education institutions than in other organisations, but the differences between the schools are very large. A small percentage of schools have hardly any absenteeism due to illness and little staff turnover, but at some schools the levels of absenteeism and staff turnover are high.

Deployment of unqualified teachers • The deployment of teachers without teaching qualifications is not uncommon, especially in secondary education. However, the approach is changing: schools now either ensure their staff receive appropriate training or they – eventually – ask their unqualified teachers to leave. According to the schools that do still employ unqualified teachers, these are often teachers nearing retirement age who have performed adequately for many years or teach a subject for which there is no specific qualification (such as maths) or 'odd hours' [*resturen*] for which no separate teacher can be recruited.[23] Nevertheless, one in five lessons is taught by teachers who are not qualified to teach the subject or teach it at the level concerned.[24]

Professionalisation and feedback • Professionalisation will enable teachers to develop further, improve themselves and remain happy with their job as they continue their careers. Professionalisation-driven staffing policy is primarily implemented at good schools, and is much less common at average or poor quality schools. Almost all teachers professionalise in the course of time, but there is a considerable variety in terms of frequency, duration and estimated effect of the professionalisation activities. The training will not necessarily match teachers' specific development needs. Remarkably enough, not all teachers/lecturers in the Netherlands receive adequate feedback.[25]

Staffing policy and the school principal • Many of the aforementioned differences can be traced back to the staffing policy of a school or study programme. Once again, schools and study programmes can differ considerably. The staffing policy in place at schools with motivated teaching teams will have been developed much further than at schools with low job satisfaction and high absenteeism rates. This holds true in respect of both the recruitment and supervision of new teachers and the further professionalisation of current teaching staff. In this regard, the principal of the school plays a prominent role.

[23] Inspectorate of Education(2015). *Onbevoegd lesgeven in het voortgezet onderwijs. Een onderzoek naar de rechtvaardigingsgronden.* Utrecht: The Inspectorate of Education.

[24] Fontein, P., Vos, K. de, & Vloet, A. (2015). *IPTO: vakken en bevoegdheden. Reference date 1 October 2013 Final Report.* Tilburg: CentERdata.

[25] Nusche, D., Braun, H., Halász, G. & Santiago, P. (2014). *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Netherlands 2014.* Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

4.4 In conclusion

Differentiation and customisation • The number of good examples of differentiation in primary education is growing. Some secondary schools are also stepping up their differentiation effort and offering a more tailored approach (but mostly outside regular lessons). Organising differentiation and providing appropriate teacher support is not always as simple as it may seem. This can only be successful with a collective approach and the support of all involved, and with more insight into effective kinds of differentiation.

Teacher teams and working climate • Many schools have close-knit teams of teachers who really enjoy working there. At other schools, negative factors such as the pressure of work, absence due to illness and a lack of autonomy seem to reinforce each other, reducing job satisfaction. It is important to understand which circumstances contribute to a positive working environment and which circumstances could trigger a downward spiral. In any event, it appears that professionalisation, good staffing policy and competent school principals (and governors) are essential elements.

School organisation

Administrative action and finance

Governance, internal supervision and employee participation are becoming increasingly professional and quality driven. The internal system of checks and balances is improving, albeit at varying speeds in the different sectors. Incidents occur primarily when governors allow educational quality to be overshadowed by other objectives, thereby no longer placing the public interest first and/or not acting in a duly professional manner.

Although the financial situation has improved, it is unstable in primary and secondary education. Employee numbers are falling and schools do not have much financial leeway. Examples demonstrate that working under such circumstances makes it difficult to provide good-quality education, which requires competent school principals and governors.

5.1 Governance of school boards

Professionalisation of school boards • In general, education institutions are properly governed. School boards, internal supervision and employee participation are becoming increasingly professional. This has a positive effect on the quality of education. The percentage of school boards facing multiple or long-term quality problems is falling, especially in secondary education. However, the number of school boards that have been placed under special financial supervision has risen slightly.

Connection between quality problems and financial difficulties • Not all school boards are competent enough to resolve certain bottlenecks. Some have one or more schools whose performance has been poor, or very poor, for an extended period of time or are facing management continuity problems at schools where income and expenditure are persistently out of balance and the boards are unable to fulfil their commitments in the short and/or medium term. Problems concerning education quality are sometimes related to problems in the financial sphere. As in previous years, the Inspectorate has noticed that risks in the financial sphere are often an indication of quality problems. Falls in liquidity and solvency especially affect the boards of schools that have been (very) weak for an extended period of time. While they spend more money on quality improvement, some are confronted by a decline in pupil numbers, and hence income. They spend their money differently compared with school boards unaffected by quality problems.

Financial statistics •
Solvency provides insight into the extent to which school boards will be able to meet their long-term financial commitments.

Liquidity provides insight into the extent to which school boards will be able to meet their short-term (< 1 year) or long-term financial commitments.

Profitability reflects the extent to which boards maintain a balance between income and expenditure and, as such, provides insight into the development of equity capital.

Incidents • In exceptional situations, problems of governance may affect institutions. Such problems are referred to as 'incidents' if they pose a serious threat to the quality of education at schools or study programmes and/or to their financial continuity. The consequences of an incident for pupils or students can be extremely severe; they could be obliged to switch to another school or study programme as a result of closure, for example. The societal impact of such situations is also significant, as they will erode public confidence in the quality of education. In the 2013/2014 academic year, eleven boards, in various education sectors, were confronted with such problems.

Prioritising the quality of education and schools' public mandate • The nature and context of incidents are diverse, though they share certain similarities. The incidents tend to concern boards with an inadequate focus on the quality of education and the public mandate of education institutions. Frequently, they lack a consistent focus on the quality and finances of the institution concerned. In some cases this involves the boards of small schools where vision is clearly prioritised above quality; other cases concern boards governing large, complex institutions.

Insufficient professionalism among board members • Incidents also often involve boards whose members lack professionalism. They may have under-estimated their tasks, perhaps make decisions too easily, with respect to accommodation for example, and fail to organise sufficient internal checks and balances. In many cases there is little or no evidence of a transparent, professional organisational culture, or of continuity of governance and management, owing to long and successive crises of governance. Stable governance and stable management (in the most vulnerable areas of the organisation, at least) are an essential precondition for lasting quality improvement. Internal supervision is specifically responsible for addressing this.

Governance supervision • The Inspectorate is increasingly active in supervising the governance of institutions that have seen protracted problems in the area of education quality and/or finances. There may also be other triggers, such as signals received by the Inspectorate or serious incidents that have occurred. The interventions by the Inspectorate are initially intended to pressure the boards into implementing any necessary governance improvements. The investigations carried out may cause the Inspectorate to advise the Minister to take certain measures, such as closing a school and/or issuing instructions for the board.

5.2 Finances

Improving the financial position • Liquidity, solvency and profitability have continued to improve in all sectors, except special (secondary) education. Higher education has seen a fairly consistent, positive development in recent years and is the sector in the strongest financial position. MBO has had a few poor years but showed considerable improvement across the board in 2013, while primary, secondary and special (secondary) education tend to be lagging behind. The improved financial positions overall are largely due to the funds received through the Autumn Agreement and the National Education Agreement [*Onderwijsakkoord*]. Without these extra funds, which the boards received in late 2013, the figures would have been less positive.

Forty-six school boards under special financial supervision • On 1 August 2014 there were 46 boards under special financial supervision. Infographic 9 shows that the number of boards under special financial supervision has risen in primary and secondary education, while their number has stabilised in special (secondary) education and MBO. On 1 August 2014 no boards in higher education were under special financial supervision.

Private income • In research-oriented education (WO), approximately one third of income in 2013 was not derived from government or student contributions. Excluding indirect funding by the government via international organisations, national government bodies, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), income from private activities in research-oriented education amounts to approx. 18% of their revenues, and the proportion of private income is rising. In HBO and MBO the percentage of private income is more modest, under 10%, and continues to fall. In primary education and secondary education, the share is less than 5% and is often generated through incidental activities. There are significant differences between boards and institutions across all sectors.

Risks of private activities • In research-oriented education (WO) private activities concern contract teaching and contract research. In higher professional education (HBO) and senior secondary vocational education (MBO), the private activities relate primarily to contract teaching and private income is generated through practical training, for example by training companies in catering, hairdressing, etc. Institutions market teaching and research products (knowledge, educational aids) and facilities (gym, car park, administration, ICT). Third parties often pay to make use of such facilities as sports accommodation or bookshops. Partly at the request of third parties, funded education is provided in a broader setting (broad-based school,
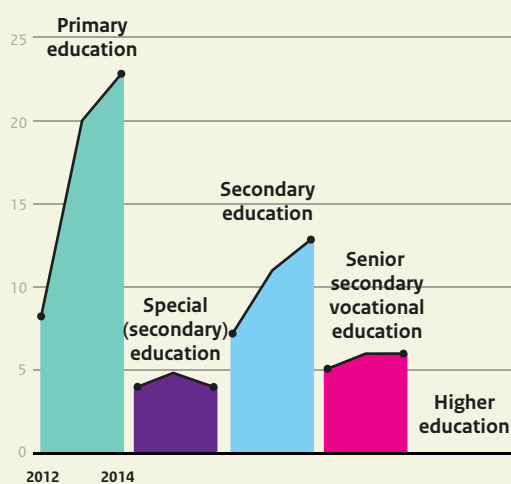
sports campus, 'education boulevard', science park, centre of excellence). The risks of private activities are financial loss and unfair competition. The institutions acknowledge these risks. Another factor in research-oriented education is the academic integrity of research. Institutes aim to control the risks, for example by applying careful decision-making procedures. A point requiring consideration is the public accountability for private activities.

Staff development • Boards spend most money on staff. In most sectors the share of the total expenditure spent on permanent and temporary staff is falling. In primary education in particular, the number of employees is falling much faster than the number of pupils. This is associated with a sharp rise in 'payroll arrangements'. Also noteworthy is the fact that the information contained in annual reports relates primarily to staff planning and working conditions, and much less to professionalisation, staffing policy, recruitment and selection, assessment and reward.

Expected continuity • To remain financially healthy, boards must systematically anticipate and plan. Regulations for the continuity section have been effective since the 2013 annual report. A random check of the annual reports revealed that 88% of boards now partially comply with these regulations. The continuity section of a little under one sixth of the boards was of a level of quality that constituted 'good practice'. There is a risk of some boards being too optimistic as regards pupil and student numbers. Predictions are not always realistic, especially in shrinking sectors or contracting regions.

5.3 In conclusion

Internal supervisory committee • Certain conditions enable the achievement of the targets set by schools and governors and, thus, will help improve education. An active internal supervisory committee that is willing and able to act as counterpart to the board is essential. Events in the recent past have demonstrated that the risk of problems increases where such an approach is lacking.

Dialogue • Another precondition is to maintain a good dialogue with the direct stakeholders. In 2013, the Education Council stated that 'the local anchors of the education boards had been weighed', while anchoring is exactly what is needed for their legitimacy.[26] This requires

Special financial supervision

Number of boards under special financial supervision on 1 August 2012, 2013 and 2014 by education sector

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2014

Infographic 9

[26] Education Council (2013) *Publieke belangen dienen. Naar bestuurlijk evenwicht tussen overheid en onderwijsinstellingen.* The Hague: Education Council.

an active dialogue with the parties most closely involved, starting with the staff. The annual report could serve as a useful aid during this dialogue. On the one hand, this is a formal accountability document addressing a number of mandatory matters, while on the other, it could be part of the dialogue with the direct stakeholders.

Staff professionalisation • Education strongly depends on the quality and commitment of teachers, who must be well trained. The school board is responsible not only for monitoring the initial basic competencies of the teachers, but also for encouraging and facilitating their further development, in the form of post-graduate or continued education, for example. We saw very little of this reflected in the accountability sections.

Key considerations for the coming year

Educational innovations, safety and inclusive education

The developments currently spreading across all education sectors will affect anyone involved in education. Over the past year schools and study programmes devoted much time and energy to educational innovations, social safety and inclusive education.

The innovations many schools and study programmes are working on are very diverse, ranging from innovations in the curriculum to changes in teaching time. These developments are quite welcome; after all, innovations will lead to greater variety.

Schools are also devoting more attention to bullying and social safety, although it is not yet clear which projects and curricula are actually effective. After having risen for years, the number of reports to confidential advisers appears to have stabilised, with the exception of special (secondary) education.

With regard to the introduction of inclusive education, school boards have initially focused on its organisation. They do not currently make use of all the tailoring opportunities available.

6.1 Educational innovations

Improving education quality • Teachers, school principals and school boards are assuming their responsibility as regards the quality of education ever more seriously and are working hard to improve it. Pupil performance is generally good and pupils' school careers are completed sooner, especially within the same sector.

Educational innovations • Improving the quality of education often goes hand in hand with other innovative activities at schools and institutions. Every day, the Inspectorate sees fine examples of teachers, school principals and governors passionately working to achieve innovation. ICT is playing a special part in education at ever more schools, such as the 'iPad schools'. Secondary schools are also experimenting with tailored facilities, such as alternative and more suitable programmes for pupils: they modify timetables, hold examinations at multiple levels and offer different subjects. Schools and study programmes choose their own emphasis, thus creating more variety and more diversity. The Inspectorate applauds this and intends to attach more weight in its monitoring to this diversity and the individual character of study programmes and schools.

6.2 Bullying, safety and citizenship

Bullying • Approximately 97% of primary school pupils feel safe at school. In secondary education, around 94% of pupils feel safe. These percentages have been more or less stable for years. Yet 17% of primary school pupils and 15% of secondary school pupils say they have been bullied at school. Given the relative scale of such forms of antisocial behaviour, the far-reaching impact it can have on the victims and the negative effect on general well-being and the learning climate, the Inspectorate feels that actively combating social insecurity is an important focus area for all schools.

Social safety policy • Providing as socially safe an environment as possible for pupils and staff alike is a key responsibility of schools. The Inspectorate ensures that one of the preconditions - the implementation of a safety policy - is complied with. Recent years have seen a fluctuation in the percentage of schools that meet the (minimum) requirements imposed by the Inspectorate (the implementation of policy aimed at preventing and dealing with incidents and insight into the perception of social safety and incidents). In primary education compliance varied between 70% and 80% and in secondary education between 80% and 95%. A national monitoring survey reported that 43% of primary school principals and 30% of secondary school principals indicated they had no explicit policy and registration.[27]

Safety in the practical school environment • Besides formulating safety policy, it is essential to ensure that it works in practice; unless all parties concerned actively contribute to shaping its practical implementation, the policy will be little more than paper reality. Insight on the part of the school into pupils' perception of safety is an essential precondition to this, as that will show the extent to which the policy is adequate and identify any areas which need to be improved. Good insight into the situation and the adoption of approaches that may be expected to be effective can help improve situations where there is an inability to provide adequate support.

Reports of psychological violence, sexual abuse and radicalisation • Any (serious) problems related to sexual harassment and abuse, psychological abuse, physical violence, discrimination or radicalisation can be reported to the Inspectorate's confidential inspectors. During the 2013/2014 academic year, the confidential inspectors recorded a total of some 2,200 reports. Compared with the previous academic year, the number of reports has

stabilised. The number reports rose in special (secondary) education and fell slightly in secondary education.
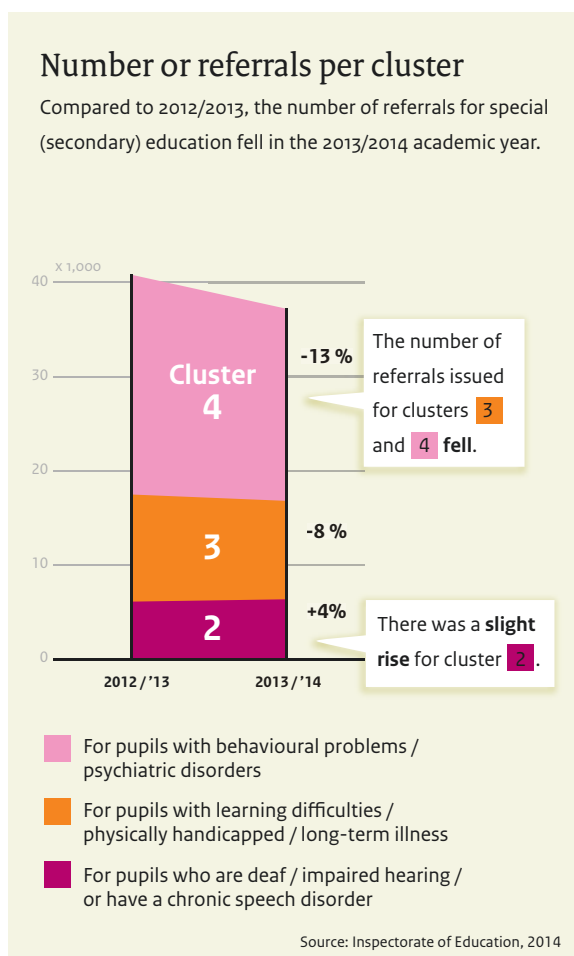
6.3 Inclusive education

Introduction of inclusive education • 1 August 2014 saw the introduction of inclusive education. School boards are now responsible for providing inclusive education to every pupil. Boards that collaborate within an alliance are free to apply funds reserved for additional support for this purpose and to determine which pupil is to receive which care. It is expected that more pupils will be placed in mainstream education and that separate facilities will increasingly be of a temporary nature.

Fewer special education referrals • Up until 1 August 2014, the 'special needs assessment committees' [*Commissies voor Indicatiestelling (CvI)*] and Regional Expertise Centres (REC) issued referrals for pupils with a disability, entitling parents to enrol their child with a special (secondary) school. This referral, combined with Individual Pupil Funding, also allowed parents to enrol their child in a mainstream school. In 2013/2014 the RECs issued a total of 37,217 such referrals. 21,280 of these concerned re-assessments. Of all referrals, 55% related to cluster 4, 28% to cluster 3 and 17% to cluster 2. Compared with the 2012/2013 academic year, the number of cluster 3 referrals issued fell by more than 8%, and cluster 4 referrals fell by 13%. The only rise was for cluster 2, which registered a slight increase of 4% (Infographic 10).

Support plans not always clear • Shortly before the introduction of inclusive education, the description and allocation of resources and facilities were sufficiently in order in three quarters of cases, as shown in the support plans for the new alliances. Around half of the new alliances describe the criteria, procedures and transfer or return of pupils sufficiently clearly. The alliances describe the procedure and policy relating to re-assessments explicitly enough in around half the cases. They have difficulties clearly describing qualitative and quantitative goals. More than half comply with the statutory require-ments for the provision of information to parents.

Organisation-focused introduction • The alliances were formed, both administratively and organisationally, in a relatively short period of time. All the alliances have determined their mission and vision and cautious targets have been set. The organisational form has now been established for practically all alliances and meets statutory requirements. Some differences remain, however. The extent to which the alliances have organised themselves varies considerably, for example. Also note that only one alliance has reached the stage of

27 Sijbers, R., Fettelaar, D., Wit, W. de, & Mooij, T. (2014). *Sociale veiligheid in en rond scholen Primair (Speciaal) Onderwijs 2010 – 2014. Voortgezet (Speciaal) Onderwijs 2006 – 2014.* Nijmegen: Radboud University, ITS.

Number or referrals per cluster

Compared to 2012/2013, the number of referrals for special (secondary) education fell in the 2013/2014 academic year.

x 1,000

Cluster **4**   **-13 %**

> The number of referrals issued for clusters 3 and 4 **fell**.

3   **-8 %**

2   **+4%**

> There was a **slight rise** for cluster 2 .

2012 / '13   2013 / '14

- For pupils with behavioural problems / psychiatric disorders
- For pupils with learning difficulties / physically handicapped / long-term illness
- For pupils who are deaf / impaired hearing / or have a chronic speech disorder

Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2014

Infographic 10

some form of risk control. Alliances which still have much preparatory work to do, have to deal with the conflicting interests of school boards and, sometimes, with strained personal relationships.

Multi-year budgets • Multi-year budgets are seldom rich in policy or detail. Furthermore, alliances generally tend to formulate the targeted results loosely, offering little direction. For example, policy aimed at avoiding pupils staying home is high on the agenda of practically all of them, but it has not been sufficiently developed. They also recognise the importance of quality control but have not yet linked this to any clear quantitative and qualitative objectives. Moreover, most alliances have not defined the criteria on the basis of child characteristics that are relevant to education. And while all alliances have arranged the allocation of extra support, in practice they do not always monitor the periods concerned and the re-assessment of current pupils in special (secondary) education.

Organisation and collaboration • In practice, it appears that the internal supervisor in many cases does not (or is unable to) operate independently of the board. It is also unclear what the internal supervisor is supposed to monitor. The connection between education and such parties as municipalities is advancing smoothly in all alliances. In practice, however, alliances that cooperate with more than one municipality are dependent on mutual collaboration between these municipalities.

Communication with parents • Communication with parents remains a focus area. Practically all alliances have a website, but there are large differences in terms of quality. Some alliances leave (much of) the communication to the school boards, because parents and teachers are often easier to contact through the schools. If this is the case, the alliance concerned must check that the provision of information through the schools is up to standard and that other parties besides parents and teachers can also be reached. This particularly concerns the alliance's role of coordinator, which is inadequately warranted in many cases.

6.4 In conclusion

Looking ahead • Education will evolve to include more tailored approaches for pupils and more variety between schools. In the coming period, this will demand significant time and effort on the part of teachers, school principals and governors. Schools and study programmes will also develop more and more activities that address bullying, social safety and citizenship. More tools seem to be required since despite the numerous options, the effectiveness of most activities is not yet understood. The introduction of inclusive education will also lead to changes for pupils, teachers, school principals and governors. The Inspectorate will monitor developments in relation to inclusive education closely over the coming years.

Towards variation and excellence • All the innovation and improvement activities demand considerable efforts from education professionals. It is great to see how they all carefully consider the best possible education and place for pupils. It is thanks to their efforts and energy that pupils and students develop so well and that the quality of education in the Netherlands is satisfactory to good. The major challenge for the time ahead is to ensure that the average school and study programme is able to offer greater variation and strive for excellence. In the promising and convincing examples of schools and programmes that have already managed to achieve this, governors and school principals have played a key role which they will continue to play in the future.

Abbreviations

BBL	A vocational learning track involving more apprenticeship work (MBO)
BOL	A vocational learning track involving 1-3 days of classes a week (MBO)
Cito	The national institute for educational measurement
Cluster 1	Education for pupils who are visually handicapped
Cluster 2	Education for students with a hearing loss and students with severe speech and language disorders
Cluster 3	Education for students who are physically or mentally handicapped and students with chronic illnesses
Cluster 4	Education for students with a psychiatric or conduct disorder
CPB	Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis
CVI	Special needs assessment committee
DUO	The Dutch government's Executive Agency for Education. DUO finances and informs pupils and students as well as schools, and facilitates exams
ECBO	Centre of Expertise for Vocational Education and Training
HAVO	Senior general secondary education
HBO	Higher professional education
HO	Higher education
IPTO	Periodically gathering of information about lessons taught in secondary education
JOB	Student union for all Dutch students in vocational education and training
LAKS	Dutch organisation that represents the rights of secondary school students in the Netherlands
MBO	Senior secondary vocational education
NSE	National Student Survey (large-scale national survey for students in higher education)
OCW	The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PABO	Primary education teacher-training college
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PO	Primary education
PRO	Practical training programmes
REC	Regional Expertise Centre
ROA	The Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market
SO	Special education
VMBO	Preparatory secondary vocational education
VMBO-B	Basic vocational track of VMBO
VMBO-K	Advanced vocational track of VMBO
VMBO-G/T	Combined/theoretical track of VMBO
VO	Secondary education
VSNU	Association of universities in the Netherlands
VSO	Special secondary education
VWO	Pre-university education
WO	Research-oriented education

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