Inspectorate of Education
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

The State of Education

MAIN THEMES OF THE 2014/2015 EDUCATION REPORT

The State of Education

Main themes of the 2014/2015 Education Report

Education in the Netherlands is both varied and of a high standard, also in international comparison. As our inspectors found, teachers and school administrators generally

Foreword

Education in the Netherlands is both varied and of a high standard, also in international comparison. As our inspectors found, teachers and school administrators generally work hard on behalf of their pupils. Their efforts result in better, and in some cases outstanding schools and degree programmes. Our inspectors visited numerous schools and institutions over the course of the past year. As day-to-day practice clearly shows, pupils and students benefit from the generally high quality of education.

However, we have also come to the conclusion that some pupils and students do not have an opportunity to participate in education that fits their individual abilities. Although these differences have always existed, the divide has been widening over the past few years. I must say this came as quite a shock to me. As we are seeing, equally intelligent pupils increasingly end up in different schools depending on their family backgrounds. Parents' level of education plays a key role in this regard.

Let us take the example of a pupil in the penultimate year of primary school with highly-educated parents, let us call him Paul. On average, Paul will be more likely to receive a relatively high-level school recommendation by the time he leaves primary school. His parents will then consciously choose a secondary school where performance levels are higher and pupils are less likely to be held back a year. Paul will be more likely to enter this school at a higher level than the original recommendation issued by his primary school. He is also more likely to transfer to a higher level over the course of the subsequent years. Statistically speaking, Paul can expect to end up in the higher education system after having completed his final secondary school exams. As a result, he will have every opportunity to perform optimally over the course of his entire school career.

Now let us examine the case of Tim, who lives two streets down from Paul. His parents have a low level of education. Although Tim is similar to Paul and has the same skills and IQ, he is highly likely to be issued a lower school recommendation when he leaves primary school. Tim's parents are then likely to – unwittingly – choose a secondary school where average performance levels are lower and pupils are more likely to transfer to a lower level. Tim is also more likely to be assigned to a level lower than the recommendation issued by his primary school and more likely to be held back or transferred to a lower level in the second or third year. The figures show that Tim is also more likely to opt for a vocational programme rather than ending up in the higher education system.

The same talents, but very different outcomes. So why are we seeing a growing divide in terms of the opportunities offered to our pupils and students? We believe this development can be attributed to a combination of factors and players, rather than a single cause. Firstly, we are seeing

a change in parents' behaviour patterns. More highly-educated parents seem to be increasingly aware of their own influence over their children's school careers. They are making more conscious decisions in terms of their children's education and are increasingly likely to invest in homework tutoring and testing and examination training. They are also more likely to notice any impediments to their children's development at an earlier stage. Furthermore, such parents will then be more likely to assume that their children are slower to develop as the result of a medical condition and will seek out – and pay for – the necessary support. In addition to parents, teachers may also unintentionally influence the course of events: although such processes are often subconscious, they will tend to have higher expectations of students with more highly-educated parents while expecting less from children from less educated backgrounds. This can make the crucial difference between getting an opportunity or missing out every time selections are made or children are assigned to a new class or level. Our education system is characterised by a large number of transitional moments and selection procedures, leaving specific pupils vulnerable to such bias.

Another key factor is the increasing diversity of schools and degree programmes. Children from lower educated backgrounds are increasingly sent to lower-quality schools, whereas children with highly-educated parents are more likely to end up in the better schools. All these developments are inevitably creating weak spots in our education system. For example, schools with a large number of pupils from less educated backgrounds are more likely to be of (very) poor quality, with higher absenteeism amongst teachers and a compromised sense of safety amongst pupils. We should ask ourselves whether the various parties involved always offer such schools the support they need to live up to their social responsibilities. Selection procedures also represent a major barrier for children from less educated backgrounds.

Finally, school administrators and boards also occasionally make choices that prioritise the interests of the school or degree programme over the interests of some of their pupils. Decisions are also occasionally prompted by financial considerations: examples include cases where pupils are transferred to another institution within an educational partnership. Schools then tend to base their decisions on the 'average' pupil. This may have negative consequences for individual pupils, in terms of both educational opportunities and aspects such as safety. After all: if more than one in ten pupils feel unsafe, the 'average' pupil will still experience his or her school environment as safe. Schools that base their decisions on this average pupil will be unlikely to make much effort towards prevention and will only take action after an incident has occurred. This measure will then be too late for the relevant individual pupil.

In short, we are seeing a growing discrepancy between pupils' educational opportunities due to the growing influence of and intervention by parents (or lack thereof), the growing differences between individual schools and programmes and the tendency to manage our education system on the basis of averages. This growing inequality between children with and without highly-educated parents will be our main challenge over the coming period. We will have to work to ensure that children with the same talents also get the same opportunities in life.

So who can we look to for the necessary change? Unfortunately, no one single actor can offer the silver bullet solution. The effort ahead will require a joint approach and analysis. After all, the causes of this growing divide are not limited to the education community, which is in no position to resolve broader inequality issues on its own.
Joint efforts with parties outside of the education domain will thus become more relevant, enabling both sides to utilise each other's potential. Examples include municipal authorities, which play a central role in offering socio-economic support. Parties in the care sector can also be relevant in this regard. In addition to policy development, such collaborations may also prove useful in offering individual pupils the opportunities they need.

However, the education sector can take the lead in certain areas in order to improve pupils' opportunities. For example, lecturers and school administrators could do more to increase their awareness of subconscious bias. Amongst other aspects, this relates to their diagnoses of pupils' failure to learn effectively and recommendations on further education. Policy makers will have to think through all proposed minor and major systemic adjustments in terms of their impact on equal opportunities. After all, policy measures generally have effects in multiple areas. What may be desirable from one perspective may have unforeseen and undesirable consequences from another. We must also continue to critically evaluate existing measures in terms of their results and any unintended side effects. In the meantime, the Inspectorate – and other supervisory bodies – must continue to critically evaluate whether our assessment methods stimulate others to create opportunities for every pupil. We will also critically assess any undesirable side effects of our supervisory activities.

Last but not least, it is important to ensure that parents are aware of their far-reaching influence on the opportunities available to their children. Amongst other areas, this influence is felt in their efforts to read to their children, practice English vocabulary, discuss their future, studies and profession or participate in the ten-minute meetings organised by schools. Most importantly, though, parents can inspire their sons and daughters by acknowledging their specific qualities. Other parties can play an active role in this process by helping to make parents more aware of their crucial role and offering them various practical resources and solutions. Naturally, some parents will require more support than others.

Dutch education is both varied and of high quality, and all pupils should be able to reap the benefits.

Monique Vogelzang
Inspector-General of Education

Utrecht, 13 april 2016

Contents

Main themes for 2014/2015


Stenden
universityhotel
Instructor

1 Educational outcomes

Although Dutch education was and remains of high quality, the difference between the Netherlands and other countries is becoming smaller. Dutch primary school pupils have above-average reading and arithmetic skills. Average grades for school-leaving examinations have risen, especially in terms of central final exam scores. Pupils receive education in social and societal competences. However, we do not have sufficient insight into the results. The academic success rates and labour market perspectives of students at vocational education and training (MBO) institutions and research universities are good and have actually improved.

The question remains: just how good is Dutch education really? Educational outcomes can be viewed from various perspectives. As a result, there is no one single answer to this question. The quality of education can be determined by assessing a confluence of factors: the education level of the general population, the learning outcomes achieved by pupils and students, the social quality of schools and programmes, academic success rates and labour market alignment. The below section describes recent developments in each of these areas.

1.1 Level of education

High level of education • The average level of education in the Netherlands is high in comparison with most other countries. In 2014, close to 45 percent of the Dutch population had completed a higher education programme. The past fifteen years have seen an especially marked rise in the number of pupils enrolling in higher education programmes. According to the EU, this high percentage is partly attributable to the range of programmes available to Dutch students and policies aimed at encouraging completion of a higher education programme.[1]

[1] European Commission (2015) 2015 Education and Training Monitor. The Netherlands. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union.

Declining lead • This growth in the number of citizens to complete a higher education programme has been stagnating over the past few years. The percentage of secondary school pupils and MBO pupils to enrol in a higher education programme is stabilising, while the percentage of pupils at senior general secondary (HAVO) and pre-university (VWO) schools is declining. 2015 also saw a drop in the number of newly-enrolled students at universities of applied sciences (HBO). With other countries experiencing a continued rise in average education levels, more and more countries are surpassing the Netherlands in terms of performance.

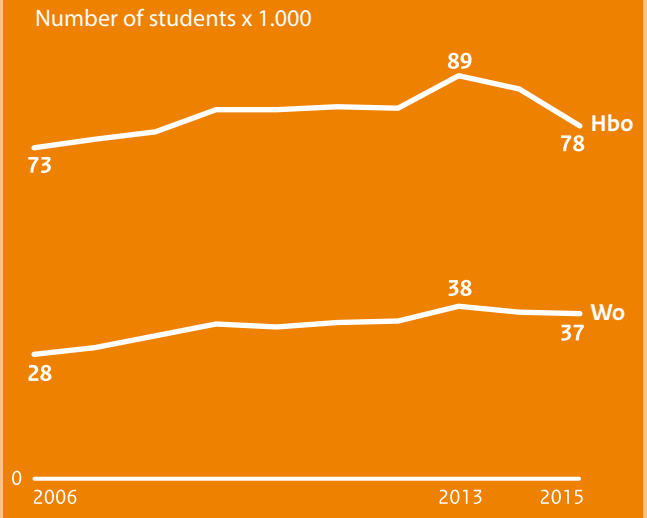
Declining intake figures at higher education institutions • The likelihood that young people will enrol in a higher education programme has decreased slightly over the past few years. Where 73 percent of young people still enrolled in higher education

Changing intake patterns in the higher education sector

The number of students to enrol in a new higher education programme has been declining since 2013, especially at universities of applied sciences. Intake in the economics and education sectors suffered the greatest decline.

1 The number of new students is declining, especially at universities of applied sciences

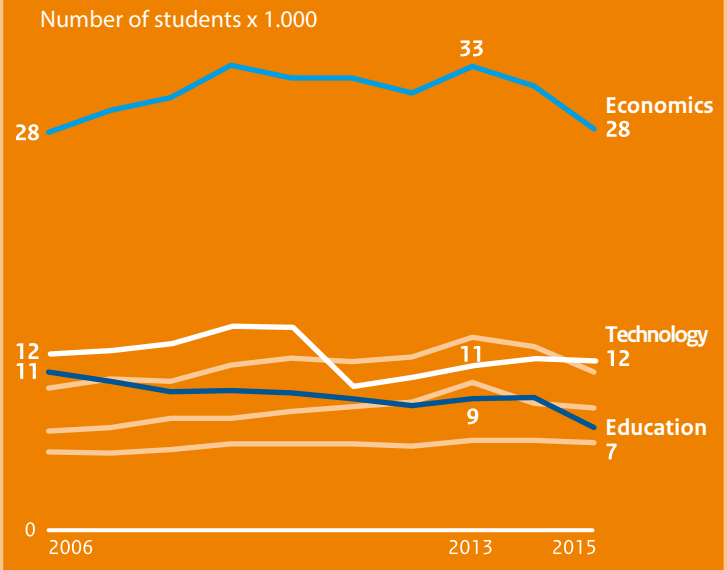
The number of new students enrolling at universities of applied sciences decreased by 11,000 post-2013 (12 percent), with 1,700 fewer enrolling at research universities (5 percent).



Intake levels at full-time Bachelor's programmes

2 Sharpest decline in number of economics and education students

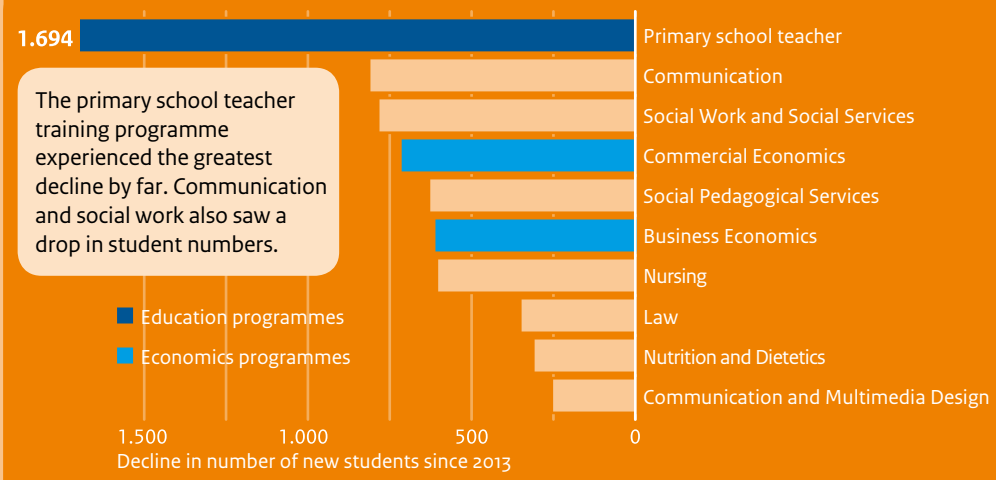
The number of new students enrolling at universities of applied sciences declined almost across the board over the past two years. Economics programmes saw the greatest decline, whereas programmes in the education sector suffered the greatest percentile decrease: 22 percent. The technology sector was the only field to see a mild increase in student numbers.



Intake levels at universities of applied sciences, per sector

3 PABO institutions experience greatest decline

The primary school teacher training programme experienced the greatest decline by far. Communication and social work also saw a drop in student numbers.



Programmes at universities of applied sciences with the greatest decline in student numbers

Source
IvhO, 2015

programmes in 2009, this figure had declined to 68 percent in 2015. This ongoing decline was most marked in 2015: Eight percent fewer pupils enrolled in higher professional education programmes in comparison with the preceding year. This is mainly due to the fact that fewer MBO graduates are enrolling at universities of applied sciences.
This trend is especially pronounced at teacher training colleges (PABO) (figures 1, 2 and 3, page 12). MBO graduates are more likely to enter the labour market instead. We are also seeing a slight decline amongst HAVO graduates, especially in 2015. VWO graduates are equally likely to enter the higher education system as previously.

1.2 Student performance

Performance levels at sub-top • Primary and secondary school pupils in the Netherlands perform above average in comparison with their international peers. For example, Dutch primary school pupils' reading and arithmetic skills are above average.[2] Dutch pupils in the fourth year of primary school perform well above the international average in terms of natural sciences. Secondary school pupils also outperform their counterparts in many other countries; their performance in terms of arithmetic, reading skills and natural sciences can be classified amongst the international sub-top.[3]

Few weak pupils, few high performers • International comparisons show that while the number of weak pupils in the Netherlands is low, we also boast few outstanding performers. For example, we have few pupils with low scores for reading skills, arithmetic and natural sciences. At the same time, our best students perform at or below the OECD average for these subjects. The best pupils in twenty to forty countries thus outperform the best pupils here in the Netherlands. It should be pointed out that this does not apply to arithmetic, where the number of students at the highest levels exceeds the OECD average.

A shrinking lead • Where the Netherlands once ranked amongst the global top in international comparative studies, this situation has changed. Where pupils' performance levels in other countries are improving, our pupils are failing to show any improvement (arithmetic, natural sciences) or even performing at a slightly lower level (reading skills). Various countries have now surpassed the Netherlands, which has ranked among the sub-top since 2012.

Proficiency meets or exceeds reference levels • In 2015, most pupils at regular primary schools performed at reference level 1F in the area of reading skills (92 percent), spelling, punctuation and grammar (97 percent) and arithmetic (90 percent). The number of pupils proficient at these reference levels was higher at schools with few children from less educated backgrounds. The percentage of pupils to perform at these reference levels differs considerably between different schools with the same amount of pupils from a less educated background. Some schools with a large amount of students from less educated backgrounds rank amongst the highest performing 10 percent.

Higher school-leaving examination grades at secondary schools • The past few years have seen an improvement in school-leaving examination results at Dutch secondary schools. This increase is closely linked to the introduction of more stringent examination regulations and is mainly reflected in central examination grades. The trend is visible at all school types. This improvement in central examination results has considerably narrowed the gap between school exams and the central examination over the past few years. Despite having experienced a temporary drop, pass rates have now returned to their pre-2010 level.[4]

More special education pupils taking examinations • A growing number of pupils at secondary special education institutions are taking part in examinations. In 2014, a total of over 4,500 pupils took part in the school-leaving examination. As regards preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO) pupils taking part in basic and specialised vocational learning tracks, this mainly concerned external candidates. The vocationally-oriented components of the examination may only be administered as part of a secondary school testing and accreditation programme. Pupils in VMBO-level theoretical learning tracks and HAVO/VWO programmes mainly take the state examination. The latter group mainly takes part in partial examinations (66.1 percent in 2015). Pupils at special secondary schools (VSO) also achieve relatively high scores on the arithmetic test.

[2] Meelissen, M. R. M., Netten, A., Drent, M., Punter, R. A., Droop, M., & Verhoeven, L. (2012). PIRLS and TIMSS-2011. Trends in learning performance: Reading, Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Nijmegen: Radboud University; Enschede: University of Twente.

[3] 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.

[4] DUO (2015). *Examenmonitor* VO 2015. The Hague: Education Executive Agency (DUO). Reference levels.

Great variation in secondary school arithmetic test results • Secondary school pupils are currently required to take arithmetic tests. Over 90 percent of all VWO pupils manage to pass these tests, with the figure at half to two thirds of all pupils for the various other levels. The large differences between individual schools are striking. The percentage of pupils at the various levels to pass the arithmetic test varies between 10 and 100 percent. Here too, VWO forms an exception, with the percentage of pupils to pass the test ranging between 54 and 100 percent.[5]

Low scores on arithmetic test at MBO schools • MBO schools are also currently administering the arithmetic test. According to figures on the 2014/2015 school year, a considerable percentage of pupils are failing to attain the intended reference level. Here too, we can identify differences between individual programmes and institutions. In total, 30 percent of all MBO-2 pupils manage to attain the reference level, as compared to 53 percent of MBO-3 and 33 of MBO-4 pupils. Results at all levels fall short of the relevant targets.

1.3 Social quality

How do we define the social quality of education? • Amongst other key objectives, education is designed to teach pupils about social and communal values. This involves the acquisition of social and societal competences. We need these competences to coexist with others while contributing to broader society and democracy. We refer to these aspects as the social quality of education.

Citizenship education proves insufficiently structural • Most schools offer some form of citizenship education, thus meeting the minimum legal requirements. However, they frequently fail to monitor and anchor the quality of this education. A small minority of schools actually evaluate quality in this area, and few schools have any insight into the social and societal competences acquired by their pupils. As the Inspectorate has repeatedly concluded, the citizenship education offered by many schools is of an insufficiently structural nature while it is unclear to what extent the curricula reflect pupils' actual needs. Most secondary schools offer socially-oriented work placements in the non-profit sector. More than three quarters of all school administrators aim to continue these initiatives, even after the 2014/2015 school year (marking the end of the legal obligation to provide such work placements).

A focus on diversity • Schools devote attention to religious, cultural, ethnic and sexual diversity. The latter three aspects are discussed several times a year at most schools. Most primary school pupils indicate that they are taught not to discriminate, and encouraged to be considerate and help others. A smaller percentage indicate that they are taught to be understanding of people with other religious beliefs or people from other countries. Most secondary school pupils feel their school devotes attention to the acquisition of social and societal competences. They indicate that they are taught to view all people as equals and show respect for others. They are slightly less likely to learn how to voice their opinions, take a stand against prejudice or resolve arguments to the satisfaction of all involved.

Difficulty in discussing sensitive issues • 7 percent of all history and social studies teachers never discuss the issues of anti-Islamism, while 8 percent never discuss the theme of sexual diversity.[6] Half to two-thirds of all teachers indicate that they occasionally discuss these issues, while one quarter to a third claim to frequently devote attention to such sensitive subjects. When asked to specify specific sensitive themes that can be difficult to discuss, teachers were most likely to mention anti-Islamism, sexual diversity and the integration of ethnic minorities. Teachers at schools with a large number of pupils from ethnic minorities were relatively likely to mention anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in this regard. Teachers feel this is attributable to lack of knowledge, lack of open-mindedness and the fear of provoking anger and aggression amongst pupils. When asked how they dealt with such issues, respondents claimed they did not personally have any difficulty discussing these matters in class. Nevertheless, some 10 to 20 percent of teachers did find it difficult to discuss issues such as fundamentalism, anti-Islamism, sexual diversity or the Holocaust. In addition to illustrating the potential difficulty of discussing sensitive issues, these figures also demonstrate just how challenging it can be to teach pupils our basic social values. Bridging the differences between pupils from various backgrounds can be difficult when belief systems clash.[7] This will require attention and skill from our teachers and school administrators.

[5] (OCW, 2015). State of affairs regarding the introduction of reference levels for language and arithmetic. Letter to the President of the Lower House of Parliament. The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

[6] Sijbers, R., Elfering, S., Lubbers, M., Scheepers, P. & Wolbers, M. (2015) *Maatschappelijke thema's in de klas. Hoe moeilijk is dat?* Nijmegen: ITS, Radboud University.

[7] Kleijwegt, M. (2016). *2 werelden 2 werkelijkheden. Hoe ga je daar als docent mee om?* The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

"Dutch pupils and students outperform the average international standard."

Knowledge of good citizenship varies depending on pupils' backgrounds • Primary school pupils with more highly-educated parents and native Dutch pupils have more knowledge of good citizenship than pupils from less educated backgrounds and pupils from ethnic minorities.[8] However, pupils from ethnic minorities perform better than their native Dutch peers in terms of citizenship-related attitudes and skills. Similar differences can also be identified at secondary schools. Comparative studies have shown that a more differentiated education system will yield more varied outcomes in terms of good citizenship skills.[9]

Knowledge of good citizenship varies considerably from school to school • The degree to which pupils leave primary school with knowledge of good citizenship partially depends on the characteristics of individual pupils. Schools also differ: pupils at some schools achieve better results than those at others. Schools where pupils perform better in terms of the reflection competence are more likely to have elaborated a clear vision on citizenship and emphasise the acquisition of social competences. Pupils at schools that formulate goals on learning about other cultures have more knowledge of good citizenship. The development of citizenship-related competences is also linked to language skills, especially when it comes to attitudes and knowledge.

Lack of insight into social performance • Schools still lack insight into the results of their education on social competences. They scarcely use any standardised instruments to determine their pupils' level of knowledge. Education is largely driven by (often global) intentions, and is not based on any clear idea as to whether the intended results have been achieved. The Citizenship Alliance (a partnership that sees schools, supervisory institutions, knowledge organisations and the Inspectorate work together to evaluate and develop citizenship education) does take stock of pupils' knowledge of good citizenship. Efforts to monitor aspects such as knowledge, skills and attitudes in the area of citizenship over the next few years will help schools gain insight into the development of their pupils. Based on the outcomes so far, secondary schools currently score highest in terms of their pupils' knowledge of democracy. However, their knowledge of conflict resolution is still lacking.

1.4 Transfers and academic success rates

Continued increase in direct transfers • Last year, we reported an increase in the number of direct transfers within the education system. This means that a greater number of pupils and students went on to enrol in a relevant programme after obtaining their certificates. Whereas VMBO pupils were more likely to transfer to a comparable MBO level, HAVO pupils were more likely to transfer to a university of applied sciences while VWO pupils were more likely to transfer to an academic programme. This trend is set to continue for all transitions from secondary education in 2014/2015, and is most pronounced amongst pupils transitioning from VMBO to MBO programmes. Here, the number of pupils transferring directly to another 'appropriate' level within the MBO system increased by 10 to 15 percent. In concrete terms, this means 89 percent of all pupils in the basic vocational track are currently transferring to MBO-2 while 70 percent of all pupils in the combined/theoretical vocational track are transferring to MBO-4. 83 percent of all HAVO pupils currently transfer to universities of applied sciences, while 80 percent of VWO pupils transfer to an academic programme.

Trend towards decreasing diploma accumulation stabilises • As we reported last year, a declining number of pupils (at secondary schools, MBO schools and higher education institutions) are accumulating multiple diplomas. This declining trend stabilised over the course of the 2014/2015 school year. The past few years saw the greatest decrease in terms of the transition from the combined/theoretical vocational track to HAVO, where the percentage of students accumulating multiple diplomas dropped from 19 to 13 percent over a five-year period. The figure remained at 13 percent in 2014/2015. Pupils at schools offering only VMBO tracks are less likely to transfer to HAVO schools than pupils at other schools.

Rise in success rates at MBO schools and academic Bachelor's programmes • As we reported in last year's edition of The State of Education, success rates have been on the rise over the past few years. This improvement in success rates at MBO schools and academic programmes is set to continue this year.

[8] Driessen, G., Elshof, D., Mulder, L., & Roeleveld, J. (2015). COOL5-18 cohort study. Technical report on primary education, third measurement 2013/14. Nijmegen: ITS, Radboud University; Amsterdam: Kohnstamm Institute.

[9] Werfhorst, H. van de, Elffers, L. & Sjoerd Karsten, S. (ed.) (2015). *Onderwijsstelsels vergeleken. Leren, werken en burgerschap*. The Hague: Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO).

Universities experienced the most prominent increase, with success rates at Bachelor's programmes rising from 53 to 68 percent over the past five years. In other words: where half of all Bachelor's students managed to obtain their degree certificate within a four-year period several years ago, two out of three students currently manage to do the same. This represents a significant improvement. Success rates at MBO schools increased from 74 to 82 percent over the past five years. A growing number of MBO pupils are also currently obtaining diplomas at a level that reflects their prior education.

Declining success rates at university of applied sciences Bachelor's programmes • Universities of applied sciences are seeing a decline in success rates: 63 percent of all students to start their studies in 2005 obtained their Bachelor's degree within five years, as compared to 57 percent of the 2009 cohort. The past two years saw an especially low number of students obtain their degree certificates within five years. HAVO and MBO pupils achieve comparable success rates (55 versus 58 percent), whereas VWO pupils achieve far better results at universities of applied sciences (75 percent). In another marked development, HAVO pupils with examination grades of 7 of higher are more likely to obtain their degree certificates within five years than HAVO pupils with lower grades (71 versus 54 percent).

High success rates at Master's degree programmes • 83.5 percent of all students at universities of applied sciences to start on a one-year Master's programme in 2012 managed to obtain their degree within a two-year period. The diploma success rate for two-year Master's degree programmes at universities of applied sciences increased from 63 to 76 percent over a period of five years. This concerns small numbers of students. The percentage of students at research universities to have obtained their degree for a one-year Master's programme within a two-year period also rose over the past five years: from 67 to 75 percent. This percentage declined somewhat over the course of the past year. The percentage of students at two-year research university Master's programmes to obtain their degree certificate within three years remained stable over the past five years.

1.5 Labour market alignment

Solid job outlook • The Netherlands can boast healthy labour market alignment figures in comparison with other European countries. The percentage of MBO students to find a job within three years of graduating currently stands at 83.4, 10 percent above the EU average. Dutch graduates from universities of applied sciences and universities stand an even better chance of finding employment: 90.6 percent of highly-educated graduates find a job within three years, as compared to an average of 80.5 percent in the other EU countries.[10]

Scarcely any improvements in terms of alignment • Despite the Netherlands' strong performance in comparison with other European countries, a growing number of highly-educated graduates have been having difficulty finding employment over the past few years. Whereas 73 percent of all highly-educated students to have graduated in the 2012/2013 academic year immediately found employment, this percentage was as high as 82 percent five years prior. The percentage of graduates to have found a job within one and a half years is now gradually increasing again.[11]

Likelihood of finding employment varies depending on area of study • MBO graduates who have completed a programme in the field of technology or health and personal care and welfare are most likely to find a job immediately after graduation, whereas school leavers to have completed programmes that combined different areas of study have the smallest chances of finding employment. School leavers enrolled in a work-based vocational learning track (BBL) have a better labour market position then those enrolled in a school-based track (BOL).[12] As regards graduates from universities of applied sciences and universities, students to have completed a healthcare or education-sector programme are most optimally aligned with the labour market. Students who have graduated from a university of applied sciences programme in the area of language and culture and university graduates with a degree in the area of agriculture and the natural environment are relatively least likely to find a job.

[10] European Commission (2015) 2015 Education and Training Monitor. The Netherlands. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union.

[11] ROA (2015). *Schoolverlaters tussen onderwijs en opleiding 2014*. Maastricht: Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA).

[12] See 11

Students at universities of applied sciences have varying chances of finding employment • For students at universities of applied sciences the chance of finding a suitable job varied widely between different programmes, with percentages varying from 26 to 92 percent. These differences are especially significant at PABO institutions. Students graduating from programmes that have experienced major growth are also more likely to find a suitable job. Conversely, this likelihood is smaller at programmes that have experienced a decline in student numbers.

Students' backgrounds affect their likelihood of finding employment • Some programmes at universities of applied sciences attract more students with good employment prospects. These differences become smaller when we apply a correction for individual student characteristics. As it turns out, students' backgrounds do have a significant impact on their chances of finding a job. Native Dutch school leavers were more likely to find a job than western and non-western ethnic minorities in 2012/2013: this applies equally to all education sectors.

Lifelong learning proves popular • The percentage of Dutch adults enrolled in a programme or course (for work or personal purposes) is relatively high in comparison with most other European countries. This percentage stood at 18 percent of all adults between the ages of 25 and 65 in 2014, a figure that is only exceeded in the Scandinavian countries and France. Highly-educated citizens are especially likely to engage in lifelong learning.[13]

[13] Pleyers, A., & Hartgers, M. (2016). *Een leven lang leren in Nederland: een overzicht. Sociaaleconomische trends 2016, no. 2*. The Hague: Statistics Netherlands (CBS).


SVMT
ROCTILBURG

2 Educational opportunities

A number of developments are causing a growing discrepancy between different pupils' opportunities for high-quality education. Firstly, parents' level of education is becoming an increasingly determining factor in the educational opportunities available to their children. This also extends to the recommendations issued to pupils leaving primary school. As a result of more targeted placement and selection at earlier stages in the education process, pupils with less educated parents are also more likely to end up at a lower level than equally intelligent pupils with more highly-educated parents. The differences between groups of pupils and students are also growing due to the homogenisation of transition classes and subsequent selection within the higher education system. Finally, the growth of shadow education, such as homework tutoring, is also contributing to the growing divide in terms of educational opportunities.

2.1 Parents' level of education

Parents' level of education proves highly influential • Dutch pupils and students navigate various pathways and education levels over the course of their school careers. As it turns out, pupils with less educated parents take other pathways than their counterparts with more highly-educated parents. Figure 1, page 22, illustrates the influence of parents' level of education on the highest level of education attained by their children. The figure outlines the educational career of a group of pupils of comparable intelligence (IQ at VMBO combined/theoretical track level): the pupils with less educated parents are represented by white dots, while the children with highly-educated parents are represented by black dots. Although these pupils have comparable IQ levels, they enter the secondary school system at entirely different levels. Whereas pupils with highly-educated parents are relatively likely to end up in HAVO/VWO transition classes, those with less educated parents tend to enter into VMBO basic or advanced vocational classes. The right section of the figure shows the highest level to be completed after secondary education. Here, the differences are even greater. A majority of the pupils with more highly-educated parents have completed a higher education programme, while pupils with less educated parents have often completed MBO programmes at level 2, 3 or 4.

Family background is of greater influence in comparison with other countries • Although the influence of the family background is not unique to the Netherlands, this factor does play a relatively significant role in comparison with other countries.[14] A comparison between the Netherlands and other countries shows a relatively large difference in terms of the performance levels achieved by pupils from different backgrounds. The performance levels of pupils from ethnic minorities are lower than those of native Dutch pupils at both primary and secondary school level. Furthermore, the percentage of graduates from non-Western backgrounds is 16 percent lower as compared to their native Dutch counterparts (2014). These differences exceed those in other countries.[15]

[14] Werfhorst, H. van de, Elffers, L. & Sjoerd Karsten, S. (ed.) (2015). *Onderwijsstelsels vergeleken. Leren, werken en burgerschap*. The Hague: Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO).

[15] See 1

Background also affects transfers to higher education • Intake at higher education institutions is characterised by a growing distinction on the basis of pupils' backgrounds (figure 4, page 23). For example, the number of pupils from deprived (poverty-related problem accumulation areas) areas transferring to universities of applied sciences is far lower than the number of transfers from non-deprived areas. Crucially, second generation pupils from non-western ethnic minorities are less likely to transfer to a higher education institution than was previously the case.

2.2 The influence of pupils' backgrounds on their school recommendation

Background plays highly determinant role • Pupils with less educated parents are issued lower secondary school recommendations than pupils with highly-educated parents. The discrepancy between recommendations issued to pupils whose parents have different levels of education has further increased over the past few years (figure 2, page 22). As the figure illustrates, pupils with highly-educated parents are more likely to be assigned to levels that exceed their original recommendation, while the reverse applies to their peers from less educated backgrounds. Figure 2 also shows that these differences increase over time, largely due to the increasingly lower recommendations issued to pupils with less educated parents. 2014/2015 saw a stronger decline in this respect in comparison with the preceding years. The distinction between pupils with less educated parents and those with highly-educated parents saw the most significant increase. Distinctions on the basis of parents' income level are also growing (also see figure 3, page 23).

More single-school recommendations • The trend towards more single-school recommendations appears to be continuing. The percentage of single-school recommendations rose again over the past year, by 5 percent. Approximately one in six pupils are currently issued multiple recommendations, as compared to just over one in four in the measurement conducted four years ago. This means the crucial selection moment for many pupils will take place in the final year of primary school, rather than the one to two-year transition period during secondary school. This development is having an especially negative impact on children with less educated parents, who are being issued lower recommendations and are more likely to transfer to lower school types than pupils with highly-educated parents and comparable performance levels.

Few reassessments • Based on the results of the final test, one in six pupils should receive a recommendation that is at least one entire school type above their original recommendation. This mainly concerns pupils with less educated parents. In practice, however, a mere 15 percent of these pupils are actually issued a higher recommendation. This low percentage points to the fact that schools have yet to structurally integrate reassessments and adjustments into their recommendation procedure. Although schools may have valid reasons for this reticence, we feel it would be prudent to issue pupils a higher recommendation when in doubt, as this will generally have a positive impact on the relevant pupils' subsequent educational careers.

Majority of adjustments at urban schools • Over two thirds of all schools do not adjust school recommendations for any of their pupils. Two thirds of the schools that do make such adjustments only do so for a handful of pupils. Schools in highly urbanised areas and Islamic schools are significantly more likely to issue a higher school recommendation after testing.

2.3 Lower secondary education

More targeted level-based classification • Over the last three years, pupils have been assigned to specific levels in a more targeted manner. On average, they are also assigned to slightly higher levels. The number of pupils assigned to transition classes at a level below original expectations is lower than in previous years. This more targeted placement is partially due to the school choices made by pupils and parents, and partly attributable to decisions enshrined in secondary school placement policies.

Homogenisation of transition classes • In addition to more targeted streaming procedures (selection and placement), selection (also referred to as tracking) is also taking place at an earlier stage. Secondary school pupils are assigned to specific tracks at an earlier stage. This is evidenced by the growing percentage of pupils in homogeneous transition classes. The percentage of homogeneous transition classes continued to increase in 2015. Where 30 percent of all pupils were assigned to homogeneous transition classes 10 years ago, this percentage currently stands at 46.

Increased success rates over last two years • The levels attained during school years 1 and 2 currently exceed expectations on the basis of the final test. Entering the system at a higher level also appears to have a positive effect for pupils; on average, these pupils are still at a higher level by the third school year. This

“Growing differences between programmes that apply selection procedures and those that do not.”

development is linked to the ongoing improvement of success rates at secondary schools over the past two years, whereby a growing number of pupils remain at the expected level. Whereas success rates had been on a downward trend for years (pupils were increasingly assigned to lower rather than higher levels as compared to their original recommendations), the past two years have seen a slight improvement.

Growing differences in later years • In addition to receiving higher recommendations, pupils with more highly-educated parents are also more frequently assigned to higher-level transition classes. These pupils will also be allocated to higher levels than their class-mates with less educated parents when they transition to the second and third school years. This discrepancy between the opportunities available to pupils thus manifests itself at the start of secondary education as well as during the transitions to school years 2 and 3. The differences between children with more and less educated parents clearly increase during the lower years of secondary education (figure 2, page 22).

Causes underlying the growing discrepancies • How can we explain these growing discrepancies in the lower years of secondary education? Firstly, more highly-educated parents tend to respond more actively to this increasingly stringent and early selection. More highly-educated parents also tend to make more conscious decisions when choosing a school for their children, and are more likely to invest in supplementary education (shadow education). Secondly, pupils are being segregated at an earlier stage due to the homogenisation and categorisation of secondary education. This is relatively disadvantageous to late developers, who often tend to have less educated parents. Finally, schools are applying more stringent selection procedures at earlier stages of their pupils’ school careers. These measures are being taken in anticipation of more stringent examination standards, as schools strive to achieve higher examination grades and success rates. The aforementioned developments are causing major differences between pupils with more and less educated parents, while restricting the opportunities available to those from less educated backgrounds. As a result, pupils’ potential is not being utilised to its fullest extent.

2.4 Transfers to vocational education

Transfers within MBO sector remain stable • The number of MBO pupils accumulating multiple degrees was on a downward trend until 2012. Transfers from MBO-1 to MBO-2 and from MBO-2 to MBO-3 were experiencing an especially marked decline. Although students from deprived areas taking part in the school-based vocational track are generally likely to accumulate multiple degrees, this group was seeing the greatest decline. Transfers within the MBO sector have been stabilising since 2012. Over the past three years, approximately 63 percent of MBO-1 students from the school-based track have transferred to MBO-2, while 50 percent have transferred from MBO-2 to MBO-3 and 44 percent transferred from MBO-3 to MBO-4.

Fewer transfers from MBO to universities of applied sciences • The last few years have seen a decline in the number of students transferring from MBO-4 to universities of applied sciences. In 2008 and 2009, 47 percent of graduates still made this transition. However, the figure had dropped to below 40 percent in 2015. The most marked decline took place in 2015. Non-western ethnic minorities and graduates from deprived areas are most likely to transfer. Over half of the students from these groups make the transition from MBO-4 to a university of applied sciences. However, this group did experience the greatest decline in transfers.

Fewer students transferring from a university of applied sciences Bachelor’s programme to research universities • The percentage of students with Bachelor’s degrees from a university of applied sciences to transfer to a research university immediately after graduation has been declining over the past few years. The percentage of transferring students recently stabilised at just under 7 percent. We did not identify any major differences between different groups of students in this regard. There are various pre-Master’s programmes available to students with non-qualifying higher professional education Bachelor’s degrees.[16]

[16] Inspectorate of Education (2015). Transition from Bachelor’s programmes at a university of applied sciences to academic Master’s programmes. Study on the practical implementation of transitional and pre-Master’s programmes in the higher education sector. Utrecht: The Inspectorate of Education.

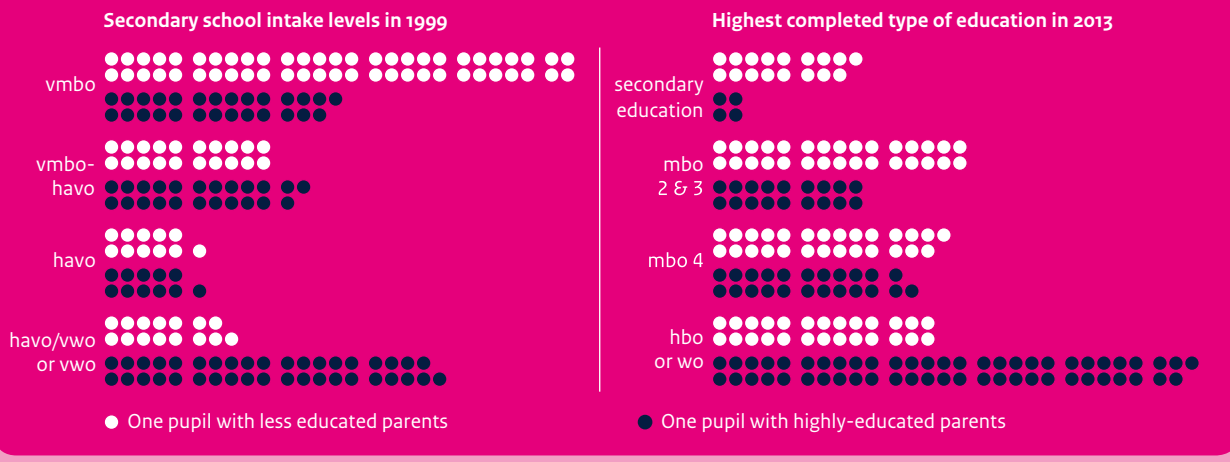
Do pupils enjoy equal opportunities?

In addition to pupils' individual capacities, their parents' level of education and income also play a key role in shaping their educational careers. This is causing differences between pupils, which increase over the course of their time at school.

1 Children benefit from their parents' level of education

A comparison of average pupils (IQ VMBO combined/theoretical) shows that half of all pupils with highly-educated parents start at HAVO or VWO level, as compared to one quarter of all pupils with less educated parents.

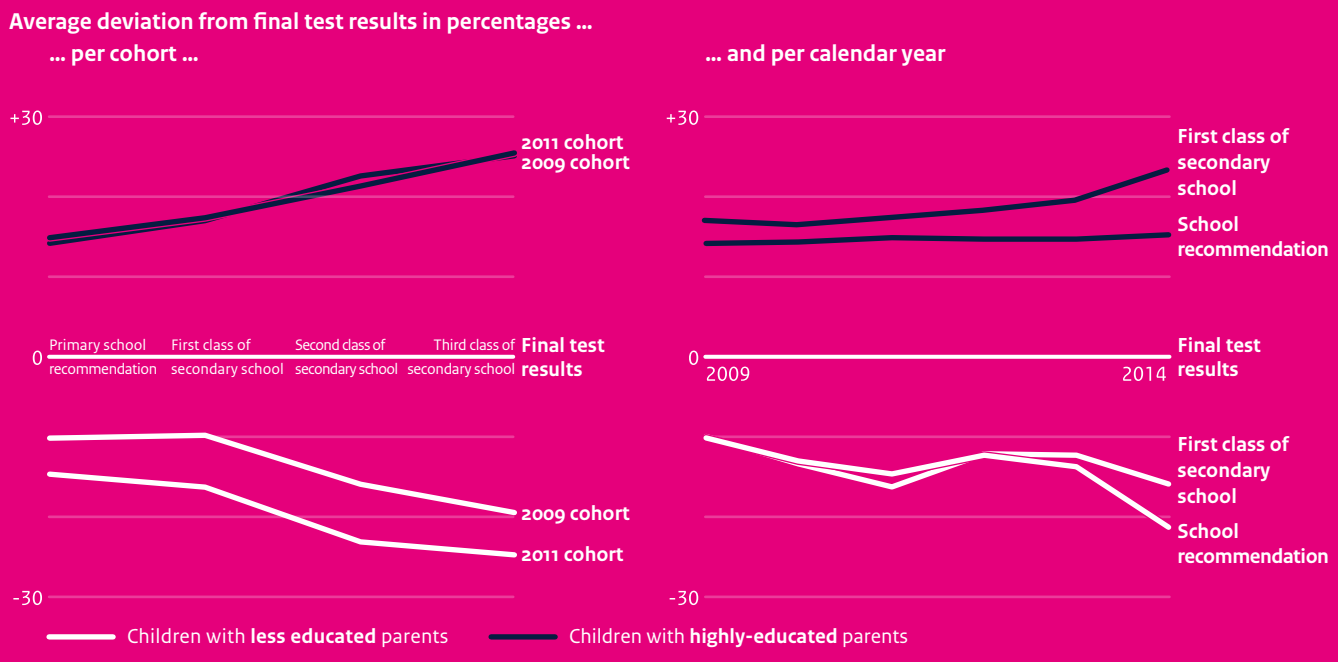
By the end of their school careers, 55 percent of the former group will have obtained a degree certificate from a university of applied sciences or research university, as compared to 26 percent of children with less educated parents. Equally intelligent pupils thus end up at entirely different levels.



2 Growing differences

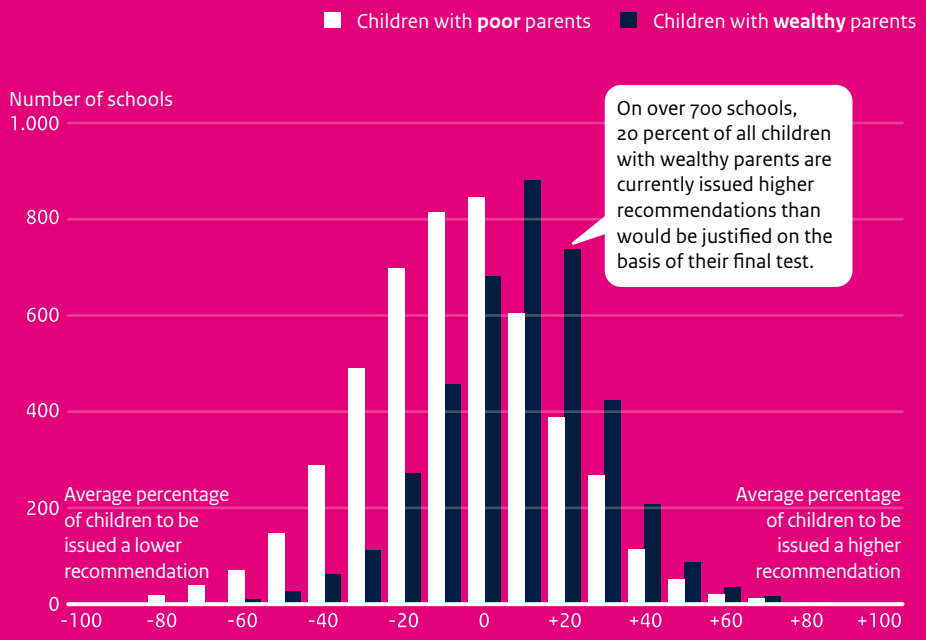
Children with highly-educated parents are more likely to be issued a secondary school recommendation that exceeds the results of their final test. The opposite applies to children with less educated parents. These differences increase during the lower years of secondary education.

Children with less educated parents have been receiving increasingly low school recommendations over the past few years, whereas children with highly-educated parents are starting at higher levels in comparison with previous years. These developments are also contributing to the growing discrepancy.



3 Children with wealthy parents are also issued higher recommendations

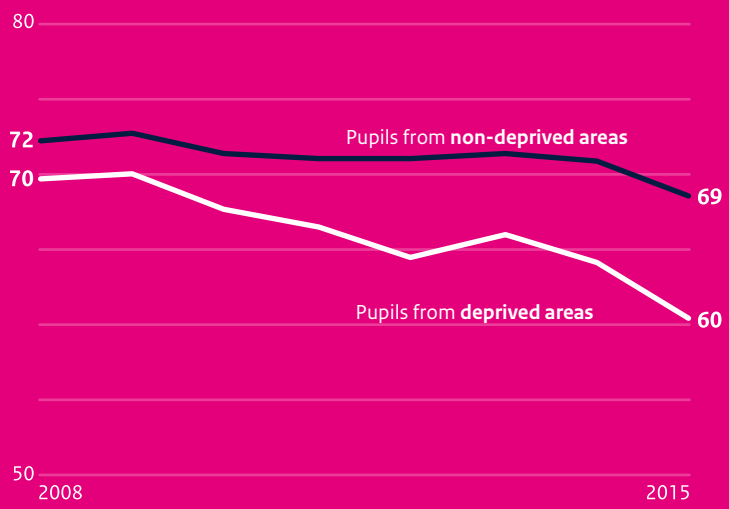
In addition to their level of education, parents' income also affects the primary school recommendations issued to their children. On average, children with wealthy parents are more likely to be issued a higher recommendation than those from lower-income families.
Differences between school recommendations and results of final test: children with poor and wealthy parents



Differences between school recommendations and results of final test: children with poor and wealthy parents

4 Pupils from deprived regions are less likely to transfer to higher education

Pupils' backgrounds also impact their transition to higher education. Pupils from deprived areas (poverty-related problem accumulation areas) are less likely to enrol in higher education programmes. The discrepancy between this group and other pupils is currently increasing.



Percentage of pupils to transfer (both directly and indirectly) to higher education programmes

Sources:
IvhO, 2015;
CBS, 2015;
DUO, 2015

Growing number of programmes now applying selection procedures • The number of MBO and higher education programmes applying selection 'at the gate' is increasing. The majority of this selection takes place in the higher education sector. In 2014, 36 percent of all new students at research universities were subjected to a selection procedure, as compared to 24 percent of students at universities of applied sciences. Five years before this measurement, 25 percent of all students at research universities enrolled in programmes with a selection procedure as compared to 19 percent of students at universities of applied sciences. Although MBO schools also increasingly apply selection procedures, it should be pointed out that they are also subject to an obligation to care for their students: institutions are obliged to admit students unless they cannot be taught.

2.5 Differences in terms of pupil population

Differences between school types • As regards the secondary education sector, the pupil populations at various school types are becoming increasingly varied. The average proportion of pupils from non-western backgrounds is growing. VMBO institutions – which already attract a relatively large amount of pupils with non-western origins – are experiencing an especially marked increase in this regard. VWO schools are not seeing any rise in the percentage of pupils with non-western backgrounds. The nationwide increase does not apply to this school type, where the percentage of pupils with non-western backgrounds still totals approximately 10 percent.

Vulnerable students in entry-level programmes • At MBO schools, the differences between the individual backgrounds of pupils also vary depending on the level. The number of vulnerable students in entry-level programmes (level 1) has seen an especially marked increase compared to a few years ago. More promising students are now likely to enter the system with a VMBO degree at level 2 or higher. This is certainly a positive development. However, this is also resulting in a growing group of vulnerable pupils at level 1. Furthermore, a growing number of pupils are transferring to these entry-level programmes from special education institutions.

Higher education selection processes increase differences • The differences between higher education programmes that apply selection procedures and those that do not are becoming especially significant. Programmes that apply selection tend to attract and select students with higher final examination grades. Programmes at universities of applied sciences that apply such selection procedures tend to have a lower percentage of students from non-western backgrounds. As regards research universities, the percentage of women at programmes that apply selection tends to increase when enrolment quotas are put in place. These shifts are further exacerbating the differences between intake patterns at higher education programmes.

2.6 Shadow education

Increase in homework tutoring • The past few years have seen an increase in the number of educational activities being organised outside of schools, also referred to as shadow education. In many cases, this involves homework tutoring and additional supervision organised and financed by parents and pupils. A growing number of schools are offering, organising or facilitating these forms of additional support, whereby additional lessons often take place at school. In view of the fact that pupils with highly-educated parents are more likely to take part in this form of shadow education, it would seem reasonable to assume that this development is further increasing the discrepancy in terms of available opportunities.

More test training • Parents and pupils also seem to be more aware of the growing importance of selection moments. Shadow education is increasingly being provided in preparation for such selection moments. This concerns test training during the final years of primary education, examination training at secondary schools and activities aimed at increasing the chances of success during decentralised selection in the higher education system.

Increase in non-funded education • The scale of non-funded education – including non-funded general adult education or VAVO – is also growing. A portion of the pupils that have trouble negotiating the regular education system manage to obtain a diploma through non-funded programmes. A total of 1,332 such pupils took part in examinations over the course of 2015, an increase of 45 in comparison with the previous year. Private schools without an examination license prepared some 970 pupils for the state examination. A relatively large number of proposals for the establishment of new private schools – a total of eleven – were submitted in 2015. Four of these initiatives concerned schools seeking to offer both primary and secondary education.


zlm
QATAR
11
NEYMAR JR

3 Safety and school climate

Pupils generally feel safe at school. However, this does not apply to everyone. Some schools also experience serious incidents with far-reaching consequences. Pupils expect schools and teachers to take action and contribute to a safe learning environment. Confidential inspectors are receiving increasingly complex and urgent reports. The number of reports of sexual abuse is rising, especially at secondary schools. The number of reports of emotional and physical abuse at primary schools is decreasing. Schools that have successfully implemented basic preconditions such as safety policies and monitoring are less likely to experience incidents.

3.1 Safety

A need to focus on safety • In every education sector, the Inspectorate came across pupils who did not feel safe. The relevant percentages vary depending on the sector (figure 1, page 30). An average of 6 percent of all primary school pupils feel unsafe, as compared to 11 percent of secondary school pupils. 24 percent of all MBO pupils say not to feel safe. An average of one to three pupils per class experience bullying. Six percent of all secondary school pupils claim to have been bullied on the basis of their ethnicity, skin colour, religion or sexual preference. Six percent also feel discriminated against. Some 13 percent of all pupils were kicked or struck. The same applies to one quarter of all primary school pupils. Here, over 20 percent reported that they were occasionally fearful of other pupils. This fear affects children's learning abilities, moods and development.

Sense of security varies depending on the school/ institution • The degree to which pupils feel unsafe depends on their school. The frequency of bullying also varies from school to school. We identified differences between schools and institutions across all sectors (figures 2, 3 and 4, page 30/31). For example, at least one in twenty pupils at more than half of all primary schools reported that they felt unsafe, whereas the entire pupil population felt safe at 20 percent of all schools. Such differences between schools and school types are also common in the secondary education sector. At 8 percent of all schools more than a quarter of pupils feel unsafe, while for approximately one third of schools this was 5 percent or less. The differences between individual institutions are also great in the MBO sector. At a small percentage of MBO institutions 80 to 100 percent of all pupils feel safe within the school building.[17] We also identified a group of MBO institutions where over one quarter of all pupils claimed not to feel safe.

Pupils expect their school to do more • 32 percent of all secondary school pupils feel teachers are not doing enough to prevent bullying. The same applies to 9 percent of all primary school pupils. Teachers that work to ensure a safe and positive pedagogical learning climate contribute to school safety. A third of MBO pupils also feel their institutions could do more to increase the general sense of safety.[18] However, pupils did indicate that their institutions performed somewhat better in 2014 as compared to 2012. Despite these efforts, the sense of safety decreased at more than two thirds of all institutions. Pupils at trade schools have the greatest

[17] JOB (2014). JOB monitor 2014. The largest student satisfaction survey in the Netherlands! Amsterdam: Organisation for Young People in Vocational Education (JOB).

[18] See 17

"Teachers that work to ensure a safe and positive pedagogical learning climate contribute to school safety."

sense of security. Although primary and secondary special education institutions also regularly experience incidents, the majority of pupils at these schools tend to feel safe. A large number of pupils at special education schools suffer from social and/or emotional problems, resulting in behavioural issues. This calls for management boards and team members with a high level of specialised pedagogical skills.

Necessary preconditions not always in place • The fact that bullying takes place and the lack of security experienced by some pupils underline the importance of effective safety policies at our schools. Depending on the sector, over 80 to 90 percent of schools have implemented safety policies aimed at the prevention and handling of incidents. Approximately 80 percent of schools have clear insight into perceptions of safety amongst their pupils and staff. Although results are ultimately key, policies and monitoring represent key preconditions for a safe school environment. As mentioned, these aspects have not been implemented at all schools. Regular monitoring and effective analysis can help schools provide more targeted solutions, thus ensuring that a greater number of pupils get what they need. Schools must also develop a clearly-defined and broadly-supported vision on specialised pedagogical skills as part of their efforts to prevent safety incidents. As of 1 August 2015, schools are legally required to ensure the social safety of their pupils.

3.2 Suspensions, expulsions

Frequent suspensions • In cases where pupils pose a threat to the safety of their fellow-pupils or teachers due to transgressive behaviour, the school may decide to issue a suspension. Schools are obliged to report any suspensions for a period of more than one day to the Inspectorate. We received a total of 287 such reports from primary schools over the course of the 2014/2015 school year. Secondary schools filed a total of 4,899 reports while a limited number of primary and secondary special education institutions reported over 1,100 suspensions. This duty to notify the Inspectorate is new to primary schools and primary and secondary special education institutions.

Expulsion in serious cases • In some cases, a pupil's behaviour is so serious that he or she must be sent to another school. The pupil will then be expelled or referred to another facility. Over 600 pupils were expelled over the course of the 2014/2015 school year. This procedure is relatively complex, as the new school will also have to accommodate the pupil and parents will have to cooperate. This can result in delays, especially in cases where schools, school boards, partnerships and truancy officers fail to cooperate effectively and educational consultants are not – or only barely – involved in the process.

Best practices from the special education sector • Expulsions are a rare occurrence at primary and secondary special education institutions. This stands to reason if we consider that schools in this sector are equipped to deal with children suffering from extremely serious behavioural problems. We can learn some valuable lessons from schools that manage to reduce behavioural problems. Amongst other strategies, these institutions are applying specialised pedagogical methods. They offer a more motivational range of programmes with higher chances of obtaining a degree, and intensify their collaborations with other parties such as district police officers, truancy officers or external behavioural experts.

3.3 Incidents

Confidential inspectors receive more complex reports • For the second consecutive year, confidential inspectors received a smaller number of reports. However, the reports they did receive concerned increasingly complex and urgent issues. For example, the number of reports on sexual abuse increased over the course of the past school year, and were more likely to concern teachers or other staff members. Reports are also taking on a more legal dimension, as parents are increasingly likely to involve legal counsel in the proceedings. The reports also reflect current social developments. For instance, we saw a rise in the number of reports on discrimination. The number of reports on radicalised youths also increased slightly and we received the first ever reports on pupils and students potentially seeking to travel to Syria.

More reports of sexual abuse • The number of reports on sexual abuse rose from 86 in 2013/2014 to a total of 112 in 2014/2015. The number of reports from secondary schools saw an especially marked increase. One in three reports – an increase in comparison with previous measurements – involved complaints of sexual abuse by a teacher or other staff member. More than half of these reports concerned a serious sex crime: sexual abuse, rape

or sexual assault. One in five reports are registered as 'sexual abuse by an authority figure', which should be taken to mean that the act was committed by an individual charged with teaching tasks who abused his or her position of authority. The number of reports of sexual harassment also increased. In most cases, these reports concern unwanted forms of touching, or undesirable behaviour on social media. This increase is a source of concern. We ask schools to take action against sexual violence against children and young people in order to guarantee their safety. Schools and institutions must ensure that their codes of conduct are consistently applied to all teachers, non-teaching staff and pupils. They must also provide appropriate sex education, encourage resilience amongst their pupils and prevent unsafe situations.

Fewer reports of emotional and physical abuse • We received fewer reports of physical and emotional abuse, especially from the primary education sector. An increased focus on safety and further measures in this area appear to have had effect. Just over half of all reports concerned emotional abuse, including bullying. Although fewer (often serious) bullying incidents were reported over the course of the 2014/2015 school year, the Inspectorate did receive more reports of threats to individual pupils. The reports received from secondary schools included a growing number of incidents in the area of physical violence. More than half of these cases concerned – in some cases severe – bodily harm.

How safe do pupils/students feel at school?

Most pupils in the Dutch school system feel safe at school. This perception of safety tends to vary depending on the relevant school, institution and sector. One quarter of all MBO students occasionally feels unsafe within the school premises.

1 Major differences between the various sectors

Ninety-four percent of all primary school pupils feel safe at school. The same applies to nine out of ten secondary school pupils, and three quarters of all MBO students.

Percentage of pupils that feels safe at school, per sector

2 Most primary school pupils feel safe

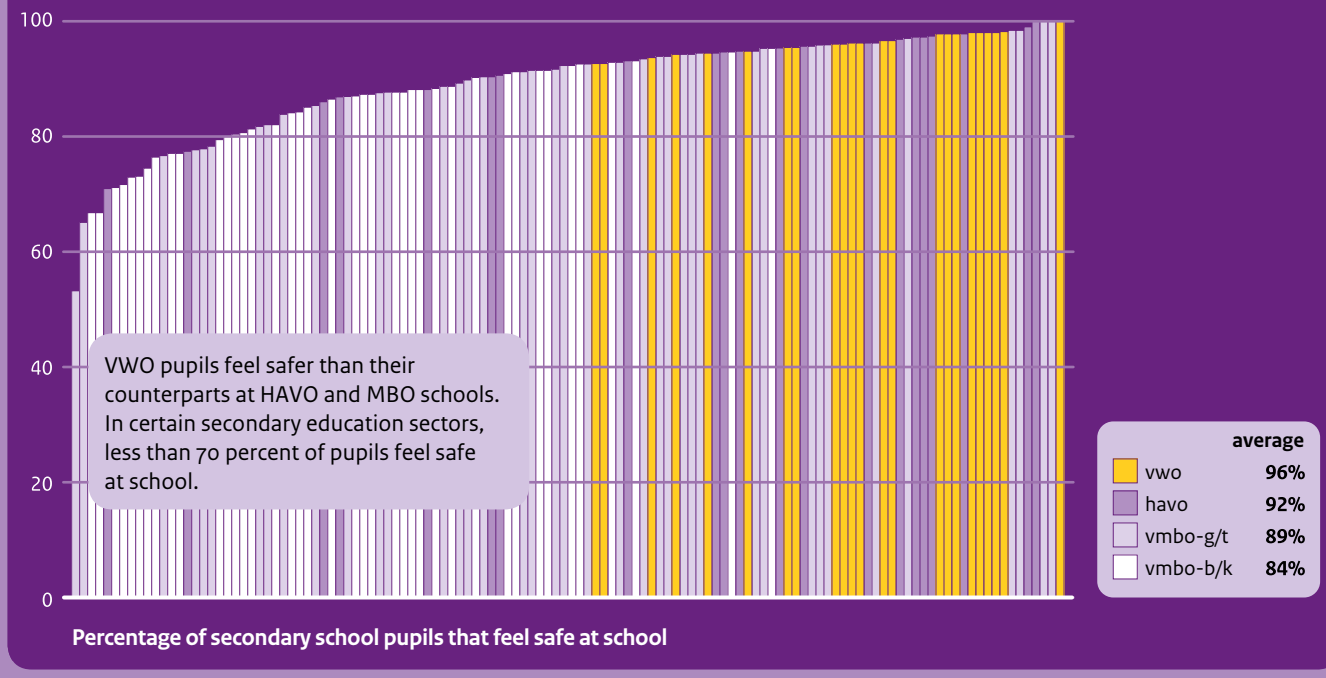
The differences between primary schools are smaller than those in other sectors. Nevertheless, the Inspectorate did identify primary schools where as many as one in five pupils feel unsafe. Pupils at schools that take a structural approach to social and societal competences tend to feel safer than those at institutions that do not.

	average
Schools **with** a structured approach to the development of social and societal competences	95%
Schools **without** a structured approach to the development of social and societal competences	92%

Percentage of primary school pupils that feel safe at school

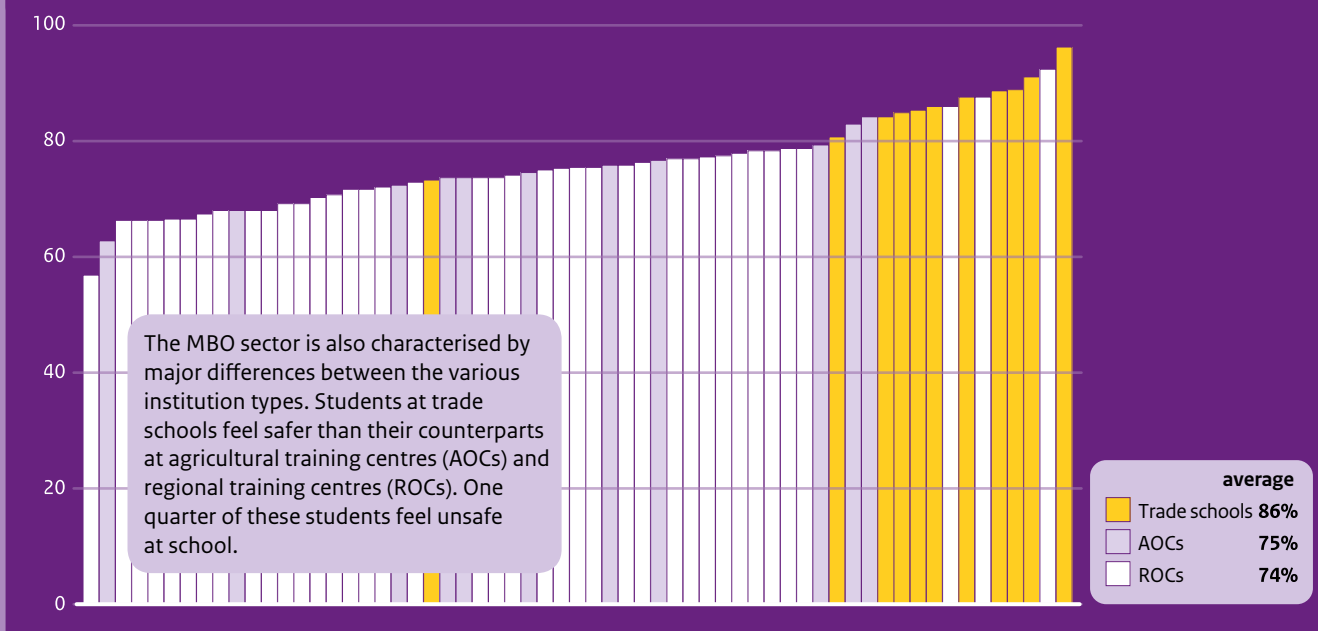
Sources
IvhO, 2013, 2015;
JOB-monitor, 2014

3 Differences are more pronounced in the secondary education sector, both between departments and levels



Percentage of secondary school pupils that feel safe at school

4 Students at trade schools feel safer than students at other MBO institutions



Percentage of students who feel safe within the school premises at MBO schools

4 Education for children with special needs

Since the introduction of education for children with special needs, a growing number of pupils that previously would have attended special education institutions are now going to regular schools. In many cases, these shifts from special to regular education are prompted by financial considerations. The amount of red tape involved in admission applications and re-evaluations is yet to be reduced, and an excessive number of pupils remain at home waiting to be admitted to suitable schools. Educational alliances are focused on substantive aspects rather than organisational matters. This is certainly a positive development. However, there is still much room for improvement in terms of the effectiveness of communications and collaboration. Once these goals have been met, the emphasis will genuinely be on pupils' interests.

4.1 Shift from special to regular education

Fewer pupils attending special education institutions • As a result of the growing emphasis on education for children with special needs, more pupils are currently attending regular schools while the populations at special education institutions are shrinking. The percentage of pupils attending special education institutions and special primary schools declined over the past two years. 2015 also marked the first time a smaller number of pupils entered the special secondary education system.

Regular secondary education sees greatest growth • The shift from special to regular education is most clearly visible in the transition to secondary education. In regions set to receive less funding over the coming years (a strong negative settlement), a growing number of twelve-year-old pupils from former special education clusters 3 and 4 transfer to regular secondary schools. Eighteen percent transferred to regular schools in 2015, compared to 11 percent in 2013. The number of pupils from regular primary schools transferring to special secondary schools is also declining. These pupils are now more likely to end up at regular secondary education institutions.

Less special education in combination with negative settlement • In 2015, schools were more likely to place pupils at regular education institutions in comparison with previous years (figures 1 and 3, page 36/37). This specifically concerns schools within partnerships that are set to receive less funding over the coming years. Primary and secondary special education institutions in regions experiencing both a decline in the population and negative settlement have already made far-reaching choices. In some cases, plans have been made to eventually terminate legal entities and transfer schools to other partners.

Special education more likely to expand in the case of positive settlement • Sixteen primary education partnerships are actually seeing a growing number of pupils participate in primary and secondary special

education. The number of pupils attending special primary and secondary schools in the regions where these partnerships operate increased over the course of 2015 as compared to the previous year. The majority of these partnerships (eleven of a total of sixteen) will be allocated more resources over the coming years as a result of positive equalisation. The placement of pupils is also driven by financial considerations: when more resources become available, a growing number of pupils transfer to special education institutions (figures 2 and 4, page 36/37).

Fewer eighteen-year-olds attending special education institutions • The secondary special education sector is also seeing a declining number of pupils in the eighteen and over age group. How can we explain this development? Although partnerships are currently less likely to issue admissibility statements for this group of pupils, it is currently unclear whether this factor is causing the decline. Several schools indicated that a growing number of eighteen-year-old pupils have been leaving school since the introduction of the Participation Act and restriction of intake opportunities for young persons with disabilities. School-going children are not eligible for disability benefits, whereas parents are required to purchase health insurance for any children over the age of eighteen. This prompts some parents to keep their children at home from this age onwards or try to get them placed in an adult daytime activity programme.

4.2 Resources and support

Varying support resources • Partnerships offer a range of different resources in terms of additional support. Many partnerships are currently opting to increase the amount of basic support available to each pupil. The support budgets made available to schools on behalf of their pupils will then far exceed the budgets provided prior to the introduction of education for children with special needs. Schools are free to allocate these resources as they see fit. Whereas one school may opt to retain smaller class sizes and the current number of teachers, others may choose to create larger classes and hire additional support staff. This development is causing differences between schools and regions in terms of institutions' basic organisational structure and the visibility of additional support.

Varying structures for additional support • In the event that no suitable education can be provided in a regular setting, pupils can often be accommodated by submitting a request for additional support to the relevant partnership. The organisational structure through which such support is provided may vary depending on the partnership. For example, some partnerships facilitate exchanges between teachers from special and regular schools. Teachers from special schools can then be deployed to classes with pupils with a disability. Other partnerships prefer to leave the details of this additional support up to the individual schools.

A focus on financial position management • Several partnerships emphasise the management of their financial position when allocating available resources. As a result, the effective organisation of support for pupils tends to take second place. Such partnerships opt to delegate their duties and authorisations to the school boards; the available resources for additional support are then divided among the various school boards (the 'school model'). Funds are generally distributed on the basis of pupil numbers, whereby schools that previously received pupil-based funding are occasionally compensated. Most partnerships opt for a hybrid of various models. However, this trend towards decentralisation could potentially result in a situation where schools fail to cooperate effectively and are focused inward. Such schools will then provide insufficient accountability to the partnership, which will be unable to determine whether resources are being spent appropriately. These partnerships also expect schools to independently resolve any conflicts concerning support for or placement of pupils. As a result, school boards may be unable to fulfil their legal duty to provide suitable education.

Specific policies for MBO institutions • MBO schools are characterised by varied populations, which include students in need of additional support and specific forms of supervision. Attention is given to suitable education at all institutional levels within the MBO sector, while policies tend to differ from institution to institution. Areas for improvement include more effective substantiation of rejected student applications and the failure of teaching staff to provide sufficient additional support in day-to-day educational practice.

4.3 Excessive bureaucracy in the area of placement and extensions

Excessive bureaucracy at some institutions • The reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy is one of the main objectives of education for children with special needs. Nevertheless, schools in the primary and secondary special education sector that interact intensively with educational partnerships are likely to experience a great deal of bureaucracy when applying for admissibility

> *"Fewer pupils attending special education and special education primary schools."*

statements.[19] This is due to the fact that partnerships are required to reclassify pupils as part of the application procedure. Schools frequently have to make part of their staff complement available to facilitate this process. The Inspectorate has also identified partnerships that have been operating with great efficiency, speed and considerably less bureaucracy since the introduction of education for children with special needs. These partnerships hold consultations instead of merely compiling files. The relevant pupil's existing developmental potential will then serve as the basis for any discussions or decision-making. As participants in these consultations, parents tend to show a greater degree of involvement in the overall process.

Schools experiencing growing workloads • Schools have indicated that administrative duties currently take up more time than the necessary consultations. New tasks relating to the provision of support to pupils also present a complex challenge. Schools perceive current workloads (in terms of the duration and complexity of procedures) to be greater.

Parents seeking greater involvement • Parents' responses to these changes to education for children with special needs have been varied, but generally quite positive. As a result of the adjustments, it now takes less time to prepare development outlooks for their children and fill out forms. However, parents do indicate that their wishes were more likely to be taken into account before the introduction of education for children with special needs. Parents generally wish to be involved more intensively and do not always have the sense that they are being taken seriously. Many parents find it difficult to determine the scope of their rights.

Little room to accommodate complex support needs • Some pupils require a combination of education and care. This often concerns support within the school and treatment outside of school hours. When compared to the facilities offered in primary and secondary special education, current regulations for regular primary and secondary education seem to offer little scope for such support. The organisation underlying this combination of care and educational support has proven to be complex. As a result, pupils with complex educational and care needs are occasionally faced with complicated processes, unnecessary bureaucracy and uncertain and sub-optimal outcomes (including situations in which they are forced to stay at home). Some partnerships treat education and care as two separate entities due to financial considerations. In practice, this position proves untenable for pupils with intensive support needs.

4.4 Stay-at-home children

Definition of stay-at-home children • The Inspectorate defines stay-at-home children as pupils that are unable to attend school for a combination of reasons. Partnerships apply varying definitions for such pupils and take different views as to who holds ultimate responsibility for their well-being. However, arguments on the relevant definitions or responsibilities do not benefit these stay-at-home children. The Inspectorate will be intensifying its monitoring of partnerships in response to reports of pupils that are currently staying at home or might end up doing so in the near future. The ultimate aim is to reduce the number of stay-at-home children.[20] To this end, the Inspectorate will be holding the parties involved accountable and ensuring that they establish clear channels of communication.

Regional alliances help reduce absenteeism • In an effort to reduce the number of stay-at-home children, partnerships, schools and youth care workers have been jointly designated as 'problem owners'. Effective regional cooperation has proven to be the most effective way of reducing the number of stay-at-home children. However, such collaboration is not necessarily a given. The partnerships take different views on the extent to which they are responsible for these pupils. As a result, some do not necessarily feel it is their duty to address the problem and fail to take action. Although the prevention and resolution of such situations is prioritised equally across the board, a mere 35 of all 152 partnerships have adequately elaborated their policies in this area.

[19] Kuiper, E.J., Loon-Dikkers, A.L.C. van, Ledoux, G., m.m.v. Felix, C., Hendrix, N. (2015). Follow-up measurement of perceived bureaucracy in relation to education for children with special needs. Study amongst schools and parents as a part of the short-term assessment of education for children with special needs. Amsterdam: Kohnstamm Institute.

[20] Also see Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) (2016). Figures on compulsory education and approach to stay-at-home children. Letter to the President of the Lower House of Parliament, 3 February 2016. The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

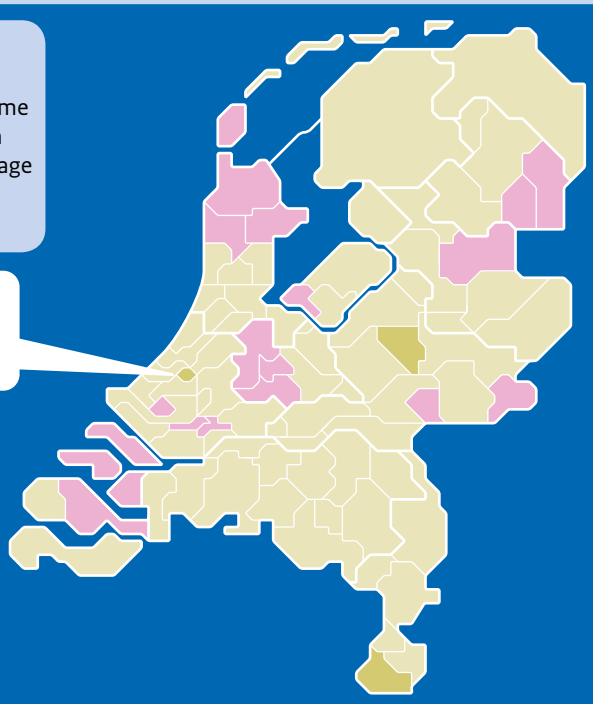
Are more pupils attending regular education?

Where possible, children should attend regular schools. This is one of the basic principles of the 2014 Education Act for Children with Special Needs. Although the percentage of children attending regular education is increasing slightly, we can identify some regional differences.

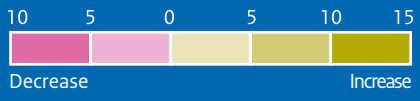
1 Changes in terms of the percentage of pupils attending regular primary education vary per region

In order to ensure that all children have access to suitable education, schools have been working together in regional partnerships since 2014. In some regions, the proportion of children participating in regular education has increased while the percentage taking part in special education has declined. In other regions, the reverse applies.

Increases were most significant in the Zoetermeer region, where **seven more** pupils out of every thousand attended regular education in 2015 as compared to the previous year.



Decrease or increase in the proportion of pupils attending regular primary schools as compared to 2014, per one thousand pupils

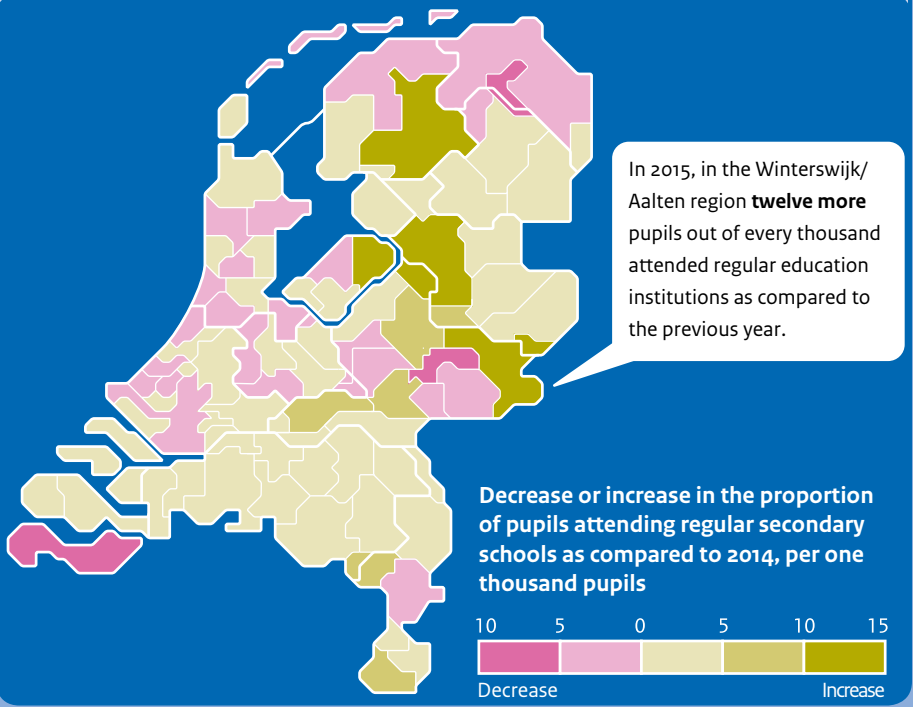


2 Lower budgets for special education may result in higher pupil numbers at regular primary schools

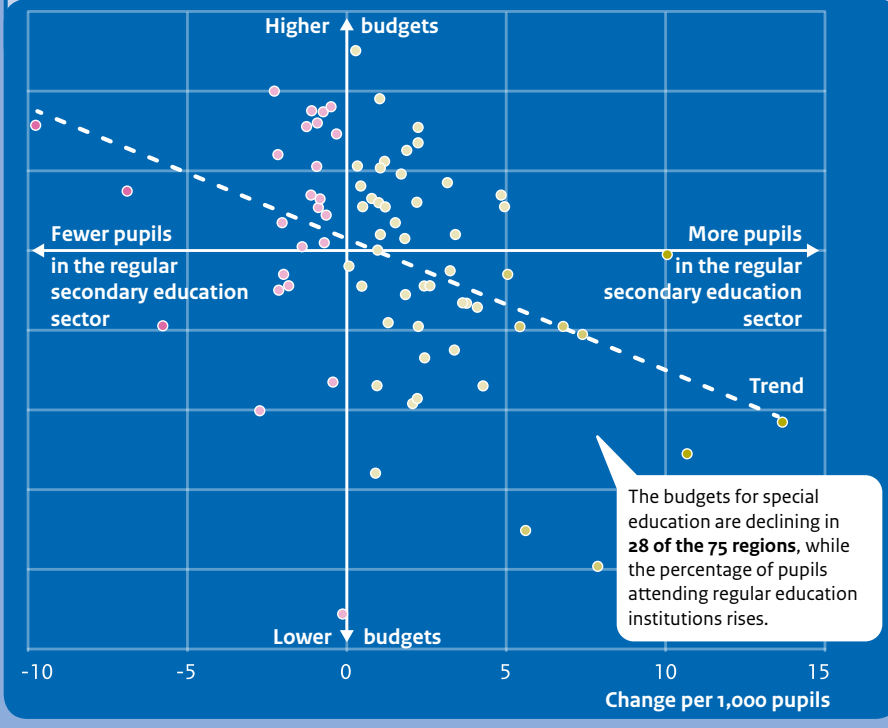
The budgets for special education are declining in **35 of the 77 regions**, while the percentage of pupils attending regular education institutions rises.

In future, all partnerships will receive equal funding to accommodate additional support for pupils. This represents a change from the situation prior to the introduction of education for children with special needs, when budgets were unequally distributed around the country. There is a mild correlation between this financial 'equalisation' and the changing percentage of children attending regular education institutions. This correlation is more pronounced at secondary schools than primary schools.

3 Greater regional differences in secondary education



4 The influence of equalisation is more pronounced in the secondary education sector



Source
IvhO, 2015

Lack of information on absenteeism • Schools, truancy officers and partnerships must record absenteeism data in order to monitor the progress of their efforts to prevent and resolve these situations. According to the Inspectorate's survey of November 2015, some partnerships do not have access to the latest data. In cases where such overviews are available, the scope of data may only cover pupils that have – for example – missed at least sixteen hours of lessons or practical training without a valid reason over the course of four consecutive weeks. This means a large portion of the relevant absenteeism data is still missing. Some partnerships apply a broader definition. Their policies are also targeted at pupils who have been exempted from compulsory education due to the fact that no suitable education is available to them, pupils whose parents feel the available facilities are not suitable for their child and pupils that are not enrolled at any school.

Need for a persevering approach • Pupils that cannot be placed at a suitable school run the risk of long-term absenteeism. One quarter of all partnerships have concluded agreements (with municipal authorities, in some cases) as to which party is authorised to force a solution if the pupil cannot be accommodated through standard procedures. In some cases, they may also bring in youth care workers. However, many partnerships have indicated that they have difficulty reaching agreements with youth care centres. One in six partnerships in the primary education sector and one in three secondary education partnerships have reached clear agreements on this aspect and awarded one or more special authorities to a separate body. There is no legal obligation to organise this type of emergency authority, which is regarded as a last resort in the effort to find suitable schools for stay-at-home children. Some partnerships even reject such solutions as a matter of principle. They take the view that it is preferable to reach a consensus with other parties, including the relevant municipal authorities.

4.5 Partnerships

Cooperation crucial to effective education for children with special needs • Our assessments of partnerships offering tailored education have shown that the parties involved have a sense of mutual trust, share responsibilities, view themselves as 'problem owners' and engage in solution-oriented dialogue. They make use of each other's knowledge and know how to help one another. These partnerships also consistently put the interests of the child first.

Intensified monitoring of partnerships • As at 1 August 2015, 124 of the 152 partnerships were found to comply with basic quality standards. Of the 28 partnerships that failed to meet the necessary standards, 18 concerned alliances between primary education institutions, while the remaining 10 were alliances between secondary schools. Following the introduction of more intensive monitoring at these 28 partnerships, a total of 22 were subsequently allocated a basic quality. The boards at two of the remaining six partnerships proved to be exposed to excessive and culpable risks, while the situation at four boards was cause for concern.

Deficiencies in support plans resolved • School boards are expected to record their procedures for organising optimally-tailored education for all pupils in their region. These agreements are to be recorded in a support plan, which must meet various legal requirements. These plans still suffered from numerous shortcomings in 2014. The support plans submitted by 93 percent of all primary education partnerships failed to meet all legal requirements (measurement conducted in May 2014). The same applied to 98 percent of all secondary school partnerships. The average number of omissions totalled six and four per partnership, respectively. Two thirds had failed to reach agreements on the reclassification of existing pupils at primary and secondary special education institutions. Furthermore, no agreements had been made on the procedure for transfers from primary and secondary special education to regular education institutions. Half of all partnerships had failed to agree on targets for the desired qualitative and quantitative results. The partnerships were then instructed to address these issues, resulting in a situation whereby the great majority of support plans now feature all mandatory components.

Lack of independent oversight • In most cases, internal monitoring of the various partnerships is not genuinely independent. The supervisory body members often simultaneously serve as school administrators at one or more schools within the partnership. This inevitably leads to conflicts of interest, as supervisory authorities are expected to further the interests of both parents and pupils as well as the schools at which they serve as administrators. As a result, internal oversight can never be genuinely independent. Furthermore, there is no clear separation between the various internal monitoring functions and administrative roles.

Financially robust • 95 of the 152 partnerships submitted an initial annual account over the August–December 2014 period. Analysis of these documents did not identify any issues in terms of financial continuity or legality. However, partnerships would do well to provide clearer accountability for the allocation of financial resources. At present, the partnerships' financial accounts provide little or no such accountability. As a result, it is unclear whether pupils are benefiting from the partnerships' efforts. The Inspectorate also concludes that partnerships frequently submit their annual accounts to auditors with insufficient knowledge of education for children with special needs.


BO MAG

5 Focusing on quality

Weak schools are improving, while the number of excellent schools is growing. Schools with effective quality assurance systems tend to be learning organisations. Despite the ongoing professionalisation of teachers, the quality of lessons remains unchanged. Schools with an effective school leader boast higher-quality lessons. School boards are becoming increasingly professional, yet still take an unrealistically positive view of future pupil numbers. Furthermore, internal monitoring and participation bodies do not always have sufficient influence on the decision-making process. As we also found, school leaders and administrators occasionally make choices prompted by financial considerations rather than the best interests of their pupils.

5.1 Schools and programmes as learning organisations

A small group of (very) weak schools • The percentage of schools and programmes of insufficient quality throughout the various sectors is small. As we found over the past few years, (very) weak schools in particular are showing marked improvement. In most cases, this can be attributed to personnel changes and the introduction of a culture of ongoing quality improvement. Nevertheless, we are also seeing new (very) weak schools emerge.

More excellent schools • The past four years saw a growing number of primary and secondary schools receive the 'Excellent School' designation (figure, page 42). This concerns schools with a demonstrable and sustainable excellence profile. In addition to a rise in the number of applications (from 165 in 2012 to 210 in 2015), the percentage of schools to be awarded this designation also increased significantly from 32 percent in 2012 to 62 percent in 2015. The primary and secondary special education sector also boasts excellent schools, at a total of 19 in 2015. Schools designated as excellent regard this distinction as both a form of acknowledgement for their efforts and a challenge to continually evaluate and further develop their education. They also indicated that their new status had strengthened their motivation, helped improve internal awareness and improved the degree of cohesion within their team. Most excellent schools also manage to attract more new pupils.

Excellent schools are learning organisations • These excellent schools stand out due to their sense of genuine enthusiasm. Both teachers and pupils exude energy and commitment. Teachers are often highly involved and eager to bring out the best in each child. In many cases, teaching staff have established working groups, clusters or project teams in an effort to implement improvements or changes. Although the school leader will generally play an encouraging and advisory role, he or she is not necessarily responsible for initiating such structures. Excellent schools tend to be learning organisations, constantly seeking to achieve further improvements and raise the bar. The learning process is never completed, and ongoing evolution seems both inevitable and natural.

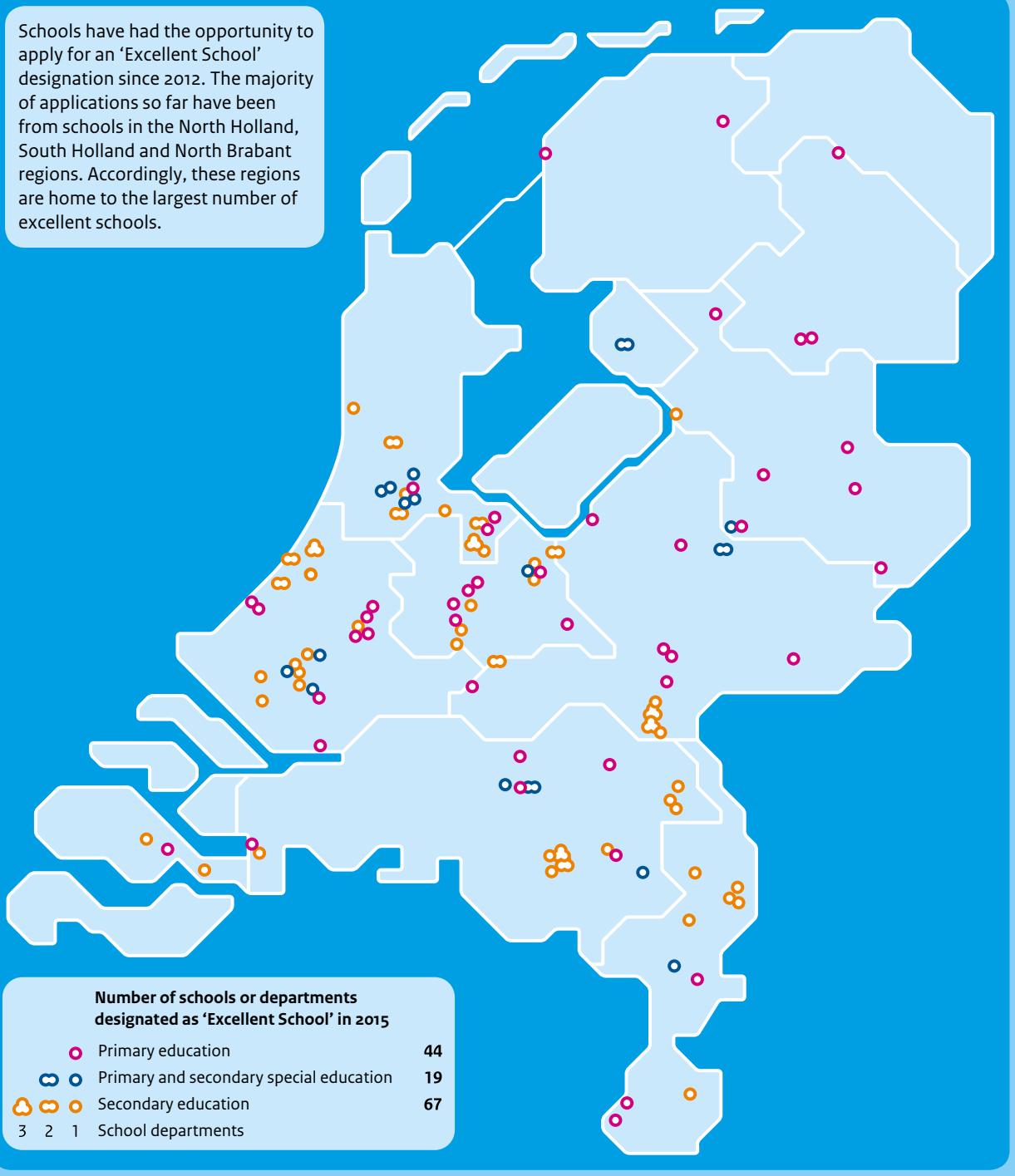
Improved quality assurance efforts, stagnant evaluation • The past few years have seen further improvement of quality assurance efforts across almost all sectors. Almost all schools currently evaluate their learning performance and teaching processes, as compared to a small minority several years ago. Most

How many excellent schools are there?

The number of schools designated as 'excellent' has increased from 53 in 2012 to 130 in 2015. A growing number of schools are applying for the designation.

Excellent schools are mainly concentrated in the western and southern regions.

Schools have had the opportunity to apply for an 'Excellent School' designation since 2012. The majority of applications so far have been from schools in the North Holland, South Holland and North Brabant regions. Accordingly, these regions are home to the largest number of excellent schools.



Source
IvhO, 2016

schools apply these evaluations to implement targeted quality improvements (three quarters of all secondary schools, 80 percent of all primary schools). However, they are still failing to complete the quality assurance cycle. For example, schools frequently launch new initiatives without evaluating existing ones or working to integrate them into their processes.

Learning organisations with effective quality assurance systems • Schools and programmes with effective quality assurance systems are often learning organisations. They set clearly-defined goals, evaluate results and adjust policies when targets are not met. School leaders/team leaders and teaching staff have an inquisitive attitude and are focused on the improvement of working processes. Various aspects of such schools and programmes tend to be of higher quality than those at schools with a less active approach to quality assurance (this does not apply to the higher education sector). Excellent schools are also likely to assure the quality of their basic processes, and will thus have more time to learn or achieve new goals.

5.2 Quality and professionalisation of teachers

Quality of lessons scarcely improved • The quality of lessons has scarcely improved since our previous report. Over the past few years, we emphasised the major variation in terms of lesson quality and failure to develop adequate differentiation skills. The latter term refers to the inability of teaching staff to offer each pupil the appropriate teaching material. The quality of lessons has scarcely improved despite numerous efforts and activities in this area. Quality levels still vary greatly and teachers are not differentiating more than in previous years.

Unqualified teachers • Some teaching staff lack the necessary qualifications to carry out their profession. Unqualified teachers tend to be deployed to specific secondary school subjects and are also found at a portion of primary and secondary special education institutions. MBO institutions also employ teachers without teacher training qualifications or a background in pedagogics or didactics. One in five primary and secondary special education institutions also turned out to employ unqualified teaching staff. Most of these institutions are (very) weak schools. These unqualified teachers are generally staff members that previously served as teaching assistants, and have been assigned to teach classes despite their lack of qualifications or teacher training. Qualified teachers at secondary schools are more likely to differentiate than their unqualified colleagues.

Insufficient support for novice teachers • As in previous years, the quality of lessons provided by novice teachers fails to meet the standards of their more experienced colleagues. Although new teaching staff must inevitably acquire certain skills during their first few years of teaching, it is also important that schools and teacher training programmes provide adequate supervision. At present, such support is not being offered in sufficient measure. As the Inspectorate has concluded, schools and teacher training institutions do not necessarily maintain lines of communication. Furthermore, the supervision of temporary (and occasionally permanent) staff is currently inadequate.

Less interaction between older teachers and pupils • The quality of lessons provided by older teachers compares unfavourably to those taught by their younger colleagues. Interaction between older teachers and pupils at MBO institutions tends to be of a less adequate standard. The Inspectorate feels this aspect should be the focus of greater attention, in view of the rising average age of teaching staff. The Netherlands has a relatively large percentage of older teachers in comparison with other countries.[21] Almost half of all teaching staff at MBO institutions are 50 or older, while close to 15 percent are over the age of 60.

Growing professionalisation • Teachers are becoming increasingly professional. They are obtaining additional qualifications with the aid of teacher's scholarships and/or through peer reviews. Special educational needs Master's are especially popular amongst teachers seeking to broaden their skill-set. Although teachers and teams are increasingly likely to independently organise this type of professionalisation, such processes are still largely initiated by school leaders.

High workloads and absenteeism due to illness • A large number of teachers are affected by high workloads. As the Inspectorate concludes, teachers tend to work hard and often experience high workloads. Absenteeism due to illness is also high in comparison with most other professions. Actual absenteeism figures vary significantly depending on the school or programme in question. Relatively high absenteeism rates are common at (very) weak schools and schools with a large percentage of disadvantaged pupils.

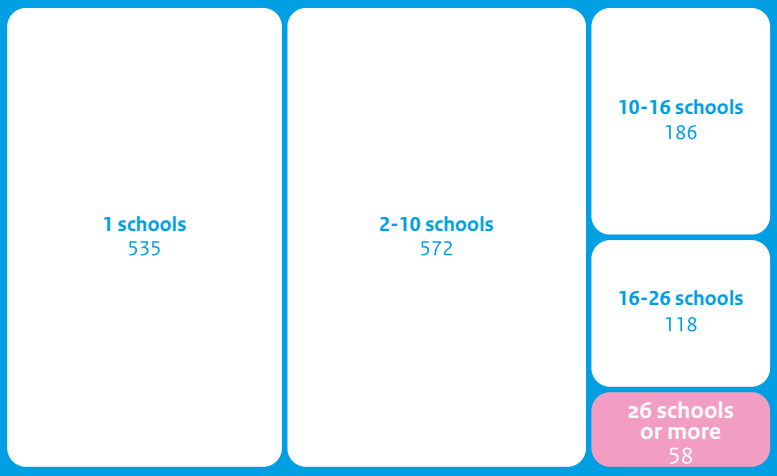
[21] OECD (2015). Education at a glance 2015. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

How financially sound are our school boards?

The Netherlands has some 1,500 school boards which are jointly responsible for over ten thousand institutions, schools and departments. A small portion of these boards do not have their finances in order, affecting almost 115,000 pupils and students.

1 School board size varies greatly

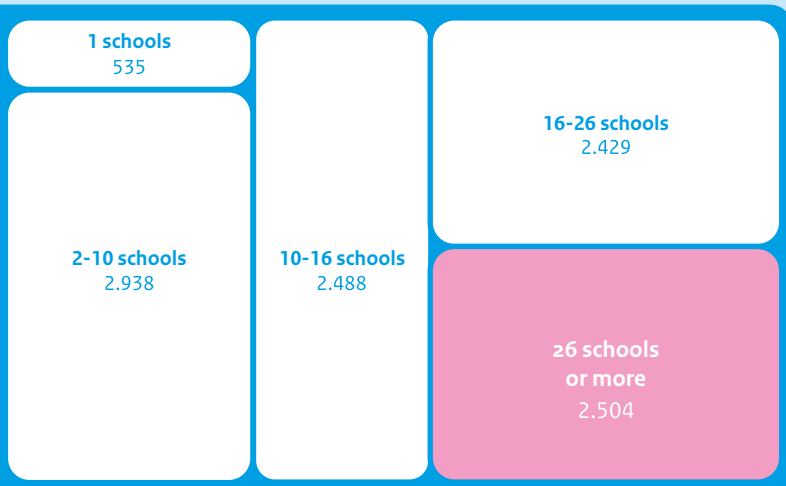
Approximately one third of all school boards are responsible for a single school or institution, whereas one quarter are charged with more than ten schools or institutions. Fifty-eight boards are responsible for overseeing more than 26 schools or institutions.



School boards on the basis of number of schools

2 The majority of schools and institutions are governed by a larger overarching board

When viewed from the perspective of the schools and institutions, this ratio is inverted: one in twenty are governed by a board charged with a single school or institution, while close to a quarter are overseen by a board responsible for 26 or more schools or institutions.

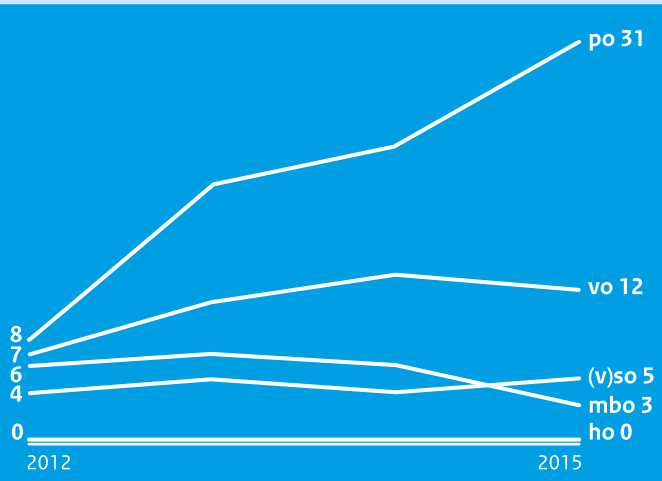


Schools on the basis of school board size

Source
IvhO, 2015

3 Growing number of primary school boards under adjusted financial supervision

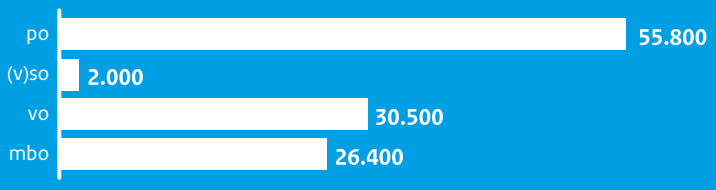
Whereas the number of boards under adjusted financial supervision totalled 25 in 2012, this figure had risen to 51 by the end of 2015 due to the more intensive monitoring of school boards. Together, these boards are responsible for over 400 schools and institutions and a total of nearly 115,000 pupils and students. The number of boards under adjusted financial supervision has since declined.



Number of school boards under adjusted financial supervision

4 Adjusted financial supervision can impact a large number of pupils and students

A large school board in poor financial health will impact a far greater number of pupils than a smaller board in the same situation. School boards in the primary education sector are relatively small. The three MBO boards under adjusted financial supervision are jointly responsible for over 26,000 pupils, while the 31 primary education boards are charged with just under 56,000 pupils.



Number of pupils and students overseen by school boards under adjusted financial supervision

"In addition to competent teachers, school leaders also play a key role in ensuring educational quality."

5.3 A need for professional school leaders

Good school leaders equals better schools • In addition to competent teachers, school leaders also play a key role in ensuring educational quality. As our inspectors consistently found over the past few years, the lessons at schools with an effective school leader are of better quality.[22] Various international studies have also shown that pupils at schools with effective school leaders achieve better average results.

Competence of school leaders • School leaders in the primary and secondary education sectors have identified and recorded the specific competences needed to carry out their jobs in a professional manner: the ability to develop a vision, involve the surrounding environment, build an educational organisation, collaborate, ensure that their school evolves into a learning organisation, and engage in higher order thinking. The Inspectorate previously conducted an assessment in 2013 to determine the extent to which school leaders had acquired these competences.[23] The general quality of school leaders was deemed to be adequate, despite some major variations. As it turned out, school leaders did not adequately anticipate relevant risks and dilemmas, devoted insufficient attention to the creation of a professional organisational culture and failed to reflect on their own actions in sufficient measure. These aspects are categorised under the following competences: 'higher order thinking' and 'strategic action'. The Inspectorate hopes that the application of internal professional standards will prompt a growing number of school leaders to develop these competences.

School leaders' professionalisation register • School leaders' professionalisation registers have been established in an effort to promote the further professionalisation of school leaders. The Primary Education School Leaders' Professionalisation Register has been in place since January 2013; as of 2018, all primary school leaders will be obliged to register in this database. A total of 3,250 school leaders had registered at year-end 2015. It should be pointed out that we have not established any correlation between registration and the quality of primary schools. A register for secondary school leaders has also been in place since March 2016. There are currently no plans to introduce mandatory registration for this database.

[22] Inspectorate of Education (2014). The quality of school leaders at primary schools, special education institutions and secondary schools. Utrecht: The Inspectorate of Education.

[23] See 22

5.4 Finances

More primary schools under adjusted financial supervision • Four percent of all primary schools are currently run by administrations having financial problems. This situation is affecting close to 115,000 pupils and students (figures 1, 2 and 4, page 44/45). The number of primary school boards under adjusted financial supervision increased from 8 to a total of 31. This increase is attributable to the more intensive monitoring of boards. The number of boards under adjusted supervision remained stable or declined slightly in all other sectors (figure 3, page 45).

Neutral profitability, growing liquidity • On average, school boards ended the 2014 financial year on a positive note. The primary and – to a far lesser extent – secondary education sectors saw negative profit margins; school boards were forced to eat into their equity capital, and spent some of the resources made available as part of the 'Autumn agreement'. At the same time, school boards in all sectors are proving reluctant to take on additional financial burdens. As a result, there is often room for investment.[24]

Rise in flexible staff deployment • Staffing costs in the primary and secondary education sector saw another mild increase, and have now returned to their pre-2012 level. All sectors saw a rise in flexible staffing in the period between 2010 and 2014 (payroll and secondment solutions). Some 400 million euros were spent on flexible staffing solutions over the course of 2014. The greater part of this amount was spent in the MBO sector. MBO schools employed the greatest percentage of staff members through payroll and secondment constructions in the period from 2010 to 2014. The MBO sector also saw the greatest rise in flexible secondment during this period. Special education institutions also saw a relatively large increase in flexible secondment: 1.5 percentage points over the past four years. Primary education institutions applied the smallest percentage of payroll and secondment constructions in 2010, but are gradually catching up to the secondary education sector. Flexible

[24] Inspectorate of Education (2015). Financial situation in the education sector, 2014. Utrecht: The Inspectorate of Education.

secondment appears to have remained relatively stable within the secondary education sector, at an overall increase of 0.2 percentage points. Any assessment of staffing developments within the education sector should also factor in flexible staff deployment.

Rationale for and risks of flexible shell • School boards opt for flexible staffing solutions for a variety of reasons.[25] For example, such flexibility may offer them the freedom they need to rapidly adapt to shrinkage and potential financial shortfalls. However, any approach based on a flexible shell also involves inevitable financial risks. Administrations are not always aware of legislative amendments in the area of flexible labour. In some cases, the actual degree of flexibility may be deceptive: administrations believe they can rapidly dissolve temporary staffing contracts, whereas this may not necessarily be the case in the practice. The flexible shell is also a costly solution, partly due to the expenses involved in hiring temporary staffing agencies and flexible labour organisations and the need to pay VAT. As of yet, we do not know whether flexible shell-based solutions have any effect on educational quality.

Overly optimistic estimates of pupil numbers • School boards prepare long-term budgets, which are partly based on the expected number of pupils (pupil prognoses). Details on this aspect are recorded in a continuity section. However, the quality of this section is still less than optimal, especially in terms of pupil prognoses. Boards tend to make overly optimistic prognoses of future pupil numbers, and find themselves unprepared for future financial risks as a result. It should be pointed out that primary education institutions tend to be more accurate in this regard than their secondary education counterparts. This is partly due to the fact that primary school boards have had more time to become accustomed to the trend of declining pupil numbers, whereas the phenomenon is relative new to the secondary education sector.

Realistic growth/shrinkage prognoses • Realistic pupil and student prognoses are not merely relevant in view of the ongoing shrinkage of primary and secondary education. Primary and secondary special education schools are also witnessing a decline in pupil numbers. The same applies to the higher education sector, where growth appears to have stagnated and 2015 saw a drop in student numbers. At the same time, we are seeing major differences between individual programmes; some are experiencing a sharp decrease in the number of enrolled students while others are growing. Such upward or downward trends have a significant impact on the operational management of these programmes and institutions. It is thus crucial that higher education institutions make realistic prognoses in order to effectively anticipate shrinkage or growth.

5.5 Administrative measures

School boards increasingly focused on quality • As in previous years, 2014/2015 saw educational institutions devote a great deal of attention to the further development and professionalisation of school board, internal monitoring and participation in decision-making. The Inspectorate is pleased to see that boards are still – and increasingly – emphasising educational quality and quality-based management strategies. For instance, three quarters of all school boards in the primary education sector spend most of their time on educational quality.[26] In addition to monitoring the enforcement of minimum quality standards (generally the standard applied by the Inspectorate), this also includes the setting of targets and standards designed to raise the quality of education above this minimum standard. A growing number of boards are also devoting greater attention to the relationship between educational quality and the effective allocation of financial resources. Efforts to develop 'good governance' are increasingly based around aspects such as organisational culture and behaviour, leadership and adherence to standards and values. Boards seem to be increasingly aware that educational quality is more than a set of regulations and agreements. As a result, the quality of education is becoming increasingly integral to the operations of our educational institutions' boards.

Internal monitoring and participation in decision-making • Ideally, internal monitoring should serve to both support and counterbalance the board in order to maintain educational quality and/or ensure financial continuity. Internal monitoring that meets these requirements can contribute to an effective quality assurance and management system. As we found, internal supervisors are currently still getting to grips with the practical implementation of this role and various associated dilemmas. All too often, internal monitoring bodies have no insight into developments with the potential to adversely affect educational quality and/or the school or institution's financial situation, or only manage to do so after the fact. However, we are pleased to find that these parties are working to further improve their performance and professional conduct.

[25] Wit, J. de, & Donker van Heel, P. (2014). *Payrollkrachten. Een onderzoek naar de kenmerken van payrollkrachten.* Rotterdam: Ecorys.

[26] Oomens, M., & Scholten, F. (2016). Good governance monitor for the primary education sector, 2015 Utrecht: Oberon onderzoek advies.

Representative advisory bodies are also still seeking to effectively position themselves as a critical force in the education sector. As the Inspectorate concluded, representative advisory bodies currently still have insufficient opportunity to counteract boards and influence the decision-making process.

Prevention of incidents • Institutions are generally well-managed. However, the performance of some boards is characterised by serious incidents and shortcomings. 2014/2015 saw a total of six serious incidents whereby the actions of a board administration endangered the quality of education and/or financial continuity. The introduction of a continuity section in annual reports and personal liability of administrators and internal supervisors should help to prevent such incidents in future. More importantly, though, administrators, internal supervisors and representative advisory bodies should fulfil their duties effectively and remain focused on potential financial risks.

Code of Good Governance still not universally implemented • The application of the Code of Good Governance is a key point for attention amongst boards and educational organisations. This code features guidelines on the actions of boards and internal supervisory bodies, and is intended to further improve the quality of education. The practical elaboration of this code varies depending on the education sector. The vast majority of boards apply a Code of Good Governance in accordance with legal requirements. Nevertheless, some boards are still failing to apply such a code. This is the case at 10 percent of all primary education boards. All sectoral councils apply aspects of this Code of Good Governance as a precondition for organisational membership, thus emphasising its importance to their members.

An increasingly complex environment • Institutional boards operate in complex environments. Their performance can be negatively impacted by a wide range of problems and issues, such as the development of education for children with special needs, the development of inter-sectoral boards, administrative cooperation or mergers with child and youth care institutions. Effective embedding within the regional context appears to be increasingly crucial. Naturally, this growing complexity will require highly effective administrative performance. This aspect is all the more crucial to the Inspectorate in view of the fact that boards operating in complex environments are more likely to deal with a growing number of weak schools and programmes.

A need for more realistic financial prognoses • We can draw various lessons from previous incidents at educational institutions during which the continuity of education was seriously undermined. For example, institutions must gain greater insight into general and financial developments and the associated expectations. For this reason, educational institutions are now legally required to include a continuity section in their annual report. The Inspectorate has concluded that 2014 annual reports were more likely to contain prognoses on pupil numbers and staffing developments, a long-term budget and description of risk management procedures as compared to the previous year. However, the featured continuity sections frequently fail to specify the relevant basic principles, considerations and expected developments.

Abbreviations

CBS	Statistics Netherlands
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
DUO	The Dutch government's Executive Agency for Education. DUO finances and informs pupils and students as well as schools, and facilitates exams
HAVO	Senior general secondary education
HBO	Higher professional education (university of applied sciences)
HO	Higher education
IvhO	Inspectorate of Education
JOB	Student union for all Dutch students in vocational education and training
MBO	Senior secondary vocational 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
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
VSO	Special secondary education
VWO	Pre-university education
WO	Research-oriented education (research university)

Publication Details

Publication
The Inspectorate of Education

Visualisations
De Argumentenfabriek

Photography
Arenda Oomen

Photographed schools/institutions
Christelijke basisschool De Wegwijzer in Wijk bij Duurstede
ZWIN College in Oostburg
Open Schoolgemeenschap Bijlmer in Amsterdam-Southeast
De Taalbrug in Eindhoven
Clusius College in Hoorn
ROC Tilburg in Tilburg
Stenden University of Applied Sciences in Leeuwarden

Design/printing
Xerox/OBT, The Hague

Ordering a copy

You can download this publication in pdf format at www.destaatvanhetonderwijs.nl

For a paper copy, please email loket@onderwijsinspectie.nl

The Inspectorate of Education
P.O. Box 2730
3500 GS Utrecht

www.destaatvanhetonderwijs.nl
www.onderwijsinspectie.nl

ISBN 978-90-8503-382-0