

# Teacher Training in The Netherlands

## Introduction

This memorandum explains the Dutch situation regarding teacher training, for the European network of teacher education policies to be established. In compiling this memorandum, allowances were made for the guidelines of Professor Friedrich Buchberger in his capacity as Rapporteur General of the Conference on Teacher Education Policies in the European Union, which will be held 22 and 23 May in the Algarve.

There will be a discussion of the following topics, successively:

1. The Dutch system of teacher training (subsection 1);
2. The responsibilities of the government and the educational institutions (sub. 2);
3. Induction (sub. 3);
4. In-service education/continuous professional development and further education of teachers (sub. 4);
5. Policies on the incorporation of a European dimension into teacher education (sub. 5);
6. The main problems of and challenges for teacher education and new strategic targets for teacher education and teacher education policies and recent developments (sub. 6).

## 1. The Dutch System of Teacher Training

In the Netherlands, teacher training is part of higher education.

Higher vocational education contains full-time, part-time and dual training systems for:

- Primary school teacher;
- Secondary school teacher, grade-two qualification;
- Secondary school teacher, grade-one qualification;
- Special education teacher (secondary training);

University education includes full-time, part-time and dual training systems for:

- Secondary school teacher, grade-one qualification.

This training is offered by colleges ('hogescholen') and universities, which also offer other technical or economic training, for example.

There is no specific training for teachers of vocational and adult education. There are more opportunities to become vocational or adult education teachers than there are in primary or secondary education. In this sector, people with higher professional education or master's degrees, along with those who have senior secondary vocational education and three years of teaching experience, may teach. This is conditional, within a period agreed with the receiving school, to obtaining satisfactory proof of didactic qualifications. Several teacher-training institutes will provide the courses leading to such proof.

Full-time and part-time training for primary school teacher carry study loads of 168 credits (1 credit equals a 40-hour study load; a four-year, full-time study is 42 weeks of 40 hours each). Candidates with at least senior general secondary education or senior secondary vocational education certificates are eligible for this training. Primary school teachers are qualified to teach all primary education subjects (intended for pupils between the ages of 4 and 12) and special education. There is also part-time secondary training for special education teachers (42 credits). This can be taken after teacher training for primary or secondary education, or following pedagogic studies.

Full-time or part-time training for secondary school teachers with grade-two qualification also carries a study load of 168 credits. Eligible candidates must at least have senior general secondary education or senior secondary vocational education certificates. Admission to some teacher training courses for

grade-two qualification is only possible with special examination subjects. The training leads to a qualification in one subject for secondary education.

Secondary school teachers with grade-two qualifications are qualified to teach the first three school years of pre-university and senior general secondary education, along with all school years of junior general secondary education, pre-vocational and secondary vocational education.

Teacher training for secondary education, grade one, is given by higher professional teacher-training institutes and by university teacher training. There are two variants of higher professional teacher training. First, there is teacher training for secondary education, grade one, following grade-two training. It carries a study load of 63 credits. Candidates admitted to this (post-initial) training must have grade-two qualifications or have taken their master's examinations in the same subject. Secondly, there is 'non-graded' teacher training for physical education training and art education, which carry study loads of 168 credits. These are no grade-two equivalents for these. Finally, there is grade-one training in drawing, handicrafts or textile crafts. These also carry study loads of 168 credits. They do not follow, but run parallel to grade-two training in these subjects.

Teacher training in secondary education, grade one, is also given at university level. The study load of the training is 42 credits (equivalent to one year's full-time study or two year's part-time). One can take university teacher training after completing a university doctoral programme in the same subject.

Students who have completed their studies are authorised to teach; i.e. eligible for appointment to a school. Before actually being appointed, they must also be in possession of a statement regarding their conduct. It is then up to the receiving school to appoint or not to appoint the teacher.

Legislation regulating higher and university education (pre-higher education) also covers teacher training.

### **1.1. Several Quantitative Data**

In the Netherlands there are currently 36 funded teacher training programmes (see sub. 2.3 for a definition of 'funded') for primary education, varying from 250 to 700 students. There are nine funded teacher-training programmes in higher professional education for secondary education and nine funded university teacher training programmes. There are currently 27,000 students in primary school teacher training, 19,000 students in grade-two teacher training, 6,000 students in grade-one secondary school teacher training (HPE= Higher Professional Education) and 550 students in grade-one secondary school teacher training (university). Additionally, there are several teacher-training programmes for specific subjects or disciplines (such as training for physical education, art subjects and nursing).

At present, there are some 8,000 primary schools in the Netherlands (approximately 1,500,000 pupils between the ages of 4 and 12) and 700 schools for secondary education (approximately 800,000 pupils). Furthermore, there are around 65 institutions with 525,000 participants in the vocational and adult education sectors.

### **2. The responsibilities of the government and the educational institutions.**

Colleges provide primary school teacher training. The institutions' boards of governors (mainly of foundations) are responsible for this. Secondary school teacher training also takes place in colleges, without national government or governmental, administrative responsibility.

The government is responsible for the adequate functioning of the teacher training system.

In this perspective the minister of education is accountable for:

- the teacher training system as a whole;
- the quality;
- the accessibility of teacher training; and
- efficient spending of budgets.

These last two responsibilities appear particularly from the funding of the teacher training institutions by the government.

The institutions earn the largest share of their income directly from the government and from the students (tuition fees). The law guarantees them considerable autonomy to determine their own policies, to design their own curricula, to develop new programmes of study, and to make investments for the future. An institution's board of governors is also responsible for recruitment, selection and hiring of teachers. The institutions are responsible for issuing teacher qualification certificates.

## **2.1. Teacher-Training Curriculum**

Although, as pointed out in paragraph 2, the government does not regulate the contents of curricula, there are some regulations; practical training is a compulsory part of teacher training courses, and also there are some regulations relating to the content of the examination syllabus and the exit qualifications for primary school teacher training courses. With respect to examination for primary school teacher training, there is a requirement that – at the very least – it should relate to the content of the subject, including the language teaching methods of teaching disciplines, arithmetic and mathematics, social sciences, science, expressive activities and physical education.

The organisation of teacher-training programmes is arranged in the education and examination procedures of universities or colleges. To establish a national basis for a uniform teacher programme, the association of the colleges of higher professional education, asked a teacher-training process management to develop a common curriculum for primary and for grade-two secondary education. This common curriculum was developed in 1998 and is being used since then by all the teacher training institutions for primary and grade-two secondary education.

Recently also occupational profiles and initial standards of competence are being drawn up for teachers in primary and secondary schools, at the initiative of the occupational field.

The occupational profiles contain a general description of the skills an experienced teacher should possess. The initial standards of competence are based on those occupational profiles and indicate the minimum requirements to be met by teachers at the start of their careers.

Based on a proposal by the teaching profession, the plan is to have the minister lay down these minimum requirements in the Teaching Act, which is currently being drafted (see sub. 6).

## **2.2. Supervision and Quality**

Supervision of higher education, including teacher training, is carried out on the basis of legislation pertaining to higher education, under the authority of the Minister of Education, by the education inspectorate.

The education inspectorate monitors the quality of work in the institutions. This quality control follows a system of external quality assessment. In this, independent external experts are appointed as members of visiting committees to evaluate the quality of the programmes of the institutions. Between 1990 and 1999, the vast majority of the higher professional education programmes have been visited. This has resulted in nearly 50 assessment reports. These reports are accessible to the public and have, up until now, received a great deal of attention from the press (especially from the trade press). The reports give accounts of the assessment of the quality, on both national and institutional level. Per programme visited, they indicate which aspects of the quality need improvement.

The Inspectorate of Higher Education is responsible for meta-evaluation of the assessment reports. In addition, the Inspectorate has the task to identify serious shortcomings of programme provision. If the Inspectorate concludes in a report to the Minister of Education that the quality of a specific programme has been seriously lacking over a number of years, then the programme concerned will receive a public warning from the Minister. The programme concerned then has a period of three months in which to respond to this warning. Should the response prove to be insufficient, the Minister

can decide to withdraw financial support. In practice, this means closing the programme. Up until now, no use has been made of this possibility. Up until now, experience has shown that external quality assessment contribute to the improvement of the quality in an important fashion. In 1998, an evaluation of the system and following discussions concerning a further optimisation of quality assessment resulted in the decision to define the system in more detail. Since then, a growing number of visiting committees has gained experience with this new-style, quality assessment. These experiences will be evaluated and form the input for ongoing improvements of the system.

At present, a review is taking place as to how to organise quality assurance via a system of accreditation. The quality of colleges and universities has received much attention in recent years. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science set up a fund, which made a total of 500 million Dutch guilders available during the years 1996, 1997 and 1998. Proportionate to their numbers of students, colleges and universities could receive money from this fund, based on project proposals submitted by the institutions. These proposals, often partly based on appraisals by review committees, indicate that the institutions are making major efforts to improve the quality and practicability of education. There was also much attention given to innovation of educational programmes, advancing the professionalism of teachers, particularly for training teachers, geared towards more independent student study forms, but also for improving quality assurance within the organisation of education.

### **2.3. Funding**

Funding of teacher training is part of the Higher Education funding system. Described briefly, this currently entails distributing a macro-budget for all colleges and universities among the institutions annually, based on the number of registered students and the output of the colleges – i.e. the number of students receiving certificates. Students with certificates weigh heavily in the funding and students that leave the institutions without certificates, weigh considerably less heavily for the allocation of national subsidies.

A new funding system is currently being set up, which anticipates policy plans to make the training more flexible. The intention is that students could study flexibly; i.e. that their studies should not be tied to a specific training institution, but that they should be able to choose from what other institutions have on offer. The performance of each institution with respect to individual students is being studied to see how these can best be honoured through funding. This system is currently being elaborated and will not go into operation until at least 2004.

Besides funding teacher training, there is also non-funded teacher training. A condition of funding is that institutions comply with legal provisions. Among other things, these involve quality assurance, planning, funding, staff, educational provision, previous qualifications, (legal) protection of students and extraneous students and the governing board of the institutions. In addition, there are institutions that are not funded by the government. Non-funded institutions may not issue legally recognised diplomas or certificates, nor are students attending these institutions entitled to student financing. Exceptions to this are approved institutions. Institutions may petition the Minister of Education, Culture and Science for 'approval'. Approved institutions do not have to meet the conditions for funding. However, they must demonstrate sufficient quality, comparable to funded institutions. They must also comply with legal requirements relating to the quality of education and quality assurance. An approved institution is entitled to issue legally recognised diplomas and certificates for higher educational training associated with the institution.

### **3. Induction**

At present, teacher-training programmes are the accepted methods of attaining a teaching qualification. These are accessible for students with satisfactory previous qualifications (senior secondary vocational education/senior general secondary education/pre-university certificate. Parallel intake in teacher training is also possible. In such cases, students with the relevant knowledge receive

exemptions, so that they can complete their studies quicker. At present, the number of students opting for the teaching profession via teacher training is too small to meet the demands of schools.

There are various reasons for this: a general shortage of higher-educated persons, an ageing population within education, reduction of classroom sizes in primary schools, demographic developments, fewer young people wanting the training, the image of the profession (not attractive, for example, due to lack of career opportunities).

Expected shortages of teachers a year 1999-2009:

- primary education: 9.000–10.000.
- secondary education: 5.000–6.000.

The position of teachers has received much attention from the current cabinet. In April 1999, the Minister of Education published the memorandum ‘Maatwerk voor morgen: het perspectief van een open onderwijsarbeidsmarkt (Custom Work for the Future: the prospect of an open educational market). This memorandum provides a comprehensive framework for present and future measures designed to attract sufficient quantities of high-quality teaching staff (see sub. 6).

#### **4. In-service education/continuous professional development and further education of teachers**

Changes and innovations in education, subject matter and textbooks change continually. In-service training is therefore essential for the quality of education. Participation in training is decided on a voluntary basis by the teachers themselves and the competent authority (school board).

Funding for in-service training is governed by law. Central government pays the competent authorities (school boards) of public and private schools an annual sum for in-service training. Some aspects and areas of education are regarded as so important that the Minister of Education, Culture and Science makes extra funds temporarily available for in-service training in these fields. The universities and colleges of higher professional education are commissioned to provide courses for a limited period and/or for a specific group of participants and receive a budget to this end. The Minister specifies the aims of these in-service training activities and may in some cases provide schools with extra resources to allow their staff to attend the courses. Teacher-training institutions (higher professional education colleges with teacher-training departments) have traditionally provided in-service training courses. They are sometimes organised in cooperation with the school advisory services, one of the national educational advisory centres or experts from outside the education system. The content of course and the choice of training institutions are left to the schools to decide. There are many different forms of in-service training. These include taught courses (theoretical instruction and/or practising of skills), independent study, conferences, placements in industry of education, further study or supervision at work by a school advisory service.

Prior to promotion to the maximum pay scale, teachers are at this moment expected to have participated in at least one in-service training activity. To maintain the professional expertise and skills of teachers, the ‘Teaching Profession Act’ includes a register of teachers. Teachers are registered if they satisfy (regularly revised) the basic skills required by beginning teachers for such registration (also see sub. 6).

#### **5. Policies on the incorporation of a European Dimension into teacher education**

Teacher training in the Netherlands is autonomous. As a rule, the higher educational institutions determine the degree and shape of internationalising their training. Although the government attaches importance to internationalising teacher training, it does not provide any separate incentive policy for this. It establishes the preconditions that make the activities of institutions in this area possible. In particular, these consist of such things as removing legal obstacles and ensuring the transparency of the higher education system. An example is the signing of the Bologna Declaration, which aims to enlarge student and graduate student mobility by mutually aligning the various educational systems.

The government subsidised European Platform is responsible for internationalising teacher training. This Platform develops various activities.

In the framework of cross-border policy, the ministry of Education, Culture and Science subsidises a collaborative project. This involves collaboration between teacher training for German at the University of Essen and the Educative Faculty of Amsterdam. Its aim can be subdivided into the following project objectives:

- Integrated teaching in specific curricula for teacher training;
- Comparisons among cultures;
- Preparations for internationalising training;
- Training of teachers in Germany and the Netherlands, with intercultural and international competence.

## **6. Main problems of and challenges for teacher education and new strategic targets for teacher education and teacher education policies and recent developments**

As mentioned previously in subsection 3, in the Netherlands we are currently experiencing a shortage of teachers, which will continue to increase if adequate measures are not taken. In other areas of society there are also shortages of persons with higher education training due, among other things, to the favourable economic situation and the ageing of the population. The problem of teacher shortages centres especially on primary education and, to a slightly lesser degree, on secondary education. This problem mainly occurs in the large cities and relatively densely populated western part of the Netherlands.

The cabinet, the minister, employers and employees in the field of education will face a challenge in the coming years to ensure that there are sufficient staff and that they meet educational, information/communications technology and social requirements. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science therefore published the memorandum 'Maatwerk voor morgen' in 1999, relating to the quantity and quality of teachers. The shortages in the labour market demand solutions – and also structural solutions -- to urgent problems. One measure that proved successful in resolving urgent problems quickly was the appeal for qualified people not working in education (the silent reserves). In one year's time, 2,500 people have gone to work in primary education. Another campaign geared towards increasing the number of students taking primary school teacher training quickly produced clear results. The flow of students into this training has now grown by 25 percent.

Until now, some 4,000 teachers have entered primary school teacher training annually. Because of the increase mentioned, by 2003 around 5,000 primary school teachers will graduate with qualifications each year. However, this number is not sufficient to meet the demand for new teachers (8,500 needed). Around 5,500 teachers a year will be needed in secondary education in the coming years (the peak will come in 2004, when the 6,000-teacher-level is reached). Annually, some 6,000 students will graduate with grade-one or grade-two qualifications. Since approximately 30 percent of these graduates will find work outside the field of education, this leaves a shortage of 1,800 teachers, if no other possibilities are created for becoming teachers.

The main outlines of the (structural) proposals in the memorandum are geared towards:

1. terms of employment
2. monitoring the quality of staff
3. better conditions for in the intake of staff.

Note 1. Terms of employment.

The following points are of interest here (in the framework of collective labour agreements): the possibilities for job differentiation within the teaching profession, linked to competency bonuses; looking at the status of work loads (generally, perceived as very heavy) and work pressures; encouraging mobility, improving quality and effectiveness of in-service training, integral staff policies.

## Note 2. Monitoring the quality of staff.

The current system offers too few incentives to satisfy the new quality requirements, which the changing time and educational reforms place on teachers. There are no incentives for teachers to maintain their competencies when practising their professions.

To attain quality assurance and promote a positive image of the profession, therefore, the Teaching Profession Act will be introduced, which will include the following:

- minimum quality standards in the form of skills required for beginning teachers, as a starting point for teacher training, maintenance of competence of practising teachers and for an assessment to determine the competence of parallel intake;
- registration of teachers with skills required for beginning teachers in a public register and periodic re-registration for teachers, to encourage them to maintain their profession competencies;
- a system of certification to promote teacher professionalism.

The profession would play a vital role in the intrinsic elaboration of these proposals. The intention is to submit the draft bill this year.

## Note 3. Better conditions for the intake of staff.

Currently, the path to the teaching profession is to follow teacher training according to the specific curriculum of that training. The intention is to create additional paths to the teaching profession, both for students who take initial training and for new target groups (parallel intake). The aim is to make teacher training more appealing and modern. There are therefore three main innovative themes here:

- flexible courses (that are customised to the needs of the individual student)
- dual courses (with more attention for practical training)
- information technology (as an integral part of teacher training education).

A draft bill to regulate parallel intake in primary and secondary education was sent to the Lower House in February 1999. The draft bill offers school boards additional possibilities for temporarily (no longer than two years) appointing people without qualifications. A condition is that they receive favourable assessments and that an agreement is entered with the employer and with a teacher-training institution concerning a tailored schooling and counselling course, resulting in a teaching qualification. A trial assessment is currently being studied. A final version will be available this year.

Additional financial resources have been put aside for the coming years to provide an impulse for the proposals in the 'Maatwerk' memorandum. Among other things, the funds will be used to modernise teacher training in higher professional and university education, to create flexible and dual educational courses, to encourage information and communications technology, and to conduct campaigns to enhance the image of the teaching profession.

Appendix: diagram of the Dutch educational system.

## **The Dutch education system**