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COUNTRY REPORT

THE NETHERLANDS

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July 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Country background

The Netherlands is a densely populated country of 16.7 million people (July 2010 est.). 17.2 % of the population is aged between 0 and 14, 67.7% between 15 and 64, and 15.2% above 65. One fifth of the population has migrant background, mainly from former the Dutch colonies (Antilles, Suriname), and from Turkey and Morocco. According to 2008 estimates, native Dutch comprise 80.7 percent of the population. The remaining part of the population originates from the EU countries (2.4 %), Indonesia (2.4%), Turkey (2.2%), Surinam (2%), Morocco (2%), and others (5.6%). Of those main groups with a non-western background, 40-50% is born in the Netherlands and belongs therefore to the second generation. Around 25% of migrants live in urban surroundings and one out of three in the three biggest cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Den Hague (SCP, 2009a).

Sample overview

The research will be conducted in three cities from different parts of the country: Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Arnhem. The cities are chosen on the basis of the national government policy to improve 40 deprived areas in the country. These cities are having at least four of those deprived areas. In those areas, special attention is being paid to so-called extended schools ('brede scholen'), preventing drop-out and improving general safety and well-being. In all of these neighbourhoods, the percentage of new early school leavers is almost twice as much as in the country as a whole (7.3 versus 3.7%).

Amsterdam, the capital of the country, has about 740.000 inhabitants, of which 30 % lives in one of the five deprived areas. The percentage of non-western immigrants is 34% (11% above the national average). The percentage of all early school leavers is 64% (national average 49%). The percentage of pupils going to the lowest tracks of secondary prevocational education is 38 % (national average 30%). The highest track of secondary prevocational education has 21 % in Amsterdam (national average 26%). The other pupils (except those going to special education) go to the two higher tracks of secondary education (one leading to university, the other to professional universities). There are about 262 primary schools in Amsterdam and about 40 secondary schools with 120 different locations.

Rotterdam, has about 584.000 inhabitants, of which 38% lives in one of the seven deprived areas. The percentage of non-western immigrants is 36%. The deprived areas differ substantially in ethnic composition (there are more working class inhabitants in Rotterdam than in Amsterdam). The percentage of all early school leavers is 66 %. The percentage of pupils going to the lowest tracks of secondary prevocational education is 38 %. The highest track of secondary prevocational education has 22 %. The other pupils (except those going to special education) go to the two higher tracks of secondary education (one leading to university, the other to professional universities). There are about 226 primary schools in Rotterdam and about 32 secondary schools with 122 different locations.

Arnhem, lies in a more rural area and has about 147.000 inhabitants, but Arnhem and its surrounding area has more than 700.000. Arnhem has, next to the big four cities and Tilburg, the highest percentage of non-western immigrants (around 17%). In Arnhem there are four deprived areas with percentages non-western immigrants ranging from 23 to 39 %. The percentage of all early school leavers is 63%. There are 67 primary schools in Arnhem and 10 secondary schools with 36 different locations.

A. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

1. Educational system

1.1. Foundations

1.1.1. Historical overview

The Dutch education system developed from what was almost a complete state monopoly with secular traits at the beginning of the 19th century into a predominantly privatised system with a strong religious character at the beginning of the 20th century (Karsten & Teelken, 1996). The first piece of educational legislation, the Elementary Education Act, was passed in 1801. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, elementary schools were divided into public schools funded by the government and private schools were financed from private sources. A 40-year political battle was fought to achieve complete equality under the law for both types of school. Catholics and Protestants wanted their own schools with a pronounced Roman Catholic or Protestant stamp but with equal state funding. The Liberals too wanted the freedom of education guaranteed by the Constitution to be reflected in equal financial treatment of public and private schools. This was finally achieved in the 1917 Constitution, in what is known as the "Pacification of 1917". After 1917, the principle of financial equality was extended to secondary and higher education (Eurydice, 2009).

The 1917 compromise has had three important consequences for the education system and education policy in The Netherlands: privatisation, centralisation and corporatism. In the period after 1918, the original relationship between public and private education was radically reversed. Private education conquered a market share of around 70%, which rose to 73% in the decades after the First World War. After the 1970s, despite the fact that a majority of the population stated that they do not belong to a religious denomination, private education's market share has remained almost constant. A second consequence of pillarisation is the high level of centralisation and the detailed quality of the legislation. This can be seen quite clearly in the area of finance. If equality was to be realised then rules would have to be laid down that prescribed what could be refunded down to the last cent. However, centralisation was also linked to the fact that confessional parties did not want to grant the municipal councils a policy-making role in the area of education. The third consequence of pillarisation was its strong tendency towards corporatism. The most salient instance of this emerges in policy access. The Netherlands has an extensive network of corporative structures like consultative bodies, innovation teams or process managers and advisory committees. Particularly in areas like services planning, educational reform and terms of employment, the state and education organizations are strongly interlinked. The government still takes the initiative in these matters, but at the same time places the responsibility for policy-making, and certainly for its execution, in the hands of the interest groups (Karsten, 1999).

The influx of migrants after the 1960s has also left clear marks on the education system. In the first place the unbalanced distribution of ethnic minorities throughout the country at large, and within large cities in particular, led to the first symptoms of segregation in the late 1980s, which the various authorities did little to avert. Since then the segregation of pupils into White and Black schools has not only increased in number but also in complexity. The aspirations of the Islamic and Hindu communities to set up their 'own' schools has also gained momentum (Karsten, 1999).

1.1.2. Legal basis

Education is governed by a number of Acts of Parliament. Each type of education has its own legislation. These include: Primary Education Act 1998 (WPO), Expertise Centres Act (WEC) which governs special education, Secondary Education Act (WVO), Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Student Finance Act 2000 (WSF 2000), Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS), Compulsory Education Act 1969, National Education Support Activities (Subsidies) Act, Education Participation Act 1992 (WMO), Participation in School Decision-making Act (WMS), and Education Inspection Act (WOT).

The obligation to attend school is laid down in the Compulsory Education Act 1969. Every child must attend school full time from the first school day of the month following its fifth birthday; in fact, however, nearly all children attend school from the age of four. Children must attend school full time for 12 full school years and, in any event, until the end of the school year in which they turn 16. Young people are then required to attend an institution providing courses for this purpose for two days a week for another year. Those who have a practical training contract in a particular sector of employment attend classes one day a week on a day release basis and work the rest of the week. In these contracts, institutions and training companies agree on the quality of practical training (Eurydice, 2007). Since August 2007, the obligation to continue education in order to obtain a basic qualification is applicable to youngsters under the age of 18, who have finished compulsory education but have not yet obtained a basic qualification certificate. They have to achieve at least a certificate at HAVO, VWO or MBO 2 level (SCO, 2008).

One of the key features of the Dutch education system, guaranteed under article 23 of the Constitution, is freedom of education, i.e. the freedom to found schools (freedom of establishment), to organise the teaching in schools (freedom of organisation of teaching) and to determine the principles on which they are based (freedom of conviction). People have the right to found schools and to provide teaching based on religious, ideological or educational beliefs. As a result, there are both publicly run and privately run schools in the Netherlands. Publicly run schools are open to all children regardless of religion or outlook, generally subject to public law, governed by the municipal council (or a governing committee) or by a public legal entity or foundation set up by the council, and provide education on behalf of the state. Privately run schools, on the other hand, can refuse to admit pupils whose parents do not subscribe to the belief or ideology on which the school's teaching is based, are subject to private law and are state-funded although not set up by the state, governed by the board of the association or foundation that set them up, and base their teaching on religious or ideological beliefs, including Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindustani and Steiner-Waldorf schools. Some schools base their teaching on specific educational ideas, such as the Montessori, Dalton, Freinet or Jena Plan method. They may be either publicly or privately run. The freedom to organise teaching means that private schools are free to determine what is taught and how. However, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science sets quality standards which apply to both public and private education and prescribe the subjects to be studied, the attainment targets or examination syllabuses and the content of national examinations, the number of teaching periods per year, the qualifications which teachers are required to have, giving parents and pupils a say in school matters, planning and reporting obligations, and so on. The Constitution places public and private schools on an equal financial footing (Eurydice, 2009).

1.2. Organization of schooling and transitions

1.2.1. Overall principles

The Dutch education system has limited educational facilities for children under the age of 4. Pre-school and early childhood education focuses on children aged 2 to 5 who are in risk of developing an educational disadvantage. Most Dutch children enter primary school in the year they turn 4, although the mandatory school age is 5. Primary education lasts 8 years. For pupils who require specialized care and support, there is special (primary) education (SE) and secondary special education. On average, children are 12 years of age when they enter secondary education. This sector offers several options: pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). Pupils can also transfer to practical training (PT) or secondary special education (SSE). After special (primary) education, the majority of pupils transfer to VMBO or PT. VMBO comprises four programmes: a basic vocational programme (BL), a middle management programme (KL), a combined programme (GL) and a theoretical programme (TL). VMBO students can receive additional support through learning support programmes. After VMBO, at an average age of 16, students may transfer to secondary vocational education (MBO). Those who have completed the theoretical programme can also choose to transfer to HAVO. HAVO is intended as preparation for higher professional education (HBO). VWO is intended to prepare students for research-oriented education (WO). The school types differ in terms of the duration of their programmes: VMBO takes 4 years, HAVO 5 years and VWO 6 years. MBO comprises a vocational training programme and a block or day release programme. There are four qualification levels: assistant worker (level 1), basic vocational training (level 2), professional training (level 3) and middle-management training (level 4). The programmes last a maximum of 4 years. The 4-year HBO programmes lead to the award of a bachelor's degree. In VWO, a bachelor's degree can be earned in 3 years. A master's degree programme takes either 1 or 2 years (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009).

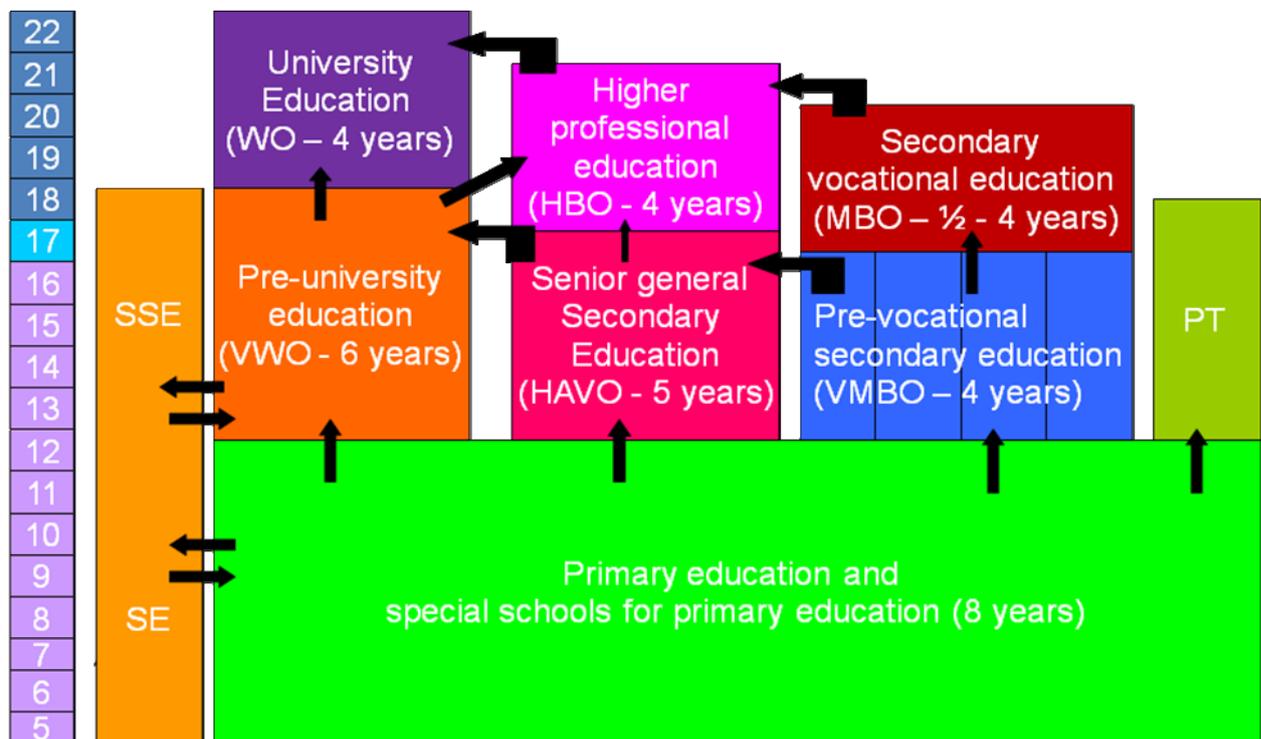


Figure: The structure of the Dutch education system (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2007)

1.2.2. Pre-primary education

The Netherlands does not provide formal pre-primary educational provision. From the age of 4 onwards, children attend primary school. For children under the age of 4 formal education is not provided, but there are various childcare facilities available outside the education system. The following organised facilities are available:

- **Playgroups:** these groups are open to all children aged 2 to 4, and are the most popular form of pre-primary education. Children usually attend playgroups twice a week, about 2-3 hours per visit. The main aim of playgroups is to allow children to meet and play with other children and to stimulate their development. At a national level, no educational goals have been defined for playgroups. Most playgroups are subsidised by local government, but income related parental contributions are often required.
- **Day nurseries:** the day nurseries cater for children aged from 6 weeks to 4 years. The main function of the day nurseries is to look after children to allow parents to work. They provide day care for children and opportunities to meet and play with other children. The responsibility for childcare facilities as a policy area has recently been transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Additionally, registered childminders offer flexible childcare in a family setting, usually in the childminder's own home. This type of childcare is provided through childminding agencies, which act as brokers between parents and childminders (SCO, 2008).
- **Pre-schools:** Since 2000 the government has provided funding for early childhood education (VVE), a form of education designed to optimise the development opportunities of children aged 2 to 5 from underprivileged backgrounds, who are at risk of educational or language disadvantage. In the future, early childhood education may also be provided for babies at risk of language disadvantage, which is greatest for babies and children of poorly educated parents. Early childhood education for preschoolers (two to four-year-olds) is provided by playgroups and, to a lesser extent, day nurseries. Primary schools offer VVE programmes for four and five-year-olds. Early childhood education is part of municipal policy on eliminating educational disadvantage. The municipal authorities are also responsible for allocating funding. Additional funding is made available by central government to finance preschool programmes (Eurydice, 2009).

The Childcare Act which entered into force on 1 January 2005 lays down that the costs of childcare must be shared by parents, employers and government. In 2005 and 2006, employers were not obliged to contribute towards the costs of childcare, although they were expected to do so. The employer's share was made mandatory as of 1 January 2007, because many parents were not receiving a contribution from their employers. Now, all employers pay their share and all working parents, employed and self-employed, receive the employer's share. This new scheme is implemented by central government. Working or studying parents whose children attend a childcare centre or are cared for by a registered childminder can apply for a means-tested childcare allowance. The allowance they receive is determined by their income, and is paid by the Tax Administration. There is no prescribed curriculum as such in childcare provision, but providers are obliged to draw up policy on child development and learning opportunities, in consultation with parents' committees. Dutch is the language of communication, yet, in places where Frisian or another regional language is widely spoken, it

may be spoken alongside Dutch. Children from a non-Dutch background may likewise be spoken to for part of the time in their own language to aid comprehension (Eurydice, 2009).

According to recent EUROSTAT statistics, average number of weekly hours of formal care was 8,1 hours for children below 3 years; 18,2 hours for children between 3 years and minimum compulsory school age; and was 27 for children between minimum compulsory school age and 12 years in 2008. The percentage of children younger than 3 cared only by their parents was 24% in 2008, while it reduced to 6% for children above 3 years old (EUROSTAT, 2010).

1.2.3. Primary education

Primary education takes place at primary schools, offering general education for children from the age from 4 till 12. Compulsory education starts at the age of 5, but 98% of all children starts primary education at the age of 4. Children whose parents are residing illegally in the Netherlands have also right to education, and the schools are not obliged to report the cases to the police. There are three types of schools: 1) public-authority, and 2) denominational schools that are financed publically, and 3) a small number of private schools that are not financed by the government. Public authority schools are open to all children, no matter what their denomination or philosophy of life may be. These schools are mostly run by the local authorities, a school board, a foundation or by a legal person appointed by the city council. About one third of all children go to public authority schools. Denominational schools are run as an association, of which parents can become members, or as a foundation. There are different sorts of denominational schools. Most of these schools are Roman Catholic or Protestant. In addition, there are Jewish, Islamic, Hindu and humanistic schools, and so called 'free schools' that base their education on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. And, there are schools that organise their education according to certain pedagogical principles, such as Montessori, Jenaplan, Dalton and Freinet schools (these can be either public-authority or denominational schools). There is also non-denominational private education, which does not depart from a special philosophy of life. About two thirds of all children go to denominational schools. Private schools can set admission requirements according to the denominational or ideological character of the school.

Parents are free to send their children to the school of their choice; free parental school choice was granted in the 1917 Constitution. Parents have access to various sources of information on which to base their choice of school. Many schools hold information evenings for parents of potential pupils; others allow parents to sit in on lessons. Moreover, all schools are statutorily obliged to publish a prospectus for parents setting out the school's objectives and the results achieved. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science also publishes a national education guide containing information that is helpful when choosing schools. Finally, the Education Inspectorate draws up and publishes school report cards on the quality of individual schools. Free parental school choice has inadvertently led to socio-economic and ethnic segregation in the primary education system (Karsten, 1994), to the emergence of so-called the 'Black' and the 'White' schools. The former refers to the schools that have a large proportion of ethnic minorities (e.g. more than fifty percent). Residential segregation and the location of the school are the most important factors for the explanation of school segregation in primary education (Karsten et al., 2003) (see part C for more information).

Primary education is free of charge. Schools may ask for a voluntary parental contribution. There are separate schools for traveller children, such as mobile schools and schools at mooring places which are part of mainstream education. The only way in which these schools differ from regular schools has to do with how and where classes are held. Very few children attend schools that are not government-funded, such as international or foreign

schools exclusively intended for pupils who do not have Dutch nationality (Eurydice, 2009). Mainstream primary schools are free to decide on their own internal organisation. Each class may include one or more age groups. At most primary schools the pupils are grouped by age. Others have mixed-age groups or group children according to their level of development or ability. There are eight year groups in all. The first two years in primary schools are play-oriented and at the age of 6 (group 3), the actual reading-, writing- and arithmetic-education starts. Primary education aims to educate children broadly. There is a national curriculum for primary education, where the goals are set. An indication is given by the Ministry per subject of what pupils must learn, in the form of attainment targets. Attainment targets indicate what schools must offer pupils in terms of teaching matter, focusing not only on cognitive and emotional development but also on creativity and social, cultural and physical skills. Schools are free, within the framework set by the government, to decide how much time is spent on the various subjects and areas of the curriculum, and when. Schools must provide teaching in six curriculum areas: Dutch; English; arithmetic and mathematics; social and environmental studies; healthy living; social structure, religious and ideological movements; creative expression; and sports and movement. The language of instruction is Dutch. However, schools in the province of Friesland also teach Frisian and may teach other subjects in Frisian as well. The school year runs from 1 August to 31 July of the following year. The summer holidays last six weeks and are staggered across the three regions (northern, central and southern) into which the country is divided for this purpose. Schools are free, within the framework set by central government, to decide how much time is spent on the various subjects and areas of the curriculum. They have to provide at least 7,520 teaching periods over the eight years that children attend school, but the distribution of periods between the first four years and the last four years is flexible (Eurydice, 2007; 2009).

In addition to the regular teaching staff, schools can appoint specialist teachers, internal counsellors, coordinators responsible for language or arithmetic, or for teaching in the junior classes, remedial teachers and so on, with a view to improving teaching. Schools are responsible for pupil guidance. Pupils receive guidance from their class teacher, but can also receive extra assistance from an internal counsellor or a remedial teacher. Remedial teachers help pupils with difficulties. Internal counsellors support children with special needs. They counsel parents as well as pupils. After completing eight years of primary education, pupils do not receive a certificate or diploma, but a school report describing their level of attainment and potential. Students are often evaluated in national standardised tests. These tests are not compulsory, but more and more the Inspectorate requires the outcomes of these tests for comparison of pupil and school achievements. The end test at the age of 12 (CITO-test) is in most cases compulsory to be accepted at a school for secondary education (Snoek & Wielenga, 2001). Primary school graduates are obliged by law to continue with their education. There are four possible transitions: Students can study at 1) VMBO (pre-vocational secondary education), 2) HAVO (senior general secondary education) or 3) VWO (pre-university education), and 4) those who are considered unlikely to obtain a qualification even with learning support can receive practical training which is geared to prepare them for labour market. The children are sorted into these different performance levels and the allocation to the tracks is highly socially selective. It is possible to correct the initial track allocation, but in general, the initial track determines to a very large extent the future educational pathway and the final educational attainment (Tieben et al., 2010).

1.2.4. Lower secondary education

There are three kinds of secondary education: pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) which takes four years; senior general secondary education (HAVO) which takes five years;

and pre-university education (VWO) which takes six years. Lower secondary education refers to the first two years of VMBO and the first three years of HAVO and VWO. Additionally, practical training is offered as a new type of education for students who are likely to fail in obtaining a qualification even with learning support. Unlike other pathways, practical training does not lead on to secondary vocational education but prepares pupils for direct entry to the regional labour market. Age of students at lower years of VMBO is between 12 and 14, and at lower years of HAVO and VWO, it is between 12 and 15. VMBO is not terminal education, but provides a basis for further vocational training. Pupils may choose from four different learning pathways: the basic vocational programme (BL), the middle-management vocational programme (KL), the combined programme (GL) and the theoretical programme (TL). HAVO provides pupils with a basic general education and prepares them for higher professional education. VWO prepares pupils for university, and there are three types of them: the ‘atheneum’, the ‘gymnasium’ (the most elitist type of VWO) and the ‘lyceum’ (a combination of atheneum and gymnasium).

For admission to VMBO, HAVO or VWO, pupils must be assessed to establish their suitability. Decisions on admission are made by the competent authority (school board). The head of the child’s primary school is required to draw up a report on his or her educational potential and level of attainment (educational report). The commonest method of assessment is for pupils to be tested in the final year of primary school, using tests developed centrally to assess pupils’ level of knowledge and understanding. Each year the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO) publishes a primary school leavers’ attainment test, which is used by almost 85% of all Dutch primary schools. Primary schools advise parents as to the type of secondary education most suited to their child on the basis of the CITO test results and the educational performance, interests and motivation of the child (Eurydice, 2009). Because pupils’ achievement levels highly correlate with their social background in the Netherlands as in most countries (the higher the social background, the more successful the school career), academic selection in secondary education results in an uneven distribution by social background (Karsten et al., 2006)

Secondary education is free of charge apart from certain educational expenses, i.e. costs connected with schools and education. Parents may voluntarily contribute to the school budget, and they can also apply for support with educational expenses and fees. The allowance is dependent on income but is not subject to income tax and does not have to be repaid. On reaching their 18th birthday, children may receive a basic allowance or study costs allowance from the government, but parents remain legally responsible for their child’s upkeep and educational expenses until the child’s 21st birthday (Eurydice, 2009). The school year runs from 1 August to 31 July of the following year. The total number of days on which no lessons are given may not exceed 68 per school year. There is no prescribed or advisory timetable and no prescribed minimum for the number of teaching hours in each subject. There is no specialisation in lower secondary education. There are attainment targets that specify the standards of knowledge, understanding and skills pupils are required to attain. At least two thirds of teaching hours in the lower years (1,425 real hours) must be spent on the 58 attainment targets, which covers the following: 1) Dutch language: the emphasis lies on the communicative function of language and strategic skills, as well as on cultural and literary aspects, 2) English language: the emphasis lies on the communicative function of the language, following a European frame of reference, 3) Mathematics and arithmetic: the emphasis lies on arithmetic skills; 4) Man and nature: the emphasis lies on physical, technological and care-related subjects; 5) Man and society: the emphasis lies on the ability to ask questions and to do research, to place phenomena in space and time, and to use concrete materials and resources, 6) Art and culture: the emphasis lies on making and presenting own work, acknowledging the work of others, report activities, and reflect, and 7)

Physical education and sports: the emphasis lies on a wide orientation of different types of physical activities (SCO, 2008). The school translates these attainment targets into subjects, projects, areas of learning. Pupils may take as long as they need to complete the lower years of secondary school. Since 2003, VMBO pupils who have successfully completed the theoretical programme may transfer from VMBO to the 4th year of HAVO. Pupils with HAVO certificates may likewise be admitted to the 5th year of VWO.

1.2.5. Upper secondary education

Upper secondary education encompass the 3rd and 4th years of VMBO, the 4th and 5th years of HAVO and the 4th, 5th and 6th years of VWO. Pupil ages range between 15 and 16 at VMBO and HAVO, and between 15 and 17 at VWO. After two years of basic vocational education, pupils in VMBO enter the specialization stage. At this stage, pupils specialize by choosing: 1) a particular sector: this is a group of subjects which lay the foundation for further training; 2) vocational stream within that sector: each pathway comprises distinctive groups of subjects and vocationally oriented programmes that are more theoretical or more practical oriented. The choice of a pathway has implications for the options open to pupils after VMBO; 3) a vocationally-oriented programme within the chosen stream: pupils can opt to specialize within one particular department (this programme leads on to vocational training in a specific occupation) or they can delay choosing a specialization by opting for a broad-based programme. The specialisation stage lasts two years. During the last two years of HAVO and the last three years of VWO, pupils focus on one of four subject clusters, each of which emphasizes a certain field of study. The following subject clusters are offered: science and technology, science and health, economics and society, and culture and society. Each group of subjects includes: (1) a common component, which covers 40% to 46% of the curriculum; (2) a specialised component (consisting of subjects relating to the chosen subject combination), covering 36% to 38% of the curriculum, and (3) an optional component occupying 18% to 21% of the curriculum. In the optional component pupils are free to choose from the subjects offered by the school (SCO, 2008). In the upper years of HAVO and VWO, the length of lessons and the length of the school day are determined on the basis of study load. The study load is calculated on the basis of the time required by the average pupil to master a particular quantity of material, both at school and at home. This covers every element of the curriculum, including writing up projects, reading, using a resource centre, excursions and homework. The study load for the upper years of HAVO is 3,200 hours (spread over two years), while for VWO it is 4,800 hours (spread over three years).

Students receive a certificate at the end of their studies at secondary level. For this purpose, they take a leaving examination which involves a school examination and a national one. The elements to be tested in each are specified in the examination syllabus, which is approved by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The syllabus also specifies the number of tests which make up the national examination, and their length. Schools are responsible for setting the school exam. Every year, schools are required to submit their own school exam syllabus to the Inspectorate showing what elements of the syllabus are tested when, and how marks are calculated, including the weight allocated to tests, and opportunities to resit them. The content of the national leaving exams determine to a large extent the content of school curriculum. Therefore, even if the system is decentralised in terms of its governance, nationwide examination system makes it more centralised and helps to harmonise the system.

Students who have successfully completed the VMBO theoretical programme may transfer to the 4th year of HAVO and pupils who have successfully completed HAVO may transfer to the 5th year of VWO. Although HAVO provides a general education and is

intended to prepare pupils for entry to higher professional education (HBO), in practice, HAVO certificate holders also opt for VWO or MBO. Likewise, although VWO aims to prepare pupils for university entry, some VWO graduates go on to HBO. New subject combinations have been introduced in HAVO and VWO with the aim of improving the interface with higher education. As VMBO is not designed as terminal education but is intended to lay the basis for further education, the majority of pupils with VMBO qualifications go on to MBO, and some are transferred to the upper grades of HAVO (Eurydice, 2009). According to the recent statistics, after one year, approximately 95 per cent of HAVO and VWO certificate holders are enrolled in subsequent study programmes. The VWO certificate holders are nearly all enrolled in a study programme in tertiary education (university or HBO); among the HAVO certificate holders, 85 per cent are enrolled in tertiary education, over 4 per cent are enrolled in vocational education and 5 per cent are enrolled in secondary education. Of those who completed the VMBO theoretical programme or the combined theoretical/vocational programme in 2007, 77 per cent transferred to versus 96 and 92 per cent respectively for the middle-management vocational programme and the basic vocational programme. In 2007, nearly 19 per cent of those who completed the theoretical programme or the combined theoretical and vocational programme moved on to studies in secondary education. For the middle-management vocational programme and the basic vocational programme, these percentages are negligible (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009).

1.2.6. Vocational training

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (1996), covers two types of education: vocational education (MBO) and adult education. MBO comprises vocational training (BOL) and block or day release programmes (BBL). BOL can be taken either full-time (K) or part-time (pt). Within BBL, the focus is on practical training, involving 60 per cent or more of the duration of the course. MBO courses are offered in four sectors: “Personal/social services and health care”, “Technology”, “Economics” and “Agriculture and the natural environment”. The later sector is funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. MBO courses can be taken at four different qualification levels: assistant worker (level 1), basic vocational training (level 2), professional training (level 3) and middle management or specialist training (level 4). The institutes have coagulated in the last years into large regional training centres (ROC's) with tens of thousands of students, with strong links with the labour market. The educational philosophy has also changed. More emphasis is laid on flexibility and employability. The many different curricula focus on core competencies connected with new forms of learning: work based learning, practical learning and digital learning. Since there is a great need of qualified workers, the training centres are developing more flexible courses, taking into account qualifications that are gained through prior educational or work based experiences. In 2008, the sector consisted of 43 ROCs (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009). Adult education comprises adult general secondary education (VAVO) and adult basic education. VAVO is regarded as “second chance education”, it leads to a pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO - theoretical programme), senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) certificate (levels 4, 5 and 6). Adult basic education comprises broad social functioning, life skills and Dutch as a second language (NT2 or DSL). Adult basic education is a first step towards further training and development (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009).

Anyone may enrol for a course at assistant or basic vocational training level. There are no requirements regarding previous education. The admission requirements for a course at professional or middle-management training level are: 1) a certificate of pre-vocational

secondary education (VMBO), 2) a certificate of junior general secondary education (MAVO), or 3) proof that the first three years of senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) have been successfully completed. Admission to a course at specialist level is possible with a professional training qualification for the same occupation or occupational group. Adult education courses are open to anyone aged 18 or over who is resident in the Netherlands. However, they are particularly intended for adults who are educationally disadvantaged. As of 1 August 2005, school fees were abolished for all pupils and students aged 16 and 17. Students aged 18 or over on 1 August who are in full-time vocational training in secondary vocational education (MBO) have to enrol with an education card and therefore have to pay school fees. The Information Management Group collects fees on behalf of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. With the abolition of fees for 16 and 17-year-olds, financial assistance is no longer necessary. However, MBO students under the age of 18 can still get financial assistance to help with educational expenses. Parents of MBO students aged under 18 are entitled to child benefit and can apply for financial support. The costs of adult education courses consist of statutory fees and learner costs. Adult learners aged 18 have to pay course fees.

In addition, there are sector-oriented Knowledge Centres (excluding agriculture, 17 in total) divided over three sectors (personal/social services and healthcare, economics and technology). Their statutory tasks are: developing qualifications for secondary vocational education, monitoring the examinations administered by education institutes, recruiting new companies offering training places (for practical training) and monitoring the quality of the companies offering training places. These centres have been influential in re-orienting vocational education according to the needs of labour market. Every course in secondary vocational education leads to a certain occupational skill or qualification. Currently, courses are based on either exit qualifications or competences. The exit qualifications for courses in adult general secondary education are the same as those that apply to secondary schools. For other types of adult education, specific exit qualifications may be laid down by the Ministry, such as for courses in Dutch, English, social orientation and arithmetic/mathematics. In all other cases, it is up to the institutions themselves to do so. The number of participants leaving MBO (in relation to the total number of participants) amounted to 34 per cent in 2007. Of this group, 85 per cent left the education system altogether (therefore, MBO is largely regarded as final education). The proportion moving on to HBO amounted to 14 per cent in 2007. Virtually all this flow was composed of students who have completed a full-time BOL programme at level 4. Well over half of these graduates transferred directly to an HBO programme (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009).

1.2.7. Higher education

Dutch higher education comprises higher professional education (HBO) and university education. HBO institutions provide theoretical and practical training for occupations for which a higher vocational qualification is either required or useful. Graduates find employment in various fields, including middle and high-ranking jobs in trade and industry, social services, health care and the public sector. Universities combine academic research and teaching. University education focuses on training in academic disciplines, the independent pursuit of scholarship and the application of scholarly knowledge in the context of a profession and aims to improve understanding of the phenomena studied in the various disciplines and generate new knowledge. Degree courses are provided at 14 universities, including the Open University. Besides, there are a number of approved institutions, including six offering theological courses, one offering a degree course in humanism, and a business university.

HBO institutions and universities have a central admissions system. For courses subject to a quota, there is also a weighted draw for places followed by selection by the institutions themselves. Prospective students must apply to the Central Applications and Placement Office (CBAP). Where no restrictions on numbers apply, students are free to enrol on whichever course and at whichever university they wish. Applicants wishing to be admitted to higher professional education must possess a senior general secondary education (HAVO) certificate; a middle-management or specialist training certificate at secondary vocational education (MBO) level; a pre-university education (VWO) certificate. Applicants possessing any of the above qualifications have in principle the right to be admitted, but additional requirements regarding the subjects studied can be laid down by ministerial order. In addition to educational requirements, institutions may impose supplementary requirements relating to the profession for which the course trains students or to the course itself. For instance, applicants for courses in dance or sport and movement must have the skills specified by the institution in question. Admission to university, on the other hand, is possible with a pre-university (VWO) school-leaving certificate or an HBO qualification or HBO propaedeutic certificate.

The bachelor-master system was introduced in 2002. The distinction between higher professional education and university education in terms of their respective goals remains. By now, all 4-year HBO courses and a majority of university courses have been converted into bachelor's and master's degree programmes. A bachelor's programme at university takes three years and a master's degree takes one, one and a half or two years. Within the HBO system, all bachelor's degree courses take four years. The introduction of the bachelor-master system and accreditation system is part of the move towards a common open system of higher education in Europe. Students have a greater degree of choice and can more easily attend a master's degree programme at a different institution (in the Netherlands or abroad) from the one where they obtained their bachelor's degree. Students in higher education pay tuition fees to the institution. As long as they are under 30 years old on the date when the academic year begins, they are charged the statutory rate for tuition fees. The Ministry guarantees the accessibility of higher education and the government is responsible for financial support for students. The Student Finance Act 2000 applies to students in higher education who are under the age of 34 and who began their studies before the age of 30. Every student enrolled on an accredited full-time course in higher education who satisfies the applicable conditions is entitled to financial assistance.

1.3. Organization of the educational institution

1.3.1. Main executive and legislative bodies

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

The overall responsibility for Dutch education lies with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, however, agriculture oriented education, the so-called *green education* is financed and governed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. Central government, in the person of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, controls education by means of legislation, taking due account of the provisions of the Constitution. Its prime responsibilities with regard to education relate to the structuring and funding of the system, the management of public-authority institutions, inspection, examinations and student support. Central government also promotes innovation in education. The Minister is, moreover, responsible for the coordination of science policy and for cultural and media policy. Control may be exercised by imposing qualitative or quantitative standards relating to the educational process in schools and/or attainment results, by means of arrangements for the allocation of financial and other resources, and by imposing conditions to be met by schools.

There are five policy departments responsible for developing policy on science and on the various sectors of education. These are the Primary Education Department; the Secondary Education Department; the Adult and Vocational Education Department; the Higher Education and Student Finance Department; and the Research and Science Policy Department.

The Education Council

It is an independent, advisory body that advises the government on the main outline of policy and legislation. The Education Council covers a broad field of education, ranging from preschool to postgraduate university education, including education and training provided by companies. It advises the relevant ministers both on request and of its own volition, and answers questions from parliament. In certain specific cases governed by law, local authorities may also ask the Council for its advice. The Council publishes recommendations and reports and initiates seminars and web discussions on relevant subjects.

Education Inspectorate

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science is charged with the inspection of education, which is carried out under his authority by the Education Inspectorate. The Inspectorate is responsible for the inspection and review of schools and educational institutions assessing the quality of education offered in schools, reporting publicly on the quality of individual institutions, reporting publicly on the educational system as a whole, encouraging schools to maintain and improve the education they offer, providing information for policy development and supplying reliable information on education (Inspectorate of Education, www.onderwijsinspectie.nl). The Netherlands does not have a national curriculum, but a standards-based curriculum with performance targets defined in terms of educational outcomes. The safeguarding of the quality of education, with these targets as a point of departure, is carried out by the National Education Inspectorate.

Central Funding of Institutions Agency (CFI)

CFI is an executive agency responsible for funding educational establishments, research institutes and education support organisations on the basis of existing legislation. Its duties include gathering, managing and supplying information on these institutions for policymaking and funding purposes. The CFI is also responsible for the ministry's own accounts. Since 1996 when the CFI acquired agency status, it has formed an autonomous part of the Ministry.

Autonomous administrative authorities in the education, culture and science sector

The Information Management Group (IBG) is an autonomous administrative authority with which the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has a formal statutory relationship. IBG is responsible for implementing the Student Finance Act 2000 and the Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act. Its other duties include the collection of school and course fees, the provision of administrative support for examinations, the placement and registration of prospective students, and the evaluation of diplomas. IBG is governed by public law and funded directly from the budget of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The other autonomous administrative authorities include the Staff Replacement Fund (for meeting the costs of supply staff) and the Collective Redundancy Payments Fund (for the payment of unemployment benefits to education personnel) (Eurydice, 2009).

1.3.2. Financial resources

Dutch education is largely funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. It is not, however, the only party that contributes funds to education. Expenditures by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (green education) and by the municipalities are also significant. In addition, contributions by parents and participants constitute part of the resources available to education institutions. Spending on a number of educational activities, such as private-sector education and company training courses, is not taken into account in the national expenditure on education. A substantial proportion of this type of education is not funded by the government (The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2008).

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science administers almost all central government expenditure on education, while the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality funds agricultural education. All educational institutions – public and private – are funded on an equal footing. This means that government expenditure on public educational institutions must be matched by expenditure on private, government-funded educational institutions. The relationship between educational institutions and the government is characterised by a large measure of institutional autonomy; government merely creates the right conditions. Schools qualify virtually automatically for funding, provided they meet the quality standards and funding conditions imposed by law for the school system as a whole. Funds are channelled from the Ministry to educational institutions both directly and indirectly. The main flows of indirect funding are via the municipalities, for example to fund adult education, and primary and secondary school accommodation. Another source of funds is the statutory course and tuition fees paid to the institutions by the students themselves. Educational institutions can also generate income from other sources, such as voluntary parental contributions, extra funding from the municipal authorities for special projects, interest on capital, contract activities and sponsoring. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science receives school fees from certain categories of students in secondary education and adult and vocational education (Eurydice, 2007).

Every child in the country over the age of 3½ has been issued with a personal identification number (PGN). Commonly referred to as the education number, it is the same as the tax and social insurance number (SoFi number). Parents need it when they register their child at a school, for instance. Children who do not have a SoFi number are given a number by the Information Management Group (IBG). Schools pass on the PGN, together with certain other data on pupils, to the IBG. They register this data, which is used to determine schools' funding and for policy development and supervision purposes, the latter by the Education Inspectorate. The data kept by the IBG is increasingly used for purposes such as monitoring pupils' school careers, school attendance or early leaving (Eurydice, 2007).

Funding mechanisms for each education level is as follows:

1) *Primary and special schools*: Government funding for these schools is spread over three budget headings: staff, running costs and accommodation. Since August 2006, mainstream primary schools and special schools receive a block grant to cover their staffing and running costs. As a result, school boards receive a single sum of money, which they are free to spend at their own discretion, giving them more scope to manage the school as they see fit. Responsibility for the funding of accommodation has been delegated since 1997 to the municipal authorities and payments are now made from the Municipalities Fund.

2) *Secondary schools*: Since 1996, they receive an annual budget from which all staff and running costs must be met. The amount allocated is based on fixed rates for each cost item. The amount allocated for staff costs is calculated by multiplying the number of establishment posts by the average personnel costs (GPL). The GPL is the amount established

nationally for personnel costs by establishment post and staff category. Block grant funding gives the competent authority greater freedom in deciding how resources are spent and also in negotiating the pay and conditions of staff. Negotiations on pay and conditions in secondary education have been partly decentralised. The component for running costs (cleaning, teaching materials, electricity, heating, etc.) is fixed on the basis of the Running Costs Funding System (BSM). Schools receive a fixed amount per pupil together with a fixed amount per school (flat-rate basic grant). Responsibility for the funding of accommodation has been delegated since 1997 to the municipal authorities and payments are now made from the Municipalities Fund.

3) *Adult and vocational education*: It is funded through various sources. Government funding is channelled through four ways: 1) the Ministry funds vocational education courses directly, based partly on the number of students per course/learning pathway and partly on the number of certificates awarded per institution; 2) the Ministry funds the knowledge centres for vocational education and business on the basis of the number of qualifications devised, the number of training companies recognised as such and the number of practical training places filled; 3) The central government budget for adult education is allocated to the municipalities on the basis of the number of inhabitants over the age of 18, the number of ethnic minorities and the number of adults with an educational disadvantage. The municipal authorities then buy in adult education courses by concluding contracts with the regional training centres (ROCs); 4) Municipalities receive a separate budget under the Civic Integration (Newcomers) Act for civic integration courses for ethnic minorities. Municipalities are free to buy in courses from various suppliers. Furthermore, students pay course fees to the institutions. Students on vocational training courses pay fees to the Ministry and are eligible for student finance. Additionally, institutions receive income from contract activities for companies and private individuals.

4) *Higher education*: The total national budget for higher education institutions, the central government grant, is fixed by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science regardless of performance indicators. The budget is corrected in line with wage and price rises only, except where adjustments have to be made in the light of policy decisions (e.g. on the basis of estimated student numbers). It is then distributed among the institutions according to an allocation formula. Institutions of higher professional education (HBO) are funded mainly on the basis of student numbers. Roughly speaking, the faster students graduate or decide to give up their studies (i.e. within the first year), the bigger the grant the institution will receive. The reverse is also true. Institutions of higher professional education also receive income from contract activities and, since 1994, an allocation for benefit payments for staff and to cover accommodation. Almost 95% of the central government grant is allocated to the institutions in the form of a block grant. The institutions are then free to decide the most efficient way of using this money to meet their personnel, equipment and accommodation costs. The remaining 5% consists of funding for specific activities such as innovation. The Ministry for the thirteen research universities (first flow of funds, direct funding) is fixed without reference to performance indicators. The budget is only adjusted in line with wage and price rises and, if necessary, adjustments are made to accommodate policy changes. In addition, the budget is reviewed each year based on the latest views with regard to trends in student numbers. The distribution of the central government grant is partially dependent on performance indicators, such as the number of graduates, the number of first-year students and the number of doctorates awarded. University research is financed via three different flows of funds. The central government grant includes a certain sum for research (direct government funding; the first flow of funds). The Netherlands Organization for Scientific

Research (NWO) allocates funds on behalf of government to specific research projects (indirect government funding; the second flow of funds). Thirdly, the universities can apply for subsidies and conduct contract research outside these two main funding mechanisms. This third flow of funds consists, to a large extent, of resources from international and national government bodies and research funding from non-profit institutions (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009). The business community accounts for around 15% of this category of funding.

Table 1: The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science spending on education (x €1million) (2008 figures)

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science overall	28,454	
Primary education	9,038	31,7 %
Secondary education	6,545	23%
Vocational and adult education	3,376	12%
Higher professional education	2,178	7%
Research universities	3,710	13%
Student finance	3,605	13%

In 2008, The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science spending on education institutions totalled more than 28 billion Euros, divided between different levels as follows: 1) primary education – 9,038; secondary education -6,545; adult and vocational education -3,376; higher professional education -2,178; university – 3,710, and student financing – 3,605 million Euros (see table 1). This amount includes student grants and loans and WO research. In the same year, the Ministry spending on education amounted to 4.8 per cent of GDP (most recent figures) and to 14.8 per cent of government spending (The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009). According to 2006 figures, all public expenditures on education were 5, 5% of the GDP for all levels of education combined. Expenditure on educational institutions from private sources was 0, 9 % of GDP for all levels of education combined in the same year. Moreover, financial aid to pupils and students as % of total public expenditure on education, for all levels of education combined was 12,8%, and 7,2 % at primary and secondary levels combined, in 2006 (EUROSTAT, 2010).

According to CBS statistics, total expenditure on education amounted to Euro 37,567 million in 2008 for all levels of education. Euro 33,246 million was provided to educational institutions (Euro 27 million from public and Euro 5,5 million from private sources), and Euro 4,3 million was given to parents and companies in relation to education. The total expenditure was 6,3% of GDP in 2008. Besides, the public expenditure on education was 11,9% of total public expenditure in the same year. Details of total public and private expenditure on education per level are provided in the table below.

Table 2. Total expenditure on education in 2008 (CBS, 2009)

FINANCING FROM PUBLIC SOURCES	32,454
Primary education	8,889
Special education	1,228
Secondary education	7,928
Vocational and adult education	3,264
Higher professional education	2,277
Research universities	4,066
Student finance (payment to households)	4,257
Subsidies to companies	544
FINANCING FROM PRIVATE SOURCES	7,037

1.3.3. Development of curricula and educational standards; quality assurance and evaluation; forecast of skill needs

Curriculum development

National curriculum policy in the Netherlands has emphasized decentralisation and an increase in local autonomy. Schools are given more scope for the development of education in line with the specific needs and local environment of their pupils. In order to enhance coherence, a set of core objectives for primary education was developed in 2006. The number of core objectives was reduced in order to provide schools with more freedom to develop their own educational programmes (SCO, 2008). Likewise, core objectives were introduced in lower secondary schools which were intended as broad guidelines on the core content. Schools are encouraged to offer this content in broad learning areas, but this is not prescribed. Schools have the freedom to determine their own curriculum, within the framework of the core objectives. The Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) serves as a national expertise centre provides independent and professional advice and support for curriculum development in primary, secondary, and vocational education. Its curriculum projects usually involve many partners. e.g. the Ministry of Education, other specific expertise centres, schools, teacher colleges, publishers, universities and many others throughout the country (SLO, www.slo.nl).

Educational standards

There are various instruments available for setting and monitoring standards within schools: the school plan, the school prospectus and the complaints procedure. These have been compulsory for primary, secondary and special schools since 1998. The school plan, which must be updated by the school board every four years, describes the steps being taken to improve the quality of education. Every school must regularly assess its own performance. This information forms the basis for the school plan, which must be approved by the participation council. Through this document, the school renders account to the Inspectorate

for its policies. The school prospectus contains information for parents and pupils. It is updated every year on the basis of the school plan and describes in more detail what goes on in the school, its objectives and the results achieved. It thus serves as a basis for discussion between parents and the school about the school's policy. The prospectus includes information on the parental contribution and the rights and obligations of parents and pupils. It also describes the provision made for pupils with learning difficulties or behavioural problems. The school sends a copy of its prospectus to the Inspectorate, to which it is accountable for its policy on quality. The Inspectorate may decide to verify whether the statements made in the prospectus accurately reflect the situation in practice. There is also a complaints procedure. Schools are required to inform parents about the procedure for handling complaints, which supplements the existing opportunities for participation in decision-making and the management of the school. It gives parents an easy way of making known any complaints they have about the competent authority or members of the staff. The school board is required by law to set up a complaints committee to which parents can submit any complaints they may have (Eurydice, 2007).

Evaluation

Since the early 1980s Dutch education policy has been geared to giving educational institutions more and more responsibility for setting and raising standards in education. As well as internal evaluation by schools and institutions themselves, independent external inspections and evaluations are also carried out – by the Education Inspectorate in primary and secondary schools, by the Education Inspectorate and the Examination Quality Centre (KCE) in adult and vocational education, and by the Netherlands-Flanders Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) in higher education. The Education Inspectorate is charged with the inspection of education. The Inspectorate monitors and promotes the quality of education in Dutch educational establishments, based on a thorough knowledge of individual schools and institutions. Regular and systematic visits are made to schools and institutions for this purpose. A report of the Inspectorate's findings is sent to the school or institution concerned, to the Minister and State Secretaries, and to parliament. Under the Primary Education Act, the Secondary Education Act and the Adult and Vocational Education Act, the competent authorities are responsible for ensuring the quality of education. The Inspectorate encourages educational institutions to fulfil their responsibilities for pursuing policies on quality. If schools regularly evaluate the standard of their teaching, the Inspectorate bases its own conclusions on the results of these self-evaluations, and keeps its own inspections to a minimum. By using a phased and consultative approach, the Ministry of Education seeks to take a more arm's-length approach and to give those in the field real opportunities to make use of the scope delegated to them. Work is under way on the governance model, under which educational institutions have more freedom, monitor their own management (for example through a supervisory board) and render account for their actions to the relevant stakeholders. The model is still under development; although it is operational to a large extent in higher education, it is still to be introduced in most other sectors (Eurydice, 2007).

1.3.4. Teachers

Initial teacher training

Initial teacher training courses for the various types of schools are part of higher education, some being provided at institutions of higher professional education (HBO) and some at universities. In most cases, teacher training institutes are departments of broader colleges and

universities Higher professional education caters for full-time, part-time and dual (i.e. work-study) teacher training courses which lead to qualifications as a primary school teacher, a secondary school teacher grade two (for lower secondary education), a teacher for vocational education, a secondary school teacher grade one (for upper secondary education), and as a special education teacher (postgraduate course). Universities provide full-time, part-time and dual training courses leading to qualifications as a secondary school teacher grade one (upper secondary education). Another way of entering the teaching profession is through lateral entry. This allows people with higher education qualifications to enter the teaching profession through an alternative admission procedure. They then receive training and supervision aimed at equipping them with the necessary skills within two years.

Teachers' role and position in the system

Primary school teachers are qualified to teach all subjects at primary level and in special education, with the exception of physical education. Most teachers working at special schools have also completed a master's degree course in special educational needs. They may take the course after completing their initial primary or secondary teacher training, or another higher education course, and students can specialise in a particular field of work (e.g. teaching children with hearing disabilities or maladjusted children). Almost all secondary school teachers have specialised in one subject taught at secondary schools. Courses are available in general subjects, arts subjects, technical subjects and agricultural subjects. The subjects on offer vary from one institute to the next. Courses in technical and agricultural subjects only lead to a grade two qualification. The training courses for physical education and fine arts teachers lead to a grade one qualification. Grade one secondary teachers are qualified to teach at all levels of secondary education. Physical education and fine arts teachers can also work as specialist teachers in primary education. Grade two secondary teachers are qualified to teach the first three years of senior secondary and pre-university education and all four years of junior secondary education. Unlike grade two teachers, grade one teachers can teach at pre-higher education level, i.e. the last two or three years of senior secondary and pre-university education) (Meesters, 2003).

Occupational status

In almost all educational sectors, primary and secondary conditions of service have been decentralised. The only exception to this is primary conditions of service in primary education. The conditions of service and legal status of education personnel in both public-authority and privately run institutions are determined at decentralised level in sectoral collective agreements. Where possible and desirable, these agreements leave room for further elaboration at school-board level. Staff in public-authority schools and institutions are formally public sector personnel; they are public servants. The same does not apply to staff in the private sector who sign a contract with the board of the legal person, governed by private law, whose employment they enter. They fall under the provisions of the civil law, insofar as the relevant educational legislation and the regulations based thereon do not differ from these provisions. Private sector staff can be deemed to share the status of public sector personnel in respect of those conditions of service that are determined by the government (Eurydice, 2009).

Social prestige

Teacher status has not changed considerably in the Netherlands between 1950s and 1980s as teachers belonged to the higher categories in the social status hierarchy. Since 1983, there has not been any major research into the subject, but there is no evidence that the position of teachers in the status hierarchy has changed significantly. More recent research shows,

however, that teachers think that their status has decreased considerably, while the value they attach to their own profession is fairly high. It is believed that this feeling of being undervalued is the cause of the negative publicity about the status of the teacher. That teachers propagate this feeling to the general public is illustrated by the fact that people personally express considerable appreciation for teachers, but they think that teachers, in general, are not appreciated. In other words, many think that the status of teachers has decreased, but in fact, this perception is not substantiated by empirical studies (Meesters, 2003). Nevertheless, there are some indications that new studies on teacher status might reveal a more depressive outlook.

Statistical information

There are pressing teacher shortages as the number of unfilled vacancies in the primary education sector is rising from 630 in the school year 2006/07 to 720 in the school year 2007/08. The problems are unequally distributed across schools. In addition, special schools have more unfilled job vacancies than mainstream primary schools. In the secondary education sector, the number of unfilled job vacancies rose from 430 in school year 2006/07 to 530 in school year 2007/08. The number of unfilled job vacancies in the BVE sector (vocational and adult education) showed a slight increase from 550 in the school year 2006/07 to 600 in the school year 2007/08. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of those who graduated from primary school teacher-training colleges in 2007 had found a job in education by October 2007, immediately after graduating. By April 2008, this percentage has risen to 79 per cent. For the teachers graduated in 2006, these figures were 64 and 74 per cent, respectively. Of the teachers graduating from a secondary school teacher-training college in 2007, more than two-thirds (68 per cent) found a teaching job immediately after graduating. Six months later, 74 per cent have found a job. Four out of every five teachers graduating from university teacher-training programmes in 2007 had a job in education by October 2007, as compared to 84 per cent of graduates in 2006. The labour market situation for graduates of teacher-training programmes differs from one region to the other. For example, in the provinces of Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe, only between 65 and 70 per cent of teachers graduating in 2007 had a job in education by April 2008, versus 80 to 90 per cent of graduates in the Randstad (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009).

The ratio of pupils to teachers in the primary education sector was 15.3 pupils to a teacher in 2006 (which was achieved at the cost of high overhead expenses). In comparison to neighbouring countries, only Belgium has a lower pupil-teacher ratio. At an average of 15.8 pupils to a teacher, the pupil-teacher ratio in the Dutch secondary education sector is higher than the OECD and EU averages. With this score, the Netherlands tops the list in comparison to neighbouring countries. It should be noted in this respect that pupil-teacher ratios are not the same as class sizes. The ratio indicates the relationship between the total number of pupils and the total number of teachers. Class sizes are influenced by organizational factors such as the number of taught hours, the scope of teachers' duties, the establishment of lesson groups and the presence of remedial teachers (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009).

Table 3: Statistics on staff in educational institutions in the Netherlands (2008)

	Number of institutions (2008)	Number of staff	Percentage of women staff	Percentage aged 50 and older
Primary education	7,534	133,500	76.5	37.7
Secondary education	647	86,400	43.1	44.9
Adult and vocational education	60	38,600	48.6	49.0
Higher professional education	36	27,400*	47.3*	39.8*
Universities	12	37,200*	40.2*	28.0*

* The figures are for 2007.

Source: Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2009)

1.3.5. Non-teaching educational staff

There are no provisions of law or regulations governing the responsibility for support and guidance. For primary schools, there are standard and model profiles, for instance, caretakers, administrative staff, classroom assistants and teaching assistants. Special schools also employ specialists like speech therapists, physiotherapists and mobility instructors. Secondary schools employ general support staff, like caretakers, administrative staff and canteen managers, and educational support staff, like teaching and classroom assistants for science subjects. Similar jobs also exist in higher professional education and as part of the job structure for adult and vocational education.

1.3.6. Student and parent participation in decision-making

The Education Participation Act 1992 (WMO 1992) governs participation of students and parents in decision-making in primary, secondary, adult and vocational education. Under this act, every primary and secondary school and every adult and vocational education institution is legally required to set up a participation council. This comprises an equal number of elected staff and parent/pupil representatives, varying from 6 to 18 persons, depending on the size of the establishment. At institutions for adult and vocational education, the participation council comprises representatives of both the staff and students. Pupils in primary schools are not represented on the participation council. Members of the competent authority of the school or institution may not sit on the participation council. The participation council has a number of general powers and has the right to give its advice or consent and to put forward proposals. Parents participate through the parents' council, which advises the parent representatives in the participation council and coordinates parent activities. Secondary school pupils can set up a student council. Most secondary schools have a pupils' charter setting out the rights and obligations of pupils.

Participation councils' right to be informed has been strengthened in recent years: the board must provide and account for all relevant policy-related and financial information, both independently and at the request of the participation council. The latter also has more far-reaching powers. No important decisions can be taken without its assent or advice. In addition to a package of joint powers of assent, teachers and parents have been assigned a series of independent powers of assent relating to topics that particularly concern them. In the case of teachers these include conditions of employment; in the case of parents, the size of the parental contribution, for instance. The competent authorities need prior consent of the participation council for decisions affecting such matters as the adoption of or changes to the school's educational aims, the school plan, the curriculum, the special needs plan, the school rules or the complaints procedure, or the transfer of or merger of a school, etc. The participation council can advise on decisions relating to the adoption of or changes to the main points of the school's multi-year financial policy (and the timetable, in the case of secondary schools), decisions to enter into, terminate or significantly change a long-term partnership with another organisation, the adoption of changes to policy on the school's organisation, the appointment or dismissal of the head/deputy head, construction of new school buildings or major alterations to existing buildings, etc. If the school board and the participation council cannot reach agreement, they can ask a disputes committee (an independent committee of experts) to mediate. The committee will usually start by presenting a proposal, but if the problem remains unsolved, it can issue a binding decision (Eurydice, 2009).

1.4. Patterns of participation

1.4.1. Quantitative distribution of students across school types and levels

According to EUROSTAT data, percentage of population aged 20 to 24 having completed at least upper secondary education was 76,2 % in 2008 (80,6% for females and 71,9% for males). Moreover, the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training was 11,4 % in 2008 (8,8 % for females and 14% for males). The percentage of population aged 25 to 34 having completed at most lower secondary education was 17, 6% in the same year. The share of persons aged 0-17 who were living in households where no-one was working was 6, 2% in 2006 (EUROSTAT, 2010).

Table 4: Number of education participants (2008) (Ministry of Education, culture and Science, 2009)

Total	3,725,600
Primary education	1,663,700
Secondary education	934,300
Adult general secondary education overall	14,400
Vocational education overall	511,200
Higher professional education	382,900
Research universities	219,000

Table 5: Participation in secondary year 3 by gender (numbers x 1000) (2008) (Ministry of Education, culture and Science, 2009)

Total	208	
VSO (secondary special education (age 15) – Boys	4,1	2%
Girls	1,7	0,8%
PRO (practical education) (age 15) – Boys	3,3	1,5%
Girls	2,3	1,1%
LWOO (learning support – Boys	12,9	6,2%
Girls	11,9	5,7%
VMBO - Boys	43,9	21,1%
Girls	38,6	18,5%
HAVO - Boys	22,8	11,3%
Girls	23,6	11,3%
VWO - Boys	19,6	9,4%
Girls	23,2	11,1%

Table 6: Pupils in secondary year 3, distribution across school types, 2007/08 (Ministry of Education, culture and Science, 2009)

	Total (x 1 000)	VMBO (%)	General undivided (%)	HAVO (%)	VWO (%)	LWOO % in VMBO overall
Native Dutch	155,6	53	3	21	22	21
Western non-natives	12,4	50	4	21	25	23
Non-Western non-natives	29,1	70	3	15	13	31
Turkey	6,8	79	2	12	8	33
Morocco	5,9	78	2	13	8	32
Surname	5,1	68	3	16	13	28
Antilles/Aruba	2,1	70	2	15	12	34
Other non-Western minorities	9,2	58	3	19	19	29

1.4.2. Quantitative distribution of school leavers by levels of qualification

School dropout is defined as leaving the educational system without a so-called ‘start qualification’, which is equal to a diploma of upper secondary education (HAVO, VWO or level 2 of MBO). Dutch education and labour-market policy regard this start qualification as the minimum level needed to enter the labour market properly equipped (van der Steeg, 2006). Awarding a basic qualification to all is one of the main priorities of the Dutch

education system. In 2007/08, the number of early school-leavers totalled 48,800. 28 percent of school leavers come from secondary education, and 70 percent from vocational education (MBO). Within secondary education, dropout particularly takes place at the lowest level (VMBO), and much less at the higher levels (HAVO and VWO). Within MBO (vocational education) dropout is concentrated at the lowest of four levels. Dropout in MBO is largest in the first year and drops quickly in following years, suggesting transition problems between VMBO and MBO (van der Steeg, 2006).

Table 7. New drop-outs by last type of education (2008)

	In numbers	Percentage of background cat. (new dropouts aged 12-22)
Total	48,800	3.7
Secondary year 1	3,270	0.8
VMBO: without diploma	2,733	1.3
with diploma	4,245	1.9
HAVO/VWO	3,318	1.1
VAVO	1,171	16.4
MBO 1: without diploma	2,879	21.8
with diploma	1,806	13.8
MBO 2-4	29,378	7.6

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2009).

Dropouts are overrepresented among youth from lower social class (low educated parents), students from one-parent families, youth entering secondary education with low test scores, youth from foreign origin and youth living in the big cities. All these factors affect the chance of school dropout separately. The chance of dropping out increases strongly when two or more of these factors are combined (van der Steeg, 2006). According to recent statistics, young men constitute the majority of early school-leavers with 59 per cent. The percentage of non-Western ethnic minority dropouts is twice as high as that of the native Dutch. Since 2006, the share of early school-leavers among ethnic minorities has gradually been falling from 6.7 to 5.8 per cent in 2008. Approximately 24 per cent of early school leavers come from single-parent families, versus 15 per cent of non-early school-leavers. In line with the Lisbon strategy, the national objective is to reduce the annual number of school leavers by 50 percent between 2002 and 2012, which refers to a maximum of 35, 000 new drop-outs by 2012 among 18-to-24 year olds that are no longer in the education system and do not have basic qualifications. The number of early-school leavers has been already decreasing since 2001. At 12 percent in 2007, the Netherlands already scores under the EU average of 15.2 percent (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009). In 2008, the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training was 11,4 % (8,8 % for females and 14% for males) (EUROSTAT, 2010).

1.5. Educational support for special needs education

1.5.1. Historical overview

Schools for children with sensory and mental disabilities have existed in the Netherlands ever since the nineteenth century. Since the introduction of the first Compulsory Education Act in 1901, special education has continued to expand. Over the years the number of different types of special schools multiplied as the definition of special education became increasingly broad. The Primary Education Act 1920 governed both special and mainstream schools, however. In 1985, separate legislation for special primary and secondary education came into force. In 1996, the "Going to School Together" policy was announced, which aimed at breaking down the division between mainstream schools and special primary schools. Since then, where possible, pupils are placed in mainstream schools and given extra assistance. They are only placed in special schools preferably on a temporary basis, if it is unavoidable. Special primary education is offered for children with learning and behavioural difficulties, children with learning difficulties and preschool children with developmental difficulties. Special secondary education is also offered for children with learning and behavioural difficulties and for children with learning difficulties.

1.5.2. Definition and diagnosis of the target groups

Special education comprises two school types: special education (SO) and secondary special education (VSO). SOVSO schools offer both forms of education. Both school types are subdivided into various types of education, based on the handicaps or learning impediments of the pupils. Within the framework of the Pupil Specific Funding (LGF) system, regional expertise centres (RECs) have been set up, i.e., consortiums of special schools and secondary special schools within a district. The schools and therefore also the RECs are divided into four clusters: 1) schools for the visually impaired; 2) schools for hearing impaired children and children with communication disabilities (due to hearing, language or speech difficulties); 3) schools for physically or mentally disabled children; and category, and 4) schools for children with psychiatric or behavioural disorders, for severely maladjusted children, and chronically sick children (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009). The criteria for behaviourally disturbed pupils require a diagnosis in terms of categories of the DSM-IV, problems at school, at home and in the community and a limited participation in education as a result of the behavioural problems (SCO, 2008).

Pupils can be referred from mainstream schools to the different types of special school and vice versa. Pupils can also move from one type of education to another when they finish primary school/special primary school. Individual needs committees and regional referral committees and determine whether a child is eligible for admission to a special school. An independent committee decides in which type of school to place them and how much funding they will receive. Special education is provided at special primary and secondary schools, and at schools providing both special primary and secondary education. The Going to School Together policy applies to schools that fall under the Primary Education Act. The target group comprises four specific categories: autistic children, children suffering from ADHD, dyslexic children, and gifted children. Compensatory policy is applied in the case of children whose language development lags behind and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Eurydice, 2007).

1.5.3. Financial support for pupils' families

Attendance at special schools for primary education is free. Parents of children in special education are eligible for financial support under the Fees and Educational Expenses (Allowances) Act (WTOS). School fees for pupils in secondary and special education aged 16 to 18 were abolished as of 1 August 2005. The WTOS, the School and Tuition Fees Act and the Student Finance Act 2000 (WSF) have therefore been amended to reflect the fact that school fees are no longer payable for this age group. Parents still have to pay educational expenses, however, i.e. costs linked to education which are not laid down statutorily and for which schools do not receive government funding. This includes the cost of books, the voluntary parental contribution (though schools must admit children even if their parents do not pay this contribution) and travel costs. The WTOS is intended to help parents meet these costs. The study costs allowance is dependent on income and consists (in the case of the maximum possible award) of the full amount of any fees payable and a contribution towards other study costs. It is not subject to income tax and does not have to be repaid (Eurydice, 2007)

1.5.4. General support mechanisms

Preventive peripatetic supervision entails the provision of extra help to enable pupils with special needs to attend an ordinary school. The help is provided by teachers from special schools and focuses not only on the pupil but also on advising staff at the mainstream school. This form of peripatetic supervision is provided to children without a positive assessment from an independent committee (CVI). Special secondary schools work together with mainstream secondary schools to offer split placements. This term refers to the possibility of arranging for part of the syllabus for pupils at special secondary schools to be taught at schools providing pre-vocational secondary education, practical training or learning support, or at adult and vocational education institutions. Split placements can play a role in the transition from special to mainstream secondary education. They were also introduced in primary education on 1 August 2003.

1.5.5. Mainstreaming special needs education

Since 1991, the policy has been geared to integrating children with special needs in mainstream primary schools, under the motto 'Going to School Together'. The aim of this policy is threefold: 1) to enable pupils with special needs to attend mainstream primary schools; 2) to control costs by awarding a set budget to consortia of mainstream schools and special schools for primary education, from which the latter schools and special facilities at mainstream primary schools are funded, and 3) to broaden and strengthen special needs facilities at primary schools so that more pupils with special needs can remain in mainstream education and all pupils receive the support they need, at the same time helping to eliminate waiting lists for admission to special schools for primary education (Eurydice, 2007). The policy emphasized improving the bandwidth in dealing with diversity in mainstream schools and stimulating cooperation between schools at a regional level.

The legislation on personal budgets (LGF) gives the parents of children with disabilities the option of choosing between an ordinary and a special school for their child. This new funding system was introduced on 1 August 2003, and about a quarter of disabled pupils can now attend mainstream schools as a result. Children who require special facilities to attend a mainstream school because of a sensory, physical or mental disability and/or learning difficulties or behavioural problems are awarded a personal budget. This money 'travels' with the child if they qualify for special education, but their parents prefer them to attend a local mainstream school, and is intended to pay for staffing and equipment costs and

any adaptations that may be necessary to meet the child's needs. Children are assessed against a national set of objective criteria by an independent committee (CVI), appointed by the regional expertise centre (REC) (a consortium of special schools), to establish whether they are eligible for such funding or for admission to a special school. In such cases, children do not receive a personal budget because they attend a special school. A national supervisory committee oversees the assessment of children with special needs by these centres. The personal budget is allocated to the school where the child has been placed. This money is used to pay for extra help for the child, for instance in the form of extra teaching materials or special needs training for teachers. Part of it must be spent on peripatetic supervision. An individual education plan is drawn up for the child, which is evaluated by the school and the parents at the end of the school year. In the case of schools for the visually impaired (category 1), children are referred not by an independent committee but by individual schools (Eurydice, 2009). There is now a growing continuum between separated education (special schools) and full inclusive schools. There are many mainstream schools with pupils with special educational needs in regular classes and mainstream schools with a special group for children with special needs within the school. Some mainstream school specializes in a particular target group and some mainstream schools collaborate intensively with special schools (European agency for Special Needs Education, 2009).

1.6. Other forms of educational support

1.6.1. Special measures for the benefit of immigrant children and those from ethnic minorities

Compensatory policy

Of the 1.5 million children who attend primary school, around 300,000 are educationally disadvantaged, often because of their socioeconomic or cultural background. Compensatory policy seeks to improve the educational achievements and career prospects of educationally disadvantaged children and young people. The distribution of responsibilities between school boards and municipal authorities has been defined such that parties can be held accountable. The lion's share of the budget for compensatory policy goes directly to schools, the remainder to the municipal authorities. A weighting system determines the amount of money allocated to schools. Schools are responsible for combating educational disadvantage. They are expected to start tackling the problems of disadvantaged pupils at the earliest possible stage. Primary schools have been allocated extra funds since 1 August 2005 to tackle linguistic and other disadvantages among their younger pupils. As schools and school boards are the main actors involved in implementing compensatory policy, they will be given more freedom to decide how the available funds should be spent. In particular, they will no longer be required to draw up a compensatory plan together with the municipal authorities, setting out their joint objectives, activities and spending plans. When tackling educational disadvantage, schools are expected to tie in with the policy of other actors (youth services, municipal authorities, etc.) and to work together with them and with organisations in the field of, say, welfare, health and sport. As the authorities closest to schools, municipalities are responsible for the functioning of local infrastructure. Drawing up compensatory policy at municipal level enables problems to be tackled at local level, according to their nature and severity. Municipalities are responsible for early childhood education and bridging classes, and are required to consult with school boards on preventing segregation and promoting integration, and on compensatory policy, including the link between early childhood education and primary education. They can also encourage individual schools to tackle disadvantage. Bridging

classes are mainly intended for primary school pupils, whether or not they are from ethnic minorities, whose language skills are holding them back. Pupils spend a year catching up on their language skills, after which they return to normal classes. The municipalities are also responsible for teaching at asylum seekers centres. Nearly all municipalities with an asylum seekers centre provide schooling that is partly funded from the municipal budget for compensatory policy. The municipalities are charged with coordinating basic facilities at local level and ensuring the availability of youth services (see also the section on community schools). They are also responsible for ensuring that school-aged children attend school, for preventing early school leaving, including the regional registration of early school leavers, and for urban policy (Eurydice, 2009).

Weighting system in primary education

In primary education, pupils with a potential educational disadvantage are given a weighting based on certain criteria. These weightings are taken into account in the funding schools receive. Until August 2006, the following weighting system applied: 0.25 for Dutch pupils whose parents have a low level of education; 0.4 for bargees' children; 0.7 for caravan dwellers' and gypsies' children; and 0.9 for ethnic minority pupils whose parents have a low level of education. Since 1 August 2006, a new weighting system has taken effect for primary education in which only the parents' level of education counts. Two weightings are used: 0.3 for pupils whose parents have no more than LBO (lower vocational training) / VBO (prevocational education) qualifications and 1.2 for pupils who have one parent with only a primary education and one parent with no more than LBO/VBO qualifications. The new weighting system has been introduced in steps between 2006 and 2010 (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009). With these weighting system schools receive extra resources and staff to be able to help pupils with potential educational disadvantages.

Ethnic Minority Pupils Funding Scheme

On 1 January 2007, a new scheme known as the Learning Plus and Newcomers (Secondary Education) Funding Scheme, was introduced to fund compensatory policy in secondary education. The scheme is made up of two parts. The first part redistributes the budget for compensatory policy. Schools will receive extra money if at least 30% of their pupils come from deprived neighbourhoods or areas. The aim is to provide more tailor-made solutions, improve pupils' performance by promoting policy on learning Dutch and prevent drop out by strengthening the network around the school. Schools can decide for themselves how they will spend the money, though they have to consult with the municipal authorities on the matter at least once a year. In this way, money will be spent where it is needed most. The scheme was drawn up after consultation with school managers, the municipal authorities and various secondary education interest organisations. At their request, the new scheme will be applicable to all types of school, not only VMBO but also HAVO and VWO. Under this new scheme, a more targeted approach to educational disadvantage will be adopted. Ethnicity is no longer the indicator for extra funding, but an accumulation of problems in a single school. The indicator for the 8% poorest areas in the Netherlands used by Statistics Netherlands in its Poverty Monitor forms the basis for deciding to which schools this applies. Schools are eligible for supplementary funding if at least 30% of their pupils come from these areas. To work out this percentage, a link is made between the pupils' education numbers and their postal codes. The administrative burden is thus minimal. The second part of the scheme funds schools for enrolling newcomers. Schools are given extra money for every pupil who has been in the Netherlands for less than two years and is an alien within the meaning of the Aliens Act (i.e. does not have Dutch nationality). Schools can decide for themselves how they organise teaching for these pupils, for example in separate classes (Eurydice, 2009).

1.6.2. Private support mechanisms

There are private tutoring institutions in the Netherlands that provide help and guidance with regard to homework. The market for such institutions has grown a lot in recent years, and they attracted much media attention. However, there have been no nation wide studies that looked at the phenomenon in depth. Besides, there are no official figures on the number of students registered at such institutions. According to the website Huiswerkbegeleiding.nl, in 2006 there were around 650 to 700 private tutoring institutions in the Netherlands. In 2007, however, the number of companies estimated to increase to 750, and the number of secondary school students to 110,000. The experts offer slightly different figures: According to them, the number of private tutoring institutions was around 1,000 in 2009, and the number of students that receive private support is estimated as 60,000.

Homework institutions vary considerably in terms of their size and services offered. There are small size institutions with even one employee as well as large companies with several branches across the country. Some have trained teachers and psychologists as well. The commercial homework institutions offer comfortable study environments in which students are guided while they are doing their homework and provided extra help when necessary. There also some institutions that offer remedial teaching in several subjects, train for taking exams and for learning how to study in a structured and effective way. They also provide opportunities for students with learning or psychological problems, such as dyslexia and ADHD so that with the help of such extra support they can continue to attend mainstream schools. Training programmes at most of the institutions are directed towards secondary school students, but there are also institutions that offer their services to last two grades of primary education (Education Council, 2009a).

1.7. Characteristic of educational governance

In recent decades, there has been a growing trend in the Dutch education system towards greater autonomy and decentralisation, as many central government powers have been transferred to the level of the individual school or local authority (municipality). Consequently, the central government has increasingly focused on defining the general outline of education policy, leaving the interpretation and implementation of this general policy outline to those directly involved namely the school boards and the schools. The expansion of autonomy pertains to both the schools and the teachers. The Netherlands has indeed a long social and political tradition of restraint by the central government in relation to the provision of education. The reasons for granting greater autonomy to educational institutions differ from era to era. In the 19th century and the early 20th century, educational institutions were given greater autonomy primarily based on religious, political and philosophical considerations. In the 1980s, the pursuit of democratic participation played a greater role. A more efficient management of public funds was the most important motive for increasing autonomy at the end of the 1990s. Today, the desire to increase the quality of education has been added to the list of reasons (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009).

The overall responsibility of the system lies with the Ministry of Education. There is one (independent) advisory body at national level - the Education Council - that advises the government on the main outline of policy and legislation. At the level of the education institutions, the school administrations are the competent authorities. They are responsible for implementing legislation and regulations and for policy-making in educational institutions. Central government control is increasingly confined to the area of broad policy-making and to

creating the right conditions for the provision of good quality education. Institutions are being given greater freedom in the way they allocate their resources and manage their own affairs, although they are still answerable to government for their performance and policies. The increase in autonomy places a heavier responsibility on school managers and boards, and entails a need for good governance. Boards are required to make agreements on decision-making, and to enshrine them in a management charter. Educational organisations have decided to draw up a joint code of good governance. It sets out various good governance principles and is intended to spark discussion between boards, managers and participation councils, leading to agreements appropriate to the nature of the schools in question and their administrative culture.

Schools, particularly school boards, have a large degree of autonomy in the teaching methods they choose and the textbooks they use. Although in the majority of EU countries, the schools and teachers may not determine the contents of the curriculum, in the Netherlands (within the boundaries of the attainment targets) teachers can determine independently or together what the contents of the syllabus of required subjects will be (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009). However, the existing of nationwide examinations at the end of primary (CITO) and secondary education (national secondary leaving exams) determines to a large extent the content of the curriculum, as schools strive to improve the achievement levels of their students in such exams. In that sense, the autonomy of schools in deciding the contents of the curriculum is framed at a central level by the Ministry. The safeguarding of the quality of education is carried out by the National Education Inspectorate. As a result of policies that give greater autonomy to schools and other educational institutions, the task of the Inspectorate of Education has shifted towards supervising the quality of the system, the guarantee of the basic quality of the schools, and the quality of the accountability efforts provided by the schools (Inspectorate of Education, 2007). It is also important to note that the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for agricultural education and has a role which is comparable to that of the Ministry of Education. Personnel management and the appointment of staff are responsibilities of the school administrations. The policy on eliminating educational disadvantage has also been decentralised by central government to the municipal authorities and schools. As schools and school boards are the main actors involved in implementing compensatory policy, they are given more freedom to decide how the available funds should be spent (Meesters, 2003).

In recent years, school boards have been subjected to increasing criticisms due to their heightened powers which seem to undermine the autonomy of schools and teachers. Critics argue that school boards have too much power and influence. This also raises legitimacy concerns since it is not clear to what extent education stakeholders such as teachers, parents and students have a real say in the daily activities of school and the formulation of school policy. Concerns are surmounting on the grounds that the autonomy of school boards has expanded at the expense of other educational actors in matters concerning the governance of education (see part C for more information). It is also interesting to mention that, parents exert some power in educational governance because of free choice policy. As explained in the section on primary education, parents can make informed choices about the schools since they have access to information about the school through information evenings, publications of the Education Inspectorate, and school prospectuses. If parents are not pleased with the quality of a school, they may choose to go another one to register their children. In this way, parents indirectly exert pressure on schools for improving their quality.

2. The Welfare state

2.1. Main principles and institutions

2.1.1. General information

The Netherlands belongs to the best performing economies in the EU. Despite recent cuts in social benefits, it is still one of the wealthiest countries in Europe. Over the last decades, its economy has developed from a traditional agricultural and industrial society into a service economy, with transportation, goods distribution, financial services, and tourism on top. Agriculture has developed into a highly mechanized and technologically advanced sector. The country has also significant oil and gas fields in the North Sea which form the basis for the nation's large energy industry. The last bi-annual report of Dutch Social-Cultural Bureau (SCP, 2009b) places NL in the lowest score of the so called *misère* index which combines indices of unemployment, inflation figures and government debt, and in one of the highest happiness positions (Veenhoven, 2009). General well-being does not only show in objective figures but in subjective feelings and opinions as well. The life situation of the population has improved over the last 10 years (1998-2008), despite the current financial and economic crisis. The most advantageous groups belong to people with a high education, young people and young families with one person in employment; this also holds for Dutch inhabitants with a migrant background. On the whole a decreasing number of the Dutch face cumulative disadvantageous circumstances such as long term unemployment, bad housing, bad health, etc. Only 3% of the population says that they are unhappy. Most of the 18-24 year old youth is content with their life (SCP, 2009b, p. 364).

2.1.2. Social assistance and other welfare benefits

Young people under 18years old

In the Netherlands, young people under 18 are not entitled to social assistance. Parents have the duty to support them and receive a financial allowance (child benefit) for the costs of care and maintenance of children up to the age of 18 under the General Child Benefit Law. The amount depends on the age of the child. Up to the age of 16, young people are supposedly attending school on a full-time basis. As far as 16- and 17-year-olds are concerned, child benefit is only paid for those who attend school for a sufficient number of hours or who are occupationally disabled or unemployed. If a teenager also has a part-time job, even as an apprentice, the entitlement to child benefit is conditional on the fact that his income from work remains below a certain level.

Young people aged 18 and older

A new Work and Social Assistance Law (Wet Werk en Bijstand, WWB) was introduced in January 2004. The WWB provides a minimum income for all persons aged 18 and more residing legally in the Netherlands with insufficient financial resources to meet their essential living costs. Social assistance is means-tested as it depends on family income. Individuals are required first to do their utmost to support themselves and are obliged to take on "generally acceptable work"; if they fail the latter, they are liable for benefit sanctions. Under the WWB, single parents with children under the age of five are no longer automatically exempt from applying for work. As a consequence, the number of single parents on welfare has declined slightly faster than other groups. The WWB provides a distinction between three age groups (18-21; 22-65; and 65+) and between household status (married couples or unmarried cohabiting persons; single parent; and single person). The level for a single young person

between the ages of 18 and 21 is based on the level of child benefit. Concerning school-leavers, the local authorities can reduce the benefits during the first semester of the year after the end of schooling. Young people aged 21 or 22 may also receive less benefits if the local social services find that granting full benefits make work financially unattractive. The current situation is already such that almost no one below the age of 25 receives social security benefit without a special reason. The total number of persons below 25 qualifying for social security benefit is now less than 20, 000. Around half of them are single parents.

Box 1. Level of monthly benefits for young people in the Netherlands in 2007

Child benefit: Between ages 12 to 17: EUR 272. For children born before 1st January 1995, up to EUR 366 in families with six children.

Social Assistance benefit: Between ages 18 to 20: EUR 215 (single person) and EUR 680 (married couple or unmarried cohabiting persons, both partners under 21 with children). From the age of 21: EUR 623 (single person) and EUR 1 246 (married couples or unmarried cohabiting persons). Maximum supplement of EUR 249 for single parents and single persons.

Unemployment Insurance benefit: Level in the first two months: 75% of the wage most recently earned (a maximum of EUR 175 per day) and 70% thereafter. Duration: three months if the person meets the “weeks condition” (26 weeks of work out of 36 weeks); a maximum of 38 months if the person meets the “years condition” (four years of work out of the previous five years).

Young handicapped persons (Wajong): Level according to the degree of occupational disability: 21% of minimum wage for a disability degree between 25 and 35%, and up to 70% of minimum wage for a disability degree of 80% or more.

Disability benefits

A distinction can be made between the occupational disability scheme for handicapped young people (Wajong) and the occupational disability scheme to which people are entitled only after they have been in work (WIA). Wajong is a lump sum granted between the ages 17 and 30 if the young person became occupationally disabled before his 18th birthday whilst studying – and therefore before entering the labour market – and has remained occupationally disabled ever since. The second scheme is regulated by the Work and Income Ability to Work Law. Young workers do not account for a large proportion of inflows into the second scheme (WIA) eligible only to workers having at least two years of work history. In cases of illness, the individual remains first in employment for the first two years and continues to receive a wage from their employer. In addition, there has been extensive screening of persons applying for the WIA benefit since the introduction of the 2002 Gatekeeper Act. There has been indeed a persistent decrease in the inflows of youth aged 15-24 into WIA in the early 2000s. By contrast, there has been a sharp increase in the number of youth entering into disability under the Wajong scheme, in particular young people with unspecified psychological disorders. This reflects a potential displacement effect now that other benefit (social assistance and unemployment) eligibility rules are tightened up for young people.

Unemployment insurance

Dutch school-leavers with no recent labour market history have no right to claim unemployment benefits. Many reforms affecting the Dutch system of unemployment insurance were made in the early 2000s. A dozen important changes implemented between 2002 and 2006. In particular, follow-up benefits available during two years after the duration of the earnings-related benefits had expired and short-term flat-rate unemployment benefits available for workers without an employment record were abolished respectively in 2004 and in 2006. As of 1st October 2006, there is only one type of unemployment benefit depending on workers' employment histories. The latter removal in 2006 affects mainly young workers and temporary workers. The Unemployment Insurance Law (WW) does not specify a minimum age limit for benefit reciprocity. Young people who are in employment are insured under the WW regardless of their age. If they become unemployed and meet the necessary requirements, they are eligible to receive unemployment benefits. To be currently entitled to unemployment benefits, a worker should have been employed in 26 out of the previous 36 weeks. If this so-called "weeks condition" is not met, no entitlement to unemployment benefits exist and the worker can apply for social assistance benefits. Workers who meet the "weeks condition" receive a basic unemployment benefit with a maximum duration of three months. For the first two months, the worker receives 75% of previous wages and, in the third month, it drops to 70%. For workers who also meet the "years condition" (i.e. they have worked in four out of the previous five years) in addition to the "weeks condition", the earnings-related benefit is paid for a longer period of time depending on the working history. As from October 2006, the maximum period of entitlement to earnings-related unemployment benefits has been shortened (from a maximum of five years to a maximum of 38 months). For each year of working experience, a month of benefit is received. Thus, a 38-year-work record is required to be eligible for the maximum period. To maintain his entitlement to unemployment benefits, the worker has to search actively for a job, with a minimum of four search activities within the last four weeks. Search activities refer to sending an application letter, having an application interview, doing assessment tests, calling or visiting a company to ask about vacancies, registering at a temporary work agency and starting one's own business. For all search activities, proof has to be kept. When search activities are not met, benefits are cut or withdrawn. The application of the job-search requirement was adapted in 2007. The process is now more customised, in the sense that more allowance is being made for individual circumstances. Recipients of unemployment benefits are obliged to accept any suitable job. The requirements for a suitable job have become stricter since the revisions in the late 1990s. The definition of a suitable job now changes over the duration of the unemployment benefit. A person with a medium-level education must accept any job after six months. After a maximum of 18 months, any job is suitable, even for highly qualified jobseekers. In general, any work is suitable for low-skilled young people with little work experience. Unemployed people who cannot find a job without additional training may be obliged to undergo training to improve their chances in the labour market (OECD, 2008).

2.1.3. Number of young people on benefits

The incidence of benefit receipt among Dutch youth aged 15-29 was less than one third that of the age group aged 30-64 in 2005. Among the 5.6% of youth on benefit, 2.3% received disability benefits, 2.2% received social assistance (mainly women) and a little more than 1% unemployment insurance benefits. In recent years, there has been a decreasing trend in the number of beneficiaries among youth, particularly in the case of unemployment and social assistance benefits. According to the SZW, the decrease is significant mainly among youth on welfare for less than six months. Looking at the average duration of welfare benefit payments, between 2004 and 2005 there was a significant decrease (42%) in the number of young people

receiving benefits for less than six months but a much smaller decrease (14%) for people receiving benefits for more than six months. According to official figures, the number of people claiming income support fell by just over 8% in 2006. In the age group 27 and younger, it dropped by nearly three times as much: 24%. The fall for younger single parents was only 15%. At the beginning of 2007, one in nine income support payments goes to the age group 27 and younger. Inhabitants in highly urbanised neighbourhoods are one and a half times more likely to claim income support than people living in non-urban areas. The number of incapacity benefits and unemployment benefits is more or less equally distributed across the neighbourhoods (OECD, 2008).

In 2007, 28, 4% of GDP was spent on welfare expenditures, and 1,6% was on family and children related expenditures (EUROSTAT, 2010).

2.1.4. Workfare and social policy

Since about a decade, Dutch government conducts a workfare policy with special attention given to early school leavers. It has closed the gap between existing education and entering the labour market by making social benefits dependent on either working or re-entering/continuing education. Preventing early school leaving is one of the central goals set out in cooperation with public and private/economic stakeholders. A close-knit net among the educational system (registration of absenteeism), the school inspection (controlling absenteeism and early school leaving), local authorities, social workers, youth care, police and labour market services has been drawn up to monitor young people on their way to work (OECD, 2008, p. 10) The CPB (Central Planbureau) expects an unemployment rate of 6.5 for 2010/2011 (NRC Handelsblad, 2010), SCP (Social Cultural Planbureau calculates 8% for 2010 (SCP, 2009a, p. 28). Both institutes expect higher percentages for young people, mainly among school leavers and young people with below-start qualification.

On the whole, NL belongs to those EU countries, especially the Scandinavian, which combine workfare policies with flexicurity policies (OECD, 2008, p.4). That notwithstanding has the *poverty rate* over the last ten years not decreased. Among social assistant benefit recipients it has even increased and stood in 2007 at 34% (SCP, 2009a, p. 96).

Measures and laws, labour market institutions

- In 2007, the Qualification Law was launched: until they turn 18, young people who have not obtained a start qualification (the equivalent of an upper secondary degree) must follow a full-time educational program;
- For 18-27 year olds without completed upper secondary education there is the obligation to go back to education or work in order to be eligible for social benefits. In other words, young people who do not have a basic qualification (a HAVO, VWO diploma or an MBO level 2 diploma), and who are not studying anymore or working, cannot apply for social benefits to support their income (Statistics Netherlands, 2009).
- Centers for Work and Income (CWI's) are the first contact for jobseekers. They get basic re-integration assistance. The CWI transfers its clients who are not ready for labour market (re-) entry to:
- Social Insurance agencies (UWVs) which pay unemployment insurance and disability benefits;

- CWI's channel clients to municipalities which, in turn, usually contract out placement and re-integration services to private and community providers who are paid on the basis of outcomes;
- Young people from the age of 18 can receive social assistance from their municipality. Each municipality can put in place financial incentives to reduce caseload and is entirely responsible for deciding what mutual obligations to implement, and to which target group. Most municipalities send youth applying for social assistance back to training programs organized by local providers;
- Youth having received unemployment or social assistance benefits for more than six months can participate in a youth development and experience placement (JOP's) A JOP is an internship of 3 months during which trainees keep their benefits and get a wage of EUR 450 p.m. from the employer. That helps long-term unemployed youth to integrate in lasting employment (yet there is no obligation for the employer to guarantee such employment);
- Youth minimum wages range from 30% of the adult rate at the age of 15 to 85% at the age of 22.
- Unemployment benefits are conditional to having worked at least 6 months and granted only 3 months for workers with less than four years of work experience (OECD, 2008).

Conclusions

- The eligibility to unemployment insurance benefits has made benefits less accessible to young people, as unemployment benefit entitlements have to be built up exclusively through work experience (young people from the age of 18 can, however, apply for receiving social assistance from their municipality) (OECD, 2008, p. 11);
- There are hardly escape routes left open for young people below the age of 18 (and also above) who are unwilling to go back to education. Numerous programs and interventions are launched to reach those young people;
- Young people are frustrated if measures and programs don't lead to jobs, like internships without the prospect of a successive work contract;
- A highly decentralized system leads to different policies of applying rules and measures; some municipalities are more lenient than others to allow for benefits even if not all criteria of applicability are met;
- Youth minimum wages lead to the threshold effect that young people aged 22 and eligible for 85% of the adult rate of minimum wages are replaced by the employer with younger and therefore cheaper employees. That means:
- Age discrimination, besides (or in combination with) possible discrimination of young people with migrant backgrounds;
- The unemployment regulation (benefits granted only for 3 months when less than four years of work experience) discriminates again against age.

2.2. Services for children and youth

2.2.1. General principles of youth policy

In the Netherlands, the implementation of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* in 1995 was an important step in boosting youth policy higher up the political agenda. The elements of the convention – participation, protection and provisions; the three basic Ps - became leading principles in Dutch youth policies.

Dutch government and society have a high interest in giving room for children and young people to live their own lives and be involved in social matters which affect them. Policies and measures are designed to help young people to get independent; education and work are the most important means to meet those aims. Protection is another cornerstone of Dutch youth policy. There are many regulations and facilities that serve to protect children and young people. Responsibility lies primarily by the parents or carers but if they do not or cannot fulfil their educational tasks, the government is eventually responsible for providing support and protection. The adoption of the *Youth Care Act* in 2005 is legislation which for the first time reflects the rights of children and young people to youth care. As concerns provisions, the government is obliged to provide basic provisions such as education and health for all families with children and young people.

In the Netherlands, youth is defined as children and young people from 0 up to the age of 24. Approximately 1/3 of the Dutch population falls into this category, and one in five young people have an ethnic background (see also (A 2.1).

2.2.2. Organisation of youth policy

On national level, the *Ministry for Youth and Families* is responsible for coordinating the different ministries which have to do with youth (sector policy): Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, of Social affairs and Employment, of Justice and of Education, Culture and Science. Since the late 1980, the central government has transferred a large number of tasks to local and provincial administrative levels with the intention to move measures and facilities closer to the basis. A distinction is made between general and preventive youth policy on one hand and the youth care system on the other; for the former, the local authorities are responsible and for the latter the provinces. Synchronization of policies is a lasting problem in the field of youth care and youth policies; it is quasi-resolved by establishing ever more commissions, steering organs, expert rounds etc. Local general and preventive youth policy includes education, leisure time, health care and preventive tasks (access to help and care coordination). The *provinces* (12 regional authorities) are responsible for child and youth care. The Ministries for Health, Welfare and Sports, and Justice are responsible for child and youth care. The former ministry is responsible for voluntary care, care for youth with a light handicap, and youth with psychic problems. The Ministry for Justice is responsible for children and young people who need additional protection (guardian), and youth who had committed criminal acts.

These responsibilities are regulated in the above mentioned Youth Care Act YCA). It is the intention of the YCA to make youth care a comprehensive and client-friendly service. Via *Bureaus Youth Care*, the client (parent, child, and youth) has access to all services of youth care. In 2005, 15 national *Bureaus youth care* were established on provincial level. They are financed by the state. The Bureaus are supposed to cooperate closely with the municipalities. Youth care has developed in a complex and not always efficient system with layers of fragmented institutions. Experts in the field criticize “oversteering” and insufficient coordination. It is characteristic of Dutch youth policy that this problem is old and today even further from being solved than ever (Berg & Weterings, 2010). The relationship between the Bureaus and the later established *youth and family centers* in each of the 431 was unclear from the beginning and has remained so. A clear task division is difficult to establish; doubling of functions and services are often the result. Instead of creating clear help lines for the public, parents who seek help for educational and/or medical and/or psychic problems are helped by too many hands and sent through to too many other hands . This is especially contra-productive for the problem of child abuse, one of the prime attention points of the government.

Over the last decades youth care policies have changed from refraining as much as possible from too much and too early intervention into the family and is now much more direct and targeted towards intervention if families fail to care for and educate their children properly. But the main policy line is *early prevention* in order to avoid intervention.

Facilities:

- *Youth and family centres* provide youth care and parental support. They will help parents and children with all kinds of problems, from educational to mental health problems and channel clients to further institutions for more specialized help if needed. Within the coming years, every municipality is obliged to have a center, including conclusive agreements on the coordination of the care provided;
- *Child day care centres* (jointly financed by parents, employers and government), preferably attached to:
- *Extended schools* which also offer after school care facilities for older pupils of working parents (mothers). *Extended schools* are a way of integrating other community-based activities and services, such as education support, childcare, health centers, etc. combining these services in one location. The *Extended schools* concept relies heavily on the participation of all actors involved (youth and parents especially). *extended schools* are also a field for experimenting with *non-formal education* (see also du Bois-Reymond 2010, for a critical assessment);
- *Youth Monitor* will present data about children and young people as to education, health, justice and labour;
- *Netherlands Youth Institute* is an expert centre, and compiles and disseminates knowledge on children and youth matters, such as youth care, parenting support and child education. Its main aim is to improve the physical, cognitive, mental and social development of children and young people by improving the quality and effectiveness of the services rendered to them and to their parents or carers. It advises on policy, programmes and implementation, and on the training of professionals in the field. It covers areas such as child and youth welfare, (residential) youth care, health, justice and children's development and well-being. It is the national specialist on parenting support, community schools, child abuse and early child education. It works closely together with other Dutch governmental and non-governmental organizations in the youth field;
- *National Youth Council (NYC)* represents more than 25 national youth organizations including political organizations, student organizations and social organizations. The NYC is responsible for improving youth participation at national and local level. Hundreds of volunteers work in and for the NYC. On their home page we read: "NYC gives young people the opportunity to find out what kind of person they are and what they are able to – be that in their neighbourhood or at the VN in New York."
- Annual report (*Kinderen in Tel*, 2010 – Children in numbers) on children and youth with detailed information on health, youth criminality, youth unemployment, youth care, children living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, children living in poverty, child abuse, education, urban space for children to use and play, teenage mothers, leisure time, and youth participation. It is a unique dataset because information on all these topics is collected in each province and municipality so that comparisons about child well-being per province and city are possible as well as trends over time (since 5 years). Its aim is to provide the basis for a broad dialogue in Dutch society among all actors involved in child-wellbeing. The project is financed by various private and public foundations, among them UNICEF Nederland and it works together with a

wide range of social institutions, such as Scouting Nederland, Stichting Alexander (specialized in youth participation), and Defense for Children International Nederland.

Target points:

- *Early prevention;*
- *Integration of migrants:* special attention is given to migrant families (parenting support) and young children (Dutch language programmes in pre-school and primary school);
- *Campaigns on anti-discrimination;*
- *Campaigns and programs for security in and around schools.*

Programs

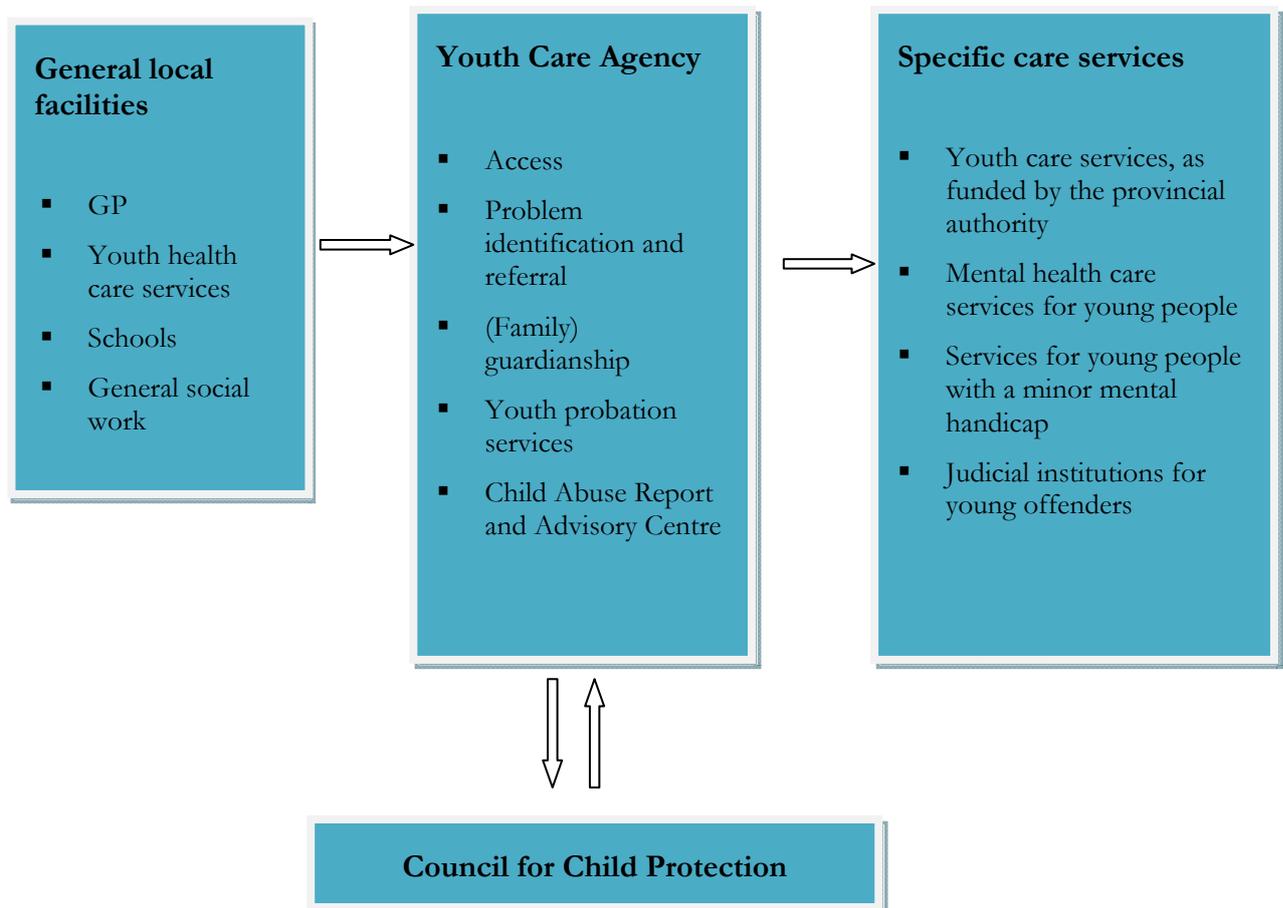
- A special incentive grant has been released by the national government: BOS (Buurt, Onderwijs and Sport: Community, Education and Sport) to stimulate sport and physical mobility (4-19 year olds) and “to diminish problems of nuisance caused by youngsters” (NJI, 2007, p. 19);
- Social Practical Training: The Ministry for Youth and Families will introduce an obligatory social training placement during secondary education in order to familiarize young people with the society in which they live and to encourage them to make a contribution to it (NJI, 2007, p. 26).
- The Dutch government has announced a new program targeted at stimulating sport activities by migrant young people (NJI, 2007, p. 26);
- A number of programs have started to modernize voluntary work in order to meet the needs of young people (e.g. short, flexible activities) (NJI, 2007, pp. 26-27).

2.3. Relations between education and welfare

Education and welfare system are not integrated in the Netherlands; there are only some bridges that connect the two. The interconnection can be categorised into three: youth care related to pre-school, integrated measures to prevent drop-out, and extended schools (see part C for more information). Extended schools are the prime examples of increased cooperation between education system and youth services. Youth sector is contacted by schools for leisure activities to be organised outside of schooling hours. Such services are offered by semi or fully profit oriented organisations, and their services are bought by schools. The graph below illustrates the chain on care services for children and their parents, in which the Youth Care Agency has a central role.

The neighbourhood policy and a recent project of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment exemplify the linkages between social policy and education. There are some neighborhoods in the Netherlands in which the quality of the living environment is falling behind compared to other neighborhoods in the country. These neighborhoods are characterized by a number of problems and shortcomings, including high unemployment, outdated housing and deteriorating public spaces. Assuming that it is the people who make the districts, the national government, together with residents and social organisations, proposed plans to improve the living environment in these neighborhoods. The government has opted for strong neighborhoods approach to turn the problem areas back into attractive neighborhoods. In 2007, the ‘From Problem District to Show District project’ project was proposed to the cabinet and a campaign was initiated to transform problem districts into show districts. The project has a broad approach and aims to involve various stakeholders. Municipalities, housing corporations, the business community, police, welfare workers and schools are setting the goals and also will jointly allocate funds and other resources. There are

40 neighbourhoods in 18 municipalities that are selected for this purpose. The aim is to turn these neighborhoods in eight to ten years into living environments that offer good educational and work opportunities and where people would desire to live. Education and childcare are critical components of the project which has four more thematic areas, including housing, employment, integration, security and education and childcare. The policy particularly aims to curb dropping-out from school and decrease (youth) unemployment (Leidelmeijer et al., 2009).



Extended schools also relate to social policy in the Netherlands. These schools at primary level cooperate with crèche and preschool facilities, and other partners from the neighbourhood. They are meant to serve a network for enhancing social interactions in the neighbourhoods, and non-formal activities are offered to supplement the formal curriculum (see part C, part 1.1. major reforms for more information).

BRIEF SUMMARY

The Dutch education system is characterised by free and compulsory education; the right to found schools and to provide teaching based on religious ideological or educational beliefs; equal financial footing for public and private schools; free parental choice; initial track allocation; a decentralised governance structure; and increasing school autonomy. Full time attendance to school is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16. However, the obligation to study full-time is maintained until the age of 18 for those who have not reached a basic qualification level for entering labour market. Education policy is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, together with municipal governments. For historical reasons, the Dutch system is characterised by the multiplicity of providers and school choice. As to provision, there are public but also so-called special, religious-affiliated schools (e.g. Catholic and Protestant schools). Both types are government-financed, and form the vast majority of the system (approximately 70%). They are officially free of charge by contrast with the few private schools that operate in the Netherlands. Public schools are directly operated by local governments. Special schools, which refers to schools looking after children with severe learning disabilities – are controlled by non-profit boards, but they are government-financed and under the close control of the ministry and its Inspectorate. Since the Dutch system combines public financing and school choice, this leads to a subtle combination of the bureaucratic controls that inevitably go with public money – and the market-oriented ones deriving from choice. The permanent challenge for policy-makers in such a context is to identify the governance structure that is likely to accommodate the tradition of self-governance of “special” schools (i.e. private but government-dependent ones) and the degree of coherence and co-ordination that modern education systems require. Inadequate governance is conducive of poor performance, particularly in equipping the most at-risk categories of the population with the skills they need to make a successful school-to-work transition.

Furthermore, the Dutch education system has an early selection mechanism since students have to choose between three forms of secondary education when they turn 12. Two of these types of secondary schools (VWO and HAVO) prepare students for higher education, and the third one (VMBO) offers intermediate (pre)vocational education lasting four years. The system appears to be characterised by a high degree of (pre)-vocationalism as more than 60% of its young people aged 15 are no longer attending what is referred to as a “general” programme by international comparison. The final destination of these young people’s education is to a certain extent dependent on the form/track attended. Furthermore, in contrast to education systems in some other OECD countries, pre-orientation, based on test scores at the age of 12 (the so-called CITO exam), is very central to the system, and there are no plans to change this structure. In such highly regulated transition systems, non-Western non-Dutch students appear to be most disadvantaged. It is also important to highlight that the different learning routes or tracks – even those a priori leading to rapid insertion into the labour market (VMBO, MBO) are structured in such a way that young people always have a possibility to go a step higher within the form/track they have chosen, and reach the equivalent of the tertiary level. They can also enter another form of education than the pre-assigned one. Therefore, upstream transfers are significant. However, it should be noted that trajectories characterised by these late reorientations are systematically longer and have much higher opportunity costs for the individuals and the family.

Although the overall performance of the Dutch basic education system is considered good, the relative performance of its first- and second-generation immigrants is unsatisfactory. At the age of 15, they perform well below the level that would be expected given their socio-economic profile. The Netherlands relies a lot on vocational education to maximise the chance of large segments of its youth. An early focus on vocational skills probably helps young people find a job quickly. But this policy also comes at a price: students in vocational education do not perform as well as their peers in the general track in mathematics, science and reading. And the PISA test score gap is higher in the Netherlands than elsewhere. Furthermore, there is a relatively high drop-out rate, particularly for vocational students around the age of 16.

B. SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

1. Living conditions of children and young people

1.1. Social position of youth and participation in a society

The vast majority of young people (85%) are doing well: their average level of education is rising, they are healthy, and the intergenerational relationship between parents and their offspring is relaxed and gives both parties mutual freedom to pursue their own interests and most of them grow up in two-parent families.

The majority of young people live at their parental homes until the age of 25 but in comparison with previous years, there is a tendency of earlier leaving. That has to do with longer education which young people attend at farther distances from home. Latest analyses about the social situation of children (0-17 year) show an upwards trend over the previous five years: the situation has improved for most children. About 15% of all youth is regarded to have one or more problems and need help (NJI, 2007). What is worrying that is the gulf between the well-to-do and the opposite group of children deepens. The study “Children in numbers” (Kinderen in Tel, 2010) documents for every municipality in NL their life situation on a number of indicators.

Youth unemployment (16-22 year olds defined as not-in-work and looking for work)

Generally, decreasing over the previous 5 years with the eastern and northern (thinly populated) provinces with highest scores (1.52-2.30%) but differences between provinces get smaller. These low percentages indicate that the great majority of this age group is still in education. Indeed, according to EUROSTAT data, in 2007, 82.3 % of 18 years old youth participated in education.

Children living in social assistant depending families (0-17 years)

There are big differences in the number of children living on the poverty line. By far the highest percentages are located in the eastern and northern provinces (32%-39%). Provinces with the big cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Den Hague score around 20% (higher percentages in the cities and within the cities concentrations in disadvantaged neighbourhoods). The bad scores of the northern and eastern provinces have to do with bad labour market conditions and therefore high numbers of unemployed persons. The percentage of poverty-prone children has decreased from 7, 22% in 2000 to 5, 47 % in 2008 (193.800 children).

Teenage mothers (15-19 years)

There were never high numbers of teenage mothers in NL, and numbers are decreasing still: 0,64% in 2008 (of all 15-19 year old females). That is in absolute numbers 3.153 females. It must be mentioned that there is hardly any discrimination against these young women.

(Unsafe) sex

One third of the 16 year olds have experience with sexual intercourse (Dorsselaer et al., 2007). More than one third of 12-25 year olds do not use a condom when having intercourse. NJI reports 6%-9% of secondary school students). At the same time, the number of teenage pregnancies, never big in the Netherlands, decreases further (exceptions: Antillean young women).

Health

17% of the 15-19 year olds smoke. These data are from 2010; NJI reported for the same age group 44% in 2007; 9% of the 12 year and older kids belong to the very heavy drinkers (3 or more glasses per day), and under the 18-24 year old young people about one quart belongs to the heavy drinkers (at least one day per week 6 glasses or more). (NJI reports for secondary school students 39% with a consumption of 5 or more glasses alcohol the last time they went out). Migrant youth is much more abstinent on account of religious norms. The majority of the 11-15 year olds begin with drinking when they enter lower secondary school. – 10 % of the 15-24 year olds has consumed drugs in the previous year. – 8% of primary pupils and 11% of secondary students are overweight. A recent evaluation of RIVM (State Institute for Health and Environment) stated that municipal programs to combat alcoholism, smoking (cigarettes and soft drugs), and obesity do not lead to the intended improvements of health (NRC Handelsblad, 2010).

Youth participation

Besides combating early school leaving is stimulation of youth participation an explicit policy aim. Every municipality has to develop measures to serve this aim. 85,3% of all municipalities have made youth participation part of their youth policy. It is up to the individual municipalities how to fill in participation. Some will establish a youth council; others will develop special programs to activate their young people. All actors agree that it is difficult to attract children and young people to participate actively in municipality affairs which pertain to their lives such as in and outdoor room to be together, more sport fields and cultural offers. That has to do with different perspectives and resources: municipality employees need clear procedures and responsibilities and a long-term perspective in planning while children and young people want “action now” and are inclined to lose interest if that is not possible. The Netherlands have a unique foundation, Stichting Alexander, which develops methodologies to enhance youth participation in all fields pertaining to children and young people. One of their biggest projects is to help municipalities establishing youth participation policies on local level.

Leisure time, volunteer work, jobs on the side

Social-cultural facilities and volunteer work have suffered a decline in interest by young people. Children and young people have less time for leisure and volunteer work than ten years ago because of time consuming school, homework, part-time jobs and other obligations. But more young people are involved in “informal” care, helping friends and relatives (NJI 2007, p. 26). On average, school-aged children have about 40 hours a week of leisure time. After school 2/3 of all children are active in clubs. Sport is a favourite pastime for them (85% of 4-12 year olds). The interest in sports declines with increasing age. Relatively few ethnic minority young people or young people with disadvantaged backgrounds are involved in

organized sport activities. Of the age group 16-25 ca. 20% perform some form of voluntary work (NJI, 2007, pp.25-26). Figures from NIBUD, the Dutch institute for information and research on budget questions, give information on how 12-18 year old students of secondary schools earn and spend money. On average, their income is EUR 144 (12 year olds: EUR 49; 14 year olds 105 EUR; 16 year olds: 221 EUR); upper vocational secondary students have more money at their disposal than students of higher educational levels, and male youth have more than female youth. Of the youngest group, 16% has a job on the side; of the 16 year olds, it is 71%. On average students work 8 hours per week. They work mostly distributing newspapers, work as baby sitters and in the supermarket or other shops (NIBUD, 2008/09).

Radicalization

A growing number of migrant young people radicalize in the name of Islam. The average age of this group is going down. The Dutch government cooperates with (Islamic) organizations to reach out to these groups and avoid further radicalization (see also Ministry of Justice 2005).

Youth (un-)employment

- Young people aged up to 25 years are at the greatest risk of becoming unemployed.
- (Regular) school leavers have to secure a position for the first time and compete with more experienced workers; on the other hand: they are cheap labour.
- Early school leavers run the highest risks of becoming and remaining unemployed.
- The risk of unemployment is highest in industry, the wholesale sector, the construction industry and the transport industry while here the loss of jobs will be greatest (SCP, 2009a, p.92); it is in those sectors where young people with insufficient education used to find jobs.
- The agriculture, communications, retail and financial, commercial and other service sectors also face a heightened risk. That means that jobs in those sectors will either get lost or will grade up qualification.
- The public sector is not regarded as a high risk area; in fact, employment is projected to grow in public administration, education and the care and welfare sector. As in most of these sectors more (young) women than men work, this development is advantageous for females who also tend to get higher diplomas than men at school (SCP, 2009a).

Programs:

- Youth Unemployment Taskforce (YUT): In 2003, the State Secretaries for Social Affairs & Employment and for Education, Culture and Science established the YUT to tackle more efficiently youth unemployment. Participants include representatives of employers, education and trade unions. The target group is aged 16-23. Within 2003-2007, the YUT created 40,000 jobs for youth under 23 years. The YUT operated independently and collaborated with all stakeholders involved. It has initiated broad campaigns, promoted best practices and activated the private sector to help create jobs for youth.
- YUT was replaced by Action Plan Unemployment in 2009 with 5 main action points:
 - Encourage students of upper secondary school (MBO) to go on with further education;
 - Covenants between government and regions to work out concrete plans and measures to combat youth unemployment

- Better matching between employers and potential employees; also stimulation of volunteer work and in-service places
 - Combination of work-learn jobs especially for young people who are longer than 3 months unemployed; older experienced workers who work part-time may serve as mentor
 - Special offers for multiple problem young unemployed people
- Civic Internships: to be implemented into the secondary school curriculum within the next 4 years: every pupil engages in 72 hours of community service in the non-profit sector (one day a week for a period of three months). The money goes directly to the schools. Schools are responsible for the implementation into the curriculum. The current number of Civic Internships has to increase tenfold to match the demand in 2011.
 - IMC (Financial Markets & Asset Management) Weekend School: a supplementary education for children 10-14 years, from underprivileged neighbourhoods in the major cities of the Netherlands. The initiative started in 1998 in Amsterdam and now runs 9 branches, all funded by companies and foundations. The Weekend School introduces motivated children to a variety of disciplines in the sciences, the arts and cultural studies. Volunteer experts serve as guest teachers. Over the course of three years students attend 15 courses each of which averages four Sunday sessions.
 - School's cool (school is cool) is an independent foundation and was founded in 1998. It works with volunteers who operate as mentors for primary school pupils, mainly of black schools in under-resourced neighbourhoods in Amsterdam whom they prepare for transiting to secondary school. The success of the program is due to the intense relationship between pupil and his or her mentor. Presently, 300 mentors are working in Amsterdam, and the demand is growing (Newsletter February, 2010; see www.schoolscool.nl; Sinnema, 2010).
 - Many programs have been started to counteract further radicalization of Islamic youth (NJI, 2007). Those programs are connected to schools and neighbourhoods in order to enhance the relations between different groups of the population (Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2005) Verkuyten & Thijs (2002) have shown that non-Dutch primary school pupils have much more to do with discriminating behaviour of Dutch pupils than the other way round. Anti-bullying programs are therefore popular.

1.2. Key issues in youth and life-course research

The Netherlands belong, not only economically (see A 2.1), to the most advanced European countries but also in terms of individualism, pluralisation of life course and family constellations, and welfare for broad layers of the population (du Bois-Reymond 2009; Manting & Liefbroer, 2000; Vollebergh, 2008). Although the last two decades saw severe cuts in public expenditure the state still provides a social security net which makes most people, and certainly young people, look with confidence into the future. A recent report of UNICEF (2007) compared child well being in 23 OECD countries and placed NL on top of the list. De-standardization of the life course alongside individualisation processes giving persons more option-space are features of Dutch society. Most young people have good opportunities in their present life and a positive view of the future. They have a rich and diversified peer life, equipped with much media equipment which they use for inter-peer communication. The blurring of formal (school) and informal learning is one of the most conspicuous traits of learning and leisure time today (du Bois-Reymond, 2008b).

Educational levels have risen sharply over the last three decades and have led to the insertion of women in the labour market ever more permanently. Despite late birth age, postponed marriage and an increase in divorce rate over the last few decades, the wish and expectation to beget children and live a happy family life is present in the large majority of all young people (Boekhoorn & De Jong, 2008). The great majority of children grow up in families with their own biological parents (Boekhoorn & De Jong, 2008; Distelbrink et al., 2005). At the same time, a wide range of family forms is present and accepted. In 2006, 18% of all families were single parent families (Boekhoorn & De Jong, 2008, p. 55).

Most young people still follow a “normal path” in that they finish school and further education, take on their first job – generally on a temporary basis – before moving to a more permanent occupation, engage eventually in a more stable partnership and begin to think about building a family. Education and social milieu are still forceful indicators for forecasting the development of life courses. The higher the education, the longer the travel to independent adulthood and family formation, and vice versa: lower educated young people tend to settle earlier and become parents at a younger age (du Bois-Reymond, 2009, p. 281).

There are contradictory opinions and images about Dutch youth courant. While statistics and general indicators of well-being indicate a generally rosy picture, other research suggests a much more problematic youth. We refer here to one of the most acknowledged research institutes of the Netherlands: Motivaction. In one of their last publications they compared the value patterns of three youth generations: older generations (born 1970 and earlier), pragmatic generation (1971-1985), and what they typified as “boundless generation” (born 1986 and later). The authors constructed “mentality milieus” of the three generations and found that the boundless generation adheres to values of extreme egotism and extrovert behaviour. They were brought up by parents many of whom had lost faith in the welfare state and had withdrawn from engagement for society. Their children carry on with that attitude, even magnifying it. Experts in the field of family and youth help state that parents are not able to educate their children properly any longer, and youth help and youth services are lost in a juggernaut of bureaucracy (Spangenberg & Lampert, 2009).

A less dramatic picture, more in line with social-economic indicators, is sketched by Wilma Vollebergh (2008) who argues that Dutch youth in general, despite their health-risk behavior, have social aptitude and abilities which make them cope with stressful situations in quite an adequate way.

Multiculturalism

Contrary to a 1970s western style (naïve) multi-culture optimism about a more or less linear adaptation of western styles and values by the “foreigners”, it shows, certainly the last years, that new lines are being drawn from both sides to re-negotiating taken for granted solutions and realities. Over the last years, Dutch government has taken measures to throttle immigration from non-western countries. And it has become worried about democracy and democratic attitudes of its citizens. “Interactive policy-making” (interactive beleidsvorming) between official policy and the citizens in the family, school and associations must bind an ever more diverse population together (RMO, 2007).

A recent report of the CBS (Central Bureau Statistics, 2008) gives a mixed picture: in general there is more integration of the second generation with non-western migrant background in comparison with the first generation (parent generation) yet also some troubling features are stated:

- Less education than Dutch-born; more school leavers among non-Dutch born young males than among non-Dutch born young females and Dutch-born students; Turkish boys highest percentage of early school leaving;
- Increase participation rate non-western students of higher forms of education over the last ten years, especially of females;
- Better situation on the labour market for 2nd generation non-Dutch born but still worse than for Dutch-born young people;
- Labour market participation has within ten years increased and unemployment has decreased;
- Labour market position better than ten years ago but worse than for Dutch young people and heavily dependent on economic fluctuation;
- More flexi contracts for non-Dutch born than Dutch-born young people;
- Non Dutch-born (young) people suffer some discrimination on the labour market (see also newsletter E-QUALITY Nr. 1, February 2010, Vol. 12, p. 1: 16% of non-Dutch job seekers have less chance to be invited for a solicitation than Dutch-born applicants);
- More, not less concentration of non-Dutch born in so called “concentration neighbourhoods” (especially in the 4 big cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Utrecht) over the last years;
- Almost half of students with a non-western migrant background go to “high concentration schools” in secondary education.

Fleuras (2009), in a chapter called “Multicultural governance in the Netherlands”, demonstrates the turns that policy has taken within the last 40 years: from a laissez-faire multiculturalism to an explicit ethnic minority policy leading to the present “monocultural nationalism and neo-assimilationist fundamentalism.. drawing immigrants and minorities into the Dutch conception of nation. Instead of a civic identity based on support for diversity, justice, and belonging the focus has shifted toward a more restricted shared citizenship anchored in Dutch values, beliefs and norms.” (p. 162) Laws have straightened to enforce civic integration for newcomers and old comers alike. The Civic Integration Act of 2007 demands the passing of a Dutch language and social orientation test (to be paid for by the applicants and only being partly refunded when they have passed the tests) before receiving a visa. On the other hand, this new governance paradigm is inconclusive as it is interspersed with elements of former politics, like allowing ethnic-cultural organizations (churches; schools) resulting in a “paradigm muddle” (Fleuras, 2009, p. 163).

Not Dutch-born children and young people have in many ways the same life conditions and outlooks as their Dutch peers. But they live more clustered in the big and medium-sized cities and realize on average lower educational levels although younger cohorts are catching up; they produce higher drop out rates and their share in the rate of youth unemployment is twice as high than for their Dutch-born peers. In the 4 big cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague, 36% of all non-western students in secondary education live in surroundings where 50% or more people are of non-Dutch origin (CBS, 2008, p.18). That means that their peers, their pastime, their families and their general “city feeling” is colored by experiences of being excluded from white mainstream society. Figures on crime and security are disadvantageous for non Dutch-born (young) people: more of them are likely to become victims of violence and suffer from feelings of insecurity, and also commit more violent and other criminal acts than the Dutch-born (CBS, 2008).

Their family structure and family life is different as well: usually more siblings, more crowded living quarters and houses, more hierarchical relations within the family and on

average shorter pathways to adulthood. On many indicators, Surinam youth is closer to Dutch-born youth (same language; relatively better education) than are young people from Turkey or Morocco. Also they tend to marry earlier and marriage is generally not preceded by a period of cohabitation – an almost universal stage in the lives of Dutch-born young people (Distelbrink & Hooghiemstra, 2005). The parents of young adults are still rather influential when it comes to partner selection for their children (Sterckx & Bow, 2005). Many young Turkish and Moroccans find their partners in their parents' homeland. That might lead to conflicts between the generations. Since 2004 the Dutch government has issued restrictions on the “import” prospective brides and bridegrooms and forcing a young woman or man (by their parents or other family) to marry against their will is prosecuted (if known). In the second generation, the trend to marry partners from their home countries decreases in favour of marrying partners of the same ethnic-cultural group who live in the country.

Recently one notices a trend among young Muslim women and men, partly in reaction to hostile reactions in Dutch society, to develop new religious identities in which they create new mixtures between traditional Islam and modern individualized life styles. In order to properly contextualize the relationship between host and migrant population, one has to realize that Dutch society, a corporatist welfare state, has long been based on the so called pillarisation principle. That is the building of state and society according to the relevant social groups: Catholic, Protestant, liberal, allowing each of them to create their own institutions. Ethnic minority policy was conceptualized in this tradition, allowing immigrants to develop their own institutions. Pillarisation was based on positive discrimination of ethnic minorities. But the much envied Dutch multicultural policy lost much of its integrating power with the withering of the pillarisation policy and reality in the 1970s and after. On account of changes on the labor market, leading to severe (youth) unemployment in the 1980s, state policy now focused on social and economic integration of the individual which led to far-reaching cultural isolation of some immigrant groups, Turks and Moroccans in particular (Bommes, 2008, pp. 27-28).

In line with that development, the emphasis of the public and politicians and research has shifted from paying attention to the problems non-Dutch youth *have* to the problems they *cause*, like criminal behaviour, early school leaving and lacking will to integrate in society (Verkuyten, 2006).

Evaluating Dutch youth and educational research

Dutch youth research is characterized by a conspicuous discrepancy between on the one hand, a wealth of statistical data and on the other fragmented theory building and interpretation of data. Sociological youth research is scarce (du Bois-Reymond et al., 1995); more is done in the field of behavioural psychology with recently strong emphasis on biological and genetic research (Vollebergh, 2008). Studies of non-Dutch born youth is usually separated from that of Dutch youth which does not mean that there is scarcity; on the contrary, much work is published, preferably on educational matters and identity problems and there are studies which compare non-Dutch and Dutch-born youth (Verkuyten, 2006; Vedder & Van de Vijver, 2003). But there is hardly any attempt to arrive at an integrated empirical and theoretical model about youth in (post-) modern society which comprises all groups of young people. Social Sciences of University Utrecht is for that project the best equipped faculty in the country.

Educational research in the Netherlands has a long tradition and a high standing internationally (two of its main scientific journals are on the Social Science Citation Index). Dutch educational researchers rely more than in other countries (e.g. England and Germany)

on positivism and prefer large-scale, quantitative research strategies. Both basic and applied research are driven by this quantitative orientation. Funding of these types of research is organized in different streams in and outside universities. Much research is focused on micro-processes of learning and teaching, but there has always been a rather strong tradition in the sociology of education with subject as ethnicity and educational inequality (Peperts, et al, 2009).

2. School to work transitions

2.1. Transitions between education and work, and changes in youth transition processes

The transition from school to work in NL may be regarded as highly regulated. The type and level of profession is closely connected with type and level of educational qualification, most certainly at the beginning of the labour market career. In other words, for nearly every profession a certain type of diploma is needed. However, given both the development of higher participation in general types of education and the development towards a broad-based service economy without clearly defined professions and qualifications, in the future more emphasis will be laid on general educational level of qualification.

While the ‘final’ transition from daytime education to full-time work has been postponed to a later age because of longer stay in education, this does not mean that Dutch young people are absent from the labour market: ever more pupils and students take on part-time jobs while still at school (see above B 1.1 under leisure). Part-time jobs are not only to earn pocket money to finance leisure time activities and allow for participating in consumption but provide young people as well with working experience.

Although NL has one of the most selective educational systems in Europe (see A 1.2), education-work trajectories have become more diverse. Instead of a limited number of more or less standardized trajectories and transitions in the past, presently a more extensive range of types has evolved as a result of differentiations within the educational system, new labour market demands and options, and diversification of life-course trajectories of young people. Main features of present-day trajectories are:

- *Simultaneity of transitions*: For the age group of students in secondary education that implies building up a school career besides making first contacts with the labour market (see under leisure, jobs on the side B 1.1), besides building up leisure careers, especially concerning ICT and internet, and experimenting with emotional-sexual transitions (Graaf, & Rademakers, 2009);
- *Blurring of borders*: Borders between learning, working, leisure time, and volunteering or following in-service in prospective work fields are not sharply to be distinguished activities in the lives of young people any longer, and that is another aspect of the simultaneity of transitions;
- *Uncertain and open future*: Students in secondary education, certainly in lower and medium vocational education, begin to calculate their chances on the labour market; they know – and are urgently told by their parents and teachers - that their chances grow with more educational credentials; all the more frustrated are potential and real early school leavers, because they know that too but cannot or will not take the consequences into account;
- *Gender changes*: Since about a decade, a trend is observed that female students do better in secondary education (and later in higher forms of education) than males, not only in the NL but in most European countries. Female transitions and trajectories tend to lose traditional traits; that shows in prolonged educational and professional careers and delayed parenthood (du Bois-Reymond, 2008a). But despite big gains in

education and on the labour market, there is still the “glass plafond” in the professional careers of women, withholding them from getting into the better paid and reputed positions (10% of the highest incomes in NL go to 85% males and 2/3 of the lowest incomes are earned by women (Halsema, 2010).

We may discern the following dominant transition patterns:

- Straight transition from full-time education to first job (smooth and unbroken transition);
- In-and-out transitions between (further) education and (part-time) work on a voluntary basis;
- In-and-out transitions between (back to) education and precarious jobs on a non-voluntary basis;
- Dead-end transitions.

Straight transitions

Although all young people are faced more than ever with temporary contracts (more than 43% of workers aged 15-24 years old in 2006 (OECD, 2008, p. 14; see below 2.2 where slightly different figures are given) and will have to wait for 3 1/2 years on average until they get a permanent job (idem), most young people succeed in entering the labour market after having finished their education. Percentages differ though for Dutch-born and ethnic minority youth (see below 2.2).

In-and-out- transitions on a voluntary basis

This type pertains to young people who finish their educational career on a low or medium level, go to work and get back to study in order to enhance their professional career chances, either while working part-time, or studying in the evening and either with financial support of their employer or on own costs. A growing number of public, private and semi-private educational institutions offering all kinds of courses and diploma's testify to this trend and which is inherent in knowledge societies.

In-and-out transitions on a non-voluntary basis

Early school leavers make up this category; they have broken transitions and run high risks of getting excluded from the regular labour market. They are most in danger of ending up in dead-end jobs interspersed with periods of unemployment. Government programs (see under 2.2. below) target this group of young people

Dead-end transitions

Also in this category, early school leavers are the main group. The difference with the foregoing category is that these youngsters do not get into the official labour market in the first place. They live unseen by officials in their families (girls from ethnic minorities) or earn their money with illegal jobs (boys with drugs; stealing cars etc.).

Support measures

Each primary school has, besides the teacher team, a professional who coordinates help for problem students. These professionals provide the link between school, parents, and youth help, including medical help. As a result, teachers are freed from tasks which are not directly related to teaching. These professionals are not social workers but usually have a university degree. Each primary school must set up a system which documents the development of each student from the beginning to the end of primary school. It works with regularly administered tests and builds up a profile of the student. The information of the 'leerlingvolgsysteem' in combination with the CITO test at the end of primary schooling is highly influential for the further school career. If the test results point to lower secondary education, the students would be transferred to that educational level. Parents have hardly any possibility to opt for a higher level. Therefore, the transition from primary to secondary school determines to a very great extent the further school career of students. In upper secondary, career counselling belongs to the obligatory curriculum and is of particular importance in the transition from upper vocational education (VMBO) to further (vocational) education (MBO) (Meijers, 2009). According to Meijers (2009), an expert in the field, in Dutch education there is hardly any focus on developing career competencies. It lacks real practicality. There is also limited discussion or guidance in making choices. One focuses on career guidance information, but rarely looks ahead to future careers.

Combating early school leaving is one of the highest priorities of Dutch educational, labour market and youth policy. It concerns a fairly big group. The number of early school leavers has decreased within two years, but not substantially and was 3.7% in 2008 (The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2009). That equals 48,800 young persons who left upper secondary education without having obtained a start qualification (minimal a diploma in upper general or vocational education).

Features and factors influencing the transition system

- Big and *unforeseeable changes* on the labour market on account of economic fluctuations nationally as well globally endanger straight and smooth transitions for all young people leaving school. Investment in (further) education is the best protection in reducing labour market risks – without creating sureness though; all young people know that.
- *Non-formal education* including activities in the volunteer sector, are valuable assets for students to acquire and exercise; they will pay off in job application.
- In accumulating educational credits, students must calculate the *risk* of entering the labour market later than cheaper workforce; in other words accumulation must be substantial and must avoid time consuming detour routes in order to pay off.
- Young people must be – and are – prepared to begin their working career with a *flex contract*. The lower their education, the bigger the risk that they do not climb up the occupational ladder from less to better flex contracts until eventually gaining a steady contract; they will stagger from low to other low flex contracts.
- *Rigid selective educational system* with sharp distinction between general and vocational tracks leading to sharply distinguished transitions despite more choices young people have than in the past; that is: choices are very unevenly distributed: the higher the educational level, the more choices; school leavers without minimum start qualification have very few job options.
- *Rigid workforce policies* prohibiting young people to enter the labour market without at least start qualification.

- Transition trajectories are supported by a broad range of supporting measures of education, youth and labour policy; but coordination between institutions and measures is lacking.
- *Gender* does not play a role in transiting to the labour market as such but gender differences persist in the choice of educational subjects which have implications on how to sell them on the labour market later. Practically all female students go on to work, also non-Dutch born students, and there is no early transition to motherhood (very low rates of teenage mothers; except for young Antillean and Aruba females; but even among them there is a sharp decrease in comparison with the first generation).
- *Ethnic minority status* in general is less favorite than for the Dutch-born young people: because of lower education, they get lower jobs and have a higher likelihood of becoming unemployed; that pertains to both, males and females. In comparison with first immigrant generation, the second generation ethnic minority students do better and approach Dutch students – albeit slowly.
- Both, ethnic and Dutch *female students* tend to surpass their male contemporaries in education and their working participation rate is as high as that of males. But later on the labour market they have difficulty (and/or no desire) to enter (very) high jobs in management and other sectors. .
- The chances of youth living in so called *concentration quarters* in (big) cities with bad infrastructure and a combination of low income/unemployment, accumulation of ethnic minority inhabitants and low performing schools are very bad.

2.2. Young people and the labour market policies

Work, part-time work, unemployment

Over the last 12 years (1995-2007), people without work lost positive thinking; they estimated their chances darker while, on the other hand, people in employment became ever more content (SCP, quoted in NRC Handelsblad 18-3-2010). Thus, the gulf between those standing in the sun and those standing in the shadow, to phrase B. Brecht, deepens. Unemployment increases and stands now on 5.7% of the working population; that was 4,1% one year earlier (CBS, quoted in NRC Handelsblad, 2010). Further increase is expected. Flexible work via job centres and growing numbers of “ZZP” people – self-employed; no employees– smoothen the upwards trend though. ZZP workers are strongly represented among young people. ZZPs seem to increase; publications are beginning to pay attention to this new type of (young) worker (e.g. Boomen, 2010).

By comparison, NL takes the lead in part-time work in the EU: 75% of women and 23% of men work. Especially the latter figure is remarkable as it points to a gender relation that differs from other EU countries, not only on the labour market but also in later transitions such as young parenthood (du Bois-Reymond 2008a; 2009). With these figures, NL complies most of all countries to the European Employment Strategy which specifically encourages more part-time work as a means of getting more people, especially women, into employment (Morley & Sanoussi, 2009). Figures of CBS (2008, p. 94) show that among Dutch-born young people (15-25 years) 8% were unemployed; among non Dutch-born this was 15%. Additionally, among Dutch-born young people, 28% worked with a flex contract, and 48% among the non Dutch-born.

Table 8: Groups working in sectors with high risk unemployment (SCP, 2009b)

	Employee, flexible contract	Employee, working with a fixed contract in a high risk sector	Employee, working with a fixed contract in a risk sector	Independent, private companies	Independent or employee, fixed contract (semi) government	Total
High risk group						
15-24 years old						
Men- Non-Western ethnic minority	43	21	26	5	5	100
Men, ≤ VMBO education	33	36	23	4	5	100
Men, MBO education	29	30	28	5	8	100
Women, Non-Western ethnic minority	42	9	29	2	19	100
Women ≤ VMBO education	38	12	39	1	10	100
Men, ≥ HBO education	25	18	36	6	15	100
Women, MBO education	30	11	31	2	26	100
Women, ≥ HBO education	25	8	22	1	45	100

The SCP (Social Cultural Planbureau, 2009a) sees much better prospects for youth with broken and insufficient educational careers to get employed after only a short time of unemployment than is the case for older workers. But prospects worsen also for the younger group.

- Young people aged up to 25 years are at the greatest risk of becoming unemployed;
- (Regular) school leavers have to secure a position on the labour market for the first time and have therefore to compete with more experienced workers; on the other hand: they are cheap labour;
- Early school leavers run the highest risks of becoming and remaining unemployed;
- The risk of unemployment is highest in industry, the wholesale sector, the construction industry and the transport industry while here the loss of jobs will be greatest (SCP 2009a, p. 92); it is in those sectors where young people with insufficient education used to find jobs;
- The agriculture, communications, retail and financial, commercial and other service sectors also face a heightened risk. That means that jobs in those sectors will either get lost or will grade up qualification;
- The public sector is not regarded as a high risk area; in fact, employment is projected to grow in public administration, education and the care and welfare sector. As in most of these sectors more (young) women than men work, this development is advantageous for females who also tend to get higher diplomas than men at school (SCP, 2009a).

Table 9. Economic activity rates by sex and age in 2008 (EUROSTAT, 2010)

	Country average	North Holland (Amsterdam)	South Holland (Rotterdam)	Gelderland (Arnhem)
Females (15-24)	72,6	71,5	70	72,9
Males (15-24)	73,7	74	71,6	75,4
Total (15-24)	73,2	72,8	70,8	74,2
Females (25-34)	86	85,5	84,2	86,9
Males (25-34)	95,5	95,6	94,9	96,8
Total (25-34)	90,7	90,5	89,5	91,9

Table 10. Youth employment rates by sex and age (15-24 years old) in 2008 (EUROSTAT, 2010)

	Country average	North Holland (Amsterdam)	South Holland (Rotterdam)	Gelderland (Arnhem)
Females	68,8	68,2	65,8	69,1
Males	69,8	70,5	67,2	71,6
Total	69,3	69,3	66,5	70,4

Table 11. Employment rates by sex and age (15-64 years old) in 2008 (EUROSTAT, 2010)

	Country average	North Holland (Amsterdam)	South Holland (Rotterdam)	Gelderland (Arnhem)
Total	77,2	78,3	76,1	78
Females	71,1	72,7	69,8	71,4
Males	83,2	84	82,2	84,5

Table 12. Youth unemployment rates by sex and age (15-24 years old) in 2008 (EUROSTAT, 2010)

	Country average	North Holland (Amsterdam)	South Holland (Rotterdam)	Gelderland (Arnhem)
Females	5,2	4,6	5,9	5,2
Males	5,4	4,8	6,2	5,1
Total	5,3	4,7	6	5,1

BRIEF SUMMARY

While the vast majority of Dutch young people are doing well in all respects, about 15% is regarded to have one or more problems. Also, there is the tendency of widening gulf between the well-to-do and poor families.

The transition from school to the labour market is for many young people a steep course, endangered by unstable working conditions and spells of unemployment. This is certainly the case for young people with low education credits and even more so for drop outs. Practically all young starters begin with flex contracts.

A broad range of programs was issued, and is regularly updated to support young people coping with this most important transition. They come all more or less down to urging young people to continue with education if they finished school with a (very) low degree, offering in-service trainee places and stimulating close cooperation between (local) economy and schools. Recently the government has issued a measure which forces young people up to their 27th year to either work or follow education.

Migrant young people follow on the whole lower levels of education than their Dutch-born contemporaries and have therefore more difficulties in making smooth transitions to the labour market; but their educational level increases, especially for females.

Dutch society is not as tolerant for immigrants and their children as it was; tensions between “white” and “black” schools and quarters are growing.

C. REFORMS AND DISCOURSES

1. Education

The Dutch education system has witnessed large-scale reforms in the past two decades, encompassing content and organisation of education as well as conditions of employment, personnel management and funding. These reforms have been influenced by neo-liberal policies (Karsten, 1999), and to a large extent characterised by deregulation and decentralisation, resulting in greater autonomy for schools. Reform programmes related to intrinsic education policies were implemented along two lines: the first type focused on sustaining an uninterrupted school career, with smooth transitions from one type or level of education to a subsequent one. This brought about changes in all levels and types of education. The second line of reforms emphasized inclusive education and issues related to handling diversity in education. The initiatives in this area aimed to improve co-operation between mainstream primary schools and special schools, reduce group sizes in primary education, stimulate use of ICT, and propose a new financing system for students who need special care. The reforms related to financing, personnel management and conditions of service, included a large component of deregulation and devolution of responsibilities. The overall development can be characterised as an ongoing process aimed at devolving responsibilities and problem solving capacities to a lower level, from central government to the organisations of employers and employees, to local authorities and to school boards. While central government retained its responsibility for providing direction within the education system (what public tasks must be fulfilled, the conditions for doing so, the funds), schools were given greater financial, managerial and educational freedom.

In order to balance the increased power of schools, repositioning of the actors within the system was imperative. This was done by passing a number of Education Acts which redefined the roles and responsibilities of the actors. For instance, the Education (Participation) Act was amended to strengthen the position of staff, students and parents within schools; the Education (Supervision) Act was passed which gave the Education Inspectorate a mandate to evaluate the education process within schools on the basis of quality criteria (Eurydice, 2009). As a result, schools have become responsible for the quality of the education they provide. They have to make use of self-evaluation systems and show that they meet the quality criteria in all respects. If they fail to do so, other parties (the Inspectorate, the Ministry, the representative advisory council) may intervene. For instance, on the one hand, the Inspectorate may only visit schools once every few years, which can show that they meet the quality criteria and, on the other hand, schools that fail to meet the criteria may be visited more frequently. This is referred to as “proportionate inspection”. Furthermore, to improve efficiency and accessibility of primary education, a process aimed at achieving increasing economies of scale was started in 1991. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of schools but increases in school size. In 1997, an increase in the economies of scale in relation to administrative processes was promoted by introducing a measure with special incentives. Economies of scale of this type could be realised by merging schools or by collaboration or joint ventures between schools. In secondary education, the process of increasing the economies of scale was started in 1992, to facilitate delegated budgeting and to increase the opportunities for students within schools to move from one type of education to another (Meesters, 2003).

1.1. Major reform initiatives

Harmonising and broadening early childhood education

The Development Opportunities through Quality and Education Act, which will enter into force on 1 August 2010, aims to increase cooperation between playgroups and day nurseries, to ensure that all children are offered similar opportunities for development regardless of the preschool facility attended. The pre-primary infrastructure will effectively be expanded, ensuring that early childhood education reaches a far broader group of children. By 2011 at the latest, schools that receive extra funding to tackle educational disadvantage will offer early childhood education in years 1 and 2 to eliminate language disadvantage and boost young children's social and emotional development (Eurydice 2009). The policy aims to prevent segregation, to strengthen the quality of early childhood education, to enhance the transition to primary schools and to diagnose and tackle language disadvantages as early as possible (SCO, 2008). Societal actors concerning early childhood education are in the scientific as well as political field and agree in their opinion that it is one of the most important measures to prevent (early) instead of intervene (later). Early childhood education is best realized in the context of the extended school.

Increasing autonomy, deregulation and decentralisation in primary education

The 'new direction' for primary and secondary education and new legislation on block grant funding and more flexible timetables will increase autonomy, deregulation and the transfer of responsibilities to local municipalities and school boards. In line with the move towards greater autonomy, deregulation and decentralisation, educational innovation will come more from schools themselves, rather than government. The government will set quality standards, but schools will be given more scope to provide tailor-made education. The changes are broadly set out in multi-year policy plans which cover the period up to 2010. They were produced in an interactive process involving input from education ministry representatives, head teachers, school boards, parents, pupils, teachers and others involved in education.

The main thrust of these policy plans is that professionals in and around schools determine the shape of teaching. Schools themselves formulate targets relating to quality and innovation. In order to achieve these targets, government policy must tie in with innovations within schools set in motion by teaching staff and other professionals. To help schools, the government is encouraging the establishment of a sectoral organisation for development and innovation. The three main policy themes are: 1) Schools pursue professionalization, quality and innovation on the basis of their own educational vision; 2) Fewer attainment targets, to enable schools to profile themselves educationally; 3) Far-reaching decentralisation of terms and conditions of teacher employment. Block grant funding (see below) enables school boards to make agreements with trade unions on secondary conditions of employment.

Demands for more autonomy, deregulation and decentralisation stemmed first from school management before it became government policy. When it showed that these measures did not necessarily make the school more active and efficient, teachers and school principals became more sceptical about these reforms. They notice that the government in effect increase their tasks and burden them with new responsibilities without adequate financial and staff compensation.

Block grant funding

Block grant funding was introduced on 1 August 2006 at primary level. It is intended to cover schools' total costs, including staff establishment, personnel and running costs, previously paid from separate budgets. The aim is to give primary schools and special schools more freedom in terms of spending, as part of the general policy of deregulation and greater

autonomy. Schools are free to determine how to allocate these funds. The budget is calculated according to the number of pupils on 1 October, and account is taken of the fact that older personnel are usually more expensive by factoring in the weighted average age of teaching staff when calculating the budget. The budget makes no distinction between personnel and running costs, which means that schools can decide whether to spend the money on, say, a new teacher or on new teaching materials. Block grant funding also applies to secondary schools. On the basis of a number of criteria, they are awarded funds to cover staff and running costs, which they are at liberty to spend as they see fit, provided they do so within the statutory parameters. One must realize that it is not the teachers who profit from block grant funding, as they have no voice in the financial management of the school. It is mainly the school principals and school boards who decide on how block funding is spent.

Compensatory policy

Compensatory policy seeks to improve the educational achievements and career prospects of educationally disadvantaged children and young people. The distribution of responsibilities between school boards and municipal authorities has been re-defined in a way that schools and school boards are given more freedom to decide how the funds allocated within the framework of compensatory policy will be used. They are no longer required to develop plans together with the municipal authorities. Municipalities are responsible for early childhood education and bridging classes, and are required to consult with school boards on preventing segregation and promoting integration, and on compensatory policy, including the link between early childhood education and primary education. They can also encourage individual schools to tackle disadvantage. In reality, (however) these policy measures and intentions do not counteract segregation of migrants in certain quarters and a growing divide between black and white schools. What schools and municipalities can do at most is to reallocate financial means in favour of black or otherwise disadvantaged schools.

Weighting system

The weighting system which is an important part of the compensatory policy, has been modified in 2006. Funding in the new system is largely determined by the parents' level of education rather than by their ethnicity and type of employment. There are two pupil weightings: 1) a weighting of 0.3 if both parents' highest level of education is junior secondary vocational education; 2) a weighting of 1.2 if one parent's highest level of education is primary education and the other parent's is junior secondary vocational education; and a weighting of 0 for other pupils.

Participation in School Decision-making Act

On 1 January 2007, the 1992 Education Participation Act (WMO) was replaced by the Participation in School Decision-making Act (WMS), regulating participation in decision-making in primary and secondary schools, including special schools. Greater autonomy and block grant funding means that school boards have much freer rein to devise their own policies, so it was felt necessary to strengthen the position of participation councils. All schools are obliged to have a participation council, and if a school board runs more than one school, there must also be a joint participation council. The composition of the participation council depends on the type of school. In primary schools it consists of parents and members of staff; in secondary schools it also includes pupils. The ratio is 50% staff and 50% parents/pupils. Participation councils' right to be informed has been strengthened; the board must provide and account for all relevant policy-related and financial information, both independently and at the request of the participation council. The latter also has more far-reaching powers. No important decisions can be taken without its assent or advice. In addition

to a package of joint powers of assent, teachers and parents have been assigned a series of independent powers of assent relating to topics that particularly concern them. In the case of teachers these include conditions of employment; in the case of parents, the size of the parental contribution, for instance. The competent authorities need the prior consent of the participation council for decisions affecting such matters as the adoption of or changes to the school's educational aims, the school plan, the curriculum, the special needs plan, the school rules or the complaints procedure, or the transfer of or merger of a school. Despite participation councils, parents have not much room to influence school policies; largely these bodies are formal and attract only a small part of the parents. This is a fortiori the case for pupil/student influence.

Extended school (brede school)

The extended school (BS) development originates in the 1990s and has spread unevenly since: quicker in the primary than in secondary education. In 2007, there were about 1.000 primary and 350 secondary BS schools in the country. The aim of the government is to increase the number of primary BS to 1, 500 and secondary BS to 460 in 2011 (Bredeschool.nl). Indeed, the government as well as the individual municipalities intend to the BS the dominant school form of the future. In the primary sector, a BS cooperates with crèche and preschool facilities, besides possibly other partners from the neighbourhood such as the music school. Meanwhile all primary schools are obliged to provide preschool and after school care on demand of parents. A BS is meant to serve as neighbourhood- and community school and as a network school in order to enhance the identification of the inhabitants with their physical and social surroundings. Non-formal activities are offered to enrich the formal curriculum and take place in after-school time. In the secondary sector, a BS is less oriented toward the neighbourhood because those schools are much bigger than primary schools and often located in more than one building. There is a wide variety of BS schools, with different profiles and objectives, dependent on the needs and wishes of the initiators and the character of the neighbourhood. In principle – and so it was in the beginning – a BS is founded by the partners involved: parents, existing (primary) school, child care facilities, municipality, and possibly other partners. Meanwhile it is primarily the municipality in cooperation with the school boards who take the decisions. The majority of (primary) BS schools do not go further than attach preschool facilities to an existing school; only few schools integrate non-formal activities into their formal curriculum. Most schools buy non-formal activities from municipal and/or commercial organizations; they have own budgets to do so.

In the next academic year, a training programme will be offered to interested persons working in or outside of primary education system, and who are motivated to become head teachers in extended schools. The training will be offered by Magistrum, which is a knowledge centre for leadership and management in education. According to Magistrum, such training is particularly suitable for persons who had management experience in primary education, child care, sport or culture sectors of the government (Nieuwsbrief Jeugd, 2010).

While the introduction of BS schools are undoubtedly a progress in school development in that they serve the needs of parents (mothers) who are in need of child care facilities also after school, their success as “integration machines” is less evident, as is their long-term effect on furthering the school careers of disadvantaged children and their families. There are three features of the BS which work counter to those expectations: 1) There is no integration of the formal and non-formal curriculum, no integration of formal and non-formal learning. Non-formal activities take place in the noon and are voluntary (with some exceptions in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with high numbers of migrants where language

courses are obligatory). In other words, the potentials of non-formal educations for creating more stimulating learning environments are underused. 2) As a consequence, there is no integration of the teaching staff and other pedagogical and social personnel. 3) The rigid divide between primary and secondary schools remain untouched by BS despite the explicit target of the government to create unbroken educational trajectories (see for a more extensive discussion, du Bois-Reymond, 2010).

Good Education and Good Governance Bill

In December 2008, the government submitted the Good Education and Good Governance Bill to the House of Representatives. The Bill would enable the government to cut off funding to individual primary or secondary schools in the interests of their pupils if the level of education they provided was consistently poor. The Bill formulates minimum quality requirements for all schools. In the case of mismanagement by the board, schools may receive a warning. If they fail to act on the warning, funding may be cut. The Bill also contains provisions to encourage the further development of the principles of good governance in primary and secondary education, including the separation of responsibility for governance from that for internal supervision, and the development of a code of conduct for good governance for each educational sector. To our knowledge there is no evaluation performed to see if the aims of the Bill are met.

Flexible approach to individual needs

As part of the trend towards deregulation, the government wishes to limit the rules governing special education. The aim is to make the current system more flexible, simpler and thus better. By offering appropriate education, schools will tie in better with pupils' needs and parents' wishes. In 2010, therefore, the statutory distinction between ordinary and special schools will be abolished. A single new funding system will be set up, which will focus on the individual pupil. It will take account of 'needs weighting' within the weighting system in general. These measures are very controversial among teachers as well as parents with children in need. If class size is not reduced significantly, it is highly questionable if those children get more chances. Teachers are afraid of growing diversity of pupil population and thus even more workload.

The future direction of secondary education

A document entitled 'Agenda for 2010' was published in 2004 setting out the future direction of secondary education. Schools will be in control, and will have more scope to organise teaching since they will be responsible for taking professional, educationally sound choices. They will also have more scope to set examinations and do their own financial planning. Together with the corresponding document on the future of primary education and the personnel policy plan, this document forms a multi-year policy plan.

Competence-based education

Competence-based education (CGO) seeks to teach students how to operate in occupational contexts. Schools began phasing it in 2004 and the transition is still ongoing, so the old system still exists alongside the new. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science wants the competence-based qualification structure to be fully operational by 1 August 2010 (though postponed for another year because of strong resistance of MBO teachers). At present, the new system applies to about 72% of MBO students. The new, competence-based qualification structure describes core tasks and working processes that are relevant to, and characteristic of, the occupation or trade; the competences needed to carry out these processes successfully; the underpinning subject knowledge and skills; and performance indicators which demonstrate that competences have successfully been acquired. In practice, the new certification should

match students more effectively to labour market requirements, and also offer better prospects of progressing to higher professional education later on. For each MBO course, a set of qualification guidelines has been drawn up by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. Together they constitute the national qualification structure, the framework for competence-based vocational education. Schools are free to decide which methods they use for training students to diploma standard. The Education Inspectorate uses the qualification guidelines to assess the quality of teaching and examining within competence-based education.

New didactic approaches

In recent years, the Netherlands was stirred by the discussion about “new learning”. That term was invented to indicate more self-administered forms of learning in school in order to develop competencies such as “learning to learn” and communicating adequately. During the first years, educationalists were very optimistic and positive about “new learning”. Educational policy reacted with the introduction of the “study house” in secondary education by which students were allowed (obliged) to work 1-2 hours per school day for themselves thus learning to organize their learning process themselves, and learning to find and use information. The role of the teacher would be that of a by-stander who would help, if need be. The reform failed in many respects and is on its retreat, although not in all schools and not in all sectors of the educational system. Its introduction in upper secondary vocational education (MBO) meets fierce resistance because of a number of reasons: 1) Self-administered learning does not work for vocational students who are not used to such learning forms but want and need structured curricula and learning tasks. 2) Teachers are not trained in applying such new didactics in the regular curriculum. As a consequence, many teachers left the students to themselves. Meanwhile new learning forms are broadly introduced in the teacher training institutes and other higher professional schools, not least to save money on the teaching staff (that was also a by-effect in schools). Many teaching students are unhappy with too much self-work (mainly in the form of portfolios and self-instruction through internet-based curricula and tests) instead of solid instruction. 3) As a consequence of initially exaggerated expectations about the positive effects of “new learning” and later disappointment as to the results, a broad backlash among parents, teachers, students and educationalists developed, leading to a back-to-basics movement; this the more so since it became evident that even many teacher students lack basic knowledge in orthography and mathematics.

Transfer and mobility within the vocational education sector

There is a shortage of skilled people at the intermediate and higher levels on the Dutch labour market, so the Ministry of Education is working with the vocational education sector to facilitate the transition from one level of vocational education to another. Secondary vocational education must supply enough young people with level 3 and 4 qualifications to meet demand in the lower and middle ranges of the knowledge economy. It is vital for students to be able to move on without difficulty from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to secondary vocational education (MBO) to higher professional education (HBO). Under the new arrangements, more students will be able to obtain the right qualifications and be equipped for the job market sooner than in the past. Most students who complete VMBO go on to MBO, and the link between the two has been strengthened by the introduction of the four ‘learning pathways’ within vocational education. Extra support will be provided for pupils transferring from VMBO to MBO. Plans are also under way to develop the concept of ‘learning careers’, enabling young people to exploit all the opportunities that are open to them across a wide range of learning environments, and to remove the barriers between the

different levels of vocational education. The government will remove statutory obstacles to make this possible while institutions themselves will be expected to work together at regional level. However, these are more plans than reality; one will have to wait if they work.

Tackling dropout

Making education compulsory to the age of 18, extra work experience placements and follow-up care for pupils going on from VMBO to MBO should ensure that by 2012 the dropout rate is 50% lower than in 2002 (no more than 35,000 dropouts). All young people up to the age of 18 are required to continue learning until they have obtained a basic qualification. This measure replaces compulsory part-time education. Money will be invested in language teaching (through early years education and bridging classes) and in more attractive, more practical education. Students in further and higher education will be encouraged to mentor and coach pupils and the support advisory teams for schools will be expanded. The Inspectorate will also monitor whether schools pursue adequate policies on truancy. Early school leavers who neither work nor attend school will be subject to compulsory supervision, giving municipal authorities extra opportunities to get them back to school or into work. It will also be easier for young people to enrol mid-course.

Peace education

There are also efforts to expand peace education in schools in order to stimulate democratic citizenship, teach children to be polite and non-aggressive and also instil a (justified) feeling of security in and out of school.

1.2. Ongoing debates

Education remains a highly contested and debated area among the Dutch public, as it closely relates to some other important societal issues such as employment, economic development, competitiveness of Dutch economy, welfare, and integration. Different actors have made diverse diagnosis of weaknesses and failings of the education system, often reflecting their own interest areas, values, and positions within the system. One of the recurrent themes of the debate on education has been a concern that education reforms of the past decade have failed to achieve their purposes while inadvertently creating new problems. For instance, decentralisation has been installed in several areas within education sector and the government establishes the central criteria. However, as it has fewer ways of exerting influence on schools than it previously had, this raises the question of whether the government still has enough significance in these educational areas. Besides, mergers of schools and governance of a few schools under the same board seem to have threaten the freedom of choice, a hallmark of Dutch education system (Education Council, 2009b). Additionally, there are concerns that as a result of recent education reforms, education has become a ‘business’; that too many responsibilities and tasks were allocated to schools and teachers, overwhelming their capacity; and overhead costs of schools have increased substantially as they have increasingly employed more staff to manage and administer the schools which have become quite large. In contrast to the expectations, mergers among schools have not also increased the economies of scale and did not improve the efficiency of the system (Verbrugge, 2009).

In its three recent annual reports, Inspectorate of Education (2005; 2007; 2008) has consistently underscored the following problems as the most pressing ones in the Dutch system: high number of students who leave schools early without an adequate qualification for the labour market; increasing numbers of young people with behavioural problems;

aggression at school, especially at secondary level; an excessively large number of pupils with reading difficulties; limited ambition among the youth for lifelong learning; and rapidly ageing teaching staff and severe teacher shortages. There are also indications that not all pupils are developing their talents to the full: pupils among whom the development of basic skills has stagnated, pupils that are not given the attention that they require, pupils that are performing below their potential and pupils that gain little satisfaction from learning. Some of these issues are further elaborated below:

Education quality, student achievement levels

The performance of Dutch school children in international comparisons is still fairly respectable (upper segment), but the number of school pupils with poor reading skills has increased in recent years according to PISA research. Besides, performance in mathematics (especially by girls) has fallen in the past ten years. Similarly, examination results for the language and arithmetic skills of first-year students in higher education are a cause for concern. Dutch school children score well in international comparisons up to the age of 15. However, in certain rankings the Dutch have dropped below the levels achieved a few years ago. The increase in ‘alternative education’ also points towards a certain lack of satisfaction with mainstream education. This happens when children of compulsory school age leave mainstream education and find an alternative in private schools or in Belgium or Germany. Another form is the use of complementary education, such as ‘homework institutes’. These in particular have seen a strong increase in recent years. Currently around 6% to 11% of school pupils avail of the services of homework institutes (Education Council, 2009b).

Early school leaving

The Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) pointed out in its report ‘The Welfare State Reconsidered’ that, in comparison with surrounding countries, pupils in the Netherlands achieve a relatively low level of education and attend school for a longer time. A big problem is the fact that many pupils leave school prematurely, particularly in pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO; basic vocational and middle management vocational programmes) within four large cities. Additionally, few young people re-enter education once they leave (Inspectorate of Education, 2008).

Pupils with behaviour problems

Increasingly, schools are facing difficulty with pupils that display behaviour problems. This is apparent, among other things, from the growth of schools for children with serious behaviour problems and the growing waiting lists for this type of schools. Also, the number of ‘pupils with a personal budget’ identified in mainstream education is increasing sharply. This, in turn, is placing great pressure on the peripatetic supervision that must be provided from the Regional Expertise Centres. Greater pressure is also being placed on the rebound facilities in secondary education (Inspectorate of Education, 2008).

Increasing school sizes

In recent decades, both administrative units and schools have grown. In primary education, 689 institutions (out of 6,891) have 1,000 or more pupils. In secondary education, 95 institutions (out of 636) have 4,000 or more pupils. This variation also occurs with respect to administrative units, with approximately 29,000 pupils under a primary education school board and approximately 62,000 pupils under a secondary education school board at the top end (The Netherlands Inspectorate of Education, 2008). The mergers have resulted in even larger organisations offering vocational education. In the last years, the institutes have

coagulated into large regional training centres (ROC's) with tens of thousands of students. The government has indeed encouraged this growth on the grounds that it would improve economies of scale. However, for several years now, attention has turned towards the disadvantages of this enlargement in scale. They can harm two important values, i.e., legitimacy and freedom of choice. Legitimacy means that the school board and school management have support for the policy they pursue and that the stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, pupils and students, have a real say in their daily activities and in the policy followed. Freedom of choice means that parents, pupils and students can choose the education that best fits their needs. The policy is focused on guaranteeing freedom of choice and legitimacy, following the motto "not larger than necessary, small where possible". This is accomplished, for example, by seeing conditions for the decision-making process surrounding mergers to enable parents, students and teachers to have sufficient influence. And by seeing up a merger test that ascertains whether freedom of choice in a particular region is served by a merger. The number of mergers is expected to decrease as a result.

Bureaucracy

This issue closely relates to the increase in school sizes. There is mounting concern among school teachers and other personnel about ever growing bureaucracy – and no measures taken against it. A far reaching division of labour and increasing school size lead to a managerial layer which does not touch the work floor and does not know anything about pedagogical and curricula needs. Growing overhead absorbs ever more financial resources which should be spent on the learning process and the pedagogical professionals.

School administration

Of very great concern and mounting critique is the disproportional influence of school boards on the individual school. It is the school board officials who decide on school fusions (leading to pedagogical disadvantageous size) without taking notice of school traditions and parent wishes; it is the school board who gets and distributes the money according to own criteria, and without being controlled by lower levels. The former autonomy of the individual school and the school team has largely disappeared in favour of school boards who enhance their power by opting for ever bigger school organizations with the argument that the bigger the organization, the more effectively it can be managed. The situation has worsened by increasing demands posed by consecutive reform efforts, which are revised and reapplied again. Schools and teachers are exhausted by all these measures which cost huge amounts of time and energy without leading to the desired effects.

Segregation

Dutch education was segregated along denominational lines for a long time as children attended the school that matched their parents' religious or other beliefs. As a consequence of this religious segregation, for a long time, too little attention was paid to segregation by socioeconomic status and recently by ethnic background. Because of variations in the socioeconomic composition of different districts and the strategic location of the private nondenominational schools (the traditional elite schools), major differences in the composition of pupil populations persisted throughout the 20th century despite equal state funding. Only when this socioeconomic segregation acquired a colour in the 1980s and 1990s did the segregation become an issue in political debate. At present, there are more Dutch elementary schools having a high concentration of ethnic minority pupils than schools with a

high concentration of White working-class kids. Most of the latter group of schools is found in rural areas in the North of the country (with declining industries), whereas the schools with high concentrations of ethnic minority pupils are mainly in the cities. In the period from 1985 to 2000, the percentage of elementary schools with more than 70% of pupils from non-Western families with a low level of education rose from 15% to 35% in the four largest cities (Karsten et al., 2006). A study which compared the levels of segregation in the largest school districts in the US with the four major Dutch cities concluded that the segregation of disadvantaged immigrant students in the Dutch cities exceeds that of black students in most American cities. So, ethnic and racial inequality in the Netherlands is increasingly becoming an important feature of the Dutch as well as the European educational landscape (Ladd, et al., 2009).

Teacher shortages

A large part of the aged population of teachers will retire in the next five to ten years and schools already meet problems in attracting new teachers and professional school managers (see A. 1.3.4.).

2. Youth policy and youth welfare

As mentioned under A2 and B1, there are essentially three levels on which youth policy is issued and exercised: state, province and municipality. There are, on these levels, various institutions with specific target groups and tasks and programs to fulfil them. Main problem since many years – and unsolved to the day of today despite broad societal consensus – is insufficient or lacking clarity about demarcation of responsibilities. The trend is to define ever more specific groups of problem youth to be targeted with specially designed measures and programs. In doing so, too many institutions and professionals work on the same cases and even (young) persons. That means doubling of work, confusion on the side of the persons involved, and growing bureaucracy. At the same time, the costs for youth welfare increase which lead to cuts in expenditures.

Concerning minority youth, the trend is to abandon a policy with special measures and help offers for specific groups of ethnic-cultural groups but define problem groups as such. Behind that switch is the idea that minority youth has to be regarded as integral part of Dutch youth and treated accordingly. It is not colour that leads to underachievement in school and deprivation in many other fields, but social factors, like parental unemployment and poverty, particularly in single parent (mother) families. And when, for example, the problem of “hanging around youth” is tackled, it should not single out specific ethnic groups but rather find common denominators for all young people who cause problems by such behaviour (RMO, 2008). In reality, though, it works just the other way round; specific groups of minority youth, preferably young male Moroccans, are blamed for misbehaviour and mischief in public, like on planes and public transport. That discrepancy signals the ambivalent policy of Dutch government for migrant groups. Insisting on integration and participation, that policy does not solve the problem, as that insistence is perceived by minority youth (and their families) as coercive and against their culture. That negative dynamic leads in many ways and instances to mutual mistrust and aggression. Youth work on the whole has no convincing strategies to counteract those developments. All the more important it is that more youth workers and other professionals (teachers; employers) working with migrant youth have the same cultural background and experience and can thus better serve as models than Dutch professionals.

Another observation concerns the relationship between youth-in-need and “normal youth”. In as much as resources shrink, scarce financial means are spent on the most visible problems of youth in disfavour of facilities for the majority of children and young people. Budget cuts hit sport- and other recreation facilities as well as professionals like youth- and street workers. Also cultural projects suffer from shrinking means, like amateur theatre and bands, jazz- and other festivals, and projects of youth exchange between European (and other) countries.

The national project of changing 40 deprived into blossoming areas

In 2007, the government launched a project of far reaching consequences: it selected 40 of the most deprived neighbourhoods in big and medium sized cities in the whole country, with special attention given to the four biggest cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht. There must be developed an integral approach for these neighbourhoods to create employment, enhance housing and increase integration. All ministries involved must coordinate their measures to meet that goal. Extra financial resources were provided. Within the chosen neighbourhoods, all inhabitants must be activated by social workers and other municipal personnel, including volunteers, to enhance their street, public places and parks, housing facades. Each chosen neighbourhood was invited to work out own plans and ideas. Schools, especially extended schools, should play a main role in the game. The project is supposed to run until 2012.

After a couple of years, first tentative results were evaluated. It showed several things: Firstly: Expectations were exaggerated: basic problems were not solved, especially concerning integration. That must not come as a surprise as many of the chosen neighbourhoods are heavily misbalanced in terms of population mix. The existence of black schools, for example, cannot be altered easily or not at all. Also the creation of employment for the unemployed proves difficult although many local enterprises have offered working places and working experience to young people. Secondly: It showed that projects to improve the living circumstances and surroundings of the inhabitants, for example through the introduction of measures to increase participation, were very much dependent on professionals and volunteers. When that support withdrew in the hope that the inhabitants would take over and deploy further activities that hope did not become true – inhabitants withdrew as well and fell back on former attitudes and behaviours. Thirdly: Some of the 40 projects succeeded and real progress was made and will continue. It remains to be seen, experts tell, if there are experiences which can be generalized and transferred to other locations.

Overlooking the enumerated institutions for youth well-being (B2.2.1) as well as the extended school movement and the project of the 40 deprived neighbourhoods, one cannot but state a similar discrepancy as we have pointed out several times earlier: on the one hand, a host of activities, initiatives and institutions, all meant to support youth. On the other hand lacking coordination and therefore missing the main aim of providing help and support as soon and directly as the client needs it. Instead there is continuous complain about too long waiting lists in youth help, confusion of clients – or missing to find the clients who are in need. Concerning the 40 neighbourhoods, an integral policy approach shows to be much for difficult than policy makers had thought.

BRIEF SUMMARY

In the past two decades, a series of large scale, system-wide reforms were introduced in the Dutch education system. Similar to many other countries around the world, these reforms were highly influenced by globalisation, knowledge economies and neo-liberal policies. Reforms were introduced in major policy areas from the content of education to the organisation of the education system, from employment conditions to personal management and funding. Reforms can be broadly categorised into two groups: The first line of reforms aimed at addressing intrinsic educational issues, such as sustaining a smooth transition from one type or level of education to a subsequent one, improving co-operation between mainstream primary schools and special schools, reducing group sizes in primary education, stimulating the use of ICT, and introducing a new financing system for students who are in need of special care. The second line of reforms were related to issues such as financing, personnel management and conditions of service, and included a large component of deregulation and devolution of responsibilities.

The overall trend in recent reforms can be characterised by an ongoing process aimed at devolving responsibilities and problem solving capacities to a lower level, from central government to the organisations of employers and employees, to local authorities and to school boards. While central government retained its responsibility for providing direction within the education system (what public tasks must be fulfilled, the conditions for doing so, the funds), schools were given greater financial, managerial and educational freedom. Some of the major reform initiatives included harmonising and broadening early childhood education, increasing autonomy, deregulation and decentralisation in primary education, introducing block grant funding to schools, changes in weighting system, merging individual schools (for efficiency reasons) into big organisations that can be run by specialised managerial staff, and initiatives aimed at reducing drop-out. In addition, extended schools were introduced in order to bridge the gap between crèche, preschool and primary school and to provide after-school care for all children. This reform allows for more out-of-school activities and for parents (mothers) the opportunity to work. While the extended school is almost universal for the primary sector, it is still expanding in secondary education.

When reforms were evaluated in retrospect, they were considered too many by politicians, teachers and the general public. Hence, there are concerns that the education system was overloaded and burdened by too many change demands. The reform implementation process was also criticized in some other ways: there were arguments that the reforms were implemented without thorough preparation of the field and were withdrawn hastily when detrimental consequences became visible. Often no reliable evaluations of the long term consequences were made or could be made. For instance, the new didactic approaches, which advocated more autonomous and self-administered forms of student learning, were introduced without adequate preparation of the teachers. Moreover, the reforms were criticised for not only failing to achieve their objectives but also inadvertently creating new problems.

Education continues to be a highly debated issue in the Netherlands. Some of the ongoing concerns include high number of students who leave schools early without an adequate qualification for the labour market; increasing numbers of young people with behavioural problems; aggression at school (especially at secondary level); an excessively large number of pupils with reading difficulties; limited ambition among the youth for lifelong learning; and rapidly ageing teaching staff and severe teacher shortages. In addition, eliminating segregation of the system alongside 'black' and 'white' schools, tackling too big school organisations, reducing bureaucracy, and improving educational achievement of non-Western non-Dutch students are viewed as important policy concerns.

D. CONCLUSION

In the Netherlands, the typical disadvantaged youth can be defined as young people who belong to ethnic minority groups, those who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, those with lower socio-economic background, and/or coming from single parent families. The proportion of attending lower streams of secondary education is higher among these groups of students. Besides, they tend more frequently drop-out of the education system without a basic qualification, which is critical for finding jobs in the labour market. The disadvantages of ethnic minority students within the education system have been explained by a variety reasons, including language deficiencies in Dutch, school segregation and concentration of ethnic minorities in Black schools, experiences of discrimination, lower parental education, lower socio-economic background, fewer available social and cultural capital, and so on (Stevens, 2009).

The Dutch education system is characterised by an early selection system as well as a highly stratified system at secondary level. In this respect, it contrasts with countries such as the US and the UK where the selection takes place at a rather later stage, at entrance to higher education institutions. In the Netherlands, however, studying at higher education is more constrained by the previous school type attended than the selective admission of higher education institutions or large tuition fees. Although, higher education is open to every individual in the Dutch society, not everyone can reach the top of the educational ladder due to highly stratified nature of the Dutch system. At secondary level, schools vary in the degree of selectivity, with VMBO being the least selective and the VWO being the most selective. The most important decision has to be made at the age of 12 when students complete primary education. Therefore the transition from primary to secondary education appears to be a defining moment for young people's educational career (Stevens, 2009), as well as their job prospects. Students are transferred to the different types of secondary schools based on their CITO scores (standardised test scores) and the advice of their teacher. CITO results are much influential in transition to secondary, as CITO scores largely determine to which type of secondary school a student can be admitted. However, teacher advice is also consulted, particularly in cases when the CITO scores are not considered sufficient to base a decision. Although some schools do offer so-called 'bridge years' that may somewhat correct the early tracking, enrolment into a certain type of secondary school still practically determines the whole educational career of an individual – leading them towards or away from higher education. Ethnic minorities are often at a disadvantage in these highly stratified school systems. Being channelled into low or dead-end tracks early on makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for them to reach higher education later (Pasztor, 2009). Transition from VMBO to MBO is particularly problematic, as many failed to make such transition and drop-out of the education system. Besides, students who study at VMBO often feel stuck in this low track, as there is little space and opportunity for them to enter upper levels of HAVO.

The Dutch education system has increasingly become competitive. Finding the best schools, and providing the best possible educational opportunities have become important concerns among middle income families. In turn, the possibilities for students from lower classes to get into qualified schools have considerably decreased. In addition, as a result of new policy measures and reform packages inspired by neo-liberal policies, more responsibility is placed on individual choices. Therefore, when individuals fail in the system, their failure is attributed to the individuals and not to the system. In other words, if individuals cannot cope with the system, they are the ones who are blamed, and the system itself is hardly

considered accountable for it. This tendency further marginalises the situation of disadvantaged youth within the education system.

The fact that too many youth leave school early is perceived by all stakeholders in the Netherlands as the main problem in the school-to-work transition. There is awareness that school drop-outs are likely to face significant difficulties throughout their careers. The Dutch drop-out rate (12 % in 2008), though close to the OECD average, is above that in most neighbouring European countries. A particularly worrying fact in the Netherlands is that, contrary to most other OECD countries, the incidence of school drop-outs did not decrease considerably over the past decade. Estimates suggest that 6.5% of Dutch youth aged 15-24 were neither in education nor in employment in 2005. This proportion is almost half the OECD average but has increased by 1.4 percentage point since 1997, while decreasing on average elsewhere. Likewise, though relatively low in number, youth unemployed in the Netherlands have a high risk of becoming long-term unemployed. Slightly more than 20% of unemployed people aged 15-24 had been looking for jobs for more than a year in 2006, a proportion close to the OECD average, but much higher than in the Nordic countries or Canada. Long-term unemployment affects disproportionately disadvantaged youth, particularly youth with a non-European background and early school drop-outs. There is evidence that being unemployed just after leaving school usually acts as a trap and has lasting negative effects on career prospects. The likelihood of being unemployed later on is almost two times higher for school-leavers having started their career as unemployed than for their counterparts having worked in a non-standard contract as their first job (OECD, 2008).

Providing young people with the education and skills needed in the labour market has long been a key policy goal in the Netherlands. In particular, to prevent early school-leaving, the programme “Blits on drop-outs” makes vocational schools more responsible regarding the destination of their former pupils around the age of 16, when compulsory school ends. The setting of an Early School-Leavers Regional Reporting and Co-ordination Centre in each municipality is also a promising initiative as well as the decision to increase spending per student in upper secondary vocational schools. These initiatives were reinforced in August 2007 by the Qualification Law (Kwalificatieplicht Wet). Until they turn 18, young people who have not obtained a basic education (startkwalificatie, the equivalent of an upper secondary degree) must follow a full-time education programme. This reform goes in the right direction to ensure that the group of low achievers obtains a basic education. Moreover, for those aged 18-27 who have not successfully completed upper secondary education a mandatory/study work (Leerwerkplicht Wet) is enforced. The intention is to force the school drop-outs to opt for study, work or a combination of the two. They will be offered a training programme to help them to achieve attained upper secondary education or a job; should they reject such an offer, they can be subject to a social benefit sanction (OECD, 2008).

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