



Structures of Education,  
Vocational Training  
and Adult Education  
Systems in Europe

# The Netherlands

## 2003

**Information provided by:**

Eurydice Nederland  
Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen  
Facilitair Bedrijf/IPC 5300/02.028  
Postbus 16375  
2500 BJ Den Haag

If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe, we warmly recommend that you consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int>)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	4
1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION .....	7
1.1 Background.....	7
1.2 Basic principles: education.....	7
1.3 Distribution of responsibilities .....	7
1.4 Quality assurance .....	9
1.5 Financing .....	9
1.6 Advisory and consultative bodies .....	10
1.7 Private sector .....	12
2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION ( <i>PRE-PRIMAIR ONDERWIJS EN BUITENSCHOOLSE OPVANG</i> ) .....	13
2.1 Organisation .....	14
2.2 Programme of activities .....	14
2.3 Assessment .....	15
2.4 Teachers .....	15
2.5 Statistics .....	15
3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION ( <i>LEERPLICHTIG ONDERWIJS</i> ) .....	16
3.A.1 Organisation of the school (Primary Education) .....	16
3.A.2 Curriculum .....	17
3.A.3 Assessment/certification .....	17
3.A.4 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements .....	17
3.A.5 Teachers .....	17
3.A.6 Statistics .....	18
3.B.1 Organisation of the school (Secondary Education) .....	18
3.B.2 Curriculum .....	18
3.B.3 Assessment/certification .....	20
3.B.4 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements .....	21
3.B.5 Teachers .....	21
3.B.6 Statistics .....	22
4. POST-COMPULSORY GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION .....	23
4.A. General secondary education ( <i>Tweede fase voortgezet onderwijs – Voorbereidend hoger onderwijs</i> ).....	23
4.A.1 Organization of the school .....	24
4.A.2 Curriculum .....	24
4.A.3 Assessment/certification .....	25
4.A.4 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements .....	26
4.A.5 Teachers .....	26
4.A.6 Statistics .....	26
4.B. Vocational secondary education ( <i>MBO – Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs</i> ).....	26
4.B.1 Organization of the school .....	28
4.B.2 Curriculum .....	28
4.B.3 Assessment/certification .....	29
4.B.4 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements .....	29
4.B.5 Teachers .....	29
4.B.6 Statistics .....	30
5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ALTERNANCE .....	31
6. TERTIARY EDUCATION.....	32
6.A. Non-university tertiary education .....	32
6.A.1 Admission requirements.....	32
6.A.2 Fees/Financial support for students.....	32
6.A.3 Academic year.....	33
6.A.4 Courses .....	34
6.A.5 Assessment.....	34
6.A.6 Teachers .....	35
6.A.7 Statistics .....	35

6.B University tertiary education (postgraduate level course – ISCED 6 – included) .....	35
6.B.1 Admission requirements .....	35
6.B.2 Fees/Financial support for students .....	35
6.B.3 Academic year .....	37
6.B.4 Courses .....	37
6.B.5 Assessment/qualifications .....	37
6.B.6 Teachers .....	38
6.B.7 Statistics .....	39
7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS .....	40
7.1 Policy and legislative framework .....	40
7.2 Management/Organisations involved .....	41
7.3 Funding .....	41
7.4 Human resources .....	42
7.5 Organisation .....	42
7.5.1 Types of training .....	42
7.5.2 Access requirements .....	43
7.5.3 Objectives of the programmes .....	43
7.5.4 Main principles of the organisation of time and venue .....	43
7.5.5 Curriculum .....	43
7.5.6 Quality assurance .....	43
7.6 Guidance/counselling services .....	43
7.7 Statistics .....	44

## INTRODUCTION

---

Europe is characterised by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) regularly update a set of national monographs entitled *Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe*.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels (from pre-primary to tertiary). Also included are descriptions of initial vocational education and training in alternance and adult education and training within provision for lifelong learning. The initial and in-service training of teachers and their status are also considered.

The information is set out in accordance with a common structure to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasised.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardised so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational provision entirely within schools). The way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational education and training in alternance is the subject of a chapter in its own right. It includes all education and training for young people that is not essentially school-based, and thus covers for example apprenticeships based on the 'dual system' pattern, sandwich course training and any other initiatives and experiments with major elements of 'on-the-job' experience.

This is followed by a chapter on tertiary education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, tuition fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment. The chapter includes any initiatives implemented as part of the Bologna process.

The last chapter deals with continuing education and training for adults (whether in or outside the labour market, employed or unemployed). It provides information on the political, legislative and financial framework of this kind of education, on the authorities concerned and their responsibilities, as well as on the general organisation of training for adults (types of institution, access requirements, programme objectives, the curriculum and quality assurance). There is also a brief description of guidance/counselling services, as well as of questions relating to assessment and accreditation including the recognition of non-formal kinds of learning.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are national statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialisation.

The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational education and training in alternance, and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the CEDEFOP REFER Network (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the case of the 12 candidate countries. We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels, CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, and the ETF in Turin for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

Given the number of countries now covered <sup>(1)</sup> and the amount of data available, the description of each system of education and training may be consulted solely electronically on the website of the EURYDICE Network (<http://www.eurydice.org>), which brings it to the attention of the largest possible number of people and enables it to be updated on a more regular basis.

Patricia Wastiau-Schlüter  
Head of the EURYDICE  
European Unit

Johan van Rens  
Director of CEDEFOP

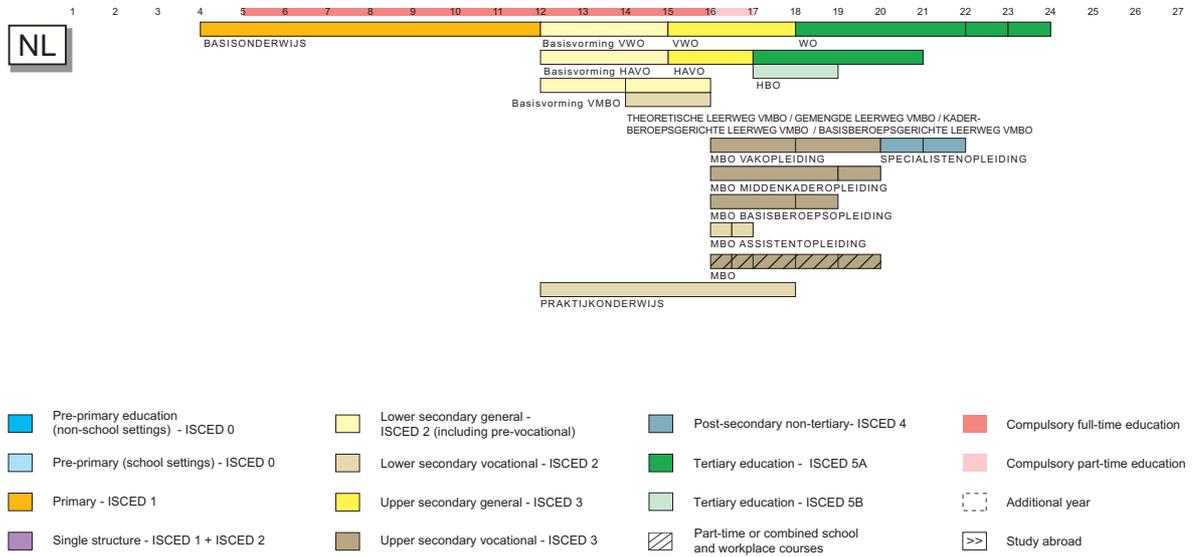
Peter de Roij  
Director of the ETF

June 2003

---

<sup>(1)</sup> The 30 European countries taking part in the EU Education Programme, Socrates.

## Organisation of the education system in The Netherlands, 2003/04



Source: Eurydice.

# 1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

---

## 1.1 Background

---

The Netherlands is a Constitutional Monarchy with a parliamentary system. The Parliament (States General) together with the Sovereign and Government Ministers form the legislature; the Sovereign and Ministers form the executive. There are two Chambers in the House of Parliament. Since the elections in January 2003 the main political parties are the Christian Democrats and the Social-Democrats. The present government consist of christian democrats and liberals.

The Dutch Constitution guarantees freedom of religion; 30% of the population is Roman Catholic, 20% Protestant, 10% another religion and 40% of the Dutch population practise no religion (2002).

The national language is Dutch. In the province of Friesland, Frisian is spoken. It is the official language of the provincial and local councils (schools teach both in Dutch and in Frisian).

In 2002, the population of the Netherlands was over 16 million, living in an area of some 41,000 square kilometres. 10% of the Dutch population consists of immigrants of other nationalities.

Of the 6.9 million workforce (2000), 270,000 were registered as unemployed.

## 1.2 Basic principles: education

---

One of the key features of the Dutch education system, laid down in Article 23 of the Constitution, is freedom of education, which includes:

- the freedom to set up schools in accordance with religious or ideological principles;
- financial equality between public and private education;
- the requirement for municipal authorities to provide a suitable form of public education.

The freedom to set up schools in accordance with religious or ideological principles has led to a

wide variety of education establishments, in particular, the parallel existence of public (*openbare scholen*) and private (*bijzondere scholen*) schools, to which all statutes apply equally. Over 70% of pupils attend private schools.

Freedom of education is restricted by the requirements laid down in the Compulsory Education Act. This law stipulates that children must attend an education establishment full-time until the end of the year in which they reach the age of 16 or have completed at least 12 full years. After full-time compulsory education it is compulsory to attend school at least part-time until the age of 18.

The freedom of privately run schools is also constrained by funding conditions.

## 1.3 Distribution of responsibilities

---

The Dutch education system combines a unified education system, regulated by central laws, with decentralized administration and management of schools. Overall responsibility for the public-private education system lies with the State, represented by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, and the legislative power of the Dutch Parliament.

### Central authorities

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is headed by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. Two State Secretaries (junior ministers) of Education, Culture and Science are appointed; one takes responsibility for parts of education policy, the other for cultural policy.

Central Government controls education by means of laws and regulations in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Constitution. The prime responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science relate to the structuring and funding of the system, the management of publicly run institutions, inspection and examination procedures and financial aid to students. Control may be exercised by imposing qualitative or quantitative standards for the educational process in schools and/or for the results they produce, and by means of

arrangements for the allocation of financial and other resources, and the imposition of conditions to be met by schools.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science lays down conditions, especially in primary and secondary education, relating to the types of schools that can exist, the length of courses, compulsory and optional school subjects, the minimum and maximum number of lessons to be given and their length, the norms for class division, the examination syllabus and national examinations, and standards of competence, salaries, status and teaching hours of teaching staff. The Ministry does not set up schools, but does determine norms for their establishment. These conditions apply to both public and private education.

### Provinces

The provinces have a limited role to play when it comes to managing education and its content. They are required to perform supervisory and jurisdictional duties. This includes tasks relating to supervising the sufficient provision of public and private primary and secondary education, and organizing training and adult education activities.

### Local authorities (municipalities)

The administration and management of schools of primary and secondary general and vocational education is locally organized.

The municipal authorities have a dual role: they are both the local authorities for all schools in the area (whether publicly or privately run) and the competent authorities – in effect the school boards – for the publicly run schools. They also ensure compliance with the Compulsory Education Act.

At primary level, their tasks include planning and coordinating accommodation, facilities and material provision, and appointing additional staff. At secondary level, the municipalities have a statutory responsibility to ensure maximum use of buildings; furthermore, they act in this area almost exclusively as competent authorities.

The Municipal Council sets up public schools and approves the establishment of private schools.

Since 1997 it is possible for a municipality to delegate its tasks performed as competent authority of publicly run schools to some other type of body governed by public law to give a clearer separation of the two responsibilities. The municipal authorities are the competent authority for publicly run schools as well.

Foundations or associations are the competent authorities for private schools. The executive committee of the foundation or association bears responsibility. The members of this committee are

appointed according to the statutes of the association or foundation.

Some schools actually consist of two or more schools with different outlooks which cooperate closely together and share the same competent authority. Some public and private schools cooperate in this way (interdenominational schools).

All schools, both public and private, are governed by a legally recognized competent authority (school board). The competent authority is the body responsible for implementing legislation and regulations in schools.

Linked to the specific function of public-authority education, in addition, the boards of publicly run schools have to ensure the provision of enough schools, comply with statutory rules (as well as with funding provisions), ensure that pupils are not refused admission because of their beliefs, and be accountable to the Municipal Council for management activities

The competent authority (or school board) assumes the responsibilities involved in running a **school** insofar as based on statutory provisions; the day-to-day management of primary and secondary schools may be delegated to the head teacher (rector in schools providing pre-university education, central management team in MBO schools), but ultimate responsibility still rests with the competent authority itself.

The tasks and responsibilities of the day-to-day management of public and private schools are very similar. They include decisions with regard to the curriculum, the choice of teaching materials, the establishment of the school plan, timetable (lessons per compulsory or optional subject), the appointment and dismissal of head teachers, teachers and non-teaching staff, the admission and expulsion of pupils, the use of school buildings, school hours and the management of financial resources and arrangements for their administration.

Since 1 January 1998 all adult and vocational education institutions have been incorporated in regional training centres (ROCs). There are two types of ROC: those in which the institutions involved are completely integrated and those in which only the management has merged. The central management board or executive board is responsible on behalf of the management of the ROC, for the preparation and implementation of policy and the daily affairs of the institution.

The Government lays down a framework within which **HBO institutions** have to operate, but it is the responsibility of the competent authority to expand on the Government framework within the teaching and examination regulations. In their education and examination regulation, HBO institutions are required to specify the teaching

programme, the main subjects and the content and form of the different examinations.

For the **universities** the same legal framework is applied as for the HBO institutions. The day-to-day management of a university is handled by the Executive Board and the University Council. The Executive Boards, comprising three members, including the rector, is accountable to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and to the University Council. The University Council comprises up to thirty representatives of the academic staff, students and the support and administrative staff.

The education and training staff are educated and trained at institutions of higher professional education (HBO: lower secondary and full teaching qualification) or universities (full teaching qualification). In general teachers are recruited by the school itself, head teachers by the competent authority in consultation with the school.

It is the school, i.c. the head teacher, who is responsible for the planning and implementation of policy with regard to teaching. Schools decide what sort of teaching or training methods are used, based on general rules concerning compulsory subjects and minimum teaching periods and the recommended number of hours.

Organised pre-school child care facilities are funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

## 1.4 Quality assurance

---

The monitoring of both **public and private education** systems is performed by the Inspectorate for Education, as defined in Article 23 of the Constitution. The inspection procedure is set out in detail in the Supervision Act. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science provides the funding for the inspectorate, whose staff members enjoy the status of civil servants. The Minister is entitled to issue instructions as regards the implementation of the inspectorate's tasks, be kept fully informed about the inspectorate's activities, and assess the inspectorate's annual workplan.

The Primary and Secondary Education Acts and the Adult and Vocational Education Act compel schools, c.q. institutions, to have a system to control their internal quality. Schools/institutions must be able to judge their own quality and relate that judgement to the aims as formulated in their school plans. The school's self evaluation is the point of departure for the Inspectorate.

The Inspectorate Council is in charge of the inspectorate and is responsible for the management of the organization. Members of the Inspectorate Council include the Inspector General. In addition to the management headquarters, there are 12 regional offices. The Inspectorate is subdivided in Inspectorates for primary, secondary, adult and vocational education and for tertiary education.

Agricultural training is supervised by the Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries.

The responsibilities of the inspectorate are:

- to ensure compliance with statutory regulations (control);-to keep up to date with the educational situation by visiting schools (evaluation);
- to promote the development of consultations on education with the competent authorities, the staff of schools and the regional or local authorities (promotion);
- to report to and advise the Minister (advising/reporting).

The inspectorate reports on the impressions gained during school visits and publishes a yearly report on its findings.

In **tertiary education** (HBO institutions as well as universities), a system of internal quality control is coupled with periodical external quality controls by so-called visiting committees.

Monitoring and evaluating teachers is at the school's/institution's discretion. Evaluation of teachers can be part of the Inspectorate's external evaluation as far as it is part of the education within the school/institution in its entity

## 1.5 Financing

---

Funding for all levels and types of education comes, in principle, entirely out of central government funds. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science administers almost all central government expenditure on education, while the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries funds agricultural education. Funding is provided to public and private establishments according to the same criteria.

Public and private **primary schools and schools for special education** (primary and secondary) receive funding to cover staffing costs, operation and accommodation.

For primary schools still detailed regulations apply:

- the Londo system, for the funding of running costs and based on the number of pupils and classes;
- the staff establishment budget system based on the number of pupils enrolled; within this system the school claim the actual staffing cost involved;
- municipalities are responsible for the funding of accommodation.

Public and private **secondary schools** receive government funding to cover the costs of staffing, operation, establishment and equipment. In secondary education, schools receive an annual budget from which all staff and running costs must be met. They receive block-grant funding. The component for staff costs is calculated by multiplying the number of establishment posts by the average personnel costs. The component for running costs is a fixed amount per pupil together with a fixed amount per school.

Most costs are paid directly to the competent authority; primary accommodation costs are paid to the local authority.

The Central Government provides block grants to the **MBO schools** to spend as they see fit on staff costs or on upgrading facilities. The schools are free to choose between these two items. Under the funding rules, schools are required to keep accounts. The schools are entitled to keep any revenue earned from activities contracted with third parties. Members of school staff may also perform activities on a contractual basis within their regular terms of employment.

Vocational education courses are funded on the basis of the number of students per course/learning pathway and on the number of certificates awarded per institution.

The Tertiary education and Research Act grants institutions of **tertiary education** considerable autonomy regarding financial policy.

Both institutions for higher professional education (HBO) and universities are funded in block grants.

- Institutions for higher professional education
 

The minister fixes the total national budget for institutions for tertiary education and this budget is allocated to the institutions according to the number of students and various performance indicators such as the number of degree certificates awarded per academic year.
- Universities
 

Universities receive a block grant. Of the teaching component 50% is allocated on the basis of the number of degree certificates

awarded. Universities have complete financial autonomy.

Education is free for all pupils up to the age of 16, although there may be costs to cover the purchase of books and teaching materials and travel. Pupils of 16 and over have to pay annual tuition fees (including apprentices).

Tertiary education

- Study cost allowances are available for 3 categories: full time pupils under 18 in secondary education, special education and secondary vocational education: allowance depending on parents' income;
- full time pupils aged 18-30: all full-time pupils in secondary education and special education receive a basic allowance, which is not dependent on the parents' income;
- for pupils aged 18 or over in secondary education who are studying part time or by correspondence.

The Student Finance Act 2000 applies to students in tertiary education who are under the age of 34 and began their studies before the age of 30. It also applies to students in full-time secondary vocational education.

Every student in these categories is entitled to a non-means-tested basic grant, which can be supplemented depending on the parents' income. The size of the grant (and supplementary grant) depends on the type of education (tertiary education or adult/vocational education) and on whether or not the student is living away from the parental home.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment funds organized child care via the municipalities. The latter decide whether and how to devote the resources to child care.

## 1.6 Advisory and consultative bodies

---

A considerable amount of advisory and consultative bodies exist in the Netherlands; they are entitled to make recommendations on education policy.

### Advisory bodies

- **The Education Council** (*Onderwijsraad*)

The education council, which advises the minister, parliament and local authorities, is an independent government advisory body. Its statutory tasks are:

- To advise, whether requested to or not, the government and both chambers of the States General on the main features of policy and legislation.
- Recommend on the application of acts, general administrative orders and ministerial regulations.
- Local authorities can also ask the council for recommendations on certain aspects of local education policy, namely accommodation, policies on educationally disadvantaged pupils, non-Dutch modern languages, education and school advisory services. Local authorities can call on the Education Council if they have a dispute with a school board that is directly or indirectly related to the freedom of education.
- The **Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences** (KNAW – *Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen*)

The academy's functions are:

- Advising the government on matters related to scientific research (councils and committees).
- Judging the quality of scientific research (peer review, academy fellowship programme, accreditation committee for research schools in the Netherlands).
- Providing a forum for the scientific community and promoting international scientific co-operation (international contacts, congresses, funds and endowments).

Acting as an umbrella organization for institutes engaged in basic and strategic research, scientific information services and biological collection management.

- **Advisory Council on Science and Technology Policy** (AWT – *Adviesraad voor het Wetenschaps- en Technologiebeleid*).

The Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy (AWT) is an advisory body to the Dutch government on science and technology policy. These policy fields are coordinated within the Cabinet by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science (science policy) and the Minister for Economic Affairs (technology policy).

The Council's tasks are:

- Advising the Government and the Parliament on the science and technology policy to be pursued nationally and internationally, and on information policy in the science and technology fields.
- Carrying out, at the request of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, foresight

studies in the field of science and technology or commission these.

The core of its advisory task is focused on the knowledge and innovation process and its development. The recommendations made by the Council may also relate to matters that affect or are the result of research and science practice and technology development.

The members come from various walks of life (university, industry etc.). The members take a seat on the Council on their personal merits and do not represent any vested interest.

Advisory bodies not offering only advice on education are the **Socio-Economic Council** (*Sociaal Economische Raad – SER*), the **Advisory Council on Government Policy** (*Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid – WRR*), the **Equal Opportunities Council** (*Emancipatieraad*) and the **Youth Policy Council** (*Raad voor het Jeugdbeleid*).

### Support structure

Municipal authorities are responsible for the provision and quality of the local and regional school advisory services.

The three national advisory centres, the **National Institute for Educational Measurement** (CITO), the **National Institute for Curriculum Development** (SLO) and the **Centre for Innovation in Training** (CINOP) are subsidised under the National Education Support Activities Act (SLOA). There are three national educational advisory centres: the **Educational Advisory Centre** (APS) for non-denominational schools, the **Protestant Educational Advisory Centre** (CPS) and the **Catholic Educational Advisory Centre** (KPC). These centres primarily provide services for secondary schools, primary teacher training and the school advisory services.

### Participation councils

Every primary and secondary school is required to set up a participation council representing staff and parents/pupils.

Parental participation can also take place through the parents' council. Staff can set up staff councils. Pupils can set up a pupils' council. The latter can all make recommendations to the participation council and/or head teacher.

Participation in tertiary education is defined in the Tertiary education and Research Act (WHW). Every institution of higher professional education has a participation council representing staff and students. Its powers vary from one college to another. At universities students participate in the University Council and in subject committees.

## 1.7 Private sector

---

Private schools are established upon private initiative and are run by a board of governors, an association or foundation. Under the terms of the Constitution, all schools – public and private – are funded on an equal basis. In other words, the Government funds both public and private schools in the same way. Central Government pays teachers in public and private schools; they have the same salary scales and terms of employment and enjoy the rights of civil servants.

In order to receive state financing, schools must observe certain conditions set out in specific government laws and regulations.

Private schools are free to establish curricular content according to their own principles, to choose their own teaching methods and appoint members of staff who agree with the school's religious or ideological tenets. The private education system consists of different types of schools: mainly Roman Catholic, Protestant and general private schools, the latter being based on specific ideological or pedagogical principles.

## 2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION (*Pre-primair onderwijs en buitenschoolse opvang*)

---

The Netherlands has no formal educational provision for children under the age of four. From the age of four onwards, children attend primary school. Outside the formal education system there are, however, childcare facilities for younger children. Childcare facilities, in the form of out-of-school care, are also available for children of school age.

Pre-primary education now is in a transitional period. Childcare falls under the 1994 Social Welfare Act. This Act gives the municipal authorities responsibility for planning and funding welfare facilities at local level, but in 2004 the Basic Childcare Provision Bill (WBK) will be in force. The new Act will regulate the structure of the childcare sector, the division of responsibilities, quality, supervision and funding (including parental contributions). The aim is to provide adequate facilities throughout the Netherlands, with appropriate educational standards. Parents will have more choice and childcare provision will be more market-led. It will also become easier for new providers of childcare to enter the market. A new national system of requirements to be met by providers and checks on municipal supervision will improve quality control. The new national standards will create greater clarity; it will moreover become easier to obtain planning permission and operating licences. Importantly, responsibility for childcare is to be shared by parents, employers and government, who will also share its financing.

### General aim for pre-primary education

Childcare facilities and playgroups offer young children the opportunity and the space to play and develop in the company of children of their own age. The aim is to stimulate children's social, cognitive and emotional development. Childcare also enables parents to take part in activities outside the home, such as a course or paid employment. Childcare provision is seen by central government as a means of enabling more parents, particularly mothers of young children, to go out to work. There are still many obstacles facing both men and women who prefer a more equal division of work and family responsibilities. Government policy is designed to tackle these problems on a number of fronts,

including expanding the number of childcare places and creating more paid leave schemes.

Attendance at pre-primary education is not compulsory. The government initiated projects (since 1988) for young children whose parents have had little schooling and/or are members of the main ethnic minorities represented in the Netherlands (mainly Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean children). The aim is to prevent educational disadvantage and prepare children for entry to Dutch primary schools, and to provide support for these children in the early years of primary school. The development and initial implementation of these projects was financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Since then they have been funded by the municipal authorities. Most of these projects form part of local compensatory policy.

The following organised facilities are available:

- **Day nurseries** cater for children aged from 6 weeks to 3 years. They are open on week days, from around 7.00 to 18.00 (10 hours a day on average), with a few exceptions. There are usually two qualified staff per group of children. Half-day nurseries cater for the same age group and are open for at least 5 hours a day. The two are sometimes combined.
- **Out-of-school care** is available for schoolchildren aged between 4 and 12. These centres are open before and after school (and sometimes at lunchtimes), on afternoons or days when there is no school, and during the school holidays. Most stay open all year round. After-school care is a specific form of out-of-school care, provided at the end of the school day. Pilot projects have been set up for teenagers under the age of 16; they offer leisure activities and facilities for doing homework.
- **Childminders** can be found through agencies that have been specially set up to put parents in touch with private individuals who are willing and able to look after up to 4 children in their own homes.
- **Company childcare schemes** are intended for employees or, in the case of universities, students. They include creches attached to a particular company (internal childcare),

shared company creches and reserved places at subsidised and non-subsidised nurseries. Employers receive tax incentives to provide childcare facilities for their staff.

- **Playgroups** are for children aged from 2 to 3 years and originated as a means of fostering children's social skills by giving them the opportunity to play with other children of the same age rather than as a form of childcare. Children usually attend two mornings or afternoons a week, for between 2½ and 4 hours a day. Playgroups are usually subsidised by the municipal authority. Parents also pay a contribution. The parental contribution varies per municipality; sometimes it is fixed, but it can also be related to parental income.

- **Educational provision**

Virtually all children attend primary school from the age of four. Attendance is compulsory from the age of five. Children who need special educational treatment can be referred to a special school.

- **Lunchtime centres** are open during the school lunch break only, for children aged between 4 and 12 who do not go home at lunchtime.

### Admission requirements

In principle, all children between 2-2½ and 4 years of age can get a place at a playgroup. However, priority may be given to children with socio-medical problems and children suffering from (or at risk of) developmental delay. Children between 0 and 4 years of age may be admitted to day nurseries and half-day nurseries. Children between 4 and 12 qualify for out-of-school and after-school care. The age limits for childminding are flexible. Municipal authorities can give priority to special target groups in subsidised childcare, such as children with socio-medical problems. Access to childcare at the workplace is governed by agreements between employers and employees. Another factor limiting admission to playgroups and day nurseries is the availability of places.

There are no single sex institutions, neither are they attached to compulsory (primary) schools.

## 2.1 Organisation

---

A childcare place can be:

- subsidised by the municipal authorities;
- provided by the employer;

- paid for by the parent;
- funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) (in the case of single parents on benefits).

As part of the quality requirements for childcare, playgroups and day nurseries are subject to a number of restrictions regarding the size of each group and the ratio of staff to children. Municipal ordinances on childcare treat these rules as a minimum standard. The Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree imposes the following restrictions:

- for children under 12 months: no more than 12 children per group;
- for children under 13: no more than 16 children per group, of whom no more than 12 may be under 12 months;
- for children aged 4 to 12: no more than 20 children per group.

The maximum permitted number of children per adult is as follows:

- children under 12 months: four;
- children aged 1 to 2: five;
- children aged 2 to 3: six;
- children aged 3 to 4: eight;
- children aged 4 to primary school leaving age: ten.

Each group should be supervised by at least two members of staff. The model ordinance drawn up by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) limits the number of children per group to sixteen.

These rules may be extended to playgroups, even though playgroups are not covered by the Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree. Municipal authorities may also draw up separate standards for playgroups.

## 2.2 Programme of activities

---

There is no curriculum as such in childcare provision. From the age of four, children go on to primary or special schools. Out-of-school care facilities are in principle available outside school hours for children aged 4 to 12, for parents who want to make use of it. The number of places available is insufficient.

Most childcare establishments employ no specific educational or teaching method. There are, however, some which are based on a

particular educational concept, e.g. the Montessori playgroups.

### 2.3 Assessment

There is no formal assessment of pupils in the childcare sector.

A childcare quality assurance project was launched in 1999 with funding from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. A certificate has been introduced, which is awarded by an independent body to childcare organisations that satisfy national standards. This enables such organisations systematically to monitor and upgrade the quality of their care. Participation is voluntary, but possession of a certificate makes an organisation more attractive to potential clients. The first certificates were awarded in spring 1999.

### 2.4 Teachers

As part of the quality requirements for childcare, playgroups and day nurseries are subject to a number of restrictions regarding the size of each group and the ratio of staff to children. Municipal ordinances on childcare treat these rules as a minimum standard. The **Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree** imposes the following restrictions:

- for children under 12 months: no more than 12 children per group;
- for children under 13: no more than 16 children per group, of whom no more than 12 may be under 12 months;
- for children aged 4 to 12: no more than 20 children per group.

The maximum permitted number of children per adult is as follows:

- children under 12 months: four;
- children aged 1 to 2: five;
- children aged 2 to 3: six;
- children aged 3 to 4: eight;
- children aged 4 to primary school leaving age: ten.

Each group should be supervised by at least two members of staff. The model ordinance drawn

up by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) limits the number of children per group to sixteen.

These rules may be extended to playgroups, even though playgroups are not covered by the Childcare Quality Requirements (Temporary Measures) Decree. Municipal authorities may also draw up separate standards for playgroups.

Childcare employees should have at least a diploma secondary vocational education at level 3 (education in social work).

Only employees in municipal facilities have civil servant status.

There is no legal obligation for attending in-service training courses; in-service training is part of the agreement between employer and employee.

### 2.5 Statistics

children 0-12 years old	1999	2000
total number of children 0-12 year olds	2,566,426	2,589,922
0-3 year olds	790,157	807,374
4-12 year olds	1,776,269	1,782,548

Capacity	1999	2000
number of institutions with childcare places	855	1,002
number of facilities according to approach		
day care centre (whole day)	1,878	2,247
day care centre (half day)	141	164
care centre outside of school	1,168	1,521
total number of available places according of which:	99,788	124,938
day care centre (whole day)	67,030	82,277
day care centre (half day)	2,023	2,468
care centre outside of school	30,735	40,193
attendance of facilities	212,991	261,258

Financing	1999	2000
total of institutions	855	1,002
Subsidised	661	824
non-subsidised	194	178

Staff	1999	2000
Total	34,138	41,977
of which:		
day nurseries	11,407	14,321
other institutions	22,731	27,656

Source: CBS/StateLine 2003

### 3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION (*Leerplichtig onderwijs*)

---

Compulsory education is laid down in the Compulsory Education Act. Every child must attend school full-time from the first school day of the month following his/her fifth birthday; however, nearly all children attend school from the age of four.

Compulsory schooling lasts either 12 years full-time (5 to 17 years old), or full-time from the age of five until the end of the school year in which the pupil reaches the age of 16 followed by part-time compulsory schooling until the age of 18 (the age of majority).

Compulsory education covers primary education and lower secondary education (*havo* and *vwo* year 1-4, *vmbo*).

There are no single sex schools.

Compulsory education is free of charge. Learning materials are provided free of charge at primary schools. In secondary education, however, parents have to pay for books and learning materials, travel costs and other costs.

**Primary education** is for children aged 4 to 12. It is provided in primary schools (*Basisschool*) which are subject to the Primary Education Act. This Act sets out the educational objectives, the rules on organizing education and the position of teaching staff, pupils and parents.

Although children are obliged by law to attend school when they are five years old, almost all children start primary school at four (i.e. the first year is optional). For subsequent years, there is a 100% attendance rate.

The aim of primary education is to provide eight years of uninterrupted education as a foundation for secondary education. Primary education is oriented towards the emotional and intellectual development of the child, the development of creativity, the learning of knowledge and the acquisition of social, cultural and physical skills.

Primary schools must have at least 200 pupils.

Primary schools are coeducational, separate school units. The establishment and closure of schools is based on the pupil density within a municipality: the number of children aged 4 to 12 per square kilometre. The minimum school size varies with the size of the municipality and is established by the Government.

**Secondary education** is provided in schools for *vmbo* (*voorbereidend middelbaar*

*beroepsonderwijs*, pre-vocational secondary education, 12-16 year olds), *havo* (*hoger algemeen voorbereidend onderwijs*, senior general secondary education, 12-17 year olds) and *vwo* (*voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, pre-university education, 12-18 year old). Secondary education is for pupils aged 12-16/18.

The government encourages the formation of broad-based combined secondary schools.

#### 3.A.1 Organisation of the school (Primary Education)

---

The Ministry determines the dates of the school year and the length and dates of the summer holiday and how they are staggered across the 3 regions in which the country is divided.

The school board or administration decides when the school day begins and ends and how long lessons will be. The school day may last 5.5 hours (excluding breaks) at a maximum, the length of teaching periods is not prescribed. Schools mostly start between 8.30 and 9.00am and stop between 3.00 and 4.00pm (with a lunch break of an hour or an hour and a half). Wednesday afternoon is usually free. There is no school on Saturday. The number of teaching periods per year is compulsory: 7,520 for the whole period of primary education).

In general groups are organised in classes according to age. Most primary schools are divided into eight classes, each containing one age-group. However, as schools are free to decide on organizational matters themselves, it is possible for classes to contain more than one age-group. The first four years are referred to as the junior classes and the last four as senior classes. Pupils may also be grouped by different levels of achievement, with possible mobility between the groups.

The same teacher is responsible for teaching a class all subjects during a school year. A specialized teacher may take certain subjects such as physical education. It is up to the schools to decide whether to assign a different teacher to a class at the end of each year.

The number of teachers allocated to a school depends on the number of pupils. Pupils with a mental or physical handicap and/or from low socio-economic background count for more than 1 pupil; their "weight" is established in accordance with regulations from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

### 3.A.2 Curriculum

---

The Primary Education Act lists subjects that must always be taught to all pupils in primary school, if possible in an interdisciplinary form:

- sensory coordination and physical exercise;
- Dutch;
- arithmetic and mathematics;
- English;
- a number of factual subject areas: geography, history, science (including biology), social structures (including political studies), religious and ideological movements;
- expressive activities: developing the use of language, drawing, music, handicrafts, play and movement;
- social and life skills, including road safety;
- health living.

Schools in the province of Friesland must teach Frisian as well, and may conduct some lessons in that language.

The school plan, which has to be updated every 4 years, describes the school's policy on educational matters, staffing and internal quality assurances. Through this document the school accounts to the Inspectorate for its policies. The curriculum for each school is drawn up in the school plan as well. Provision may be made for pupils without a Dutch background. The school plan is developed into a plan of activities which sets out the pupils' activities for the year in question, the duties of the teaching staff as well as the teaching time, holidays and other free days. The school plan must be submitted to the inspectorate for approval.

The school prospectus informs the parents about the school. The prospectus must have the parents' approval before being published.

### 3.A.3 Assessment/certification

---

The assessment of pupils' academic performance in all subjects is continuous; it is carried out at regular intervals (usually twice during the year and once at the end of it) by the teacher on the basis of all (oral and written) work accomplished during the school year. A scale of 1-10 is used for awarding marks. A score of 1 is extremely poor, while 10 is given for excellence. Pupils' individual progress is recorded in school reports.

No certificates or diplomas are awarded to primary school leavers, but pupils do receive a school report, which the head teacher draws up in consultation with the teachers. This describes their individual level of achievement and potential and advises on further study. Parents receive a copy of the report, but are not obliged to follow the advice on further study.

### 3.A.4 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements

---

Each school decides on measures to accommodate weaker pupils (different groups, support teachers or repeating). The teacher(s) and the school authority decide on whether a pupil moves up to the next class. Although it is possible for pupils to repeat every year, it is rare for a pupil to have to repeat a class or a year (1 to 2% do so each year). In principle, all pupils complete primary education.

National tests organized by CITO (Central Institute for Test Development) have been developed for the final year of primary education and are used in some 85% of schools. These are aimed at testing pupils' knowledge and understanding with regard to entry to the different types of secondary education, and may be taken into consideration in the school report.

### 3.A.5 Teachers

---

Primary school teachers have a primary school teacher diploma (*diploma leraar basisonderwijs*), obtained on completion of a primary teacher training course at an HBO (higher professional education) institution. They are fully qualified to teach all primary school subjects to all age groups. Full-time training courses last four years.

In addition to general subjects, students training to be a primary school teacher are also taught a specialist subject, chosen from among such subjects as physical education, drawing, music, handicrafts and Frisian. Specialist teachers working in primary schools sometimes teach only their specialist subject. One-quarter of the training is made up of teaching practice.

Teachers in public and private schools enjoy the rights of civil servants and may work full-time or part-time.

In-service teacher training is regulated by law, but no in-service training is compulsory. When completed successfully, it leads to a certificate.

### 3.A.6 Statistics

	2000-2001	2001-2002
Number of pupils at primary schools (x 1000)	1,546,4	1552,2
% attending primary schools	95 %	94,9 %

	2000-2001	2001-2002
Number of establishments		
- number of primary schools	7,042	7,019
- number of annexes	144	152
Average school roll	220	221

	2000	2001
Number of staff in FTEs		
- per calendar year (x 1000)	87,3	93,0
% of women staff in FTEs		
- heads	14.9	16.5
- deputy heads	46.2	48.3
Teachers	75.9	76.8
Age of staff (incl. special schools)		
- average age	42.2	42.3
- % aged 50 or over	26,2	27,4
	2000-2001	2001-2002
Pupil-teacher ratio	23,8	23,2

### 3.B.1 Organisation of the school (Secondary Education)

It is common for classes to be arranged according to age groups. Classes may, however, contain pupils of one level or school type, or of mixed levels/school types (for example VMBO/HAVO, HAVO/VWO). Within combined schools the pupils are sometimes all mixed during the first year (a transition period). At the end of the second year VMBO pupils choose a sector and a learning pathway. HAVO/VWO pupils have to choose one of four fixed subject combinations at the end of the third year. They are then regrouped in accordance with the choices made. All lessons are given by specialist subject teachers.

The school year runs from 1 August to 31 July. There are 200 school days per year during basic secondary education. The maximum time which may be allocated to pupil holidays is 60 school days. The summer holidays last for 7 weeks in July and August, staggered over the three large regions into which the country is divided for this purpose. The dates and length of the summer holidays are prescribed by Central Government. The dates of the Christmas and the May holidays are the same throughout the country. The competent authority decides on the dates and length of the remaining holidays, although Central Government does recommend two periods for the autumn and spring breaks. Schools operate five days per week.

The school board and the competent authority are required to establish a school plan giving an overview of the organization and content of teaching and a lesson timetable, and submit it for approval by the inspectorate. No requirements are laid down for subject matter, methodology or teaching methods, but examinations are subject to certain conditions.

### 3.B.2 Curriculum

The first stage of secondary education encompasses the four-year VMBO course and the first three years of HAVO (total duration: 5 years) and VWO (total duration: 6 years). VMBO covers the whole period of compulsory education, HAVO and VWO partly (HAVO one year post compulsory; VWO 2 years post compulsory)

Basic secondary education is the core curriculum for the lower years of all the different types of

secondary school. The emphasis is on applying knowledge, acquiring skills and delivering an integrated curriculum. Pupils are taught a minimum of 15 subjects. The period of basic secondary education can vary from school to school and is normally three years. This may be extended to four years or reduced to two.

The recommended timetable for basic secondary education contains 15 compulsory subjects: Dutch, English, second foreign language (French, German), mathematics, biology, physics and chemistry, IT studies, history and politics, geography, economics, technology, social and life skills, visual arts/ music/ dance/ drama (at least two of these), physical education. In addition, 20% of the total curriculum is made up of optional subjects (Latin, religious instruction, mother tongue teaching, pre-vocational subjects, subjects from the basic curriculum, individual lessons or study or vocational orientation). The time need not be used in the same way for every pupil and its extent may vary from one course year to the next.

National attainment targets are being set for the subjects in the basic curriculum. They are compulsory minimum standards for schools to achieve by the end of the period of basic secondary education. There are two different achievement levels for basic secondary education and pupils are grouped by level of achievement in such a way that it is possible for certain pupils to finish basic secondary education in two years instead of three, while others may take four years.

The timetable gives a guide for the minimum number of lessons per subject. There is no obligation to adhere to the timetable except in the case of the number of hours set for social and life skills, physical education and art subjects. For VMBO there is also a prescribed minimum number of hours for directly vocational subjects. During the first three years of VWO and HAVO courses, it is compulsory to take a third modern language (French, German, sometimes Spanish), and the curriculum for *Gymnasium* pupils must also include Latin or Greek during the first three years.

After the second year of the course, VMBO schools can provide fewer than 1,000 lessons in the subjects prescribed for the basic curriculum, and replace these with vocationally oriented subjects. This is on condition that a total of at least 3,000 lessons are provided in the subjects of the basic curriculum over the three years.

Timetables also exist for the years following the basic secondary education period. The recommended timetable for the whole period of all types of secondary education includes: Dutch, English, French and German language, history and politics, geography, mathematics, physics and chemistry, biology, music, drawing, handicrafts, dance, drama, physical education, technology, social and life skills, IT studies, economics, and

individual lessons. The main difference between the different types of secondary education is the level at which the subjects are studied and the number of lessons devoted to different subjects over the whole period of a particular type of education.

In addition, pupils in the *Gymnasium* must also study Latin and Greek language and literature. A good deal of the recommended timetable for VMBO is devoted to vocationally oriented subjects.

Optional subjects for VWO and HAVO in the compulsory period are: Frisian, other modern foreign languages, biblical studies, history of Christianity, religious knowledge, astronomy, philosophy, film, theatre, performing arts, history of art, health care and care of the home, nutrition and clothing. In addition, pupils in VWO can study Hebrew language, those in the *Gymnasium* can study economic science and law, and those in the *Atheneum* can study Latin and an introduction to the culture of the ancient world.

There is one achievement level for each type of secondary education after basic secondary education, and mobility between the different types is possible.

The minimum number of lessons to be provided per year is given in the recommended timetables for each type of school. During the first three years of secondary education, pupils receive a minimum of 1,280 lessons of 50 minutes per year. During the period of basic education, a minimum of 1,000 lessons are in the subjects of the basic curriculum. Tuition can be provided in periods longer or shorter than 50 minutes.

This means that the average school week will consist of 32 lessons of 50 minutes each. All schools will be required to devote 25 hours to the compulsory subjects making up basic secondary education. The remaining seven hours may be devoted to subjects of the schools own choosing.

The Ministry does not prescribe textbooks; teachers are free to choose teaching materials.

Schools are not legally bound to provide educational and vocational guidance, but there is often a teacher who does so.

VMBO is not a vocational course as such but lays the basis for secondary vocational education (MBO) or, for pupils taking the theoretical programme, senior general secondary education (HAVO). Some 60% of all pupils in secondary education attend VMBO. After two years of basic secondary education pupils specialise by opting for:

- A particular sector: this is a group of subjects that lays the foundation for further training (engineering and technology, care and welfare, business, agriculture).

- One of the pathways within that sector (theoretical programme, combined programme, middle-management vocational programme, basic vocational programme). Each pathway comprises a distinctive, self-contained group of subjects and vocationally-oriented programmes. The system of learning pathways takes into account differences in the learning styles of pupils who may be either theoretically or practically inclined. The different programmes correspond with different styles of learning (from the more theoretical to the more practical). The choice of pathway has implications for the options open to pupils beyond VMBO;
- A vocationally-oriented programme within the chosen pathway (NB. Pupils taking the theoretical programme study general subjects instead of a vocationally-oriented programme): pupils can opt to specialise within one particular department (this programme leads on to vocational training in a specific occupation) or they can delay choosing a specialisation by opting for an intra-sectoral programme, which provides a broader base (see 'broad-based' options in the table below). Pupils who have studied mathematics at VMBO level may go on to any MBO course, regardless of their choice of vocationally-oriented programme.

The specialisation stage lasts two years.

### 3.B.3 Assessment/certification

As at primary level, the assessment of pupils' academic performance in all subjects is continuous; it is carried out at regular intervals (usually twice during the year and once at the end of it) by the teacher, and is recorded in school reports. In the final year, the last assessment before the final examinations is made at Christmas. Marks are awarded on a scale of 1 to 10; a score of 1 is extremely poor, 10 is given for excellence, and 6 is the pass mark.

Pupils move up to the next class if they have received the mark "sufficient" (6) at the end of the year for the majority of subjects. Pupils can repeat the year once; if their marks are not deemed sufficient at the end of this year, they must change to another type of education.

The school plan outlines the school's policy on educational and other matters, including the rules for promoting pupils to the next year. During the period of basic secondary education, pupils may have to repeat a year or they may be admitted to the next year on a provisional basis.

Tests based on the attainment targets are set for each subject in the core curriculum (with the exception of physical education). The attainment targets are drawn up under the responsibility of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and describe what pupils are expected to achieve in terms of knowledge and skills by the end of the period of basic secondary education. Tests are taken in each subject or group of subjects. The method of testing is recorded in the school plan.

Interim assessment may also take place where subjects are not taught throughout the entire period of basic secondary education. The final tests may not, however, be sat before the end of the second year of the course. Schools may supplement these tests with their own test papers and can decide when and in what order the tests are to be taken.

Attainment targets for the period from 1998 to 2003 were adopted on 1 August 1998.

The VMBO is the only course that is completed within the period of compulsory education.

The VMBO leaving examination is in two parts:

- a school examination and a national examination.
- For some subjects – physical education, social studies and arts I – there is a school examination only.
- The national examination consists, for all pupils, of a written exam and, for pupils taking the basic vocational programme or the middle-management vocational programme, a practical component as well.
- The school examination includes a project on a topic relating to the chosen sector. This is compulsory for all pupils, apart from those taking the basic vocational programme.

The final grade in each subject (or intra-sectoral or vocationally-oriented programme) is calculated by combining the mark for the school examination and the mark for the national examination as follows:

- in the basic vocational programme, the mark in the school examination counts as 2/3 of the grade and the mark in the national examination as 1/3;
- for the other learning pathways, each counts as half.

Not all subjects are marked in figures:

- physical education and arts I are marked as 'satisfactory' or 'good';
- the grade obtained in the school examination for social studies counts in its entirety towards the final results.

### 3.B.4 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements

---

Pupils may take up to five years to complete the first stage of secondary education (the four-year VMBO course or the first three years of HAVO and VWO). As of 1996 it has been possible to extend this to a maximum of six years for certain groups of pupils in VMBO, i.e. disabled pupils, pupils who received their primary schooling outside the Netherlands and pupils who have missed more than a year of schooling due to illness or circumstances beyond their control. The Inspectorate may, in exceptional cases, grant exemption from the five-year rule for pupils in these categories at the request of the head teacher.

Pupils who have completed the period of basic secondary education receive a certificate on leaving secondary school.

At the end of the second year, the competent authority (school board) will advise pupils as to which option they should choose.

Pupils unable to achieve all the attainment targets may qualify for exemption from the attainment targets or from one or more subjects in the core curriculum. Decisions of this kind are taken by a committee appointed by the school board.

As from 1 August 2001 (and in practice as from the 2000/2001 school year) testing has no longer been compulsory for subjects in the core curriculum.

The package of tests supplied by the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO) for 2000 includes reference data (for certain subjects only) allowing teachers to compare their pupils' results with the scores obtained nationwide at schools offering the same, or different, types of education.

Learning support and practical training are being introduced in VMBO schools so that pupils who would otherwise have been referred to an LOM or MLK school or to a department for individualised pre-vocational education (IVBO) can remain in mainstream secondary education. The expertise will be available in mainstream schools to provide them with the kind of special educational treatment they need.

Special secondary education is geared to the potential for development of each pupil and are organised in such a way that pupils can follow an uninterrupted process of development. The aim is to enable all pupils to obtain a VMBO qualification or to enter the labour market. Learning support can take the form of remedial teaching, training to help pupils cope with fear of

failure, social skills training, study skills training or teaching in small groups (for some or all subjects).

Learning support (LWOO) is an integral part of the four VMBO learning pathways. It is not a separate programme. The curriculum is therefore the same as for the four learning pathways. Learning support is intended for pupils who, with some extra assistance, of whatever kind, will be able to obtain a VMBO qualification. The duration of learning support, and the form it takes, varies considerably from pupil to pupil, the aim being to tailor teaching to the individual's needs.

### 3.B.5 Teachers

---

There are two ways of qualifying as a secondary school teacher: via a teacher training course at an HBO institution or by taking a postgraduate teacher training course at a university.

HBO teacher training courses for secondary school teachers lead to either a grade one or grade two qualification. Courses are available in general subjects, arts subjects, technical subjects and agricultural subjects. In principle, students specialise in one subject.

Teachers who have obtained a grade two qualification in a general subject after studying either full or part-time can then take an HBO course (usually part-time) leading to a grade one qualification in the same subject.

Courses in technical and agricultural subjects lead to a grade two qualification only; both full-time and part-time courses are available.

The training course for physical education teachers leads to a grade one qualification.

Similarly, teachers of certain arts subjects (fine arts, music, drama and dance) may only take a course leading to a grade one qualification with a study load of 240 credits.

Grade two teachers are qualified to teach the first three years of HAVO and VWO and all years of VMBO (MAVO and VBO) and secondary vocational education. Grade one teachers are qualified to teach at all levels of secondary education. Unlike grade two teachers they can also teach at pre-tertiary education level, i.e. the last two or three years of HAVO and VWO respectively.

In recent years, the government has given HBO institutions providing secondary school teacher training extra funds to enable them to offer tailor-

made courses for various target groups, integrate ICT into courses, work more closely with schools, adapt courses in line with the standards of competence, enhance career prospects and raise pass rates.

University graduates can take a postgraduate teacher training course leading to a grade one qualification. Both the part-time and full-time options have a study load of 60 credits (equivalent to one year's full-time study). Courses are available in all subjects in the secondary curriculum. Students specialise in one subject.

Teaching practice is a vital component of all teacher training courses. All teacher training leads to a certificate indicating the field of study and the level of attainment.

All teaching staff in public and private schools enjoy the rights of civil servants and may work full-time or part-time.

In-service teacher training is not compulsory and regulated by law. When completed successfully, it leads to a certificate.

### 3.B.6 Statistics

#### Number of pupils (x1 000) and % ethnic/cultural minorities

	2000/2001		2001/2002	
	Number	% eth. min.	Number	% eth. min.
totaal vo	862.9	9.3	872.1	9.6
total (excl. special needs)	764.9	6.7	768.6	6.8
secondary education year 1 and 2	332.3	7.7	329.2	7.8
vmbo 3/4	82.9	10.9	-	-
vmbo 4	-	-	39.3	10.7
vmbo basic vocational programme 3	-	-	20.9	14.7
vmbo middle management vocational programme 3	-	-	25.6	9.9
mavo 3/4	98.3	7.7	-	-
vmbo theoretical pathway 3	-	-	38.4	7.4
vmbo combined programme 3	-	-	9.9	7.2
mavo 4	-	-	50.6	7.5
havo/vwo 3	78.1	3.8	77.5	4.1
havo 4/5	80.6	4.6	84.5	4.6
vwo 4/5/6	92.7	2.8	92.7	2.8
total secondary education special needs	98.0	29.4	103.5	30.0
lwoo 1/2/3/4	67.7	33.3	-	-

lwoo 1/2	-	-	44.0	40.1
lwoo basic vocational programme 3	-	-	14.3	23.8
lwoo middel management programme 3	-	-	1.4	22.1
lwoo combined programme 3	-	-	0.5	3.5
lwoo theoretical programme 3	-	-	0.2	16.4
lwoo 4	-	-	12.3	21.8
svo-lom (learning support)	11.5	10.9	10.1	11.5
svo/mlk (learning support)	5.4	17.8	3.7	19.3
practical training	13.4	30.2	17.0	30.0

#### Percentage distribution of schools by denomination

B) Denomination	2000/2001		2001/2002	
	% scholen	% leerlingen	% scholen	% leerlingen
Total	99	100	100	100
public	28	26	28	27
private non-denominational	11	9	11	8
Protestant	22	26	23	25
RC	29	27	28	27
combination	10	12	10	13

#### Staff

A) Staff in FTEs (x 1000)	2001	2002
Total	69,8	71,3
teachers only	53,8	54,6

B) female staff	2001	2002
Total	31,8	32,9
heads/deputies	12,3	13,8
teachers	33,0	34,1

C) average age	2001	2002
Total	45,4	45,4
Male	47,1	47,3
Female	41,6	41,5

D) percentage aged 50+	2001	2002
Total	39,4	40,3

E) on redundancy pay	2001	2002
number in benefit FTEs (x 1000)	2,9	-
average age	56,9	-
percentage aged 50+	84,5	-

F) ratios	2001	2002
pupils-teachers	15,8	15,8

## 4. POST-COMPULSORY GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

### 4.A. General secondary education (*Tweede fase voortgezet onderwijs – Voorbereidend hoger onderwijs*)

The second stage of secondary education is partly compulsory, partly post-compulsory and encompasses the 4th and 5th years of HAVO and the 4th to 6th years of VWO. This period of pre-tertiary education (VHO) follows on from basic secondary education.

Pre-university education (VWO) is for pupils aged 12-18 years and last six years. It consists of a first stage (three years) and a second stage (three years). There are three types of VWO school: the "atheneum", the "gymnasium" (where Greek and Latin are compulsory) and the "lyceum" (a combination of "atheneum" and "gymnasium").

Senior general secondary education (HAVO) lasts five years and is for pupils aged 12-17 years. Like VWO, it consists of a first stage (three years) and a second stage (two years).

The same general objective applies to the whole of secondary education, namely that education should contribute to the development of pupils with due regard to and respect for the different ideological and social values within Dutch society.

Compulsory schooling lasts either 12 years full-time (5 to 17), or full-time from five until the end of the school year in which the pupil reaches the age of 16 followed by part-time compulsory schooling until the age of 18 (majority).

There are no single sex schools.

Most secondary teaching takes place within combined schools offering a number of different types of secondary education (VMBO, HAVO, VWO). Some are broad-based, offering all the different types of secondary education. Others are narrow-based and offer several, but not all, types of secondary education.

There are also schools which provide only one type of secondary education. There are no separate schools for HAVO. VMBO schools, schools providing practical training and special

schools for secondary education are required to form part of a consortium. As a result of the government's mergers policy, the number of schools has fallen from 1,454 in 1992 to 784 in 2001/2002.

When admitting a pupil to any year of the course beyond the first, the competent authority (i.e. the school board – in practice the teaching staff) must consider whether the pupil is able to complete the course successfully. It is also possible to be admitted to the next year on a provisional basis, except for pupils moving up from the fourth or fifth year to the final year.

Pupils who have successfully completed the VMBO theoretical programme will be able to transfer from VMBO to HAVO, provided their examination subjects included mathematics and either French or German. There may be other requirements as well. A VMBO pupil wanting to take the science and technology option at HAVO level, for instance, must have studied physics and chemistry, while a pupil wanting to take science and health must have studied biology, physics and chemistry.

Pupils with HAVO certificates may likewise be admitted to the fifth year of VWO.

Education is free of charge up to the age at which full-time education is no longer compulsory. Schools may ask parents to contribute towards the cost of certain activities (parental contribution), but such contributions are voluntary and may not constitute an obstacle to the admission of pupils.

Schools select their own textbooks and course materials. School books are purchased by the parents. Many schools operate a book fund, buying the books and renting them out to parents. Others make arrangements for books to be rented from book suppliers.

Under the School and Course Fees Act, fees have to be paid by all pupils and students aged 16 or over at the start of the school year (1 August). This applies to full-time pupils/students in secondary education, special education, secondary vocational education (vocational training pathway) and adult general secondary education.

HAVO provides a general education and is therefore not intended as terminal education. Its

purpose is to prepare pupils for entry to higher professional education (HBO). In practice, however, school-leavers with HAVO certificates also opt to move across into VWO or go on to MBO.

The purpose of VWO is to prepare pupils for university entry (WO). However, some school-leavers with VWO qualifications go on to HBO.

#### 4.A.1 Organization of the school

---

Most secondary teaching takes place within combined schools offering a number of different types of secondary education (VMBO, HAVO, VWO).

The number of periods in the second stage of secondary education (i.e. the upper years of HAVO and VWO, together known as pre-tertiary education) is based on the study load system. Teaching periods in the first stage of secondary education are assumed to last 50 minutes each and in the second stage of secondary education 60 minutes each. The length of a teaching period is not, however, prescribed by law. This is decided by the competent authority of the school (school board), which also determines when the school day starts and ends.

In the second stage of HAVO and VWO – the period of pre-tertiary education (i.e. the last two years of HAVO and the last three years of VWO) – the standard study load per pupil is 1,600 hours per school year (40 hours a week for 40 weeks). This includes at least 1,000 hours of teaching during school time. These hours are "real" hours, i.e. 60 minutes, whereas in basic secondary education each teaching period is assumed to last 50 minutes. 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 includes writing up projects, reading, using a resource centre, excursions and homework. The study load for the second stage of HAVO is 3,200 hours (spread over two years), while for VWO it is 4,800 hours (spread over three years).

Classes are organised according to level and subject.

Schools select their own textbooks and course materials. School books are purchased by the parents.

#### 4.A.2 Curriculum

---

The standard study load for the 4th and 5th years of **HAVO** combined amounts to:

- 1,480 hours for the common component. The common component comprise the following subjects:
  - Dutch language and literature
  - English language and literature
  - French, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian
  - Arabic, Turkish or Frisian language and literature 1
  - general science
  - history and social studies
  - culture and the arts
  - physical education
- 1,160 hours for the specialised component. The specialised components are:
  - science and technology
  - science and health
  - economics and society
  - culture and society
- 560 hours for the optional component.

The standard study load for the 4th, 5th and 6th years of **VWO** combined amounts to:

- 1,960 hours for the common component.
  - Dutch language and literature
  - English language and literature
  - French language and literature 1
  - German language and literature 1
  - general science
  - history and social studies
  - culture and the arts 1
  - physical education 1
- 1,840 hours for the specialised component (see HAVO);
- 1,000 hours for the optional component.

Subjects are taught at the same level to all pupils.

Two new concepts have been introduced as a result of the reforms in the second stage of secondary education:

- “studiehuis” which refers to an approach to teaching where the emphasis is on enabling pupils to work increasingly on their own, under the supervision of a teacher;
- a study load system based on the time required by the average pupil to master a particular quantity of material. This includes preparation and self-study at home as well as attending lessons.

Schools select their own textbooks and course materials.

#### 4.A.3 Assessment/certification

---

Pupils' progress is continuously assessed in oral and written tests. The results of assessment carried out during the year are taken into account in end-of-year assessment.

HAVO and VWO are rounded off with an examination.

Both tests and examinations are compulsory.

The school-leaving examinations are in two parts:

- a national examination held in the final year.

The national examination consists of the same questions – or questions of an equivalent degree of difficulty – for all pupils and is assessed against national standards. It is taken at the time specified by the government, which is the same for all HAVO schools and all VWO schools respectively.

- a component organised by the school, known as the school exam.

For some subjects there is a school exam only. The school exam takes the form of an examination portfolio comprising various elements as documented in a form decided upon by the school, e.g. a list of grades or examples of project work. The requirements to be met by the school exam, as approved by the Minister for Education, Culture and Science, are set out in the examination syllabus and cover all the elements that make up the examination portfolio for each subject. The separate elements of the school exam are not all scheduled for the final year. Each school can decide when the various parts of the exam are to be held. In the case of subjects for which there is a school exam only, the exam can be held before the final

year, for instance at the end of the fourth year.

The HAVO and VWO school-leaving examinations cover the following subjects:

- the subjects that make up the common component, including the literature element of language studies, for which a separate mark is awarded, although there is no separate study load;
- the relevant specialised subjects, including a project with a study load of 80 hours; pupils cannot be examined twice in the same subject, e.g. they can sit the exam in economics 1 or in economics 1,2, but not in both. Pupils can, however, sit exams in both mathematics A and mathematics B; subjects or other elements of the curriculum that make up the optional component.

Not every subject taken as part of the optional component has to be an exam subject. The optional component generally accounts for 120 hours of the exam syllabus, depending on the study load in the specialised component. Schools may offer pupils the chance to take additional subjects – bringing the study load to over 120 hours – without sitting an exam in them.

Marks are awarded on a scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent). A six is a pass. Pupils can still be awarded an overall pass mark even if they get a lower grade in up to two subjects (either two fives or one four and one five is acceptable). Pupils who get a grade of 3 or lower in any of their subjects have failed. In addition, pupils must have no more than one grade 4 or 5 in their specialised subjects.

Candidates at both HAVO and VWO level receive a national HAVO or VWO certificate listing all the subjects which contributed to the outcome of the exam and a transcript listing the grades achieved in the school exam, the exam syllabus followed for each subject and the grades achieved in the national examination, the topic or title of the project undertaken together with the subjects studied for it and the mark obtained, the mark obtained for the subjects culture and the arts 1 and physical education 1, the final grades obtained for the examination subjects and the outcome of the school-leaving examination.

#### 4.A.4 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements

---

The school plan describes the steps to be taken to establish whether and to what extent the organisation and content of teaching are achieving the desired results.

Pupils may occasionally have to repeat a year (i.e. they are not promoted). It is also possible for pupils to be admitted to the next year on a provisional basis, but not to the last year.

There are different VWO certificates for *atheneum* and *gymnasium*, but both qualify pupils to enter university and higher professional education.

The HAVO qualification gives entry to higher professional education, but school-leavers with HAVO certificates can also enter the fifth year of VWO or go on to secondary vocational courses.

#### 4.A.5 Teachers

---

Teachers are allocated according to subject.

There are two ways of qualifying as a secondary school teacher: via a teacher training course at an HBO institution or by taking a postgraduate teacher training course at a university (during or after rounding off the university).

There are HBO teacher training courses in general subjects, arts subjects, technical subjects and agricultural subjects.

Students qualify to teach one subject.

All secondary school staff (i.e. head teachers, teaching staff and non-teaching staff) is employed in the general service of the competent authority, rather than being employed by a particular school. This applies to all schools with a school board. Staff who move to another school governed by the same school board are not dismissed and reappointed but simply transferred.

The letter of appointment must record a number of details. The most important of these are: the date on which the appointment commences, the post and relevant pay scale, whether the appointment is temporary or permanent, the number of hours to be worked, the place of work and the salary.

Staff in public-authority schools and institutions are formally public sector personnel; they are

civil servants within the meaning of the Central and Local Government Personnel Act. 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.

The supply of in-service training courses is determined by demand from schools. Courses are geared to a particular target group, which may vary from an individual teacher to a small group of teachers to all teachers in one or more types of school.

Participation in training is decided on a voluntary basis by the teachers themselves and the competent authority (school board).

#### 4.A.6 Statistics

---

##### Fees

Standard amounts in euros	2000	2001	2002
Full-time education (16+)	827	852.50	885

#### 4.B. Vocational secondary education (MBO – *Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*)

---

Secondary vocational education provides both theoretical instruction and practical training in preparation for the practice of a wide range of occupations for which a vocational qualification is necessary or useful. It also furthers the general education and personal development of students and helps them to play an active part in society. Secondary vocational education is for students from the age of 16. Vocational education within the meaning of the Adult and Vocational Education Act does not include higher professional education (HBO).

The aim of secondary vocational education, as defined in the Adult and Vocational Education Act, is to provide both theoretical instruction and practical training in preparation for the

practice of a wide range of occupations for which a vocational qualification is necessary or useful. It also furthers the general education and personal development of students and helps them to play an active part in society.

The age of the participants in vocational education ranges from 16 to 64 (including adult vocational education), however, 95% of the participants in the main pathway (BOL – *beroepsopleidende leerweg*; full time) is under 22.

Participants pay school or course fees and qualify for student financial support in return if they take school-based full time training.

Senior secondary vocational education (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* – MBO) has a structure that corresponds to the different business sectors. Training programmes are offered in four different fields: technology, commerce/administration, services/health-care and agriculture. The training courses are provided at different levels and with varying duration.

All courses within the qualification structure are entered in the Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO, *Centraal Register Beroepsopleidingen*). This register records which institutions provide which courses, what the exit qualifications are, which learning pathway is involved and which of the partial qualifications awarded are subject to external validation. It also indicates which courses are funded by the government and which bodies are authorised to validate examinations. Courses lead to qualification for successively higher levels of professional practice, middle-management and specialist training courses being the fourth and highest level. For each course there are in principle two learning pathways: vocational training where practical training will take up between 20% and 60% of the course and block or day release where practical training will take up more than 60% of the course.

The courses vary in length:

- training to assistant level: 6 to 12 months;
- basic vocational training: 2 to 3 years;
- professional training: 2 to 4 years;
- middle-management training: 3 to 4 years;
- specialist training: 1 to 2 years;
- other courses: at least 15 weeks.

The introduction of a national qualification structure for vocational education took place in 1996, with the introduction of the WEB. The qualification structure for secondary vocational education comprises four levels of training.

- **level 1:** courses at assistant level equip students to perform simple executive tasks. These courses are intended for those who are not able to obtain a basic qualification (level 2) but can thus obtain a certificate nonetheless.
- **level 2:** basic vocational training prepares students to perform executive tasks at a slightly higher level. The diploma awarded at this level is equivalent to a basic qualification, which is the minimum qualification that everyone should have.
- **level 3:** holders of a professional training diploma are able to carry out tasks completely independently. They must also be able to account for their actions to colleagues and monitor and supervise the application of standard procedures by others.
- **level 4:** middle-management or specialist training prepares students to carry out tasks completely independently, combined with the ability to perform a broad range of tasks or specialisation in a particular field. Students must also demonstrate that they possess non-job-specific skills, such as tactical and strategic thinking, and can expect to take up posts in which they have hierarchical, formal and organisational responsibilities.

All courses (or, in official terminology, qualifications) forming part of the qualification structure are listed in the Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO). A total of 700 qualifications have been registered to date. In principle, each of these courses should be offered in two variants: *beroepsopleidende leerweg* (vocational training), where practical training takes up between 20-60% of the course and *beroepsopleidende leerweg* (block or day release) where practical training takes up more than 60% of the course. This currently applies to just over half of all courses. Since the introduction of the new legislation, private (i.e. non-government-funded) educational institutions have also been able to offer courses within the new qualification structure.

Institutions for secondary vocational education are co-educational. Training programmes are offered in regional training centres (*regionale opleidingscentra*, ROC). There were 43 regional training centres operating in the 2001/2002 school year, offering a complete range of adult and vocational education courses, both full-time and part-time. Agricultural courses are now provided at agricultural training centres (AOCs). Vocational education courses in the agriculture and natural environment sector are the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries.

The task of a regional training centre is to offer the entire range of programmes in vocational and adult education: non-formal education for young people, basic adult education, secondary general adult education, apprenticeship training and senior secondary vocational education, in at least three educational sectors (engineering & technology, economics, social services & health care and agriculture & environment). In most cases the regional training centres will carry out their tasks at different locations, often even in different municipalities within a single region. The regional training centres developed into large colleges because of mergers and general expansion. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has overall responsibility for this public or private institution, which is co-educational. All approved establishments are funded by the public sector in accordance with the same criteria. Fees are charged for students aged 16 and over in full-time education.

Under the qualification structure introduced by the Adult and Vocational Education Act, anyone is able to 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:

- a certificate of junior secondary vocational education (LBO, precursor of VBO) or pre-vocational education (VBO, currently integrated in VMBO), or pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO):
- a certificate of junior general secondary education (MAVO, currently integrated in VMBO), or:
- 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.

Block or day release courses are open to persons above school leaving age only.

The choices open to VMBO certificate-holders depend on the subjects taken at VMBO level.

Vocational secondary education and the textbooks for this form of education are not free of charge.

Employers' organisations and trade unions in the relevant sector of employment are represented in the national vocational education bodies, which formulate the exit qualifications. Industry can therefore influence the exit qualifications.

Cooperation between education and industry was strengthened in 1999 with the creation of a number of technocentres: intermediary organisations set up at regional level by educational institutions (including the regional training centres and higher professional education institutions), local businesses, the local authorities, manpower services and other relevant partners. The role of these centres is threefold: to improve the alignment of education and employment, to further the diffusion and application of knowledge, and to allow the joint use of advanced equipment.

#### 4.B.1 Organization of the school

---

Under the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), the administration of each regional training centre (ROC) sets out the number, length and times of the classes for each course in the teaching and examination regulations. As of 1 August 2003 institutions providing secondary vocational education will be required to provide at least 1,000 hours of teaching per course per year. The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) is to be amended accordingly. This includes not only teaching and contact hours but all activities carried out on behalf of the institution with a view to achieving the exit qualifications.

Part of the courses can be attended in evening courses as well.

Classes are organised by subject, level and course.

Nothing is laid down in the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) regarding teaching methods. It is up to the institutions themselves to organise courses and teaching in such a way that students are able to complete their courses successfully.

#### 4.B.2 Curriculum

---

Under the Adult and Vocational Education Act, the administration of each institution draws up teaching and examination regulations for each course offered by the institution. These regulations set out the educational and developmental objectives, including the exit qualifications, the units of study that make up the course, the content and organisation of the course, including the learning pathways and the

content and organisation of the practical training provided, and the content and parts of the examination.

The exit qualifications indicate in abstract terms what is expected of the students at each of the levels (including what they have to do to obtain partial qualifications along the way). Employers, teachers and students will then know what knowledge and skills are required and what is on offer. It is up to the institutions how they organise their teaching. They are free to devise their own programmes for the courses they offer on the basis of the exit qualifications.

Each course includes practical training in the occupation concerned. This is provided on the basis of a contract between the institution, the student and the company or organisation providing the placement. The contract sets out the rights and obligations of each party, including provisions on the number of hours' training to be provided, arrangements for supervision of the student, which part of the exit qualifications must be satisfied by the student in the course of his or her practical training, and how the latter is to be assessed.

The *Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven* (national bodies for vocational education) are responsible for the exit qualifications. The influence from business and industry organisations is laid down in the Education and Vocational Education Act, and takes practical form via 21 national bodies for vocational education. The national bodies aim to promote the quality of personnel provision for the sector, and close involvement by business and industry in the quality of education. They are a key link in a subtly-organised network of business and social institutions, organisations of employers and employees, and funded and non-funded educational institutions.

The national bodies were established by business and industry organisations. They are autonomous, active organisations (associations or foundations) for each individual sector or job category. They are governed by the employers' and employees' organisations of their individual sector. Regional colleges are also represented in the majority of governing boards. As the central meeting point and centre of expertise for their sector, the national bodies fulfil a bridging function between education and organised business and industry in the Netherlands.

---

#### 4.B.3 Assessment/certification

The teaching and examination regulations drawn up by the administration of the institution describe the content and organisation of each course offered by the institution and the examinations to be held.

The contract concluded between the institution and the student includes provisions on supervision, including regular advice to students as to whether they should continue with their course or switch to another one. The method of assessment during the period of practical training is set out in the practical training contract.

Pupils who pass a partial examination of a secondary vocational education course receive a leaving certificate. After the pupil has passed all the tests for the secondary vocational education course, the certificates are replaced by the diploma (*Diploma middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*).

Certificates are classified according to the four levels in secondary vocational education.

---

#### 4.B.4 Progression/guidance/transition arrangements

---

#### 4.B.5 Teachers

For secondary vocational education graduates from other HBO courses with a certificate of education and people educated to HBO level can be appointed, in addition to HBO teacher training graduates. The institution decides if a person has sufficient qualities to teach – if necessary with a complementary training. Persons can be appointed as teacher in vocational secondary education if they have other professional experience or training, provided they take complementary didactical training.

Teachers are subject specialists.

Staff in public-authority schools and institutions are formally public sector personnel; they are civil servants within the meaning of the Central and Local Government Personnel Act. 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.

#### 4.B.6 Statistics

##### Students (vocational education)

Number of students (x 1000)	2000/2001		2001/2002	
Secondary vocational education (total)	423.3		432	
<b>Block or day release pathway (BBL)</b>				
- levels 1 and 2	74.1	-	75.7	-
- levels 3 and 4	68.5	-	74.7	-
- total	-	142.6	-	150.4
<b>Vocational training pathway (BOL) – full-time</b>				
- levels 1 and 2	47.6	-	52.0	-
- levels 3 and 4	207.2	-	201.9	-
- total	-	254.8	-	253.9
<b>Vocational training pathway (BOL) – part-time</b>				
- levels 1 and 2	12.4	-	13.3	-
- levels 3 and 4	14.5	-	14.4	-
- total	-	26.9	-	27.7

##### Institutions and staff

	2000/2001	2001/2002
<b>Total number of institutions</b>	62	61
<b>Number of staff in FTEs (x 1000)</b>	33.3	35.8
Average age	45.6	45.7
% aged 50 or over	37.0	38.6

## 5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ALTERNANCE

---

For initial vocational education and training in alternance see chapter 4, Post-compulsory general and vocational education/4.B. Vocational secondary education and chapter 7, Continuing education and training for adults.

## 6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

---

Tertiary education comprises higher professional education (HBO) and university education (WO). These types of education are provided by HBO institutions ("hogescholen") and universities respectively.

### 6.A. Non-university tertiary education

---

#### 6.A.1 Admission requirements

---

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;
- a pre-university education (VWO) certificate.

Persons aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may be admitted after passing special entrance examination. This lower age limit may be waived in the case of courses in the fine and performing arts.

Applicants possessing any of the above qualifications have in principle the right to be admitted, but institutions impose additional requirements regarding the subjects studied.

Like the universities, HBO institutions have a central admissions system and, for courses subject to a quota ("numerus fixus"), a weighted draw for places. 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 institution they wish. Numerus fixus courses are those where the maximum number of first-year students that may be admitted to a particular course and/or institution is restricted.

#### 6.A.2 Fees/Financial support for students

---

Students in tertiary education pay tuition fees to the institution. As long as they continue to receive student finance, they are charged the statutory rate for tuition fees. The annual statutory tuition fees for the 2002/2003 academic year are EUR 1,395.83. The level of the statutory fees is fixed by law and is adjusted every year in line with the family spending index. Students aged 30 or over have to pay fees at a separate rate, the level of which is set by the institution itself and can therefore vary from one institution to another.

The Student Finance Act 2000 (WSF 2000) applies to students in tertiary education who are under the age of 34 and who began their studies before the age of 30. It also applies to students in full-time secondary vocational education (vocational training pathway).

Every student in full-time tertiary education and full-time secondary vocational education (vocational training pathway) is entitled to a non-means-tested basic grant. Depending on their parents' income, students may be able to claim a supplementary grant in addition to the basic grant. The size of the basic grant and the supplementary grant depends on the type of education (tertiary education or adult/vocational education) and on whether or not the student is living away from home.

Students may also take out an interest-bearing loan, subject to a ceiling. Since 1 January 1995, student loans have no longer been related to parental income.

Some students may qualify for a single parent allowance or an allowance for their partner. These allowances are paid in addition to the basic grant and are not dependent on parental income.

All students in receipt of financial aid are entitled to a public transport pass giving unrestricted free travel on public transport throughout the Netherlands. Students can choose between a week-day pass and a weekend pass. The week-day pass entitles them to unrestricted travel during the week and reduced-rate travel (40-50% off) at the

weekend, while the weekend pass allows free travel at the weekend and cheap travel during the week.

Students aged 30 or over do not forfeit their entitlement to financial assistance as long as they are still following without interruption the same course of study they were following when they turned 30. Tertiary education institutions have been given special funds with which to make financial provision for students whose progress has been delayed due to circumstances beyond their control or exceptional personal circumstances (course completion funds).

**Forms:**

- a) students who enrolled before 1 September 1996: **progress-related grant**

Students have to obtain a minimum number of credits each academic year, namely 50% of the standard study load for that year. If they fail to do so, their grant for that year will be converted into an interest-bearing loan. If, however, during the full duration of the course plus one year, they succeed in obtaining the full number of credits for the whole course, this step can be reversed. This type of grant is known as a progress-related grant.

There is also a limit to the length of time for which a student can claim financial assistance in tertiary education. The maximum period for assistance in the form of a non-repayable grant is equivalent to the official course duration plus one year's grace. After this period, students are entitled to a maximum of two years' assistance in the form of an interest-bearing loan, provided they have not exceeded the maximum period of enrolment.

- b) students who enrolled after 1 September 1996: **performance-related grant**

A new type of grant, known as a performance-related grant, was introduced on 1 September 1996 for students entering tertiary education in that or subsequent years. Most tertiary education courses last 48 months. During this time all students are entitled to a non-means-tested basic grant and possibly a supplementary grant which is dependent on income. Students who need longer to complete their studies can then apply for an interest-bearing loan for a further 36 months.

The basic grant and supplementary grant are paid out in the form of a performance-related grant. This works on the principle of "loan then grant". The amount of the basic grant and supplementary grant are initially received as a loan, with the exception of the supplementary

grant received in the first year which does not have to be repaid. Provided the student meets the performance criteria, the loan is converted into a grant and does not have to be repaid. These criteria are as follows. In the first year, students must obtain at least 50% of the available credits, i.e. 30 out of a possible total of 60. If the student meets these criteria, the loan awarded in the first year is permanently converted at the end of that year into a grant. The travelling allowance is part of the performance-related grant for students who received since 1 September 2000 for the first time a grant in tertiary education. In the second, third and fourth years the student is again awarded the basic grant and supplementary grant in the form of a loan, which is then converted into a grant if the student obtains a degree within ten years of starting his or her studies. After the fourth year, students will continue to be eligible for financial support for a further three years, but in the form of a loan only.

- c) As of 1 September 2001, students from a member state of the European Economic Area studying in the Netherlands and following a course for which student finance is available, will be entitled to financial assistance under the Student Finance Act 2000. They will qualify for an allowance equivalent to the basic grant for students living at home, although not for a public transport pass.

**6.A.3 Academic year**

---

In tertiary education, the academic year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year.

The length of tertiary education courses is defined in the Tertiary education and Research Act (WHW) in terms of the study load, which is expressed in credits. As a rule, the study load of a course is equal to 240 credits, i.e. 60 credits per year for a total of four years. The study load for engineering and science courses lasting five years is 300 credits. A credit is equivalent to 28 hours of study. The length and timing of lectures in tertiary education are not laid down by law but are set out by the administration of the institution in the teaching and examination regulations for that institution.

### 6.A.4 Courses

---

The HBO institutions are responsible for providing higher professional education. They may conduct research that is related to the courses they provide. They must in any event provide initial education programmes and transfer knowledge for the benefit of the community. They also contribute to the development of those occupations to which their teaching is geared.

As far as teaching is concerned, the government lays down no more than a framework, within which the institutions must operate; it is the responsibility of the administration of the institution to expand on this framework in the teaching and examination regulations. These lay down for every course provided at the institution such matters as the syllabus, the main degree subjects and detailed regulations with regard to the content and organisation of the various examinations. The participation council has a say in the adoption or amendment of the regulations. Government-funded higher professional education courses cover the following seven areas: Education, Economics, Behaviour and Society, Language and Culture, Engineering and Technology, Agriculture and the Natural Environment, and Health Care. Most HBO institutions offer courses in several of these fields. There are full-time and part-time courses and dual forms of training combining study and work experience.

Initial education is provided in the form of study programmes – or courses – made up of a number of units of study, which together form a cohesive entity. The study load for each course is expressed in terms of credits, one credit being equivalent to 28 hours of study, consisting of lectures, laboratory work (where applicable) and independent study. As a rule each unit of study is worth 2 or more credits.

The academic year lasts 42 weeks. Most full-time courses have a study load of 240 credits, which is equivalent to four years of study. The first part of the course is called the propaedeutic part and consists of 60 credits. This part of the course concludes with an examination.

Since the 1998/1999 academic year HBO institutions have been able to offer a dual learning variant for all full-time courses. Dual courses combine study and paid work, the aim being to bring education and employment closer in line with each other and to prepare students more effectively for the world of work.

The administration of each institution is responsible for the development of courses

within the framework imposed by central government. The choices made with regard to the syllabus and examinations are set out in the teaching and examination regulations.

### 6.A.5 Assessment

---

Not later than at the end of the first year of enrolment in the propaedeutic part of a full time or dual course programme, the institution advises students as to whether they should continue their course within the bachelor programme or not. This advice may or may not be optional. A student who has been told they cannot continue with their course cannot enrol for the same course again either as a regular student or an "extraneous" (external student). The advice is founded on objective criteria based on the student's results; these criteria must be known to the student in advance. Due warning must be given so that the student in question has a chance to improve their results.

Responsibility for examinations within the institution rests primarily with the administration of the institution. A separate examining board is set up for each study programme to conduct examinations and organise and coordinate the interim examinations. The Act contains a number of conditions regarding the procedure to be followed. The purpose of the examinations is to assess whether candidates have attained the level stipulated in the teaching and examination regulations in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills.

At the end of the first year of study, there may be a propaedeutic examination. After four years the final examinations are held. Successful candidates are awarded a certificate listing the subjects in which they were examined. Students abandoning their courses before the final examinations receive a transcript indicating how much of the course they have completed and which interim examinations ("tentamens") they have passed.

Courses which are geared to specific occupations in particular must include practical preparation for professional practice.

The institution grants the bachelor or master to students who have successfully completed a bachelor respectively master course in HBO. Those granted with this title are entitled to use it in combination with their name.

A HBO certificate gives access to university.

### 6.A.6 Teachers

There are no specific training courses for those wishing to teach in tertiary education. Lecturers at institutions of higher professional education (HBO) must hold a tertiary education qualification plus a certificate of competence to teach. This does not apply to staff at teacher training institutions who must have a grade one teaching qualification. However, this requirement will no longer apply if a bill that is currently before parliament becomes law. For university lecturers, there are no specific requirements regarding previous training.

### 6.A.7 Statistics

#### Students in higher professional education

##### Students enrolled in HBO (x 1000)

	2001	2002
Total	313.0	314.0
Intake of first-year students in HBO (x 1000)		
total full-time (incl. dual courses) & part-time	82.7	80.5
total part-time	16.7	14.9
<b>HBO graduates (x 1000)</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
total full-time (incl. dual courses) & part-time	54.2	56.7

#### Institutions and staff (higher professional education)

	2000	2001
<b>Total number of institutions</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>50</b>
Number of staff in FTEs (x 1000)	22.5	23.3
- teaching staff	13.1	13.2
- support staff	9.4	10.1
Average age	44.8	45.0
Student-teacher ratio	23.9	23.8

#### Fees

Standard amounts in euros	2000	2001	2002
Higher education	1304	1329.58	1395.83

### 6.B University tertiary education (postgraduate level course – ISCED 6 – included)

#### 6.B.1 Admission requirements

Admission to university is possible with a pre-university (VWO) school-leaving certificate or an HBO qualification or HBO propaedeutic certificate. Applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may be admitted after passing a special entrance examination.

As with HBO institutions, there is a central admissions system and, for courses subject to a quota ("numerus fixus"), a weighted draw for places. 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. Numerus fixus courses are those where the maximum number of first-year students that may be admitted to a particular course and/or institution is restricted. Until the 1999/2000 academic year, places on numerus fixus courses were allocated entirely by means of a weighted draw.

#### 6.B.2 Fees/Financial support for students

Students in tertiary education pay tuition fees to the institution. As long as they continue to receive student finance, they are charged the statutory rate for tuition fees. The annual statutory tuition fees for the 2002/2003 academic year are EUR 1,395.83. The level of the statutory fees is fixed by law and is adjusted every year in line with the family spending index. Students aged 30 or over have to pay fees at a separate rate, the level of which is set by the institution itself and can therefore vary from one institution to another.

The Student Finance Act 2000 (WSF 2000) applies to students in tertiary education who are under the age of 34 and who began their studies before the age of 30. It also applies to students in full-time secondary vocational education (vocational training pathway).

Every student in full-time tertiary education and full-time secondary vocational education (vocational training pathway) is entitled to a non-means-tested basic grant. Depending on their parents' income, students may be able to claim a supplementary grant in addition to the basic grant. The size of the basic grant and the supplementary grant depends on the type of education (tertiary education or adult/vocational education) and on whether or not the student is living away from home.

Students may also take out an interest-bearing loan, subject to a ceiling. Since 1 January 1995, student loans have no longer been related to parental income.

Some students may qualify for a single parent allowance or an allowance for their partner. These allowances are paid in addition to the basic grant and are not dependent on parental income.

All students in receipt of financial aid are entitled to a public transport pass giving unrestricted free travel on public transport throughout the Netherlands. Students can choose between a week-day pass and a weekend pass. The week-day pass entitles them to unrestricted travel during the week and reduced-rate travel (40-50% off) at the weekend, while the weekend pass allows free travel at the weekend and cheap travel during the week.

Students aged 30 or over do not forfeit their entitlement to financial assistance as long as they are still following without interruption the same course of study they were following when they turned 30. Tertiary education institutions have been given special funds with which to make financial provision for students whose progress has been delayed due to circumstances beyond their control or exceptional personal circumstances (course completion funds).

a) students who enrolled before 1 September 1996: **progress-related grant**

Students have to obtain a minimum number of credits each academic year, namely 50% of the standard study load for that year. If they fail to do so, their grant for that year will be converted into an interest-bearing loan. If, however, during the full duration of the course plus one year, they succeed in obtaining the full number of credits for the whole course, this step can be reversed. This type of grant is known as a progress-related grant.

There is also a limit to the length of time for which a student can claim financial assistance in tertiary education. The maximum period for assistance in the form of a non-repayable grant is equivalent to the official course duration plus

one year's grace. After this period, students are entitled to a maximum of two years' assistance in the form of an interest-bearing loan, provided they have not exceeded the maximum period of enrolment.

b) students who enrolled after 1 September 1996: **performance-related grant**

A new type of grant, known as a performance-related grant, was introduced on 1 September 1996 for students entering tertiary education in that or subsequent years. Most tertiary education courses last 48 months. During this time all students are entitled to a non-means-tested basic grant and possibly a supplementary grant which is dependent on income. Students who need longer to complete their studies can then apply for an interest-bearing loan for a further 36 months.

The basic grant and supplementary grant are paid out in the form of a performance-related grant. This works on the principle of "loan then grant". The amount of the basic grant and supplementary grant are initially received as a loan, with the exception of the supplementary grant received in the first year which does not have to be repaid. Provided the student meets the performance criteria, the loan is converted into a grant and does not have to be repaid. These criteria are as follows. In the first year, students must obtain at least 50% of the available credits, i.e. 30 out of a possible total of 60. If the student meets these criteria, the loan awarded in the first year is permanently converted at the end of that year into a grant. The travelling allowance is part of the performance-related grant for students who received since 1 September 2000 for the first time a grant in tertiary education. In the second, third and fourth years the student is again awarded the basic grant and supplementary grant in the form of a loan, which is then converted into a grant if the student obtains a degree within ten years of starting his or her studies. After the fourth year, students will continue to be eligible for financial support for a further three years, but in the form of a loan only.

c) As of 1 September 2001, students from a member state of the European Economic Area studying in the Netherlands and following a course for which student finance is available, will be entitled to financial assistance under the Student Finance Act 2000. They will qualify for an allowance equivalent to the basic grant for students living at home, although not for a public transport pass.

### 6.B.3 Academic year

---

In tertiary education, the academic year begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year.

The length of tertiary education courses is defined in the Tertiary education and Research Act (WHW) in terms of the study load, which is expressed in credits. As a rule, the study load of a course is equal to 240 credits, i.e. 60 credits per year for a total of four years. The study load for engineering and science courses lasting five years is 300 credits. A credit is equivalent to 28 hours of study. The length and timing of lectures in tertiary education are not laid down by law but are set out by the administration of the institution in the teaching and examination regulations for that institution.

### 6.B.4 Courses

---

The universities can be categorised on the basis of the types of course they offer. There are 13 universities in all: six general universities offering courses in almost all sectors, except Engineering & Technology and Agriculture, and seven providing a more limited range of courses. These include the three technical universities and the agricultural university. The Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO) lists 117 university courses.

Within these courses, students are to some extent free to put together their own individual programmes of study through their choice of options and main subjects. Equally, students may – with the approval of the relevant examining board – put together their own degree course by selecting from the different units of study on offer.

There are both full-time and part-time courses. Dual courses combining learning and working were introduced on an experimental basis in 1998/99.

The universities have reduced the number of courses listed in the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO) to 117. Courses with a largely similar content have been grouped together under one heading, thereby increasing the transparency of the courses on offer.

The Open University of the Netherlands (OUNL) is a state establishment offering distance

learning courses at university level for people aged 18 and over ([www.ou.nl](http://www.ou.nl)). The tasks of the OUNL, as stated in the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), are to provide initial courses at university level in the form of distance education and contribute to innovation in higher education.

The OUNL was founded in 1984 to provide higher education courses for persons who were unable for various reasons to obtain a higher education qualification in the past (second chance education). Besides the headquarters in Heerlen, there are 18 study centres spread throughout the Netherlands, providing information, guidance and advice for students in relation to their studies. Although the OUNL is independent, it maintains contacts with other institutions of higher education.

The main objective of the OU is to make higher education accessible to adults who want a second chance. Its "openness" manifests itself in the following four ways:

- absence of any admission requirements relating to prior education;
- freedom as to place and time of study;
- freedom as to pace of study;
- freedom as to choice of courses: students can combine modules to make up their own programme of study.

The administration of each institution is responsible for the development of courses within the framework imposed by central government. The choices made with regard to the syllabus and examinations are set out in the teaching and examination regulations.

### 6.B.5 Assessment/qualifications

---

At the end of the first year of enrolment in the propaedeutic part, the university advises students as to whether they should continue with their course or switch to another. This advice may be binding. Students who have been told they cannot continue with their course cannot enrol for the same course again either as a regular student or an "extraneous" (external student). The advice must be founded on objective criteria based on the student's results; these criteria must be known to the student in advance. Due warning must be given so that the student in question has a chance to improve their results.

Every university course includes a propaedeutic part, which is followed by an examination (the

propaedeutic examination), and final ("doctoraal") examinations. A separate examining board is set up for each study programme to conduct the examinations and organise and coordinate the interim examinations. The faculty council draws up the teaching and examination regulations after consulting the relevant examining board and study programme committee. Students who pass the final examinations are awarded a certificate listing the different parts of the examination and, where appropriate, the professional qualification obtained.

Courses which are geared to specific occupations in particular must include practical preparation for professional practice. This applies to the courses for doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons, architects and pharmacists.

The institution grants the bachelor or master to students who have successfully completed a bachelor respectively master course in HBO. Those granted with this title are entitled to use it in combination with their name. The Dutch title can be used as well.

### 6.B.6 Teachers

---

For university lecturers, there are no specific requirements regarding previous training.

## 6.B.7 Statistics

## University students

Students enrolled at universities, including "extranei" (external students) and "auditoren" (auditors with the right to sit examinations) (x 1000)

	2001	2002
Total	173.6	175.6
Science	12.7	12.4
Engineering & Technology	25.9	25.5
Health	21.6	22.0
Economics	29.8	30.1
Law	25.4	24.8
Behaviour & Society	35.0	37.3
Language & Culture	23.3	23.7
	2001	2002
Intake of first-year university students (x 1000)	34.9	34.2
	2001	2002
University graduates (x 1000)	19.6	20.3

## Institutions and staff (universities)

	2000	2001
Number of institutions	12	12
Average roll (enrolled students gross x 1000)	13.5	14.0

	2000	2001
Number of staff in FTEs (x 1000)		
Total	40.0	38.6
- academic staff	21.2	20.4
- women as % of academic staff	27.7	30.6
Ratio of students to academic staff	7.6	8.3

## Open University

	2000	2001
Number of enrolled students (x 1000)	20,850	21,182
New OU students (x 1000)	8,828	9,087
Number of university degrees awarded	353	329

## Wageningen University (agricultural courses)

	2001	2002
Enrolled students incl. "extranei" (external students) and "auditoren" (auditors with the right to sit exams) (x 1000)	3.9	4.0
Intake of first-year students (x 1000)	0.8	1.0
Graduates (x 1000)	0.4	0.6

## Fees

Standard amounts in euros	2000	2001	2002
Higher education	1304	1329.58	1395.83

## 7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

### 7.1 Policy and legislative framework

On 1 January 1996, the Act on Vocational and Adult Education (*Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs*, WEB) was implemented in the Netherlands. This Act was the first one to bring together all types of secondary vocational education and adult education and aimed to strengthen and further integrate the system of initial and post-initial vocational education, apart from general education.

The formation of a small number of large regional training centres out of numerous smaller schools has had a huge impact on the educational system. Another major achievement of this Act was the implementation of a national qualification structure.

Adult education (corresponding to BVE and AVE in the diagram of the Dutch VET system) is geared to people over 18 whose goal it is to qualify for work and prepare for further training. Adults who are unemployed or wish to re-enter the labour market are primarily targeted. In general, adult education can be divided into three parts:

- 1) **the education which comes under the 1996 Adult and Vocational Education Act** (*Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs* – WEB) and is provided at the ROCs: basic adult education and general secondary education for adults. Participants in general secondary education for adults must have completed compulsory education to be admitted. Additional requirements may possibly be imposed, depending on the type of education. For basic adult education, there are no specific requirements.

Adult education has a separate qualification structure (*Kwalificatiestructuur Educatie* – KSE) distinguishing six levels:

- a) self-reliance level (*redzaamheidsniveau*)
- b) threshold level (*drempelniveau*)
- c) basic level (*basisniveau*)
- d) initial 1 level (*start-1-niveau*)

- e) initial 2 level (*start-2-niveau*)
- f) advanced level (*voortgezet niveau*)

In basic adult education courses are provided at the levels 1 – 3 aiming at:

- furthering self-reliance
- providing a broad basic education and social skills;
- Dutch as second language (NT2) at 5 different levels (not forming part of the qualification structure for education). An example of NT2 is the educational component of the (compulsory) integration programmes for newly arrived immigrants.

In general secondary adult education, courses are provided at the levels 4 – 6, through which participants can obtain a VMBO, HAVO or VWO qualification.

Transfer to vocational education (corresponding to the levels of the qualification structure for vocational education and training).

Different levels in adult education provide access to different training courses and qualification levels in vocational education. The 'threshold qualification' provides access to 'assistant training' (level 1). The 'basic qualification' provides access to 'basic trade practitioner training' (level 2). 'Initial 1' qualifications provide access to 'training for trade professionals' and 'middle-management professional training' (levels 3 and 4). The 'initial 2' qualifications provide access to HBO. The 'advanced qualification' provides access to university education.

#### 2) training for the unemployed

The training of unemployed adults, financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, does not have any national structure for recognition and examination. The focus is on recognition by the regional business community. The main purpose of the specific training (*specifieke scholing*), which comes under the Manpower Services Act (*Wet op de arbeidsvoorziening*) from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, is to strengthen the position of disadvantaged groups on the labour market.

3) **part-time vocational education and in-service training schemes.**

Internal training in enterprises is not organised in any consistent way. The learning routes are highly heterogeneous and recognised by enterprises (not nationally).

Quite a lot of private training providers are active in the market of continuing (vocational) training, of which 200 are formally recognised training institutes. They have the right to provide training programmes that fit the requirements of the national qualification structure and participants therefore can obtain a nationally recognised diploma.

The most significant forms of part-time vocational education subsidised by the government are part-time MBO and part-time HBO. The participants generally attend these alongside their work.

**7.2 Management/Organisations involved**

---

The following Ministries play a role in vocational and adult education at central government level:

- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for the total education system, including vocational education and adult education.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature management and Fisheries is responsible for education and training of the agricultural sector.
- The Ministry of Economic Affairs is involved in lifelong learning and employability initiatives.
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is responsible for the training of job seekers and unemployed, takes part in interdepartmental initiatives on lifelong learning and new provisions for the balance between work, care and free time, and is responsible for social inclusion and gender issues. A specific agency resorting under this Ministry is responsible for the management of the Equal and ESF 3 programmes.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science adopts a policy of decentralisation of responsibilities. The Ministry finances and controls the publicly funded institutions. Educational institutions are financed by means of block grant financing and are thus responsible for the overall management of the

institution including personnel policy. At regional/local level, these educational institutions or regional training centres are the main actors.

Municipalities are responsible for the management of the budget for and good quality provision of adult education.

In the Vocational and Adult Education Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsopleiding* – WEB), the involvement of social partners in a legal sense is not mentioned in a very explicit way. However, the Act mentions the various ways of formal communication and involvement of relevant actors at central, institutional level and at the level of the national bodies. The social partners are formally represented in the national vocational education bodies (in the board).

At **national level**, the Social Economic Council (*Sociaal Economische Raad* – SER) is the main advisory body of the Dutch government on national and international social and economic policy. Its position is anchored by law since 1950 when the Industrial Organisation Act came into force. In its advisory capacity the SER represents the interests of trade unions and industry. Being independent from the government and financed by industry, the SER may give advice, solicited or unsolicited, on all major social and economic affairs.

At **sectoral level**, social partners are represented in the board of Colo, the association of national vocational education bodies. Colo has a tripartite board consisting of representatives from employers, employees and the national vocational education bodies (laid down in the statutes of the association). See the diagram for the responsibilities of the various actors with regard to vocational education and training. Social partners are specifically responsible for defining and updating the occupational profiles, which form the basis of the qualification profiles.

At **regional level**, most regional training centres (ROC) have a representation of social partners in their supervisory board.

More and more, social partners are involved in or take initiatives at branch or local level by stimulating cooperation between education and training and trade and industry. The leading notion is to improve the relation between the demand and supply of labour force and skilled personnel.

**7.3 Funding**

---

While there has been a general retreat of the government in Dutch society as a whole, initial vocational training has virtually remained the

responsibility of central government. As a corollary, the government remains primarily responsible for adequately funding the IVT structures.

With regard to continuing vocational training for the employed, the private sector has the dominant role, although the government continues to take some responsibility, through financially stimulating training in enterprises. At the central government level, it is not only the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science which contributes to the funding of continuing training but also the departments of Agriculture (*Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Visserij*), of Economic Affairs (*Ministerie van Economische Zaken*) and of Welfare and Health (*Ministerie van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Cultuur*) for specific training areas.

While the private sector has a dominant role in the financing of continuing vocational training for employed people, there are numerous arrangements between the private and the public sector, leading to varying shades of mixed (private and public) involvement. This mixed involvement has led to a number of developments including the creation of training networks, special funds and mechanisms for monitoring training demand and supply. There are many examples of such co-operation in continuing vocational training between the private (employers and employees, labour unions and sectoral organisations, training providers etc.) and public (national and local authorities, providers, monitoring institutes etc.) sectors. The shared responsibility for training and the process of seeking consensus on any controversial issues between parties that have conflicting interests (such as employers and employees), is a typical feature of Dutch society.

## 7.4 Human resources

---

Persons with no teaching background can be appointed as teachers on the basis of professional competencies and skills acquired elsewhere.

## 7.5 Organisation

---

### 7.5.1 Types of training

---

Courses are offered at six levels, which, in most cases, correspond to the starting level for courses in the qualification structure for vocational education. The six levels are:

- KSE 1: self-reliance level
- KSE 2: threshold level
- KSE 3: basic level
- KSE 4: starting level 1
- KSE 5: starting level 2
- KSE 6: advanced level

Levels KSE 1, 2 and 3 offer training in basic skills:

- **KSE 1** Students are taught various elementary skills necessary in order to participate in society in a general sense. Competence at this level is a prerequisite for enrolment on other adult education courses at a higher level.
- **KSE 2** Equips students for secondary vocational education courses at assistant level, basic job-related training in the workplace and equivalent manpower training courses.
- **KSE 3** Equips students for secondary vocational education courses at basic vocational level and equivalent company training courses and manpower training courses.
- Levels **KSE 4, 5 and 6** prepare students for VAVO courses in one or more subjects: level 4 for VMBOO, level 5 for HAVO and level 6 for VWO.

Within the qualification structure for Dutch as a second language (**NT2**), there are five levels:

- **NT2 1** Students have a very elementary knowledge of Dutch, sufficient at the very most for referral to an NT2 course at level 2.
- **NT2 2** Students have a sufficient knowledge of Dutch to get by in Dutch society and cope with a vocational education course at assistant level or a manpower training course or training in the workplace at an equivalent level.
- **NT2 3** Students have a sufficient knowledge of Dutch to cope with a secondary

vocational education course at basic vocational or professional training level or a manpower training course or training in the workplace at an equivalent level.

- **NT2 4** Students have a sufficient knowledge of Dutch to take a secondary vocational education course at middle-management or specialist level or enrol at a university or college of higher professional education.
- **NT2 5** Students have a sufficient mastery of Dutch to be able to speak it fluently with very little trace of an accent.

The Minister may stipulate by ministerial order what falls into the category of courses providing a broad basic education and courses aimed at fostering self-reliance. No other provisions are laid down concerning the precise nature of the courses to be provided within these categories.

### 7.5.2 Access requirements

---

Adult education courses are open to adults only, that is to say persons aged 18 or over who are resident in the Netherlands. In view of the numbers of young people under the age of 18 taking VAVO courses it was decided in 1997 to waive the minimum age requirement for 16 and 17-year-olds for a transitional period. This period has since been extended to 31 December 2002.

### 7.5.3 Objectives of the programmes

---

Adult education is geared to furthering the personal development of adults and their participation in society by developing their knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes in a way that fits in with their needs, potential and experience and the needs of society. Where possible, it brings students up to the level required for admission to vocational education courses. Adult education does not include any form of higher education.

### 7.5.4 Main principles of the organisation of time and venue

---

Adult education and training is provided in daytime and evening classes

### 7.5.5 Curriculum

---

The administration of each institution draws up teaching and examination regulations for each course offered by the institution. The regulations set out the educational and developmental objectives, including the exit qualifications, the units of study that make up the course, the content and organisation of the course and the content and parts of the examination. VAVO courses and courses in Dutch as a second language (NT2) are not covered by the institution's own regulations; VAVO courses fall under the secondary education leaving examination regulations, while the attainment targets for Dutch as a second language are fixed by the Minister. VAVO courses encompass all the subjects referred to in the Secondary Education Act with the exception of physical education.

Nothing is laid down in the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) regarding teaching methods. It is up to the institutions themselves to organise courses and teaching in such a way that students are able to complete their courses successfully.

### 7.5.6 Quality assurance

---

The institution is responsible for the quality of the education.

### 7.6 Guidance/counselling services

---

The contract concluded between the institution and the student includes provisions on supervision, including regular advice to students as to whether they should continue with their course or switch to another one.

## 7.7 Statistics

## Students (adult education)

Number of students (x 1000)	2000/2001	2001/2002
Adult education (total)	160.5	155.7
Adult education qualification structure (KSE)		
Levels 1 to 3	44.0	45.8
Level 4	10.4	8.8
Level 5	9.6	7.5
Level 6	4.3	3.8
Dutch as a Second Language (NT2)		
Levels 1 and 2	66.1	61.0
Level 3	16.3	16.2
Level 4	6.8	8.5
Level 5	2.9	4.1
Integration courses	21.2	25.1
Adult population (age 18 to 64) (x 1000)	10,279.9	10,336.7