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WORKING IN EDUCATION 2008

The Netherlands



Working in Education¹

Concerns about the quality of education and of teachers

The Dutch public is concerned about the quality of education and of teachers. The Onderwijsmeter 2007, an annual monitoring survey reveals that the approval rating for educational services continues to fall. Primary and university education achieve the highest average scores, with a somewhat meagre 6.6 (out of ten). Secondary education scores just 5.8. The proportion of respondents that holds secondary education teachers in high esteem fell from 68% in 2006 to 55% in 2007. However, parents continue to have confidence in their own children's schools, with primary education receiving a score of 7.8 and secondary education a score of 7.4 (with the 'VMBO' junior vocational component scoring only slightly lower at 7.3). These figures have remained stable for several years. The impressions of the general public do not therefore chime with the actual situation experienced by parents. Nevertheless, public opinion remains worrying in terms of the recruitment potential of the education sector. After all, it is this perception of the profession which determines whether people will opt for a career in this sector, which is now facing an impending serious shortage of teachers. If the general perception is allowed to deteriorate further, this will raise an additional disincentive to the choice of education as a career.

More vacancies

The number of unfilled vacancies in the education sector is now rising. Competition from and among other sectors has greatly increased in recent years. The supply-demand imbalance is now acute. School management boards are experiencing far greater difficulty in filling their vacancies. The average number of vacancies in primary, secondary and senior vocational education (mbo) increased from 950 during the 2005/2006 school year to 1,600 in 2006/2007.

The number of vacancies per one hundred teachers is also increasing, and now stands at 0.3 in the primary sector and 0.5 in secondary education. Even so, these figures are still well below the critical value of 1.0. Should the figure rise above this critical level, there will certainly be an adverse effect on schools' ability to provide good education. The number

¹ Management summary of the report "Werken in het Onderwijs 2008" (November 2007). See www.minocw.nl

of vacancies in senior vocational and higher professional education also continues to rise rapidly, partly due to the buoyant general economy.

‘Combination jobs’

The primary sector currently has a surplus of teacher-assistants. Less than five per cent of qualified teacher-assistants are able to find a suitable job in the education sector within eighteen months. Most opt to continue their studies or to seek work in other sectors. It is now several years since vocational colleges introduced the teacher-assistant courses, but demand has since levelled out. The majority of active teacher-assistants are relatively young. As a result, turnover is limited. It would seem wise for the vocational colleges to restrict admission to the relevant courses accordingly. Alternatively, other course options should be developed to address the demand for ‘combination jobs’, the holders of which are concerned with various aspects of education and general welfare. This demand has grown rapidly with the emergence of ‘community schools’ which offer out-of-hours childcare services and extra-curricular activities.

Prospects for the years ahead

The supply side of the employment market is likely to become even more restricted in the years ahead, due to factors including population ageing and continued economic prosperity. Recruitment in the education sector will continue to focus on tertiary-level graduates, while competition within this segment is expected to increase significantly. The employment market will come under further pressure as the ‘baby boom’ generation approaches retirement age and the general economy continues to fare well.

Many staff in today’s education sector are ‘seniors’, i.e. 55 years of age and above. In fact, the proportion of seniors working in education is between one-and-a-half and two times higher than the national average. The turnover due to retirement will therefore be greater in the education sector than elsewhere, resulting in yet greater demand for new staff to fill the resulting vacancies. It seems likely that the recruitment problems will be greatest in the secondary sector. Assuming no downturn in the general economy, the vacancy rate for teachers could reach 6% by 2011.

In the primary sector, the problems caused by population ageing are less acute, at least for the time being. Until 2004, the teacher training courses were still attracting an unprecedented number of enrolments. As a result, with a strong economy, the vacancy rate for teachers in 2011 will remain below 3%. However, the shortage of school managers

could be somewhat more acute, reaching almost 5% by 2011. The labour market projections already took into account a slight decrease in the enrolment numbers for teaching training courses at primary level. Judging by the number of preliminary applications, the intake of students will indeed be lower this year. The introduction of a numeracy test is likely to further deter some potential students who are not confident of their abilities in this area. However, given that the test will also have a 'filtering effect', fewer students are likely to drop out of the course prematurely.

Employment as a teacher in primary or secondary education demands certain qualifications, whereupon the profession can largely be regarded as a 'pre-entry closed shop'. This applies to a somewhat lesser extent to the vocational and professional education sectors, but here too population ageing and the general economy are already having an adverse effect on staffing levels. The demand for replacements will therefore continue to rise, and a severe shortage may develop if economic growth remains high.

Academics in education

In the primary sector, two per cent of teachers hold a university degree (in addition to the required teacher's diploma). In secondary education, the proportion of university graduates is just under 25%, and in senior secondary vocational education it is approximately 15%. Of all students graduating from Dutch universities in 2005, some 17% went on to take up employment in the education sector (at all levels, including postgraduate readerships in universities). This figure is actually double the figure achieved among those graduating in 1999, of whom just 8% had gone into teaching by 2001 (i.e. within eighteen months).

Performance appraisal interviews

Although almost all (97%) educational institutes hold some form of regular job appraisal interviews with their teaching staff, there are several aspects of the profession which receive little or no attention during such interviews. Remarkably few discuss 'remuneration', with agreements in this regard being made in only 8% of cases. This is due to the fact that over half of the current teacher population have now reached the highest tier of their salary scale, while others assume that they will receive the 'traditional' annual increment within their existing scale. Few teachers are 'promoted' into a higher scale.

It is relatively common for school managers to observe actual lessons and introduce their findings as an element of the appraisal interview. This practice informs 78% of interviews in the primary sector, 63% in the secondary sector but only 37% in senior secondary vocational education.

Students' (examination) results play a more prominent role in appraisals in secondary education than in the other sectors. Here, 38% of school managers state that they explicitly include results in the interviews. This figure is conspicuously higher than those for the primary sector (17%) and senior secondary vocational education (24%).

Personnel policy and results information in secondary information

Results of the central (national) examinations have long been used to compare the performance of secondary schools. However, it is now possible for these figures to be used to compare performance within one and the same school. For the past year, the CFI website has presented each school's average examination results broken down by subject. Over 70% of schools report that they now use this information to assess the performance of departments and individual teachers. The most advanced way in which the information is used is the 'internal comparison by subject', whereby schools benchmark their own departments' performance against the national average for the subject concerned, taking note of the deviation between their results and the national average. The deviations within each subject provide an indication of the school's educational performance (at the level of the age group taking the examinations) and may therefore suggest avenues for improvement.

Training

The budget available for 'on the job' training is often underutilized. Training of teachers and other staff in the education sector is not yet seen as a matter of course. It is the employers who administer the budget; staff themselves state that they would appreciate more training opportunities than currently available. The various Collective Labour Agreements for the education sector include target figures for the proportion of working hours to be devoted to training, but these targets are not being met.

This underinvestment in training is a matter of concern and is likely to stand in the way of any further professionalization. If responsibility for administering the funds is organized differently, it may be possible to make better use of the existing training opportunities. Specific training funds or 'personal budgets' seem worthy of consideration in this context.

Organization and expansion of scale

An expansion of scale has taken place within the education sector in recent decades. The process was first seen in the vocational and higher professional education sectors in the 1980s and 1990s, and later in the primary and secondary sectors. More recently, however, some have questioned the wisdom of this development, and particularly the practice of

merging several schools or colleges to form 'mega-institutes'. The expansion of scale has increasingly been associated with excess bureaucracy. Political and public opinion has called for a return to 'human proportions'.

Facts about scale expansion

It is important to distinguish between two types of 'scale': that of the administrative apparatus and that of the school unit itself. In senior secondary vocational education, the administrative scale has been stable for several years. In 2006, for example, each board of management was responsible for an average of 9,300 students and 640 members of staff. Similarly, the size of the colleges themselves has remained stable, with an average of 716 students and 50 staff members. However, the primary and secondary education sectors have seen a process of 'administrative densification', often as the result of mergers. During the four-year period to 2006, the average number of students for which each secondary school board of management was responsible increased from 2,280 to 2,550, and the average number of staff from 200 to 240. During the same period, the average number of primary school pupils per management board increased from 890 to 1,170, and the average number of staff in this sector from 70 to over 90.

In terms of the physical size of schools falling under a board, the growth seen in the secondary sector has not affected the primary sector. During the relevant four-year period, the average size of a secondary school increased substantially, from 680 students and 120 staff in 2002 to 740 students and 130 staff in 2006. In the primary sector, management boards have been successful in maintaining a smaller scale within schools, with the average school size remaining a constant 210 pupils and 17 staff.

Administrative expansion of scale: pros and cons

In terms of the organization of the educational process and the perception of 'mass production' on the part of students and teachers, the physical size of the school is far more relevant than that of the board or administrative apparatus. However, preferences with regard to school size vary from one person to the next. Parents generally state that they wish their children to attend a relatively small-scale school. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find that the parents of students attending large (or larger) schools are generally more positive in their assessment of "their" schools.

An administrative expansion of scale can have certain advantages, but will fail to achieve its aim if education itself can no longer be organized on a small scale, if staff feel that they are

not being taken seriously, and if pupils must contend with the anonymity of the impersonal 'mass production' setting.

Managers in education

A study conducted by the Organization for Strategic Employment Market Research reveals that the education sector has a significantly lower proportion of managers (8%) than the private sector (11%). This is because education has traditionally had a reasonably level organizational structure. The number of managers in primary, secondary and senior secondary vocational education has fallen from 16,100 in 2002 to 15,300 in 2006, largely due to the aforementioned mergers. The number of managers expressed as a proportion of the total workforce in these sectors has also fallen. The decrease is particularly marked in the primary sector: from 9.2% in 2002 to 8.4% in 2006, a fall of almost one percentage point. However, there is a marked trend towards stratification, i.e. more levels of management: there are now boards of management, school managers (principals), department heads, team leaders and coordinators. In order to provide a better understanding of the way in which management functions are developing, the published statistics for the primary sector are now based on a modified management structure. The Ministry of Education intends to adopt a similar structure in its reports on secondary and senior secondary vocational education. In the secondary sector, we now see an increasing number of teachers who spend little or no time actually teaching in the classroom (i.e. fewer than five hours per week, assuming a full-time appointment). In 1998, there were 800 staff in this category; by 2005 the number exceeded 2,000.

Terms and conditions of employment

Over the past decade, the terms and conditions of employment have become a matter for the education sector and individual schools, with far less input from the Ministry of Education. The ministry now intends to implement just one more Collective Labour Agreement which will apply solely to the primary sector. Thereafter, all aspects will be the responsibility of the sector itself.

Salaries

The development of standard (contract) salaries within the various education sectors stand up to comparison with those in the private sector. Indeed, salaries in the private sector form a point of reference for labour costs in the public sector, including education. During the early years of this decade, additional investments were made as per the recommendations

of the Van Rijn Commission. The annual bonus was increased and given a more permanent character, whereby teachers' salaries rose more rapidly in 2002 and 2003 than those in the private sector.

Collective Labour Agreements

The current Collective Labour Agreements for staff in primary and secondary education are due to expire shortly. Negotiations for a new agreement for the primary sector have already begun, and the relevant staff organizations have made their wishes known. In summary, they are asking for a 3% increase in salary in 2007, a reduction in the number of salary scale increments for teachers and school managers (from 18 to 12), increases of the maximum salary within each scale (by € 200), and budget for more teacher to be placed in Scale LB of primary education and Scale LC of special education.

Negotiations with the higher professional education sector have now resulted in an outline agreement, whereby (contract) salaries will rise by 5.6% over three years, and a full 'thirteenth month' bonus will be payable in 2009 and beyond. Together, these measures represent a salary increase of 11.9% over three years. Agreements have also been made regarding the 'employment and employability guarantee', whereby the social partners have opted to make employer and employee jointly responsible for ensuring that staff can be offered adequate work and income, even if this entails duties other than teaching itself. The emphasis is therefore on incentives and mobilization, rather than on the payment of benefits and 'retainers'. The current arrangements for benefit payments are to be discontinued, being replaced by a protocol addressing the employment and employability guarantee.

Satisfaction with salaries

At present, teachers and other staff, particularly in the primary and secondary sectors, cannot be said to be particularly satisfied with their remuneration levels. Indeed, some are (extremely) dissatisfied. They complain that there are too few opportunities for career advancement leading to higher remuneration. A higher salary is therefore at the top of the 'wish list' of education staff, with opportunities to take early retirement in second place.

Function and salary differentiation

In the secondary education sector, approximately two thirds of staff now fall within Scale LB (pro rata according to actual hours of attendance). The proportion of staff in Scale LB has fallen only very slightly over the last five years. The number of staff falling within Scale LC has increased by 3% over the same period, reaching 16.8% in 2006. The proportion of staff

in Scale LD fell to 17.8%; the vast majority of staff in this scale are senior teachers with a specialist teaching qualification. The LD scale is rarely applied within the junior vocational secondary school staff population.

Compared to other countries, the Dutch education sector applies salary differentiation to only a very limited degree. The measures elsewhere are generally labour-market related (e.g. as a recruitment incentive for teachers of specific subjects or in specific regions), or take the form of performance-related bonuses. Research in the United States and Israel reveals that students' results improved significantly following the introduction of performance-related bonuses for teachers. We can therefore conclude that salary differentiation can be beneficial if it is directly linked to certain clearly defined objectives and appraisal criteria.

Partial employment incapacity

The new Wet Werk en Inkomen naar Arbeidsvermogen (Work Capacity and Income Act; WIA) came into effect on 1 January 2006. This legislation establishes a direct link between a person's physical ability to work and legal right to incapacity benefits. In practice, where a person's incapacity is adjudged to be less than 35 per cent (i.e. less than 35% lower than that of an able-bodied person practising the same profession), the right to incapacity benefits lapses. However, the social partners are able to make additional arrangements for such persons within the Collective Labour Agreements.

National statistics for 2006 reveal that over half of all staff with incapacity below the 35% level no longer had an employment relationship with their previous employers; two thirds had seen their contracts terminated. Specific figures for the education sector are not yet known. However, the arrangements made within the Collective Labour Agreement for those employees with an incapacity level of under 35% have now been published. The agreement for the primary and secondary sectors for 2005/2007 states that employers must retain such staff, unless doing so will result in significant financial difficulties. The agreement also provides for financial compensation if the staff member concerned is offered alternative employment at a lower salary.

The Collective Labour Agreement for the higher professional education sector (2006/2007) states that staff with under 35% incapacity cannot be automatically dismissed. The agreements for the senior secondary vocational and university sectors do not contain any specific provisions addressing this group.

Encouragement of Employment Participation among Seniors (BAPO)

A specific arrangement, known as BAPO, exists whereby senior teachers (those aged 55 and above) are permitted to reduce their working hours by between 10% and 20%. Those doing so have been found to have a lower rate of absenteeism (through illness). However, research reveals that these staff had a lower rate of absenteeism even before taking advantage of the special arrangement. Accordingly, we may conclude that the BAPO concession does not have a causative effect and does not in itself serve to reduce absenteeism.

Fact sheet

Vacancies²

	'01/'02	'02/'03	'03/'04	'04/'05	'05/'06	'06/'07
Primary education						
Managers/principals	250	320	210	150	150	180
Teachers	1.300	1.030	310	210	190	330
Support staff	390	240	100	60	70	120
Total	1.940	1.590	620	420	410	630
Secondary education						
Managers/principals	60	50	50	30	20	50
Teachers	500	370	250	180	150	320
Support staff	130	90	60	60	40	60
Total	690	510	360	270	210	430
Senior secondary vocational education						
Managers/principals	20	20	20	10	10	20
Teachers	110	190	110	150	130	270
Support staff	140	120	90	110	110	260
Total	270	330	220	270	250	550
Grand total	2.900	2430	1200	960	870	1610

² The average number of unfilled vacancies (expressed in FTE) during the relevant school year.

Intake of teacher training courses, by type

Level of education	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Primary education	7.500	8.550	8.800	8.000	8.400	9.700	9.400	8.700	8.550
Secondary education	4.650	4.750	4.900	4.500	5.500	6.100	5.600	5.250	5.500
University programs for secondary education	550	550	650	650	650	850	1.000	1.050	1.050

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

Output (number of graduates) of teacher training courses

Level of education	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Primary education	4.550	4.350	4.800	5.400	6.150	6.700	6.950	7.050	7.150
Secondary education	4.900	3.800	3.800	3.800	3.900	4.050	4.250	4.100	4.000
University programs for secondary education	450	350	400	500	400	400	500	600	600

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

Satisfaction of education staff with various aspects of their employment (% of respondents awarding a rating of 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied')

	Prim.	Sec.	Sen. Sec. Voc.	Higher prof.	Univ.	Private sector (reference)
General employment satisfaction	77	70	67	71	76	69
Organizational aspects	60	48	41	46	53	62
Primary benefits	41	39	49	51	55	50
Secondary benefits	61	58	65	62	71	52

Employees' assessment of terms
and conditions of employment,
by (public) sector

Proportion of respondents agreeing (completely or largely) with the statement:

	"This organization offers me ample opportunity for financial development"	"My salary adequately reflects my individual performance"	"My salary is appropriate to the level of my position"	"My salary is at the appropriate level compared to that offered by other organizations for which I could work"
Total public sector	15	17	32	29
Education and science ³	11	12	28	26
Primary	7	8	23	23
Secondary	10	10	24	22
Senior secondary vocational	11	10	33	31
Higher professional	16	20	41	37
University	15	22	39	30
Private sector	31	34	42	42

³ Including research institutes and university medical centres.



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