

The State of Education in the Netherlands

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2012/2013 EDUCATION REPORT

This is the Education
Report 2012/2013,
outlining what our
inspectors saw in the
past academic year at
schools and study
programmes.

Foreword

This is the Education Report for the 2012/2013 academic year, outlining what our inspectors saw in the past academic year at the schools and study programmes. These insights can help teachers, school directors and school boards to improve the education provided to pupils and students. The publication of this report continues a valuable and time-honoured tradition. For more than two hundred years, the 'state of' the country's education, as defined in the Constitution, has been described and presented to the members of the Parliament.

No report mark for education

How good is Dutch education? This question is put to me every year upon the publication of the Education Report. My answer is always: a lot is going well, and a lot could be better. What is the inspectorate's report mark for education? None, because you simply cannot capture the performance of such a multi-faceted and diverse system in a single mark.

Educational quality consists of so many aspects. Each school has its own profile in terms of traditions and denomination. The social area and region in which the school operates also has an important bearing on its character and results. The overriding concern is to ensure that all pupils and students learn what they need to learn, while also finding a sense of enjoyment in learning. To this end, it is vital that good and motivated teachers are in front of the class, that schools and institutions offer a safe environment and that there are adequate guarantees for education of sufficient or good quality – not just today, but also for the years ahead. The inspectorate attaches importance to many different aspects of quality. We assess the quality of education in order to provide schools with insights into their performance and to raise specific issues or concerns with them wherever necessary. That is what this Education Report is about. But our intention is not to pass judgement, so there is one thing you will not find here: a report mark for our Dutch education system as a whole.

What applies to the education system as a whole is equally true for individual schools and institutions: these too are far too diverse and complex to capture in a single report mark. A single report mark can be misleading and school directors and teachers are increasingly opposing what they refer to as top-down test based accountability. Fortunately, we now see that schools in various sectors are increasingly embracing a culture of accountability of their own accord. Many are now willing to provide insight into their educational aims and aspirations and the extent to which they are successful in achieving these. The inspectorate welcomes this development.

The state of education

Most pupils and students are satisfied with their school or study programme. Satisfaction ratings are rising in the higher education sector, particularly at the universities. Pupils and students are performing well compared with surrounding countries. A growing number of students in the secondary vocational education (MBO) sector are leaving school with a diploma and in the past years the final exam marks in secondary education have also been improving. One possible reason is that these pupils and students are working harder. But whatever the explanation, they are certainly demonstrating that improvement is possible.

Unfortunately, however, we notice a lack of motivation among a large number of pupils and students. To them, education is not a right but an obligation. Pupils enjoy going to school to meet each other, but are a lot less enthusiastic about many of the lessons they are required to attend. During my visits to schools, I am struck by their attitude and lack of enthusiasm during the classes and lectures. Do they actually derive any enjoyment from learning? Why are our pupils less motivated than their peers in other countries? Are the lessons too dull? Is the class schedule too overloaded? Do we challenge the pupils enough? We also know that if we can make our better pupils more motivated to perform to their true potential, this can deliver crucial benefits to our country and vastly improve the innovative capability of our society. It would be wonderful if more pupils and students simply enjoyed learning.

Fortunately, the inspectors also see many encouraging examples of inspiring and motivating lessons at many schools – lessons where the pupils are actively involved, inquisitive and keen to make interesting new connections and find answers. We cherish these examples, and draw inspiration from them. They also demonstrate that the contribution of pupils and students is crucial to achieve educational excellence. What must we do to encourage more active involvement in our education?

Another thing that strikes us is that schools and institutions appear to be applying stricter selection procedures in the first years of secondary and higher education. This is evident from the increased drop-out rate in higher education among first-year students. At universities, this higher drop-out rate is accompanied by an increased chance of graduation from the second study year, but we do not see this correlation in higher professional education (HBO). Another trend is that secondary education schools seem to be adopting a more cautious approach to place pupils in educational tracks. Pupils who switch to a different type of education in the first three years often switch to a lower rather than a higher type of education. For instance, more senior general secondary education (HAVO) pupils switch to the theoretical stream of pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO-t) than to pre-university education (VWO). At the same time, fewer pupils in the later years of secondary education repeat a year. The inspectorate notices that switching from one type of education to another and repeating a year can have far-reaching effects on pupils, both in a positive and a negative sense.

Opportunities for improvement

In the past years teachers at many schools and institutions have worked extremely hard to improve the education for pupils and students. And, in the vast majority of cases, their efforts have been successful. The number of weak and very weak primary schools, for instance, has fallen significantly in the past three years from 501 to 153. This improves the educational prospects of over sixty thousand pupils, and probably also gives them a better start in life. The spectacular improvement in special education is another noteworthy achievement. In the past years much has been renewed in that sector, including the educational offerings.

In the past years many schools and study programmes have invested in creating the right conditions to promote academic excellence and the acquisition of skills. Many have set up registration and quality care systems, giving staff more frequent and easy access to data on the progress of their pupils and students. This enables them to more quickly identify any problems or deterioration in results and deploy care and support facilities at an earlier stage.

Even so, these investments often fail to bring about visible beneficial effects in the class or group. In some classes the pupils hardly notice any improvement. By no means all teachers are able to harness the investments at school level to raise the quality of their day-to-day lessons. Improvements at school level are often not translated into improvements at classroom level. Sometimes, for instance, the registration of data seems to have become an end in itself, without delivering any clear benefits for the pupils and students. In the worst case, registration becomes a bureaucratic data-gathering exercise that merely serves to keep tabs on teachers and pupils and hold them accountable. As a result, the envisaged improvements for the pupil are nipped in the bud and fail to come to fruition at classroom level.

The beneficial effects of investments must not be restricted to the school organization, but should also be visible in the day-to-day teaching in the classroom. This applies in particular to the introduction of ‘Passend Onderwijs’ (a new policy in Netherlands for pupils with special needs). Ultimately, good education must be provided to all pupils in the classroom; this is where pupils receive the extra support they need. We see that a lot of effort is being devoted to the provision of individualized education within school alliances. At the same time, however, we notice

differences in the aims and aspirations of these alliances. There are also differences in the quality of care and support that teachers and schools or study programmes offer to pupils and students. Moreover, schools and study programmes are not all equally open and receptive to pupils or students who require extra care. Differences, in themselves, are natural; variety is the oxygen of our educational system. But this variety must be aimed at giving vulnerable pupils and students every opportunity to benefit from individualized education. They deserve good education.

Quality of school directors and school boards is a key factor

School directors support and coach teachers in their demanding task of giving good education. We see that teachers and lessons are better at schools with good school directors. The role of the school director is therefore crucial to achieve good education. Every day the inspectors see examples of good school directors, but they also see school directors whose performance is less satisfactory. Good school directors are able to get the teaching staff working collectively on innovations and quality improvements. Their primary priorities are to promote the development of pupils and students, successfully foster an atmosphere of mutual trust at their school or study programme, and work in good harmony with their board.

In no other country do schools and school boards enjoy so much autonomy as in the Netherlands. School boards and school directors take decisions independently about educational quality, including decisions about the teaching plan, methods, staff appointments, staff policy and finance. Boards with lots of ambition strive for good and satisfied pupils and teachers. In recent years many boards have obtained much more accurate insight into the educational quality of their schools and study programmes. For instance, a growing number of secondary vocational education (MBO) study programmes now monitor their internal quality. At the same time, boards are proving increasingly successful in keeping their institutions financially healthy and effectively deploying their resources for educational purposes.

Unfortunately, even students and pupils who currently receive good education cannot always count on this remaining the case in the future. Educational quality is not static. School directors and boards must constantly strive to make improvements and prevent a deterioration of standards: plans must be made and the effects evaluated, after which the improvements can be implemented and then embedded. At two thirds of the schools and study programmes, school directors and boards are not fully successful in maintaining this ongoing cycle of improvement. Getting teachers, school directors and boards to work in unison on the implementation and consolidation of improvements in day-to-day educational practice is evidently a hard thing to achieve. Investments should not lead to education that merely looks good on paper, but to tangible improvements in the classroom. We notice that the enthusiasm of teachers, pupils and students is considerably greater at those schools and study programmes that manage to achieve such improvements.

Concluding remarks

Education is important. Everybody agrees on that. Dutch education is definitely in good shape, but it could be so much better. Dutch pupils and students are entitled to the best education they can get – so that they are well-prepared for their future education, work and life.





Time and again, we are impressed by the drive and passion with which our education professionals pursue improvements. Their hard work would have even more effect if initiatives were mutually reinforcing and given sufficient time to come to full fruition. The key question with all these efforts is: what tangible improvements are achieved for the pupil or student? This is the question that will continue to guide the inspectorate's work.



Ms A.S. Roeters
Inspector-General of Education
Utrecht, 16 April 2014



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1

PUPILS AND STUDENTS AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE



Pupils and students and their educational performance

Good results and satisfied pupils and students

Dutch pupils and students are generally satisfied with their education. Their performance is good. However, their active classroom engagement, enjoyment in learning and motivation cannot be taken for granted and could be better. In the first years of secondary education more pupils switch to a lower rather than to a higher type of education and in the higher education sector more first-year students drop out than in previous years. At the same time, higher-year secondary education pupils and university students have a better chance of obtaining their diploma.

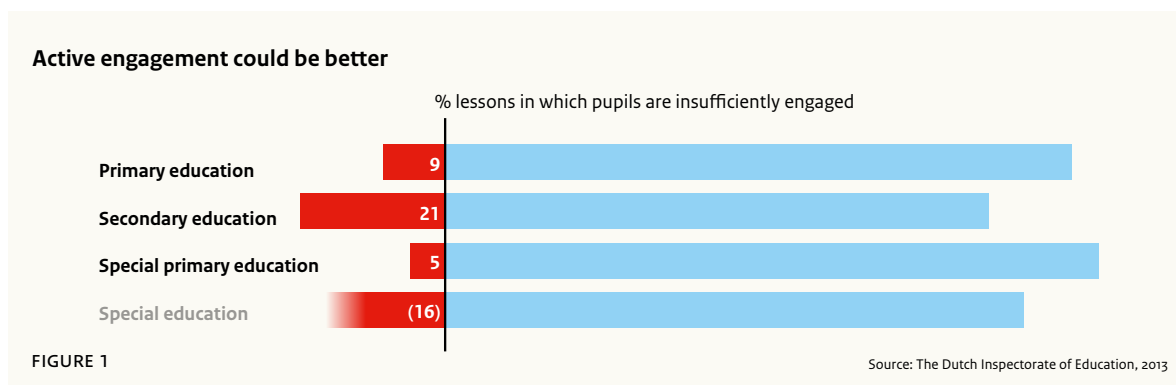
1.1 Motivation and satisfaction

Satisfied pupils and students • Over 3.7 million pupils and students attend some form of education in the Netherlands. They are generally satisfied with the education they receive and enjoy going to school. Secondary education pupils rated their school as satisfactory. Secondary vocational education (MBO) pupils are generally satisfied. Higher education students are the most satisfied group, and the satisfaction ratings are still rising in this sector. Compared to pupils from other countries that are high on the PISA rankings, Dutch pupils are also satisfied with their school.¹

Level of engagement varies greatly • Most teachers succeed in engaging their pupils in the classroom. During school visits, inspectors also notice that pupils are extremely motivated and involved with some lessons, but hardly or not at all with others. Figure 1 shows the percentage of lessons where the inspector considered the level of pupil engagement to be unsatisfactory. This concerns a small percentage (5% to 9%) of the lessons in (special) primary education and a somewhat higher percentage (16% to 21%) in special secondary education and secondary education.

Student motivation and enjoyment below par • Despite the high satisfaction ratings, pupils and students

¹ OECD (2013). PISA 2012 Results: Ready to Learn: Students' Engagement, Drive and Self-Beliefs. Paris: OECD.



are not always motivated. The scores of Dutch pupils for both intrinsic motivation (interest/enjoyment in the subject matter) and instrumental motivation (learning for a specific objective) are lower than in other countries. Pupils say they sometimes do not understand the reason for or personal relevance of a certain task or assignment. Strikingly, only 40% of secondary education pupils are satisfied with the extent to which teachers motivate them.²

Little pleasure in reading and mathematics • Earlier the inspectorate reported on the lack of enjoyment in reading and arithmetic in primary education. International comparative research shows that Dutch primary school pupils derive less pleasure from reading than their peers in other countries and are less motivated to read.³ The recent PISA results show a similar picture for Dutch fifteen-year-olds for motivation for mathematics. Only a fifth of the pupils look forward to their next mathematics lesson and only 12% of the pupils enjoy reading about mathematics (Figure 2). Only 58% of Dutch pupils realize that mathematics can be useful for their subsequent career, while the OECD average is 75%.

Challenges and expectations for pupils • Pupils and students need sufficient challenges to remain motivated. For instance, only one third of Dutch secondary school pupils say they continue working on a task until the result is perfect. In previous Education Reports, the inspectorate already mentioned that teachers sometimes have low expectations of their pupils and that good pupils and students tend to underachieve in the Netherlands. Many initiatives are currently under way to get the best out of the better pupils. The inspectorate also sees teachers taking good initiatives to motivate

pupils, particularly in the field of ICT applications and activating working methods.

1.2 Educational performance

Developments in performance

Primary pupil performance slightly lower • Compared to 2012, the performance of primary pupils was at the same or slightly lower level for most subjects. Their reading comprehension and vocabulary remained at the same level, while their spelling and math was slightly weaker. The weaker performance for math concerned all aspects of the subject. This emerged from the Annual Evaluation of the Educational Level (Jaarlijks Peilingsonderzoek van het Onderwijsniveau).⁴ However, in 2013 the pupils' performance for all subjects was still at a higher level than five years earlier. The pupils' results in the Final Test in Primary Education (Eindtoets Basisonderwijs) were also slightly lower than in 2012 (falling half a point to 535). Particularly schools where many pupils did the 'Niveau' version of the Final Test (i.e. the version for pupils with lower reading and math skills) showed lower average scores.

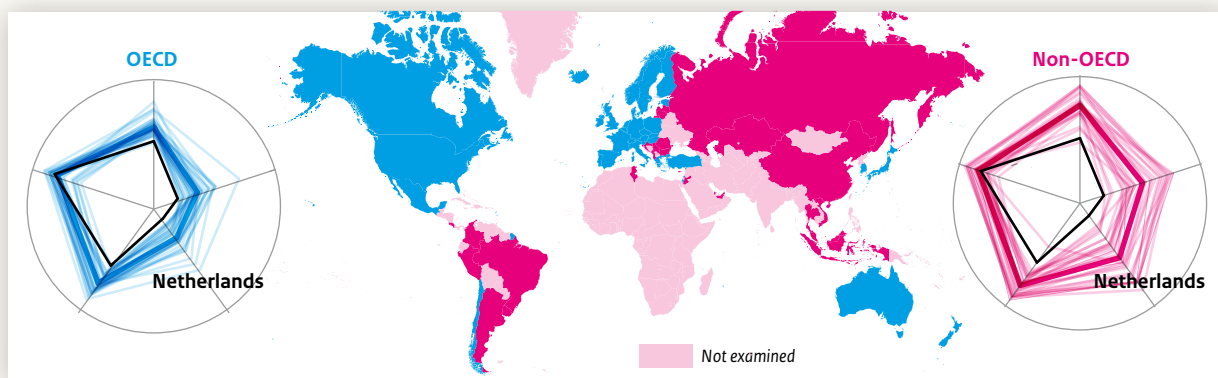
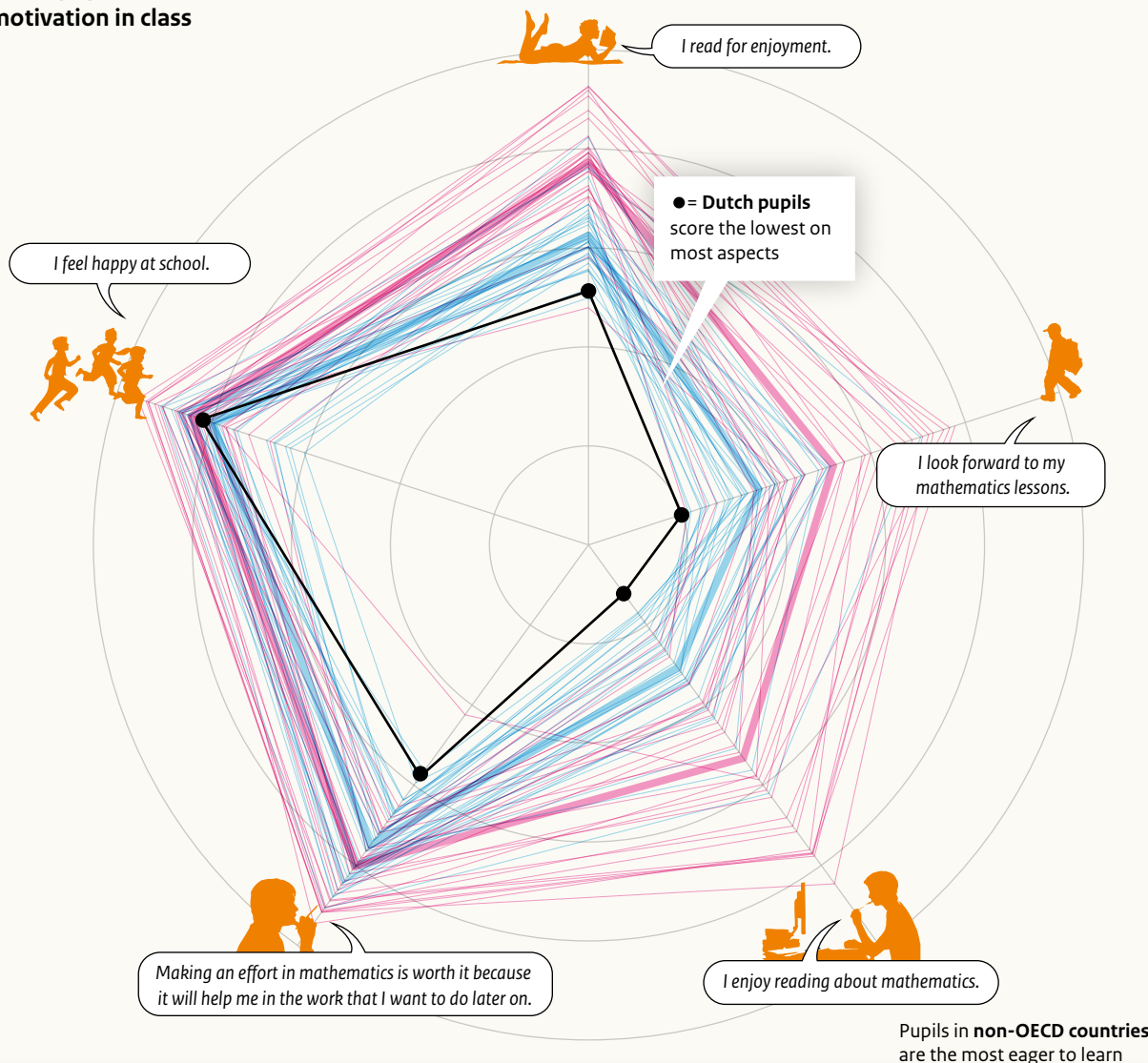
Higher final exam marks • Secondary pupils performed better in their final exams in 2012 and 2013 than in previous years. In 2013 senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO) pupils achieved higher marks. At the same time, the difference between the marks for the school exam and the national exam decreased. This difference has been a long-standing source of concern. In the basic vocational programmes of pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) and senior general secondary education (HAVO), the marks for the national exam were actually higher than for the school exam. Only a small proportion (10%)

² LAKS (2012). Laksmonitor 2012. Het tevredenheidsonderzoek onder leerlingen in het voortgezet onderwijs. Utrecht: LAKS.

³ Netten, A., Droop, M., Verhoeven, L., Meeuwissen, M.R.M., Drent, M., & Punter, R.A. (2012). Trends in leerprestaties in lezen, rekenen en natuurkundeonderwijs. PIRLS TIMSS 2011. Nijmegen: Radboud University.

⁴ Cito (2014, not yet published). Peiling van de rekentaalvaardigheid en taalvaardigheid in jaargroep 8 en jaargroep 4 in 2012. Jaarlijks Peilingsonderzoek naar het Onderwijsniveau (JPON). Arnhem: Cito.

Dutch pupils lack motivation in class



Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland

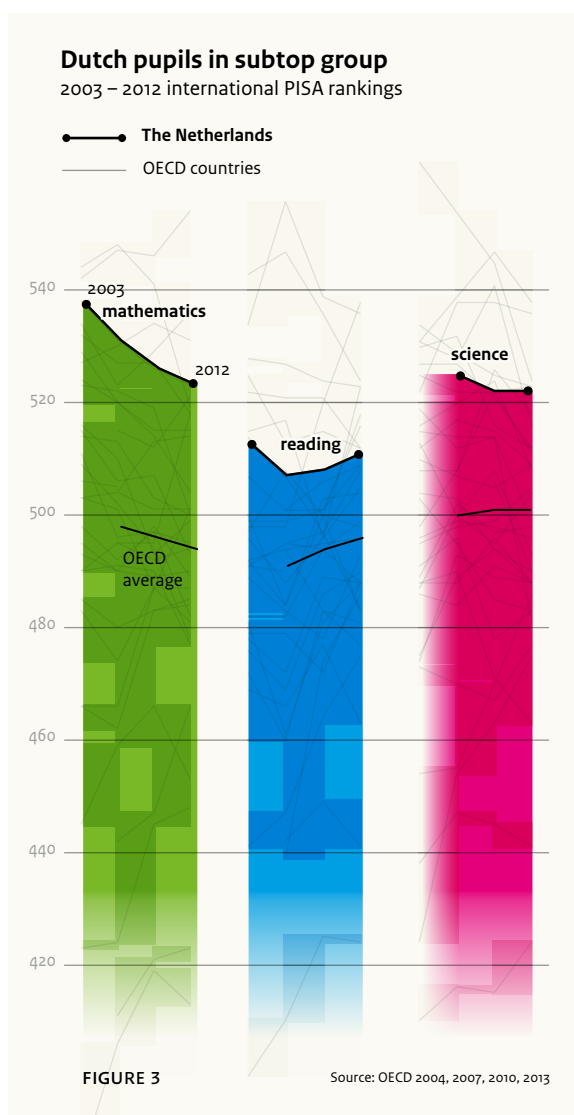
Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Hong Kong-China, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Macao-China, Malaysia, Montenegro, Peru, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Shanghai-China, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam

FIGURE 2

Source: OECD, 2009, 2013



Social benefits • Alongside cognitive educational results, the inspectorate also attaches importance to the social benefits of education. Schools teach pupils social competencies: the knowledge and skills to interact in a pleasant and constructive manner with others and to contribute towards our democracy and society, as well as competencies for personal development and the acquisition of general knowledge. Pupils who have sufficient social competencies contribute to a positive and safe social climate in schools and institutions. Social competencies are also an important condition for education and learning.



of the mixed/theoretical departments still shows a difference of more than half a point. The higher exam marks are related to the changed pass/fail criteria, but the exact extent of the influence of these new criteria is unknown. Nor is it known whether the new criteria mainly spurred the pupils or the schools to make an extra effort. The inspectorate does see that schools are devoting more attention than before to the preparation for the national exam.

Results in international perspective

Stable performance of fifteen-year-olds • Dutch fifteen-year-olds perform well above the OECD average for math, reading and science (Figure 3). The Netherlands thus occupies a place in the subtop, just below the top performers. This is the outcome of the international PISA study. There is no clear upward or downward trend compared to earlier PISA measurements in reading and science. Mathematical skills declined, mainly due to a poorer performance among girls.

Few pupils at a high level • The inspectorate reported in the 2011/2012 Education Report that a relatively low percentage of primary pupils are proficient at the highest achievement level. The recent PISA study into the performance of fifteen-year-old pupils shows that the same applies to secondary education. Despite the high PISA scores, the Netherlands has relatively few high achievers. Dutch education underperforms the countries around us in this respect.

Social benefits

Where we stand • Dutch research data show, on the one hand, that pupils generally have good social skills at the end of group 8 (age 12).⁵ On the other hand, the civic competencies, including citizenship knowledge, of primary and secondary pupils leave something to be desired.⁶ In their own view, lower-year secondary pupils

⁵ Kuhlemeier, H. Boxtel, H. van, & Til, A. van (2012). Balans van de sociale opbrengsten in het basisonderwijs. Eerste meting voorjaar 2011. Arnhem: Cito.

⁶ Maslowski, R., Werf, M.P.C. van der, Oonk, G.H., Naayer, H.M., & Isac, M.M. (2012). Burgerschapscompetenties van leerlingen in de

“Differentiation not only makes learning more fun, but also helps to motivate pupils.”

(VWO pupils)

think they have sufficient civic competencies. They are positive about their prosocial skills and think they are capable of reflecting and forming an opinion on social issues. Girls score higher on most aspects than boys. Pupils from migrant groups score higher than native Dutch pupils, except on citizenship knowledge. Pupils in pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) score lower on citizenship competencies and knowledge than primary pupils or senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO) pupils.

Education in social/civic competencies still too ad hoc • Most primary and secondary schools comply with the statutory requirements regarding the provision of education in social/civic competencies. These are defined in the core objectives and the mission to promote active citizenship and social integration. Citizenship lessons at primary schools focus largely on social skills, polite and decent behaviour, and basic values. Many secondary schools can only give limited insight into the content of their social/civic education programme and the extent to which the subjects given are tailored to the grades. Earlier the inspectorate already noted that schools do devote attention to citizenship issues, but that their approach to citizenship education and related areas of learning is often too ad hoc and not aimed at concrete learning objectives. The same applies more specifically to the aspect of ‘attention for diversity in society’. The inspectorate found that schools do deal with this aspect, with a particular focus on religious, gender and cultural or ethnic diversity, but again, the approach is too ad hoc and there is no consistency between the approach to and frequency of the education.

1.3 Switches and school careers

Strongly segmented system • The Dutch educational system consists of various types of education and educational sectors. It is more strongly segmented than in most other countries. There are various levels of secondary education and a relatively large number of special needs schools. As a consequence, pupils tend to switch more between different types or sectors of education than in other countries. These are important steps in their school career that partly determine their future position in society.⁷

Vulnerable groups of pupils and students • Pupils and students belonging to a vulnerable group generally have a less smooth school career than other pupils. Vulnerable pupils and students switch more often between schools and levels of education, partly because this is how the Dutch educational system is organized and partly out of personal choice. As each switch carries a risk for a pupil or student, more switches means more chances of problems. What’s more, some schools and study programmes appear to create barriers for at-risk pupils in order to regulate the intake of such pupils.

Primary school advice: a key factor in transition from primary to secondary education • After completing their primary education, the majority of pupils end up in the type of secondary education that was advised by their primary school teachers (Figure 4a). During their first years of secondary education, a certain proportion of these pupils decide to switch up or down a level. In the third year of secondary education, three quarters of the pupils are still in the same type of education that was recommended by their primary school (excluding pupils who repeated a year).

More downward than upward switches in first years of secondary education • Starting from 2012 we have for the first time seen a larger number of pupils switching down rather than up in their first years of secondary education. This breaks the former trend. In 2013 about 15% of pupils were in a lower type of education than recommended by the primary school, while 10% were in a higher type of education (Figure 5). In the years before 2012, by contrast, more pupils switched upward than downward. The changes relate with the heterogeneity of the school (Figure 4b). Another striking result is that the number of heterogeneous transitional years has decreased in the past years, by about two percentage points per year.

onderbouw van het voortgezet onderwijs: Eindrapport van de International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) in Nederland. Groningen: GION.

⁷ Leest, B., Fettleaer, D., Eck, E. van, Verbeek, F., Vegt, A.L. van der, & Jongeneel, M. (2013). *Selectiemechanismen in het onderwijs*. Nijmegen: ITS; Amsterdam: Kohnstamm Instituut; Utrecht: Oberon.

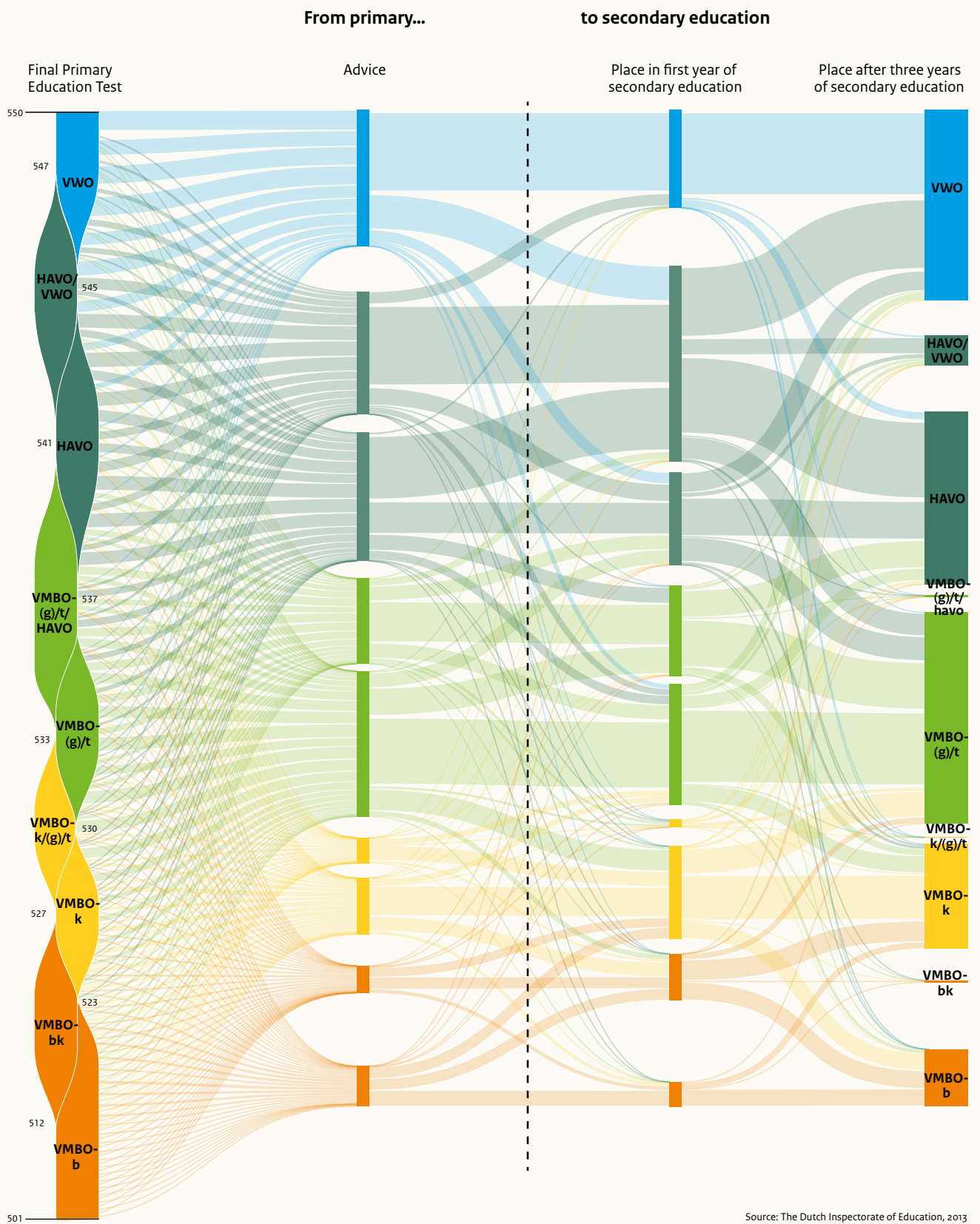
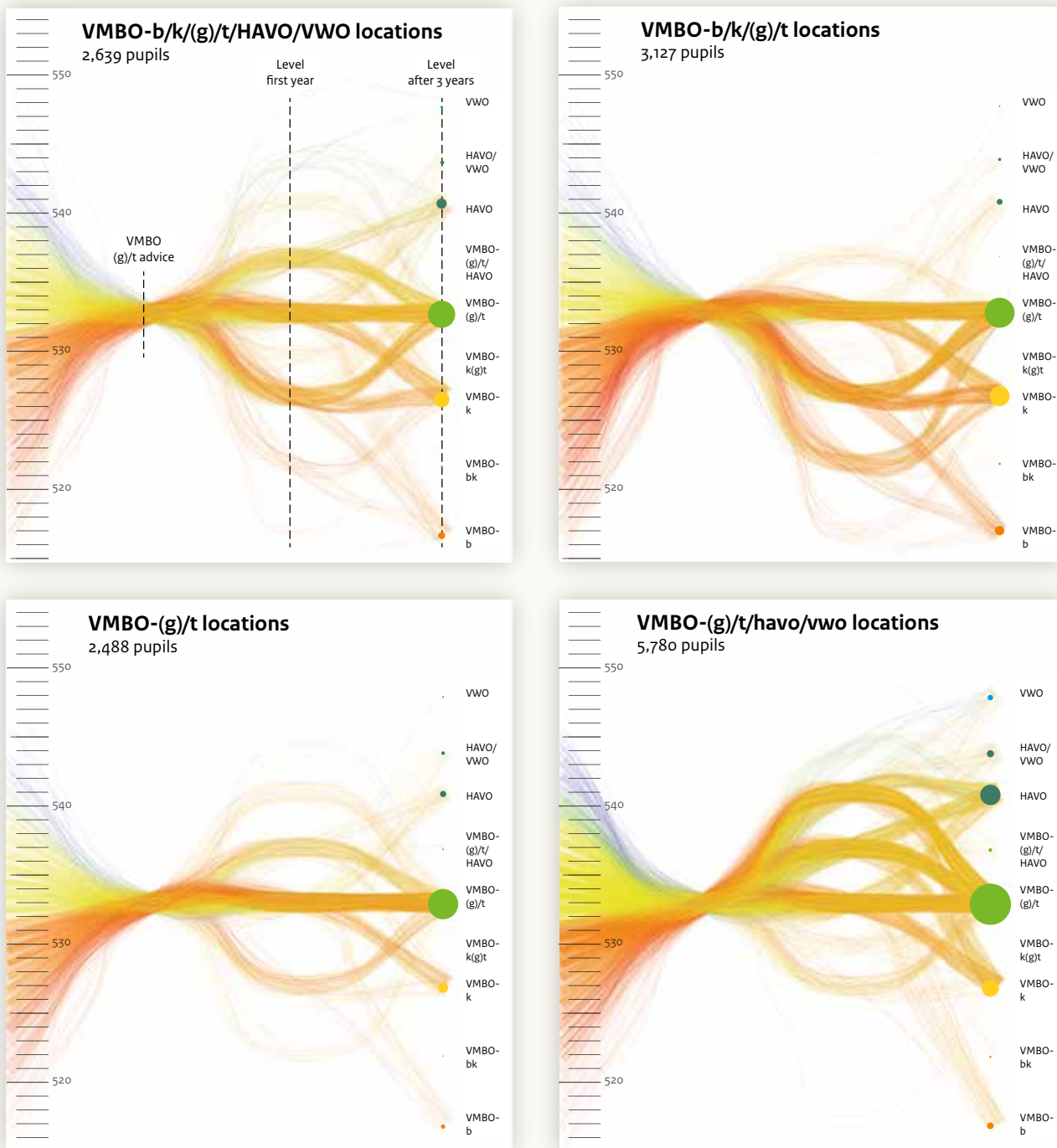


FIGURE 4A

Source: The Dutch Inspectorate of Education, 2013

Pupils with VMBO mixed/theoretical advice

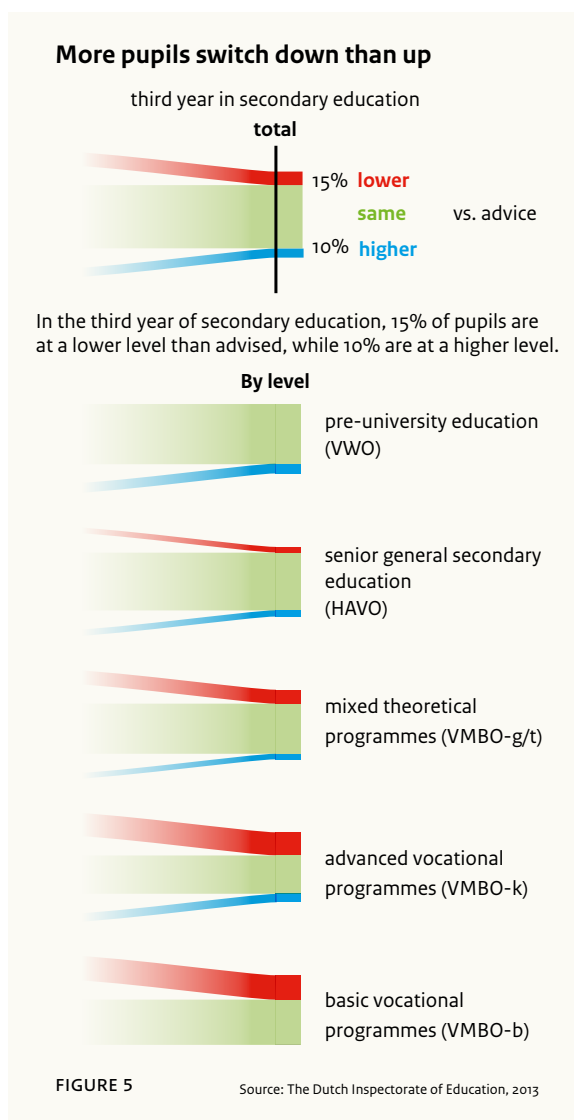


FIGUUR 4B

VWO = pre-university education
 HAVO = senior general secondary education
 VMBO = pre-secondary vocational education

VMBO-b = VMBO basic vocational programmes
 VMBO-k = VMBO advanced vocational programmes
 VMBO-(g)/t = VMBO mixed/theoretical programmes

Source: The Dutch Inspectorate of Education, 2013



Many downward switches in VMBO • The number of upward and downward switches varies in the lower years of secondary education, depending on the type of education. Figure 4 shows that HAVO and VWO pupils switch less often than VMBO pupils. Over a third of pupils in VMBO basic vocational programmes started in a higher type of education (Figure 5). Many of these pupils were advised by their school to opt for a higher level of education than was to be expected on the basis of their test scores at the end of primary school ('Eindtoets Basisonderwijs'). The largest number of upward switches occurred in the VWO and the VMBO advanced vocational programmes.

Advice and performance • Just over half of the primary pupils receive advice from their primary school that corresponds with the results of the test scores and are

still in the expected level of education in their third year of secondary education. Some pupils receive a lower or higher advice than would be expected on the basis of their test scores. These pupils are usually at the level advised by their primary school in their third year of secondary education. A very small group of pupils (1%) who receive a higher advice than expected on the basis of their test scores switch to an even higher level during their secondary education. A relatively large number of these pupils are girls with low-educated parents of ethnic origin. There is also a small group of pupils (0.7%) who received a lower advice and subsequently switched to an even lower level. These are mainly ethnic boys with low-educated parents.

Fewer primary pupils repeat a year • The number of primary pupils who repeat a year decreases. At the start of the 2012/2013 year, fewer primary pupils in group 8 had repeated a year than in earlier years. In total, about 17.5% of pupils repeat a year, usually in the lower years. Primary schools that annually evaluate their pupils' performance and use a comprehensive system of method-independent tests have fewer pupils who repeated a year. At the same time, almost 6.5% of pupils complete primary school in less than eight years. These are the pupils who go to secondary education well before the age of twelve – and their number is growing.

Secondary education: fewer pupils repeat a year and switch down in higher years • The number of pupils repeating a year in the higher years of secondary education decreased in 2012/2013. In addition, fewer pupils switched down to lower types of education. This too is a striking break in the trend: for years the number of pupils repeating a year and switching down rose steadily. Now, more secondary pupils obtain their diploma, and do so more quickly.

More focus on pupil's progress after special education • Special education schools increasingly keep track of their pupils' progress after leaving the school. After one year, one in fourteen of the pupils has already left the first institution they went to after leaving the special education school. Most of them progress to special secondary education. In 2012 a substantial number (18%) progressed to mainstream secondary education. Special secondary education schools are also increasingly keeping track of their former pupils. Over a third of these pupils progress to secondary vocational education (MBO). In almost 80% of cases, the pupils' place of education is still known after one year. About one in six of pupils has moved to a new educational institution after one year.

“The first question our class asks when we get a new assignment is: ‘Will we get a mark for this?’ And if the answer is no, our motivation hits rock bottom.”

(VWO pupils)

More secondary vocational education diplomas •

The percentage of students leaving secondary vocational education with a diploma has increased in the past years. Last year the strongest increase in the number of school leavers with a diploma occurred in level 2. The percentage of premature school leavers decreased. Fewer drop-outs means a better performance for secondary vocational education. A strikingly large number of students obtain lower-level diplomas first before progressing to a higher level, a phenomenon called ‘diploma stacking’. Ultimately, a third of the MBO pupils with prior practical training obtain a diploma at level 2 or higher. A third of the pupils from VMBO basic programmes obtain a diploma at level 3 or higher. On the other hand, about 40% of pupils in a theoretical programme or HAVO fail to obtain a diploma at level 4.

Higher drop-out rate in first year of higher professional education • The performance of first-year higher professional education (HBO) students is deteriorating. About a fifth changes their study programme during the first year. A further 18% of the first-year students of 2011 have dropped out completely. These percentages have been rising for years. 42% of the students of the 2007 group obtained a diploma for their original study programme after five years. Another 3% obtained a diploma for a different study programme within the same institution. One positive development is that the post-first year performance is no longer deteriorating, but remained roughly the same as last year. Of the students that do not drop out or change their study programme in the first year, about two thirds successfully completes their studies within five years.

More diplomas, low university drop-out rate • The performance of university education is improving. More students graduate within four years: 42% without changing their study programme (the same percentage as in higher professional education (HBO)) and 51% without changing institutions. The post-first year diploma performance of university students is improving. Of those who re-enrol in the second year, more than 60% graduate within four years. Nevertheless, the percentage

of drop-outs and ‘switchers’ after one year is also rising in university education. Compared with the HBO, the drop-out rate is small (just under 9%), but the percentage of students changing their study programme is high: 28%. One positive development in the entire higher education sector is that only a very small percentage of students drop out or change their study programme after they started their second year.

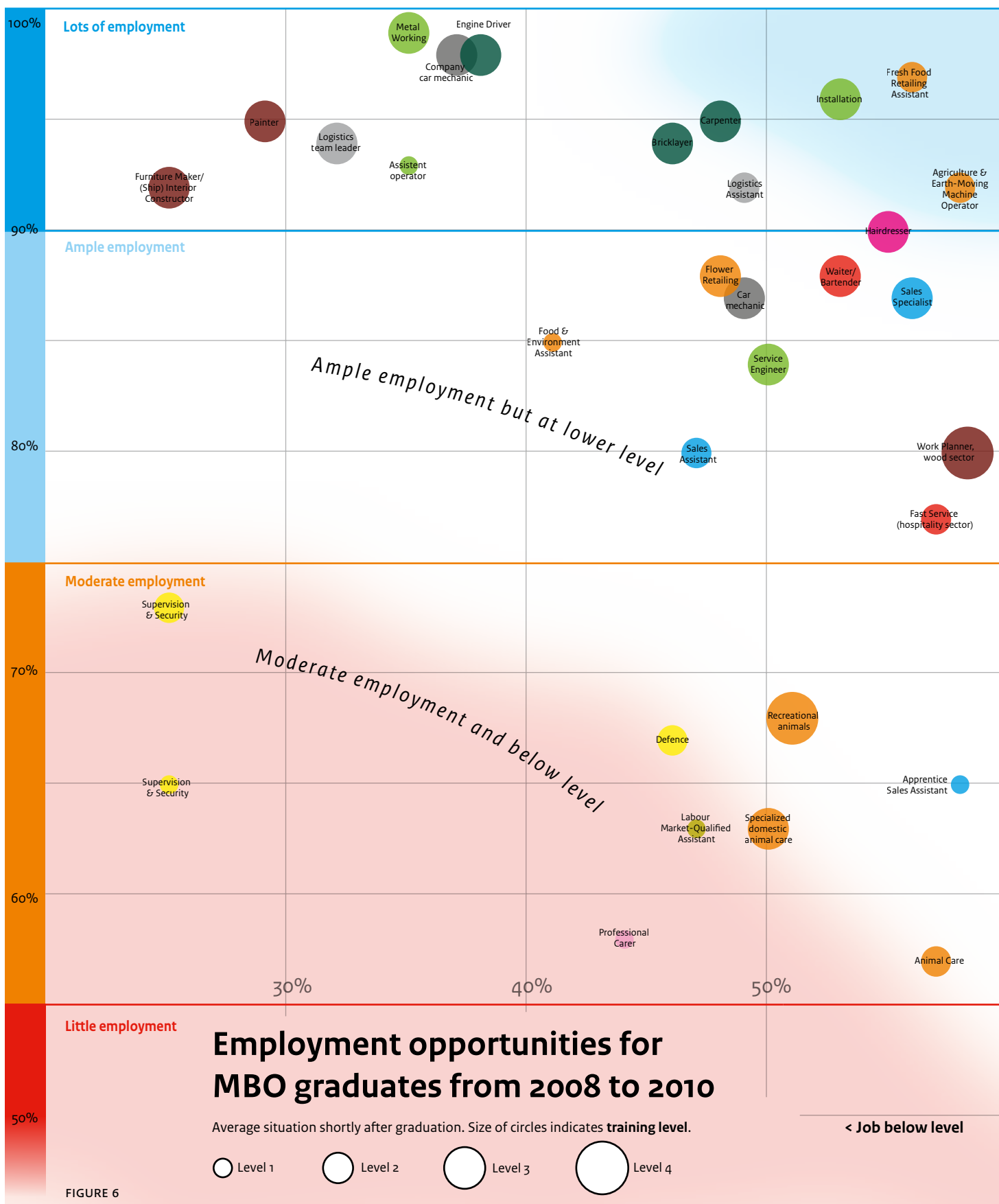
Progress to the labour market

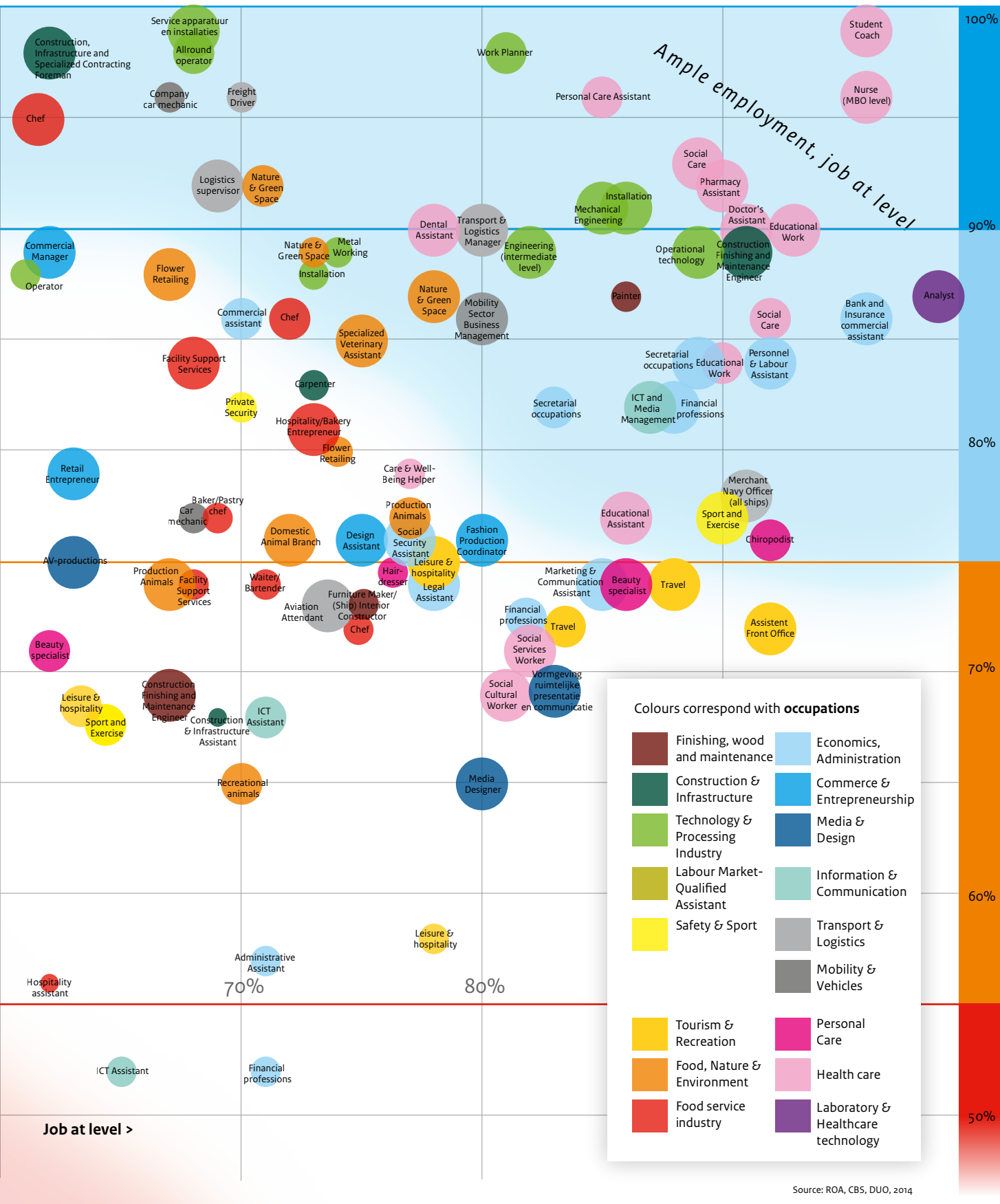
Smaller chance of work • The task of educational institutions is to provide pupils and students with the knowledge and skills they need to be well-equipped for the labour market. At the start of the study programme, they must also give their students clear information about their career opportunities and the chances of finding work. The chance of finding work decreased in the past year. Particularly the number of jobless people with a classroom-based vocational diploma (BOL) increased. The consequences of the crisis are clear in that sector. The same applies to higher professional (HBO) and university graduates.

Work-based vocational training (BBL) offers good chance of work • A survey was carried out to determine the number of secondary vocational pupils who found work soon after completing their training. 82% of the students of the classroom-based vocational programme (BOL) found work for at least twelve hours per week within one month of completing their training. The percentage for work-based vocational programmes (BBL), where students already have a contract with a company, was 94%. The chances of BOL students of finding work increased with the level of the diploma. With BBL students, the level of the diploma made little difference.⁸

Chance of work differs per study programme • With the BBL, the study programme has few consequences for the student’s chances of finding a job. However, large differences do exist in the case of the BOL. In general, students from the ‘Labour Market Qualified Assistant’, ‘Media and Design’ and ‘Commerce and Entrepreneurship’ domains have more problems finding a job immediately after their training than students specializing in e.g. ‘Crafts, Laboratory and Health Technology’, ‘Construction and Infrastructure’ and ‘Technology and Processing Industry’. Figure 6 shows the chance of work for the BBL and BOL jointly.

⁸ ROA (2013). *Schoolverlaters tussen onderwijs en arbeidsmarkt*. Maastricht: Researchcentrum Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt (ROA).





Regional differences for MBO graduates • With certain study programmes there are large regional differences in the chance of finding work. Secondary vocational (MBO) graduates with a level 2 diploma for economics, commerce, ICT, transport, personal care or the green domain have the best chances of finding work in Helmond-De Peel, Food Valley (Utrecht and Veluwe) and Gorinchem. A level 3 diploma offers good chances of work in Food Valley and Gorinchem, but also in Gooi- en Vechtstreek. Students with a level 4 diploma are more likely to find work in Noord-Limburg, in Food Valley and Gorinchem. MBO graduates are least likely to find work in the Haaglanden and Amsterdam regions.

Learning gains

Student registration systems underutilized for individualized education • Many schools and study programmes follow the development of pupils and students with a student registration system. They use this information to see whether pupils and students are developing according to expectations or whether the results are below or above expectations. Teachers and school directors can use this information to tailor their education to the needs of individual pupils and students. It would be extremely useful if schools could also use this information to assess and analyse the learning gains and thus obtain better insight into the quality differences within the school or study programme. As the existing testing and school information systems are not yet equipped for this, primary and secondary education pilots are being conducted to find out how schools can calculate the learning gains and use this to add more value.

Schools can determine learning gains • The student registration systems of primary schools contain information about the start and end level of their pupils. In secondary education, too, a growing number of schools monitor their pupils' progress from the first year of study. The pilots show that learning gains make a valuable contribution to the further development of results-oriented teaching in schools and to the assessment of their own teaching performance. Schools can compare their learning gains with those of other schools. This approach creates a new benchmark that can help schools to draw conclusions about their organization and educational approach.

Transparency and rankings • Schools are becoming more and more transparent about the educational performance of their pupils. Results are increasingly published in the school guide or on the website. This information is also available on www.schoolinfo.nl. But significant differences exist: some schools are extremely transparent, while others are much more reluctant to divulge their results. The publication of league tables is not sufficient to motivate these schools to adopt greater transparency. The inspectorate has some objections to the current league tables, as these claim to provide insight into the added value of a school, but do not have the necessary data to live up to that claim. This could be disadvantageous for schools that genuinely contribute added value to the educational system.

1.4 Concluding remarks

Focus on the wider picture • The inspectorate is keen to obtain a broader view of the outcomes and added value of education. Cognitive results are obviously important, but a one-sided focus on measurable results for, notably, language and arithmetic is undesirable. Other domains, such as social and civic competencies, creativity and digital skills, must remain firmly in our sights.⁹ For this reason, alongside the cognitive results, the inspectorate also focuses on the broader results of schools, including the development of social and civic skills.

Opportunities and school careers • More pupils switch down than up in the lower years of secondary education and more students drop out or switch in the first year of higher education. At the same time, fewer pupils in primary schools and the higher years of secondary education repeat a year. The chances of finding a job have decreased and not all study programmes are equally well-aligned with the labour market. These developments have major implications for students' opportunities to find their place in society. The inspectorate will deal with this issue at greater length in a future Education Report.

⁹ Onderwijsraad (2013). *Een smalle kijk op onderwijskwaliteit. De stand van educatief Nederland*. The Hague: Onderwijsraad.



2

SUPPORT AND INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION



Support and individualized education

Classroom support is desirable, particularly for individualized education

Over the past years a lot has been invested at school and institutional level in the provision of support to pupils. The effects of these investments are still not always visible in tangible improvements in the classroom or study programme. Large differences exist in the way school alliances introduce individualized education, with some giving greater priority to the interests of pupils and students than others. Professionalization of teachers and good registration is vital to make further progress.

2.1 Quality and support and social safety

Support in the classroom could be better

Better support structure • Some pupils and students need extra support during their school career. Sometimes temporary help is sufficient, in other cases structural support is required. Most schools and institutions support and assist their pupils or students who require extra attention. The inspectorate already noted this in the 2011/2012 Education Report. Many make use of a comprehensive student registration system for this purpose. The improvements achieved in the past years have mainly taken place in the support system. In secondary vocational education (MBO), for instance, both the structure of first- and second-line care as well as that of third-line care is sufficient or good at almost all institutions. Targeted intake procedures, for instance, ensure the correct placement of students in study programmes. Only secondary education has so far failed to implement sufficiently systematic support structures for pupils.

Support in the classroom • An investment at school level does not automatically translate into better support in the classroom for pupils and students. The classroom support is much less structured than the support systems at school level. All educational sectors can still make major improvements in this respect. Primary schools often fail to provide specific individualized support and

supervision (cognitive, social or emotional) for pupils. Partly for this reason, the inspectorate concludes that support is often not sufficiently systematic. Secondary education also needs to take further steps to put the extra support on a more systematic footing.

“Resolving, fighting and preventing bullying is much more important for pupils than data-gathering and definitions.”

(VWO pupils)

Evaluation of support is insufficient • There is also room for improvement of certain aspects of the support evaluation process. At pre-school and early-school institutions, for instance, the staff rarely evaluate whether the support given to the children produces tangible results. Not all primary schools check whether their support system is effective. In special (secondary) education the introduction of the personal development goals plan (*ontwikkelingsperspectief*) got off to a good start, but schools do not sufficiently evaluate the individualized education plans (*handelingsplan*) or personal development goals plan. Such an evaluation could take place within the context of the classroom or study programme, but also at school or institutional level. Primary schools could, for instance, ascertain at school level how often individualized education plans lead to the envisaged result.

Tailoring education to individual needs is important • Pupils and students are best served by teachers who tailor their lessons to individual differences in development. This applies in particular to pupils who require extra support. Teachers who are able to address the specific needs of individual pupils and students can be found in every educational sector, but by no means all can count on such an individualized approach. Many teachers still struggle to differentiate between the specific needs of individuals. A lot of progress remains to be made in this area.

Timely identification of problems • When a pupil or student is going through a difficult period, it is important to identify this as early as possible. Timely extra help and support is vital for the student's health and general well-being as well as his or her learning performance. This can make the difference between success and failure. Unless a student's problems are noticed (e.g. due to bad results or unacceptable behaviour), schools do not necessarily have a reason to raise the matter with the parents or share information with other organizations.

And even when risks or problems are identified, there is often little follow-up and relevant information is rarely shared. When students change schools, the old school mostly gives the new school little or no information about possible risks and problems, even when there are suspicions of child abuse.¹⁰ The organizations that have frequent contacts with the children rarely share their concerns with the school, and when they do it is often too late. When a primary school receives a new four-year-old pupil, for instance, it is often not given any information on pre-school care or child healthcare services.

Social safety

Perception • Most pupils – around 90% – say they feel safe at school. This is the outcome of the inspectorate's survey into the social qualities of schools. The percentage is roughly the same as in an earlier survey.¹¹ However, 17% of primary pupils and 15% of secondary pupils say they were bullied in the past year. The social safety of pupils therefore remains an important concern.

Safety policy • During the school visits inspectors enquire whether the school has a safety policy in place. For instance, the inspectorate wants to know whether the school keeps track of incidents. The inspectorate also asks whether the school regularly surveys and assesses the safety perception of pupils and staff. Over 70% of primary schools and over 90% of secondary schools do this. About 90% of schools have a safety policy for preventing and handling incidents. The mere existence of a safety policy is not sufficient, however. Everyone within the school must uphold and practise the safety values so that they are effective and integral to the school's educational policy.

Reporting incidents to inspectors • Anyone who is confronted with serious problems in or around the school, such as sexual harassment and sexual abuse, emotional and physical violence or discrimination and radicalization, can get in touch with a specialised inspector ('*vertrouwensinspecteur*'). Parents and pupils can do this, but so can teachers, friends, family and anyone else with confidential information, and school boards. In the 2012/2013 academic year, almost 2,300 reports of sexual abuse, emotional and physical violence, and discrimination and radicalization were registered.

¹⁰ Samenwerkend Toezicht Jeugd (2013). Meldcode: stap 0. Vroegsignalering van risico's en aanpakken van beginnende problemen om kindermishandeling te voorkomen. Utrecht: Samenwerkend Toezicht Jeugd (STJ).

¹¹ Witvliet, M., Tillaart, H. van den, Bergen, K. van, Mooij, T., Fettelaa, D., Wit, W. de, & Vierke, H. (2012). Sociale veiligheid in en rond scholen. Primair onderwijs 2010-2012. Voortgezet onderwijs 2006-2012. Nijmegen: ITS Radboud University; Amsterdam: Regioplan.

That is just under 20% more than in the 2011/2012 academic year. The increase occurred in virtually all educational sectors. Only special (secondary) education saw no increase in the number of incidents. As in previous years, just over half of the reported incidents concern emotional violence (bullying, threats, exclusion, cyber-bullying, extortion, stalking). Many incidents involve several forms of emotional violence, such as bullying combined with cyber-bullying and threats. The number of reported bullying incidents is rising. These account for just over half of the reported emotional violence incidents. Strikingly, there are fewer reports of physical violence in special (secondary) education. The inspectorate has not investigated the reasons for the fluctuations in the number of reported incidents. More reported incidents does not automatically indicate a deterioration in the social safety of a school, because other factors also play a role, such as the willingness to report incidents, media attention and what is considered to be socially 'normal' behaviour.

2.2 Special needs education: the most important changes

Introduction

New division of tasks • A new Act for students with special needs education (*Wet passend onderwijs*) is due to take full effect on 1 August 2014. School boards will then have the task of realizing a tailor-made educational approach within the context of school alliances. In 2015 the responsibility for the youth policy will be transferred to the municipalities. The provision of the tailor-made approaches is therefore the responsibility of schools and study programmes, but the provision of extra care involves a combined effort, consisting of support within the schools and additional back-up care from the municipalities where necessary.

Individualized education via alliances • School boards will be made responsible for the organization and funding of the extra educational support. They have a duty of care for pupils who require extra support. To fulfil this task, they will join one of the 152 alliances. The money will be spent in consultation with parents, teachers and municipalities. The underlying idea is that if schools are directly responsible, they will be better able to support pupils within a specific alliance. Good support in mainstream schools can prevent pupils being referred to special (secondary) education, though this option will of course remain available.

Quality of the alliances

Positive alliance culture • The inspectorate started halfway through 2013 with its supervision of the alliances on special needs education (in the form of simulations). In the meantime 55 alliances have been visited. From statements made by the alliances about the implementation of the new Act, the inspectorate concludes that most schools are cooperating effectively. Considerable effort has gone into this in previous years, for instance within the existing 'Weer Samen naar School' (WSNS) alliances and within secondary education. But the inspectorate also notes that a lot remains to be done. Alliances are busy working out the concrete implementation plans. Many are opting for a growth model: they do not want to commit themselves too much at this stage and are therefore not making any detailed long-term plans. The inspectorate also notes that the manner in which the consultation with the municipalities and the stakeholder representatives (employees, parents and students) is given shape varies strongly from one alliance to the other.

Pupil numbers and placements • The starting position of the various alliances differs widely. Some, for instance, have a low percentage of special needs pupils, others have a high percentage. The provision of special needs care and the placement strategies also vary strongly. Some alliances mainly place special needs pupils in mainstream schools, while others show a preference for special education. Figure 7a provides insight into the size of the differences.

Different policy approaches • By no means all alliances have a clear vision on the support to and placement of special needs pupils. Some alliances have no clearly defined policies for the introduction of individualized education, while others operate on the basis of a strong vision and clear views on the most appropriate support.

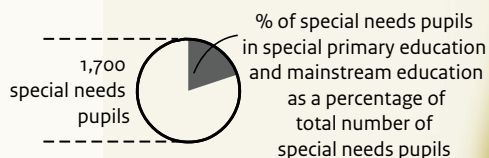
Quality of support at schools • The starting position of the alliances not only differs in numbers and vision, but also in the quality of the support at the schools within the alliance. In some alliances there are virtually no shortcomings in the provided support; in other alliances, however, the care provided by some of the schools is deficient. Figure 7b shows the average percentage of shortcomings in the support at primary schools (until the end of July 2013).

Alliance finances

Differences due to redistribution of funding • Much remains unclear about the financial situation of the alliances. For instance, little is known about the available funding and the planned effective expenditure of that funding. The alliances do not all have the same

Special needs pupils in primary education

Percentage of special needs pupils in special education, special primary education and mainstream education



Size of circles proportionate to number of pupils per individualized education alliance

Colour indicates % of special needs pupils per individualized education alliance

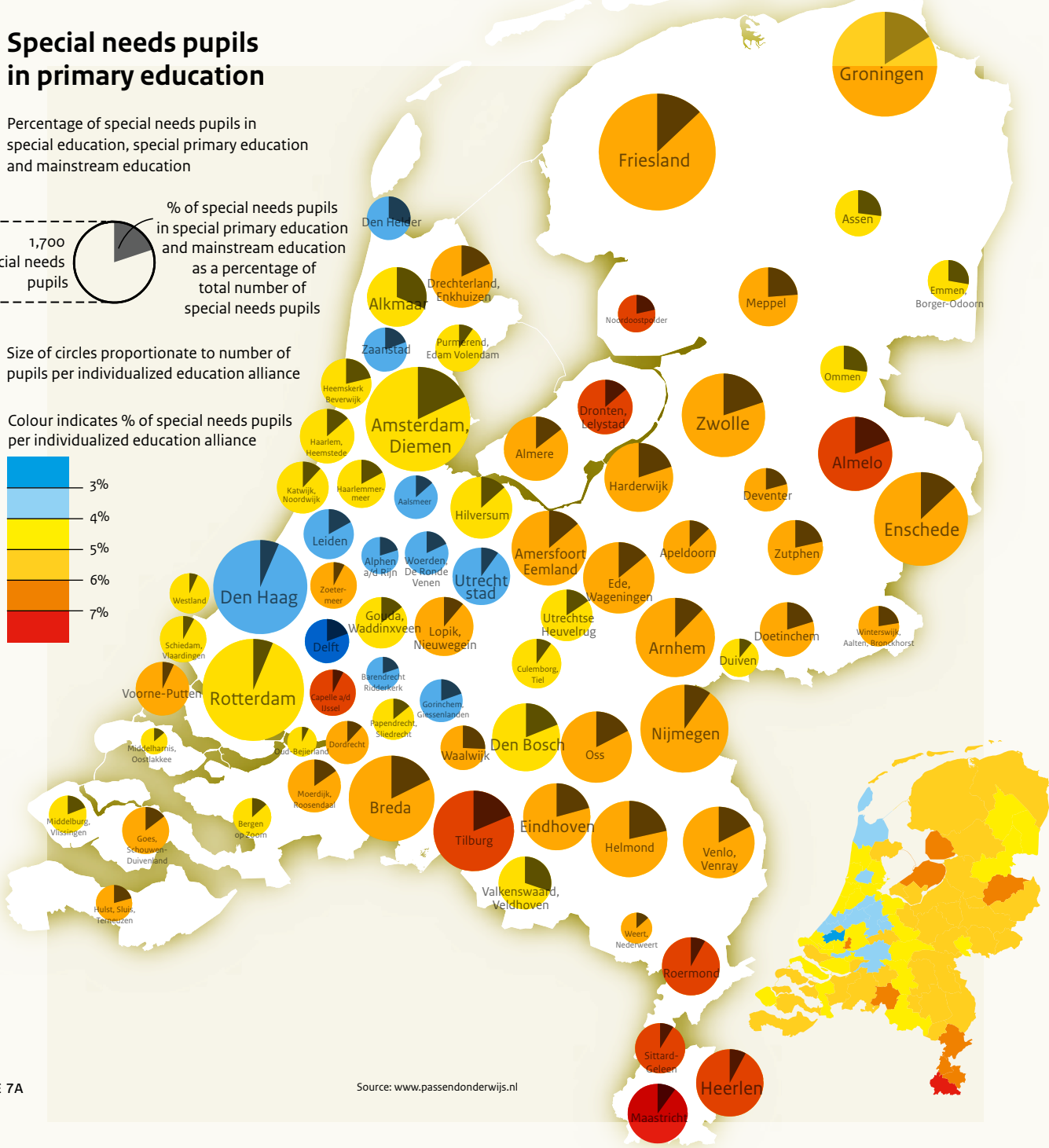
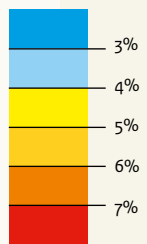


FIGURE 7A

Source: www.passendonderwijs.nl

Quality and Support

Average percentage of care & support shortcomings within an individualized education alliance



Size of circles proportionate to number of pupils per individualized education alliance

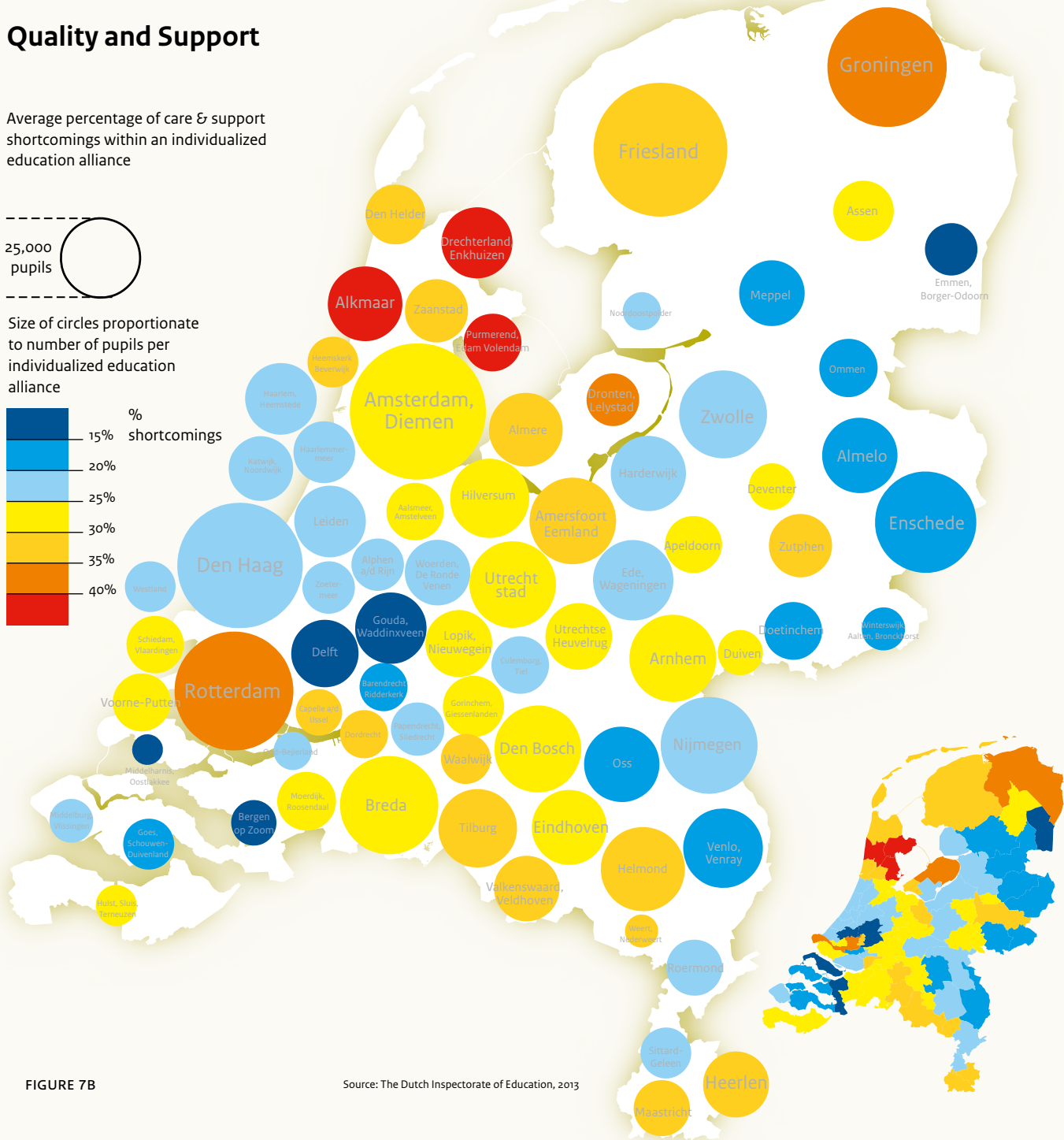
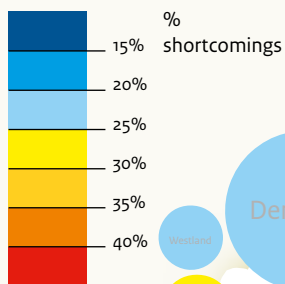


FIGURE 7B

Source: The Dutch Inspectorate of Education, 2013

financial starting position. Some alliances will at a certain point be forced to make substantial spending cuts. These alliances may, for instance, opt to drastically reduce the number of pupils that are placed in special (secondary) education. They are also considering closing existing facilities, such as educational-didactic centres and rebound facilities, or reorganizing these facilities on a smaller scale. The worry here is that the accumulated expertise may drain away and possibly be lost altogether. At the same time, the inspectorate notes that the pressure of drastic spending cuts can also inspire new and creative solutions. By contrast, there will also be alliances with a lot more funding to spend. The question is whether these alliances have sufficient expertise to deploy the new resources in the most beneficial manner possible for the pupils.

Support within alliances • Within the current legislative framework, relatively many pupils switch from a special needs school within one alliance to a school within another alliance (cross-alliance switches). The alliances make arrangements about the transfer of funding for the provision of extra support to pupils who switch. The expectation is that from 1 August 2014 fewer pupils will switch to schools in another alliance. The reason for this is that the new regional alliances for individualized education are larger than the former WSNS alliances. Moreover, the individualized education alliances that the inspectorate visited are striving to remedy any shortcomings in their support facilities within their own region. In the case of primary special education, the inspectorate expects that there will almost be no cross-alliance switches in the future. The alliances that do not yet have a ‘cluster 4’ facility (for pupils with psychiatric disorders or severe behavioural problems, but no physical handicaps) are seeking to develop this capacity themselves. The situation is different for pupils with multiple handicaps and pupils requiring residential facilities. Few alliances dare to set up new facilities for these pupils, because it concerns a small group requiring very specific support.

Involvement of pupils, parents and teachers

More teacher and parental involvement • Most alliances do too little to involve parents and teachers. Communication with them is often regarded as a matter of secondary importance. Alliances are making progress in this respect, but are sometimes insufficiently aware that many teachers and parents still see the changes as a distant prospect (see also the ECPO report¹²), even though the new Act is due to enter into full force on 1 August 2014. It is the responsibility of alliances and school boards to involve and inform parents, teachers and school directors. The inspectorate has pointed out to the alliances that parents of special needs children should, at the very least, be informed as soon as possible about the support they can expect after 1 August 2014.

Professionalization of teachers • The introduction of ‘passend onderwijs’ places new demands on teachers and school directors: more individualized education, more knowledge about special needs pupils and good interaction with parents. Further professionalization of these skills is important for teachers. The Monitor Passend Onderwijs¹³ reports that about 60% of the alliances make provisions for the further professionalization of skills in their support plan. The other alliances either regard this as the exclusive responsibility of school boards or intend to include a professionalization policy in their support plan, but have yet to do so.

Specific expertise and facilities • When schools determine the level of required basic support, they usually opt for the same level that they are currently accustomed to. However, the ambition is to enable more special needs pupils to attend mainstream education and this has both financial and practical consequences. In many cases schools must make targeted investments in the professionalization of teachers and the provision of facilities. The main thing is that teachers must learn how to deal with differences between pupils and tailor their tuition to the specific needs and abilities of individual pupils. The inspectorate sees insufficient evidence of this during the lessons. With the introduction of the new Act on special needs education now imminent, the inspectorate reiterates that teachers must improve their knowledge and skills in this area and be sufficiently facilitated to deliver the envisaged individualized education.

“Alliances and school boards still do too little to involve parents and teachers in the introduction of individualized education.”

¹² ECPO (2013). *Routeplanner passend onderwijs met Evaluatieplan en Nulmeting 2013*. The Hague: Evaluatie- en adviescommissie Passend onderwijs (ECPO).

¹³ OCW (2013). *Passend onderwijs. Derde voortgangsrapportage*. The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

Utilize special (secondary) education expertise •

Special needs education also calls for good cooperation between mainstream and special (secondary) education. For instance, the expertise of the special (secondary) education sector can be very useful in helping mainstream schools to cater to the specific needs of pupils. Individualized education alliances seek to recruit the necessary staff for individualized education in different ways. Some alliances recruit all or some of the special needs support staff from special (secondary) education. However in some regions, and particularly those where the number of pupils is falling (or expected to fall), they are engaging fewer special needs staff.

Getting dropouts back to school demands a joined-up approach

Complex problems keep pupils at home • Every child has a right to education, but some pupils and students drop out of school and stay at home for a variety of reasons. Sometimes this is due to a combination of problems with the pupil, the family and/or school. Dropping out of school has far-reaching consequences. An interrupted and prematurely aborted school career often puts young people at a disadvantage – and makes it much more difficult for them to find their way in society in later life.

Dropout and absence registration is flawed •

Reducing the number of dropouts and absent pupils is an important objective of individualized education, but not all alliances have a clear picture of the scale of the problem. Their first step must be to make an accurate assessment of the number of dropouts and absent pupils. Particularly children who are not enrolled in any school tend to fall off the radar, either because the municipality lacks an adequate registration system or because the alliance has insufficient information. In addition, there is a group of enrolled pupils who are absent without the school realizing this, for instance because it does not keep accurate absence records.

Joint approach to dropout and absence prevention •

In 2013 the inspectorate, together with other supervisors, carried out a study into what teachers and other professionals are doing to tackle the absence and dropout problem in the eleven to sixteen age group. This study revealed that tackling the complex problems of absent pupils and dropouts requires a joint approach involving schools as well as the care and welfare network. Teachers and other professionals can only act effectively if they listen carefully to parents and pupils, take their problems seriously and tailor the solution specifically to these problems. The better the relationship between the pupil and parents on the one hand and the teacher or support worker on the other, the better the chance is of getting the pupil back to school.

Rapid action is part of the solution • Acting quickly and at the right moment is essential to effectively tackle the absence and dropout problem. Schools that know their pupils well and have good contacts with parents are quicker to pick up signals and raise issues with the persons concerned. Short lines between schools and support organizations in the municipality or region can enable a school to quickly mobilize the most appropriate support services. The longer a pupil stays at home, the more difficult it becomes for him or her to get back into the rhythm of going to school. Fast action shortens the period that a pupil stays at home. It is often difficult for dropouts to return to their original school. Sometimes a new start at a different school is a conscious choice, but in other cases the school has not done enough to give the pupil a second chance at his/her original school.

2.3 Concluding remarks

Professionalization of teachers is desirable • The teacher's professionalism is a key factor in determining whether a pupil receives sufficiently individualized support and education in a class or group. It is crucial that teachers are given ample opportunity and take responsibility to professionalize their skills in this area. The ability to differentiate between individual needs and tailor the support to these needs is particularly important. The implementation and quality of individualized education in the classroom is obviously a shared responsibility of teachers, school directors, school boards *and* the boards of the alliances. The inspectorate would like to see school directors and boards giving teachers sufficient opportunity to improve their expertise and differentiation skills. In addition, it is important that teachers are provided with the necessary facilities to actually put their skills into practice.

Involving parents and teachers • The inspectorate concludes that teachers and parents are still insufficiently involved in the provision of individualized education, even though it is precisely the parents and teachers on whom the success of individualized education depends. It is now up to the boards of alliances and educational institutions to rapidly improve the communication with and involvement of parents and teachers.

Action plan required to tackle dropout and absence problem • Tackling the problem of dropouts and absent pupils calls for good-quality teachers and other professionals acting under the skilful direction of a school director. Vigorous and rapid action is what is needed. If involved teachers take appropriate and timely measures in the school and classroom, there is a good chance that the pupil can return to his or her original school. Alliances

need to have a clear picture of the national and regional dropout and absence rates in order to assess the effectiveness of measures and to enable alliances to learn from each other.

Change is a chance to improve • Many changes are afoot in the field of special needs education, both within the educational sector itself and within the youth care sector. Fast and effective support is only possible if professionals can rapidly coordinate their response and take concrete action. The inspectorate sees that due to the current changes in the division of responsibilities, the efforts to mount a rapid and well-coordinated response to problems are not always successful. This is understandable, because building new networks costs time and energy. However, the current changes also present an excellent opportunity to improve the existing care and support practices and give vulnerable pupils and students better education.



3

TEACHERS



Teachers

Investments do not automatically lead to better tuition

Teachers have good educational skills, usually give clear explanations and create a focused working environment. But the education should be more finely tuned to the abilities and needs of pupils and students. Teachers are by no means always successful in using the investments made at school level to good effect in their daily lessons. Facilities and ample opportunities for the professionalization of their teaching skills are necessary to help them do this. The high demands made on teachers, the larger classes and the introduction of individualized education make professionalization all the more imperative.

3.1 Teachers' skills

Good educational climate • Virtually all teachers create a safe learning climate. This has been the case for years. Depending on the educational sector or the type of school, teachers showed in 94% to 100% of the observed classes that they are proficient in (special needs) educational skills. This also emphatically applies to special (secondary) education, where great demands are made on the teachers in this respect. If a teacher has good educational skills, pupils are more likely to enjoy going to school and learning.

Adequate teaching skills • Some three quarters of the teachers give clear explanations of the subject matter, create a focused working environment in the classroom and actively involve the pupils and students in their lessons. These teachers are equipped with general teaching skills. Primary and special primary education teachers stand out in a positive sense here; they display these skills during most lessons (84% and 89% respectively). Special secondary education teachers, by contrast, display these skills less than their colleagues in the other sectors (in two out of three lessons).

Differentiation is essential • Teachers who differentiate systematically tailor their lessons to the pupils' level and pace of learning. They adapt their explanations and assignments, take maximum advantage of the available teaching resources, and make optimal use of the available teaching time for each pupil. In the secondary



Teachers' skills • General teaching skills are:

- the teacher provides a clear explanation of the subject matter;
- the teacher creates a focused working environment;
- pupils are actively engaged in the educational activities.

Differentiation skills concern the ability to tailor the lessons to the different needs of pupils and students. What this exactly entails depends on the education sector.

“When innovations are introduced you sometimes have to put your hard hat on, because the plans come from on high.”

(primary school teacher)

education, secondary vocational education (MBO) and special education sectors, a quarter to a third of teachers shows during their lessons that they can differentiate. The percentages are higher in the primary and special primary education sectors, where about 50% to 60% of teachers differentiate during the lessons.

Motivated pupils through individualization and feedback • It is important for pupils to have more teachers who can individualize and differentiate. Pupils are more motivated if teachers make a clear connection between their lessons and the pupils' abilities and interests. Apart from tailoring lessons to pupils' specific needs, teachers need to give their pupils or students regular feedback.¹⁴ During the class observation sessions, the inspectorate found that teachers do not always give targeted feedback. The performance and motivation of pupils and students tended to be higher with teachers who gave targeted feedback and also clearly explained what the pupils needed to learn and why.

Individualized education remains a challenge • Taking account of differences is not an objective in itself but a means of enabling both strong and weak pupils or students to reach their full potential. Responding to individual needs will become even more important after the introduction of individualized education. Rolling out individualized education remains a challenge. There are three reasons for this. First of all, not all teachers recognize the importance of differentiation. Second, teachers say that differentiation and individualization is not always possible due to workload and time pressures and lack of

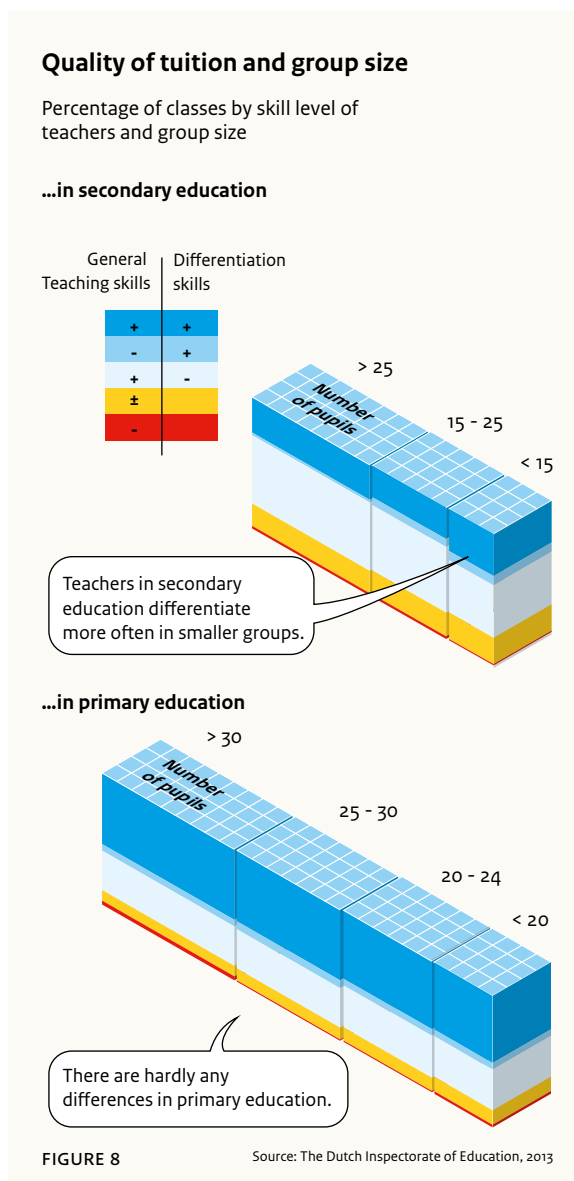
facilities. Third, not all teachers have received sufficient training in differentiation. Teachers who want to learn differentiation skills see no way of doing this without increasing their workload.

Differences between teachers • Not all teachers display the same level of skill. On average the general teaching and differentiation skills of part-time teachers are not as good as those of full-time teachers. The same applies to starting teachers. Teachers with more than twenty years' experience also show less proficiency in both types of skills.

Investments reach teachers insufficiently • Large investments have been, and are still being, made in education and much has improved in recent years. Schools and study programmes keep closer track of the progress of their pupils and students, evaluate this progress and organize extra support and care for pupils and students who need this. But teachers and pupils do not necessarily always benefit from investments. During inspections at schools and institutions the inspectorate sees excellent systems, but quite often there is no connection between these systems and the hands-on teaching in the classroom.

Investments a burden rather than a benefit • In their day-to-day educational practice, teachers often derive little benefit from investments at school level (such as improved quality care, results-oriented working and structured pupil care). In many cases teachers cannot use these investments to improve their classes. Sometimes, for instance, better data registration appears to have become an end in itself, with no clear benefit for pupils and students. In the worst case, investments and registrations lead to bureaucracy or to information that is used to critically monitor the teachers' or pupils' performance. At schools where this happens, some of the teachers tend to dismiss the investments as policy for policy's sake. Consequently, the investments lack support and are perceived by teachers as an administrative burden that distracts them from the real business of teaching. Investments in, for instance, results-oriented working and structured pupil care are intended to induce improvements for the pupil, but are failing to do so.

¹⁴ Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible Learning for Teachers. Maximizing the Impact on Learning*. London: New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.



Investments in teachers yield benefits • How can teachers make better use of investments at school level in their daily work? The inspectorate sees schools where the investments are used to good effect in the classroom. These schools often make funds and time available for the professionalization of the teachers' skills. This genuinely benefits pupils and students. The inspectorate also regularly sees examples of this at schools or study programmes that were formerly weak or very weak. At these schools, providing teachers with extra training and promoting their development is often an integral part of the investments. In addition, the teachers receive better support in translating the investments to day-to-day teaching practice.

3.2 Group size

Groups slightly larger • The average group size has increased slightly in the past two years and the number of classes with more than thirty pupils rose.¹⁵ The size of the group has an effect on how teachers experience their work. The bigger the class, the larger the teacher's workload. He or she must correct more assignments, maintain the pupil tracking system for more pupils, and divide his/her attention over more pupils. The physical space is also sometimes cramped, as not all classrooms are designed for more than 25 pupils.

No quality differences between large and small primary school classes • Virtually no differences in tuition quality are visible in primary education between small classes and large classes (Figure 8). This is evident from the inspectorate's class observations. In about 85% of the cases the teacher in front of the class is at least proficient in general teaching skills, regardless of whether the class is large or small. Moreover, teachers with large classes differentiate between pupils' needs just as well as their colleagues with smaller classes. This may signify that group size has no bearing on the quality of teaching. It may also mean that schools allocate their best teachers to larger classes.

Better fine-tuning in small classes in secondary education • During its class observations in the secondary education sector, the inspectorate did see a difference in tuition quality between small and large classes (Figure 8). In classes with fewer than fifteen pupils, more teachers displayed effective differentiation skills than in larger classes. Attempts to differentiate between the needs of pupils are mainly successful in small classes. These small classes often occur in VMBO vocational programmes. Upwards from fifteen pupils, no differences can be seen between the differentiation skills of teachers. These findings are in line with international research, which shows that the learning performance of pupils is only higher if there are fewer than seventeen pupils in a class,¹⁶ though there are also studies that find more general effects of class size.¹⁷

¹⁵ OCW (2013). Groepsgrootte in het basis- en voortgezet onderwijs. [Letter] to the President of the House of Representatives of the States General, 9 December 2013. The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

¹⁶ OECD (2013). Education at a Glance 2013. OECD Indicators. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

¹⁷ Fredriksson, F., Öckert, B., & Oosterbeek, H. (2013). Long-term effects of class size. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128 (1), 249–285.

“The ideal teacher is good at explaining, uses humour, can control the class, actively involves pupils and uses ICT in a way that contributes to the lesson. It’s also an advantage if the teacher is enthusiastic.”

(VWO pupils)

3.3 Professionalization of teachers

Professionalization in schools • Teachers are usually given a say in how they professionalize their skills and are generally positive about the resources and time they get for extra training. They are also predominantly positive about the professional working environment that the school management offers. They feel they can contribute sufficient input in determining the learning goals and themes and, as a consequence, they virtually all support the efforts undertaken to improve the school. At the same time – as in 2011/2012 – more than half of the teachers indicate that the demands of their daily work leave insufficient time for professionalization. They often feel overburdened. In secondary education, more than half of the teachers say that the school director pays insufficient attention to this aspect. In primary and special education, the percentage is lower. Alongside a lack of time and facilities, the professionalization efforts are not always aimed at school- or institution-wide investments and changes.

Teachers more positive about themselves than the inspectors • Virtually all teachers think they have a clear idea of the aspects of their teaching that they can still develop further. These are not always the same aspects that the inspector assesses as unsatisfactory. A study where the inspector and the teacher both gave ratings for the lessons showed a discrepancy between these two assessments. In 2011/2012 the inspectorate already observed this in primary education, but now the same phenomenon is seen in secondary education and special education. Teachers are more positive about their skills than the inspectors. Particularly the weaker performers among teachers were more positive about themselves than the inspector. For instance, almost three quarters of the secondary education teachers said the lessons were tailored to the differences between pupils, while the inspectors found that this was the case in only just over a third of the lessons.

Less refresher training • The international comparative PISA study¹⁸ shows that the professionalization of Dutch teachers is failing to keep pace with other countries. This applies both in general, and to mathematics in particular. Far fewer teachers in the Netherlands take part in refresher study programmes in mathematics than in other OECD countries (Figure 9).

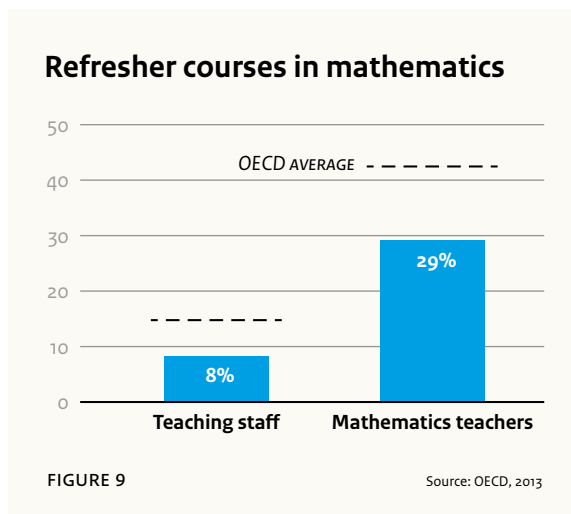
Training level of teachers • The training level of teachers differs per educational sector. In primary education 91% of the teachers have an HBO (higher professional education) diploma, including a small proportion with an HBO Master’s degree. In special primary education and special (secondary) education a considerably larger number of teachers have an HBO Master’s degree (30%). Few university graduates work in these educational sectors (3% to 8%). In the secondary education sector, the largest proportion of teachers have an HBO diploma (68%), and about 30% are university graduates. In secondary vocational education (MBO) almost 80% have completed their HBO education and 14% are university graduates. The teachers active in higher professional education are more highly trained: 65% are university graduates.¹⁹

Good supervision prevents starting teachers leaving the profession • Many students drop out during their teacher training or abandon the profession in their first years in front of the class. Only 28 out of 100 students who start a teacher training course still work in education five years after graduating.²⁰ A certain percentage abandons the teacher training course and a further percentage opts for a different career fairly quickly after graduating. Good support for starting teachers is of essential importance. Teachers who receive insufficient support at the start of their career and have less educational and teaching skills are more likely to leave the educational sector.

¹⁸ Kordes, J., Bolsinova, M., Limpens, G., & Stolwijk, R. (2013). Resultaten PISA-2012. Praktische kennis en vaardigheden van 15-jarigen. Nederlandse uitkomsten van het Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) op het gebied van wiskunde, natuurwetenschappen en leesvaardigheid in het jaar 2012. Arnhem: Cito.

¹⁹ Berndsen, F.E.M., Brekelmans, J.L.J.M., Dekker, B., & Bergen, C.T.A. van (2014, not yet published). Onderwijs Werkt! Rapportage van een enquête onder docenten en management uit het po, vo, mbo en hbo. Meting 2013. Amsterdam: Regioplan.

²⁰ OCW (2013). Nadere invulling impuls leraren tekortvakken. [Letter] to the President of the House of Representatives of the States General, 13 March 2013. The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).



Quality of starting teachers varies • Most starting teachers receive support from an experienced colleague. Replacement teachers generally receive less support. The large variances in support are also striking. This particularly concerns the actual content of the support. In primary education new teachers often receive assistance with knowledge of the subjects, but also with such aspects as working in a systematic manner, handling differences between pupils, and dealing with special needs pupils. 70% to 80% of the starting teachers receive support in these areas from their supervisor. About half of the starting primary school teachers receive suggestions for better classroom control. The inspectorate will report more extensively on starting teachers in the 2013/2014 Education Report.

3.4 Quality of the teacher training programme

Renewal in teacher training programmes • In the past years teacher training programmes have undergone extensive renewal to raise the quality of the training to a higher level. One example of this is the development of the 'knowledge base'. The teacher training colleges are also working with schools to introduce in-service training ('in-school training'). The effects of this renewal drive on the educational curriculum and the level of graduates should become clear in the coming period. The initial experiences of teacher trainers and schools are positive.

Alumni and starting teachers reasonably satisfied • Starting teachers have different views on the quality of their training. About 60% of the starting teachers in primary and secondary education think that the training equipped them with sufficient skills for the teaching profession. One in five starting teachers in secondary

education and a slightly smaller group of starting teachers in primary education think they are insufficiently equipped.

In-school training • In addition to the existing teacher training programmes, an important new option has been opened up for prospective teachers: in-school training. This training route largely entails learning by doing. Working in close cooperation with teacher training colleges, the schools train prospective teachers in the school. This takes place in primary schools, in secondary education and in secondary vocational education (MBO). Those involved are unanimous in their views on this in-school training approach: there is less distance between the school and the study programme, and the students find this an attractive training route. However, in-school training also carries risks, particularly in terms of the quality of supervision and the assessment of students at the workplace. These can vary strongly between schools. Often, there are also too few mechanisms in place to assure the quality of supervision and assessment. A systematic quality cycle is necessary for this purpose.

More academics in front of the class • In the past years new training programmes have been started up to train more academics as teachers (the academic primary teacher training college (PABO), the education minor and the 'Eerst de Klas' programme). A fairly large number of students are enrolling for the education minor and the academic PABO programme: the latter, for instance, is attracting about five hundred students every year. The inspectorate sees this as an important development. There is a strong demand for academically trained teachers who can reflect critically on the quality of education.

Trainee teachers need sufficient supervision • The inspectorate concludes that sufficient supervision is vital in these new training programmes. In addition, academics in front of the class can only help to improve the quality of education if there is sufficient employment for them and if they have a challenging working environment. These conditions apply in particular to the primary education sector, so it is encouraging to see that the academic PABO programmes are keeping close track of the career paths of their graduates in order to assess the effectiveness of the training programme.

3.5 Teacher qualifications

Numbers of unqualified teachers • Many secondary pupils are taught by unqualified teachers. 12% to 22% of the lessons are given by unqualified teachers and 5% to

8% by a teacher who is underqualified.²¹ Underqualified teachers are, for instance, teachers who are still in training or are underqualified for the level they are teaching at. The PISA report indicates that the Netherlands has the highest number of unqualified or underqualified teachers of all OECD countries. Unqualified teachers occur relatively frequently among part-timers and at pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) schools. There are also specific subjects where unqualified teachers are relatively common.

Conditions for appointing unqualified teachers •

Schools claim that severe shortages in the labour market sometimes force them to appoint unqualified teachers. The law allows this in emergencies, provided that the school takes measures to ensure that the unqualified or underqualified teacher obtains the required qualifications as quickly as possible. In 2014 the inspectorate will carry out a study into unqualified teaching in secondary education.

More unqualified teaching at weak schools • In the 2011/2012 academic year more lessons were given by unqualified teachers at secondary schools with weak and very weak departments (19%) than at schools without weak or very weak departments (16%). The average final exam results are a fraction lower at schools with more lessons taught by unqualified teachers than at schools with fewer lessons taught by unqualified teachers (6.5 versus 6.6). The percentage of pupils who pass their exams is also slightly lower at schools with a lot of unqualified teaching (88.6% versus 90.3% of the final exam pupils). However, little difference is noticeable in the quality of the classes given by qualified and unqualified teachers. The same applies to secondary vocational education (MBO).

Unqualified teaching points to shortages • Almost 17% of the lessons in secondary education are given by an unqualified teacher, a clear indication of the current shortage of qualified teachers. This shortage is expected to increase further: labour market forecasts show a rapid rise in the number of vacancies from 2014 through 2017.²² From 2015 there will also be a large demand for new teachers in the secondary vocational sector (MBO). There is still virtually no unqualified teaching in the primary education sector.

²¹ Berndsen, F.E.M., & Leenen, H. van (2013). IPTO Bevoegdheden 2011. Amsterdam: RegioPlan.

²² CentERdata (2013). De toekomstige arbeidsmarkt voor onderwijspersoneel 2013-2025. Tilburg: CentERdata.



4

SCHOOL DIRECTORS AND BOARDS



School directors and boards

Quality systems satisfactory, but still few benefits for pupils and students

More and more pupils and students are receiving education of sufficient quality. The number of weak and very weak schools again decreased in the 2012/2013 academic year. Schools are gathering more and better data on quality, but do not yet use that knowledge to make improvements in day-to-day educational practice. There are more financially healthy boards, but there is a small group of boards where quality problems go hand in hand with financial problems. Incidents often involve a combination of problems with an insufficiently professional governance culture.

4.1 Improvement in educational quality

Fewer weak schools • The number of primary and secondary pupils in weak or very weak schools decreases steadily. This means that more pupils receive education of sufficiently good quality and leave primary and secondary education without learning gaps. The decrease in the number of weak and very weak schools is particularly noticeable in primary education, special primary education and special (secondary) education (Figure 10). In the special (secondary) education, the percentage of weak and very weak schools even fell from 18.7% in the 2011/2012 academic year to 9% in 2012/2013.

Quality of secondary vocational education (MBO) remains stable • About 20% of the secondary vocational education (MBO) programmes provide weak or very weak education (Figure 11). The quality improvements as visible in other educational sectors are not yet manifest here. The institutions and study programmes have improved their quality systems, but this has not yet translated into improved education at the study programmes themselves. However, the number of pupils leaving the MBO with a diploma is growing.

Quality improvement through joint effort • The teachers, school directors and boards of most schools and study programmes have put their shoulder to the wheel to improve the quality of education. Particularly

Percentage of weak/very weak schools is decreasing

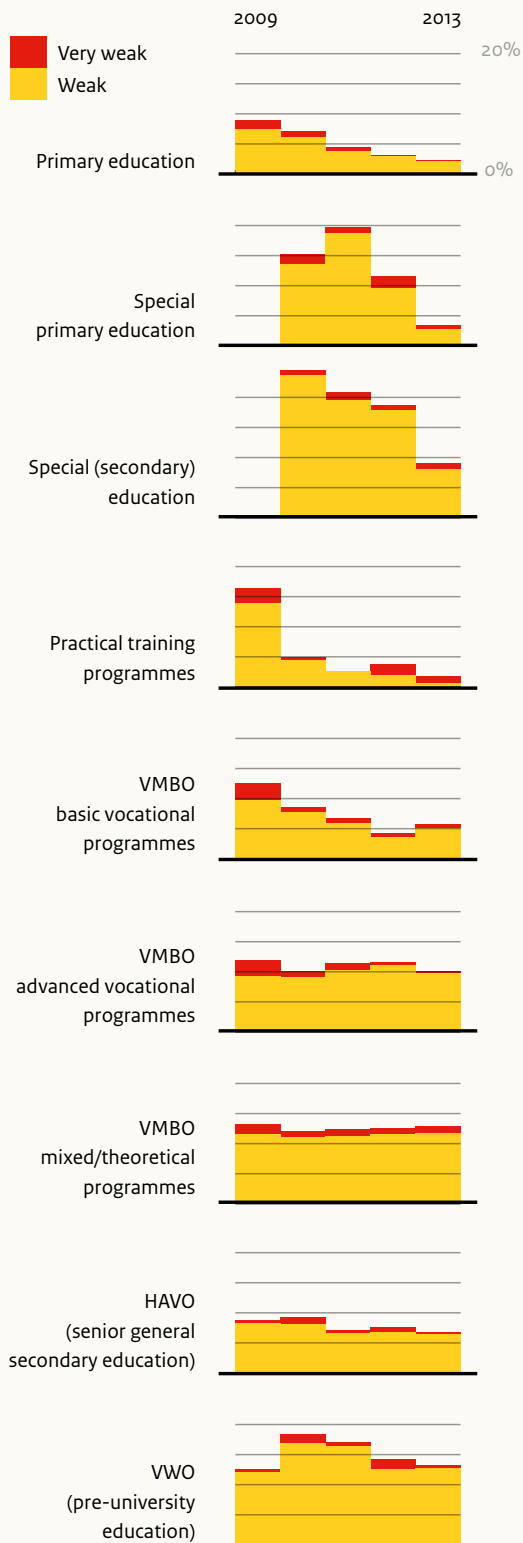


FIGURE 10 Source: The Dutch Inspectorate of Education, 2013

Follow-up supervision in secondary vocational education (MBO)

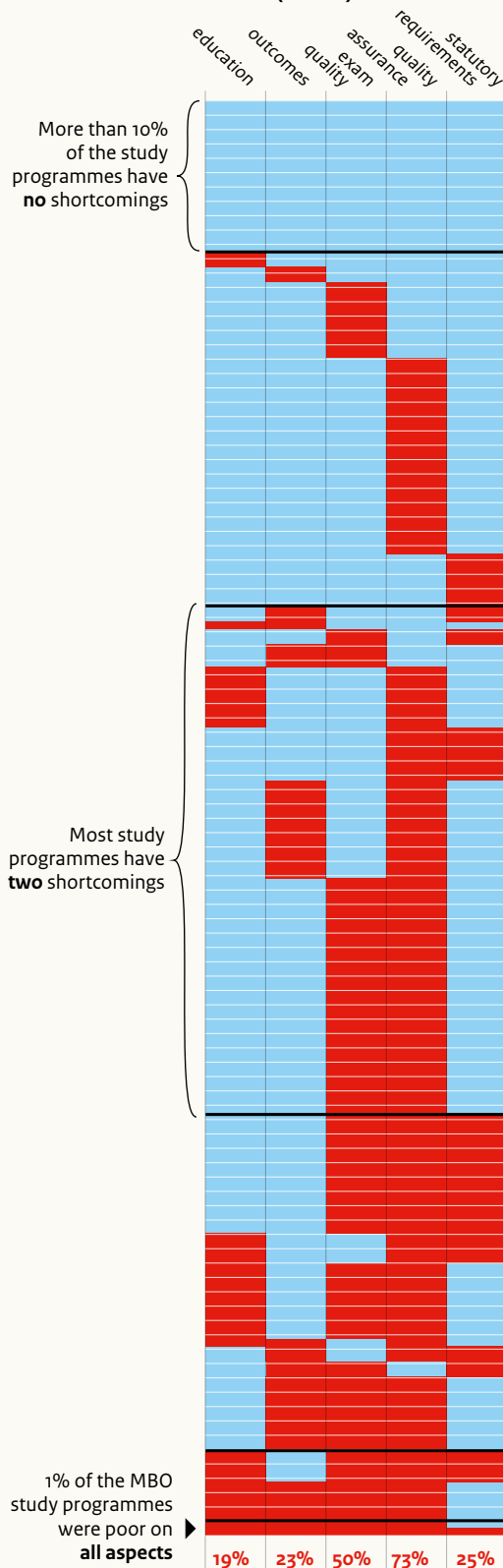
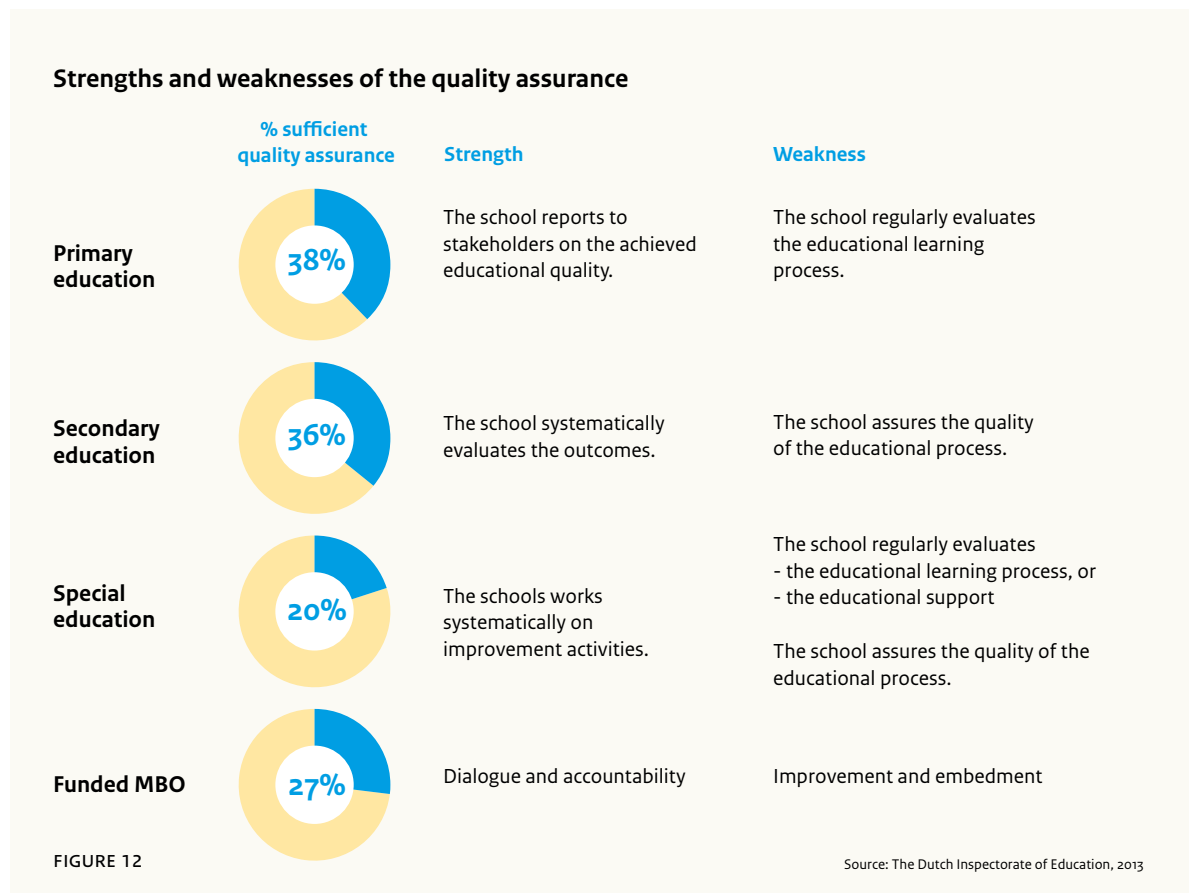


FIGURE 11 Source: The Dutch Inspectorate of Education, 2013



schools and study programmes that used to be weak or very weak have made major strides forwards. Most of these schools and study programmes have invested so much time and effort in the quality improvements that quality is now guaranteed for the longer term. In fact, the average quality is higher at former (very) weak schools than at other schools. The greatest quality improvements were achieved where teachers, school directors and boards worked together in a joint effort.

Quality differences between schools and study programmes • Though many schools and study programmes offer a basic quality of education, the inspectorate still notices large differences in quality in all sectors. Sometimes the inspectorate encounters enthusiastic teachers at good schools or study programmes. These schools typically distinguish themselves by devoting extra attention in the classroom to, for instance, culture, technology, sports, extra languages or ICT. In other cases the quality is just sufficient and no more, and the teams lack enthusiasm. The quality differences are also evident from educational benchmarking initiatives in the primary (e.g. ‘Vensters PO’) and secondary (e.g. ‘Vensters VO’) education. The inspectorate also intends to provide more insight into the quality differences in the future.

Higher ambitions, better quality • Schools and study programmes not only differ in quality, but also in ambition. Less ambitious schools and study programmes are usually content to meet the inspectorate’s minimum standards for basic quality, and show little intention to improve their quality beyond this minimum level. Ambitious schools and study programmes tend to offer a higher standard. The school director plays a crucial role: the quality of tuition is better at schools and study programmes with good school directors.

Shortcomings in structural attention for quality • Teachers, school directors and boards are responsible for ensuring that the quality of education remains sufficient and is improved wherever necessary. In the past years they have successfully focused on improving the basic quality, but there has been no across-the-board improvement in the structural care for quality and quality assurance. Shortcomings in quality care and quality assurance occur at about two thirds of the schools and study programmes (Figure 12). This number has barely changed over the past years. A study of the inspectorate shows that schools and study programmes with sufficient quality assurance are more likely to have a satisfactory educational process and examination/graduation procedures than those that lack sufficient quality assurance.

“School directors make the difference.
The better the school director,
the better the classes.”
(practical training teacher)

Improved evaluation systems and accountability •

Two quality assurance aspects have clearly improved in the past years: evaluation and accountability for pupils' results. In almost all educational sectors, a large to very large majority of the schools evaluate the pupils' results. In addition, a growing number of schools and institutions are accountable on the basis of these results.

Learning from evaluations appears to be difficult •

Despite the widespread presence of quality care systems, these are not always aimed at improving the teachers' performance. For instance, almost all schools and study programmes measure the results of pupils and students, but only half draw lessons from this for the benefit of the educational process (Figure 12). Schools and study programmes also evaluate the satisfaction of pupils and students, but do little with the outcomes (other than pass them on to the teachers involved). In the past years virtually all schools and study programmes have invested in systems to gather data on quality, but about half of the schools and study programmes still fail to use this information to improve the quality of education for pupils and students. Primary education stands out in a positive sense in this respect, secondary vocational education (MBO) in a negative sense (see Figure 12). At schools and study programmes where the quality assurance system is still not fit for purpose, it is often unclear who is responsible for monitoring quality. Those involved do not always adhere to the procedures and new teachers are insufficiently informed about the rules. In some cases, the quality of the tests also leaves something to be desired.

No quality guarantees • The failure of a quality care system to lead to sufficient improvements in the educational process raises question marks about the effectiveness of that system. At some of the schools and study programmes, the quality care system seems to be an end in itself, rather than a means to improve the quality for pupils and students. Quality here is good on paper, but not necessarily in practice. These schools or study programmes use the quality care system as an accountability instrument, not as a means to improve their own quality. If outcomes of evaluations do not lead to changes, pupils and students cannot rely on the quality of education being maintained at an acceptable

standard. Due to the resulting deterioration of standards, school directors and boards can be surprised by unforeseen incidents.

Good examples • Schools and institutions need to focus on making genuine improvements that have a visible effect on the quality of tuition. This will help to prevent investments resulting only in improvements on paper. The inspectorate sees interesting examples of schools that are making genuine improvements by learning from the evaluations of their educational quality. There are many good examples of this in the special (secondary) education sector. Many schools or study programmes that were formerly weak or very weak have also been successful in making lasting improvements and achieving above-average quality.

4.2 Quality of the school leader

Large differences in the quality of school leader • On the whole, the performance of school leaders in primary, special and secondary education is adequate. The inspectorate draws this conclusion on the basis of a study involving about three hundred school leaders. In primary education about half of the school leaders sufficiently master all five competencies as defined by the Dutch School Leaders Academy (Nederlandse Schoolleiders Academie).²³ Virtually no school leaders receive an unsatisfactory rating for each of the standards, though most school leaders could improve their performance on one or two aspects.

Differences in competencies • School leaders in primary and special education are good at building trust; they are reliable and act in a credible manner. They encourage teachers to professionalize their skills and pay sufficient attention to those around them. What causes them the most difficulty is anticipating risks and dilemmas, solving complex problems and using internal or external data to improve the school. The latter may explain why some of the schools and study programmes are still unable to learn lessons from the quality care systems. School leaders in secondary education are knowledgeable of regulations and implement these in a manner that is beneficial to the quality of education. Less well developed competencies of school leaders are: reflection on their own actions, creating a professional culture and realization of expectations of pupils, parents and other stakeholders.

²³ Andersen, I., & Krüger, M. (2012). *Advies beroepsstandaard schoolleiders primair onderwijs*. Utrecht: NSA.

Good school leader, better classes • Most school boards keep a general eye on the quality of their schools. They also only monitor the school leader's performance in a general sense. A small number of the boards (3% to 8%) does not hold annual job performance interviews with the school leader(s). One in ten school boards make no concrete arrangements about professionalization. In the secondary education sector this even applies to one in five school boards. In all the studied educational sectors it is still fairly unusual for boards to obtain information about the school leader(s) from other sources than the school director him/herself. Satisfaction surveys which often contain such information are carried out at three quarters of the primary schools, but consultation between boards and the stakeholder representatives (employees, parents, students) or external audits are still rare. The inspectorate does note that the better the boards monitor the quality of school leaders, the better the school leaders perform, so it certainly pays for boards to keep an eye on their school leader's performance.

4.3 Financial situation of education

Slight improvement in finances • In general, the boards are financially healthy. In 2012 the solvency, liquidity and profitability of all educational sectors were above the critical indicators (Figure 13). A slight improvement can be seen in almost all sectors compared with 2011. The inspectorate concludes from this that the rise in the number of boards exposed to financial risk in the primary, secondary and secondary vocational education sectors has been stopped for the time being. In the previous Education Report it still expressed concern about this issue. It should be noted, however, that there are still boards contending with financial risks within the various educational sectors.

Boards under increased financial supervision • The financial supervision of the inspectorate is aimed at the financial risks of school boards. The supervision focuses on financial continuity, financial legitimacy and financial effectiveness. If a school board takes too much risk, the inspectorate places it under increased financial

supervision. On 1 August 2013 a total of forty boards were under increased financial supervision (Figure 13). These boards occur in all educational sectors, with the exception of the higher education sector. Compared with 2012, the number of boards under increased financial supervision has risen, particularly in the primary and secondary education sectors. This increase is partly due to the fact that, when in doubt, the inspectorate now imposes increased supervision more quickly than before.

Reviews of audit work • Adequate supervision of boards relies on the availability of accountability information. This accountability information is audited by a board-appointed auditor. The audit is performed according to detailed instructions set out in the education audit protocol. The inspectorate carries out file reviews to verify the adequacy of the audit work. In 2012 the inspectorate performed a total of 113 reviews. The outcomes of seven of these were unsatisfactory, which means that the audit report or assurance is insufficiently reliable. This number is comparable to 2011. The auditors performed additional work on the boards in question. With the other reviews too, the inspectorate regularly makes comments on the approach, implementation and evaluation of the audits.

Improvement in quality of small audit firms • The inspectorate has found that the quality of the audits performed by most auditors at educational institutions is good. The quality of the audits by smaller audit firms also improved in 2012. The inadequate reviews at smaller audit firms were performed by audit firms with a limited number of audits in the educational sector.

Slight reduction in annual audit costs • The annual audit costs have fallen slightly in all sectors of funded education. This is because boards have improved their accounting systems, so that the auditor can perform the audit more efficiently. In addition, the market as a whole is under pressure. The total auditor costs have increased slightly over the past years due to a growth in the volume of non-audit and advisory work performed by the auditors. The annual audit and other auditor costs are still not reported by all boards. The inspectorate will raise this issue with these boards.

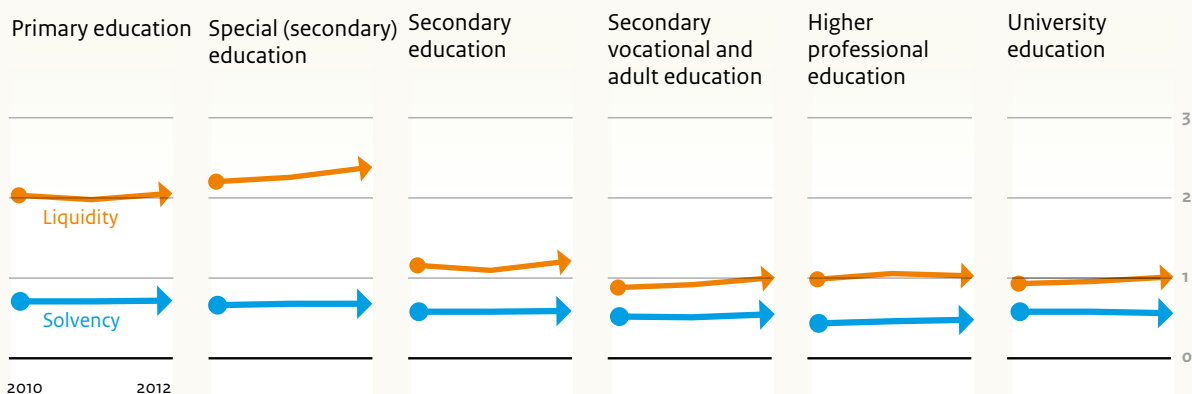


Continuity • Is the board financially healthy? Is it able to meet its short- and long-term financial liabilities? Does the board use resources for effective planning and control?

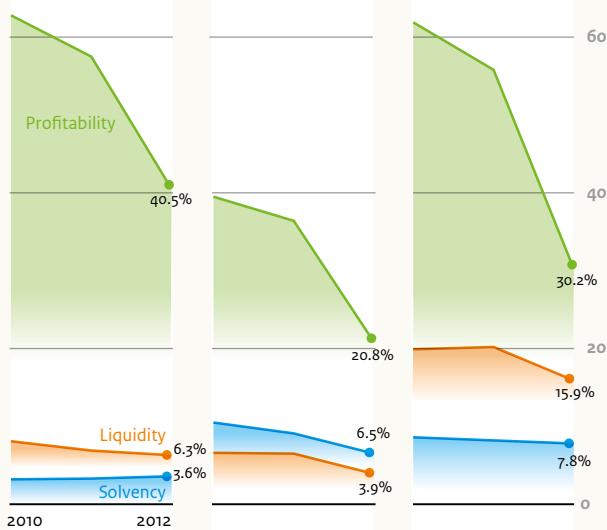
Legitimacy of funding and expenditure • Is the board entitled to the funding it receives from government? Is the money spent on the appropriate purposes as defined in the laws and regulations?

Effectiveness • Does the board make efficient use of the funding it receives from government?

Despite slight improvement in financial positions...



... and fewer boards undershooting the minimum financial limits



Solvency
Indicates the extent to which boards can meet their long-term financial liabilities.

Liquidity
Indicates the extent to which boards can meet their shorter-term (< 1 year) financial liabilities.

Profitability
Indicates the extent to which boards can balance revenues and expenditures and thus provides insight into the movement of equity.

...more boards are under intensified financial supervision.

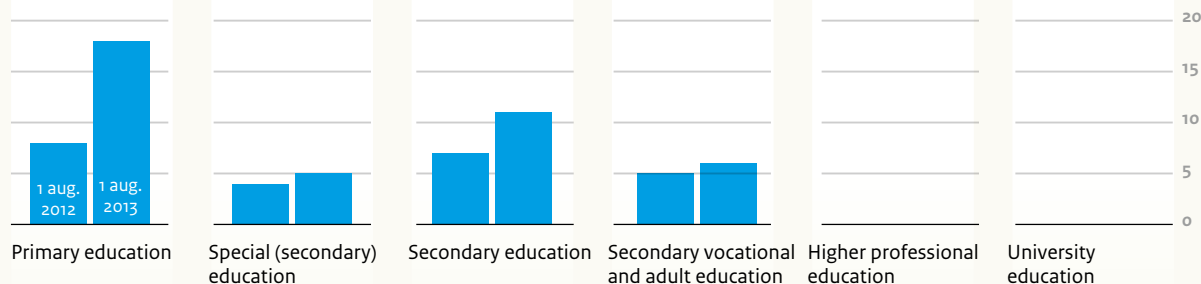


FIGURE 13

Source: DUO/The Dutch Inspectorate of Education, 2013



Governance of school boards • From 1 August 2013 the quality of the governance of school boards has become a standard element of the inspectorate's risk-based inspection methods. The inspectorate defines this quality as the functioning of the governance chain (board, internal supervision, management, employee/parent/student representatives). The inspectorate is not concerned about specific individuals, governance structures or the paper reality of articles of association and regulations, but about actual behavioural actions.

Top incomes and remunerations • The inspectorate has reclaimed remunerations from three boards on the grounds that these were not efficacious. The *'Regeling bezoldiging topfunctionarissen OCW-sectoren'* sets maximum limits for the remunerations of board members and senior officials. Board members who earn more than the maximum for the sector, but whose contract falls within the transitional arrangement, received a letter from the Minister of Education at the start of 2013. In this letter, the minister made a moral appeal on them to reduce the remuneration. Discussions were held with board members who refused to cooperate with that request. Except for a few individuals, everyone has complied with the request.

4.4 Relationship between educational quality and finance

Quality risks with increased financial supervision • In general the school boards are financially healthy. At sector level, the solvency, liquidity and profitability of all educational sectors was above the critical indicators in 2012 (Figure 13). Compared with 2011 a slight improvement can be seen in almost all sectors. The inspectorate therefore concludes that the rise in the number of boards at financial risk in the primary, secondary and secondary vocational education sectors has been stopped for the time being. In the previous Education Report it still expressed concerns about this issue. It should be noted, however, that there are still boards contending with financial risks within the various educational sectors.

Connection between financial problems and quality problems • There is no one-on-one relationship between financial risks and the quality of education at a school or institution, but both depend on the quality of the school board. A connection can mainly be seen when the quality is very low or the financial risks very large. Boards with a high solvency usually also have a better quality of education (Figure 14). This connection was also observed among boards for special (secondary) education, though the numbers here are much smaller.

Boards without weak schools have higher solvency and liquidity • The solvency and liquidity is higher among boards without (very) weak schools than among boards with (very) weak schools. A structural difference can be seen in the level of the key financial ratios between these two groups of boards. This applies to the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. Here too, the picture is the same for boards in the special (secondary) education, primary education and secondary education sectors.

At-risk boards are often large boards • It follows that the quality and finances of a school or institution are probably related to the quality of the board's performance. The inspectorate also notes that boards with risks in the field of both educational quality and finances are often larger and more complex than boards without these risks. Clearly, if the governance quality is of the same level, it is more difficult to keep the diverse variables under control in a more complex context.

4.5 Lessons from incidents

Situations with large consequences • Occasionally, serious situations occur that have major consequences for the pupils or students and may even threaten the continuity of schools or institutions. In 2012/2013 there were five major incidents in different educational sectors. Pupils and students directly or indirectly experience the consequences of these incidents: what are their study results or diplomas still worth? Their future prospects can be seriously damaged by such incidents. If their school or study programme is closed, pupils and students are forced to switch to a different school or study programme. Students may struggle to adapt to the new school, fall behind with their studies or even drop out.

Social consequences • When serious incidents occur at schools and institutions, this also has consequences for the general perception of the quality of education. Such incidents undermine not only the trust of pupils and students, but also that of parents, teachers and other stakeholders. Moreover, schools incur very high costs in handling and resolving incidents.

Relationship between finances and educational quality

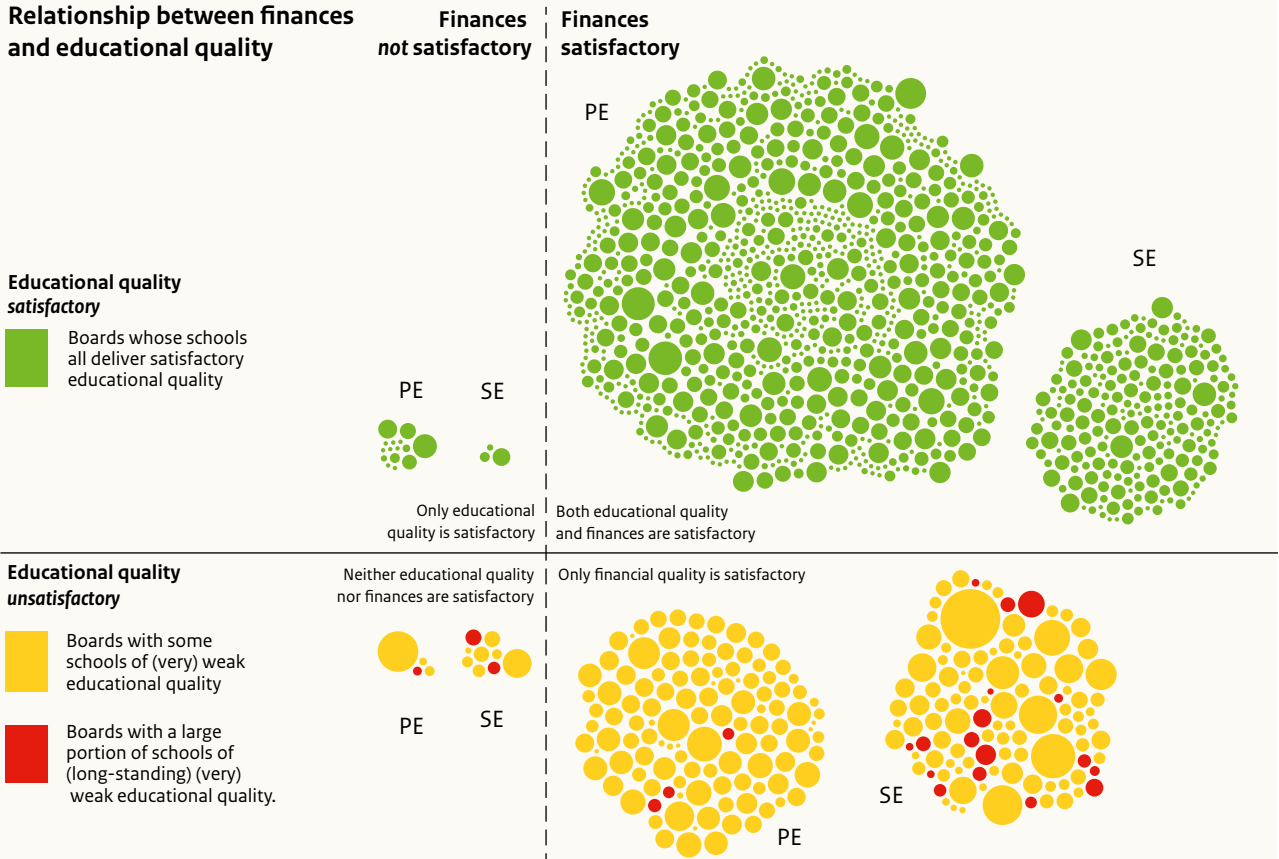


FIGURE 14A

Source: The Dutch Inspectorate of Education, 2013

Satisfactory educational quality, more often financially healthy

Educational quality and finances viewed over three years

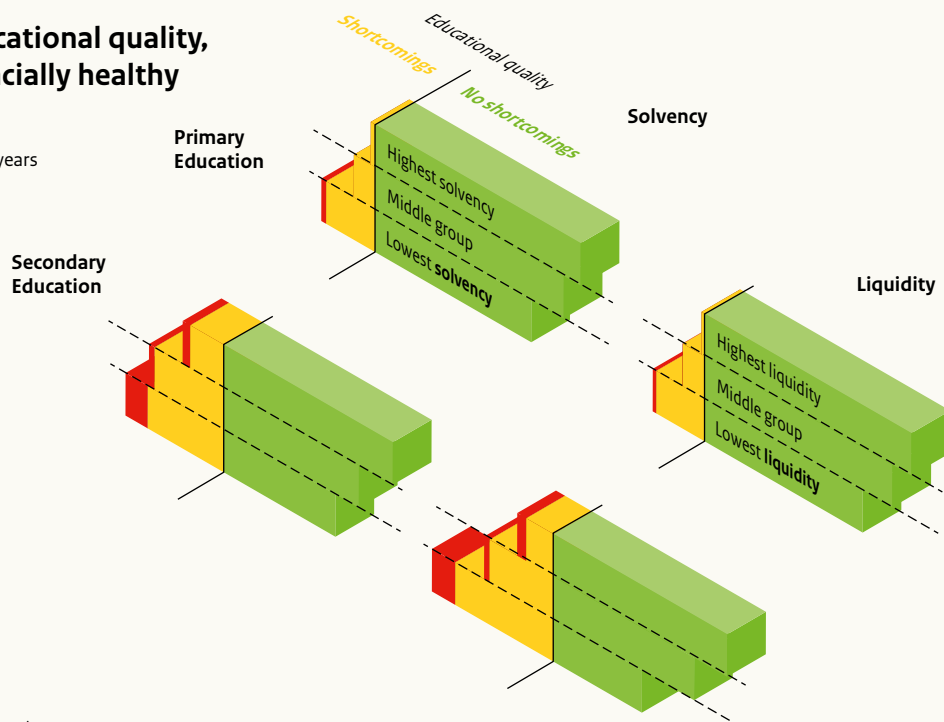


FIGURE 14B

Source: The Dutch Inspectorate of Education, 2013

“You must not raise the bar, you must teach people to jump higher.”

(secondary school director)

Governance failures • Every incident is different; the nature and context vary strongly. Incidents are therefore difficult to compare with each other. Nevertheless, the problems can usually be traced back (with hindsight) to governance failures. Studies into governance actions show that there are often four areas of failure. The first is the failure of ‘checks and balances’.

‘Checks and balances’ do not work • Boards in the Netherlands enjoy a large degree of autonomy. This calls for an effective system of powers and countervailing powers. One aspect of this is the separation of management and internal supervision, as laid down in legal codes. In practice we find that adequate internal supervision arrangements exist on paper, but that insufficient checks are in place to ensure the adequate performance of the board and proper adherence to good employment practices. In some cases, for instance, no performance and appraisal interviews are conducted with the board. As a result, risks are not brought to light in time. The role of the stakeholder representatives (employees/parents/students) also often leaves a lot to be desired. This is partly due to a lack of interest in participation in a (common) representative body alongside a lack of expertise. Another problem is that in some situations the board does not take the representative body seriously enough and does not involve it sufficiently in important policy decisions. In such situations, there is insufficient scope for critical reflection and dissenting voices within the school or institution.

Quality not assured • The second governance failure relates to the quality of education. The cause in this case is the constantly changing quality in combination with ad-hoc solutions. The quality may be improved in one area (partly under pressure from the supervising inspectorate and with external support), but then new quality problems arise in other areas. A relatively large number of schools and institutions fail to implement lasting improvements and take too long to address problems on a structural basis. Faced with problems, many schools repeatedly resort to management changes and make frequent use of interim managers.

No coherent focus on quality and finances • Most schools and institutions operate a quality care system that is adequate on paper but, all too often, not in practice. This is the third area of governance failure. The quality care is insufficiently noticeable in the classroom. In addition, the policy, both in educational and financial terms, has a short-term focus. A carefully-thought-out policy for the medium term, outlining a coherent strategy for educational quality, staff policy and sound finances, is either absent or not transparent. Financial problems are often solved by creating funding gaps elsewhere. There is no long-term vision on the future of the school or institution or on the financial and other risks that it runs.

No transparent and professional organizational culture • The fourth governance failure is that institutions at risk of incidents often have an insufficiently transparent organizational culture. This may be due to a variety of causes. If the continuity of an institution is in jeopardy (and hence the employees’ jobs), employees are often reluctant or too fearful to openly express their opinion. In other cases the decision-making process is not transparent. With large institutions, the distance between the management and the teaching staff is sometimes too great. With small institutions, few official records are kept and there is often a more informal culture of short lines and verbal contact. There are also institutions where colleagues are not inclined to confront each other about their professional behaviour. If the identity of an institution is an important consideration, then greater importance may be given to the continuity of the institution – sometimes under pressure from the stakeholders – than to the quality of education. In such cases, the institution operates from a defensive and fairly isolated position and the board no longer acts in a professional manner.

4.6 Concluding remarks

Governance model in question • Over the past years a lot more attention has been given to how boards of educational institutions perform their role. Boards carry the final responsibility for the development and monitoring of the quality of education, subject to strict financial parameters. That is the essence. Educational boards enjoy a large degree of autonomy, within certain legal frameworks. Partly in response to incidents at schools and institutions, various initiatives have been taken to improve the effectiveness of this governance model. Various parties are now also looking closely at the legitimacy of educational boards and at the integrity and conduct of board members and supervisors of educational institutions.

Good cooperation • The inspectorate considers it important that measures are taken to improve the performance of the boards of educational institutions. This calls for good cooperation with all stakeholders within the educational sector. The inspectorate sees initiatives in all educational sectors that are aimed at improving the professionalism and expertise of boards and internal supervisors.

Ordering

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