



Education Inspectorate
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

The State of Education in the Netherlands

Highlights of the 2010/2011 Education Report



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The Dutch Inspectorate of Education
April 2012

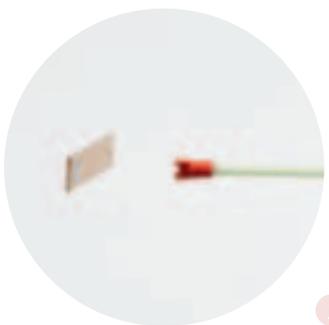
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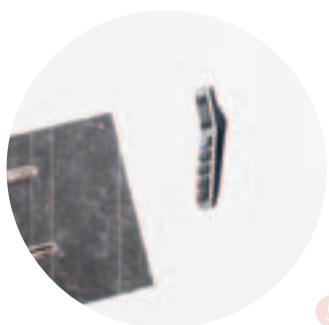
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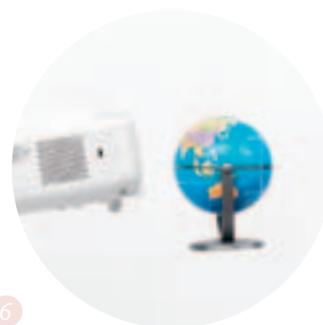
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The state of education in the Netherlands

The Education Inspectorate monitors the quality of education in the Netherlands. The Inspectorate's Education Report provides an annual overview of positive and negative developments in the education system. It also includes recommendations for improvements. This is a summary of the Education Report on the 2010/2011 school year.

Favourable developments

The education provided in the Netherlands scores well in comparison with other countries. Most pupils and students receive education of sufficient or good quality. A number of positive developments that the inspectorate pointed out in earlier reports have continued into the 2010/2011 school year:

- there are fewer weak and unsatisfactory schools and study programmes;
- more pupils and students continue on to higher forms of education, thus increasing the average level of education;
- educational achievement in primary education increased slightly once again and there were fewer early school leavers in secondary vocational education.

Room for improvement

Nevertheless, education in the Netherlands can and must be improved. There are major differences between the schools, so that not all pupils and students are getting the same opportunities. The following aspects of our education system can be improved:

- the quality of teaching (to be able to provide teaching tailored to the needs of both low and high performing pupils and students);
- the support provided to vulnerable pupils and students;
- boardroom attention for the quality of educational practices and for compliance with legislation and regulations;
- the performance of a number of small schools and study programmes.



To read more about developments in education in 2010/2011 you can view the full Education Report at www.onderwijsinspectie.nl

1

SCHOOL QUALITY

LESS WEAK AND
UNSATISFACTORY SCHOOLS



Basic quality level for
more pupils and students



Cities show most improvement



Focus on results-oriented teaching



→ The number of weak and unsatisfactory schools and study programmes has been decreasing since 2008

→ Major differences between the provinces

1. Less weak and unsatisfactory schools and study programmes

Continuing the trend set during the past few years, the number of weak and unsatisfactory schools decreased in 2011. More and more schools are meeting the inspectorate’s quality standards. However, there are large differences between the sectors where the distribution of weak and unsatisfactory schools is concerned.

Decrease of the number of weak and unsatisfactory schools

The percentage of weak and unsatisfactory schools has been decreasing since 2009. As of 1 September 2011, a decrease of 1 to 2 per cent applied virtually across the board. The greatest improvement took place in the special education sector; there the decrease amounted to nearly 4 per cent.

Three categories of schools failed to reflect this decrease

The percentage of weak and unsatisfactory schools did not decrease in three categories of schools: special primary schools (where the percentage of

unsatisfactory schools actually increased by a few per cent), the advanced vocational track of pre-vocational secondary education and the cluster 4 schools in (secondary) special education.

Sectors with few weak and unsatisfactory schools

The lowest percentages of weak and unsatisfactory schools occur among the primary schools and the practical training programmes. The percentage lies below 5 per cent for these categories of schools. In fact, as of 1 September 2011, not a single school for practical training was categorized as unsatisfactory.

Definitions



SATISFACTORY QUALITY CATEGORY

The annual risk analysis or a quality survey did not reveal any threats to education quality. The results are of a level that can be expected and the school has the confidence of the Inspectorate (basic supervision).



WEAK QUALITY CATEGORY

The quality of education at these schools has major shortcomings. The Inspectorate has intensified its supervision to improve quality as quickly as possible.



UNSATISFACTORY QUALITY CATEGORY

The quality of education at these unsatisfactory schools has major shortcomings. Both the results and the educational processes are inadequate. The Inspectorate has intensified its supervision.

Results-oriented teaching is an important key to quality improvement.

Sectors with many weak and unsatisfactory schools

The highest percentage of weak and unsatisfactory schools is found in the special secondary education sector. Over a fifth of these schools were categorized as weak or unsatisfactory on 1 September 2011. These are relatively often cluster 4 schools, intended for pupils with serious behavioural or psychiatric problems.

Relatively many special primary schools and pre-university schools (VWO) are weak or unsatisfactory: 15 to 20 per cent of these schools and programmes are categorized as such.

Cities catching up

The percentage of weak and unsatisfactory primary and secondary schools has particularly decreased

in the cities. Cities still have a relatively large share of these schools, but they are catching up.

Differences between the provinces

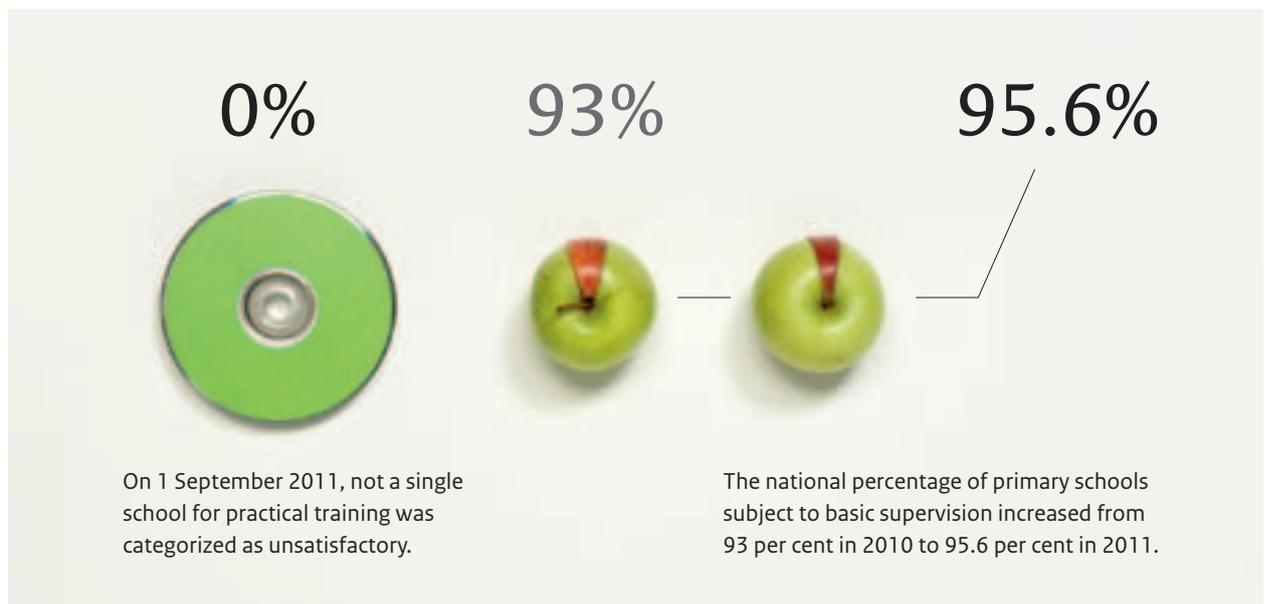
More than 10 per cent of the primary schools in Flevoland and Groningen are weak or unsatisfactory. The national average is just above 4 per cent. The percentage of weak and unsatisfactory primary schools in Zeeland decreased from 10 to 1 per cent. This meant that Zeeland had the lowest percentage of weak and unsatisfactory primary schools of all the provinces last year. The percentage of weak and unsatisfactory secondary schools in Friesland and Groningen is relatively high (21 and 23 per cent, in comparison with a national average of 10 per cent). This percentage increased, which was against the national trend.



The number of weak and unsatisfactory schools and study programmes has been decreasing since 2008

Figure 1.1

Supervision of practical training and primary schools (reference dates: 1 September 2010 and 1 September 2011)

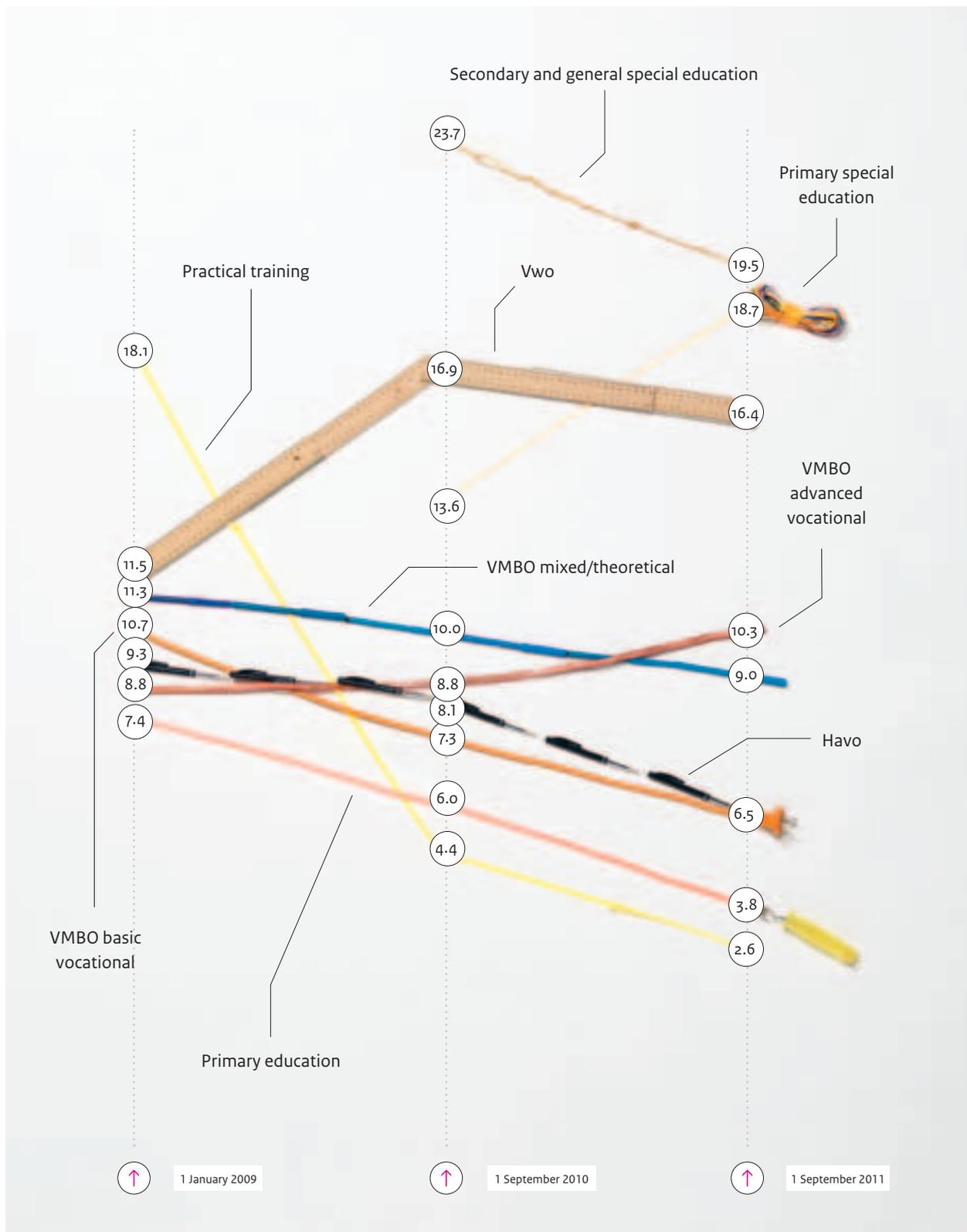


Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

→ Basic quality for more pupils and students

Figure 1.2a

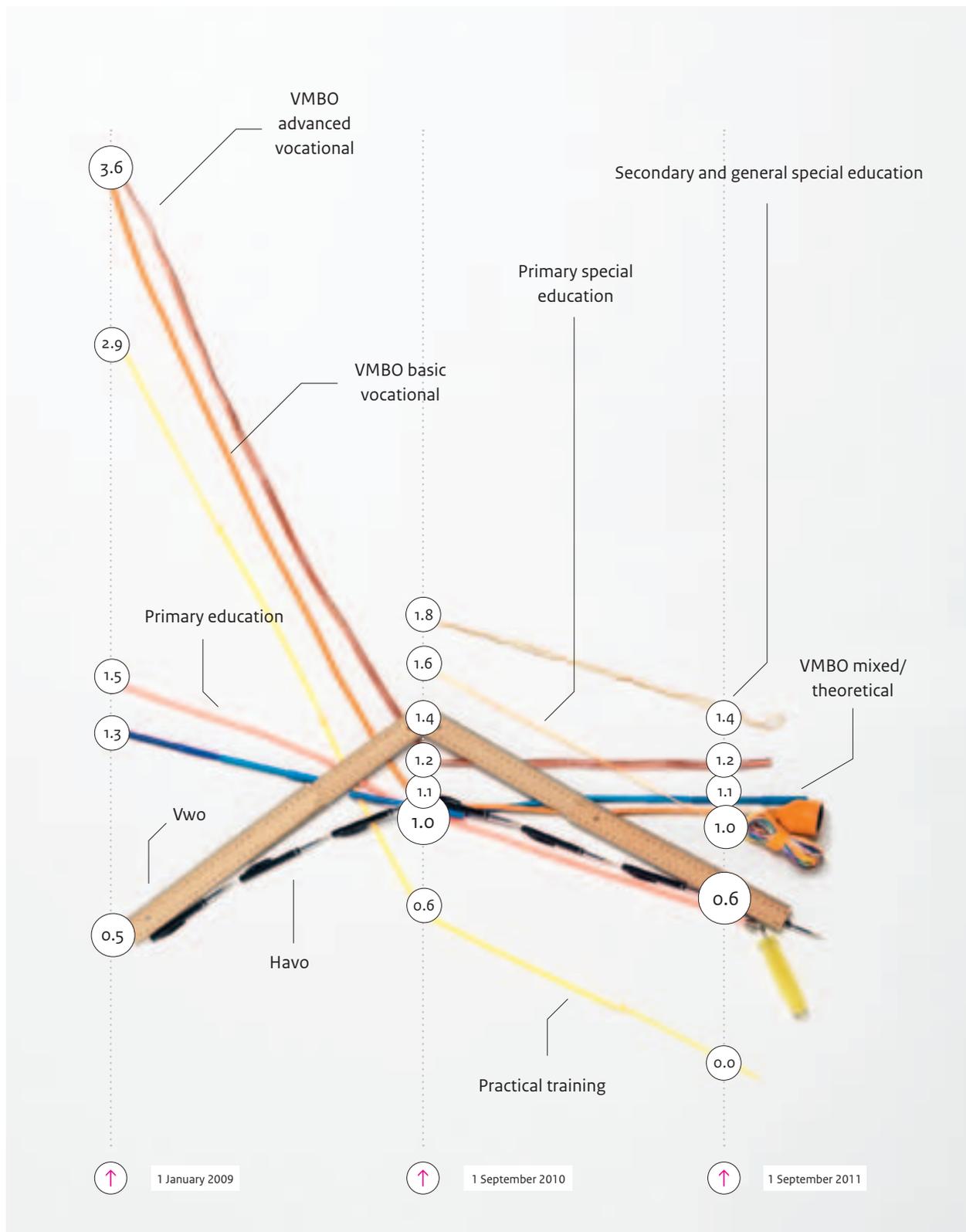
Percentage of weak schools per sector (reference dates: 1 January 2009, 1 September 2010 and 1 September 2011)



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

Figure 1.2b

Percentage of unsatisfactory schools per sector (reference dates: 1 January 2009, 1 September 2010 and 1 September 2011)



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

Weak secondary vocational programmes

The number of weak and unsatisfactory programmes in the secondary vocational education sector fell too; from 335 on 1 September 2010 to 189 on 1 September 2011. This sector cannot be compared with the other sectors because the inspectorate uses a slightly different method of supervision here.

Further improvement

If schools want to improve their results they need to evaluate their results and their educational processes. Weak and unsatisfactory schools scored significantly lower for quality assurance than schools that fall under the basic supervision system. The same applies to results-oriented teaching methods. An extremely low percentage of weak and unsatisfactory schools meet the requirements of all five of the indicators for results-oriented teaching. There is a lot of room for improvement in quality assurance and results-oriented teaching among

schools and programmes subject to basic supervision by the inspectorate.

Results-oriented teaching

In the last Education Report, the inspectorate emphasized that results-oriented teaching is the most important key to educational improvement. Institution boards, directors and teachers all play their own crucial role in this. There is still room for improvement by all the involved parties.

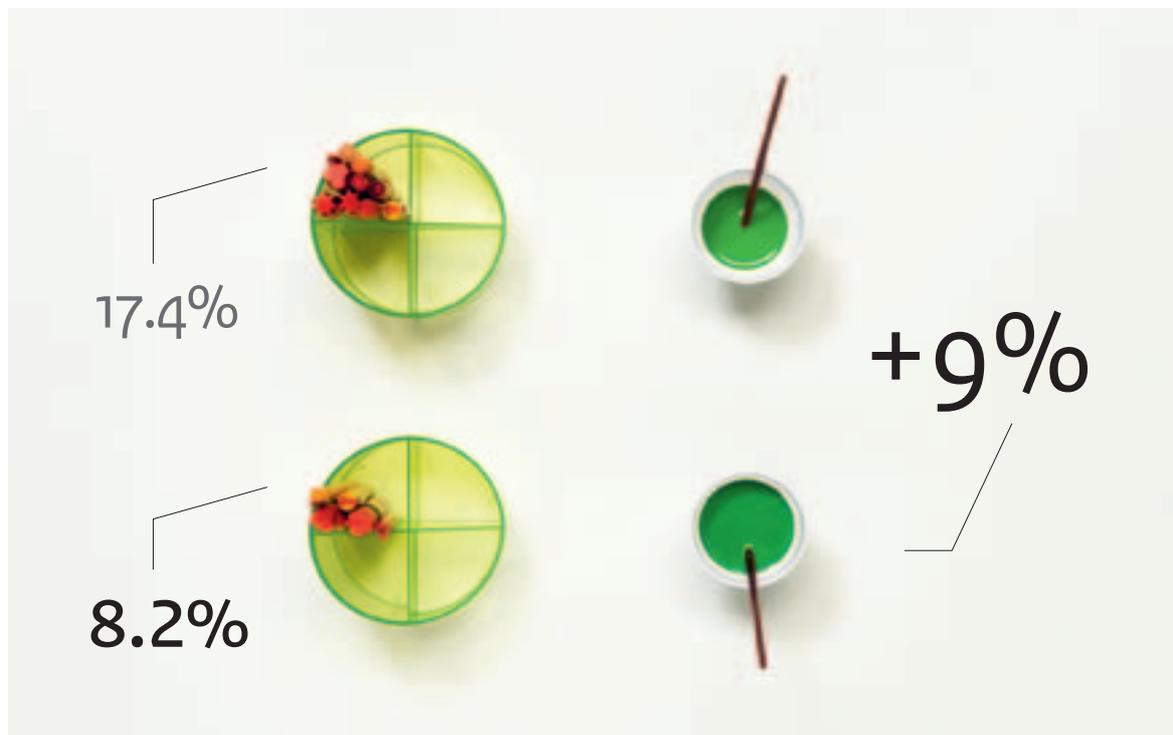
The number of weak and insatisfactory schools and study programmes is still decreasing. This means that more schools are meeting the minimum quality requirements.



Cities show most improvement

Figure 1.3

Supervision of primary and secondary schools in a number of cities



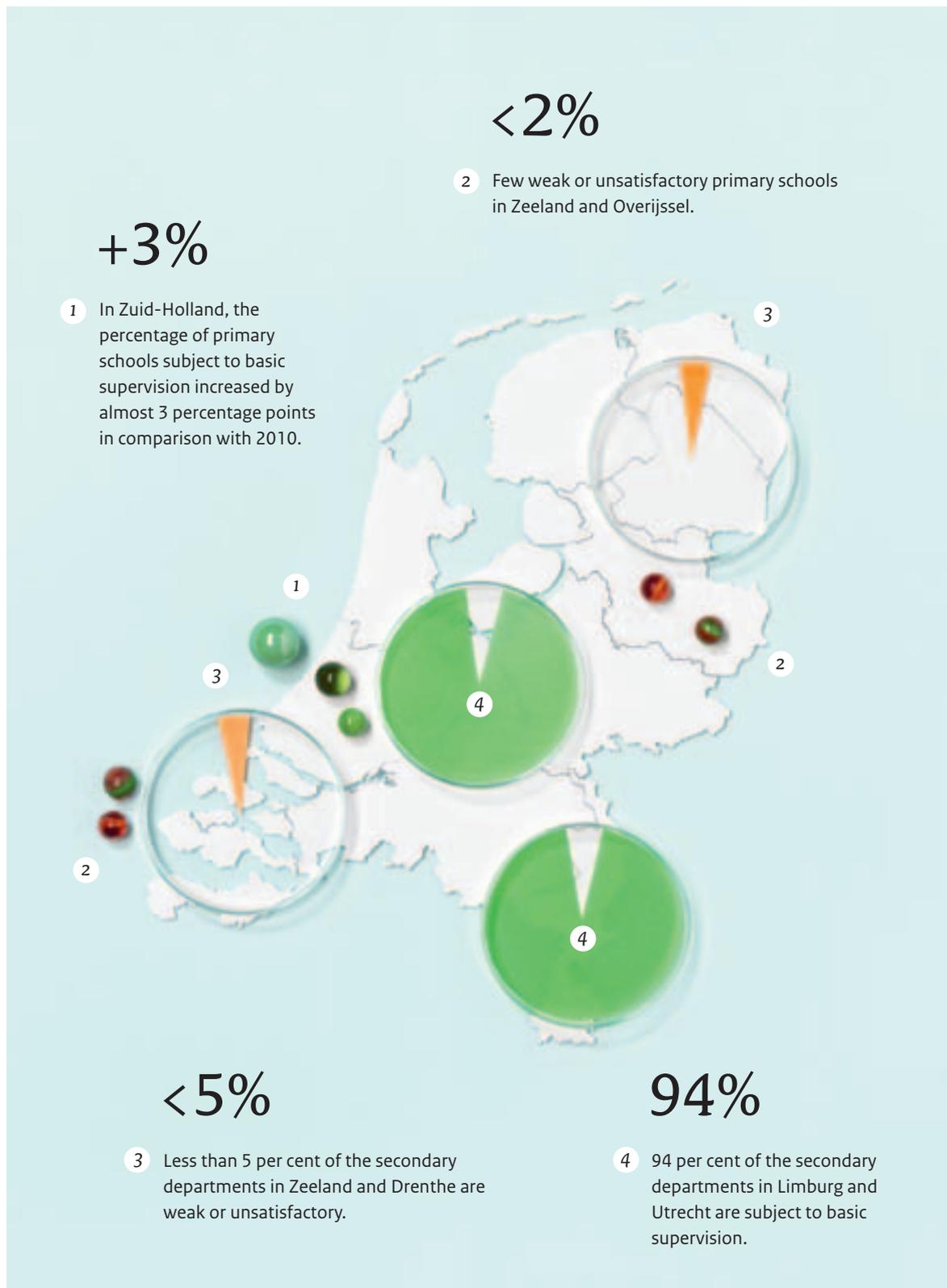
Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

The percentage of weak and unsatisfactory secondary schools in Amsterdam fell by more than half: from 17.4 per cent in 2010 to 8.2 per cent in 2011.

In The Hague, the percentage of primary schools subject to basic supervision increased by almost 9 percentage points in comparison with 2010.

→ Major differences between the provinces

Figure 1.4
Supervision of primary and secondary schools per province



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

2

YOUTH MORE HIGHLY EDUCATED

MORE AND MORE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NETHERLANDS ARE HIGHLY EDUCATED



Growing numbers of students in HAVO/VWO and higher education



High percentage of Dutch youth with a higher education diploma



Declining pass rates and exam results in secondary education



2. Attainment of higher levels of education places greater demands on schools

More and more pupils are continuing on to higher forms of education. The level of education of the population as a whole is thus increasing. The changing pupil and student population does place greater demands on the schools and study programmes.

Increasing level of education

Young people in the Netherlands are becoming more and more highly educated. Higher education is growing the fastest, with participation in higher education at the research universities (WO) growing faster than in higher professional education (universities of applied sciences – HBO). The number of young people with a higher education diploma is high in comparison with the rest of the world too¹. The proportion of students attending senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO) is increasing as well.

Fewer pupils following pre-vocational secondary education and secondary vocational education levels 1 and 2

The trend towards higher forms of education has consequences for schools and study programmes. For example, this means that a smaller proportion of the pupils are continuing on to the pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) basic vocational programme (basisberoepsgerichte leerweg). Less pupils are also following the level 1 and 2 MBO programmes².

The Netherlands has the highest percentage of young people with a higher education diploma in Europe.

Positive trend

The trend towards higher forms of education has been continuing for some decades. This trend is not only visible in the Netherlands, but also in the countries around us. More and more pupils now have the opportunity to develop their potential and so this is a positive trend.

All education sectors affected

The trend towards higher forms of education is visible throughout the education system. Primary school graduates are being advised to follow more higher-level follow-up programmes than a few years ago. During the first stage of secondary education, schools often place pupils in higher level classes than advised. Here too, more pupils are continuing on to higher levels. This applies to pupils or students moving from theoretical pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO-T) to senior general secondary education, from secondary vocational education (MBO) to higher professional education and from higher professional education to university education.

Pupil population changing

The composition of the pupil population is changing. The VMBO basic vocational programmes count a greater percentage of pupils who receive educational support. HAVO and VWO programmes are also receiving a greater diversity of new pupils. This is because more pupils are choosing to follow these forms of education.

Demands placed on schools and study programmes

Differentiation

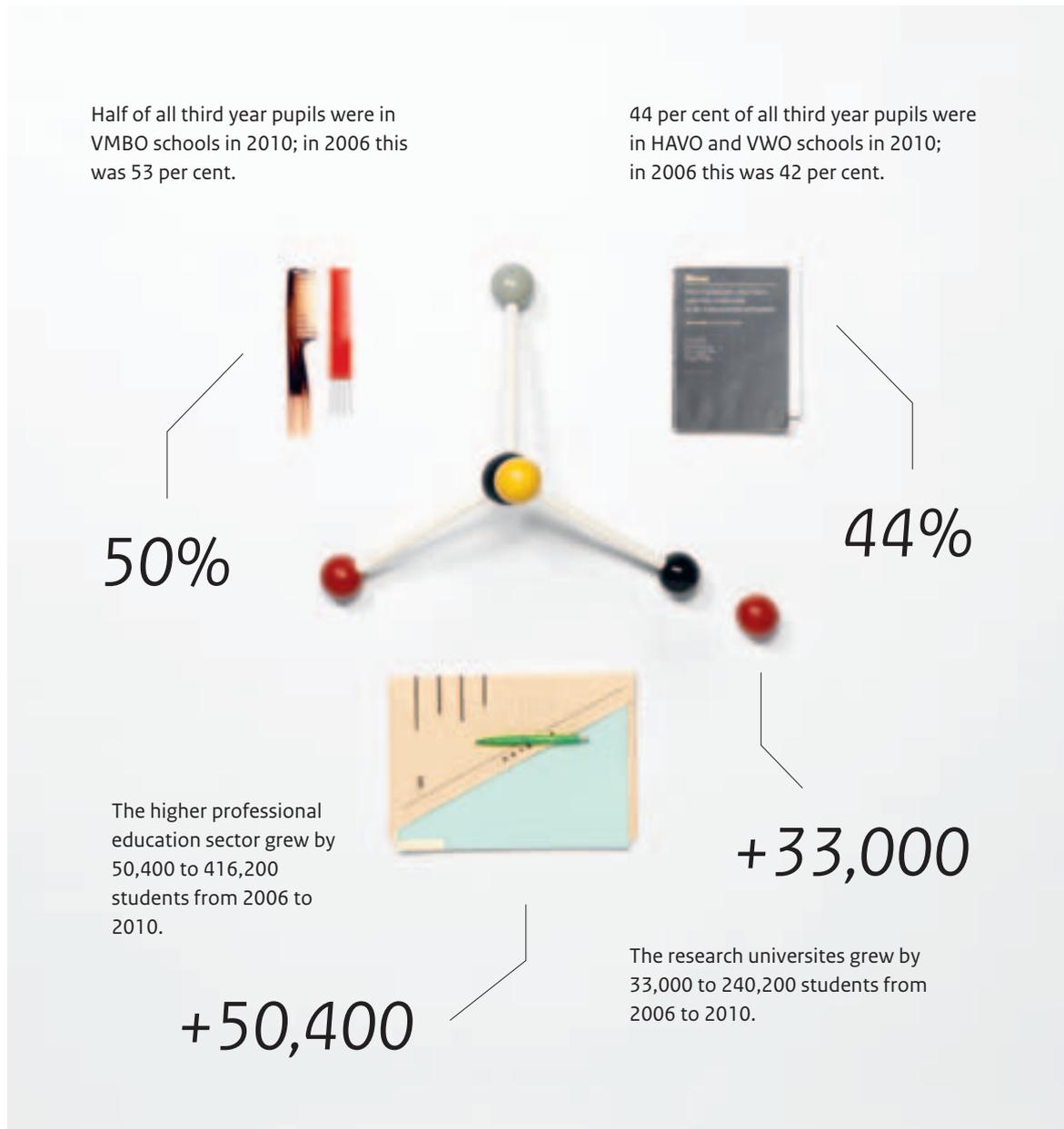
The greater diversity of pupils entering higher education and HAVO and VWO programmes demands more differentiation. Teachers and lecturers will need to adapt their subject matter, teaching methods and available time to the capacities of individual pupils and students. The Inspectorate has ascertained that a considerable number of programmes need to improve on this point.



Growing numbers of students in HAVO/VWO and higher education; fewer young people opt for VMBO

Figure 2.1

Numbers of pupils and students in secondary education, higher professional education and research universities



Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), 2011³

Support and supervision

The number of vulnerable pupils is increasing in the VMBO basic vocational programmes and the MBO level 1 and 2 programmes. It is important to provide these pupils with extra support and supervision. Not all schools and study programmes are providing these pupils with extra support.

Maintaining exam quality

The current exam levels must at least be maintained. Schools and programmes need to realize the importance of this. This is all the more relevant due to the increased diversity in the level of the pupils and students that enter these programmes. Examination requirements must not be lowered to meet the level of the underperforming portion of the pupils and students.

Exam results and numbers of repeating pupils are a cause for concern

Drop in pass rates

Pass rates in secondary education dropped again slightly in 2011. Fewer pupils passed their final exams. The decline started in 2008⁴, when 93.5 per cent of the pupils passed their final exams. This percentage fell to 90.5 per cent in 2011. The effect of the more stringent examination requirements in 2012 is unknown, but such increased stringency probably does not result in an increase in pass rates.

No improvement in examination results

The average examination results of the VMBO programmes decreased slightly again. Less pupils achieved high grades in VMBO and VWO education. The percentage of pupils with an average of 6.5 or higher declined between 2006 and 2010.

School examinations

Some secondary schools have been unable to reduce the discrepancy between the school examination and national examination results. Although the school examination is valuable in itself, the marks achieved in this examination are higher than those of the national examination. This difference increased again slightly in the 2010/2011 school year. It is alarming that VAVO schools (adult general secondary education) in particular hand out higher marks for their school examinations than the national examinations: by an average 0.75 points. Systematic differences between schools lead to undesirable differences in pupils' results and their chances of successfully completing their education. For this reason, schools and their boards need to carefully monitor the quality of the school examinations.

→ Declining pass rates and exam results in secondary education

Figure 2.2

Pass rates and exam results in VMBO education



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

Advanced vocational programmes

The average marks for exams fell the most in the advanced vocational programmes: from 6.5 in 2006 to 6.1 in 2011. Pupils in basic vocational programmes scored an average mark of 6.3 (was 6.6), while those in the mixed/theoretical programmes scored 6.1 (was 6.4).

Mixed/theoretical programmes

Fewer pupils passed their VMBO exams in 2011 than in 2010. The percentage of pupils who gained their diploma fell particularly in the mixed/theoretical programmes: from 93.7 per cent in 2010 to 92.6 per cent in 2011.

Major differences in test and exam results and success rates between the various schools and institutions.

Relatively high numbers of repeating pupils

Dutch pupils have always been relatively frequent repeaters of school years⁵. The highest percentages are found in the second stage of secondary education institutions. The percentage of repeating pupils in secondary education has increased since 2008⁶.

There are considerable discrepancies in percentages

of repeating pupils between schools.

There is insufficient insight into the effects of repeating a year, but positive effects in the short term are often negated later on. The effectiveness of repeating a year is subject to debate and other, better forms of harmonization may in fact be required.

Higher education examinations

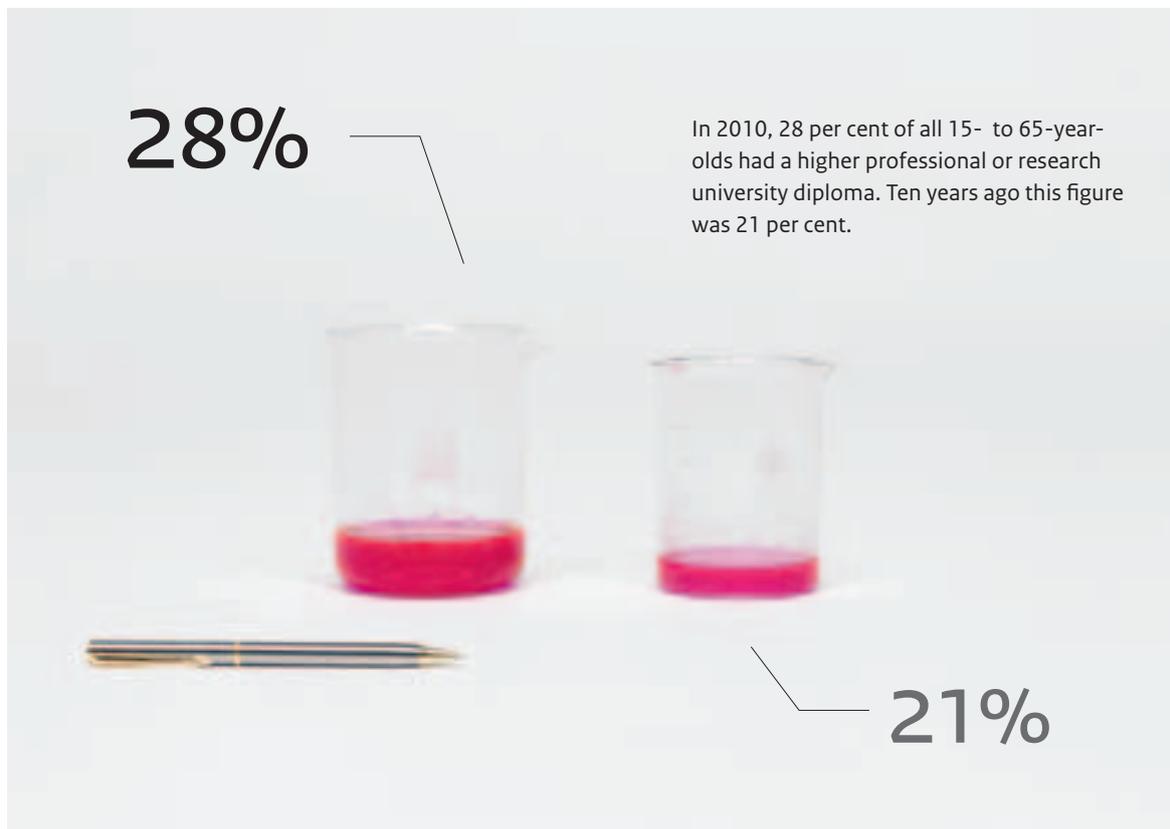
Higher education programmes and institutions need to carefully monitor the quality of the examinations. Recent incidents reveal that some programmes have not guaranteed the quality of their examinations. It is unknown whether this concerns an incidental problem, or that the quality of the higher education examinations is under pressure across the board. In any case, the incidents indicate that the quality of examinations is of crucial importance and that institution directors need to incorporate quality assurance in the examination system.



High percentage of Dutch youth with a higher education diploma

Figure 2.3

Percentage of Dutch youth with a higher education diploma



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

⁵ OECD (2011). When students repeat grades or are transferred out of school: What does it mean for education systems? PISA in focus 6. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

⁶ Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2011). Kerncijfers 2006-2010. Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

3 THE TEACHER

THE TEACHER CANNOT DO IT ALONE



Most teachers have sufficient basic skills to be able to offer good teaching.



Some 25 to 50 per cent of the teachers demonstrate more complex skills



School boards and directors need to invest in the professionalization of teachers



3. Targeted professional development of teachers

The teacher is crucial to good education. There are many good teachers, but there are also teachers who need to improve.

Basic skills

Most teachers have sufficient basic skills to be able to offer good teaching. They explain the subject matter clearly, create a task-oriented learning environment and actively involve the pupils in the classroom activities. The Inspectorate came to this conclusion after observing more than 2,500 teachers at work in primary and secondary education institutions. A very small proportion of teachers lacked the basic teaching skills; some 2 to 3 per cent of the teachers observed. School directors and boards need to learn to recognize these teachers, confront them with their shortcomings and provide them with supervision.

Most teachers have sufficient basic skills to be able to offer good teaching.

explained clearly, a task-oriented learning environment is created and pupils are actively involved in the classroom activities. The Inspectorate found that at least one of these aspects scored insufficiently for a small number of teachers. This applied to one in seven teachers in the primary schools and more than one in five teachers in secondary schools. The professional development of this group of teachers must primarily focus on the application of basic skills.

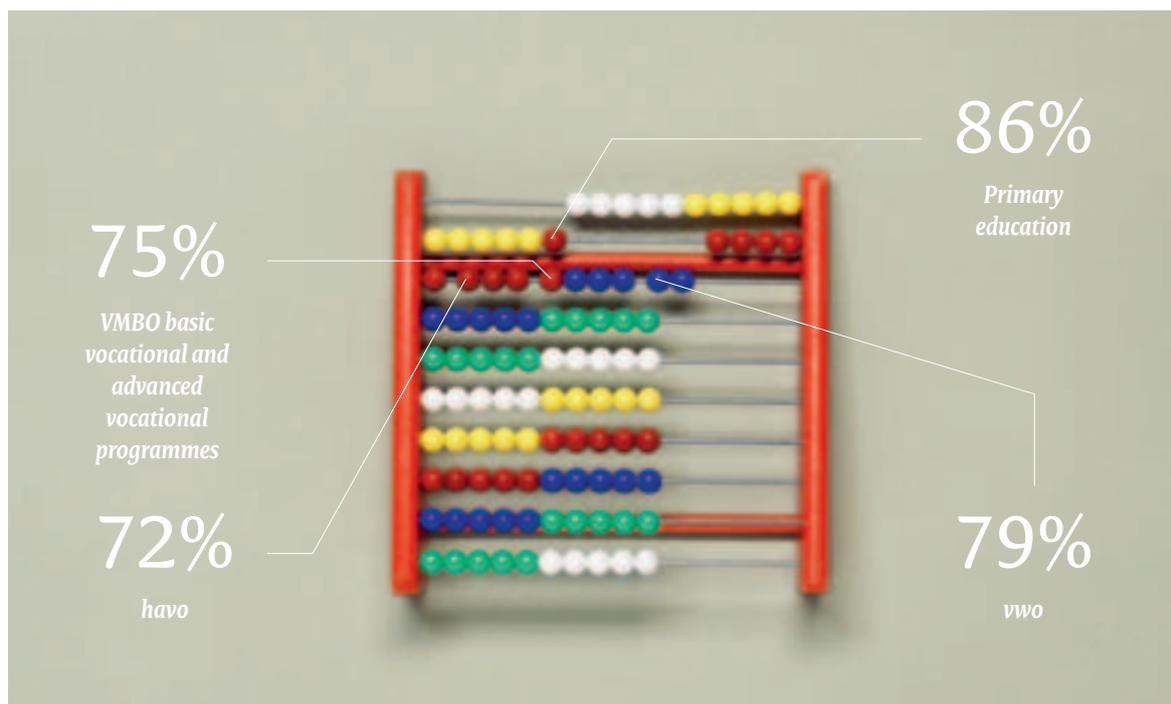
Targeted professional development

The Inspectorate has ascertained that in a large majority of the lessons, the subject matter is

→ Most teachers have sufficient basic skills to be able to offer good teaching

Figure 3.1

Teachers with sufficient basic skills



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

Definitions



BASIC SKILLS

- The teacher clearly explains the subject matter
- The teacher creates a task-oriented learning environment
- Pupils are actively involved in the classroom activities



COMPLEX SKILLS

- The teacher tailors the lessons to various needs
- The teacher tailors the assignments to various needs
- The teacher tailors the available time to various needs
- The teacher monitors and analyses the progress of pupils systematically (applies only to primary education)
- The teacher provides systematic care to vulnerable pupils (applies only to primary education)
- The teacher ascertains that the pupils understand the subject matter (applies only to secondary education)
- The teacher provides substantive feedback (applies only to secondary education)

Complex skills

The teachers who apply the three basic skills differ in the degree to which they have acquired complex skills. About half of the teachers who master the basic skills also possess these more complex skills. This applies to both teachers in primary and secondary education. Both groups of teachers are represented at most schools, which means that teachers should be able to learn from each other.

Beginning teachers have less skills

No major, generally applicable differences in skill levels were found between men and women or between younger and older teachers. The differences that do exist between these groups are small. It is striking that teachers in their first year of teaching prove to possess the basic skills less often than

more experienced teachers. It is thus important to provide these teachers with extra support and supervision. The Netherlands scores poorly in this respect in comparison with other countries. Earlier investigations by the Inspectorate revealed that beginning teachers often receive minimal supervision and that this varies greatly between schools⁷.

Investment in teacher professionalization is particularly needed to improve their complex skills.

Differences between schools

Virtually all schools have one or more teachers who insufficiently master the basic skills. However, almost all of them also have teachers who possess the complex skills. As is to be expected, there are more teachers who display these shortcomings in basic skills at the weak and unsatisfactory primary schools. Differences in these skill levels between the separate classes and subjects are apparent in both primary and secondary schools. For example, third year primary school teachers and VMBO teachers who teach vocational subjects are better at teaching than their colleagues who teach other classes and subjects.

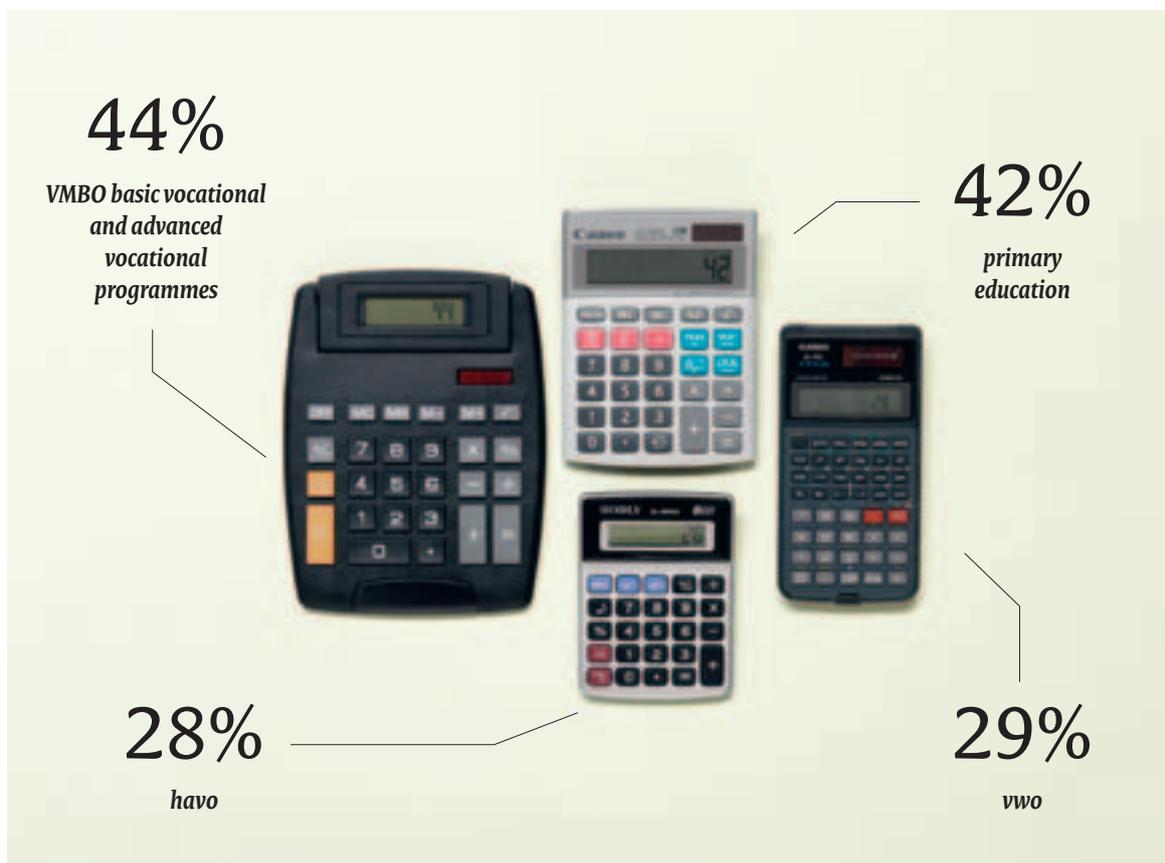
Decline in the quality of teaching

There has been a gradual decline in the quality of teaching in various sectors. At the beginning of this century, the percentage of primary schools with teachers who explained their subject matter clearly was stable at more than 97 per cent. This has declined gradually during the past five years to 91 per cent. A similar decline is apparent in secondary vocational education, adult education and special education.

→ Some 25 to 50 per cent of the teachers demonstrate more complex skills

Figure 3.2

Teachers with sufficient basic skills and complex skills



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

Higher education

More attention has been paid to the quality of teachers in higher education in recent years. This is a positive development. The educational level of these teachers has increased.

Invest in professional development

If teachers continue to develop professionally then the pupils' results will improve. Professional development must be tailored to the skill levels of teachers. An extra investment in basic skills will benefit a small group of teachers. A slightly larger group of teachers could improve their complex skills, such as tailoring lessons to particular pupils and providing extra support. Beginning teachers need extra supervision during their first year in front of the classroom.

Discuss differences

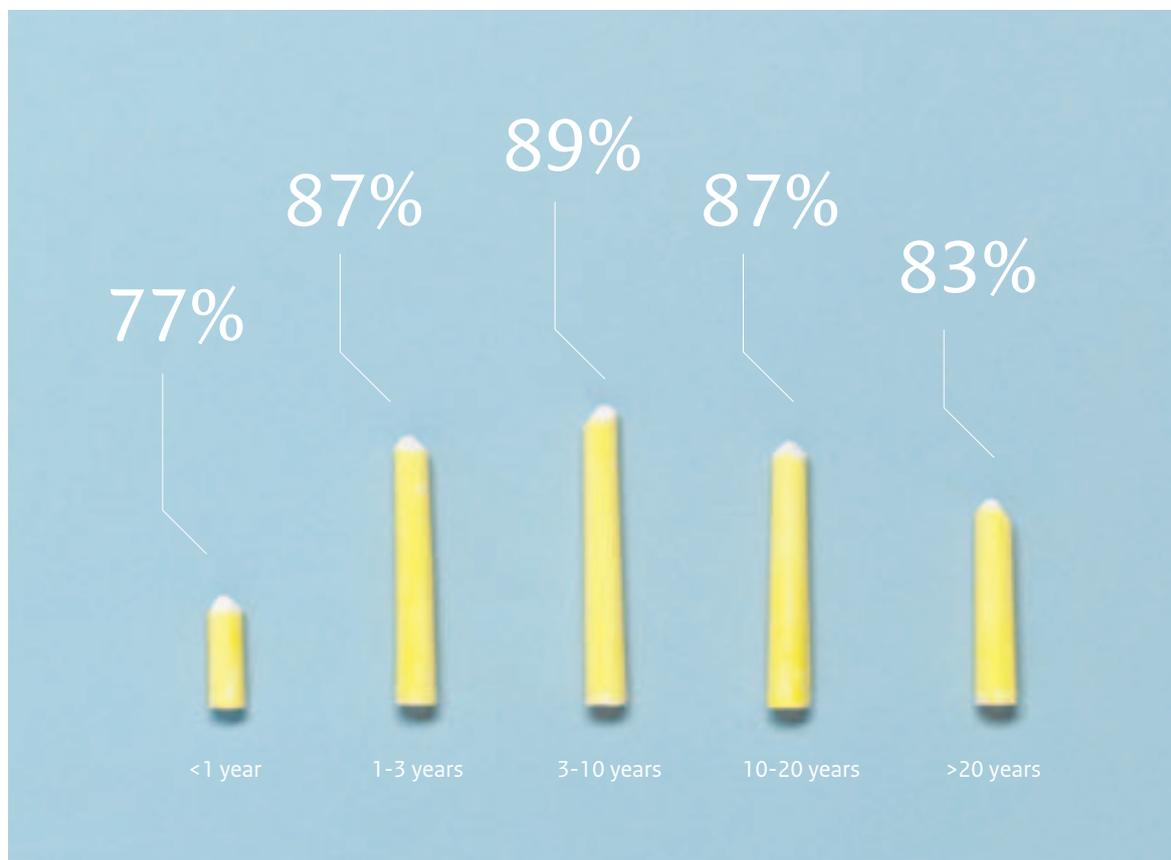
The school directors, boards and the profession as a whole need to recognize the differences in skill levels between teachers and facilitate the dialogue on this issue. They need to monitor the teachers' progress and regularly hold performance interviews. Some teachers require further training aimed at improving these skills.



Beginning teachers possess the basic skills less often

Figure 3.3

Percentage of primary school teachers that demonstrate the basic skills (compared with years of experience)

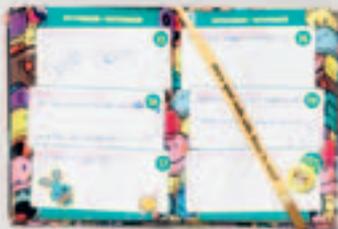


Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

Support should focus more on performance



Both primary and secondary special schools need to improve instruction and the evaluation of care



Vulnerable pupils in mainstream education particularly need extra support and instruction tailored to their needs

4. Insufficient attention for vulnerable pupils

Every pupil has a right to good education. In the Netherlands, however, this is not a matter of course. Vulnerable pupils need to receive an education that is tailored to their individual potential.

More focus needed on individual pupil's development.

Growth in cluster 4

There are many pupils with a special needs diagnosis in primary and secondary schools. Their number has been growing for years⁸. In particular, the number of special needs pupils diagnosed with serious behavioural problems has increased during the past years. They often have an autistic spectrum disorder. This is the main cause of the growth in cluster 4. The pupil numbers in the other clusters, including primary special education, have grown little or not at all.

Points for improvement in primary special education, secondary special education and general special education

Primary special education (SBO), secondary special education (VSO) and general special education (SO) schools are specialized in providing extra support to special needs pupils. These schools are often

relatively weak or unsatisfactory, particularly VSO and SO cluster 4 and 2 schools. The main points for improvement involve tailoring the teaching and the available time to various needs and the quality of the teaching. Many schools also need to pay more attention to the development of their pupils, and not so much their care requirements.

Room for improvement in the evaluation of care

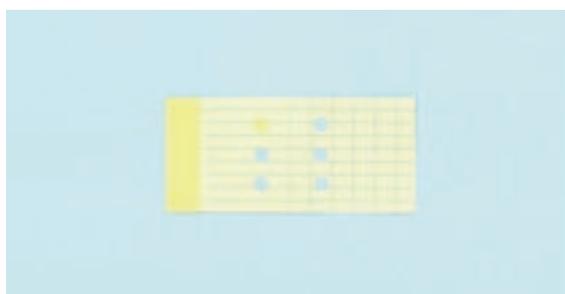
VSO and SO schools are generally capable of establishing the needs of new pupils. Almost all schools implement an individual education plan in consultation and with the agreement of the parents. One point for improvement is the evaluation of care. Two thirds of the schools do not do this sufficiently. Furthermore, the cooperation with the various bodies involved in youth social services is sometimes lacking.

Definitions



PRIMARY SPECIAL EDUCATION (SBO)

For children with learning difficulties, behavioural problems, or who need special care and attention.



SECONDARY SPECIAL EDUCATION (VSO) AND GENERAL SPECIAL EDUCATION (SO)

For pupils with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities and for pupils with psychiatric or behavioural problems.



VULNERABLE PUPILS

Vulnerable pupils need additional support or supervision to be able to keep up at school. Most vulnerable students are diagnosed as ‘special needs’ pupils. These pupils receive additional funding to meet their care needs. Some of these pupils attend special primary, special secondary or general special education institutions. Another portion of these pupils attend mainstream schools and also receive extra financial assistance for their education. Some vulnerable pupils are not diagnosed as special needs pupils, such as highly gifted children.



THE SO AND VSO SCHOOLS ARE DIVIDED INTO FOUR CLUSTERS:

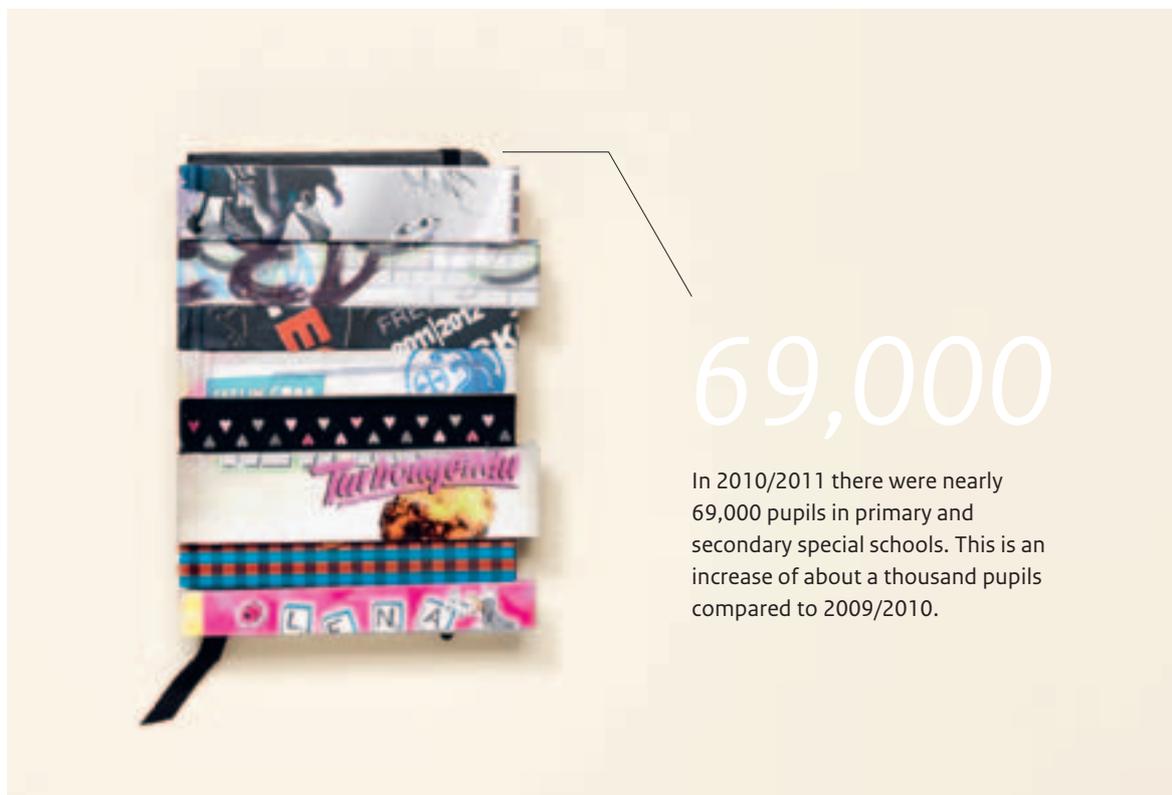
1. for visually impaired children;
2. for deaf and hearing impaired children or children with communicative disabilities;
3. for children with physical and/or intellectual disabilities, chronic illnesses and severe learning difficulties;
4. for children with severe behavioural or psychiatric problems.



Vulnerable pupils attend both mainstream schools and special education schools

Figure 4.1

Numbers of pupils in primary and secondary special schools



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

→ **Both primary and secondary special schools need to improve instruction and the evaluation of care**

Figure 4.2
Assessment of indicators and points for improvement



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

Two thirds of primary and secondary special schools pay insufficient attention to the evaluation of care. Teachers at two thirds of the schools subject to special supervision tailor their instruction and assignments insufficiently to the needs of their pupils. Instruction at 40 per cent of the mainstream primary schools is insufficiently tailored to pupils with varying needs.

Mainstream education: care and support have not improved

Special needs and mainstream pupils
It is very important that the care and support of vulnerable pupils in mainstream education is effectively organized. The Inspectorate has not observed any improvement in this respect in any of the sectors, while improvements are certainly required.

Primary education
Only a third of the primary schools score a satisfactory mark for the quality of care and supervision. This constitutes a small decline in comparison with previous school years. Most primary schools follow the development of their pupils, but only half use the information to determine what care is needed. Moreover, the majority of the schools do not have systematic care programmes. A third of the primary schools pay insufficient attention to the evaluation of the measures taken.

Pre-vocational secondary education
Virtually all basic vocational streams in VMBO schools follow the development of their special needs pupils and use the information to determine what care is needed. Collaboration with healthcare workers and partner organizations is also sufficient in most schools. These schools evaluate the effects of the measures taken less frequently. Only half of these schools pay sufficient attention to evaluation. In addition, a third of the schools do not have systematic care programmes. The individual education plans focus mainly on socio-emotional problems and hardly on development opportunities and solutions for cognitive problems.

Secondary vocational education
The attention, care and support for vulnerable pupils at MBO (VET) institutions has improved significantly in recent years. Almost all MBO and adult education institutions have established care advisory teams. As with the VMBO schools, the care and support focuses mainly on socio-emotional problems and much less on educational performance.

Mainstream education sector fails to cater for special needs

Fewer opportunities

Vulnerable pupils need to receive an education that is tailored to their individual potential. The Inspectorate assessed this aspect of the teaching as unsatisfactory relatively often. This has been the case for many years. Many teachers focus on those groups of pupils with average performance and less on pupils who have difficulties with the lessons, or those pupils who need to be more challenged.

Primary education

Primary schools are failing to tailor their teaching particularly where it concerns instruction: teachers are not taking enough account of differences between pupils at 40 per cent of the schools. This percentage was stable in recent years, but there appeared to be a slight decline last year. Teachers at primary schools do have more success tailoring assignments and the available time to the needs of various pupils. However, this still scores unsatisfactorily at more than one in four schools. Primary schools that do sufficiently tailor their teaching to their pupils show better educational performance in year 8.

Pre-vocational secondary education

Last year, the Inspectorate investigated the quality of VMBO schools with basic vocational programmes. The Inspectorate assessed the schools' attention for various needs as unsatisfactory relatively often. Only one third of these schools adapted assignments to the level of the pupils. Approximately 40 per cent of the VMBO schools offer instruction that is tailored to various needs.

Secondary vocational education and adult education

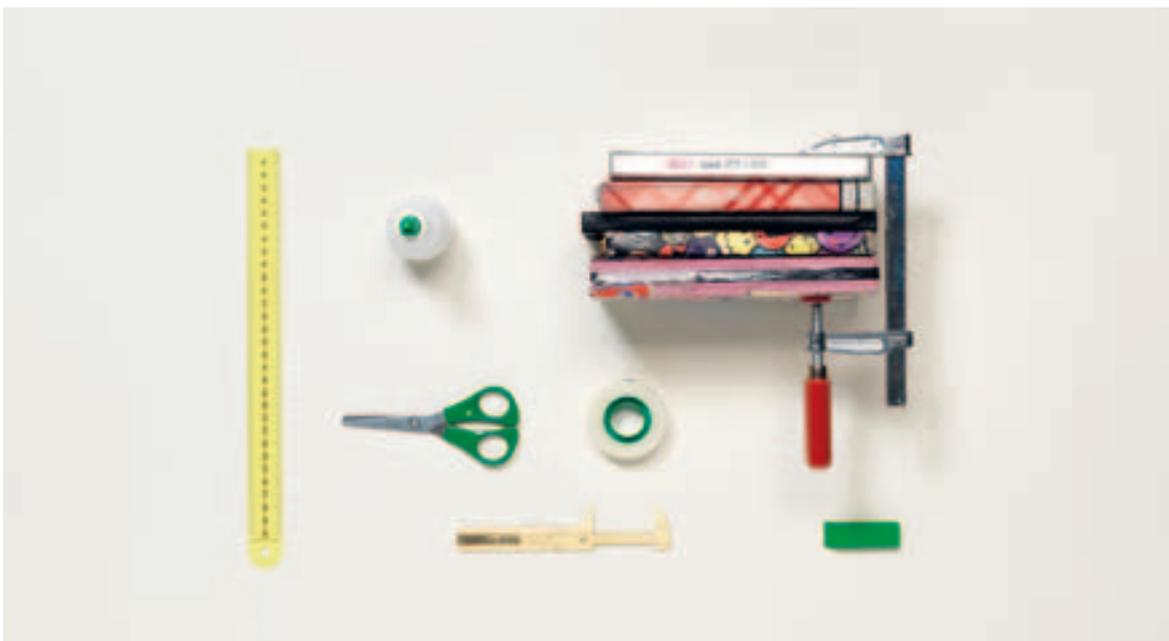
VET and adult education institutions are offering more and more programmes tailored to the needs of a diverse group of students. Where ten years ago only half were successful, today this is two thirds. This means that there is still room for improvement here: one third of the programmes do not sufficiently tailor their instruction to various needs.

Higher education

The growth of the higher education sector has led to more diversity in the student intake. This increased diversity means that instruction tailored to various needs is important in this sector too. Programmes and institutions should offer more instruction tailored to various needs and should provide extra support to vulnerable groups of students.



Vulnerable pupils in mainstream education particularly need extra support and instruction tailored to their needs



Adequate support and care prevents vulnerable pupils from dropout and gives them the opportunity to develop to their full potential. Teachers need to provide classes or groups with extra support and this issue needs more attention at the school level.

5 SCHOOL BOARDS

SCHOOL BOARDS ARE FINANCIALLY HEALTHIER AND ARE MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN QUALITY ASSURANCE



A professional school board is not a guarantee of adequate quality assurance and care



Room for improvement in compliance with legislation and regulations



School boards and directors should focus more on quality assurance and care in their schools and study programmes



Most school boards are financially healthy

In all sectors the percentage of weak or unsatisfactory schools and study programmes per board is decreasing



5. Boards improving, but quality assurance lagging

School boards preside over less and less weak and unsatisfactory schools. However, quality assurance at the level of the individual schools is lagging.

Better performance at the institutional level

The average percentage of weak and unsatisfactory schools per school board has fallen particularly in the primary education sector. There are less boards with unhealthy finances. At the same time we see the effects of economies of scale. If more schools work together under one board this increases their combined capacity to carry out effective policies. This is coupled with extension of the support available to boards.

The quality of the school or study programme will improve if boards focus more on the quality of teaching and on results-oriented teaching.

Some boards not showing improvement

Not all boards are improving. There are major differences between them. A very small portion of the boards run weak or unsatisfactory schools.

This concerns 43 boards in total (boards that manage a single school not included). The boards of primary and secondary special schools and mainstream secondary schools are overrepresented.

Irregularities

The number of boards that do not comply with legislation and regulations is decreasing. These are small percentages of the total. Most boards are managing their finances properly and are acting in accordance with the legislation and regulations. The rules are sometimes not respected because these are very complex and extensive. It then becomes difficult to obtain funding. This issue is apparent, among others, in the enrolments in primary and secondary special education.

In addition, the Inspectorate found that some boards seem to have deliberately provided incorrect information to be able to claim more government funding. One example of this is the weighting scheme in the primary education sector. Each pupil is weighted on the basis of their parents' level of education. The larger the total weighted amount, the more funding a school receives. Last year, some boards made errors when allocating weights, and this was not for the first time. Finally, in the secondary education and secondary vocational education sectors, the required amount of teaching time was not always achieved.



Room for improvement in compliance with legislation and regulations



The number of boards failing to comply with legislation and regulations is declining. Only a small percentage fails to comply. Most boards are financially healthy and comply with legislation and regulations. In those cases where non-compliance is a factor, the causes are often to be found in the complexity and scope of the legislation involved.

Figure 5.1

Examples of the (non) compliance with laws and regulations



1. **Certificate of good conduct (VOG)** In 2010 approximately 2,000 employees had failed to submit a recent VOG to the personnel administration.
2. **Cooperation between school boards** Boards are only given permission to merge under certain conditions. More and more often, boards are deciding against mergers and instead cooperate on other levels. The Inspectorate considers this an undesirable development, because it believes that supervisory activities should take place at the board level.
3. **School mergers** When boards merge their schools, one of the consequences is that they forfeit a part of their funding. However, school closures following a merger are not always reported.
4. **Pupil enrolment** Some boards have not enrolled their pupils with the correct school. In 2011 this involved erroneously appropriated funding of between some tens of thousands up to about half a million euros. The Inspectorate reclaims funds that boards have received erroneously.
5. **Weighting scheme** A primary school receives extra funding from the government to compensate for educational disadvantages on the basis of a weighting scheme. Many primary schools make errors when allocating weights. It is estimated that schools received some 50 million euros erroneously in the 2011/2012 school year.

Quality lagging at the individual school level

The professionalization of the boards has not resulted in sufficiently improved quality assurance at the level of the individual schools and study programmes. This applies to all sectors, with the exception of the VET sector. Boards need to pay more attention to quality assurance at their schools and study programmes. Here lies an important task. Boards need to stimulate results-oriented teaching in the schools. They also need to hold the directors and managers of the schools accountable for their results.

Higher education examinations

Inspectorate investigations⁹ have revealed that there are insufficient assurances for the quality of alternative graduation tracks in higher professional education. Quality assurance and performance monitoring are becoming increasingly important due to the growth in the sector, the pressure to deliver more graduates and the increased diversity of the intake. It is not known whether this is reflected in current educational practice. This will be a point for attention in the Inspectorate's new higher education supervision programme.

Improved governance

Good governance does not guarantee effective quality assurance at schools and study programmes. The school boards will need to govern more effectively if they want to make a real difference in educational practice. More attention could be paid to education quality and results-oriented teaching. Boards also need to ensure that they call attention to the quality of their schools. The boards are also dependent on the quality of their directors. Next year, the Inspectorate will conduct an investigation into the relationship between the school boards and the school directors and the role of the directors in quality improvement.

Financial risks

School boards will need to implement tighter financial regimes in the coming years. The reserves are shrinking and some of the boards will be faced with further falls in pupil numbers due to population decline. It will become more important to draft realistic budgets and long-term forecasts. These items are still currently lacking in a majority of the annual reports.

Financial supervision definitions



CONTINUITY

Is the board financially healthy? Can it meet its financial obligations in the short and long term? Does the board use tools that enable it to carry out adequate planning and control?



LEGALITY OF FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE

Does the board have a lawful right to the funding it receives from the government? Is the funding spent on the activities for which it is meant according to the legislation and regulations?



EFFECTIVENESS

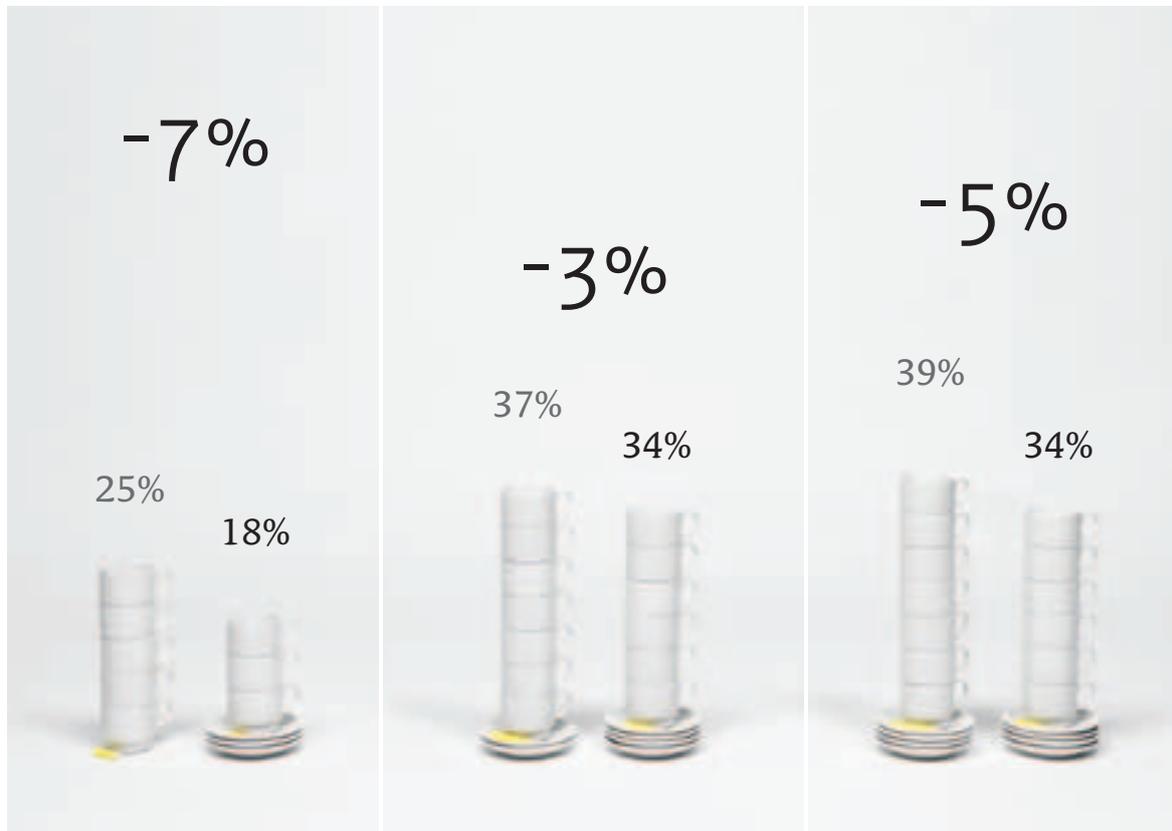
Does the board use the funding it receives from the government effectively? The Inspectorate assesses the boards' annual reports to be able to identify financial risks in good time. If the Inspectorate identifies a risk it will intensify its supervision of the board in question.



The percentage of weak and unsatisfactory schools and study programmes per board is decreasing in all education sectors

Figure 5.2

Decrease in the number of weak and unsatisfactory schools (percentages per board)



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

Primary education

The decrease is most apparent in primary education. Here, the percentage of boards with one or more weak or unsatisfactory schools declined from 25 per cent in 2010 to 18 per cent in 2011.

Secondary education

The percentage of boards in secondary education with one or more unsatisfactory departments fell from 37 to 34 per cent.

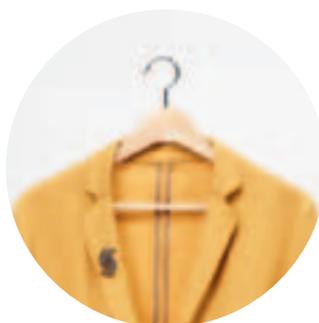
Primary and secondary special education

The percentage of boards with one or more weak or unsatisfactory schools in primary and secondary special education decreased from 39 to 34 per cent.



A professional school board is not a guarantee of adequate quality care and assurance

Despite the fact that boards are professionalizing, there was no discernible improvement in quality assurance at the schools and study programmes themselves in 2010/2011. This applies to all sectors, with the exception of the MBO sector.



Boards need to improve their administrative activities even further to be able to make a real difference in educational practice. Points for improvement are: more focus on education quality, results-oriented working, effective information collection and provision and clear division of responsibilities.

6

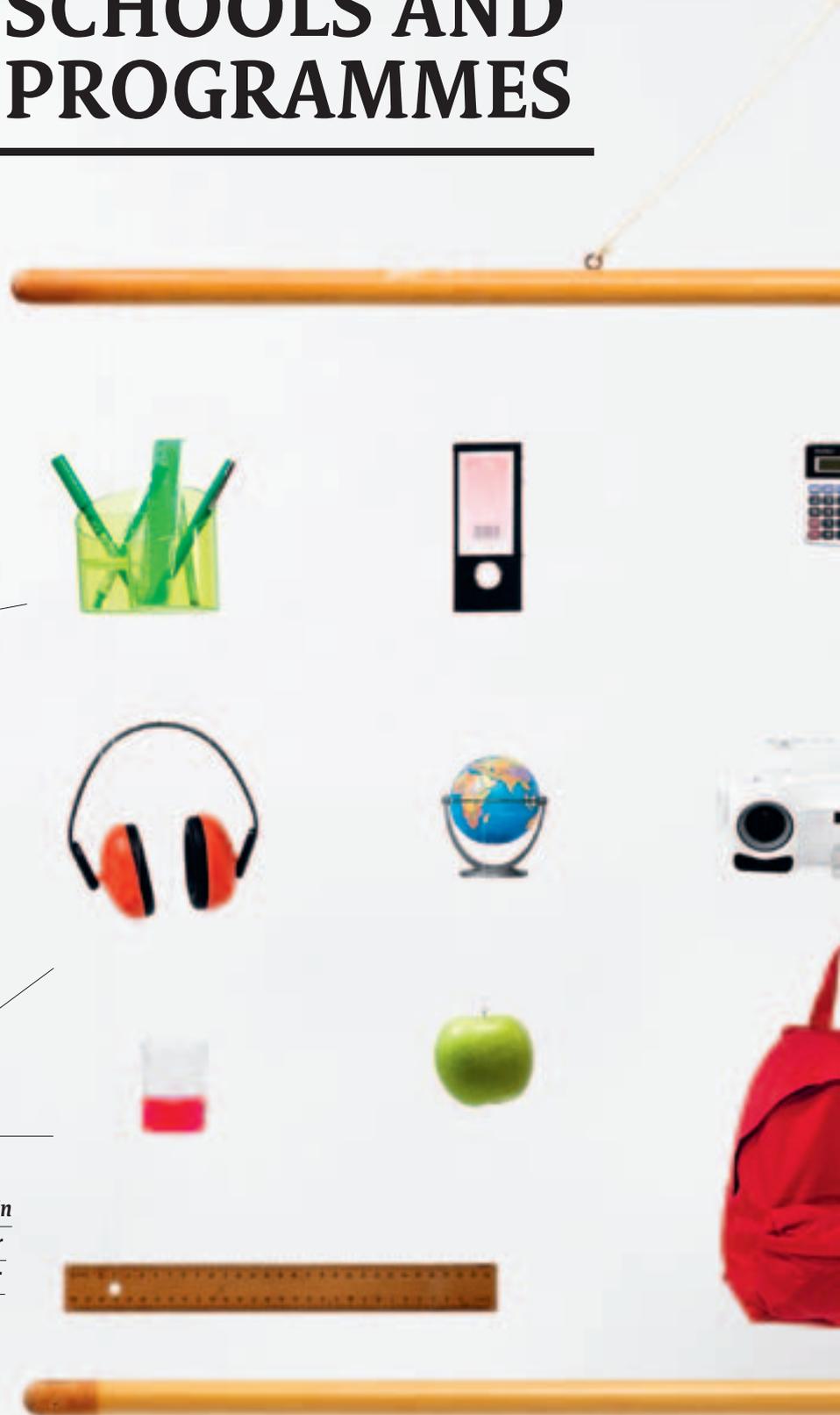
SMALL SCHOOLS AND STUDY PROGRAMMES



The quality of small primary schools has improved



Small study programmes in the MBO sector and higher education showing poorer quantitative results



Small schools and study programmes are vulnerable and need to safeguard their quality and results



→ Some small schools and study programmes showing good results



→ Small HAVO and VWO departments are more often weak or unsatisfactory



6. Poorer performance of small schools and study programmes

Small schools and study programmes are more often categorized as weak or unsatisfactory, particularly in the secondary education sector. However, there are major differences between the individual institutions.

Definition: what is a small school, department or study programme?



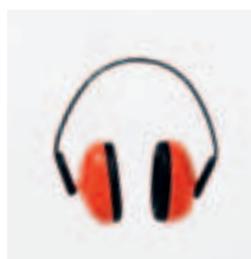
PRIMARY EDUCATION

less than 100 pupils



SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education: less than 100 pupils



SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

less than 12 students



HIGHER EDUCATION

less than 25 students

Small schools and study programmes are more at risk.

Small schools and study programmes at risk

The Inspectorate has noted differences in quality between schools and study programmes across all the sectors. The success of pupils and students thus depends on which school they attend. The differences between the schools and study programmes are often caused by a wide range of factors, making them difficult to explain.

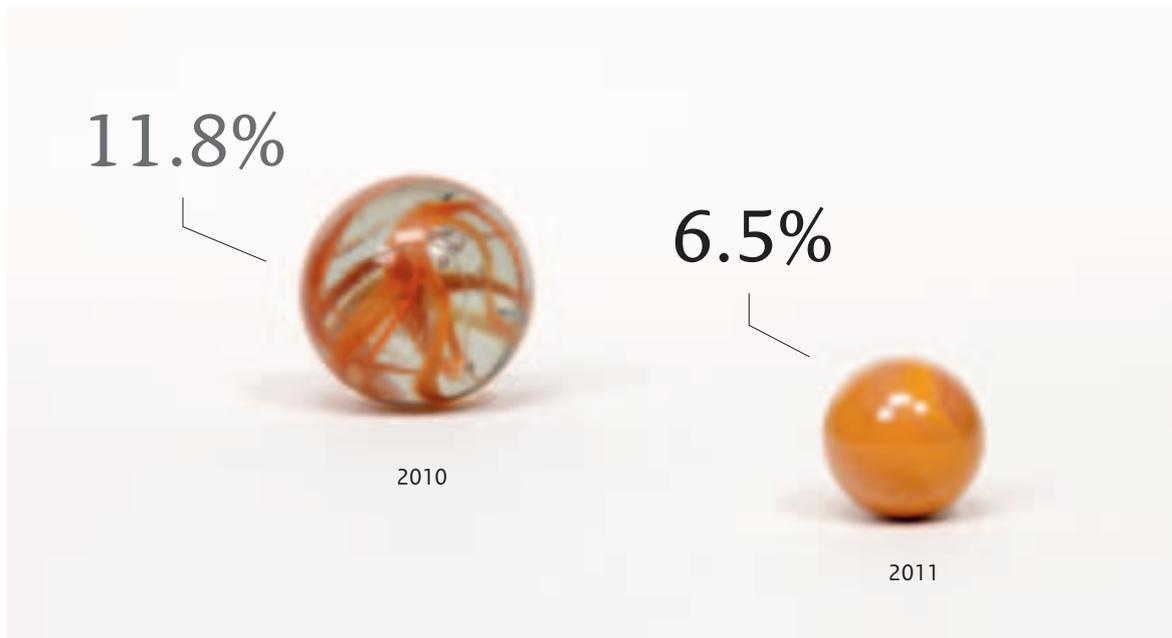
Salient in 2011 was that small schools and study programmes once again performed slightly poorer than the rest. This may be a cause for concern, because more and more schools and study programmes are being categorized as 'small' due to declining populations and increasing differentiation in the educational landscape.

Mixed picture

Although the quality and results of some small schools and study programmes are lagging behind those of the larger schools, this is not the case for all of them. So small schools and study programmes do not perform more poorly by definition. Small schools and study programmes are more at risk, but this picture varies between the education sectors.

→ The quality of small primary schools has improved

Figure 6.1
Percentage of small schools that are weak or unsatisfactory (reference dates: 1 September 2010 and 1 September 2011)



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

→ Small HAVO and VWO departments are more often weak or unsatisfactory

Figure 6.2
Percentage of weak or unsatisfactory VWO departments by school size (reference date: 1 september 2011)



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

→ Small study programmes in the MBO sector and higher education showing poorer results

Figure 6.3

Results of small study programmes in secondary vocational and higher professional education and research universities



Source: Inspectorate of Education, 2012

1. **Secondary vocational education** The results of small MBO study programmes are about 7 per cent lower than those of MBO programmes with more than sixty students.
2. **Higher professional education (universities of applied sciences)** Higher professional education study programmes with less than 25 students have an average pass rate of 26 per cent. This is between 40 and 50 per cent at larger programmes.
3. **Teacher training and technical programmes** The small teacher training and technical programmes at the universities of applied sciences score twice as low as similar larger programmes.
4. **Research universities** The relationship between size and results is less pronounced at the research universities than at the universities of applied sciences.
5. **Technical, agriculture and healthcare programmes** The results of the small research university programmes are poorer than those of the larger programmes. The results of the small technical, agriculture and healthcare programmes are in fact higher than similar larger programmes.

Primary education

The performance of pupils who attend small primary schools is only slightly lower than that of pupils of larger schools. Last year, these schools recovered much of the ground they had lost. Of the schools with less than one hundred pupils, 6.4 per cent were weak or unsatisfactory (the national average is 4.4 per cent). The data gathered by the Inspectorate reveals that it is particularly the schools that saw major falls in pupil numbers during the past five years that are now categorized as weak or unsatisfactory. Some of the school boards in regions with declining populations are unable to maintain the quality of education, in part because they have less financial resources and staff available to them.

Secondary education

In the secondary education sector, it is particularly the small higher level classes that are categorized as weak or unsatisfactory. It concerns 18 per cent of the HAVO and VWO departments with less than 100 pupils and only 5 to 10 per cent of the departments with greater pupil numbers. Small VMBO schools with advanced vocational and/or mixed/theoretical programmes are also often weak or unsatisfactory. No differences are discernible between small and large departments at the practical training programmes and VMBO schools with basic vocational programmes. In fact, sometimes the small departments perform better than the larger ones.

Secondary vocational education

The results of the small programmes of the VET institutions are approximately 7 per cent lower than those of the larger programmes (with more than 60 students). However, there are large differences between the results of the small programmes. Further analysis reveals that it is particularly the small level 4 programmes that score lower than average. The differences in results are most apparent in the vocational training courses (BOL).

Higher professional education

The results of the small programmes are poorer than the larger programmes (26 per cent compared to 40 to 50 per cent). Here too, there are large differences between the small programmes. The small teacher training and technical programmes score twice as low as similar larger programmes. The agriculture and healthcare study programmes form an exception: programme size does not affect the returns in these sectors.

University education

At the research universities, the relationship between the size of the study programme and the returns is less well-defined than at the universities of applied sciences, although programmes with less than 25 students score lower than those with 250 or more students. Here too, there are large differences between the small programmes themselves. The results of the small technical, agriculture and healthcare programmes are actually higher than similar programmes with greater numbers of students, while the results of small language and culture programmes are lower.

Investigation required to discover the causes

There is still little insight into the reasons why small schools and study programmes are at risk. It is not understood why some small schools and study programmes are performing very well while others are not. Apparently, it is more difficult to arrange quality education for a small number of pupils or students, although some small schools and study programmes do manage this. In the coming year, the Inspectorate will conduct an investigation into the differences and their relationship with increasing or declining numbers of pupils and students in schools and study programmes.

Small schools and study programmes need to pay extra attention to quality and results.

Fragmented educational landscape

The boards of the institutions must closely monitor the quality and results of the small schools and study programmes. Moreover, further fragmentation of the educational landscape would appear to be undesirable if this is to lead to even more small schools and programmes.

Concluding remarks

Improvement required

The Inspectorate concludes that, broadly speaking, the state of education in the Netherlands is satisfactory. At the same time, a number of improvements can and must be made.

Pupils and students

The success of pupils and students depends, amongst others, on which school or study programme they attend. Their success depends largely on their teachers and other stakeholders in the school. The Inspectorate emphasizes the importance of improving the opportunities for development for vulnerable pupils.

Points for improvement

This Education Report contains a number of points for improvement. These can be used for the professional development of teachers in specific areas and further improvement of the schools. School boards and directors must lend their support to these developments and monitor the quality of the results. Experiences at home and abroad have demonstrated that it is the learning organizations that achieve the greatest improvements in quality. Schools, study programmes and their boards are learning organizations with professionals that need to cooperate because they are mutually dependent on each other.

Developments

Major developments await the education sector in the coming year, such as the implementation of Individualized Education (Passend onderwijs) and the financial challenges for the boards. Other developments include the new assessment and examination requirements. Improvements in literacy and numeracy must be visible at both the class and the individual level and in line with the reference levels.

Inspiration

The Inspectorate recommends that the Education Report is not only a reference book, but also a source of inspiration for teachers, principals and administrators. Only together can we ensure that all students receive the education they need.

Senior Chief Inspector of Education,



Mrs. drs. A.S. Roeters
Utrecht, April 2012

Colophon

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