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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

THE NETHERLANDS

School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 5 and 17 (with an obligation to qualify until the age of 18) and covers primary education *(basisonderwijs)*, lower secondary education and the first two years of upper secondary. At the end of primary education (at the age of 12), the majority of pupils take part in non-compulsory tests developed at central level. According to the results of these tests along with pupils' overall results and motivations, parents are advised by primary schools regarding the choice of secondary school (*VWO*, *HAVO* or *VMBO*). The decision as to the choice of school is taken by a competent authority, which may include the school head and primary school teachers.

VWO and *HAVO* schools offer general education. The first two years of *VMBO* also consist of general education but, at the age of 14, different pre-vocational options are proposed to pupils. At the age of 16, these pupils move on to the different levels of upper secondary vocational education in an *MBO* school.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in terms of vocational guidance education is to allow pupils in secondary and higher education, as well as adults, to obtain the necessary skills to make the 'right' choices concerning their future career, based on complete and objective information.

The law on secondary education (31 October 1995) stipulates that in each school 'one or several members of the teaching staff are assigned the tasks of head/coordinator of vocational guidance'.

Structures have been implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment to coordinate the lifelong learning policies. In 2005, the Project Directorate Learning and Working was established, as a joint activity of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The task of the project directorate is to take concrete steps towards lifelong learning. Their 2005-2007 action plan is continued in a new 2008-2011 programme.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Following the privatisation and near disappearance of regional guidance bodies (*Arbeid en opleidingsbureaus* – AOB) which used to work with schools, the state funds have been absorbed by the schools which, as autonomous bodies, formulate their own policies and objectives, and ensure and control the content of the guidance services provided. The inspections which schools are subject to represent the main mechanism for quality assurance in the area of guidance. Nevertheless, the standards are not very precise.

The inspectorate of education publishes a brief overall assessment based on these visits in its annual report.

The Centres for Work and Income (CWI) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment assess the training needs of clients who receive vocational guidance, which is then provided (for a fee) by a series of (private) reintegration agencies. These services mainly concern people seeking employment or ethnic minorities, as well as young people who are early school leavers, for example.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

The intention is to integrate educational and vocational guidance into all subjects in general and vocational secondary education. Although it is compulsory only during the upper years of secondary school, all schools offer pupils guidance lessons for career choice throughout the entire duration of secondary education. All vocational disciplines in technical education make room for sectoral vocational guidance. It is at the schools' discretion to decide on the content of guidance.

As regards senior vocational secondary education, a document entitled 'Learning, career and citizenship' *(Leren, loopbaan en burgerschap)* has been drafted by relevant stakeholders, providing guidelines to institutions about which (career) competencies students must acquire and how to implement them in their curriculum.

Reflection on qualities, motives and networking are key competencies students are expected to acquire.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

Since 2001, *VMBO* schools offer basic vocational education programmes with 640 (80 days) to 1 280 hours (160 days) of traineeships in companies during the 3rd and 4th years. Pupils receive a certificate which gives them access to upper vocational secondary education.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

Traineeships as preparation for employment on the regional labour market may be organised within the framework of subjects chosen by the school authorities (such as Dutch or information and communication technologies) and in consultation with the municipal authorities and local employers. Schools (and industries) offer pupils portfolios of skills (within the framework of the national employment action), validating the non-formal and informal training received.

In all three sectors of secondary education, the concept of civic apprenticeship *(maatschappelijke stage)* is introduced, involving a period of voluntary work done by students. From 2008/09, financial incentives will stimulate schools to implement this.

Guidance services at school

Generally, a school offers first-line and second-line guidance to students. First-line support is offered by a dedicated teacher (mentor), and second-line support is offered by vocational advisers *(schooldekanen)*.

Almost all schools appoint one or several *schooldekanen (*members of the teaching staff) to take on the tasks of head/coordinator of vocational guidance. Each school defines these tasks and decides on the amount of time and resources to allocate to them. Most schools also appoint a school counsellor who focuses on the psychological or social problems of students.

Guidance services outside school

These services are generally referred to as third-line support. They are offered by several institutions and are mainly market-driven. The Counselling Centres for Employment and Training (*Arbeid en opleidingsbureaus* – AOBs), whose services are offered for a fee, traditionally play a role in this. Other private reintegration agencies offer personalised counselling. They employ a wide range of specialised staff, including psychologists, guidance counsellors, employment counsellors and reintegration consultants.

The Centres for Work and Income (public employment service) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment offer reintegration and career planning programmes as well as information on employment and social assistance services. These services are aimed in particular at adults and those seeking employment. CWIs are increasing their activities to provide support for younger people, especially in the prevention of early school leaving.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

Some vocational advisers *(schooldekanen)* who are responsible for vocational guidance have received specific part-time training lasting two years. This training is integrated into HRD studies and is offered at universities of applied sciences. Others have completed a traineeship lasting two or three days or have not received specific training.

The NVS-NVL is the main provider of career guidance in schools. One module normally takes two or three days.

The Netherlands introduced standards for teachers in vocational education and training (VET). These are laid down in the WET BIO (Professions in Education Act 2004; see the website http://www.lerarenweb.nl/lerarenweb-english.html). The Wet BIO anticipates registration and quality standards for vocational advisers.

In other guidance services

The staff at AOBs and other private agencies (psychologists, guidance counsellors, employment counsellors and reintegration consultants), generally have higher education degrees in areas related to career management.

A foundation for registering guidance counsellors and agents was created by the Association of Vocational Guidance Counsellors (VBA).

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Leaning/working arrangements and employability issues are being incorporated more often in regional cooperation efforts between stakeholders. In secondary education, these structures also exist, but with more emphasis on care structure (school absenteeism and early school leaving). Several parties may be involved in these structures, depending on the specific regional situation.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Several databases on information structures have been developed. The Project Directorate Learning and Working coordinates the main databases in one portal: www.opleidingenberoep.nl. This portal provides information about learning and working. The portal is supported by the establishment of several 'learning/working desks' throughout the country. It is supported by a telephone help desk which citizens can access for free to obtain information on learning or working topics.

The information provided by the Centre for Work and Income (CWI) is available on the website www.werk.nl, which includes diagnostic tools (based on individual interests), data on professions (in particular, labour market trends and data on wages), information on training possibilities and access to an online version of the employment offers database.

There are also plans to develop a support centre by telephone, email, fax and post.

Parts of this website are integrated into the *opleidingenberoep* portal.

Internet references

www.minocw.nl (Ministry of Education)

http://www.leren-werken.nl (website of the Project Directorate Learning and Working)

www.opleidingenberoep.nl (portal of the Project Directorate Learning and Working)

www.werk.nl (website of the CWI)

www.nvs-nvl.nl (Association of Careers Guidance Counsellors**)**

Sources

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3. Guidance policies in the knowledge society. Trends, challenges and responses across Europe. A Cedefop synthesis report. Ronald G. Sultana. Cedefop Panorama series; 85. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.
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5. Eurybase; Eurydice.
6. Career Guidance and Public Policy. Bridging the gap. OECD 2004.