

Adjustments to teacher qualifications for a more attractive education labour market

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 NETHERLANDS

Timeline

2019 Design 2020 Design 2021 Design 2022 Design 2023 Design
2024 Design 2025 Design

ID number 36261

Background

Working in education should become more attractive to mitigate teacher shortages. The Education Council (*Onderwijsraad*) states that not only is the influx of new teachers into schools lacking, but it is also hard retaining them.

The move to another subject or sector within education may offer a stimulus to teachers, but it often turns out to be too big because a new qualification must be obtained.

Having the option to build a qualifications portfolio across education sectors and/or subjects, will enable teachers switching between education sectors to increase their career prospects. This requires organising teacher qualifications and teacher training courses differently.

Objectives

The education ministry, following the suggestion of the Education Council, will develop a new system of teacher qualifications to make room for career moves within and between the education sectors. The initiative refers to teachers in primary education, secondary education and VET.

Description

The education ministry aims to design compact qualifications, which can be combined in different ways. For example, a teacher will be able to specialise in one subject in primary, secondary and vocational education or in a number of subjects in one education sector, or in a combination of subjects and education sectors. Current and future teachers will be the beneficiaries.

The design of the teacher training courses in a modular system should allow for stacking competences, fitting within the current bachelor-master system. For side entry learners coming from another sector who want to become teachers or who have limited education experience, allowances will be made to validate previously acquired compatible competences.

Consequently, wage differences between education sectors should be reduced.

The most important actors are the education ministry, schools, teacher training colleges and individual teachers. Teacher training colleges were responsible for defining the schools in primary, secondary, and vocational education where pilots will take place. Current partnerships between teacher training colleges and schools (*Samen opleiden* partnerships) are considered as frontrunners in discussions concerning the new qualification system.

2019 Design

In 2019, the first scenarios for the new system of qualifications were in the design phase.

2020 Design

In February 2020, the first scenarios for the new system of teacher qualifications were presented to parliament via a policy letter. They mainly focused on secondary education and the possibility of using the system in VET for the vocational parts of preparatory vocational education. A new advisory committee was set up, which was expected to include VET in its advice for the new system of teacher qualifications.

In July 2020, a change of the time schedule was announced due to the advisory committee's prolonged consultation with all involved stakeholders. Because of the COVID-19 crisis, the consultation phase took place in an alternative and more time-consuming way.

In October 2020, it was announced that the Minister for Education, Van Engelshoven, had made a governance agreement with the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (*Vereniging Hogescholen*) and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) aimed at speeding up the flexibilisation of teacher college study programmes.

2021 Design

In February 2021, the advisory committee resigned prematurely because they could not reach a unanimous agreement. The following generic main points were delivered by the committee:

- (a) a teaching qualification should comprise four areas of competences: subject content knowledge, subject didactics, learners' development stage and common characteristics of the teaching profession. To obtain a qualification learners should cover all four areas at bachelor or master level. They should be granted more freedom in choosing their specialisation in those four areas;
- (b) more flexible training routes tailored to learners' needs should be offered, while teacher training colleges should deepen their cooperation, harmonise their practices and aim for more learners to obtain a master's degree;
- (c) the development of the competence relating to the common characteristics of the teaching profession was finalised in December 2020. For this competence, the question of what common factors bound all teachers was answered and determined and, as a consequence, which demands should also be satisfied by every teacher;
- (d) specifically for VET, the pedagogical-didactical certificate (PDG) should become a more flexible, customisable study programme within the teacher training colleges, and in which the competences of subject didactics, the phase of development of the pupil/student and the common characteristics of the teaching profession should be grounded. Combined with the already previously acquired subject content knowledge at bachelor or master level, a customised programme will result in a teacher qualification. This will make switching for teachers between VET and the vocational parts of preparatory vocational education easier;
- (e) coaching, guidance and supervision of learners should be enhanced, aiming to reduce the dropout rate from teacher training colleges and the teaching profession, and encourage professional development of teachers.

The committee could not agree on the idea of a single qualification system as a single means of entry into the profession. In this system, teachers who want to develop further would only need to obtain some supplementary areas of competence, not redo everything for a second separate qualification.

The process of developing a new system of qualifications will continue.

2022 Design

There has not been substantial progress, because the subject was declared controversial, which means that developing policies on the topic is postponed until the new government takes office. The new government has been in power since the beginning of 2022.

In June 2022 the education minister announced a new comprehensive agenda to address the dire labour market shortages in Dutch primary education, secondary education and upper secondary vocational education. Plans to optimize the existing system of teacher qualifications by making several urgent adjustments are part of this new agenda. In December 2022, a follow-up letter to the parliament provided more details about the process of these revisions:

According to the follow-up letter, the following parts of the teacher policy agenda concerning the system of teacher qualifications are given priority:

- (a) The recalibration of competence requirements is a legal obligation and must therefore be implemented from 2023.
- (b) The bottlenecks concerning both the teacher qualification system and extra shortages in teachers within secondary (special) education (V(S)O) and especially within lower secondary pre-vocational education (VMBO) and labour-oriented practical training (PRO) are urgent. The National Working Group Qualified (*Landelijke Werkgroep Bevoegd*), in which the education ministry, Secondary Education Council (VO-raad), Education cooperation (Onderwijscoöperatie), Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (*Vereniging Hogescholen*), the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (Universiteiten van Nederland) and other relevant partners, have drawn up a project plan with a timeline to start addressing this issue.
- (c) In line with the agreements in the work agenda, the education ministry will select 2-3 cases and start a number of experiments (pilots) in 2023 that will contribute to solving perceived bottlenecks in the teacher qualifications system. The education ministry and all partnering stakeholders within action line 3 of the work agenda are tackling this together.

2023 Design

The National Working Group Qualified (*Landelijke Werkgroep Bevoegd; LWB*) has proposed replacing the link between practice-oriented subjects and specific qualifications with a connection to broader qualification clusters. The LWB recommends five clusters: four specialist clusters (agriculture, commerce and business services, technology and engineering, health and social care) and one generalist cluster (broad orientation).

The LWB underscores the importance of maintaining an up-to-date professional development offering within these broader qualification clusters. Practical teachers must stay current in their respective fields. Additionally, teacher training programmes need to be systematically informed of updates to the vocational curriculum to ensure that knowledge bases in professional development offerings remain relevant. The education ministry has accepted the LWB's recommendations. By adopting broader qualification clusters, the vocational curriculum can better address students' needs in a rapidly evolving world. Implementing these changes to the qualification system will require an amendment to the Secondary Education Act, with the legislative process scheduled to begin in spring 2024.

Further challenges within the qualification system are being tackled through planned

experiments in primary and secondary education. A framework has been developed to identify potential legal changes that could address current educational challenges. The education ministry has compiled nearly 40 cases that could be piloted, including proposals to create customised programmes for professionals in lower secondary pre-vocational education (VMBO) and to employ individuals with backgrounds in pedagogy or behavioural studies in general secondary education.

In consultation with social partners, the education ministry has decided to focus these experiments on cases that fall outside the scope of the action plan and other ongoing initiatives, as those are already being addressed within the education sector. By summer 2024, the education ministry will select the cases to be developed into experimental pilots.

2024 Design

There is a growing demand for pedagogically and didactically skilled group teachers for students aged 12+ in general secondary education (VO), special secondary education (VSO), labour-oriented practical education (PRO), and vocational education and training (VET), particularly at entry level and MBO level 2. In collaboration with the National Working Group Qualified (LWB), the Ministry of Education conducted qualitative research on the added value of group teachers.

The research concluded that all the sectors studied acknowledge the value of group teachers for students aged 12+. However, significant differences in content, didactics, and pedagogy exist between secondary education, special secondary education, practical education, and vocational education. The LWB is currently mapping these differences and will present its findings to teachers' organisations. These organisations can use the insights to inform their upcoming proposals for revising competency requirements for teachers in primary, secondary, and vocational education.

It is possible that these organisations will recommend establishing a specific competency area for group teachers of students aged 12+, as the current primary and secondary teacher training programmes do not provide an adequate foundation for teaching this group. Such a recommendation could lead to the creation of a new qualification with its own set of competency requirements. This decision will be made as part of the ongoing review of competency standards.

Competency requirements define the minimum knowledge and skills teachers and VET instructors must have to begin teaching. These requirements are currently being revised by the General Union of Education (AOB) in collaboration with other teachers' unions, including CNV, FvOv, BVMO, and PVVVO. The education ministry expects to receive their recommendations soon, with the revised competency requirements set to be finalised by the end of 2025.

In a policy letter in November the education ministry has provided an update on the revision of qualification requirements for teachers and VET instructors. Teacher organisations are consulting with educators, trainers, schools, and stakeholders to refine and deepen these standards. An advisory report is expected in April 2025, which will inform amendments to the national regulation on teacher qualifications.

2025 Design

As of July, the qualification requirements are still in the process of being revised by representatives of the teaching organisations. The revision aims to formulate these requirements more concretely and to tailor them better to the different student groups that graduates will teach. Alongside the development of updated, more specific qualification standards and knowledge bases, the establishment of the Teacher Education Advisory Board (Opleidingsberaad Leraren) supports the ministry's ambition to create greater focus and reduce overload in teacher education curricula.

The Education Council (Onderwijsraad) published the advisory report 'Securing teacher qualification requirements' (Bekwaamheid beter borgen). The advice of the Education Council entails:

- (a) affirming of the need to tighten legal requirements
- (b) bringing more consistency to how the competence of graduates is assessed
- (c) including subject-specific requirements in qualification standards.

In response, the education ministry informs that policy to follow these suggestions will be developed, where appropriate, as part of the broader effort to develop clearer, more concrete and less burdensome qualification standards and teacher-education curricula.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Target group

Education professionals

Teachers

Thematic categories

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Attractiveness of the teaching and training profession/career

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Policy letter, education ministry, 2 July 2019](#)

[News item, education ministry, 2 July 2019: An attractive education labour market](#)

[Teacher training colleges, news item: More flexibility and customisation in teacher training study programmes](#)

[Policy letter, education ministry, 14 February 2020](#)

[Policy letter, education ministry, 10 July 2020](#)

[Policy letter, education ministry, 1 February 2021](#)

[Working agenda teacher policy, June 2022, education ministry](#)

Policy letter, education ministry, 13 December 2022

Report working agenda teacher policy, December 2022, education ministry

Policy letter, education ministry, 20 June 2023

Policy letter, education ministry, 15 December 2023

Policy letter, education ministry, 26 June 2024

Policy letter on teacher policy, education ministry, 17 December 2024

Policy letter on teacher policy, education ministry, 3 July 2025

Advise to the Ministry of Education, Education Council, 17 January 2025

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

National approach to teacher professionalisation

The National approach to teacher professionalisation (NAPL) consists of four pillars. The four pillars are:

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/36261>