

European VET for the 21st century: the balancing of excellence and inclusion



WA2: Excellence and inclusion – concept exploration and inclusion in
national VET objectives

Exploration in the Netherlands

October 2024

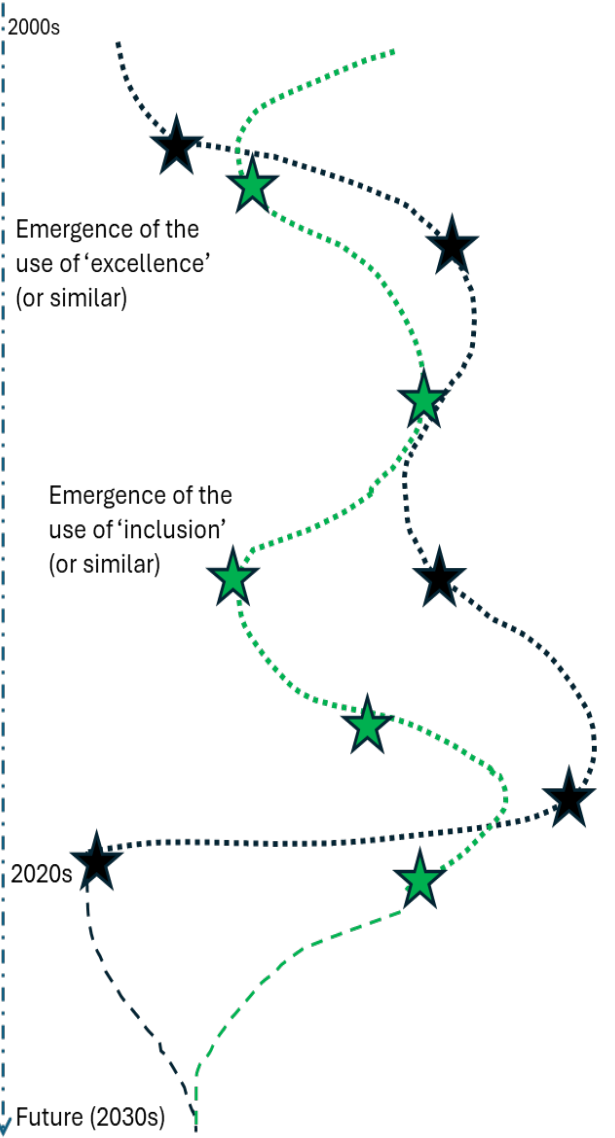
Simon Broek

s.broek@ockham-ips.nl

Aims and research questions

- Policy trails**
- When and in which context are the concepts used?
 - Who uses the term excellence and inclusion and in which context?
 - What underlying concept is implied by the use of the concepts?
 - How does the use differ over time?

- Policy trail of 'excellence': how concept is used and by whom?
- Policy trail of 'inclusion': how concept is used and by whom?



1. How are the concepts of excellence and inclusion understood in the Netherlands?

2. Which instruments are used to promote excellence and inclusion in the Netherlands?

Time frame for analysis: past 25 years

Methodology:

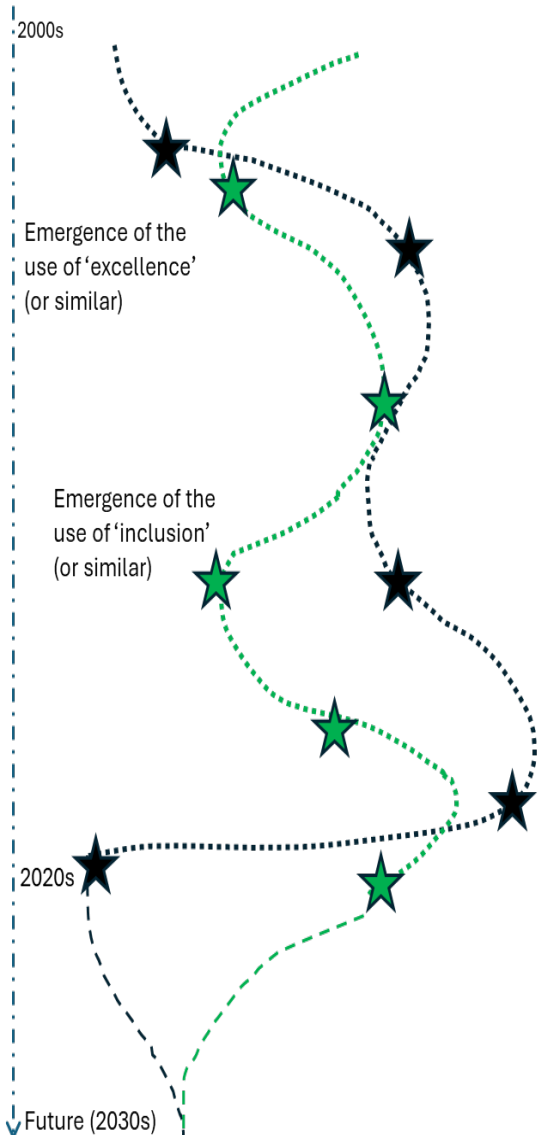
- Desk research
- Interviews with experts on excellence and inclusion in VET

Excellence

- Policy trails**
- When and in which context are the concepts used?
 - Who uses the term excellence and inclusion and in which context?
 - What underlying concept is implied by the use of the concepts?
 - How does the use differ over time?

Policy trail of 'excellence': how concept is used and by whom?

Policy trail of 'inclusion': how concept is used and by whom?



Emancipating VET following the VET act (WEB) (1996-2010)

- No attention to excellence (busy with reforming the system)
- Mergers of VET providers, more autonomy
- Inspiration from HE on excellence programmes to boost esteem.

Excellence programmes for personal development (2010 -2020)

- Driven by reform agenda 'Focus on craftsmanship' (2011) and related 'Quality Agenda's'
- Emergence excellence programmes and other initiatives (skills competitions) for motivated students (extracurricular)
- Gradually developing in more 'personal development' programmes
- *On the other hand, VET is also confronted with tendencies of cost-effectiveness, harmonisation and standardisation.*

Towards institutional and system 'excellence' (2020 –2024 (and continuing))

- Capitalising on institutional reforms since 1996
- General integration of 'higher quality' in regular VET programmes
- Excelling on all levels
- Developing a 'mature VET system' with own knowledge domains and own research positions ('Practorates')
- Expanding VET public esteem: from 'learners' to 'students'

Inclusion

Emancipating VET following the VET act (WEB) inclusion firmly embedded (1996-2010)

- VET system intrinsically oriented to inclusion (offering all levels, accessible for all learners)
- VET for all learners
- Always possibility for further learning
- Focus on labour market and societal integration
- Inclusion not a specific topic in policy debates
- Upon medical reasons, VET providers could receive a specific budget for a learner (rucksack)

Fitting Education: Focus on (physical) accessibility (2010-2016)

- All VET learners should go to VET, no 'special education' for specific groups
- Implementation 'fitting education' act 2014 (passend onderwijs) forcing VET schools to have a plan, no specific personal budget, but lumpsum for guidance and support systems
- Focus on disabilities and chronic illnesses and focus on physical accessibility

Diversity & anti-discrimination: Solving cultural issues related to inclusive VET (2016 – 2020)

- Shift focus to equity and inclusion aspects *within* VET: i.e. discrimination in internship applications
- Specific measures to combat specific equity issues

Inclusion as a continuous dialogue (2020 –2024 (and continuing))

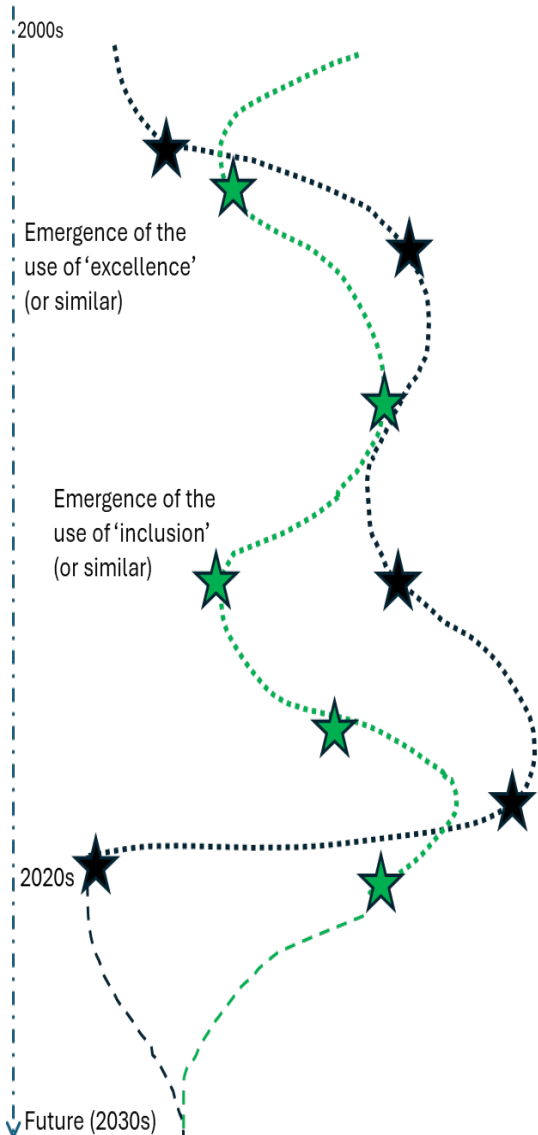
- Inclusion in the labour market (not only in VET) is regarded as a general aim of VET.
- Focus on any kind of exclusion
- Strengthening the continuous engagement and reflection on inclusiveness of VET and the labour market
- Focus on more tailoring of VET programmes/system to individual/target groups needs (e.g. adult learners)

Policy trails

- When and in which context are the concepts used?
- Who uses the term excellence and inclusion and in which context?
- What underlying concept is implied by the use of the concepts?
- How does the use differ over time?

Policy trail of 'excellence': how concept is used and by whom?

Policy trail of 'inclusion': how concept is used and by whom?



Overarching reflections



- Excellence seen in the context of ‘emancipation’ of ‘gaining maturity’ of the VET system in the Netherlands:
 - Boost esteem – it is possible to excel in VET
 - Develop own knowledge domains and research positions
- Excellence more reserved to extracurricular activities, but here the term is also often replaced by more inclusive language
- Inclusion firmly grounded in the VET system: offering a pathway for all
- Received further operationalisation and reflection over the recent decades
- Understood as needing continuous reflection and action
- Towards inclusive excellence: every learner is put in a position in which that learner can excel, meaning to bring out the best of its abilities.