

# Netherlands

## VET in Europe - Country report

2010

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## Colofon



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### **Abstract:**

This is an overview of the VET system in the Netherlands. Information is presented according to the following themes:

1. General context – framework for the knowledge society
2. Policy development – objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities
3. VET in times of crisis
4. Historical background, legislative and Institutional framework
5. Initial vocational education and training
6. Continuing vocational education and training for adults
7. Training VET teachers and trainers
8. Matching VET provision (skills) with labour market needs (jobs)
9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment
10. Financing - investment in human resources
11. National VET statistics – allocation of programmes

This overview has been prepared in 2010 and its reference year is 2009. Similar overviews of previous years can be viewed at:

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More detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can also be found at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/detailed-thematic-analyses.aspx>

### **Keywords:**

vocational education and training (VET) systems; initial vocational training; continuing vocational training; lifelong learning; VET policy development; financial crisis and VET policies; VET legislative and institutional frameworks; validation of non-formal and informal education; teachers and trainers; anticipation of skill needs; vocational guidance and counseling; VET financing mechanisms; allocation of national VET programmes; national and international qualification systems.

### **Geographic term:**

the Netherlands

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## Preface

This thematic overview of the Dutch vocational education and training system is a result of the Cedefop ReferNet work programme 2010. Its aim is to provide a clear, short description of the VET system in the Netherlands. The overview is brought up to date each year; this is the eighth version. Ecbo (Centre for Expertise in Vocational Education and Training), as ReferNet partner in the Netherlands, was responsible for carrying out this task. The white boxes in the text contain additional information which a reader can skip for a clear apprehension of the Dutch vocational education and training system. This version will be updated again in the autumn of 2011, bringing the number of versions to 9.

Autumn 2010

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# 1 General context – framework for the knowledge society

## 1.1 Political and administrative context

The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system comprising two chambers. Central government is the highest tier of administration. However, a trend towards decentralisation began many years ago and is still underway. Tasks and responsibilities are progressively being transferred to lower levels of government, to provinces and especially to municipalities, but also to social interest groups such as school associations and/or boards of governors. The Netherlands has 12 provinces, each with their own tasks and responsibilities – though these are limited in terms of education policy. At present, the Netherlands consists of 430 municipalities. In contrast, municipalities have a greater involvement in education and training, being responsible, for instance, for (a) certain aspects of publicly financed schools at primary and secondary level, (b) the introduction of measures to reduce early school leaving and to counteract (potential) underachievement by children and youngsters from about the age of three, and (c) planning general adult education provision, including specific courses for migrants.

## 1.2 Population and demographics

The population of the Netherlands totals 16.5 million (2009). The country occupies an area of 41,526 square kilometres, which comes to 488 inhabitants per square kilometre. In 2009, the demographic burden – the 'green' burden – constituted by the young (i.e. the under-twenties as a percentage of the number of 20 to 65-year-olds) was 39 percent. In 2009, the burden constituted by the elderly – the 'grey' burden – was 24.5 percent. Table 1 shows the population forecast.

**Table 1: Population forecast by age, demographic burden and country of origin/in percentages**

	2010	2020	2030	2050
<b>Population x 1,000</b>	16,536	17,014	17,380	17,343
<b>Younger than 20 yrs</b>	23.7	22.1	21.4	21.6
<b>20 to 65 yrs</b>	60.9	58.2	55.0	53.9
<b>65 yrs or older</b>	15.3	19.7	23.6	24.5
<b>'Green' burden</b>	38.9	37.9	39.0	40.1
<b>'Grey' burden</b>	25.2	33.9	42.9	45.5
<b>Native Dutch</b>	79.9	77.7	75.6	71.3
<b>Foreign western</b>	9.0	9.6	10.1	11.5
<b>Foreign non-western</b>	11.1	12.7	14.3	17.2

**Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2010.**

This table shows that the composition of the population is set to change due to the demographic burden. While the 'green' burden will remain relatively stable, the 'grey' burden will increase during the next decades by about 80%. The composition of the population will change in other respects too, and in particular in terms of ethnic background. The number of people of foreign – non-

western and western – origin will increase by about 20% until 2030 and continue to rise until 2050; these are first- and second-generation migrants.

### 1.3 Economy and labour market indicators

The service industry makes up almost 80% of the Dutch economy and labour market (see table 2).

**Table 2: Employment in % per sector**

	2000	2005	2008
<b>Agriculture and fishery</b>	3.5	3.3	2.9
<b>Manufacturing and construction</b>	19.4	17.5	16.9
<b>Commercial services</b>	47.0	46.4	47.8
<b>Non-commercial services</b>	30.2	32.9	32.3

Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2010.

In 2009, the employed labour force decreased with 0.3 per cent to nearly 7.4 million people (net participation rate: see table 3). Since 2001, employment has risen in the elderly age segment(s) of the labour force because of the situation in the labour market and the partial elimination of arrangements for early retirement, and because more women were entering the labour market.

**Table 3: Net labour participation, by sex, age and country of origin; 15-65 years in % (employed labour force as a percentage of the population).**

	2001	2005	2009
<b>Total</b>	65.0	63.2	67.2
<b>Sex</b>			
<b>Men</b>	76.8	73.3	74.7
<b>Women</b>	52.8	53.0	59.7
<b>Age</b>			
<b>15 to 25 yrs</b>	45.9	37.7	39.5
<b>25 to 35 yrs</b>	82.0	80.5	84.0
<b>35 to 45 yrs</b>	78.4	77.8	82.7
<b>45 to 55 yrs</b>	70.6	73.3	78.4
<b>55 years and over</b>	33.7	38.2	46.8
<b>Country of origin</b>			
<b>Native Dutch</b>	66.7	65.2	69.1
<b>Foreign western</b>	62.5	62.1	66.1
<b>Foreign non-western</b>	52.7	49.2	54.7

Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2010.



**Table 4: Net labour participation, by educational attainment level in %.**

ISCED level	2005	2008
ISCED 0-1	40	45
ISCED 2	57	61
ISCED 3 general	67	73
ISCED 3-4 vocational	73	77
ISCED 5 Bachelor	81	84
ISCED 5-6 Master/doctor	82	85

Source: OCW, Key Figures 2005-2009.

As a result, 4.9% of the labour force was unemployed in 2009 (see table 5). Above this average of 4.9% women (5.3%), the group aged 15-25 (11.2%), people with a foreign background, especially non-western (11%), and those with qualifications at ISCED level 2 or lower. Graduates with a Bachelor's degree have the best chances in the labour market, better even than those with a Master's degree.

The labour market is late to react to economic developments and lags one economic phase behind. Still the effect of the crisis was already visible in 2009. Each month saw 11,000 newly unemployed on average. At the start of 2009 304,000 people were unemployed, almost 15,000 more than in the summer of 2008. This was the lowest number since the previous recession. But unemployment increased steadily in the course of 2009. At the end of the year 435,000 people were unemployed. Men accounted for nearly two-thirds of the increase (work in the industrial sector).

In September 2008, right before the crisis hit, there were nearly 250,000 job vacancies and the labour market was very tight. The number of vacancies halved in the first six months of 2009. Although there was still a slight decrease at the end of 2009 the number of vacancies seems to have stabilised. The labour market is still very dynamic. In 2009 some 725,000 vacancies were created, so despite the bleak economic circumstances people could still find jobs.

**Table 5: Unemployment (as a percentage of the labour force) by country of origin and education level of 15-64 year-olds**

	2005	2009
<b>Total</b>	6.5	4.9
<b>Country of origin</b>		
<b>Native Dutch</b>	5.2	4.0
<b>Foreign western</b>	7.9	6.1
<b>Foreign non-western</b>	16.4	11.0
<b>Education level</b>		
<b>Primary education</b>	12.7	9.8
<b>Secondary education – stage 1</b>	9.0	7.0
<b>Secondary education – stage 2</b>	6.2	4.6
<b>Bachelor's</b>	3.9	3.1
<b>Master's/doctorate</b>	5.0	3.3

Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2010.

In 2000, public and private expenditure for publicly funded education (excluding subsidies for college and university fees) was 5.7% of the Gross Domestic Product, compared to 6.3% in 2008 (Statistical Yearbook 2010). In 2008, funding by government – as part of the GDP – was 5.4%, which constituted 15.5% of total government spending in 2008 (including student finance 17.5%). Government funding of upper secondary VET in particular has risen in the last decade.

#### 1.4 Educational attainment of the population

One reason for the changes in educational attainment of the population between 2000 and 2008 (see table 6) was that young people with qualifications at higher levels of formal education entered the labour force, while older generations with lower levels gradually left.

**Table 6: Educational level of population aged 25-64 yrs in %**

ISCED level	2000	2008
<b>ISCED level 1</b>	11.1	7.6
<b>ISCED level 2</b>	23.6	20.0
<b>ISCED levels 3 and 4</b>	40.2	41.3
<b>Bachelor: level 5</b>	15.8	19.3
<b>Master/doctor: level 5/6</b>	8.8	11.3
<b>Unknown</b>	0.5	0.6

Source: OCW, Key Figures 2005-2009.

The increase in the educational level of the population is most prominent in the age bracket 25 to 34. In 2008, 39% of 25-34 year-olds had a higher education qualification (ISCED level 5 or 6); in this age group, 25% had a Bachelor's and 14% a Master's degree or doctorate.

Additional information about EU objectives concerning (vocational) education is presented in box 1.

**Box 1: EU objectives – national benchmarks – realisation of targets**

In addition, the EU benchmarks agreed for the 2002-2010 period (and since then for 2020 as well) play a part in assessing performance, including that of the VET system. As part of the open method of coordination, it is about policy learning through peer pressure. The Netherlands is partial to these benchmarks and monitors them carefully. Within Europe, the Netherlands is specifically interested in performance in Scandinavia, Germany, Belgium/Flanders, France and the United Kingdom/England, countries which are considered as reference countries. Each of the five EU benchmarks is reviewed below in brief.

The first EU benchmark is to halve number of 18 to 24-year-olds who do not have at least a diploma at ISCED-3 level and who are also no longer in education. There is a big difference in the labour market situation for young people with basic qualifications (at least ISCED level 3C) and for those without (at most ISCED level 2, i.e. early school leavers). For example, only 66% of the total group of early school leavers aged 15 to 22 found work in 2008 as opposed to 83% of those with basic qualifications. Some two-thirds of the dropouts with a qualification at ISCED level 2 (aged 15 to 22) found a job while less than half of those with only primary education found work. The Netherlands' aim for 2010 is to label a maximum of eight percent of this group as early school leavers. In the Netherlands, this percentage dropped from 15.4 to 11.4 in the 2000-2008 period. The Dutch objective for 2020 remains unchanged.

The second EU benchmark is the extent of participation of 25 to 64-year-olds in learning activities, as measured by the Labour Force Survey. The European objective for 2010 was 12.5%; that for 2020 is slightly more ambitious at 15%. The Netherlands has its own objective, namely that at least 20% of this age group takes part in learning activities in 2010 and in 2020. In actual fact, 15.5% of this age group were taking part in learning activities in 2000, and 17% in 2008.

The third EU benchmark concerns the level of reading skills of 15-year-old students (PISA). The EU objective was aimed at reducing the number of students with poor reading skills by 20% in 2010. The Dutch objective is to bring the number of students down to a maximum of 8% in 2010 and in 2020. Between 2000 and 2006, this percentage increased from 9.5% to 15.1%. In other words, this represents a tough challenge which the government is addressing by setting new reference levels for basic skills.

The fourth benchmark is the number of 20 to 24-year-olds with an ISCED-level 3 diploma. The European and Dutch objective for 2010 is 85%, an objective that the Netherlands is not meeting: the percentage rose from 71.9 to 76.2 in the 2000-2008 period.

Finally, the fifth benchmark is the number of graduates in sciences and technology. The objective of a growth of at least 15% has been more than fulfilled: from 5.8% (in 2000) to 8.9% in 2007.

New European benchmarks for the period 2010-2020 have been translated in the Netherlands in the paper *Towards a robust knowledge economy*; some as mentioned above. Others are:

At least 40% of the population aged 30-34 within Europe must have completed a study programme at the tertiary level or higher. The Netherlands has formulated its own national target: by 2020, at least 46% of the population aged 25-44 must have completed such a programme.

At least 95% of children between the ages of 4 to school entry age must participate in early-school programmes. The Netherlands has its own national target: 100% enrolment in pre-school and early-school programmes among target group children.

**Source: Key figures 2005-2009. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.**

## 1.5 Some definitions

Some definitions of terms – used in this publication – are shortly explained in box 2.

### Box 2: Definitions

**General education: *algemeen (vormend) onderwijs.***

Education which is mainly designed to lead to a deeper understanding of a group of subjects, mainly with a view to preparing participants for further education at a higher level. Successful completion does not provide the participants with a labour market qualification. These programmes are school-based.

**Pre-vocational education: *beroepsvoorbereidend onderwijs (lower secondary level).***

Education which is designed to introduce participants to the world of work and to prepare them mainly for entry into vocational education programmes. Successful completion of such programmes does not yet lead to a labour market relevant vocational qualification.

**Vocational education: *beroepsonderwijs (upper secondary level; including post-secondary non-tertiary level)***

Education which is mainly designed to lead participants to the acquisition of a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes (competences) for employment in a particular vocation or group of vocations; it may also lead to further learning at a higher level in the system. Successful completion of such programmes leads to a labour market relevant vocational qualification at upper secondary level recognised by the Ministry of Education. Technical education (*technisch onderwijs*) is a sector in vocational education.

**Professional education: *beroepsonderwijs (tertiary level)***

Professional education is 'vocational education' at tertiary level (part of higher education). It contains ISCED-5B programmes ('associate degree' programmes) and ISCED-5A programmes (professional bachelors/masters) recognised by the Dutch Flemish Accreditation Organisation. This education is provided by the universities of applied sciences, not academically research oriented.

**Higher education = tertiary education: *hoger onderwijs = tertiair onderwijs.***

Higher education has a binary system with two elements: (a) universities with an academic, largely theoretical and research orientation (ISCED-5A and 6), and (b) universities of applied sciences with a professional orientation (ISCED-5A and 5B).

**Initial vocational education and training (IVET): *initieel beroepsonderwijs.***

Initial vocational education (and training) is mainly education after fulltime compulsory education with the intention to lead participants to the acquisition of a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes (competences) focused on the entry to a vocation or group of vocations and to further learning too. It can be provided in a school-based environment with a component of workplace learning and in apprenticeship training.

**School-based programmes: *beroepsopleidende leerweg (at upper secondary level).***

School-based programmes take place in educational organisations; these programmes have a component of practical experience at the workplace during at least 20% of the study time in upper secondary VET.

**Apprenticeship/alternance training: *beroepsbegeleidende leerweg (at upper secondary level).***

Apprenticeship is systematic, long-term training in a school and in upper secondary VET for at least 60% of the study time at the workplace. The apprentice has a contract with the school/training centre and a contract with the employer; the apprentice receives remuneration. The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific vocation.

**Continuing vocational education and training (CVET): *scholing.***

Continuing vocational (education and) training is further vocational/professional development through (education and) training, mainly after one has completed initial vocational education (and training). In reality,

there does not exist a sharp definition of this term in the Netherlands.

**Qualification: *kwalificatie*.**

A formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes (as a set of competences) to given standards; diplomas refer to qualifications.

**Skills: *vaardigheden*.**

The ability to use cognitive and practical 'know how' and 'know who' knowledge in the completion of tasks and in problem solving. Take note, there does not exist one accepted definition.

**Competence: *competentie*.**

A competence is the ability to use and apply a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes (and personal qualities) for the execution of tasks in an adequate way. Adequate = effective + efficient. The competence level connects with the amount of autonomy and responsibility concerning the execution of tasks.

**Curriculum: *curriculum or leerplan*.**

In the Netherlands, there does not exist one definition for the term 'curriculum'. Distinctions can be made between (a) organisational levels (for instance: national level; school level; classroom level; individual level) and (b) the character of a curriculum (for instance: intended curriculum; designed curriculum; realised curriculum). In this publication we use the term curriculum as a learning plan document designed at school level. National curricula do not exist in the Netherlands.

## 2 Policy developments in the VET system

*Author's note: reading section 5.1 before the following chapters is recommended – section 5.1 presents a bird's eye view of the Dutch education and training system.*

### 2.1 Objectives and priorities

The main objectives to which the VET system has to contribute are:

- to raise the educational level of the population (par. 1.4: EU objectives).
- to embed the VET system in a lifelong learning strategy.  
A key question here is what level of flexibility IVET suppliers can attain with regard to the 'just-in-time-and-place' supply of educational courses and what may reasonably be expected of these providers in this respect. In terms of organisation, the system of initial education and vocational education is, after all, geared towards teaching students in cohorts in various types of education, during which a foundation is created for lifelong learning.
- to make the VET system more attractive for participants and stakeholders in the labour market and in society.

The present VET priorities are in line with these objectives.

In relation to raising the educational level of the (future) labour force population and also to promoting a lifelong learning strategy, these priorities include:

- reducing the number of early school leavers by 50% between 2002 and 2012;
- more emphasis on Dutch and arithmetic in the curricula for primary and lower/upper secondary education, including vocational education;
- aligning different types and levels of IVET by realising a 'vocational education column' which includes pre-vocational education (ISCED level 2), upper secondary vocational education (ISCED levels 3 and 4) and a more differentiated higher professional education (ISCED level 5);
- improving the match between the demand and the supply side of CVET and promoting CVET, for instance through regional or local one-stop-shops for information and guidance and possibly for further support (e.g. for training and accreditation of prior learning) for the unemployed, employees, self-employed and employers.

In relation to enhancing the attractiveness of VET, for instance:

- implementing a fully new competence-based and objectives-led qualification structure for upper secondary vocational education. This new qualification structure contains a description of competences for work, (further) learning and citizenship as central issues for preparing future employees for the requirements of modern society. This structure gives educational institutions more freedom to adopt innovative pedagogical and didactical methods;
- introducing innovative learning arrangements in VET schools at different levels and improving regional cooperation with different stakeholders (including those in the labour market);

- promoting science and technology education throughout the education system to enhance the attractiveness of technical programmes and the quantitative growth of the number of science graduates.

A further key priority is to prevent a shortage of VET teachers in the near future. Many of these teachers belong to the 'baby boom' generation born after 1945 and are set to retire before 2015. An important aspect: raising the quality of teacher training and finding a new balance in curricula between subject-oriented knowledge and pedagogical/didactical skills.

## 2.2 Use of EU tools

### Box 3: EU tools and the implementation in the Netherlands

The European Framework for Reference of Languages of the European Council is used to develop and practice foreign language teaching in upper secondary VET.

The Dutch vocational education system has a complete system of qualifications (i.e. diplomas) from ISCED levels 2 to 5. Horizontal transfer is possible at the same level and vertical transfers and progression routes are laid down by law, with everyone having the opportunity, in principle, to attain the highest level. As such, there are no cul-de-sacs or traps in this differentiated system, so that it is in theory suited for a lifelong learning strategy. These and other qualifications are classified in a national qualification framework (NLQF) that reflects the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). In 2009, the Ministry of Education took the lead by tasking a group of experts to develop the NLQF, which is to be referenced to the EQF at the end of 2010. The further implementation will then be outsourced to a national coordination point in 2011. The aim is to use EQF labels in all Europass documents from 2012.

The implementation of the European quality assurance principles is also on the agenda. It should be noted here, however, that a well-balanced system of quality assurance is already in place for upper secondary VET and higher professional education, albeit with a different character for each type. In upper secondary VET, this system involves a combination of supervision and inspection, nationally established learning outcomes in the various qualifications, the obligation of VET suppliers and Centres of Expertise on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market to have their own quality assurance systems with a view to permanently improving performance, and not unimportantly, to account for their performance to the public. This section of Dutch vocational education (largely) meets the European indicators for quality assurance. That also applies to higher professional education which has a system of self-evaluation, review and accreditation, for the time being at programme level. A fairly small national reference point for EQA-VET is planned for upper secondary VET, which is or will be linked to the national Leonardo da Vinci agency.

The national reference point for quality assurance will also be forming the national coordination point (NCP) for ECVET. Given the factors as the link with the Leonardo da Vinci programme and the modest size of the NCP, it is not illogical to presume that, at least for the time being, ECVET implementation relates to the qualitative and substantive improvement of the (current) mobility activities of learners in a number of educational fields where mobility is relatively high.

### Box 4: international mobility of learners and teachers in VET

Compared to all upper secondary VET students, the number of participants registered in upper secondary VET via the Leonardo da Vinci programme and the very modest BAND programme (Dutch-German exchange) in 2008 was 0.54% (a total of some 2,700). In 2004, this was 0.33% (at least a two-week stay abroad).

The figures for teacher mobility are: 413 in 2004 and 634 in 2008, with a peak of 852 teachers in 2007.

This registered mobility is not the entire picture. In addition to mobility in a programme context (Leonardo da Vinci/BAND), there are free riders who spend part of their studies abroad. Over-18s who wish to pursue a full-time upper secondary VET programme abroad can take their Dutch student grant with them to an as yet

restricted number of countries.

The participation of higher education students in mobility programmes is higher than among upper secondary VET students. In 2006-2007, some 14,750 students were studying for their entire study abroad (2.49% of the Dutch student population). At the start of the 2007/2008 study year, student grants could be transferred worldwide. The (estimated) numbers for the credit mobility are in the student monitor: 17% of the students in university education and 12% of the students in higher professional education. The percentage of graduates that say they gained experience abroad during their studies was 23.1% in 2006-2007.



### 3 VET in times of crisis (or recovery)

In response to the economic crisis, the Dutch government and the social partners signed a social agreement in 2009. Fundamental to this agreement – partly related to VET – were three topics:

- measures concerning fewer working hours per week: part-time unemployment. The aims are (a) to guarantee the continuity of business enterprises, (b) to improve knowledge and skills (by training) during 'unemployed' hours, and (c) to prevent shortages in the near future;
- the awareness of the importance of avoiding a 'lost generation' through the creation of a Youth Unemployment Plan. The social partners want to create 10,000 more learning and working places in enterprises.
- Longer stay in education. About 200,000 youngsters and young adults leave school every year, representing approximately one age cohort. The majority are looking for work. In 2009, some 30,000 students extra remained in education – perhaps partially in the wake of the economic crisis (see hereafter in box 5).

In addition, with different learning paths acting as 'communicating vessels', at its upper secondary level the IVET system is robust and, consequently, the impact of the economic crisis on VET is less marked. The Dutch Central Planning Office evaluated the effects of the economic crisis on the labour market and (vocational) education (summer 2010); this evaluation is summarized in box 5.

#### Box 5: Economic crisis – VET – labour market

Unemployment in the Netherlands is among the lowest in the world. It increased only marginally during the crisis, or at any rate to a lesser extent than expected, from an average 3.9% in 2008 to 6.1% in March 2010. Unemployment dropped in the second quarter of 2010 and now stands at 5.7% (June 2010). How can that be and what part, if at all, does vocational education play? There are several possible explanations, some of which are better than others.

A first explanation could be that because of rising unemployment, fewer people register with a job centre; i.e. unemployment has a discouraging effect. As an explanation, this paints a rather simplified picture. A degree of deterrence is found only among youngsters: instead of working, they stay at school longer. The rise in educational participation among youngsters is not exceptional, however in 2009 as it has been on the increase for decades already (the driving force being a desire for personal development). The elderly and women do not allow themselves to be put off at all. Their numbers in the labour force have been steadily increasing for years, and this trend has continued throughout the crisis. For the elderly, work is financially worthwhile and women work chiefly in such growth sectors as care.

A second explanation that cuts more ice has to do with the strained job market as it was before the outbreak of the crisis, namely that there were more than 240,000 vacancies against 310,000 jobseekers in 2008. The first 'round of cost savings' during the crisis then involves either not filling vacancies or scrapping them altogether. Notwithstanding the economic crisis the number of participants (especially adults) in the dual pathway of upper secondary VET continues to increase during the 2005-2009 period.

A third explanation is the termination of contracts with self-employed (one-person businesses) and workers from temporary agencies. This large occupational group is by definition mobile, and therefore contributes to a rapid adjustment of the job market both in growth sectors and shrinking sectors.

A fourth explanation is the reduction in working hours of permanent staff, by first doing away with overtime. A harsher step is using part-time unemployment as a way of reducing staff working hours, which is done by implementing a temporary government measure involving part-time work (for which the person receives a wage) and compulsory schooling (with unemployment benefit) during the remaining working hours. The scope of this measure is not particularly ambitious as it applies to about 1% of the workforce.

A final explanation is that businesses have been cautious when it comes to laying off staff, for fear of losing skilled workers and so being faced with shortages once the economy starts to recover. After all, the population

is ageing and the baby boom generation will be retiring in the near future.

All these explanations may say something about the modest increase in unemployment, but they do not explain the recent decrease in unemployment, according to the Central Planning Office (Dutch economic think tank). This can only be due to an economic recovery, for instance a rise in exports.

## 4 Historical background, legislative and institutional framework

### 4.1 Historical background

The development of vocational education can be characterised by a division into different periods of time. The first period, from the second half of the nineteenth century until 1919, when the first law concerning vocational education, the Industrial, Technical and Domestic Education Act (*Nijverheidsonderwijswet*), came into force, is characterised by the founding of technical schools and vocational schools, most of which were privately funded. The 1919 Act also provided for an apprenticeship system that was regarded as an alternative to vocational education in a day school context. This Act came into force in 1921.

Vocational education experienced an explosive growth during the second period, which lasted from 1921 to 1968; real growth from 1945. This huge growth was especially true for lower secondary vocational education, which followed on from primary education for children up to the age of 12, and for the apprenticeship system. This growth in secondary school attendance, which was primarily publicly funded, underscored the need for more cohesion between the various forms of secondary education. This resulted in the Secondary Education Act (*Wet op het voortgezet onderwijs*) commonly known as the *Mammoetwet*, or Mammoth Act, which came into force in 1968. General secondary education, together with vocational education at lower, intermediate and higher levels, was an integral part of this Act. This joint legislation positioned general education and vocational education as equal alternatives alongside one another with the possibility of reciprocal transfers. The apprenticeship system was given its own independent legal basis in the Apprenticeship Act of 1969.

Educational expansion continued in the third period, a period concerned mainly with upper secondary vocational education and higher professional education. In the case of the latter, this period lasted until 1986, although it continued to grow after that as well. In 1986, higher professional education was provided for in a separate Act, the Higher Professional Education Act (*Wet op het hoger beroepsonderwijs*) and 'liberated' from the constraints of secondary education; the start of the fourth period for higher professional education. Dating from the 1970s, the idea of creating greater cohesion between higher professional and academic education came to fruition in 1993 with the introduction of the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*). Vocational education at secondary level also underwent emancipation during this third period of time, culminating in the (Adult) Education and Vocational Education Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs*) in 1996; the start of the fourth period for upper secondary vocational education and training. As far as vocational education is concerned, this legislation provides for both the more school-based learning strands and the apprenticeship system.

In terms of size, new legislation for higher professional education on the one hand, and for upper secondary vocational education, on the other, has created major education providers that have high levels of autonomy within a framework of general, statutory regulations – typical of the fourth period.

### 4.2 Legislative framework for initial vocational education

Educational laws in the Netherlands provide a broad framework outlining key elements such as general aims and objectives of VET, access and accessibility, design procedures and procedures concerning the determination of qualifications, curricula and examinations, quality assurance procedures, regulations about the administration of publicly financed IVET suppliers, procedures with regard to the recognition of private commercial IVET suppliers, and financing. The central

government can formulate more detailed measures in orders in council (*Algemene Maatregelen van Bestuur - AMVB*), which can be updated more easily.

The main legislation concerning initial vocational education and training (IVET) is:

- for lower secondary general and pre-vocational education (*VMBO – voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*) as part of general secondary education (see section 5.1): the Secondary Education Act (*WVO – Wet op het Voortgezet Onderwijs*; 1968 with later amendments).
- for upper secondary vocational education (*MBO – middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*; see section 5.1): the General Adult Education and Vocational Education Act (*WEB – Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs*; 1996 with later amendments).
- for higher professional education (*HBO – hoger beroepsonderwijs*; see section 5.1): the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (*WHW – Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek*; 1993 with later amendments).

Chapters 5 (general outline of VET type) and 10 (financing) also discuss some of the legislative arrangements.

The following laws are also important for IVET:

- Regional Registration Act (early school leavers) and Coordination (*RMC: Regionale Meld- en Coördinatiewet*; 2001). Goal: reduction of early school leaving.
- Student Finance Act (*WSF – Wet op de Studiefinanciering*; for students over the age of 18 and in full-time education).
- The Reduction of Wage Tax Contributions Act (*WVA – Wet Vermindering Afdracht Loonbelasting*). Goal: financial support of enterprises that provide places for apprentices and interns.
- The Professions in Education Act (*Wet BIO – Wet op Beroepen in het Onderwijs*; 2006). Valid for primary, secondary and general adult education and for IVET at lower/upper secondary level: regulates the minimum requirements for teachers.

### 4.3 Institutional framework: initial vocational education and training (IVET)

There are basically three organisational levels in the Dutch initial vocational/professional education system:

- national level
- sectoral level (especially in upper secondary VET)
- regional/local or school level

We identify several functions and roles in the VET system: legislation and financing, development of qualifications, development of curricula, examinations, quality assurance – internal and external, and promotion of interests.

Table 7 combines the levels of organisation (including the relevant organisations or bodies) with these functions and roles.

**Table 7: Organisational levels and functions/roles within initial vocational/professional education.**

Function	VMBO (ISCED-2)	MBO (ISCED-3/4)	HBO (ISCED-5)
<b>Legislation/financing (section 4.2 and chapter 10)</b>	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science/ Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality	The same	The same
<b>Development of qualifications</b>	Design: national level Validity: national	Design: sectoral level by Knowledge Centres VET – Trade and Industry (social partners & VET). Validity: national	Design: school level Validity: national
<b>Development of curricula (chapter 8)</b>	School level	School level	School level
<b>Examination (chapter 8)</b>	Partly central/national; partly school exams	School exams; external contribution of trainers in enterprises	School exams
<b>Quality assurance</b>	Internal External: Inspectorate	Internal External: Inspectorate; special attention: exams	Internal: self-evaluation. External: accreditation of HBO-programmes by NVAO*. European level: use of Dublin level descriptors.
<b>Promotion of interests by associations of schools**</b>	VO Council	MBO Council (schools); Colo (association of sectoral knowledge centres)	HBO Council

\*NVAO = Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (*Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie*).

\*\*NRTO (*Dutch Council for Training*) promotes the interests of private, non-subsidised VET providers that have been legally recognised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to offer regulated VET courses at upper secondary and tertiary level.

#### 4.4 Legislative framework for continuing vocational training

Legislative framework for CVET:

- IVET legislation applies if IVET functions as CVET for individuals; and
- tax deduction measures for individuals to facilitate training and procedures for the accreditation of prior learning.

Social partners can formulate aims and arrangements for CVET and apprenticeship training in collective labour agreements. The regulations differ per branch of industry or labour market sector. Collective labour agreements are declared legally binding for all businesses in a particular branch or sector of the labour market; this declaration is issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

#### 4.5 Institutional framework: continuing vocational education and training (CVET)

No institutional framework for CVET exists in the Netherlands. Provision is market-driven with a great many suppliers (including publicly financed IVET suppliers offering private commercial contract activities). Social partners can stimulate CVET with the help of their branch-specific Training and Development Funds (*Opleidings- en ontwikkelingsfondsen*).

CVET can be divided into:

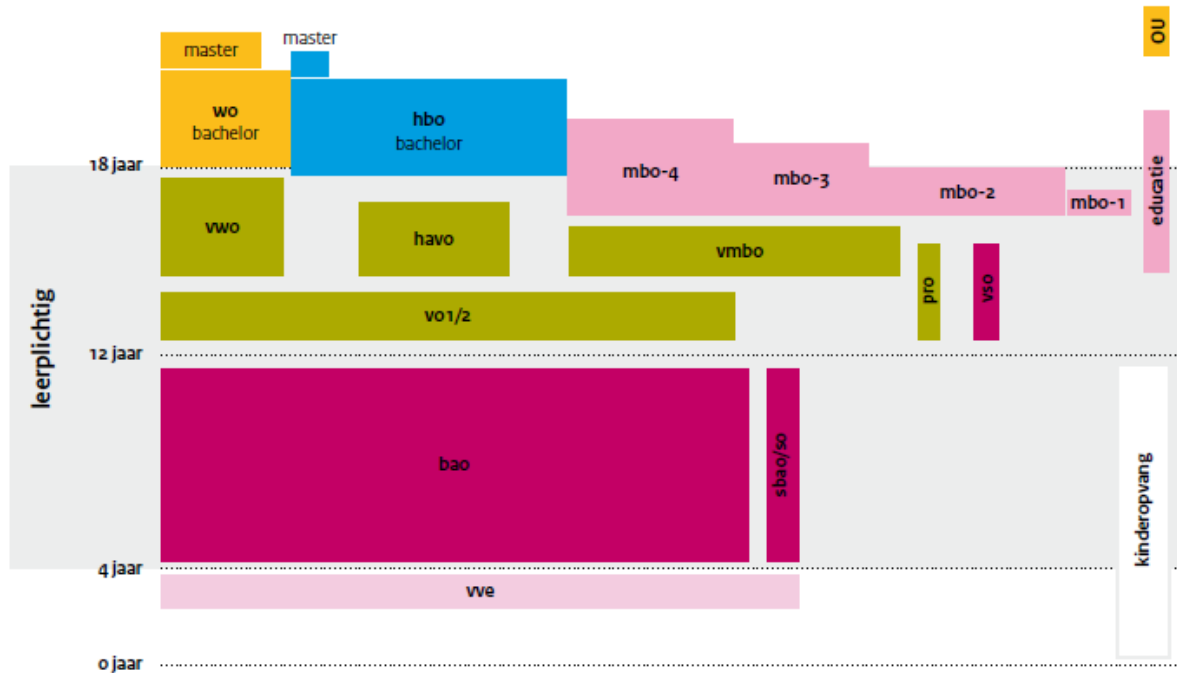
- legally regulated and publicly financed part-time/dual IVET that functions as CVET for individuals;
- extensive provision of specific training for the unemployed and jobseekers;
- private, non-government-funded training for employees, self-employed people and employers.

There are various forms of training provision:

1. The part-time equivalents of regular full-time/school-based vocational/professional education and the dual pathways within upper secondary vocational education and higher professional education.
2. Private correspondence courses and e-learning activities, which are primarily vocational in nature.
3. Private oral education, which again comprises primarily vocational courses; training courses given outside the company.
4. In-company training, off-the-job and on-the-job.

## 5 Initial vocational education and training

Figure 1: Diagram of the Dutch education system



Explanation of abbreviations / terms: *leerplichtig* = compulsory education; *vve* = *voorschoolse en vroegtijdige educatie* = pre-school education; *kinderopvang* = child relief besides/after school; *bao* = *basisonderwijs* = primary education; *sbao/so* = *speciaal basisonderwijs/speciaal onderwijs* = special (primary) education; *vso* = *voortgezet speciaal onderwijs* = special secondary education; *pro* = *praktijkonderwijs* = practical, labour oriented education; *vo* = *voortgezet onderwijs* = secondary education; *vmbo* = *voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* = pre-vocational education; *havo* = *hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs* = upper secondary general education; *vwo* = *voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs* = pre-scientific education; *educatie* = general adult education; *mbo* = *middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* = upper secondary vocational education (including a specialist programme after mbo-3 not visible in this diagram); *hbo* = *hoger beroepsonderwijs* = higher professional education (including a short cycle programme not visible in this diagram); *wo* = *wetenschappelijk onderwijs* = scientific education (including trajectories for future doctorates; not visible in this diagram); *OU* = *Open Universiteit* = Open University. Not visible in this diagram: continuing vocational training.

Transfer possibilities within the education system are shown in figure 2; see section 5.1.

The related ISCED-levels are specified in section 5.1.

## 5.1 Background: a bird's eye view of the Dutch education and training system

The Dutch education and training system comprises six elements: (a) primary education, (b) special education, (c) secondary education, (d) upper secondary vocational education and general education for adults, (e) vocational courses and training for adults (CVET), and (f) tertiary or higher education.

Figure 1 shows a diagram of the Dutch system of education.

Education is compulsory for pupils from 5 to 16. Until August 2008, those aged 16-17 on August 1 of any one year were required by law to attend education on at least one or two days a week. Since then, a 'qualification duty' exists for this age group, if they have not yet attained a general or vocational qualification at upper secondary level (in the diagram: at least vwo, havo or mbo-2). This new arrangement was introduced because of the need to reduce the number of early school leavers.

Primary education (ISCED level 1; Dutch abbreviation: *PO – primair onderwijs*): for pupils aged 4-12; for eight consecutive years.

Special education at primary and secondary level (Dutch abbreviation: *SO/VSO – speciaal onderwijs/voortgezet speciaal onderwijs*): for pupils aged 3-20 with learning or behavioural difficulties and/or with mental, sensory or physical handicaps.

General secondary education (ISCED levels 2 and 3; Dutch abbreviation: *AVO – algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*) includes three types of education:

- Pre-university education (ISCED level 2 after three years and further at level 3; Dutch abbreviation: *VWO – voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*). The duration is six years and prepares for further study in higher education: research universities and higher professional education/universities of applied sciences. Age: 12-18 years.
- Upper secondary general education (ISCED level 2 after three years and further at level 3; Dutch abbreviation: *HAVO – hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*): the duration is five years and prepares for further study in higher professional education. Transfer to the fifth year of pre-scientific education is also possible. Age: 12-17 years.
- Lower secondary general and pre-vocational education (ISCED level 2; Dutch abbreviation: *VMBO – voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*): the duration is four years and prepares for further study in upper secondary vocational education (and partly in upper secondary general education). Age: 12-16 years. This type of education is discussed below as part of VET.

Connected with the latter is a separate practical, labour-oriented programme for pupils who are not able to attain a lower secondary/pre-vocational education (*PRO = praktijkonderwijs*) diploma. Age: 12-18/19 years.

Upper secondary vocational education (ISCED levels 2, 3 and 4) and general adult education (ISCED levels 1 to 3). Dutch abbreviation: *BVE – beroepsonderwijs en volwasseneneducatie*.

- The first is upper secondary vocational education with several programmes in four sectors of the labour market; at four levels (MBO levels 1, 2, 3 and 4) with different duration. As part of the Dutch VET system, this type of education is discussed below. Dutch abbreviation: *MBO – middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*. Age: from 16.
- The second is general adult education: basic education (ISCED level 1; Dutch terminology: *basiseducatie*) and general secondary education for adults (ISCED levels 2 and 3; Dutch abbreviation: *VAVO – voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs*). Age: from 18 (but 16/17-year-olds can also attend this type of education under certain conditions).



CVET comprises a range – or maybe better termed a ‘jungle’ – of vocational or more general courses for jobseekers, the unemployed, employees, self-employed people, and employers. IVET programmes can also function as CVET.

The terms ‘higher education’ and ‘tertiary education’ have the same meaning. As a binary system, higher education (ISCED level 5) has two components:

- higher professional education: the duration is four years (mainly Bachelor’s degree, also associate degree and Master’s degree). Provider: ‘universities of applied sciences’. As part of the VET system, this type of education is discussed below. Dutch abbreviation: *HBO – hogere beroepsonderwijs*. Age: from 17/18.
- scientific/university education (ISCED level 5; and 6 for doctorates): the duration is four years and for technology studies five years (Bachelor’s/Master’s degree). Dutch abbreviation: *WO – wetenschappelijk onderwijs*. Age: from 18.

As part of (academic) adult education, and providing a modular programme structure, the Open University has open access.

The system can be divided into two ‘columns’ or tracks (see also figure 1):

- the general education track starts in general secondary education with direct transfer possibilities to higher education, and
- the vocational education track starts in lower secondary pre-vocational education (study year 3) with transfer possibilities to upper secondary vocational education; MBO level 4 graduates can continue their studies in higher professional education. Upper secondary vocational education is the pivot in this column. For some students, it is the end of initial vocational education, and is completed with an initial qualification. For others, it is an alternative route to higher professional education; nowadays, more than 50% of the level 4 graduates continue their studies in higher professional education, and the numbers are increasing.

Most pupils aged 14 follow the vocational track, although general education is viewed as a superior path towards higher education (see table 8 in section 5.2). Improving parity of esteem between the two tracks is a policy priority.

Figure 2 shows the estimated number of pupils transferring within the system; this relates to pupils leaving primary education in 2008. These estimates approximate present levels.



**Table 8: Participation in different types of secondary education year 3 by gender; in %.**

Type of education	1990	2000	2009
	boys/girls	boys/girls	boys/girls
<b>VSO (15-year-olds)</b>	1.2 / 0.6	2.2 / 1.0	4.2 / 1.8
<b>PRO (15-year-olds)</b>	1.4 / 0.8	2.4 / 1.4	3.3 / 2.3
<b>VMBO - LWOO</b>	9.5 / 5.4	11.8 / 7.5	12.8 / 11.6
<b>VMBO (excl. LWOO)</b>	62.3 / 56.2	51.7 / 47.7	42.1 / 37.4
<b>HAVO</b>	16.3 / 18.3	20.1 / 22.3	23.2 / 24.2
<b>VWO</b>	15.1 / 16.1	16.1 / 19.6	19.9 / 22.8

**Source: Key Figures 2005-2009; OCW. See section 5.1 for abbreviations. VSO and PRO: special types of secondary education – usually not leading to a diploma at ISCED level 2. VMBO: IVET and general education at lower secondary level leading to a diploma at ISCED level 2 (LWOO = *leerwegerondersteunend onderwijs*: extra support for pupils within VMBO). HAVO and VWO: general secondary education/pre-scientific education as preparation for higher education.**

Pre-vocational secondary education (*VMBO – voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*) lasts 4 years. The first two years consist of general subjects only and years 3 and 4 are characterised by three system elements:

1. pupils can receive extra support in the different programmes;
2. pupils choose a 'learning path' characterised by 'level differentiation', programmatic orientation and different transfer possibilities in the education system.

The four learning pathways are:

- a. The theoretical learning pathway (*VMBO-TL – theoretische leerweg*). Those graduating from the theoretical learning pathway can transfer to upper secondary vocational education (especially long courses at the highest levels of upper secondary VET – MBO levels 3 and 4) or continue their education in the fourth year of upper secondary general education. The content of the programme is general in character.
- b. The mixed/combined learning pathway (*VMBO-GL – gemengde leerweg*). This is similar to the theoretical learning pathway but with a more pre-vocational orientation for about ten to fifteen per cent of the study time. Progression routes towards upper secondary VET are the same as for the theoretical pathway.
- c. The pre-vocational learning pathway – higher level (*VMBO-KL – kaderberoepsgerichte leerweg*): preparation for long courses in IVET at secondary level – MBO levels 3 and 4.
- d. The pre-vocational learning pathway – lower level (*VMBO-BL – basisberoepsgerichte leerweg*): preparation for short courses in upper secondary VET – MBO level 2. Within this pathway, some pupils can participate in a dual track that combines learning and working. Various experiments were started in 2008, including the full integration of these programmes and MBO level 2 programmes in collaborations between schools (making a 'smooth' progression route without a break halfway).

**Table 9: Participation in VMBO learning pathways 2008; in %.**

Learning pathway within VMBO	2008	% LWOO-pupils in a learning path
VMBO - BL	25	58
VMBO - KL	27	23
VMBO - GL	12	6
VMBO - TL	36	3

Source: Key Figures 2005-2009; OCW. Compilation of data.

- Pupils choose a sector in the pre-vocational oriented pathways (agriculture, technology, economics, health and welfare) and further specialities within a sector (see table 10).

The examination subjects are two obligatory subjects for all pupils (Dutch and English), two sector-specific subjects (limited choice) and two other subjects (different options). The vocationally oriented subjects can be broader or more restricted in nature. The programmes lead to nationally recognised qualifications/diplomas. Some examinations are organised centrally/nationally while others are the responsibility of the schools.

**Table 10: Choice of sector within VMBO study year 3 in VMBO BL/KL; in %. Exclusively VMBO-TL and VMBO-GL; more vocationally oriented programmes only.**

Sector	2000	2007
Green education	12.4	13.1
Technology education	35.7	26.7
Economy and business	25.8	26.1
Health care/welfare	26.1	28.1
Combination of sectors		6.1

Source: CBS. Statistical Yearbook Education/2008. In 2008, the distribution of pupils was virtually the same as in the previous year.

In addition, there is a specific practical pathway for low-achievers, which is geared towards preparing them for the labour market; see section 5.1 about PRO (*praktijkonderwijs*). Some of these pupils also transfer to upper secondary VET (MBO level 1; see section 5.3). Pupils without qualifications can also enter upper secondary VET, i.e. programmes at MBO level 1 (these programmes can also be offered in VMBO schools in cooperation with MBO schools) and, under certain conditions, MBO level 2 programmes. See section 5.3 for admission requirements in upper secondary VET.

### 5.3 IVET at upper secondary level

In upper secondary education, 68% of the school population participates in a vocational programme and 32% in general education (2007; Eurostat). The number of participants in VET is

high; both youngsters and adults attend upper secondary VET, meaning that the numbers do not represent a division into age cohorts.

The age of the participants in upper secondary vocational education ranges from 16 to 35 and over. The average age of upper secondary VET participants is, in fact, slightly higher than in higher education. Accordingly, upper secondary VET fulfils an emancipatory function.

Subsidised programmes in IVET at upper secondary level are offered by 43 regional, multisectoral training centres (*ROCs – regionale opleidingscentra*), 12 specialist trade colleges (*vakscholen: specific for a branch of industry*), 12 agricultural training centres (*AOCs – agrarische opleidingscentra*) and four other schools. The AOCs are separately financed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality. In addition, private, non-subsidised providers can offer VET programmes on condition that their programmes are recognised by the Ministry. Consequently, upper secondary VET is an open system. Moreover, the subsidised educational institutions can also offer contract educational activities, paid for by employers/employees. These activities make up some four percent of their operating costs.

The system elements in upper secondary VET are:

- a. Two learning pathways: school-based full-time or part-time programmes with practical periods in enterprises (*BOL – beroepsopleidende leerweg*) and a dual pathway (apprenticeship training) in which learning and working are combined (*BBL – beroepsbegeleidende leerweg*). In the school-based pathway, the practical period in companies makes up at least 20% of the study time to a maximum of 59%; in the dual pathway, training takes place in a company during at least 60% of the study time. Both pathways function in the market as communicating vessels; the same qualifications/diplomas can be achieved via both pathways. Participants in the school-based pathway are mainly youngsters (see tables 11 and 12), while 40% of those following the dual pathway are aged 25 and over (see table 12 and section 5.4).

**Table 11: Participation in MBO: learning pathways**

	1995	2000	2005	2009
<b>Total number</b>	436,000	452,000	489,000	520,000
<b>% BOL pathway</b>	73	66	72	67
<b>% BBL pathway</b>	27	34	28	33

Source: Key figures 2005-2009, OCW.

**Table 12: Participation in MBO: age and learning pathway, 2008; in %.**

	BOL pathway	BBL pathway
<b>16-20 yrs</b>	72	33
<b>20-25 yrs</b>	24	28
<b>25-30 yrs</b>	2	10
<b>30-35 yrs</b>	1	6
<b>35 yrs and over</b>	1	23

Source: CBS, Yearbook Educational Statistics, 2009.

- b. Programmes at four levels with different access criteria and transfer possibilities for further learning.
- MBO level 1 'assistant training' (*assistentenopleiding*) lasts six months to a year. It prepares participants to carry out simple executive tasks (ISCED level 2 in Dutch/international statistical information). There are no restrictions on access. Progression to programmes at MBO level 2 is possible. There are a few sector-specific programmes, as well as a broader work-oriented programme for vulnerable groups (assistant with a job market qualification– *arbeidsmarktgekwalficeerde assistent*). The programmes at this level are intended for youngsters who are probably not in a position to attain a minimum starting qualification at MBO level 2.
  - MBO level 2 'basic vocational education' (*basisberoepsopleiding*) lasts two or three years and prepares for executive tasks (ISCED level 3C short). This level is the 'official' minimum qualification level for the labour market, the term 'official' in this context meaning that it is related to the definition of early school leaving, which, politically speaking, is regarded as a desirable minimum for every citizen. Access requirements: at least a basic pre-vocational education diploma; completed assistant training (MBO level 1); under certain circumstances no access requirements apply. Progression to MBO level 3 (and sometimes level 4) programmes is possible.
  - MBO level 3 'professional education' (*vakopleiding*) lasts three/four years (two years after completion of an MBO level 2 programme). It prepares people to carry out tasks independently (ISCED level 3C long). Access requirements: (1) a pre-vocational secondary education certificate/diploma (excluding basic pre-vocational education), or (2) proof that the first three years of upper secondary general education or pre-university education have been successfully completed. Progression to programmes at MBO level 4 are possible as are middle management training programmes and specialist training (see below).
  - MBO level 4 'middle-management VET' (*middenkaderopleiding*) usually lasts four years. It prepares people to carry out tasks independently and with more responsibility (ISCED level 3A). Access requirements: the same as for MBO level 3. Progression and transfer to higher professional education (see section 5.7) are possible.
  - MBO level 4 'specialist training' (*specialistenopleiding*) lasts one to two years (ISCED level 4). Access requirements: completion of a programme at MBO level 3 (or 4). Progression/transfer to higher professional education, especially the dual or part-time pathways, is possible.

Access requirements for upper secondary vocational education are designed to ensure that everyone can gain a minimum qualification level regardless of their previous education and training.

**Table 13: Participation in MBO–levels and learning pathways, 2007; in %.**

	<b>BOL</b>	<b>BBL</b>
	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	3	7
<b>Level 2</b>	19	41
<b>Level 3</b>	23	33
<b>Level 4 – middle management</b>	55	16
<b>Level 4 – specialist</b>	1	3

Source: CBS, Yearbook Educational Statistics, 2008.

- c. A qualification structure is in place that relates to different industry/business sectors. Programmes are offered in four different sectors: green/agriculture, technology and engineering, economics/services, and health/welfare. Each sector includes various branches of industry/business.

The qualification structure has been redesigned. The original structure comprised in 1995 some 700 qualifications, drawn up by the Knowledge Centres VET-Trade and Industry (hereafter referred to as KBBs – *Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven*); there are now 17 such centres. The new structure (2010) comprises 237 competence-based qualifications/diplomas with different exit differentiations (approx. 650). This means that the reduction in the number of VET programmes is smaller than the qualification structure suggests. Each qualification describes the desirable output of programmes based on these qualifications, which is output related to a specific vocation or group of occupations, to citizenship and further learning. This new structure has been implemented and will be fully operational by in study year 2010/2011. All qualifications have three objectives, which relate to work and occupation, citizenship and further learning.

Creating a balance between general and vocational subjects/domains in the curriculum is the responsibility of the learning provider.

Assessment and examinations are the responsibility of the VET providers; they are legally required to involve the trainers in enterprises that are responsible for internships and apprentices in the various learning pathways.

**Table 14: Participation in MBO – programme orientation and learning pathways, 2008; in %.**

	<b>BOL</b>	<b>BBL</b>
	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>
<b>Green/agriculture</b>	4.9	6.0
<b>Technology</b>	22.6	45.3
<b>Economics/services</b>	36.4	24.5
<b>Health/welfare</b>	35.4	23.3
<b>Combination of sectors</b>	0.5	0.7

Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2010.

## 5.4 Apprenticeship training

While it plays a more modest role in lower secondary VET (section 5.2) and higher professional education (see section 5.7), apprenticeship training is a substantial part of upper secondary vocational education (see section 5.3).

Normally, apprentices conclude two contracts, a learning/educational agreement with the VET school (*onderwijsvereenkomst*) and an employment contract (*arbeidscontract*) with an organisation/enterprise. At least 60% of the study time is spent at the workplace. In practice, this means that students also conclude a 'practical learning agreement' (*praktijkvereenkomst*) with a company (and with their school) for four days a week and attend school one day a week, though this varies.

The apprenticeship system is becoming more attractive for young adults – youngsters tend to opt for school-based programmes with practical periods in the curriculum (see table 12 in section 5.3). Technology studies are dominant in the dual part of the VET system (see table 14 in section 5.3).

The organisation of the school-based and the dual programmes in upper secondary vocational education come under the same administrative framework. Schools serve as linking pins between lessons and workshops held at the schools themselves and the practical training workplaces.

Furthermore, the sectoral Knowledge Centres mentioned above are important actors in this field, checking and assuring the quality of the companies providing practical training places for the school-based and dual programmes. This is laid down in legislation. In addition, the centres provide training for practical trainers and help schools to improve the job-specific elements of their dual and non-dual study programmes.

Those with qualifications obtained via the dual pathway find work sooner because they have more practical experience and because most already have jobs. They tend to find permanent jobs more quickly and earn more at the start of their career than those who have followed more school-based learning pathways. These certificate holders are also more focused on work and therefore less inclined to enrol in further education courses than those from school-based pathways.

## 5.5 Other youth programmes and alternative pathways for vulnerable groups

The regular system of VET is also aimed at serving vulnerable groups. Several measures – some of which were mentioned in section 5.2 and 5.3 – have therefore been taken to achieve this. They include:

- Extra support for pupils in lower secondary VET who are eligible for support in accordance with a rigorous formal procedure (see section 5.2).
- Opportunities for pupils in lower secondary VET and practical training who may not be able to gain a lower secondary education diploma that enables them to combine lower secondary VET with participation in an 'assistant training' programme (see section 5.2).
- The introduction of job-oriented assistant training programmes within upper secondary VET in the 1990s and, a few years ago, a more labour-market oriented 'assistant training' programme for youth 'at risk' (MBO level 1; see section 5.3).
- Extra support for all participants in upper secondary VET at MBO levels 1 and 2. Aim: preparatory activities geared at identifying and supporting those with learning difficulties.
- The introduction of a 'personal budget for youngsters' in special (secondary) education. Using this budget, awarded following a rigorous procedure, the participants can 'buy' extra support in both mainstream education and upper secondary level VET.



In addition, municipalities can take measures to reduce early school leaving and to integrate vulnerable groups in education and/or work. They often use the possibilities of the regular VET system at upper secondary level or sometimes design their own programmes with the support of regular VET providers and/or enterprises that offer work-based learning places. The regular VET system has three explicit functions: an economic function related to the labour market, a social function aimed at inclusion and citizenship, and a personal development function (including the aim of making further learning attractive).

The political adage is to make the regular VET system accessible and attractive to all, the consequence being that the system must be flexible.

## **5.6 Vocational education and training at post-secondary, non-tertiary level**

The most common formal type of training at post-secondary, non-tertiary level is specialist training. In the Netherlands, this is part of upper secondary VET (described above in section 5.3).

This programme is a further vocational specialisation (at ISCED level 4) and is the highest level of the qualification structure for upper secondary VET. This type of training usually lasts one to two years after students have completed a programme at MBO level 3.

Further learning at higher professional level is possible. The most appropriate choice here are dual pathways because most students in specialist training programmes already combine learning and working and are therefore not inclined to transfer to full-time programmes.

## **5.7 Professional education and training at tertiary level**

There are two types of higher education: university education and higher professional education (see section 5.1). Higher professional education offers professionally oriented programmes. It is outlined in more detail here. Publicly financed providers are the universities of applied sciences. Non-subsidised providers can also offer similar programmes if they have appropriate accreditation.

These educational institutions offer study programmes leading to Bachelor's degrees – this is their core business. In addition, pilot projects with short-cycle higher education ('Associate degree' or Ad, ISCED level 5B) were introduced in the Netherlands a few years ago, the aim being to implement the Ad in the regular education system. The Ad programme (120 ECTS; normative duration about two years) is an integral part of a Bachelor's programme (240 ECTS; normative duration four years), so that further progression in higher education for graduates with an associate degree is possible. This is of particular interest to those with a VET background at upper secondary level. These organisations also offer Master's programmes for Bachelor graduates, with more programmes expected in the next decade. These organisations can also organise market-driven contract activities paid by employers and/or individuals/employees, such as educational courses and applied research. In 2006, these activities made up some 8% of their operating costs.

Degrees are awarded by the institutions themselves. Official recognition of the courses is granted on condition that they are accredited by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation.

Higher professional education (ISCED level 5) is generally open to those who have obtained a diploma by way of pre-scientific education, upper secondary general education or the longer upper secondary vocational education course (MBO level 4). The number of entrants with a VET background is increasing (see table 15), a consequence of the implementation of the Lisbon strategy in the Netherlands.

Progression routes: after completing the first year of a Bachelor's programme, entrance to university programmes is possible; a Bachelor's degree gives access to Master's degree

programmes in higher professional education, as well as to Master's degree programmes at university, which are often preceded by a bridging programme. The expected success rate for students in higher professional education is 73% (2009).

**Table 15: First-year HBO students by previous education\*; in %.**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2008</b>
	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>
Direct entrance: HAVO	34	34
Direct entrance: VWO	6	4
Direct entrance: MBO	20	24
Direct entrance: others	3	2
Indirect entrance	37	35

**Source: Key Figures 2005-2009 (OCW). \*The numbers do not include 'green' education and non-subsidised HBO programmes.**

In 2009, there were some forty government-funded higher professional educational institutions in the Netherlands, with a total of 402,000 students. Higher professional education is provided at universities of applied sciences (*hogescholen*) for students aged 17 and over. They generally offer study programmes in one or more of the seven fields of training: 'green'/agriculture, technology, economics and services, health care, behaviour and society, culture and arts, and teacher training (see table 16).

Higher professional education provides education for professions that require both theoretical knowledge and specific skills. Courses are therefore almost always closely linked to a particular profession or group of professions and most programmes include a work experience placement. This type of education can also be attended part-time as part of professionally oriented adult education, and, for the last ten years, in dual learning pathways.

**Table 16: HBO students by learning pathway and programme orientation; in %.**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2009</b>
<b>Total number</b>	313,000	357,000	402,000
<b>Learning pathway:</b>			
<b>Full-time</b>			81
<b>Part-time</b>			16
<b>Dual</b>			3
<b>Sectors:</b>			
<b>Education</b>			17
<b>Technology</b>			16
<b>Economics</b>			37
<b>Health</b>			9
<b>Behaviour/society</b>			15
<b>Culture/arts</b>			4
<b>'Green' education</b>			2

**Source: Key figures 2005-2009, OCW.**

Curriculum development and assessment are the responsibility of the individual schools. A broad variety of curricula and learning environments exist even for programmes related to the same profession. The intention is to minimise the variety of curricula in teacher training programmes.

## 6 Continuing vocational education and training for adults

### Background

See section 4.5: institutional framework of CVET.

See chapter 2: the realisation of local/regional one-stop-shops for information, guidance and possibly further support related to jobs, employment and training. Target groups: the unemployed, people in work but also employees faced with unemployment, the self-employed and employers.

### 6.1 Formal learning/education

Where IVET functions as CVET for individuals, it can also be termed 'publicly promoted (and financed) CVET for all'. Adults in upper secondary vocational education mainly follow dual and part-time learning pathways; these programmes also function as vocationally oriented adult education (see table 12; and sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.6). The same is true in higher professional education, where the dual and part-time pathways are attended by about 20% of the student population (see table 16 in section 5.7).

The Open University (distance learning) also belongs to the category 'publicly promoted CVET for all'. 14,000 students were enrolled in 2008, 30% of whom were studying for a single certificate and 70% following a course leading to a diploma of higher education.

Publicly funded general education for adults, i.e. paid directly or indirectly by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, has two components: basic education (non-formal rather than formal learning) and secondary general adult education (the same diplomas as in general secondary education), both offered by the regional training centres for upper secondary VET (see chapter 5.1 and chapter 10.2; legislative framework the Senior Secondary VET and Adult Education Act (chapter 4.1)). Since 2007, civic integration courses for migrants have been privatised and the regional training centres for upper secondary VET and adult education are no longer the sole providers. Providers have to tender and the municipalities decide which providers can deliver these civic integration courses (legislative framework: Civic Integration Act – *Wet Inburgering*). The central government allocates a (fixed) budget to the municipalities for general adult education and for civic integration because they are responsible for planning these aspects of general adult education.

In addition, the central government – via the Interdepartmental Project Directorate Learning and Working as a cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment – promotes the 'accreditation of prior learning'. In 2008, a marketing campaign was started on television that focused on obtaining an 'experience' certificate. In addition, this Directorate also promotes other strategies of lifelong learning (see section 6.2).

**Table 17: Participation in publicly financed (by the MoE) general adult education; x 1,000.**

	1995	2000	2006	2008
<b>Basic education *</b>	-	(125)	(99)	36
<b>Secondary adult education **</b>	46	24	10	15

Source: CBS, Yearbook Educational Statistics.

\*Until 2006, including civic integration courses for migrants ('old' and 'new'); that explains the much lower number of participants in 2008. \*\*Especially programmes at upper secondary level.

## 6.2 Non-formal learning/education

This section describes non-formal, work-related CVET, which is sometimes 'formal' in character.

Employee training is partly influenced by Collective Labour Agreements, which are valid for a certain branch/sector of the labour market. Financial arrangements for CVET can be made through funds reserved for training and/or research and development (Training and Development Funds - *O&O fondsen: Opleidings- en Ontwikkelingsfondsen*). Employers pay an obligatory part of their personnel costs into these sectoral or branch funds and can benefit from refunds for training employees, (this applies in particular to training courses offered by private providers linked to a recognition/admission system for these funds). There are about 140 of these funds, covering 85% of employees.

Training initiatives can also come from employers or employees.

A great many training providers are active in this non-formal continuing vocational training (off-the-job) market for employees. Most are private commercial training providers covering 88% of the training market and a smaller number are publicly funded VET providers that offer contract activities paid by the contractor (approx. 12% of the courses). There is very little statistical information available about informal on-the-job learning (workplace learning).

Most CVET is enterprise-based.

In January 2007, a tax regulation was introduced to stimulate the recognition/accreditation of prior learning: Tax Relief APL-Procedures Act (accreditation of prior learning) – *Wet Vermindering Afdracht Erkenning Verworven Competenties*.

Regional agreements on working-learning arrangements and the use of procedures for the accreditation of prior learning have increased over the past few years, stimulated by the Interdepartmental Project Directorate for Learning & Working and others. As of 2005, the task of this interdepartmental project unit was to take concrete steps towards lifelong learning. Rather than carrying out the project itself, the government stimulates and facilitates employers, employees, citizens, trade and industry, employment services, educational providers, local governments and regions to take practical steps to achieve this goal. See also section 2.1: realisation of local one-stop-shops; since the economic crisis, 'mobility centres' have had the same task, namely to guide people from one job to another. The dominant way of thinking has shifted from job security to work security.

Participation:

Table 19 shows the number of enterprises (according to size) involved in training. Larger companies are more training-minded (CVTS-2/CVTS-3). Table 18 is more interesting in that it shows the number of employees in different sectors who attended off-the-job company training

courses. Participation rates in the primary sector of the labour market (mining) and in the financial services sector are the highest.

The downward trend in the economic situation in 2003-2005 has had a negative impact on participation. The turnaround will have to come from small and medium-sized enterprises, which are particularly sensitive to economic change. A degree of training saturation is evident in larger companies.

**Table 18: Participation of employees in company training by size category and sector; in % of total number of employees. CVTS: 1, 2 and 3 resp. in 1993, 1999 and 2005.**

	1993	1999	2005
<b>Total</b>	26	41	34
<b>10-99 employees</b>	15	37	24
<b>100-499 employees</b>	27	45	36
<b>500 employees or more</b>	36	42	45
<b>Mining</b>	.	60	61
<b>Industry</b>	24	40	34
<b>Power stations/ waterworks</b>	37	47	44
<b>Construction industry</b>	24	58	40
<b>Trade</b>	22	37	26
<b>Catering</b>	16	32	22
<b>Transport/communication</b>	.	40	39
<b>Financial services</b>	46	65	54
<b>Commercial services</b>	20	36	35
<b>Other services</b>	.	39	30

Source: Key Figures OCW, 2003-2007.

**Table 19: Number of enterprises involved in training as % of all enterprises, by size class.**

	1999	2005
<b>All</b>	88	75
<b>10 – 49 employees</b>	85	71
<b>50 – 249 employees</b>	96	88
<b>250 employees or more</b>	99	96

Source: Key Figures OCW, 2003-2007.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Adult Education Survey (AES) asked respondents about their participation in formal and non-formal learning (age bracket 25-64, the active labour force). The results for 2008 were: 16.6% via LFS (reference period: four weeks) and 42.1% via AES (reference period: twelve months).

### 6.3 Training for the unemployed and other vulnerable groups

Unemployed people can search for jobs at their local/regional Centres for Work and Income (Employment Service). These centres have merged with agencies that pay social security and unemployment benefits to the unemployed and people with occupational disabilities. The municipalities are responsible for paying income support to people with no income from work or the social security/insurance system. These agencies cooperate in helping people to find work. Training can be part of the (re)integration into work. Private re-integration offices and several private and 'public' education providers (offering commercial contract activities and sometimes regular IVET programmes for the relevant target groups) are involved in programmes leading to work for people receiving benefits (unemployment, income support or social security benefits). Depending on the circumstances, people themselves have a say in the choice of the most appropriate routes back to work, in the form of training components such as courses/programmes paid by these agencies.

To stimulate civic integration, participation in education and the labour market, a 'participation budget' has been introduced at municipality level. This is a merger of three former budgets for social welfare and income support (Work and Income Support Act – *Wet Werk en Bijstand*), employability education and civic integration. The aim is to decrease bureaucracy. The Participation Budget Act has been operational since January 2009.

## 7 Training VET teachers and trainers

### 7.1 Types of teachers and trainers in VET

A distinction can be made between:

- teachers in IVET as a regulated, publicly financed part of VET (even if VET functions as CVET for individuals);
- trainers in enterprises fulfilling a role within the school-based and/or dual pathways in IVET;
- teachers and trainers in CVET as a market and demand-driven part of VET.

#### Teachers in IVET

The initial/continuing training of teachers in IVET is governed by two important laws. Firstly, the Professions in Education Act (*Wet BIO – Wet Beroepen in het Onderwijs*) and secondly, the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act, which is applicable because the teacher training courses are provided by institutions for higher professional education and universities (see chapter 4 and section 5.7; see also section 7.2).

The Professions in Education Act, which came into force on 1 August 2006, regulates the standards of competence for both teachers and others working in education-related jobs in primary, general secondary, vocational secondary and general adult education. Training courses must be based on these standards. The law enables schools to devise policies for maintaining the skills of their staff (see section 7.2).

Teachers in senior secondary VET fulfil all possible roles – generic roles such as instruction, guidance and assessment, and more ‘specific’ roles, some of which are part of the job and some of which are not, and which may include curriculum development and innovation, assessment development, coordination tasks e.g. for internships, career guidance, quality assurance, applied research activities, monitoring, remedial teaching, and so on. In consultation with school management, the possible and desirable roles are distributed among the team of teachers.

#### Trainers in enterprises in the IVET system.

The 17 Knowledge Centres for VET – Trade and Industry (*KBB's: Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven*) in senior secondary VET are intermediary bodies between the sectoral labour markets and the educational sector. Their first mandatory task is to translate the (training) needs of the labour market as laid down in vocational profiles into qualifications (see chapter 8 about qualification and curriculum development). With regard to practical training (training in the workplace) as part of the IVET courses, these centres have also formulated criteria for the accreditation of companies providing practical training. This is the second mandatory task of these centres, which involves monitoring and improving the quality of learning in enterprises for students/apprentices. One criteria is that the practical trainers, who are responsible for guiding and training of students/apprentices in the company, should have didactic skills such as being able to instruct, guide, motivate and assess the students/apprentices. These sectoral centres regularly provide (commercial) courses to train these practical trainers in the various branches of industry.



## 7.2 Teachers and trainers in IVET

The training of teachers for various fields of vocational education (for general, technical and agricultural subjects) forms part of higher education and falls under the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en het wetenschappelijk onderzoek – WHW*).

Initial teacher training is provided by higher professional education institutions (see section 5.7) and by universities.

Teacher training covers both subject training and aspects of teaching in general and leads to a Bachelor's degree (240 ECTS) qualification (grade two) for teachers. All higher professional education regulations apply. Graduates having completed other (non-teaching) courses can also be appointed as teachers in secondary vocational education schools. The school decides whether the candidate meets the standards of competence for the subject in question. If not, the candidate is required to make up for the shortfall within two years and also to gain a certificate of competence in teaching (part-time or dual pathway). Candidates who do not have a Bachelor's degree but who are considered capable of functioning at that level on the basis of their education and work experience can also make use of this lateral entry arrangement.

University graduates with a Master's degree can take a postgraduate teacher training course with an average duration of one year (60 ECTS) leading to a grade-one teaching qualification. Students can also start and complete a teacher training course while they are still undergraduates.

Increasingly, schools for secondary vocational education are training teaching staff themselves as part of a dual pathway within teacher training. This includes students on training and employment contracts, teaching assistants undergoing teacher training, and lateral entry staff with substantial work experience.

Schools for secondary vocational education have their own budgets for in-service training for teachers. Together with the teachers, they decide about the content of courses and the institution that provides the training. School boards are obliged to take measures and introduce tools to ensure that the staff to whom standards of competence apply can maintain their skills and knowledge (an obligation laid down by the Professions in Education Act).

Trainers in enterprises within IVET: see section 7.1.

## 7.3 Teachers and trainers in CVET

No information is available about the initial/continuing training of teachers/trainers in CVET. CVET is a demand-driven market with its own highly differentiated market mechanisms, with open access, quality recognition, customer satisfaction, marketing strategies, and so on. No generalised framework for the training of teachers/trainers exists in CVET as it does for IVET.

## 8 Matching VET provision with labour market needs

### 8.1 Systems and mechanisms

The Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (*ROA*) is the institute in the Netherlands that specialises in labour market forecasting and skills anticipation. The forecasts aim to increase transparency of the match between education and the labour market. Two approaches can be distinguished: top-down and bottom-up. In the top-down approach, a general forecasting model for the whole labour market and data from national sources are combined to serve two main functions: policy and information. Every other year, the organisation publishes the report '*The labour market by education and occupation in 20xx*' which includes analyses of expected labour market developments in the light of particular policy issues. The information function is primarily intended to assist and support vocational and educational guidance processes.

In the bottom-up approach, partial models of labour market forecasting are used, for example for just a selection of sectors or occupational classes, with input from specific (ad hoc) data sources. This can be complementary to the top-down approach.

The association of Knowledge Centres for VET and Trade and Industry (*Colo*) (see section 4.2) – active in upper secondary VET – works together with the ROA to make better use of the available data. Their cooperation has been laid down in a four-year contract. These 17 branch-specific Knowledge Centres publish the results of 'education and labour market research' for their own sector, making use of ROA information and other resources. These documents contain information on the labour market by sector or branch, such as expected demand for qualified personnel and the expected availability of places in companies for practical training (as part of vocational education programmes), as well as qualitative developments related to changing and new employment. The educational institutions are subsequently responsible for attuning their provision of education at regional level. The regional training centres sometimes carry out their own market research to gain insight into expected needs for qualified employees at regional level.

Social partners and educational institutions can both take the initiative to introduce new occupations or qualifications or renew existing qualifications. Furthermore, social partners have an explicit task to take the initiative to incorporate new occupations or qualifications into the national qualification structure in upper secondary vocational education (see section 8.2).

The centres for work and income (*Centrum voor Werk en Inkomen - CWI*), the social security agency (*UWV*) and the Council for Work and Income (*RWI*) are also involved in the cooperation between the ROA and Colo to match information on demand and supply in the labour market, at sectoral and regional level. The CWIs and the offices of UWV merged on 1 January 2009 and are now known as The Work Enterprise (*Het Werkbedrijf*).

Private commercial training providers have their own marketing strategies (including market research), so that they can offer courses that are relevant to potential target groups and the labour market.

### 8.2 Practices

The (legal) framework for qualification design and curriculum development and assessment is described below.

#### Qualification design

The pattern for qualification design differs between the parts of the vocational/professional column:

- a. In lower secondary pre-vocational education: examination syllabi are laid down in a framework by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and developed by the Foundation for Curriculum Development in the Netherlands.
- b. In upper secondary vocational education: the national qualification structure defines the desired output of the qualifications. Three steps can be identified:
  - a. social partners develop and determine/validate vocational/occupational profiles;
  - b. representatives of social partners and education develop the qualification profiles (output), which are adopted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science / Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality. This development work is done by the 17 branch-specific Knowledge Centres for VET- Trade and Industry;
  - c. schools develop curricula – in cooperation with training firms – on the basis of the qualification profiles.
- c. In higher professional education: qualifications and programmes, developed by the schools, are accredited by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation. A curriculum is part of the accreditation request.

CVET is market-driven and therefore unregulated, unless CVET is equivalent to IVET.

### Curriculum development

The term 'curriculum' has various meanings in the Netherlands. In relation to the term 'qualification', the best definition is: a document that relates to the desired implementation of an entire educational programme, leading to a diploma. The document always contains descriptions of the following: objectives – contents – educational structure – assessment/evaluation. The extent of detail can vary. The development of a curriculum is a matter for the individual schools within the legal frameworks as laid down in the constitution.

Schools are primarily responsible for the modernisation of their curricula. Authority with regard to learning arrangements is assigned to them; this is constitutionally regulated ('state education' has a negative ring to it in the Netherlands), which is to say that (most) 'how' questions are answered by schools (for vocational education) themselves; close collaboration exists with companies in the region. This does not mean, however, that the national government remains completely aloof. It can stimulate those developments and innovations that have consequences for the modernisation of curricula.

Spearheads in the modernisation of vocational education are: (1) a turn towards competence-based learning in multiple forms; (2) more active forms of work, which call for greater levels of independence and self-regulation amongst participants in vocational education programmes; (3) the introduction of a greater variety in practical learning with the emphasis on the practical applicability of knowledge: workplace learning; simulation companies; carrying out assignments for companies, etc.; (4) the development of longitudinal learning strands that transcend the different types of vocational education; (5) the introduction of different forms of supporting participants: coaching, mentoring (also peer mentoring), career guidance, etc.; and (6) the introduction of more varied means of assessment, including the simulation of an aptitude test.

Schools providing vocational education make their own choices when it comes to the finer points of modernisation.

### Assessment: recognition of formal learning

In the Netherlands, the mechanisms to recognise formal learning in IVET are as follows:

- In lower secondary vocational education, central, national examinations and school examinations are held, both of which are important for gaining a diploma. The Education Inspectorate supervises the quality of school exams.

- In vocational education at upper secondary level, the assessment of learning results is a matter for the school. The law stipulates that the learning company has to be involved in this testing process. The qualification standards serve as benchmarks for the assessments. The Education Inspectorate supervises the quality of the examinations (content, level and procedures at programme level).
- In higher professional education, schools are responsible for the examinations in accordance with the teaching and assessment regulations designed by the provider; these regulations are part of the accreditation request for a recognised HBO programme (see chapter 5.7).

All IVET diplomas/certificates are valid at national level; see chapter 5 for transfer and progression routes and chapter 4 for the legislative framework.

As for CVET, it has its own regulations, unless IVET programmes are available that function as CVET for individuals. Certain measures or legal regulations are sometimes in place, e.g. compulsory further training for medical personnel or BHV (emergency response officer) in the transport sector.

#### Assessment/recognition of non-formal/informal learning

Accreditation of prior learning is an instrument that has been promoted in the Netherlands for the last ten years.

APL is structured as follows:

- Accreditation of prior learning in accordance with the national qualifications/standards in IVET at upper secondary vocational and higher professional level in particular. Accreditation is laid down in the form of a diploma or a course certificate; parts of regular VET programmes are exempt. Schools or other training providers play an important role in making use of these procedures – they apply them. Free access to examinations already existed in the Netherlands: various education acts refer specifically to the possibility of external candidates or outsiders sitting examinations.
- Other standards such as the Microsoft MCSD are also in place. They are demand/market-driven and unstructured.

#### Macro-effectiveness and efficiency of VET provision

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science determines the provision (learning departments for broad fields related to the labour market) in lower secondary pre-vocational education.

Schools in upper secondary vocational education decide which qualifications to provide. While efficiency and effectiveness exist at a regional level, no effectiveness tests are in place at national level.

In higher professional education, schools develop their programmes themselves (in cooperation with partners in the labour market). These programmes are accredited by a competent authority. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science decides whether an accredited programme is to be publicly funded or not (macro-effectiveness test).

## 9 Guidance and counselling for learning, employment and career

### 9.1/9.2 Strategy and provision/target groups and modes of delivery

The organisation of study and career orientation and guidance in the Netherlands has three components:

1. Study and career orientation and guidance is integrated into the educational sector, i.e. in general education and vocational education, and is embedded in or alongside the school curriculum.
2. It is part of the services provided for unemployed jobseekers.
3. Other facilities are in place.

Ad 1. Career guidance is an integral part of schools and training centres in general secondary education and upper secondary vocational education. It is a special task for teachers who are known in this context as student counsellors/coaches. In this case, career guidance is a task of the school. Information about study programmes and work, more active forms such as visits to schools and enterprises, and 'participatory learning' can be integrated into or organised alongside the curriculum. Schools decide how they organise career orientation and counselling. Private agencies for career guidance, e.g. Advice Centres for Training and Employment, can be contacted by schools or individuals for general or special advice.

Ad 2. Unemployed people and jobseekers can consult specialised advisors at the Centres for Work and Income (Employment Services) for career planning and guidance and help in finding work. Modes of delivery: individual competence scans, information about work and job vacancies, work experience projects, etc.

Ad 3. The last component is career guidance and orientation for people in employment. The relevant institutions are mainly private consultancy centres specialising in outplacement and guidance. The assessment of competences is an important task. In addition, some sectoral Training and Development Funds (see section 6.2) have regional-sectoral career advisors and career projects for employees in their sector who are looking for a career change.

At national level, the Interdepartmental Project Unit for Learning & Working aims to set up regional, learning/working desks that provide access to employed people and jobseekers with advice on careers, competences and training opportunities; the Project Unit's aim is to stimulate lifelong learning. Since the economic crisis, these learning/working desks are also known as 'mobility centres'. Target groups are youngsters without starting qualifications (i.e. who have not yet attained at least an ISCED 3C level qualification) and unemployed people with no or low qualifications. The term learning/working desk refers to an accessible point of contact where everyone (jobseekers, employees and employers) can obtain general and tailor-made information and advice about training, as well as career counselling and assistance. The aim of these desks is to support people in undertaking activities that promote continued learning.

### 9.3 Guidance and counselling personnel

In general secondary education and in upper secondary vocational education, career counsellors are generally teachers with extra training specifically for this purpose. Special training courses for career advisors have only become available in the last few years. At present, courses are available at ISCED level 5 and are offered by some institutions of higher professional education.

In the other fields, career counsellors generally have a relevant, higher educational background, having followed specific study programmes and/or gained work experience in the field.

## 10 Financing: investment in human resources

### Background information

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science administers almost all central government expenditure on education; an agency of the Ministry has been charged with this task (DUO). The Service Institute Education (*Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs - DUO*) within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science plays a key role in the administration and financing of IVET. There is a complex but direct financing relationship between this agency and the schools for vocational/professional education.

The relationship between educational institutions and the government is characterised by a high degree of institutional autonomy: the government merely creates the right conditions. Schools qualify virtually automatically for funding, provided they meet the quality standards and funding conditions imposed by law on the school system as a whole.

Funds are channelled either directly to schools or indirectly through municipalities (primary and secondary education for school accommodation; general adult education). Another source of funds consists of the statutory course and tuition fees paid to the institutions by the students themselves. Educational institutions can also generate income from other sources, e.g. contract activities, extra funding from municipal authorities for special projects, e.g. reduction of early school leaving.

Non-subsidised (vocational) education and non-formal vocational education activities can be paid partly/wholly by individuals/employees, by employers, by sectoral training funds governed by the social partners, by the employment services and re-integration offices, and by municipalities. Several alternative measures are also in place, including individual learning accounts and tax arrangements for individuals and employers.

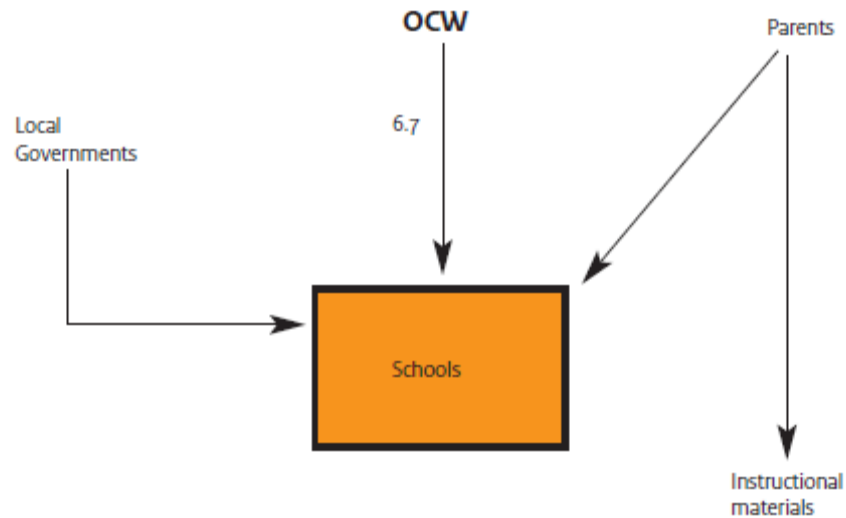
### 10.1 Funding IVET

#### Lower secondary vocational education

The funding principle is block grant funding. It gives the competent authority considerable freedom in deciding how to spend the available resources. Schools receive a fixed amount per pupil plus a fixed amount per school.

The flow of funds is shown in figure 3.

**Figure 3: Flow of funds in secondary education, incl. lower secondary vocational education (2009); in billions €.**



**Source: Key Figures 2005-2009, Ministry OCW; (Note: pre-scientific education, upper secondary general education and pre-vocational (excluding agricultural) education are classed together in this diagram).**

#### Upper secondary vocational education and general adult education

There are various sources of funding in this sector:

- Government funding

For vocational education: block grant funding of schools is within the macro budget at national level: the amount of money is based in part on the number of students per course/learning path and in part on the number of certificates awarded per institution.

Funding of the Knowledge Centres for VET Trade and Industry.

For general adult education: money is allocated to the municipalities on the basis of the number of residents over the age of 18, the number of ethnic minorities and the number of adults with learning difficulties. The municipal authorities purchase adult education courses by concluding contracts with the VET providers.

The municipalities also receive a budget from the central government for civic integration training. This market was liberalised in 2007, so that upper secondary VET schools are no longer the sole providers.

- Other income

Contract activities for companies and individuals, and for municipalities in civic integration training.

- Students

Students pay course fees to the institutions. Students in vocational education and training programmes (school-based pathway - see section 5.3) pay fees to the government and qualify for student grants from the age of 18 (Student Finance Act).

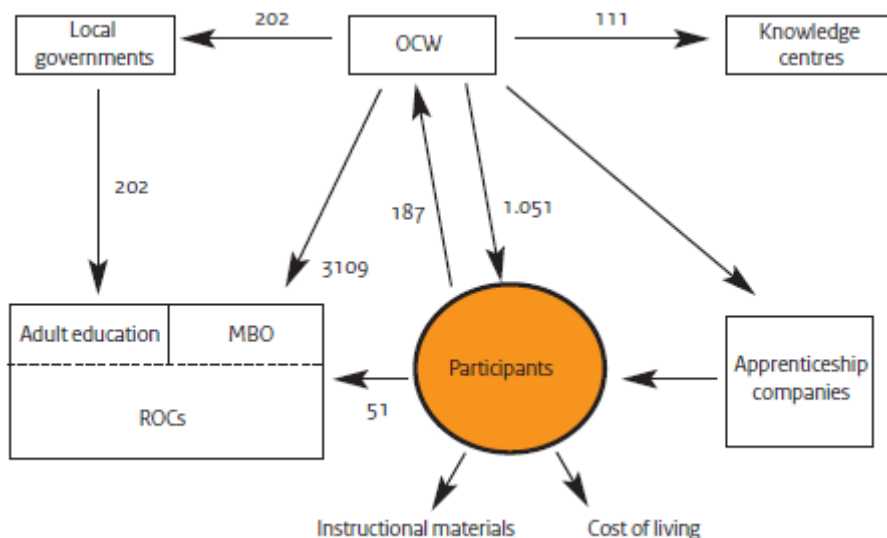
- Companies

For companies offering learning places for apprentices/dual pathway: a tax facility of €2,500 (€ 180 million per year) for each place occupied.

Companies spend an average of €8,400 for 'guided learning activities' for each participant in the dual system (upper secondary and higher VET level) and €1,750 for students in practical learning periods in full-time school-based VET (2006).

The flow of funds is shown in figure 4.

**Figure 4: Flow of funds in upper secondary vocational education and general adult education (2009); in millions €**



**Source: Key Figures 2005-2009, Ministry OCW- Education, Culture and Science; (Notes: mbo = upper secondary vocational education; ROCs = regional VET centres; Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality and agricultural schools not included in the diagram). Other income for VET providers is not shown in the diagram. The amount of money for civic integration training is not shown in the diagram; municipalities/local governments receive funds from a different Ministry.**

#### Higher professional education

- Government funding

The amount of money is within the macro budget and is based in part on the number of enrolled participants and in part on output/outcome results (number of diplomas). There is also a fixed budget. The pattern of financing will probably change in 2011.

- Private funding

Contract activities paid by the contractor (enterprises and/or individuals/employees).

- Students

Full-time students receive financial support from the age of 18 under the Student Finance Act (via the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) and they have to pay tuition fees to the universities of applied sciences.

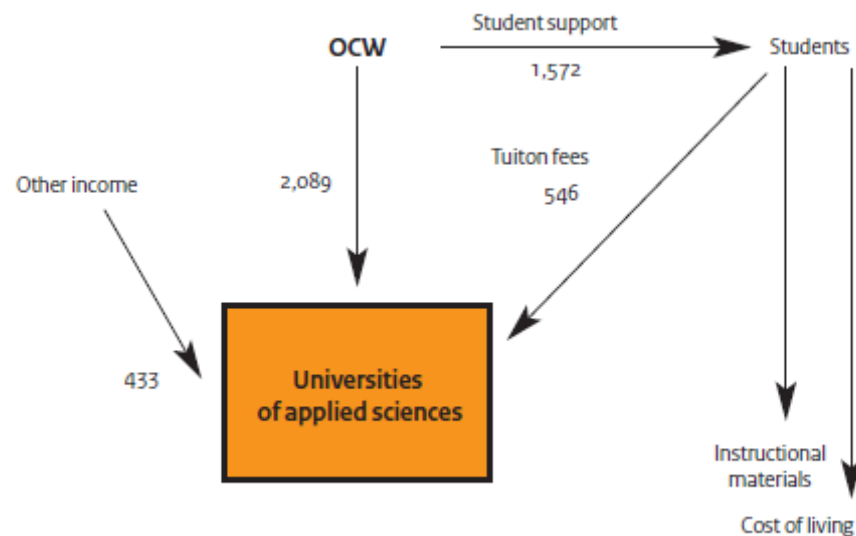


- Companies/enterprises

Enterprises offering learning places in the dual pathway: tax deduction scheme comparable with that of upper secondary vocational education. Companies incur costs for guided learning activities.

The flow of funds is shown in figure 5.

**Figure 5: Flow of funds in higher professional education (2008); in millions €.**



**Source: Key Figures 2005-2009, Ministry OCW; (Note: Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality and agricultural schools not included in the diagram). The flow of money for apprenticeship companies is not shown in the diagram.**

## 10.2 Funding CVET and adult learning

### Public funding (general) adult education

See section 10.1: the relationship between general adult education and upper secondary vocational education. When publicly funded IVET functions as CVET for participants, the financial regulations are the same: see section 10.1 (especially for upper secondary vocational education and higher professional education): part-time pathways and dual pathways.

### Funding enterprise-based CVET

Enterprise-based CVET for employees is financed by companies, training and development funds (see below), tax facilities and individual initiative. Enterprise-based arrangements for training are often made in the context of Collective Labour Agreements. These agreements are made in each sector of industry and are preceded by negotiations between employers and employees and last for a specified period of time (usually one or two years). Some of these sectoral arrangements contain extra provisions to accommodate specific regional demands or circumstances. Financial arrangements in these agreements – specifically pertaining to continuing training – are made through funds reserved for training and/or research and development. The most prominent of these funds are the Training and Development Funds (*O&O fondsen*), which were established as a means of creating a more solid foundation for training and ensuring that training became

embedded within the various sectors of the economy (and the individual companies within these sectors). The total expenditure on company training courses by the business community is shown in table 20.

**Table 20: Spending on company courses 1999 and 2005.**

	1999	2005
<b><u>All sectors: x € 1 million</u></b>		
<b>Incl. working hours</b>	3.088	3.093
<b>Excl. working hours</b>	1.908	1.738
<b><u>Per employee in euros</u></b>		
<b>Incl. working hours</b>	810	810
<b>Excl. working hours</b>	500	450
<b><u>In % of labour costs</u></b>		
<b>Total</b>	2.8	2.0
<b>Size 10-49 employees</b>	1.6	1.1
<b>Size 50-249 employees</b>	2.5	1.2
<b>Size 250 employees and over</b>	3.7	2.9

Source: Eurostat and CBS

### 10.3 Funding training for the unemployed and other vulnerable groups

Training for the unemployed and other vulnerable groups is available to those who are registered with the Centres for Work and Income (*Centra voor Werk and Inkomen-CWI*). See section 6.3.

### 10.4 General funding arrangements and mechanisms

See background information in chapter 10.

## 11 National VET statistics

### 11.1 Classification of VET programmes

**Table 21. Classification of VET programmes in pre-vocational education, upper secondary vocational education and higher professional education. Duration and stay in years.**

Dutch level*	ISCED level	Nominal duration**	Typical starting age
Lower secondary	2	2	14
Upper secondary: MBO level 1	2	0.5 - 1	16
MBO level 2	3C - short	2 - 3	16
MBO level 3	3C - long	3 - 4	16
MBO level 4	3A	4	16
MBO level 4/specialist	4	1 - 2	Above 20
Tertiary: associate degree	5B	2 (120 ects)	Above 20
Tertiary: bachelor	5A	4 (240 ects)	18
Tertiary: master	5A	1 - 2 (60 - 120 ects)	(Above) 21

\*See the sections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6 and 5.7 where the different Dutch levels are combined with the ISCED levels. MBO level = upper secondary level. \*\*ects = European credit transfer system (study points).

### 11.2 Fields of VET

**Table 22. Fields of VET programmes in upper secondary VET (related to the 17 Expertise centres VET – Trade and Industry); used in VET statistics.**

Sector	Branch
Agriculture	Agriculture
Health care/welfare	Beauty care and hairdressing Health care and welfare
Economics	Economics and office work Retail and distribution Hotel, catering and tourism Meat sector
Technology	Construction Printing and communications industry Cars, motorcycles and bicycles Metal industry, incl. electricity engineering and fitting industry

**Decoration and advertising**  
**Wood and furniture industry**  
**Health technology occupations and specific crafts**  
**Process industry**  
**Body works**  
**Transport and logistics**

**Table 23. Fields of education in higher professional education; used in VET statistics.**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Engineering and technology</b>	<b>Health</b>	<b>Economics</b>	<b>Behaviour and society</b>	<b>Culture and arts</b>	<b>Agriculture and environment</b>
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[www.minocw.nl](http://www.minocw.nl) OCW = Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Especially: Key Figures 2005-2009.

[www.nvao.net](http://www.nvao.net) NVAO = Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation

[www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)

[www.onderwijsinspectie.nl](http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl) Education Inspectorate

[www.refernet.nl](http://www.refernet.nl)

[www.szw.nl](http://www.szw.nl) SZW = Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment