



Netherlands

VET in Europe – Country report

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CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing vocational education and training

1.1. Political and administrative framework

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 years ago and is still underway. Tasks and responsibilities are progressively being transferred to lower levels of government and especially to municipalities, but also to social interest groups such as school associations and/or boards of governors.

The Netherlands has 12 provinces with own tasks and responsibilities, though these are limited for education policy. At present, the Netherlands consists of 415 municipalities. Municipalities have greater involvement in education and training, such as being responsible for certain aspects of publicly financed schools at primary and secondary level, introducing measures to reduce early school leaving and to counteract (potential) underachievement by children and youngsters from the age of three, and planning general adult education provision.

1.2. Population and demographics

Population of the Netherlands totals 16,829,289 in 2014 ⁽¹⁾. The country occupies an area of 33,718 square kilometres, which comes to 498 inhabitants per square kilometre (2013) ⁽²⁾. In 2014, the demographic burden constituted by the young, the so called 'green' burden was 38.2% (under-twenties as % of number of 20 to 65-year-olds). In 2014, the burden constituted by the elderly, the so called 'grey' burden was 28%. Table 1 shows the population forecast.

⁽¹⁾ CBS (2014). *Statline*. <http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/>

⁽²⁾ CBS (2013). *Demografische kerncijfers per gemeente*. <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/63B0697F-F8B0-4AC0-A4E5-69EB567D4CAC/0/2013b55pub.pdf>

Table 1. **Population forecast by age and demographic burden in %**

	2014	2040	2060
Population x 1,000	16 778	17 816	17 899
Younger than 20 yrs	22.9	21.4	20.8
20 to 65 yrs	59.8	52.1	52.8
65 yrs or older	17.4	26.5	26.3
'Green burden'	38.2	41.1	39.5
'Grey burden'	29.0	50.8	49.9

Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2013, CBS statline

In December 2013 ⁽³⁾ the Netherlands had 16.8 million inhabitants almost 50 thousand more than in 2012. Some 164 thousand immigrants arrived while 145 thousand emigrants left (2013) ⁽⁴⁾. Immigration was down for the first time since 2006, while emigration rose for the third year running. Natural growth (births minus deaths) contributed 30 thousand, the lowest figure since 1871.

Of the total population in the Netherlands, 9% is western and 12% non-western foreigner ⁽⁵⁾.

1.3. Economy and labour market

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

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

	2005	2010	2011
Agriculture and fishery	1.7	1.5	1.4
Manufacturing and construction	17.5	16.1	15.8
Commercial services	48.7	49.4	46.8
Non-commercial services	32.1	33.4	33.5

Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2012

In 2013 the employed labour force was 8.5 million people (net participation rate: see table 3). Since 2000, employment has risen in the elderly age

⁽³⁾ CBS (2014). *Cijfers*. <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/cijfers/default.htm>

⁽⁴⁾ CBS (2014). *Immi- en emigratie naar geboorteland, leeftijd (31 december) en geslacht* <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=03742&D1=a&D2=0&D3=0&D4=0&D5=0&D6=a&HD=130225-1521&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2,G3,G4,G5>

⁽⁵⁾ CBS (2014). *Statistical yearbook of the Netherlands 2014*. <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/publicaties/boeken/statistisch-jaarboek/archief/2014/statistical-yearbook-of-the-netherlands-2014-pub.htm>

segment(s) of the labour force because of 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 gender, age and country of origin; 15-65 years in % (employed labour force as % of population)**

	2005	2010	2012
Total	63.7	67.1	67.2
Gender			
Men	73.8	74.4	73.7
Women	53.5	59.7	60.6
Age			
15 to 25 yrs	38.6	37.7	37.2
25 to 35 yrs	80.5	83.5	81.6
35 to 45 yrs	77.9	82.6	81.2
45 to 55 yrs	73.8	78.7	78.8
55 years and over	39.4	48.7	53.4
Country of origin			
Native Dutch	65.8	69.4	69.6
Foreign western	62.6	64.7	65.6
Foreign non-western	49.3	52.8	53.1

Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2013

Educational levels and labour participation are correlated: the higher the educational level, the higher the labour participation (see table 4).

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

ISCED level	2005	2010
ISCED 0-1	41	45
ISCED 2	57	61
ISCED 3 general	67	73
ISCED 3-4 vocational	74	77
ISCED 5 Bachelor	81	84
ISCED 5-6 Master/doctor	83	86

Source: OCW, Key Figures 2007-2011

In 2013, 8.3% of the labour force was unemployed (see table 5). Above this average of 8.3% are women (8.4%), youngsters aged 15-25 (15.9%), people with foreign background, especially non-western (18.6%), and those with qualifications at ISCED 2 or lower (12.5%).

Table 5. **Unemployment (% of labour force) by country of origin and education level of 15-64 year-olds**

	2005	2010	2012	2013
Total	6.5	5.4	6.4	8.3
Country of origin				
Native Dutch	5.2	4.5	5.0	6.7
Foreign western	7.9	6.5	8.2	10.2
Foreign non-western	16.4	11.3	15.5	18.6
Education level				
Low (primary, education, MBO1, VMBO, ISCED 2)	9.7	8.7	9.7	12.5
Medium (MBO 2,3 and 4, HAVO, VWO, ISCED 3 or 4)	6.1	5.1	6.3	8.7
High (HBO, WO, ISCED 5 or 6)	4.3	3.7	4.4	5.1

Source: CBS, Statistical Yearbook 2014

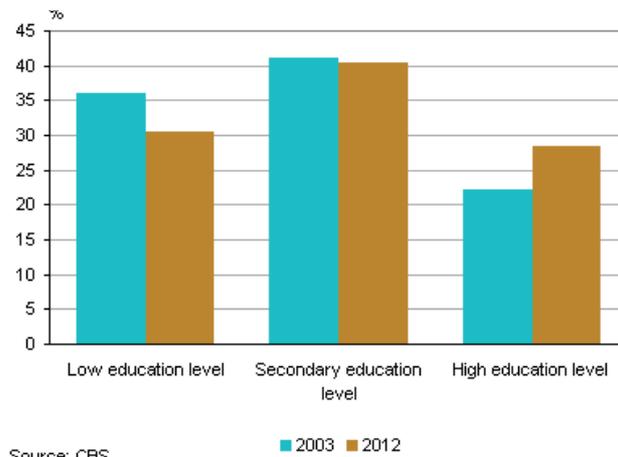
In 2013, Ministry of Education (OCW) spending on education institutions totalled nearly EUR 31.8 billion. This amount includes student grants and loans and university research. In 2013 spending on education amounted to 5.3% of GDP and 19.4% of government spending, a slight increase compared to 2012 (OCW, 2014c).

1.4. Educational attainment

One reason for changes in educational attainment of the 15-64 age group (workforce) between 2000 and 2012 (see table 6) was the rising share of young people with higher qualifications levels in formal education, while older generations with lower levels gradually left the labour market. In 2012, nearly 11 million Dutch people were aged between 15 and 65 years. In this age category, 28% were highly educated and 30% had a low education level. Since 2003, the proportion of highly educated people has risen by 6% and the proportion of low educated people has declined by 6%. With just over 40%, proportion of people educated at secondary level remained fairly stable ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁶⁾ CBS (2013). *Web magazine*, 4 October 2013

Table 6.



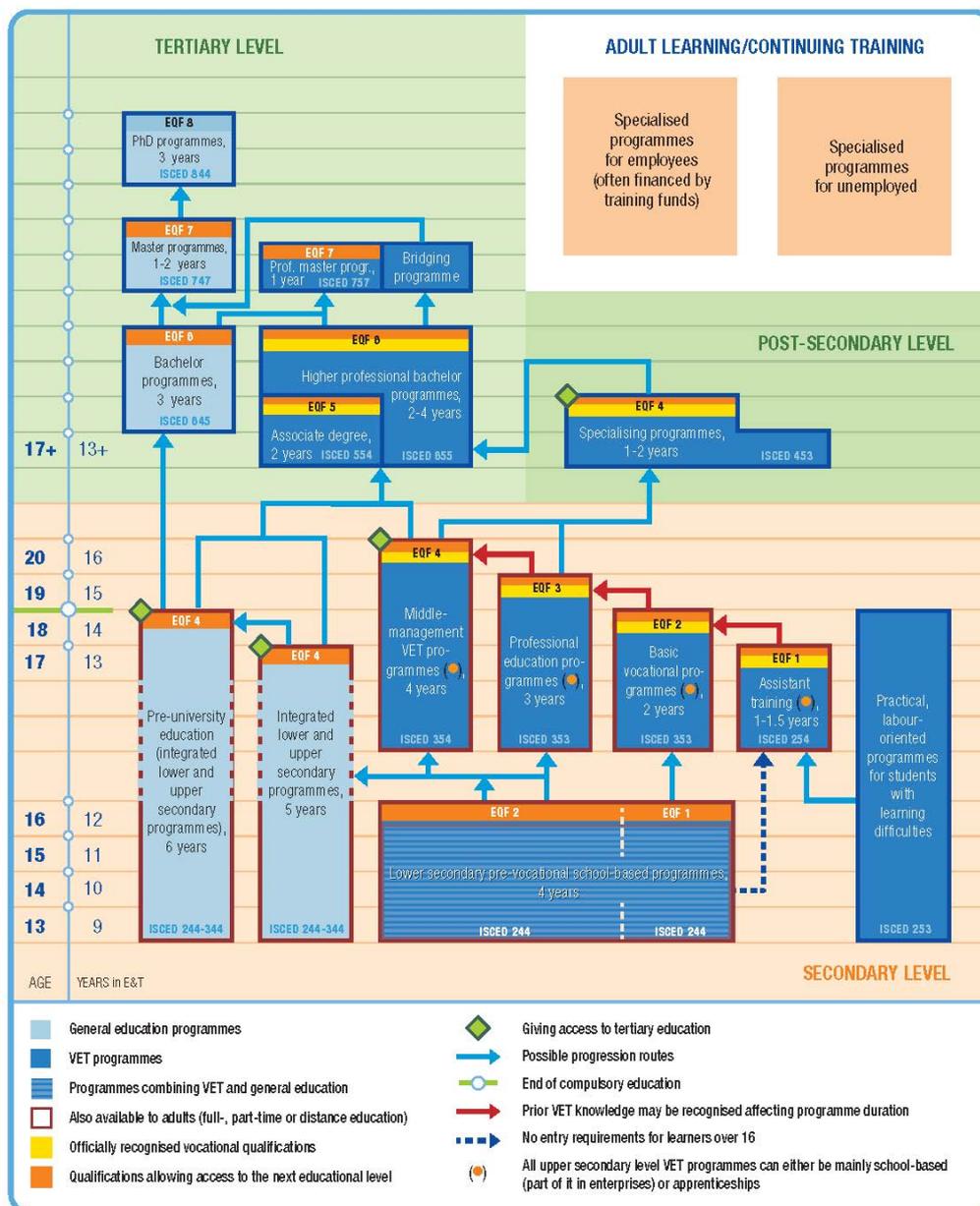
The increase in education level of the population is most prominent in age bracket 25 to 34. In 2011, 41% of 30-34 year-olds had a higher education qualification (ISCED 5 or 6). Between 2003 and 2013 the proportion of highly educated has increased faster among young women than among young men, respectively by 13 and 9%.

CHAPTER 2.

Providing VET in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1. Describing the Dutch education and training system

Figure 1 Vocational education and training in the Dutch education system



Source: Spotlight on VET in the Netherlands, 2015.

2.2. Elements of the Dutch education and training system

The Dutch education and training system's main elements are:

- (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);
- (f) tertiary or higher education.

Education is compulsory for pupils from 5 to 16 and for those aged 16 to 17 on August 1 of any year, if they have not yet attained a general or basic vocational qualification at upper secondary level (in the diagram: at least *VWO*, *HAVO* or *MBO-2*); the so called 'qualification duty' (*kwalificatieplicht*). This arrangement was introduced in 2008 to reduce the number of early school leavers.

- (a) **primary education** (*PO – primair onderwijs*): ISCED 1, for pupils aged 4-12; for eight consecutive years;
- (b) **special education at primary and secondary level** (*SO/VSO – speciaal onderwijs/voortgezet speciaal onderwijs*): for pupils aged 3 to 20 with learning or behavioural difficulties and/or with mental, sensory or physical handicaps;
- (c) **general secondary education** (*AVO – algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*), ISCED 2 and 3, includes three types of education:
 - pre-university education (*VWO – voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*). ISCED 244-344 after three years and further at ISCED 3; EQF 4. 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 (*HAVO – hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*), ISCED 244-344 after three years and further at ISCED 3; EQF 4, duration is five years and prepares for further study in higher professional education. Transfer to fifth year of pre-university education is also possible. Age: 12-17 years;
 - lower secondary general and pre-vocational education (*VMBO – voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*): ISCED 244; EQF 1 or 2; 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.

Besides these school types a separate practical, labour-oriented programme (*PRO = praktijkonderwijs*) is available for pupils not able to attain a diploma in general secondary education; ISCED 253; age: 12-18/19 years;

- (d) **upper secondary vocational education** (ISCED 351-354) and **general adult education** (*BVE – beroepsonderwijs en volwasseneneducatie*)
- upper secondary vocational education (*MBO – middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*) consists of several programmes in four labour market sectors; at four levels (*MBO 1, 2, 3, 4, EQF 1, 2, 3, 4*) with different duration. As part of the Dutch VET system, this type of education is discussed below. Age: from 16;
 - general adult education includes basic education (*basiseducatie*) and general secondary education for adults (*VAVO – voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs, VMBO, HAVO and VWO*); age: from 18, but under certain conditions 16/17-year-olds can also attend this type of education.
- (e) **CVET** comprises a range of vocational or more general courses for jobseekers, the unemployed, employees, self-employed people, and employers. IVET programmes (upper secondary vocational education) can also function as CVET.
- (f) **higher or tertiary education** have the same meaning. As a binary system, higher education has two components:
- higher professional education (*HBO – hoger beroepsonderwijs*) mainly Bachelor degree; ISCED 655/EQF 6; duration four years; also – since 2011 - a two year associate degree (AD) (ISCED 554/EQF 5) and professional master's degree (ISCED 757/EQF 7); providers are 'universities of applied sciences'; as part of the VET system, this type of education is discussed below; age: from 17/18;
 - scientific/university education (*WO – wetenschappelijk onderwijs*); ISCED 644 for doctorates; duration three years and for technology studies four years; three years for a Bachelor's, ISCED 645/EQF 6; one or two years for a Master's degree, ISCED 747/EQF 7; providers are universities; age: from 18;
- (g) as part of (academic) adult education, and providing a modular programme structure, the open university has open access.

2.2.1. Transfer possibilities in the system

Transfer possibilities within the education system are shown in figure 1, paragraph 2.1. Related ISCED levels are specified there and in table 12 including NLQF/EQF levels.

Table 7. **Classification of VET programmes in pre-vocational, upper secondary vocational and higher professional education**

Dutch level (*)	ISCED level	Nominal duration (**) in years	NLQF / EQF level
Lower secondary; study year 3 and 4	244	2	1 and 2
Upper secondary: MBO 1	254	0.5-1	1
MBO 2	353	2-3	2
MBO 3	353	3-4	3
MBO 4	354	3-4	4 and partly 5
MBO 4/specialist	453	1-2	4
Tertiary: associate degree (AD)	5B	2 (120 ECTS)	5
Tertiary: bachelor	645	4 (240 ECTS)	6
Tertiary: master	747	1-2 (60-120 ECTS)	7

NB: (*) MBO level = upper secondary level. (**) ECTS = European credit transfer system (study points).

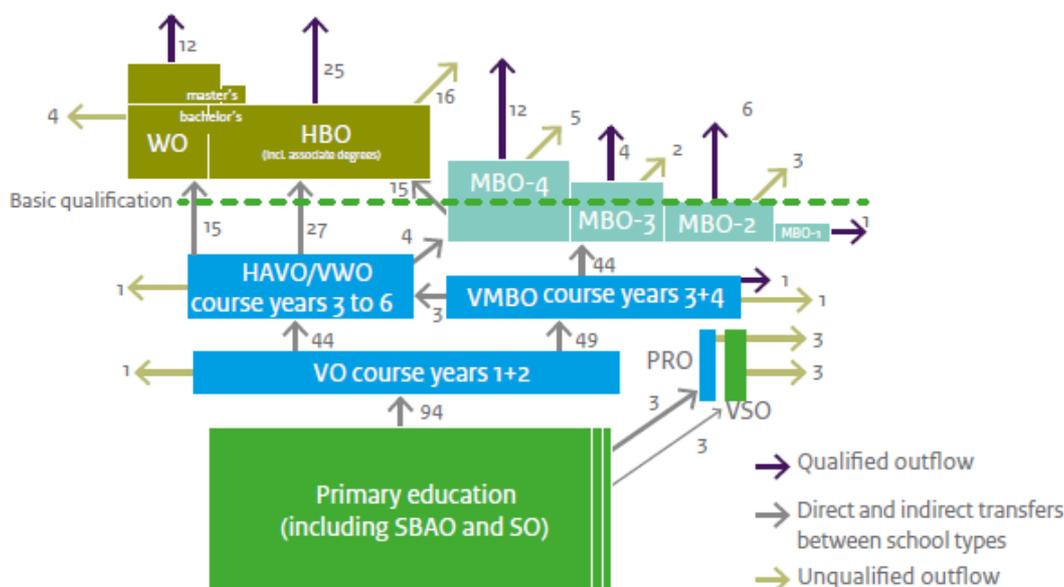
The system can be divided into two tracks (see also figure 1):

- general education track starts in general secondary education (*HAVO*, *VWO*) with direct transfer possibilities to higher education (*HBO*, *WO*);
- vocational education track starts in lower secondary pre-vocational education (study year 3, *VMBO*) with transfer possibilities to upper secondary vocational education. Upper secondary vocational education (*MBO* 1-4) is the pivot in this track. For some students, it is the end of initial vocational education, and is completed with an initial qualification which gives access to the labour market. *MBO* 4 graduates can continue their studies in higher professional education (*HBO*). Nowadays, about 50% of level 4 graduates continue without interrupting their studies in higher professional education.

Most pupils at age 14 follow the vocational track, although general education is viewed as a superior path towards higher education. Improving parity of esteem between the two tracks is a policy priority.

Figure 2 shows estimated shares of pupils transferring within the system. This relates to pupils leaving primary education in 2010. Estimates approximately present transfer percentages in one age cohort.

Figure 2. **Movements in Dutch education, including transfers, in % of a cohort of pupils leaving primary education, 2012**



BAO - Mainstream primary education	SBAO - Special primary education
BBL - Block or day release in vocational education	SO - Special education
BOL - Full-time vocational programmes	VMBO - Pre-vocational secondary education
HAVO - General secondary education	VO - Secondary education
HBO- Professional higher education	VSO - Secondary special education
MBO - Vocational education	VVE - Early childhood education
OU - Open University	VWO - Pre-university education
PRO - Elementary vocational training	WO Academic higher education

NB: Basic qualification = at least a VWO, HAVO or MBO-2 diploma.

Source: Key Figures 2009-2013 (Ministry of OCW).

2.3. Government regulated vocational education

2.3.1. Historical background

VET development can be divided into four periods. The first, 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 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 was true for lower vocational education which followed on from primary education for children up to 12, and for the apprenticeship system. Growth in secondary school attendance, which was primarily publicly funded, underscored the need for more cohesion between various forms of secondary education. This resulted in the secondary education act (*Wet op het voortgezet onderwijs*) commonly known as the Mammoth act (*Mammoetwet*), which came into force in 1968. General secondary education and vocational education at lower, intermediate and higher level was an integral part of this act. This joint legislation positioned general education and vocational education as equal alternatives with the possibility of reciprocal transfers. Apprenticeship was given its own independent legal base with the apprenticeship act (*Wet op het leerlingwezen*) of 1969.

Educational expansion continued in the third period, a period concerned mainly with upper secondary vocational education and higher professional education. In 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 constraints of secondary education. From the 1970s, the idea of creating greater cohesion between higher professional and academic education came to fruition in 1993 with introducing 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 and vocational education act (*Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs*) in 1996. As far as vocational education is concerned, this legislation provides for more academic learning strands and the apprenticeship system.

New legislation for higher professional education and for upper secondary vocational education has created major education providers with high levels of autonomy within a framework of general, statutory regulations – typical of the fourth period.

2.3.2. Legislative framework

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 determination of qualifications,

curricula and examinations, quality assurance, regulations about administration of publicly financed VET suppliers, procedures about recognition of private commercial VET suppliers, and financing.

Main legislation concerning initial VET (IVET) is:

- for lower secondary general and pre-vocational education (*VMBO – voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*) as part of general secondary education (see paragraph 2.1.2): Secondary Education Act (*WVO – Wet op het Voortgezet Onderwijs*; 1968 with later amendments);
- for upper secondary vocational education (*MBO – middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*; see paragraph 2.1.2): General Adult Education and Vocational Education Act (*WEB – Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs*; 1996 with later amendments);
- for higher professional education (*HBO – hoger beroepsonderwijs*; see paragraph 2.1.2): Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (*WHW – Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek*; 1993 with later amendments).

The following laws are also important for (initial) vocational education:

- regional registration act and coordination (*RMC - Regionale Meld- en Coördinatiewet*; 2001). This act aims to combat early school leaving for young Dutch people over 18 and are no longer subject to compulsory school attendance requirement. According to act 39 regions are responsible for combatting early school leaving. Each municipality is a member of one of the 39 registration and coordination regions (*RMC* regions). Each *RMC* region has a 'contact municipality' which coordinates notification and registration of early school leavers;
- student finance act (*WSF – Wet op de studiefinanciering, 1986 revised 2000/2001*) for students over 18 and in full-time education;
- professions in education act (*Wet BIO – Wet op Beroepen in het Onderwijs, 2006*). Valid for teachers in primary, secondary and general adult education and for VET at lower/upper secondary level: regulates minimum requirements for teachers.

Recently some amendments were made to the general adult education and vocational education act (*Wet Educatie Beroepsonderwijs*). Based on the policy action plan 'Focus on craftsmanship 2011-15' (*Focus op Vakmanschap 2011-15*) new measures are introduced, primarily focussing on raising VET efficiency:

- introducing a new funding model: cascade model based on input funding discouraging studying for a longer period of time, to be implemented in January 2015;
- curtailing training length in upper secondary VET (for most *MBO* 4 programmes length is curtailed from four to three years; *MBO* 3 with a

maximum duration of three years, *MBO 2* with a maximum duration of two years) to achieve faster transit through the vocational education track, while increasing study-load (for some of the relevant programmes), because of the compulsory introduction – with central exams in the near future – of some key subjects;

- introducing entry level courses replacing *MBO 1* courses. Entry level courses are positioned separately from *MBO 2, 3* and *4* courses. This policy change was prompted by huge intake of students without diploma into VET colleges (*ROC - regionaal opleidings centrum*) and intensive supervision required by some youngsters. The change had a major impact on financial resources of institutes and their organisational capacity, adversely affecting teaching at levels 2, 3 and 4 (Oudeman Committee, 2010);
- ending of non-threshold inflow in *MBO 2* (August 2014). Admittance to *MBO 2* is open for youngsters who do have a *VMBO* diploma or certificate proving their admittance into the fourth year of *HAVO/VWO*.

Quality agreements between individual *MBO* colleges and the Ministry of Education will be introduced in 2015. Agreements have to improve quality of education and will financially reward schools for achieved results. In the agreements measurable results will be defined on several topics: early school leaving, completion rates, quality of (guidance of) workplace learning and professionalisation of teachers (OCW, 2014a).

2.3.3. Institutional framework

There are three organisational levels in the Dutch VET system:

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

Several functions and roles can be identified in regulated VET system: legislation and financing, qualification development, curriculum development, examinations, internal and external quality assurance, and promotion of interests. Table 7 combines levels of organisation with these functions and roles.

Table 8. **Organisational levels and functions/roles within initial vocational/professional education**

Function	VMBO (ISCED-2)	MBO (ISCED-3/4)	HBO (ISCED-5)
Legislation/ financing	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Education/ Ministry of economic affairs
Qualification development	Design: national level Validity: national	Design: sectoral level by Centres of Expertise on VET and labour market (social partners & VET) ⁽⁷⁾ . National coordination by Foundation SBB*. Validity: national	Design: school level Validity: national
Curricula development	School level	School level	School level
Examination	Partly central/national; partly school exams	School exams; external contribution of trainers in enterprises Central examination Dutch language and arithmetic (August 2015 onwards)	School exams
Quality assurance	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
Promotion of interests by associations of schools***	VO Council	MBO Council	HBO Council

NB: * S-BB: Foundation Cooperation VET – Trade and Industry

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

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

Some 17 centres of expertise (*Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven*) on vocational education, training and labour market, each representing a sector or branch of industry, have been appointed by the Ministry of Education to perform legal tasks in VET:

- (a) developing and maintaining qualifications as part of the qualification framework for upper secondary VET. Qualifications are developed via full consultation with representatives from social and educational institutions, supervised by a committee of industry and education stakeholders;
- (b) accreditation of companies offering work placements and quality monitoring of these work placements (venue, support, qualified staff).

⁽⁷⁾ In 2015 these tasks will be transferred to the newly set up sector chambers, see paragraph 3.1

Due to budget cuts, these legal tasks will be transferred to the foundation of cooperation on VET and the labour market (*SBB - Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven*) in August 2015.

SBB was set up in 2012 on request of the Ministry of Education to replace Colo, the organisation representing interests of the centres of expertise at regional, national and international levels. Since 2013, SBB provides advice on VET policy to the ministry and offers a single contact point that draws up recommendations and advice on education and labour market, against the background of social interests. Within SBB representatives from vocational education and social partners work together on VET qualifications structure, examination, work placement, efficiency of training programmes and more. SBB optimises connections between education and labour market to deliver sufficient and well-qualified professionals. SBB is the main organisation charged with creating this compatibility. Its work includes themes with a cross-regional and cross-sector focus.

For the Netherlands, it is an important change within the organisational VET structure. All parties involved in VET work closely together and try to reach consensus within SBB. The aim is to increase commitment of all parties to improve quality of VET.

In 2012 the government announced a budget decrease for the centres of expertise. As result a new organisation model is developed and to be implemented in August 2015. The legal tasks of the 17 centres of expertise, such as developing qualification structure and accrediting training companies will be transferred to SBB. Fine-tuning between VET and labour market representatives will then take place within eight 'sector chambers' covering sectoral issues. These sector chambers fall under SBB. In each 'sector chamber' vocational education and social partners are equally represented.

2.3.4. Governance

The adult and vocational education act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs*) grants upper secondary VET schools rather ample space for policy making. Schools have full control over deployment of teaching staff, educational programmes offered, regional industry-specific training portfolios, organisation of education, and choice of cooperation partners. School management is also responsible for deciding how to allocate annual lump sum grant from the ministry in the school-budget, such as amounts to be allocate on personnel costs, materials, housing and reservations for future investments. An auditor's report provides an annual insight into how subsidies are spent.

Governance is often defined in an internal, vertical and a horizontal axis: the internal axis stands for the organisation of internal management and control, the vertical axis stands for school-government accountability relations, the horizontal

axis for the (accountability) relations between school and its local stakeholders. Governance relations are regulated by law (General adult education and vocational education act - *WEB*) and in a code for governance (*MBO Raad*, 2009).

Internal monitoring and control: upper secondary VET colleges have small executive boards (*CvB - College van Bestuur*) with one chairperson and one or two associated posts (compare: central management) and an internal supervisory board (compare: board of supervisors in large companies). Middle management is accountable to the executive board. Participation of students, teachers and parents in decision making is regulated in the act on works councils (*WOR - Wet op Ondernemingsraden*).

Vertical monitoring and control: the education inspectorate (*Inspectie van het Onderwijs*) is in charge of the external supervision, checking whether statutory provisions are met and quality assurance is in place. Of specific concern for the education inspectorate is the quality of school-based exams regarding content, quality of tests and procedures. Supervision is proportional in nature, meaning it is stricter where deficiencies are found, and required improvements are monitored by the inspectorate.

Horizontal dialogue: Using self-chosen tools the executive board is also expected to render horizontal account to important stakeholders: employers, local government and other regional organisations (*MBO Raad*, 2009).

2.3.5. Vocational education at lower secondary level

VET at lower secondary level is part of secondary education.

Pre-vocational secondary education (*VMBO – voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*; EQF 1 or 2) lasts four years. First two years consist of general subjects and years three and four are characterised by three system elements:

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

The four learning pathways are:

- a) Theoretical learning pathway (*VMBO-TL – theoretische leerweg*, EQF 2). Those graduating from theoretical learning pathway can transfer to upper secondary vocational education, especially long courses at highest levels of upper secondary VET – *MBO 3 and 4* or continue in the fourth year of upper secondary general education (*HAVO*). Programme content is general in character.
- b) Mixed/combined learning pathway (*VMBO-GL – gemengde leerweg*, EQF 2). Similar to theoretical learning pathway, apart from 10 to 15% of

study time dedicated to vocational subjects. Progression routes in upper secondary VET are the same as for theoretical pathway.

- c) Pre-vocational learning pathway – higher level (*VMBO-KL – kaderberoepsgerichte leerweg*, EQF 2). Preparation for long courses in VET at secondary level – *MBO 3* and *4* with dominantly vocational subjects.
 - d) Pre-vocational learning pathway – lower level (*VMBO-BL – basisberoepsgerichte leerweg*, EQF 1). Preparation for short courses in upper secondary VET – *MBO 2* with dominantly vocational subjects. Within this pathway, pupils with learning difficulties can follow a dual track, combining learning and working.
3. Pupils in VMBO's pre-vocational oriented pathways have to make a choice for a specific programme in agriculture, technology, economy and business, health and welfare, or opt for an inter-sectoral programme. All VMBO examinees have to sit for an examination in Dutch and English language, as well as two sector-specific subjects (limited choice) and two optional subjects. All subjects are object to a national and a school based examination and lead to national diplomas, with no labour market currency as pupils are supposed to continue in MBO or HAVO (for some). In 2016 new programmes will be introduced in VMBO. They will be new in terms of content (fitting with modern occupational practice and curriculum developments in MBO) and in terms of structure (over 30 programmes will be replaced by flexible programmes with fixed and optional modules).

Also, a specific practical school type is available for low-achievers, geared towards preparation for work (*PRO - praktijkonderwijs*, EQF 1). Some low-achievers transfer to upper secondary VET (*MBO 1*, now called Entry level education; see paragraph 2.2.5) to obtain an upper secondary VET diploma. PRO-pupils and pupils without formal diplomas are more or less unconditionally allowed to enter upper secondary VET programmes, however at *MBO 1* only. To smooth transfer, *MBO 1* and *2* programmes are also offered in VMBO schools, under condition of cooperation with upper secondary VET colleges.

Table 9. Participation in different types of secondary education year 3 by gender; in absolute numbers (x 1000)

Type of education	2000 boys/girls	2010 boys/girls	2012 boys/girls	2013 boys/girls
VSO (15-year-olds)	2.2 / 1.0	4.3 / 1.8	4.7/1.9	5.2/2.0
PRO (15-year-olds)	2.4 / 1.4	3.1 / 2.2	3.0/2.3	3.3/2.4
VMBO – LWOO	11.8 / 7.5	12.8 / 11.5	12.9/11.9	13.4/12.4
VMBO (excl. LWOO)	51.7 / 47.7	41.3 / 37.1	42.6/38.3	43.8/39.3
HAVO	20.1 / 22.3	23.0 / 23.8	24.3/25.3	24.8/25.7
VWO	16.1 / 19.6	20.0 / 22.7	20.0/22.9	20.5/22.7
Total	203.8	203.6	209.8	215.5

NB. See paragraph 2.1 for abbreviations. VSO and PRO: special types of secondary education – usually not leading to a diploma at ISCED 2. VMBO: IVET and general education at lower secondary level leading to a diploma at ISCED 2 (LWOO = *leerwagondersteunend onderwijs*: extra support for pupils within VMBO). HAVO and VWO: general secondary education/pre-scientific education as preparation for higher education.

Source: Key figures 2009-2013; OCW.

Destinations of 14-year-olds within the early tracking system of secondary education (study year three in secondary education) is shown in table 8. The table shows an increase in number of pupils in ‘higher’ segments of secondary education (HAVO/VWO; EQF 4) since 2000 and earlier. This is also the case for pupils who need extra support in the ‘lower’ segment (VSO/PRO). The ‘middle’ segment of secondary education (VMBO – excluding VMBO with extra support via LWOO) has decreased rapidly during the last two decades.

2.3.6. Vocational education at upper secondary level (including post-secondary – non tertiary level)

The number of participants in VET is high; both youngsters and adults attend upper secondary VET.

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

Subsidised VET programmes at upper secondary level are offered by 43 regional, multisectoral training VET colleges (*ROC – regionale opleidingscentra*), 12 specialist trade colleges (*vak scholen*: specific for a branch of industry), 11 agricultural training centres (*AOC – agrarische opleidingscentra*) and one school for people with disabilities in hearing, language and communication. AOCs are separately financed by the Ministry of Economics. Also, private, non-subsidised providers can offer VET programmes as long as their programmes are recognised by the Ministry. Thus, upper secondary VET is an open system. Also, subsidised educational institutions can also offer contract educational activities, paid for by employers/employees.

System elements in upper secondary VET are:

- school-based full-time programmes with practical periods in enterprises (*BOL – beroepsopleidende leerweg*);
 - dual track or pathway (apprenticeship training) combining learning and working (*BBL – beroepsbegeleidende leerweg*).
- (a) In school-based pathway, practical periods in companies make up at least 20% of study time to a maximum of 59%; in dual pathways, training takes place in companies at least 60% of study time. Both pathways function in the market as communicating vessels; same qualifications/diplomas can be achieved via both pathways. Participants in the school-based pathway are mainly youngsters, while almost 50% following dual pathway are aged 24 and above.

Table 10. **Participation in MBO: learning pathways (2000-13)**

	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total number	452 000	489 000	525 000	530 000	523 000	526 000
% BOL pathway	66	72	66	67	68	73
% BBL pathway	34	28	34	33	31	27

Source: CBS: Yearbook education in figures – 2013.

- (b) Programmes at four levels with different access criteria and transfer possibilities for further learning
- Entry level education: this programme lasts maximum one year (ISCED 254, EQF 1). It replaced in 2014 the *MBO 1* ‘assistant training’ (*assistentenopleiding*) and broader work-oriented programmes for vulnerable groups (assistant with a job market qualification – *arbeidsmarktgekwalficeerde assistent*). With introducing entry level courses admittance is limited to school leavers from lower secondary education without diploma. Entry level courses are aimed at qualifying youngsters to entering *MBO 2*, as well as guiding youngsters, who are not capable to proceed to level 2, to work. Also obligatory study advice will be introduced for youngsters over 17, preventing schools to remain responsible for young people making little study progress.
 - *MBO 2* ‘basic vocational education’ (*basisberoepsopleiding*) lasts two years and prepares for executive tasks (ISCED 353 short, EQF 2). It is the ‘official’ minimum qualification level for the labour market, the term ‘official’ in this context meaning that it is politically speaking, regarded as a desirable minimum for every citizen. The term is also related to the definition of early school leaving.

Access requirements are at least a basic pre-vocational education diploma; completed entry level (*MBO 1*). Until 2014 no access requirements applied, but this has changed since entry level courses have been introduced.

Progression to *MBO 3* and sometimes level 4 programmes is possible.

- *MBO 3* ‘professional education’ (*vakopleiding*) lasts three years. It prepares people to carry out tasks independently (ISCED 353 long, EQF 3).

Access requirements: (1) pre-vocational secondary education certificate/diploma (excluding basic pre-vocational education), or (2) proof successful completion of first three years of upper secondary general education or pre-university education.

Progression to programmes at *MBO 4* are possible as are middle management training programmes and specialist training (see below).

- *MBO 4* ‘middle-management VET’ (*middenkaderopleiding*) lasts three years. It prepares people to carry out tasks independently and with more responsibility (ISCED 354, EQF 4).

Access requirements: same as for *MBO 3*.

Progression and transfer to higher professional education is possible. In 2014 duration of *MBO 4* courses is, for most qualifications, reduced by one year to 3 years, as a result of new government policies (Focus on craftsmanship - *Focus op Vakmanschap*).

- *MBO 4* at post-secondary non-tertiary level, ‘specialist training’ (*specialistenopleiding*), lasts one to two years (ISCED 453; EQF 4).

Access requirements: completion of a *MBO 3* or 4 programme.

Progression/transfer to higher professional education, especially dual or part-time pathways, is possible.

Because of efficiency reasons programme duration was reduced in 2014.

Duration of *MBO 2* programmes is limited to maximum two years, *MBO 3* and 4 programmes maximum 3 years and specialist training 1 year. The minister has the right to make exceptions to this rule and allow specific *MBO 4* courses to last 4 years.

- (c) Qualification structures are in place for 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 comprises competence-based qualifications, each divided into several profiles. Each qualification describes desirable learning

outputs of VET programmes related to a specific vocation or group of occupations, to citizenship and further learning. The qualification structure is currently under revision and a new structure will be set up in 2015. Qualifications will be clustered for better transparency and feasibility. Definitions of qualification files are broadened, with a basic structure, profile modules and elective modules. In February 2015, 176 files and 489 profiles will remain, representing an almost 25% reduction in files.

Various experiments started in 2014 (*vakmanschap- en technologieroute*) to improve transfer from pre-vocational education (*VMBO*) to upper secondary vocational education (*MBO*). Schools cooperate to create 'smooth' progression routes without a break halfway.

Table 11. **Participation in *MBO* and adult education**

	Unit	2010/'11	2011/'12*	2012/'13*
Institutions	absolute	71	70	69
Students	x 1,000			
of whom				
Mbo (excl. exam-only students)		528	523	513
Bol		358	358	360
Bbl		170	165	153
Level 1		25	24	23
Level 2		129	125	118
Level 3		145	144	141
Level 4		229	230	230
Adult education		43	36	40
Vavo		15	14	17
Other education		28	22	22

Source: CBS: Statistical Yearbook 2014.

2.3.7. Professional education at tertiary level

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

These educational institutions offer study programmes leading to Bachelor's degrees (ISCED 645, EQF 6) – this is their core business. Also, pilot projects with short-cycle higher education ('associate degree' or AD, ISCED 554, EQF 5) have been introduced a few years ago, and have been implemented in the regular education system in September 2013. AD programmes (120 ECTS; normative duration two years) are part of bachelor's programmes (240 ECTS;

normative duration four years), so that further progression in higher education for AD graduates is possible, although recently it has been decided that the automatic right for continuation in a bachelor is going to be replaced by a system of admissibility (OCW, 2013a). AD is of particular interest to those with a VET background at upper secondary level. In 2014 the total number of students starting an AD in 2013 is 1901, making it in total 5 475 (OCW, 2014b).

Higher professional education institutions/universities of applied sciences also offer master's programmes (ISCED 747, EQF 7) for bachelor graduates, with more programmes expected in the next decade. These higher professional education institutions can also offer market-driven contract activities paid by employers and/or individuals/employees, such as educational courses and applied research.

Degrees are awarded by institutions themselves. Official recognition of courses is granted as long as they are accredited by the Dutch-Flemish accreditation organisation (*NVAO – Nederlands - Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie*).

After years of steady growth, enrolment in professional higher education (*HBO*) is falling. On 1 October 2012, number of students totalled slightly less than 412 thousand (excluding green programmes). The decrease can primarily be attributed to a sharp fall in part-time a slight fall in work-based learning programmes. Enrolment for full-time programmes still shows a slight upward trend.

It is expected that student numbers and diversity of student population will continue to increase in the next few years. New legislation has been introduced in 2013 (*Wet Kwaliteit in verscheidenheid* Quality through diversity act), which urges differentiation on three aspects: structure (such as number of associate degrees AD's), institutes (profiling) and educational offering (such as broad bachelor programmes). Also instruments are set up to support students in their choice for a specific course.

Admission into higher professional education requires an upper secondary general education (*HAVO* or *VWO*) or VET qualification (*MBO 4*). Some bachelor programmes have additional admission criteria for prospective entrants, which relate to the subjects they studied to attain their qualification. These criteria do not apply to students with an *MBO 4* qualification, as they currently have a universal right to go on from *MBO* to *HBO*. However, with introducing the 'Quality through diversity' act, admission criteria for *MBO 4* students into higher professional education can be sharpened (for specific courses).

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 and university, which are often preceded by a bridging programme.

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 seven fields of training: 'green'/agriculture, technology, economics and services, health care, behaviour and society, culture and arts, and teacher training.

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.

Curriculum development and assessment are responsibility of individual colleges. Various curricula and learning environments exist even for programmes related to the same profession. Intention is to minimise the variety of curricula in different fields, such as in teacher training programmes.

Success rates: expected success rates present a somewhat fluctuating picture. After peaking to 75% in 2003, success rates have shown a gradually declining trend over the years that followed. The average expectation for 2013 fell by 3% compared to 2012 and now amounts to 62%.

Table 12. **Enrolment in professional higher education. Number of enrolled students x 1000, including green education**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Full-time	326.3	339.1	350.6	356.6	378.1
Part-time	63.8	64.1	60.4	53.1	50.8
Work-based learning programmes	12.4	12.8	12.3	11.6	10.8

Source: Key Figures 2009-2013 Education, Culture and Science.

2.3.8. Teachers and trainers

Three quarters of teachers in upper secondary vocational education are educated at higher professional education level; 13% are university-trained. In higher professional education, around 60% of teachers are university graduates (OCW, 2011d).

The education professions act (*Wet BIO/ Wet op Beroepen in het Onderwijs*) which came into force on 1 August 2006 regulates competence standards for teachers and other educational staff in primary, general secondary, vocational

secondary and general adult education. The legislation requires the competent authority to maintain a teacher competency document for each individual teacher. The teacher competency document details teacher's competencies and activities aimed at maintaining and improving these competencies (OCW, 2011d).

Professionalisation of teachers is a pivotal political issue, in which over the past few years substantial resources have been invested to raise standards. Policies, formulated in the action plan 'Teachers 2020: a strong profession' (*Actieplan Leraar 2020 - een krachtig beroep!*) (OCW, 2011c), are based on the following developments: shortage of teachers is expected in years to come, especially in secondary education; Dutch students' learning achievements are still above average in international rankings, but fail to reach the top five in any category. Student achievement is even declining for a number of indicators; there are concerns about teacher quality (OCW, 2011c). The Action Plan Teachers 2020 contains three action lines:

- strengthening quality of current and future teachers by introducing a professional register. It will encourage teachers to maintain and improve their professional competencies (OCW, 2011d). By 2018, registration will be compulsory for all educational staff. (OCW, 2011c).
- encouraging schools to become highly professional organisations by introducing an ambitious, results-based culture and by stimulating professional HR policies. This means: giving teachers sufficient opportunities for professional growth, providing avenues for professionalisation, showing appropriate appreciation for excellent teachers and rewarding it. School boards will receive additional funding to promote teachers to higher positions with appropriate remuneration. This is what is meant by improving the 'salary mix' (differentiation of responsibilities and remuneration).
- Improving quality of teacher training courses, by educating new teachers to a higher level and to more exacting standards.

In 2009 an agreement between social partners in upper secondary education was reached on the introduction of a professional statute. In this statute the internal right of say is established for teachers and their team on pedagogical and quality issues in the institute. In combination with the Teacher 2020 action plan and various sector collective bargaining agreements in VET and higher professional education, these developments are to produce a more modern human resources management (HRM) policy in educational institutes.

For professionalisation activities, teachers in upper secondary education are entitled 59 hours of training and professional development annually. Employees are responsible for justifying these hours to their employer. Also, there are 107 training hours available per FTE per team. The team determines content and

allocation of hours among employees concerned, in consultation with the employer. Teachers in higher professional education make individually personal development plans agreement with their employer. At least 59 hours of professional development time is available for teaching staff to realize their PDP. Employees also receive a personal budget for professional development of 0.8% of their annual salary.

Trainers responsible for work-based learning of students in companies (both in apprenticeship and work-based learning in school based track) are trained by centres of expertise on VET (*Expertisecentra*). These trainers should have didactic skills such as being able to instruct, guide, motivate and assess students/apprentices. Centres of expertise regularly provide (commercial) courses to train these practical trainers in various branches of industry.

2.4. Other forms of vocational education and training

2.4.1. Provision

There is no institutional framework for other forms of VET in the Netherlands; especially for continuing vocational training (CVT). Provision is market-driven with many suppliers. Social partners can stimulate CVT with the help of their branch-specific training and development funds (*Opleidings- en ontwikkelingsfondsen*). Until 2014 tax deduction measures promoted and eased training and procedures for accreditation of prior learning. This tax deduction is replaced by a subsidy-system, implemented in 2014.

CVT can be divided into:

- legally regulated and publicly financed part-time/dual IVET that functions as CVET for individuals (see paragraph 2.2.5 and 2.2.6.);
- extensive provision of specific training for unemployed and jobseekers,
- private, non-government-funded training for employees, self-employed people and employers.

There are various forms of training provision:

- (a) part-time equivalents of regular full-time/school-based vocational/professional education and dual pathways within upper secondary vocational education and higher professional education;
- (b) private correspondence courses and e-learning, primarily vocational in nature;
- (c) private oral education, which again comprises primarily vocational courses; training courses given outside the company;
- (d) in-company training, off-the-job and on-the-job.

Many training providers are active in non-formal CVET (off-the-job) market for employees. Most are private commercial training providers covering 84% of the training market and a smaller number are publicly funded VET providers that offer contract activities paid by contractors (around 16%). There is little, reliable statistical information available about informal on-the-job learning (workplace learning).

2.4.2. Sectoral and regional initiatives

Staff training is partly influenced by collective labour agreements 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 (*O&O fondsen - Opleidings- en Ontwikkelingsfondsen*). Employers pay an obligatory part of their personnel costs into 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.

Regional agreements on working-learning arrangements and use of procedures for accreditation of prior learning have increased over the past few years, stimulated by the former interdepartmental project directorate for learning and working (*interdepartementale Projectdirectie Leren en Werken*) and others. Government has stimulated and supported employers, employees, citizens, trade and industry, employment services, educational providers, local governments and regions to take practical steps in 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 whether or not via additional training.

To stimulate civic integration, participation in education and 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*) (SZW, 2003), employability education and civic integration. The aim is to decrease bureaucracy. The participation budget act has been operational since January 2009.

Unemployed people can search for jobs at their regional employment service (*UWV Werkbedrijf*). Municipalities are responsible for paying income support to people with no income from work or social security/insurance system. UWV Werkbedrijf-agencies cooperate in helping people to find work. Training can be part of (re)integration into work. Depending on circumstances, people themselves have a say in choosing the most appropriate routes back to work, in form of training components such as courses/programmes paid by these agencies.

2.4.3. Participation

The labour force survey (LFS) and adult education survey (AES) asked respondents about their participation in formal and non-formal learning (age group 25-64, active labour force). Results for 2011 were: 16.7% via LFS (reference period: four weeks) and (in 2008) 42.1% via AES (reference period: twelve months). Higher educated persons, younger age groups and persons with a flexible labour contract take part more often than lower educated persons, older age groups and persons who are self-employed or possess a solid labour contract.

CHAPTER 3.

Shaping qualifications in vocational education and training

3.1. Anticipating skills needs

The Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (*ROA - Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt*) is the institute in the Netherlands that specialises in labour market forecasting and skills anticipation. Forecasts aim to increase transparency of matches between education and 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, ROA publishes the report 'The labour market by education and occupation in 20xx' (ROA, 2013) which includes analyses of expected labour market developments in the light of particular policy issues. The information function is primarily intended to help and support vocational and educational guidance.

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.

Centres of expertise – active in upper secondary VET – used to cooperate with ROA to improve use of available data. These 17 branch-specific centres of expertise published 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 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. From August 2015 onward this task will be transferred from the centres of expertise to the 2012 set up SBB. Due to budget cuts legal tasks from the 17 centres of expertise, developing qualification structure, recruiting and accreditation of learning companies, will be transferred to SBB. SBB will then be responsible for these tasks, including labour market research for developing qualification structure. Within SBB eight newly set up 'sector chambers' will prioritise and direct SBB activities. In these sector chambers vocational education and social partners are equally represented.

Educational institutions are subsequently responsible for attuning their provision of education regionally. 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 take initiative to introduce new occupations or qualifications or renew existing qualifications. Furthermore, social partners have an explicit task to take initiative to incorporate new occupations or qualifications into the national qualification structure in upper secondary vocational education. The national social security agency (*UWV - Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen*) is also involved in the cooperation between ROA and SBB to match information on demand and supply in the labour market, at sectoral and regional level.

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

3.2. Designing qualification and curriculum development

Pattern for qualification design differs between parts of the vocational/professional track:

- (a) in lower secondary pre-vocational education: examination syllabi are laid down in a framework by the Ministry of Education and developed by the Foundation for Curriculum Development in the Netherlands;
- (b) in upper secondary vocational education: the national qualification structure defines desired output of qualifications. Three steps can be identified:
 - (i) social partners develop and determine/validate vocational/occupational profiles;
 - (ii) representatives of social partners and education develop qualification profiles (educational standards as output), which are adopted by the Ministry of Education / Ministry of Economics. This is done by 17 branch-specific knowledge centres for VET- trade and industry and in the near future by eight newly set up 'sector chambers' within SBB.
 - (iii) colleges develop curricula in cooperation with training firms based on qualification profiles.
- (c) In higher professional education: qualifications and programmes, developed by schools, are accredited by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation. A curriculum is part of the accreditation request.

The term ‘curriculum’ has various meanings in the Netherlands. A ‘qualification’ is best defined as: a document that relates to the desired implementation of an entire educational programme, leading to a diploma. The document always contains objectives, contents, educational structure, assessment/evaluation, while extent of detail can vary. Curriculum development is a matter for individual colleges within the legal frameworks as laid down in the constitution.

Schools are primarily responsible for modernisation of their curricula. Authority with regard to learning arrangements is assigned to them; this is constitutionally regulated. This does not mean, however, national government remains completely aloof. It can stimulate developments and innovations that have consequences for the modernisation of curricula.

3.3. Assessment

In the Netherlands, mechanisms to recognise formal learning in government-regulated VET are as follows:

- in lower secondary vocational education, central, national examinations and school examinations are held, which are important for gaining a diploma. The education inspectorate supervises quality of school exams;
- in vocational education at upper secondary level, assessment of learning results is a matter of schools. The law stipulates that the learning company has to be involved in this testing. Qualification standards serve as benchmarks for assessments. The education inspectorate supervises quality of examinations (content, level and procedures at programme level);
- since August 2014, obligatory central examinations in Dutch as language and arithmetic will be carried out in phases;
- in higher professional education, schools are responsible for examinations in accordance with teaching and assessment regulations designed by providers. These regulations are part of the accreditation request for a recognised *HBO* programme.

Accreditation of prior, non-formal and informal learning is an instrument that has been promoted in the Netherlands for the last ten years. Accreditation of prior learning takes place in accordance with national qualifications/standards in VET at upper secondary vocational and higher professional level in particular. Accreditation is laid down in 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 existed in the Netherlands: various education acts refer specifically to the possibility of external candidates or outsiders sitting examinations.

3.4. Macro-effectiveness of VET provision

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

Schools in upper secondary vocational education decide for themselves which qualifications to provide. Recently however, macro-efficiency has been put on the national agenda for upper secondary VET aim to

1. remove overlaps in regional provision of VET courses; competition between providers has been replaced by a policy focussing on macro-efficiency. A key focal point is how to arrive at an optimum offer of qualifications at national and regional level. In terms of effectiveness, how to arrive at an optimum of courses relevant to regional labour markets. In terms of efficiency how to arrive at an optimum of qualifications with a sufficient number of students. This operation is been entrusted to SBB.
2. The aim of the second operation, the on-going review of the qualification framework, to become effective in 2015, is to arrive at an 'optimum reduction' of qualifications. A limited number of qualifications will make it easier for students to select a programme, and will support schools to work more efficiently. Revision of the qualification structure is a major project with the involvement of VET colleges and social partner representatives. VET-institutes, in cooperation with companies, use these qualifications as input for developing programmes and examinations.

In addition to qualifications, regions will be afforded the leeway to draft some options themselves, and thus to anticipate specific regional needs or to be put in just the right position to better prepare students to continue their education. The options will also allow them to provide coursework in German language or commercial skills as part of their programmes. Starting with the 2016-2017 school year, and in addition to the revision of the qualification structure, more experimentation will be allowed for cross-overs, in which innovative training programmes can be created that go off the beaten path by combining parts of several qualifications. Being allowed to engage in such experimentation is conditioned on an institution's qualifications being insufficient to offer demonstrable job prospects (OCW, 2014a).

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 decides whether an accredited programme is to be publicly funded or not (macro-effectiveness test).

CHAPTER 4.

Promoting participation in VET

4.1. Funding government regulated VET

The Ministry of Education administers almost all central government expenditure on education. The Service Institute Education (*DUO - Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs*), an agency of the ministry has been charged with this task. DUO plays a key role in administration and financing state-regulated VET. There is a complex but direct financing relationship between DUO and schools for upper secondary vocational education.

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

4.2. Funding lower secondary vocational education

The funding principle is block grant funding. It gives competent authorities considerable freedom in deciding how to spend available resources. Schools receive a fixed amount per student plus a fixed amount per school. There are also extra financial measures for 'students at risk'.

4.3. Funding upper secondary vocational education (and general adult education)

There are various sources of funding in this sector:

4.3.1. Government funding

For vocational education: block grant funding of schools is within the national macro budget: amount of money is based in part on number of students per course/learning path and in part on number of certificates awarded per institution. In 2014 the so called 'cascade funding' was introduced. Schools receive money for each student for a maximum of 6 years, including extra money in the first

year. This is to enforce schools to place students directly in the right track, instead of accumulating tracks (such as start at *MBO* 2, to continue at level 3).

Funding of the centres of expertise: In the coalition agreement 2012, government announced to reduce the budget for these centres by 80%. As a result legal tasks of these centres will be transferred to SBB and the eight 'sector chambers'.

For general adult education: money is allocated to municipalities based on number of residents over 18, number of ethnic minorities and number of adults with learning difficulties. Municipal authorities used to purchase adult education courses by concluding contracts with VET providers. In 2015 this market will be liberalised. Municipalities will have freedom how to spend their budget.

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

4.3.2. Other income for *MBO* colleges

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

4.3.3. Students

Students pay course fees to institutions. Students in VET programmes (school-based pathways) pay fees to the government and qualify for student grants from the age of 18 (student finance act, *WSF – Wet op de studiefinanciering*).

4.3.4. Companies

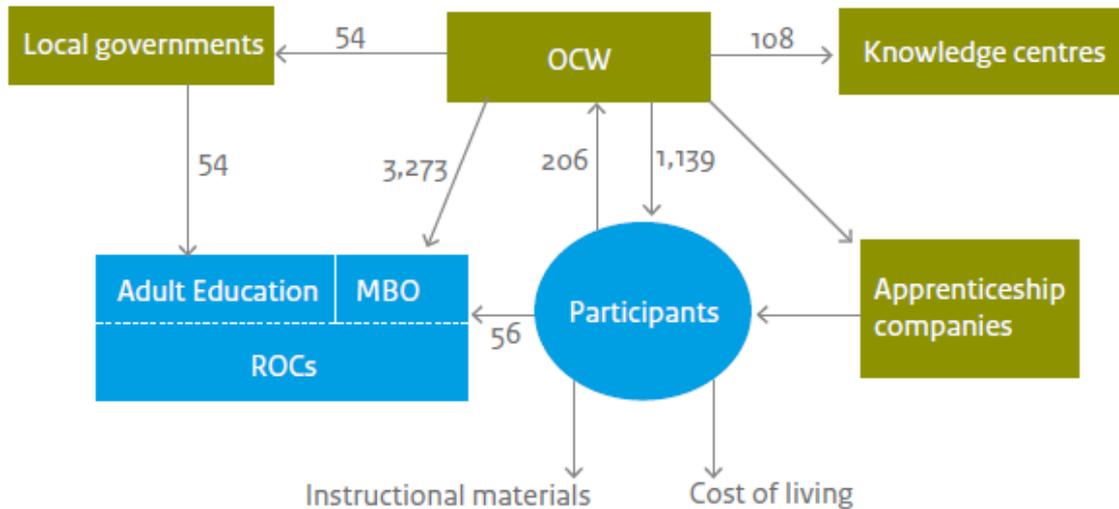
Companies used to have a tax facility of EUR 2 500 for each learning place offered and occupied. This tax deduction is replaced by a subsidy in 2014 because of excessive use.

Companies can apply for funding when offering educational activities for students in the dual (*BBL*) pathway and for students in dual track in higher education (in technical or agricultural courses).

In 2013, companies certified to supervise work periods of pupils and students spent nearly EUR 2.4 billion on teaching *MBO* and HBO students practical work skills in 2013, EUR 94 million less than in 2012. As fewer *MBO* and HBO students are in tracks involving work-based learning, overall supervision costs fell, although for *MBO* students in school-based tracks and full-

time HBO students they rose by EUR 30 million⁸. The flow of funds is shown in figure 3.

Figure 3: **Flows of funds in vocational and adult education (2013), in EUR million)**



Notes: *MBO* = upper secondary vocational education; *ROCs* = regional VET centres; Ministry of Economics and agricultural schools not included in the diagram). Other income for VET providers is not shown in the diagram. Amount of money for civic integration training is not shown in the diagram; municipalities/local governments receive funds from a different Ministry.

Source: Key Figures 2009-2013, Ministry OCW- Education, Culture and Science;

4.4. Funding higher VET

4.4.1. Government funding

Part of funding is within the macro budget and based partly on number of enrolled participants and partly on output/outcome results (number of diplomas). There is also a fixed budget.

4.4.2. Private funding

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

⁸ CBS (2014). Web magazine, 28/11/2014. <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/onderwijs/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2014/2014-4183-wm.htm>

4.4.3. Students

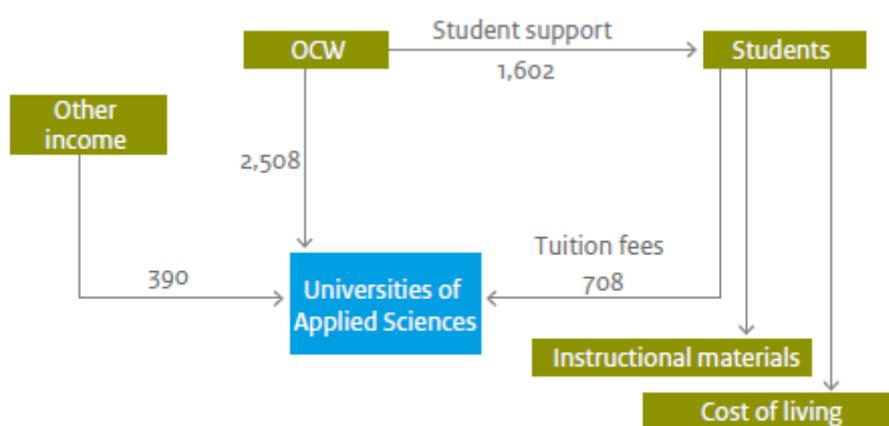
Full-time students receive financial support from the age of 18 under the student finance act. They have to pay tuition fees to universities of applied sciences. In the near future a social loan system will be introduced.

4.4.4. Companies/enterprises

Enterprises offering learning places in the dual pathway: tax deduction was replaced by a subsidy in 2014. The scheme is comparable with that of upper secondary vocational education.

Flow of funds is shown in figure 4.

Figure 4. **Flow of funds in higher professional education (2013); in EUR million**



NB: (Note: Ministry of Economics and agricultural schools not included in the diagram). Flow of money for apprenticeship companies is not shown in the diagram.

Source: Key Figures 2009-2013, Ministry OCW.

4.5. Funding other forms of VET

Enterprise-based CVET for employees is financed by companies, training and development funds (see below) and individual initiatives. Enterprise-based arrangements for training are often made in 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 set up as a means of creating a more solid foundation for training and ensuring that training became embedded within various economic sectors economy (and individual companies within these sectors).

List of abbreviations

AD	Associate degree
AES	Adult education survey
AOC	agrarisch opleidingscentrum [agricultural training centre]
AVO	algemeen voortgezet onderwijs [general secondary education]
BAO	basisonderwijs [primary education]
BBL	beroepsbegeleidende leerweg [dual pathway (apprenticeship training) in which learning and working are combined]
BOL	beroepsopleidende leerweg [school-based full-time or part-time programmes with practical periods in enterprises]
BVE	beroepsonderwijs en volwasseneneducatie [upper secondary vocational education and general adult education]
DUO	Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs [Service Institution Education]
HAVO	hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs [upper secondary general education]
HBO	hoger beroepsonderwijs [higher professional education]
LFS	Labour force survey
MBO	middelbaar beroepsonderwijs [upper secondary vocational education]
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie [Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation]
NRTO	Nederlandse Raad voor Training en Opleiding [Dutch Council for Training]
O&O fonds	Opleidings- en Ontwikkelfonds [Training and Development Fund]
OU	Open Universiteit [Open University]
PRO	praktijkonderwijs [practical labour oriented education]
ROA	Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market
ROC	regionale opleidingscentrum [regional, multisectoral training centre]
SBAO/SO	speciaal basisonderwijs/speciaal onderwijs [special (primary) education]
SBB	stichting Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven [Foundation Cooperation VET – Trade and Industry]

UWV	Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen [national social security agency]
VMBO	voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs [pre-vocational education]
VMBO – BL	basisberoepsgerichte leerweg [pre-vocational learning pathway]
VMBO – GL	gemengde leerweg [mixed/combined learning pathway]
VMBO – KL	kaderberoepsgerichte leerweg [pre-vocational learning pathway]
VMBO - TL	theoretische leerweg [theoretical learning pathway]
VAVO	voortgezet algemeen volwassenenonderwijs [general secondary education for adults]
VO	voortgezet onderwijs [secondary education]
VSO	voortgezet speciaal onderwijs [special secondary education]
VVE	voorschoolse en vroegtijdige educatie [pre-school education]
VWO	voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs [pre-scientific education]
WSF	Wet op de studiefinanciering [student finance act]
WO	wetenschappelijk onderwijs [scientific education]

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