



Inspectie van het Onderwijs
*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en
Wetenschap*

Dutch Inspectorate of Education

Background information and working method of the inspectorate

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List of abbreviations

BAO	Mainstream primary education
BBL	Block or day release in vocational education
BOL	Full-time vocational programmes
CITO	National institute for test development
GGD	Municipal health authority
HAVO	General secondary education
HBO	Professional higher education
MBO	Vocational education
NVAO	Dutch-Flemish accreditation organisation
OKE LAW	Law on developmental opportunities through quality and education
OU	Open University
PRO	Elementary vocational training
SBAO	Special primary education
SICI	Standing International Conference of national and regional Inspectorates of Education
SLO	The Dutch institute for curriculum development
SO	Special education
VMBO	Pre-vocational secondary education
VO	Secondary education
VSO	Secondary special education
VVE	Early childhood education
VWO	Pre-university education
WEB	The adult and vocational education act
WHW	Law on higher education
WO	Academic higher education
WOT	The legal basis for the inspectorate of education is the act on the inspectorate of education

1. A summary profile of the Dutch inspectorate

Founded in 1801, the Dutch Inspectorate of Education is one of the oldest state inspectorates of education nowadays.

Since 2008, the Dutch Inspectorate of Education has worked with a risk-based model of inspection in order to identify those schools who pose an educational risk on the basis of their level of quality. On an annual basis, the inspectorate collects and analyses information on possible risks in all schools and visits each school at least once every four years. The results of the risk analysis indicate whether a school needs to be investigated more extensively, or whether the school can be trusted to perform adequately during the next year. If the analysis does not reveal any risks, the inspectorate has sufficient confidence in the quality of the education provided to qualify the school for the so-called basic inspection programme. On the other hand in case a school performs inadequately, the inspectorate states which shortcomings should be improved and subsequently monitors these improvements.

In the future the inspectorate wants to expand its supervision by encouraging all schools in the Netherlands to improve. As a consequence in 2014 the inspectorate started a pilot with the aim of developing a more differentiated inspection method. These pilots and changes in the supervision system are currently in a development phase.

There are no significant differences in the inspection regimes for public schools and schools controlled by private boards. Checking compliance with rules and regulations is always part of an inspection visit, in addition to the evaluation of quality.

The inspectorate has no advisory or counselling tasks with respect to schools; schools are provided with a budget they can use for hiring advisors and other support staff from regional or national agencies. In case pupils, parents, teachers or other stakeholders have complaints, they should address these to the complaints commission that schools are legally obliged to have. The inspectorate only has a role when complaints cannot be solved by the complaints commission. Besides that, the inspectorate uses complaints as inputs in risk based inspection.

The inspectorate also conducts so-called thematic inspections: in a sample of schools a certain topic or subject is inspected using a specific framework of indicators and criteria. These inspections also result in public reports.

Each year the inspectorate publishes a report on the state of education in the Netherlands. This report is sent directly to parliament and to the Minister of Education and generally attracts large media attention.

The inspectorate has always had extensive and extended international contacts and participates in many cooperation projects and networks; including SICI.

2. The Education System

2.1. Structure, table, numbers (data for 2013, source: OCW: Key figures 2009-2013 and Kamerbrief, March 24 of 2014)

ISCED level	Division	Name of subdivision in your country	Age range of pupils	Number of schools/ institutions	Number of pupils	Number of teachers/ employees
0, 1	Pre-school (nursery education)	Voor- en vroegschoolse educatie (VVE)	2-5			
	Childcare in child centres	Kinderopvang/Dagopvang c.q. kinderdagverblijf	0-4	6187	261.000	89.000 fte
	Childcare in child centres	Kinderopvang/Buitenschoolse opvang	4-13	6417	278.000	
	Childcare at home	Kinderopvang/Gastouderopvang	0-13	40.148	107.000	-
	Toddler playgroup	Peuterspeelzaal	2-4	2919	63.353	12.000 fte
1	Primary education	Primair Onderwijs (PO)	4-12	7261	1.586.200	123.600 fte
2	Secondary education on three levels (numbers for the whole division)	Voortgezet Onderwijs (VO)	12-18	645	974.400	83.200 fte
	- Pre-university education with four profiles	Vorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (VWO)	12-18			
	- Preparation for non – university higher education with four profiles	Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs (HAVO)	12-17			
	- Preparation for intermediate vocational education with four strands	Vorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (VMBO)	12-16			
	- Practical training	Praktijkonderwijs	12-18			
5	Non-university higher education (Professional higher education)	Hoger Beroepsonderwijs (HBO)	17+	34	439.700	-
5	University(Academic higher education)	Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (WO)	18+	12	248.300	-

3	Adult education in three strands - Second chance education for adults - Education for broad general competences - Dutch as a second language - Education for social independency	Volwassenenonderwijs Voortgezet Algemeen Volwassenen Onderwijs (VAVO) Opleidingen gericht op breed maatschappelijk functioneren Nederlands als Tweede Taal (NT2) Opleidingen gericht op sociale redzaamheid	>16 >16 >16 >16	57 (vocational and adult education together)	13.400	35.800 fte (vocational and adult education together)
3	Vocational education at four levels: - Assistant workers - Basic vocational training - Professional education - Middle management and specialist professional education	Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (MBO): Assistentenopleiding Basisberoepsopleiding Vakopleiding Middenkaderopleiding Specialistenopleiding	16-17 16-18/19 16-18/20 18-20	57 (vocational and adult education together)	495.200	35.800 fte (vocational and adult education together)
	Special education (Primary) Special education (Secondary) Pupils with an indication for special education in mainstream schools	Speciaal Onderwijs (SO) Voortgezet Speciaal Onderwijs (VSO) Leerlingen met een indicatie voor speciaal onderwijs in reguliere scholen	3-20 12-20 4-30		31.800 39.300 38.100	

2.2 Description

One of the key features of the Dutch education system, guaranteed under article 23 of the constitution, is freedom of education, i.e. the freedom to found schools, to organise the teaching in schools and to determine the principles on which schools are based. Any citizen has the right to found schools and to provide teaching based on religious, ideological or educational beliefs. The constitution guarantees equal public funding for both private and public schools.

Public schools are open to all children regardless of religion or conviction and are generally subject to public law. They are governed by the municipal council, increasingly by a board or by a public legal entity or foundation set up by the council. Public schools provide education on behalf of the state.

Private schools have the right to refuse to admit pupils whose parents do not respect the belief or ideology on which the school's teaching is based. They are subject to private law and are state-funded although not set up by the state. Privately governed schools are governed by the board of the association or foundation that set them up. The school boards of public and publicly financed private schools appoint their own principals and teachers. Guaranteed in the constitution is also the choice of textbooks. Teaching in

private schools is based on religious or ideological beliefs. These include for example Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindustani and anthroposophist beliefs and views.

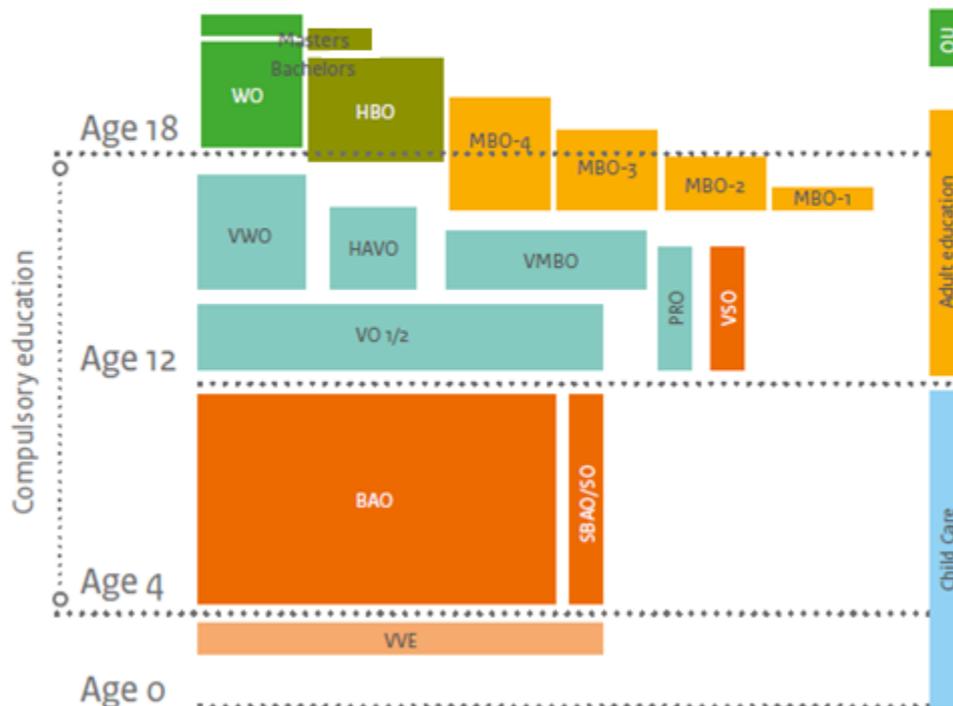
Some schools base their teaching on specific educational ideas, such as the Montessori, Dalton, Freinet or Jenaplan method. They may be either publicly or privately governed. There are also combinations, e.g. Protestant or Catholic schools with the Jenaplan.

'Freedom to organise teaching' means that both public and private schools are free to determine – within legal boundaries - what is taught and how this is taught. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science however, does set quality standards which apply to both public and government-funded private education. These standards prescribe the subjects to be studied, the attainment targets or examination syllabuses and the content of national examinations, the number of teaching periods per year, the qualifications which teachers are required to have, giving parents and pupils a say in school matters, planning and reporting obligations and so on. Of course there is a continuous debate in politics and between the Ministry and the national associations of school boards and/or teachers about details in this balance of freedom and prescriptions.

2.3 Overview of the Dutch education system

The following scheme gives an illustration of the Dutch education system.

The Dutch education system



Compulsory education

The obligation to attend school is laid down in the Compulsory Education Act 1969. Every child must attend school full-time from the first school day of the month following its fifth birthday. However, parents are allowed to send their child to school before that, at the age of four (98% of the four years olds attend school). Children must attend school full-time for twelve full school years. Since 2007 students who have not obtained a qualification at MBO-2 or HAVO/VWO level, are legally obliged to stay in school until they are eighteen years old.

The Compulsory Education Act is implemented by the municipal authorities.

The municipal executive (at local level) checks that children below school-leaving age who are registered as resident in the area, are enrolled as pupils at an educational establishment and actually attend school.

Primary education

There are limited facilities for children under the age of four. From August 2010 the OKE law is in force for pre- and early education (VVE). This type of education aims to support children between two and four years old that run the risk of being educationally disadvantaged. This policy has been partially integrated into urban policy and municipal policy on educational disadvantages. The municipalities must, among other things, ensure that these children do have their preschool education. They must also ensure that school boards and preschool organisations make the statutory appointments. The conditions for the kindergarten and preschool are also formulated in the OKE law.

Primary education is spread over eight years/classes. Most children start primary school at the age of four, however compulsory education starts at the age of five. Schools are free to determine the content and methods of teaching, but their work must be based on national attainment targets and reference levels for literacy and numeracy.

Attainment targets indicate in general terms the basic minimum that schools are expected to teach their pupils. On the other hand, as the core learning objectives are described in very broad terms, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science developed additional reference levels for literacy and numeracy. Schools have been required to implement these since 2010 and will be required to report on their students' performance in relation to the reference levels from the 2015/16 school-year. The reference levels provide a general description of knowledge and skills to be achieved, a description of the types of tasks to be mastered, and the criteria that these tasks should meet. Furthermore, these reference levels are included to a certain extent in the end-of-primary tests which became obligatory since the 2014/2015 school-year.

The government does not prescribe how the progress of primary school pupils should be assessed, however it does state that each school should follow the progress of all pupils in primary schools.

In the school plan (an obligatory document for each individual school), schools describe their assessments, evaluations and reporting procedures.

At the end of their eight years of schooling, primary school leavers receive a report describing their level of attainment and potential. To assess the educational potential of their pupils, most schools use the tests for primary school leavers developed by the National Institute for Test Development ('CITO' test for primary education). As previously mentioned this test became obligatory since the 2014/2015 school-year. However, besides the test developed by CITO, schools are permitted to choose from different examination providers which are approved by the Minister of Education and are checked yearly. Nevertheless, all primary schools should choose one test for all pupils. Based on the capabilities of pupils, teachers give a recommendation on the type of secondary school appropriate for a student, at the end of primary school. This recommendation is decisive for students transfer into different types of secondary

schools. Previously pupil's achievement on their end-of-primary test had more weight on the decision for the type of secondary school, however nowadays the outcome of this test can only be used when its score is higher than the recommendation given by a teacher for the type of secondary school.

Secondary education

Upon leaving primary school at the age of twelve approximately, children have a choice – mainly dependent on their potential and capacities - between three major types of secondary education: VMBO (pre-vocational secondary education; four years), HAVO (senior general secondary education: five years) and VWO (pre-university education: six years). For pupils that are not expected to be able to conclude their education with an examination, practical training is offered for which they may get certificates. These pupils are prepared for a variety of skills which are important to enable them to participate in society.

VMBO is a type of secondary education introduced in 1999/2000 with the objective of combining the former VBO (pre-vocational education) and the former MAVO (junior general secondary education).

There are four learning pathways in VMBO:

- basic vocational programme
- middle-management vocational programme
- combined programme
- theoretical programme.

Most secondary schools are combined schools offering several types of secondary education, so pupils can easily transfer from one type education to another within the same school.

All three types of secondary education start with a period of basic secondary education, during which all pupils study a broad range of subjects which on paper is the same for all types of schools. The actual programme and content matter vary in order to cater for differences in learning abilities. HAVO and VWO pupils study three modern languages, while pupils in VMBO study two. The period of basic secondary education varies in length from one type of school to another, but it lasts at least for two years (as in the case of VMBO) and usually three.

After completing VMBO at the age of about sixteen, pupils can go on to secondary vocational education (MBO). Pupils who have successfully completed the theoretical programme within VMBO can also move on to HAVO which provides access to vocational higher education.

In the second stage of their curriculum, pupils in HAVO and VWO have a choice between four profiles:

- nature and technology
- nature and health
- economy and social studies
- culture and social studies.

A profile is a cohesive educational programme acting as preparation for higher education.

All profiles share a common component. In addition there is a profile component with subjects linked to the chosen profile. And finally, there is room for additional subjects. Pupils can choose subjects from another profile component or take on extra subjects.

Special education

In addition to mainstream primary and secondary schools there are special schools for children with physical, sensorial, learning and/or behavioural difficulties who- at least temporarily- require special educational treatment. There are also separate schools for children with disabilities of such a kind that they cannot be adequately catered for in mainstream schools. Some of them are able to obtain a diploma in vocational education. Pupils who are not able to obtain a diploma receive practical training which prepares them for entering the labour market. If they perform well in the practical training they may receive a certificate for assistance work in a particular industry. Others who need long-term extra help and/or cannot do any kind of labour go to homes for daytime activities after becoming 18 (or 19-20) years.

In order to be allowed into special schools, pupils have to obtain an indication from an independent commission: a permissibility statement. Besides this, pupils with severe handicaps or disabilities who need specialized treatment and support can be enrolled in a residential setting like an eight, twelve- or 24-hour institution. Once indication has been obtained, parents may choose between a special school and a mainstream school. In the latter case, those mainstream schools receive additional funding for these pupils, up to the age of 20.

Act for pupils with special educational needs

As of August 1st 2014, a new Education Act for pupils with special educational needs ('Wet Passend Onderwijs') came into effect. This act implies that all school authorities are united in a regional school alliance for either primary or secondary education. Such a partnership is responsible for the organization and funding of all extra educational support for all of their schools.

In accordance with this act, schools have an obligation towards pupils, who require extra support, to find them the most suitable educational provision. To fulfil this task, school authorities must realise a tailor-made educational approach within the context of the school alliances. These 152 school alliances, of which 77 in primary education and 75 in secondary education, are organised as a cooperation between mainstream schools and schools for special needs education, within a region.

The government funding received, must be spent in consultation with parents, teachers and municipalities. The underlying idea is that if there is less regulation and schools are directly responsible, schools will be better equipped to support all pupils within a specific alliance. Beneficial support in mainstream schools can prevent pupils from being referred to school for special (secondary) education, though this option still will remain available for the 'severe cases'.

In 2015 another law regarding youth policy and youth care has been adopted. This meant a big change in responsibility and provision of youth care. Since then, the responsibility for the youth policy has been transferred to the municipalities.

As previously mentioned, the provision of the tailor-made support of children with special needs in the schools is the responsibility of the school alliances, but the provision of extra care involves a combined effort of the municipalities and the school alliances consisting of the schools delivering the support.

Adult and Secondary Vocational Education

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), which came into force on the 1st of January 1996, covers two types of education: secondary vocational education (MBO) and adult education.

MBO comprises school bound vocational training (BOL) and block or apprenticeship programmes with work components (BBL).

BOL is full-time (fte) with a course programme of 1.600 hours study load per year, of which approximately 1000 hours a year of guided education time under the responsibility of and practised by the educational establishment and vocational training at the company. For each of the training levels specific requirements apply for the distribution of the hours per year, on the basis of legislation. Within BBL, the focus is on practical training. Each year comprises at least 850 clock hours, of which at least 200 guided teaching hours and at least 610 clock hours of vocational training.

Besides a BOL or BBL programme, students also have the possibility to follow a third pathway. This third pathway can only be offered in the form of a private-non-funded vocational training by institutions and here no standards for the amount of teaching hours required apply.

MBO courses are offered in four subject fields (economics, technology, agriculture and personal and social/healthcare) and the courses can be taken at four different qualification levels:

- assistant worker (entrance level/ level 1);
- basic vocational training (level 2);
- professional training (level 3);
- middle management or specialist training (level 4).

Adult education comprises adult general secondary education (VAVO) and adult basic education. VAVO is regarded as 'second chance education' (VMBO-theoretical programme, HAVO and VWO). Adult basic education is focused on acquiring language and mathematic skills. Furthermore also basic ICT skills are comprised herein.

The following courses are offered:

- Dutch language and mathematic courses focusing on literacy and the starting level of vocational education;
- 'Dutch as a second language' courses which are aimed at mastering the Dutch language at a basic level;
- 'Dutch as a second language' courses focusing on literacy.

Higher education

The Netherlands has a binary system of higher education, which means there are two types of programmes: research-oriented education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs, WO), traditionally offered by research universities, and professional higher education (hoger beroepsonderwijs, HBO), traditionally offered by hogescholen, or universities of professional education. The distinction between WO and HBO types of higher education is important in the Dutch higher education system, and determines the admission requirements, content and length of degree programmes, as well as the degrees awarded. All higher education institutions may offer both types of programmes, but in most cases research-oriented programmes are offered by research universities and professionally-oriented programmes are offered by universities of professional education. Since 2002, the higher education system in the Netherlands has been based on a three-cycle degree system, consisting of a bachelor, master and PhD.

At the ages of around 17 and 18 respectively, HAVO certificate-holders and VWO certificate-holders can opt to move on to higher education. HAVO is designed to prepare pupils for higher professional education (HBO). In practice, however, many HAVO school-leavers also go on to the upper two years of VWO and to secondary vocational education. VWO is designed to prepare pupils for university. In practice, many VWO certificate-holders enter HBO. MBO level 4 certificate-holders can go on to higher professional education, while HBO graduates may also go on to university.

3. Tasks, responsibilities and roles of the inspectorate: general overview

3.1 Legal basis; description in official documents

During the past twenty years, two trends can be distinguished in the field of education in the Netherlands. On the one hand there is a growing demand for insight into educational standards and performance; on the other hand there is a trend towards reducing national regulations and strengthening the responsibility of educational institutions for their own policy and practice.

The legal basis for the inspectorate of education is the Act on the inspectorate of education (Dutch acronym: WOT) which became effective in September 2002. In this law, the discussion about the balance between the two trends has been elaborated. The general formula in the WOT for this balance is: 'The role of the inspectorate is to evaluate and to stimulate the quality of education and to inform all parties concerned on the quality of education in general and in the individual institutes.'

The WOT has consequences for the way in which the inspectorate monitors schools. The responsibility for the quality of education lies in first instance with the school itself. The school decides on objectives (within the national framework), organisation, methods, materials and pedagogy and on the ways in which quality is assessed, evaluated and improved. The WOT obliges the inspectorate to conduct a periodical assessment of the quality of each educational institution, with the exception of higher education institutions. Schools that perform well are granted a light inspection regime (the so-called 'basic arrangement'). Schools that do not comply with national regulations are called to account. In addition, the inspectorate points out to the school leadership in what respects quality improvements can be achieved. If a school shows serious weaknesses, the inspectorate imposes a more intensive supervision regime and – eventually – reports to the Minister of Education about the school. The WOT states all nine aspects of quality on which the inspectorate has to report about each school, but leaves it to the inspectorate to elaborate these into indicators for quality. The law obliges the inspectorate to do that in mutual agreement with the education sector. Amongst others, the annual report, which schools are legally obliged to produce, is an important input for the external evaluation by the inspectorate.

In the past decades there has been a movement towards a more centralised inspection organisation with a strong emphasis on inter-subjectivity and a shared inspection framework. This movement started in the late seventies and has been strengthened in the nineties. As a result of the government's striving for deregulation and an emphasis on the school's autonomy, the inspectorate's concern shifted from convincing schools of the need to change matters, in contrast to the possibility of enforcing this through sanctions, to governmental regulations towards the schools' results and other quality aspects. The fact that the frameworks of the inspectorate (for assessing quality of schools) are developed in mutual agreement with the field of education implies that they reflect a national consensus – although not fixed by law.

Since 1998 the inspectorate's reports on individual schools, which were formerly exclusively provided to the school itself and to the Minister, have been made public. All school reports are now available on the website of the inspectorate (www.onderwijsinspectie.nl) for public consultation. By doing this, the inspectorate publicly supplies information on the quality of schools. The inspectorate aims to stimulate educational institutions to maintain and improve their quality. For school managers, policymakers and all other parties involved the inspectorate provides reliable information on the quality of individual educational institutes including their role in the regional chain of youth provisions. They may also use this information as a basis for policy making and management.

The quality requirements for childcare and toddler playgrounds have their legal basis in the Childcare-law. Municipalities are responsible for all locations for childcare in child centres to be inspected every year; for the inspection of other locations different requirements apply. If the quality standards are not met, the municipality is obliged to take measures to improve the conditions. The inspectorate is responsible for supervising the local municipalities for childcare and toddler playgrounds.

Caribbean Netherlands

Since 2011 the inspectorate also monitors schools and institutions in Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius, which are three special municipalities of the Netherlands. Inspection of schools in these municipalities is organised in the same manner as for other regular Dutch schools.

Inspection of schools providing Dutch education outside the Netherlands

Dutch education outside the Netherlands is mostly found in primary and secondary schools for Dutch language and Culture. At these schools students follow courses in Dutch and culture, as an addition of, or as part of local or international education, for approximately 120 hours per school year. This involves approximately 250 institutions for approximately 13.000 Dutch students. Apart from these language courses about 15-20 full Dutch schools exist for primary and/or secondary education, in which approximately 1000 children are involved.

The main objectives of the supervision system is to determine the education quality of these institutions and to provide an education which enables pupils and students to integrate easily into the Dutch education system upon their return to the Netherlands. Supervision of the education provided by the schools is the responsibility of the inspectorate. A fixed group of specialized inspectors and supporting staff is responsible for inspecting these schools in a cost-effective way.

Up to 2014 the Dutch government funded Dutch education outside the Netherlands, but in the autumn of 2013 The House of Representatives in the Netherlands decided to stop all funding as per January 1st of 2014. However, early 2014 it became clear that this type of education still received funding for the period of 2014 to 2016. Nevertheless, the support Foundation for Dutch Education Worldwide (<http://www.stichtingnob.nl/english-summary.aspx>), and the supervision system remained intact.

Inspection of European schools

European Schools (<http://www.eursec.eu>) are official educational establishments controlled jointly by the governments of the member states of the European Union. In all these countries they are legally regarded as public institutions. The mission of the European Schools is to provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils. Currently (2014) there are fourteen European schools. Two specialized inspectors are responsible for the quality of education, and for the quality of the teachers in the Dutch sections (primary and secondary education) of the European schools. This is a separate type of inspection, which is implemented under auspices of the European Commission.

3.2 Mission statement

'Effective supervision for better education'

The inspectorate of education is responsible for the inspection and assessment of schools and educational institutions.

The inspectorate:

- stimulates schools and educational institutions to maintain and improve the quality of education they offer;
- assesses and stimulates compliance with the regulations based on the education act;
- assesses the quality of education of the individual educational institutes and the education system as a whole in the Netherlands and its developments;
- assesses the quality of the higher education system, including the accreditation system;
- assesses and stimulates the financial legitimacy;
- assesses and stimulates the legitimacy and effectiveness of the way in which municipalities carry out their tasks on the domain of childcare and toddler playgrounds;
- communicates in an accessible way with all its target groups and stakeholders;
- reports in public.

3.3 Which organisations, other than schools are also inspected?

In addition to its tasks with respect to the quality of education in schools and other educational institutions, the inspectorate is 'meta-supervisor' for childcare and toddler playgrounds.

On the basis of the results from annual questionnaires administered to about 400 municipalities, the inspectorate assesses the performance of the municipalities with respect to their tasks for childcare and toddler playgrounds. In this they would like to increase the quality of these facilities or to support the maintenance of high quality facilities by collecting information and by assessing how municipalities perform their duties and – if necessary – make interventions;

The assessment report is sent to parliament. Since 2009 the inspectorate has been investing a lot in contacts with individual municipalities, with the intention to operate in a tailor made way aiming to improve the quality of the performance of the municipalities in this area.

4. Inspection of schools as a task of the inspectorate

4.1 Current risk-based inspection method

The inspectorate conducts school inspections in primary, secondary, vocational & adult education and in special education. Since 2008 the Dutch Inspectorate of Education has worked with a risk-based model of inspection in order to identify those schools which pose an educational risk in terms of their level of quality. On the one hand this system is supposed to limit the inconvenience of inspections for schools with satisfactory results, on the other hand it is supposed to increase the impact of inspections. Schools that seem to offer good educational quality (no risks detected) and deliver good student results are 'rewarded' by a reduction of the intensity and frequency of inspections. The inspectorate aims to focus on a rapid improvement of schools which deliver poor education (risks detected) and unsatisfactory results.

If the inspectorate decides to visit a school, as a result of risks detection during the risk detection phase, a quality inspection will be conducted. These 'aspects of quality' are evaluated using a specific set of indicators which have been elaborated into an assessment framework.

It is important to note that quality inspections generally take place in only those schools where risks have been detected. However, all primary, secondary and special schools, including those where no risks have been detected, will be visited by the inspectorate once every four years, either for a quality inspection, a thematic inspection or an inspection used to gather data for the annual report.

4.1.2 The role of the inspectorate in higher education

In higher education, the role of the inspectorate is different from its role in other educational divisions because the Dutch higher education system has, just as many countries in Europe do, a system of accreditation based on peer reviews. The major objective of the accreditation system is to guarantee that all higher education programmes meet basic quality standards. Therefore, the inspectorate does not conduct inspections of higher education institutions and programmes on a regular basis. The cooperation agreement (2014) between the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO – www.nvao.net) and the inspectorate of education states:

'In The Netherlands, supervision of higher education is one of the tasks of the inspectorate of education. In higher education, the inspectorate supervises compliance with laws and regulations as well as financial compliance and financial continuity of institutions. Assessing the quality and the quality assurance of programmes and institutions in higher education is the responsibility of the NVAO.'

The major tasks of the inspectorate with respect to higher education are the following:

- 1) To supervise and report on developments in higher education, including the accreditation system, by conducting thematic research. A major product of the inspectorate of higher education is its contribution to the annual report on 'The state of education' by the inspectorate to parliament;
- 2) To check whether higher education institutions comply with laws and regulations;
- 3) To conduct research when checks and balances within (or in the environment of) institutions of higher education are failing, especially if the problems exceeds the level of individual institutions;
- 4) To supervise financial compliance by higher education institutions.

Therefore, the financial supervision by the inspectorate is mainly focused on the financial continuity of educational institutions and the efficiency and regularity of the expenditure incurred by educational institutions:

- Is the financial situation of the educational institutions suitable enough to offer good education quality in the now and the near future ? Are educational institutions able to react adequately at financial problems? (financial continuity)
- Did schools spend their funding effectively in favour of the quality of education? And did they do this according to regulations? Is their accountability done appropriately?

Financial indicators and financial risks

All school boards must submit their financial statements for the previous year, yearly before the 1st of July. From these financial statements the schools' indicators are derived for liquidity, solvency and profitability. If these indicators are lower than the so-called signalling-values then there may be a financial risk. To gather more information on this topic, in these cases, the inspectorate analyses the annual reports. Sometimes the inspectorate also requests additional information about the institutions to make a proper assessment of the risks. Besides the annual reports the inspectorate can also act on signals of potential financial problems.

Adjusted financial supervision

In case the inspectorate determines that an educational institution is at financial risk, it can be placed under "intensified financial continuity supervision". In this case the institution is expected to make an improvement plan in which the financial problems are tackled within the foreseeable future. The inspectorate ensures that the institution complies with the agreements formulated in that plan. In case the institution ultimately fails to get out of financial difficulties, the Minister of Education may intervene (under certain conditions).

Public reports

According to the WOT, the inspectorate has to report publicly about its investigations. This also applies to the reports about financial investigations. Reports should inform the public about the findings and judgements of the inspectorate.

Explanation of risk-based inspection diagram

Box 1: Signals

The inspectorate uses all kinds of signals in its risk analysis. Signals may consist of complaints (by pupils, students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders), articles in newspapers or on the internet and findings of a thematic inspection. Signals contain pieces of information on what happens in the schools that could cause a future deterioration of educational quality. Signals are often more up to date than the student results and annual accountability documents. Signals also provide the inspectorate with a better insight into the risks perceived by pupils, parents and the press. The inspectorate uses an automated risk registration, combined with a standard delivery of signals by the press agency, student organizations, and other information.

Box 2: Accountability documents

From 2008 onwards every school board is obliged to produce an annual document which not only contains a financial report, but also a description of the quality and achievements of the governed school(s). The inspectorate analyses these documents and draws conclusions about specific risks at school level.

Box 3: Student results

Each year the inspectorate collects information from all schools on student performances. Around 80% of this information is provided by national independent test or exam institutions, the remaining part is collected via schools. The inspectorate analyses the student results and calculates a specific risk level for every school. The lower the results, the higher the calculated risk level. Thus, the inspectorate performs a risk analysis on all schools at least once a year. Information from signals may come in at any time. If an urgent signal has been picked up, it may lead to immediate action.

Primary detection

The monitoring of these three elements (signals, accountability documents, student results) is an automatic process called 'primary detection'. This entails gathering the information, applying the rules to calculate the risk level and providing detailed information on this level to inspectors. If there seems to be no risks, no further action is taken towards the school. Schools without risks do not need to be investigated; they are granted a so-called 'basic' inspection arrangement. This means that the inspectorate trusts the school in performing up to the standards until the next risk analysis. If in any of the elements a risk has been detected, expert analysis will be initiated.

Expert analysis

All schools with risks are subject to further investigation by inspectors, aided by data-analysts. This 'expert analysis' is conducted by means of desk research, using information from the risk analysis combined with the 'organisational memory' of the inspectorate and also with publicly accessible information about the school (for instance, on the school's website). Based on this information, an inspector may conclude that nothing (actually) seems to be wrong. In such cases, a basic inspection arrangement will be granted. However, it is also possible that the existing doubts remain or even are augmented by this analysis. In those cases, the inspector decides to inspect the school.

School inspection

Further investigation is always conducted in contact with the school board. Such investigations often take place within the school itself. The inspector starts by interviewing the school board in order to determine whether the board is aware of possible problems in this particular school and whether the board is able to solve them. In most cases the inspector decides to conduct a quality inspection at the school. This is a regular inspection, but with a strong focus on quality elements which may be at risk. The inspection investigation is usually announced one month in advance.

In the end the inspector describes in the report of findings the identified shortcomings in the quality of the education or in the compliance with legal requirements. This report provides the basis for the inspection arrangement.

The inspectorate investigates all MBO-institutions once every three years. For each institution this investigation results in the "State of the Institution" report. In this report the inspectorate judges the quality of the institution's education and the financial position of the institution's board. Complementary to the three-yearly investigation, the inspectorate monitors possible risks at the educational institution yearly by doing a desk study.

Incidental inspections

As a result of complaints of a serious nature, signals from 'whistle-blowers', requests from the Minister of Education, or reports in the media, incidental inspections may be conducted. The inspectorate gathers information and analyses the situation, followed by a report in which it passes judgement. An incidental inspection could for instance be an inspection of a particular school that the inspectorate has received serious complaints about - for example about the discipline in classrooms or the lack of lessons that are offered.

Processes and methods for incidental inspections: first, the inspectorate drafts a plan for the inspection project. For incidental inspections such a plan is of course 'unique', although some principles of inspection work always apply, such as: evidence-based conclusions, transparency about procedures and working methods, interviews with all involved. Inspection instruments are chosen or specifically developed. In general, schools know in advance that an inspection will take place. Sometimes an incidental inspection takes place without prior notice. The results are always public, unless the nature of the information does not allow this. The inspectorate always takes views from both sides into consideration in its reports. Sometimes there are follow-up inspections to check whether a situation has improved.

Inspection follow-up arrangement

The inspection arrangement can be, as stated earlier, a 'basic arrangement'. This means that the quality of the school is up to the standards (after a school inspection) or is estimated to be sufficient (when no risks or important problems have been detected). If problems have been detected, the school receives a customized inspection arrangement. In this report the problems are outlined and the report also contains the decisions or agreements with the board on how to improve the schools' quality. In addition, the deadlines and the means on how to monitor the improvement process are part of the arrangement. The inspection arrangement is a central pillar in the system of risk-based inspection.

Intervention

The ultimate aim of the supervision by the inspectorate is of course that the quality of education improves. During the intervention phase, the school has to take action to improve the shortcomings and the inspectorate monitors these improvements. If the school fails to improve, the inspectorate can raise pressure by additional monitoring or - if possible - by imposing sanctions. This action leads to an adjustment of the inspection arrangement. When all relevant problems have been solved, the school receives a basic inspection arrangement.

4.2.1 Inspection of non-public schools

In the Netherlands next to public schools, there are government-funded private and non-government-funded private schools. Government-funded private schools are a very large majority in the Netherlands. These schools are inspected in exactly the same way as schools governed by the state or the local authorities. The inspectorate does not give a judgement about the content of religious education or any other content or pedagogy that is clearly linked to the ideological basis of the school - under the condition that there is no contradiction with the constitution or with other laws.

The inspectorate does not evaluate the educational process at non-government-funded primary and secondary schools. However, it does check whether non-government-funded schools comply with legal obligations, such as meeting the minimum amount of teaching time and satisfying attainment targets. These checks are performed by specifically trained inspectors. Evidently, this only applies to schools that provide education to pupils

of statutory school age. Only about 1% of all primary and secondary schools are non-government-funded.

In special education there are hardly any non-funded private schools.

This is different in vocational and adult education. In this division there are many non-funded schools and here the inspectorate does have a task in evaluating schools. The arrangements are nearly the same as those in the 'funded' division.

In higher education there are also quite a few non-funded institutions with degree awarding powers. These are subject to several sections of the law on higher education (WHW).

4.3 Changes in the method of inspection (Supervision 2020)

Currently the supervision system in the Netherlands is undergoing some changes with regard to the new supervision system, Supervision 2020. Therefore, it has been decided to update this section after the implementation of the new supervision system.

4.4 Obligation of schools concerning quality assurance and improvement

School boards are obliged to deliver an annual report which is part of the school's annual accountability documents. These documents provide important input for the inspectorate's risk assessment of a school. In these documents the board should account for the quality and the achievements of the school(s) it is responsible for. A self-evaluation is a logical (but not legally required) component of the accountability documents. Self-evaluations are thus used by the inspectorate during the risk detection phase. Even though schools are not legally obliged to perform a self-evaluation, most schools do work on self-evaluations. However, in the excellence programme which started in 2012 (and will be discussed in the next paragraph), schools are expected to present themselves through self-evaluation.

The aim of self-evaluation is to evaluate, monitor and improve the quality of the education provided by a school. In this sense it can be both a process evaluation and a product evaluation. Schools are free to choose their own methods for a self-evaluation. They are also free to select the aspects of quality they want to evaluate and the priority they want to give to certain aspects for improvement.

The inspectorate does not give a separate judgement on a self-evaluation. A specific instrument was developed to check the quality of self-evaluations by schools. In this checklist the coverage of the main aspects of quality by self-evaluation is checked, furthermore it is also checked whether the judgements of the school about itself seem to be covered well enough by facts and/or judgements of external, independent persons who have been interviewed by the school.

In general, schools in primary education and special education have less developed self-evaluations (as processes and/or documents) than schools in secondary education. In most divisions the self-evaluations of schools are not yet very mature.

Likewise, in vocational and adult education schools are not obliged to carry out a self-evaluation. In this sector however, the inspectorate has agreed with the schools that all of them perform a self-evaluation as part of the obligatory report on their quality control.

In higher education, the inspectorate does not assess the quality of self-evaluations. Higher education institutions are legally obliged to have all their degree-awarding programs accredited every six years. Responsibility for the accreditation process lies with the NVAO (Nederlands Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie). The NVAO brings in peer

review committees to judge the quality of the programmes. Part of the process is assessment (by the peer review committee) of the quality of the self-evaluations prepared by the programme which needs to be accredited.

Many schools hire external help from private firms, experts or from school guidance centres in their region; in order to help them with their self-evaluation and/or with improvement projects. The lump-sum budget which schools receive provides the means to do this. Within a larger conglomeration of schools, schools sometimes organize a commission that visits the different schools to evaluate their quality. There are certain project-organizations, working with public money, available to support schools with their quality assurance and self-evaluations.

4.5 Excellent schools

In line with the changes in the supervision system, starting in 2015 the “excellent schools programme” became the responsibility of the inspectorate. Through this programme the inspectorate wants to contribute to an education culture where striving for improvement becomes a natural aspect for all parties involved. Prior to this year the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science was responsible for this programme from 2012 till 2014.

What is an excellent school?

According to this programme an excellent school is defined in the following way: ‘An excellent school is in its basis a good school which further distinguishes itself from other good schools by offering a specific profile of excellence to its students and the entire school body.’

Admission

Admission to the excellent school programme takes place through self-application. Schools can apply for the programme by filling out an online application form. If the school successfully completes this first stage it is judged by an independent jury through a presentation and a school visit. This independent jury advises the head of the inspectorate on excellent schools and focuses on the profile of excellence of the school. In the future this programme will be only open to “good” schools.

Starting in 2012 there were 165 applications and 52 excellent schools of which 31 primary schools and 22 secondary schools. In 2014 this number increased to 187 applications and 106 excellent schools (39 primary schools and 67 secondary schools), showing a slight increase in the number of applications and a significant increase in the number of excellent schools.

What is the excellence profile of a school?

Schools are able to determine to what extent and in which way they would like to define themselves. In order to grant space to the vision of schools and to value the effective use of this space, it is not desirable to prescribe the content of excellence profiles. Therefore it is up to the school to indicate in which area they regard themselves excellent.

Afterwards, it is up to the jury to verify that not only the indicated excellence profile is very well implemented by the school, but also that it is recognizable and implemented throughout the whole organisation.

Some examples of excellence profiles that schools may indicate are: an innovative curriculum; a new and effective approach to differentiation between different types of students; an inspiring educational method; a distinctive interpretation of the social task of the school.

Procedure

The procedure of excellent programmes is the following:

1. Applications period (March): schools can apply through the inspectorate's website;
2. First screening by inspectorate (March - April): all registered schools are screened by the inspectorate;
3. Presentations by schools (May - June): schools give a brief presentation about their excellence profile to a number of members of the jury;
4. School visits by jury (September - November): a delegation of two members visits the school;
5. Report (September - November): after the school visit a school report is written. This report includes a combination of information from previous stages of the excellence programme and jury findings from the school visit. Based on this, the advice is given as to whether a school is appointed as an excellent school or not;
6. Award ceremony (January).

Assessing excellent schools

It is a requirement for excellence that a school offers good quality education. In the first phase of the excellent schools programme, prior to phase 3 of the procedures, the overall education quality is investigated by the inspectorate. This is done on the basis of information already known by the inspectorate and information which was handed in to the inspectorate by the school.

This investigation focuses on the following aspects:

Part I: Assessment of educational quality

Student outcomes

- Broad results
- Feature of the student population that have an effect on student outcomes

Teaching and learning process

- Curriculum
- Development
- Teaching methodology
- Support

Quality assurance & ambition

- Evaluation and improvement
- Quality culture

School climate & safety

- Safety
- School climate

Financial management

- Financial management on the level of the school board

In case of identified severe signals, this screening can lead to the exclusion of schools from the excellence programme. This may be related to:

- Severe signals related to safety;
- Severe signals related to financial risks at the board level.

The profile of excellence - that which the school excels in - has a more central position in judging excellence, starting 2015. In the second phase of the excellent schools programme, the jury evaluates the school's excellence profile by considering the following characteristics.

Part II: Assessment of the quality profile

School's profile of excellence

- The school has a clearly defined and relevant profile of excellence.

Method, results and evaluation

- The school has a well thought through method. The profile of excellence is integrated into the school and the school's quality.

Development of the profile of excellence

- The school has concrete plans to develop the profile of excellence further.

Acknowledgement of the profile of excellence

- The profile of excellence is acknowledged internally and externally.

5. Inspection of specific quality-related themes

5.1 Introduction

The starting point of this type of inspection is not the whole school, but a particular domain/theme or the educational system. Domain(s) vary greatly, but are always themes for which the inspectorate thinks improvement is possible and necessary. Some examples: an inspection could be concentrated on domains like 'quality of teaching in pre-primary education', or 'the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics in pre-university secondary education', or 'compliance with statutory regulations concerning teaching time in vocational schools', or 'cross-curricular work in primary schools', or 'selection in higher education'.

There are several types of inspections that are not full inspections, but inspections of a certain domain or actor.

Investigation of specific themes

These thematic inspections intend to investigate the quality of a certain aspect of the education system in general. They are not aimed at evaluating the quality of the theme or topic at a particular school. Of course schools that are in the sample receive feedback about the results of the investigation on that specific theme in the school. The results of these thematic inspection projects are often published in thematic inspection reports or other forms of publications. The results are used in discussions with educational professionals, policy makers, politicians and media. Furthermore, the results also provide important input for the inspectorate's yearly report on education: 'The State of Education in the Netherlands'. In 'The State of Education' the inspectorate describes important developments in education and addresses actual themes. This task is an essential aspect of 'freedom of education'; a principle which has been laid down in the Constitution of the Netherlands.

Preschool research projects

From 2006-2012 the inspectorate conducted inspection projects in preschool education (nursery schools, day care centres). This research was requested by the Minister of Education and by the Mayor and Aldermen of the four largest cities in the Netherlands. In this project, the inspectorate cooperates with the Municipal Health Authority (GGD) to investigate the quality of preschool education in all Municipalities (policy and quality of the preschool locations). From August 2010 the OKE law is in force for pre- and early education (VVE). Amongst others, the municipalities must ensure that children who run the risk of becoming educationally disadvantaged obtain their preschool education.

Domains and actors investigated vary greatly, depending on signals or complaints the inspectorate receives, the type of inspection and the division involved. Some of the inspections are included in the annual working plan of the inspectorate and are announced far in advance. Other inspections, particularly the incidental inspections, are conducted as a result of signals and questions. These are not planned in advance and are not always announced. At times, the inspectorate also conducts projects in cooperation with other inspectorates, such as the inspectorate for youth welfare.

5.2 Examples of specific themes or topics

A few examples of thematic inspection projects in 2014 are the following:

- Learning gains and value added in primary education;
- Audit fees;
- Quality of municipal supervision in childcare facilities;
- Quality of school leaders in primary, special and secondary education;
- Admission of pupils with an autism spectrum disorder;

- Educational improvement in the Caribbean Netherlands;
- Teacher training programmes;
- Quality of the primary school recommendation;
- Central examinations;
- The voluntary parental contribution in primary education;
- Pre- and early education (VVE).

Processes and methods in thematic inspections

Thematic or preschool research projects always start with a project plan drafted by the inspectorate.

Thematic research projects are often carried out in phases; starting after the desk research with a pilot in a few schools in order to explore the theme and the inspection methods to be applied. The pilot is then followed by a project on a larger scale. For most themes a sample of some 30-100 schools is sufficient, depending on the sector. The inspection working methods and procedures used in schools are: observations, interviews, questionnaires and triangulation of results from various sources.

The practical organisation of the incidental, thematic and pre-school inspections depends on the type of inspection that is being conducted. Sometimes inspectors work in a team, sometimes they work alone. The time an inspection takes, varies between a few hours and a few days. Sometimes inspectors work in a team, sometimes they work alone. In higher education inspections are always conducted in teams.

5.3 Inspection of teaching staff

Inspecting teaching staff is not a separate task of the inspectorate; the inspectorate has no responsibility for hiring or firing staff, for promotion or for whatever administrative or managerial purpose. These responsibilities are in the hands of the school boards exclusively. Only within the full inspection as such, teachers and school leaders are observed in their work and a judgement is made about 'teaching in general' or 'management in general' – as aspects of the quality of the institution.

5.4 The judgement about themes & staff and its possible consequences

The inspectorate publishes a report after every inspection, thematic research project or preschool inspection. In most thematic inspection projects the aim is to give a national overview. The inspectorate gives its judgement based on the quality of the situation and themes being inspected. In doing so questions like: what is good, satisfactory or insufficient, play an important role. What are possible causes or backgrounds? The inspectorate also indicates how situations may be improved: by actions of schools themselves, or by actions initiated by national institutes or agencies (e.g. for curriculum development or school guidance). The inspectorate can also advise the Minister of Education to take action: to start a national project, to be stricter in maintaining regulations. Measures have to be initiated by the parties involved; the inspectorate has no authority to order something on the basis of a thematic inspection. It can only exert influence by delivering high-quality reports and by offering convincing facts and arguments.

In incidental inspections the inspectorate thoroughly investigates a school or a group of schools. In those cases, the aim is then to judge the quality of that school or group of schools; in general or with respect to a particular theme.

In pre-school inspections a separate report is made about each pre-school location. The data in these reports are then aggregated into reports on a regional and national level. The consequences are the same as for the thematic inspections.

6. Advisory tasks of the inspectorate

6.1 Areas and tasks

The inspectorate has very limited advisory tasks. Due to its role as an independent evaluator, and to the high level of school autonomy, the inspectorate does not provide individual schools with recommendations on how to improve. However, it does explain the results of its evaluation to the school, and it provides a picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

6.2 Practice

The inspectorate advises the Minister/Ministry on a range of subjects, both when asked to do so as well as on its own initiative. The content of this advice varies greatly.

7. Other tasks of the inspectorate

7.1 Curriculum development

The Inspectorate has no tasks in curriculum development. The Dutch Institute for Curriculum Development (www.slo.nl) is in charge for the development of proposals for the government for new attainment targets or other curricular sets; and for the development of curricular materials for (groups of) schools. But incidentally it happens that specialist inspectors take part in the work of curriculum groups as advisers, in particular in the aftermath of a thematic inspection at national level in a certain curricular domain.

7.2 Data bases

The inspectorate only develops databases for its own use and for the use of the Ministry of Education. On request, certain data can be made available to others.

7.3 Examinations

The inspectorate neither organises exams nor determines the content of exams. The inspectorate has a responsibility in secondary education in safeguarding the quality of the examination process. In addition, schools are obliged to request permission from the inspectorate if they want to make an exception to examination regulations. Furthermore, in secondary education the inspectorate checks whether there are any irregularities in the annual examination results (i.e. whether students have unjustly passed or failed their exams). Also, the inspectorate keeps a close watch on the average discrepancy between scores for school examinations and scores for national exams. If this discrepancy exceeds a certain level, the school board is called to account.

In vocational education, the inspectorate checks the quality of the examinations (which the schools in this division design themselves). To this end a number of specific standards of examination have been established by the Minister of Education.

7.4 Handling complaints

All schools are legally obliged to have a complaints procedure, If the complaint cannot be solved by the school or the school board, the complainant can apply to an independent committee with his complaint. If the results are still not satisfactory, the complainant can ultimately go to court. The inspectorate has no legal powers in case of complaints. It may happen however, that the inspectorate – by acting as intermediary - helps to reconcile the problem between e.g. a parent and a principal. Thus problems can be solved without taking them to an independent committee or to court.

Complaints - and in particular complaints with respect to the quality of education- are treated as signals. In serious cases (or if several complaints come in about the same school and reveal a certain pattern), the inspectorate can decide to visit the school . If the number of complaints about a certain issue becomes a national issue, this also may lead to a thematic inspection. If the complaint concerns the inspectorate itself, the complainant can apply to the independent complaints commission established by the inspectorate.

Confidential complaints inspectors

The inspectorate of education monitors the quality of education. This responsibility is recorded in article 3 of the Act on the inspection of education.

Within the inspectorate of education a number of inspectors have a particular responsibility in addition to their supervisory role: they are confidential complaints inspectors. This responsibility is recorded in article 6 of the act on the inspection of education.

Why and When?

A small team of confidential complaints inspectors works at the inspectorate of education. This team is also entrusted with the role of confidential complaints inspectors in the Dutch Caribbean.

Parents, pupils, teachers, management teams, boards, but also school counsellors can consult the confidential complaints inspector when serious problems occur at school relating to:

- sexual intimidation and abuse;
- emotional and physical violence;
- discrimination and radicalization.

Complaints that fall under these categories can be submitted to the confidential complaints inspector, who listens, advises and makes inquiries. Where necessary the confidential complaints inspector can assist in the process of filing a formal complaint or reporting to the police.

Other complaints concerning schools

The inspectorate of education is not responsible for processing complaints concerning schools. The only exceptions, as previously explained, are complaints concerning sexual intimidation and abuse, emotional and physical violence, discrimination and radicalization. When someone has a complaint about teaching, a discussion with the person(s) directly involved can come a long way towards solving the issue. The school management team can mediate in this. If the complaint concerns the school management team, then one can contact the appropriate authority (school board). The school board will inform the complainant on how to file a complaint.

In order to get a better picture of the school, the inspectorate asks complainants to send the inspectorate a copy of the complaint. This complaint is sent to the appropriate school inspection team. The team investigates the complaint, records it in the school's file, and may consider it in the next school assessment. Complaints, together with other information about the school, can lead to an investigation of the school concerned. Only in exceptional circumstances the person filing the complaint receives a response from the inspectorate – the school or the school board is responsible for the reaction to the complainant.

8. Inspection reports

8.1 Types of reports

There are various types of reports:

- Quality inspection school reports;
- Reports on thematic inspections;
- Reports on incidental inspections;
- Reports on satisfaction surveys on the Inspectorate's work;
- Reports about pre-and early schooling in the 37 big municipalities;
- The inspectorate's annual report on education: '[The State of Education in the Netherlands](#)';
- Sometimes staff members of the inspectorate write articles or give presentations at conferences.

8.2 Target audiences

The following table combines data about target audiences and types of reports with facts about the way of publishing.

Type of report	Target audience	Way of publishing
Evaluation of the quality of school.	Board of the school, parental participation in the school's advisory board.	Public in print and on the internet.
Results of a thematic investigation into the quality of education (usually a national overview).	The Minister of education and parliament, educational bodies, general public.	Public in print and on the internet; actively sent to parliament and other groups.
Results of incidental inspections (conducted as a result of complaints of a serious nature, signals from 'whistle-blowers', requests from the Minister, or reports in the media). An incidental inspection could for instance be an inspection of a particular school that the inspectorate has received serious complaints about.	The person or organisation that has commissioned the inspection, generally the Minister of education.	Mostly public, sometimes confidential.
Reports of satisfaction surveys on the inspectorate's work.	Inspectors and schools.	Public in print and on internet.
Reports about pre-and early schooling in the 37 big municipalities.	The Minister of education and parliament, educational bodies, general public.	Public in print and on internet.

The state of the education in the Netherlands in a particular year.	The Minister of Education and parliament, educational bodies and the general public.	Public and on internet. Actively brought into the media and widely distributed.
Articles or presentations.	Varied	Public

8.3 Confidential or public

See table 8.2

9. Structure, position, staff and budget

9.1 Structure

At this moment (2015) the inspectorate is headed by the senior chief inspector and one chief-inspector.

The senior chief inspector is responsible for secondary education, higher education, vocational and adult education, whereas primary and special education, together with the child care facilities department and pre-and early school education are led by the chief inspector. Both the senior chief inspector and the chief inspectors are appointed by the Minister of Education.

Managing directors are responsible for the operational management of each division. Apart from these managing directors, there are managing directors for three specific fields: staff and organization, financial inspection and information management and analysis.

The inspectorate has its head office in Utrecht. In addition the inspectorate has two regional offices: Zwolle and Tilburg.

9.2 Position

The Minister of Education is responsible and formally liable by parliament for the supervision of education which is carried out by the inspectorate. Formally, the inspectorate is part of the department of education, culture and science, but professionally independent. The WOT states that the inspectorate will be independent in its working methods and reporting. The inspectorate is physically located outside the department.

The inspectorate is not an advisory board of the Minister or the Ministry of Education, but may give advice (either when asked to so, or on its own initiative), based on the results of inspections of schools.

Each year the inspectorate itself chooses a limited number of themes to investigate, in addition to the risk-oriented inspections that take up most of the inspectorate's capacity. The annual working plan is decided upon by the senior chief inspector after consulting various relevant groups, including the Ministry of Education. The Minister of Education has to approve the annual working plan and sends it to parliament. Although the inspectorate mainly determines its own working programme, the Minister of Education can request the inspectorate to investigate specific aspects of the educational system, on an incidental basis.

The inspectorate annually reports on the state of education in the Netherlands based upon its own research and research by others. On behalf of the government, the Minister of Education sends this annual report to parliament with a policy response.

9.3 Staff and budget

Total staff of the inspectorate numbers 535 fte spread over 595 persons (2014). About 480 fte are directly related to the primary process.

The total budget for the inspectorate is about € 68.250.000 (2015). The Minister of Education sets the total budget, but generally speaking decisions about its use are made by the senior chief inspector.

10. Recruitment and training of inspectors

10.1 General remarks / Recruitment conditions

To become an inspector one is required to have a university degree or equivalent, a broad experience in and knowledge of the educational field and preferably managerial experience. Experience as a teacher is required, with exceptions for some inspectors or other staff. Some solid years of experience in various fields of teaching are desirable. Also experience as a school leader, counsellor, teacher trainer or in service trainer is commendable. Experience with writing articles and/or chairing larger meetings (for example having been active in a teacher union or teacher association) is desirable. There is no specific recruitment examination or test; recently, assessment procedures have been introduced. Dutch writing skills, assessments and conversational/interview skills with boards and directors are important.

The consequence is that the age of inspectors has traditionally been rather mature. This has changed over the past ten years. The average age is now lower, although the demand to have enough experience and to be 'a mature personality' has as a consequence that inspectors are usually over 35 years old. But it is more common now that, after a period within the inspectorate, inspectors become a principal of a large school, a civil servant in larger local authorities or a director of larger bureaucracies of regional school boards. The number of younger staff in the main office working on the further development of the instruments and the database, and on analysis of data from school inspections is also larger than it used to be.

The expertise and authority of inspectors in their communication with schools during and after an inspection remains important. Such communication requires strong communication skills, sensibility, and the ability to quickly analyse complex situations.

10.2 Training

New inspectors are given a four-month training to settle into the job. This training consists of two parts: a general part where inspectors learn, for example, about the role of the inspectorate in the education system, its legal basis, and about the inspectorate's political environment; and a second part consisting of more specific information that is more closely related to the day-to-day job of inspectors. This training is usually given to a group of new inspectors simultaneously and consists of a combination of instruction within the office and accompanying an experienced inspector on school visits. During these visits the new inspector gradually takes over the inspection tasks.

In the instruction a broad range of items is dealt with: the history of the inspectorate, the exact definition of the tasks of the inspectorate (the role conception of the inspectorate versus the inspected boards to understand the position of the inspected party), and the inspectorate's framework. Much attention is given to intersubjectivity in the evaluation of schools: with video training in evaluation of lessons, in evaluation aspects of the pedagogical climate based on video clips and other information.

10.3 In-service training

Inspectors and staff have the possibility to choose from a range of courses and seminars to deepen their skills and knowledge. These courses are taught by coaches from within the inspectorate and by experts from outside. Introduction of new frameworks and instruments and procedures is also accompanied by obligatory in-service training for all inspectors concerned. All existing inspectors are required to invest approximately ten working days per year on this in-service training. In 2014, the Inspection Academy was established. Its main goal is to steer, coordinate and align all learning activities in order to effectively support the introduction of a new inspection approach.

11. Evaluation of the inspectorate

11.1 Internal

Samples of schools are asked to give written feedback about the work of inspectors in general and to confidentially mail this feedback to coordinating inspectors or team leaders. There are regular self-evaluation meetings and discussions within the inspectorate, often also based on analysis of large quantities of school inspections; and for example based on analysis of the comparability of judgements in one region to another in order to guarantee the objectivity of the inspectorate's judgements about schools. Aspects of communication and climate within the organisation are assessed by questionnaires. Annually each inspector is evaluated by his/her team leader. By means of questionnaires schools are asked to evaluate the inspectors in person. These are used in that annual evaluation of the inspectors. Directors are evaluated by the chief inspectors, who are evaluated by the senior chief inspector.

A quality manager is in charge of the quality assurance of the inspectorate as a whole. Annually all processes within the inspectorate are assessed by an internal audit carried out under the supervision of the quality manager of the inspectorate.

11.2 External

The inspectorate has been accredited for the ISO 17020-standard from April 2007 till October 2011. This accreditation from the Dutch Accreditation Council (Council for accreditation of all agencies or organizations that have to do with safety, quality and supervision) has been valuable for the inspectorate for some subjects to sharpen the professional discussion. Subsequently, the inspectorate has opted for a different quality system. Which fits recent organisational developments. This quality system is the ISO 9001 standard which includes external and independent audits, and for which the inspectorate has been accredited since 2012.

Effectiveness of quality management

In 2014 the inspectorate conducted an annual management review, according to the ISO 9001-standard. This review led to the conclusion that the quality management system was appropriate and effective. This was evident based on the improvement measures that were taken as a result of internal audits and evaluations. However, a point of improvement was project-oriented-working for which measures were taken in 2014.

Interim assessment ISO 9001- standard

Independent assessment: In 2014 the agency responsible to assess the inspectorate detected no abnormalities on the ISO 9001-standard. The agency reported that the quality system is known and applied throughout the whole organization.

Peer review

The inspectorate considers it important that more independent third parties evaluate its supervision. This evaluation takes place in the form of a peer review which is a visitation form between inspectorates. The peer reviews for which the Dutch inspectorate has taken the initiative on, take place in collaboration with inspectorates from other countries which, like the Dutch inspectorate, are a member of the Standing International Conference of national and regional Inspectorates of Education (SICI).

In June of 2013, the Niedersächsische Schulinspektion (Lower Saxony) conducted a peer review in the Netherlands, which focused on monitoring the supervision system in primary education. During this peer review German colleagues accompanied the Dutch inspectors during the school visits. After this the roles were reversed in 2014, when the Dutch inspectors accompanied their colleagues in Lower Saxony.

12. Information: website, contact, links

The website of the Dutch Inspectorate of Education is www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/english.

The website of the Ministry of Education is www.minocw.nl/english and provides general information about Dutch Education.

The SICI contact person is:

Name: Jessica Villamil
Function: Advisor International Affairs
Address: Inspectie van het Onderwijs
Kantoor Utrecht
Park Voorn 4
Postbus 2730
3500 GS Utrecht
Phone: +31 (0)30 669 06 00
Fax: +31 (0)30 666 28 80
E-mail: International_Affairs_Inspectorate@owinsp.nl

ANNEX I Background literature

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