

Well trained teachers for secondary vocational education

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Well prepared for teaching in secondary vocational education (VMBO and MBO)

How can the teacher training system suitably equip teachers for preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO) and senior secondary vocational education (MBO)? This report examines the quality of the teacher training programmes as well as their appeal. In this report, the Education Council advocates that the existing training programmes for teachers in preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO) and senior secondary vocational education (MBO) should be modified. This is needed because they do not sufficiently take account of the characteristics of these forms of education. Teachers in preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO) need to have knowledge of their subject and of the professional environment, but they also need to have specific educational and teaching skills. Teachers in senior secondary vocational education (MBO) primarily require well-developed vocational and professional skills. Furthermore, they also need to be better prepared for working in competence-based education and for working with qualification case files.

The Education Council recommends changes in second-level ("tweedegraads") teacher training programmes in general subjects (e.g. Dutch, English, geography, economics), in second-level teacher training in vocational subjects (e.g. engineering, graphic design, health and welfare, mechanical engineering and education studies), and in the system as a whole. This would improve the relevance of the training programmes for teaching practice, and would add to the appeal of teacher training programmes for the vocational subjects.

Recommendations for teacher training in general subjects

Make the graduate profiles compulsory and improve them

On most teacher training programmes, students can choose from one of three profiles in the general subjects: subject-based training (this profile focuses on teaching in HAVO or VWO schools), welfare development (focused on VMBO education) and professional practical training (focused on MBO). The Education Council proposes that these graduate profiles are made compulsory for all teacher training programmes for general subjects and that the course content be bolstered. Furthermore, the curriculum in the initial phase of teacher training programmes in general subjects should be brought more into line with the teaching practice in preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO) and senior secondary vocational education (MBO). The Education Council recommends that knowledge of professional practice-oriented teaching methods should be expanded in order to take the teacher training programme for general subjects to a higher level. This also applies to other training pathways for secondary vocational teachers (MBO and VMBO).

Utilise the generic competence requirements and introduce emphasis

The generic competence requirements could serve as a guideline for the changes in the content. However, the Education Council does consider it essential that these include an element of emphasis for secondary vocational teachers (VMBO and MBO).

Recommendations for teacher training in vocational subjects

Encourage the clustering of small programmes

The Education Council recommends that a stimulus is given to initiatives already started to organise smaller vocational training programmes into clusters. This approach could solve and prevent business issues and quality problems resulting from a low student intake. A condition of this, however, would be that the programmes maintain their level of professional expertise.

Offer students in higher professional education (HBO) an early option to follow a teacher training programme

The Education Council recommends that students on professional programmes of higher education are offered the option of following a minor in education during the bachelor cycle. Together with the existing professional top-up programme and the lateral entry pathway, the minor would provide added flexibility to the training system. It would also improve the appeal of the teaching profession in vocational subjects.

Harmonise the lateral entry pathway for senior secondary vocational education (MBO)

In practice, a large variety of lateral entry pathways have been created within senior secondary vocational education (MBO). This leads to differences in the quality of the teachers and therefore also in the value of the MBO diploma. The Education Council proposes that these training pathways should be harmonised by including statutory frameworks within the Adult and Vocational Education Act (Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs).

Recommendations for the entire system

Get the most from post-graduate opportunities

In undergraduate teacher training programmes, teachers are trained so that they are competent to perform the various tasks required of teachers. Competent here means that teachers meet the minimum requirements to be authorised to teach. It is important that teacher development does not stop on completion of undergraduate training. A professional postgraduate programme is required. To meet this need, the Education Council recommends the use of a professional register for teachers and for their compulsory in-service training. Furthermore, the opportunities for teachers in secondary vocational education (VMBO and MBO) to take part in professional internships could be expanded.

Raise the educational standard of teachers

The Education Council recommends that it is made compulsory for new teachers of general subjects to take part in postgraduate professional training up to the master's level (higher professional education or university education). This obligation would not apply to teachers of vocational subjects (including many from the lateral entry pathway). However, the Education Council believes it is necessary that every team possesses some expertise at the master's level. Furthermore, the Education Council also recommends making it compulsory for teachers who teach in the final year of the senior secondary vocational education (MBO) level 4 to have a first-level ("eerstegraads") teaching qualification for the general subjects. This obligation already applies for the upper years of senior general secondary education (HAVO), which also gives access to higher education.

Involve all teaching staff in professional development

In senior secondary vocational education (MBO), the instructors, mentors and practical training supervisors at the companies providing training places are equally important. The Education Council believes that they should also be included in initiatives to establish professional groups involved in teaching.