



UK COMMISSION FOR  
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

# The vocational education and training system in the Netherlands

Briefing Paper  
August 2013

# **The Vocational Education and Training System in Netherlands**

**Paul Casey**

**UK Commission for Employment and Skills**

**August 2013**



## **Acknowledgements**

Representatives of the following organisations in the Netherlands generously assisted in this research by affording time to answer various questions via telephone and email correspondence. The research also richly benefited from a joint UK Commission for Employment and Skills/Department for Business, Innovation and Skills study visit to the Netherlands in June 2012. This provided an opportunity to meet with policymakers, employers, employees and training providers to discuss the practicalities of the VET system.

Sincere thanks go to: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment; the Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market; the Association for Vocational and Adult Education; Kenteq Knowledge Centre; the Regional Education and Training Centre, Central Netherlands; and OTIB (Training and Development for Technical Installation) for their assistance. The names of individuals representing these organisations have been withheld to afford them the opportunity to speak freely about the opportunities and challenges provided by Dutch VET, as they see it. Any mistakes herein remain the responsibility of the author and his alone.

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## List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full title</b>
<b>AOC</b>	(Agrarische Opleidingscentra) – Agricultural Education and Training Centres
<b>BOL</b>	(Beroepsopleidende Leerweg) – school based training
<b>BBL</b>	(Beroepsbegeindende Leerweg) – work based training
<b>COLO</b>	Central Organisation of National Training Agencies of Enterprise (now replaced by Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven – SBB)
<b>EL&amp;I</b>	(Ministerie van Economische Zaken, Landbouw en Innovatie) – Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation
<b>HAVO</b>	Pre-university education pathway to go to university focusing on applied/vocational subjects (HBO)
<b>HBO</b>	Higher vocational education which focuses on applied/vocational subjects
<b>KBB</b>	(Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven) – Knowledge Centres
<b>KCE</b>	(Kwaliteitscentrum Examens) – Centre for Quality of Examinations
<b>MBO</b>	(middelbaar beroepsonderwijs) – senior secondary vocational education training
<b>MBO Raad</b>	Association for Vocational and Adult Education
<b>NBI</b>	(niet bekostigde instellingen) – non-state funded vocational education and training
<b>OCW</b>	(Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap) – Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
<b>O&amp;O Fonds</b>	(Onderzoek en Ontwikkelingsfondsen) – Training Development Funds (TDFs)
<b>OTIB</b>	Training and Development for Technical Installation (Sectoral TDF)
<b>ROA</b>	(Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt) – Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market

<b>ROC</b>	(Regionale Opleidingscentra) – Regional Education and Training Centres
<b>ROC MN</b>	(ROC Midden Nederland) – Central Netherlands Regional Education and Training College
<b>SBB</b>	(Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven) – Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market
<b>SZW</b>	(Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid) – Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
<b>TDFs</b>	Training Development Funds (see O&O Fonds)
<b>WEB Act</b>	(Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs) – 1996 Education and Vocational Training Act
<b>WVA</b>	(Wet Vermindering Afdracht loonbelasting en premies volksverzekeringen Onderwijs) – Employer tax rebate for training
<b>VET</b>	Vocational education and training
<b>VMBO</b>	Preparatory vocational secondary education pathway to take MBO training
<b>VWO</b>	Pre-university education pathway to go to university focusing on academic subjects.

# 1 Introduction and background

This briefing paper developed out of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills' interest in seeking to understand high performing European vocational education and training (VET) systems. The UK Commission has a driving ambition to encourage more and better investment in the skills and employment opportunities for people in the UK. Skills are a key driver of employment and productivity growth and developing them is an intrinsic part of securing growth and prosperity for the UK.

In December 2011, 'Employer Ownership of Skills' was launched. This is the UK Commission's long-term agenda to change the way in which the UK invests in skills.<sup>1</sup> It seeks to develop an internationally competitive skills base built on a sustainable market for skills development. The policy is based on transforming the way the skills system works for employer-led training. It seeks to provide employers with greater ownership of skills, along with greater responsibility. Examining the approaches taken in other countries is another way to understand, consider and develop better policy design for our own country specific circumstances and requirements.

The 2008-2009 recession has highlighted the challenge of youth unemployment, although this has been rising in the UK before that, since 2005. This suggests there are structural causes behind the current economic situation affecting young peoples' prospects. They include a changing labour market and recruitment practices, both of which make it difficult for young people to get into work (UKCES, 2012, 2013). Yet some of our European counterparts have relatively low youth unemployment. Admittedly this could be due to having a better supply of available jobs in labour markets, but it is also in part due to having efficient and effective skills infrastructure, assisting young people into these labour markets. For instance, the systems in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands see greater employer participation rates (both in those offering and taking on people to train), greater participation rates from young people, higher levels and longer durations of training (with significant proportions of time spent in the workplace) and lower rates of youth unemployment than in the UK.

During his attendance at the Brussels European Council meeting, in June 2013, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, addressed the challenge of tackling youth unemployment and described it as "one of the EU's most acute problems".<sup>2</sup> The outcome

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<sup>1</sup> For further details on Employer Ownership of Skills see: <http://www.ukces.org.uk/ourwork/investment/employer-ownership/our-vision> [Accessed 19.08.13].

<sup>2</sup> Government of the Netherlands, News Item, 'EU to spend €8 billion on tackling youth unemployment'. See: <http://www.government.nl/government/members-of-cabinet/mark-rutte/news/2013/06/28/eu-to-spend-8-billion-on-tackling-youth-unemployment.html> [Accessed 09.07.13]



of the summit saw a determination to tackle the crisis, affecting seven and a half million under-25 year olds who are without work, by utilising €8 billion of the 2014/15 EU budget to create more jobs specifically for young people. But Mr Rutte also commented that additional funding could not solve everything. As well as reform of the labour market, learning from each other's experiences and understanding good practice would be important too.

In that spirit, this briefing paper provides insight into the Dutch VET System. The vocational opportunities young people receive from employers, during their training, contribute to the Netherlands having one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the European Union behind Germany and Austria.<sup>3</sup> The Dutch VET system enjoys considerable participation by young people, with the majority of all secondary students choosing to take a well-established, flexible and clearly structured VET pathway. There are very high completion rates and good prospects for employment, which rise the higher the vocational qualification taken. And, as will be seen, the interests of employers are central. In the Netherlands VET is driven by employer demand.

## 1.1 Origins

The Dutch skills system has been “developed under a specific political culture where consensus is central” (Sung et al. cited in Sims, p.2). In the skills system it is in the form of a tripartite arrangement with a strong tradition of employer and employee involvement (Sung et al., p.20). Skills policy is developed at the national level and the Dutch sectoral approach is based on a national system, involving national and regional partners (Sung et al., p.61).<sup>4</sup>

There was little employer VET coordination in the Netherlands until the 1980s. Employers have only been formally integrated into a national system of VET in 1990s, via the 1996 Education and Vocational Training Act (Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs aka WEB Act). (Anderson & Nijhuis, p.106). The aim of formalising the employer role was to provide them (and unions) with more influence on the content of VET and skills certification. Previously, employers had complained that VET in the Netherlands did not sufficiently focus on supplying the skills required by the labour market (Anderson &

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<sup>3</sup> At 9.8 per cent the Netherlands youth unemployment rate is far lower than that of the United Kingdom's, at 20.7 per cent. Youth unemployment statistics, 2012Q4, Eurostat. See: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php?title=File:Youth\\_unemployment,\\_2012Q4\\_\(%25\).png&filetimestamp=20130418091546](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:Youth_unemployment,_2012Q4_(%25).png&filetimestamp=20130418091546) [Accessed 09.07.13]

<sup>4</sup> An essential difference between the Netherlands and the UK is that the Netherlands has a national political culture of consensus, as illustrated in the 'Polder Model' for consensus decision making with tripartite stakeholders. Dutch society has had a history of pillarisation (*verzuiling*) in which communities were vertically divided according to religion/political affiliation. Whilst these pillars have broken down and Dutch society no longer operates a consociational democracy (in which political representation of the different pillared groups is guaranteed) its legacy is consensus government. Employers and employees, therefore, have a leading role in part because of the political system and culture they inhabit.

Nijhuis, p.106; Sung, 2010). Hence, the WEB Act ensures that sectorally based training is at the centre of the VET framework, via the institutional structure of organisations called knowledge centres (Sung et al., p.61). The other characteristic of VET in the Netherlands, as we shall see, is that its delivery is provided by decentralised training providers mainly at a regional level.

One of the significant design aspects of the Dutch VET system is the concept of 'dualisation'. Training and qualifications contain both work and theoretical components and this has "turned out to be an important tool for raising the level of employers' involvement and interest in VET qualifications". (Sung, p.20). The WEB Act also gives vocational training parity with academic education in order to provide a pathway to higher education. However, the bridge to HE is arguably underdeveloped because the main focus of VET policy has been to empower employers to take a leading role in the system (Sung, p.21).

The rest of the briefing paper is structured in five sections:

- The key institutional actors from government employers and training providers are identified in **Section 2**.
- **Section 3** looks at the Dutch education system from secondary level; from an early stage young people begin to decide whether they would prefer to take a vocational education pathway. The section then focuses on VET and explores the training levels and pathways which can be taken. How VET is designed, delivered and quality assured is then explored.
- In **Section 4** the public funding of the design and delivery of VET is briefly described.
- The range of financial incentives, open to employers and individuals, which are provided by the state to increase workforce development, are then illustrated in **Section 5**.
- Finally, **Section 6** provides a summary and conclusion which looks at the employer ownership of VET in the Netherlands.

## 2 Key actors in the VET system

The key policy actors in the Dutch VET system are identified in this section. Employer and employee representation is through a national, sectorally based group of knowledge centres. Equivalent to Sector Skills Councils in the UK, they are legislated to be at the heart of the VET system. The delivery of training is provided by a small number of super-sized Regional Education and Training Centres. Both of these institution-types are mainly funded by central government.

### 2.1 Government

The **Ministry of Education, Culture and Science** (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap aka OCW) has responsibility for strategic policy and oversight for VET, except for agriculture. Agriculture in the Netherlands is a large, strategically important sector and VET is overseen by a separate department. **The Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation** (Ministerie van Economische Zaken, Landbouw en Innovatie aka EL&I) has responsibility for policy here and it funds the 12 Agricultural Education and Training Centres (Agrarische Opleidingscentra aka AOCs) which deliver VET for this sector. This ministry also leads on industrial policy.<sup>5</sup>

Supporting central government on VET policy is a recently formed body, the **Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market** (Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven aka SBB). Established in January 2012, the SBB represents all social partners (employers, employees and training providers) in the system and provides a unified, single voice on VET policy to advise the OCW.<sup>6</sup> Its strategic board consists of members representing all social partners (employers, employees and training providers<sup>7</sup>) and, in the spirit of its inclusive membership, its first designated chair was also the chair of the umbrella body for state funded training providers, the Association for Vocational and Adult Education (MBO Raad). The SBB “offers the Minister a single point of contact that draws up recommendations and advice on behalf of education and the labour

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<sup>5</sup> In 2011, nine sectors of priority, or ‘top sectors’ (*Naar de top*) were identified to focus on building economic growth. These are: life sciences, high tech materials and systems, agro-food, water, energy, horticulture, chemistry, creative industry and logistics. €1.5bn was set aside to increase competitiveness in the top sectors and further funds have since been made available in the second Rutte cabinet government. See: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/ondernemersklimaat-en-innovatie/investeren-in-topsectoren> [Accessed 11.06.13].

<sup>6</sup> The previous body, COLO (Central Organisation of National Training Agencies of Enterprise), was focused on representing employers’ and employees’ interests and was the umbrella body for the 17 knowledge centres. It was somewhat similar to the former UK Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA). The move to a new body, integrating and representing all interests, was an initiative by social partners as there was perceived to be a divergence of priorities between employers and training providers (SBB).

<sup>7</sup> As well as employer and employee representatives, education representation also includes a board member representing privately funded education (SBB). See: <http://www.s-bb.nl/general-board-sbb.html> [Accessed 11.06.13].

market”.<sup>8</sup> Examples here include reviewing various aspects of VET policy, such as the duration of MBO training, its ability to meet labour market demands, the regional structure of training provision and the quality of qualifications.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 Employers

The primary vehicles for employer and employee representation in Dutch VET are the **knowledge centres** (Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven aka KBB). There are 17 in existence, each covering a distinctive economic sectoral footprint.<sup>10</sup> These are much larger organisations than their UK equivalents. See Appendix Two as an illustrative example. Given their extensive roles they currently have bigger budgets and greater staffing resources than Sector Skills Councils.<sup>11</sup>

The economic recession has brought significant implications for knowledge centres and the functions they perform. Following the austerity measures announced by Prime Minister Rutte’s second cabinet, after its formation in November 2012, the OCW’s budget is to be cut with funding to knowledge centres severely affected.<sup>12</sup> Bearing this in mind, the role and functions of knowledge centres are outlined below as they stand. But they are likely to undergo substantial change from 2014/15.

Knowledge centres are mandated by the 1996 WEB Act to perform certain activities for their respective sectors, including (Sung et al, p.62-63; Otero et al., p.65):

- Developing and maintaining qualifications.
- Recruiting and accrediting employers so that they can engage in workplace training, by taking on trainees via apprenticeships or internships.
- Coordinating and promoting sectoral training (e.g. recruiting new vocational education providers<sup>13</sup>).
- Conducting labour market intelligence.

Knowledge centres are also responsible for ensuring there are enough apprenticeship (BBL) and internship (BOL) places in their respective sectors and for matching training programmes to labour market needs (Anderson & Nijhuis, p.105). Furthermore, they also

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<sup>8</sup> SBB. See: <http://www.s-bb.nl/recent-policy-advise.html> [Accessed 11.06.13].

<sup>9</sup> The latest policy developments can be seen here: <http://www.s-bb.nl/recent-policy-advise.html> [Accessed 11.06.13].

<sup>10</sup> There does not appear to be coverage of all industrial sectors. For instance, new media is not represented (SBB).

<sup>11</sup> UK SSCs typically have a staffing complement of 40-80 people; knowledge centres employ many more. For example, the Kenteq knowledge centre employs 300 people.

<sup>12</sup> Research and international activities of the OCW are facing the heaviest cuts, particularly the Nuffic overseas institutes, Netherlands Education Support Offices (NESOs), which support internationalisation in HE (OCW).

<sup>13</sup> Some Knowledge Centres are also training providers where there is little or no provision of skills required by a particular industry (Sung et al, p.37-38).

have a role in raising employers' commitment to training and creating a learning culture within their sectors (Sims, p.2). "For all industrial skills training, the first step is to start from the knowledge centres. The VET system is there to support the standards that the knowledge centres create." (Sung et al., p.25).

To achieve this knowledge centres have direct links to industry to determine what the skills demand is, and to the education sector, to direct the supply of training. Employers have access, via a social partnership model, with each knowledge centre having a strategic board with employer, trade union and training provider representation. But it is not clear the extent to which individual employers, let alone employees, get engaged at this level.

A point for consideration is whether it is the representative bodies of employers and employees that provide strategic direction for knowledge centres, rather than individual employers and employees. Nevertheless, Sung states that employers "take their leadership role very seriously" as they fully understand that their contribution will determine what kind of VET provision will materialise (p.25).

To reiterate, the budget cuts facing knowledge centres in 2014/15 are severe. To what degree, they will retain the functions described above is unclear at the moment. At the time of publication the OCW is considering different models in the redesign of this aspect of the VET system. Certain tasks are likely to be centralised under the SBB and more responsibility could be given to employers themselves.

### 2.3 Training providers

Publicly funded senior secondary vocational education training (middelbaar beroepsonderwijs aka MBO) and also some continuing education for adults, is delivered by the **Regional Education and Training Centres (ROCs)**.<sup>14</sup> There are 42 ROCs throughout the Netherlands.<sup>15</sup> In comparison to the UK these are super FE Colleges. The largest, (e.g. ROC van Amsterdam - <http://www.rocva.nl>) has upwards of 35,000 students. As an illustrative example, see Appendix One which gives a brief overview of another ROC, ROC Midden Nederland.

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<sup>14</sup> This briefing paper solely concentrates on publicly funded VET. VET is also provided by the private sector. Such provision does not receive state funding (*niet bekostigde instellingen* aka NBI).

<sup>15</sup> Under the 1996 WEB Act, hundreds of vocational training centres were merged to form the present 42 ROCs plus 12 Agricultural Education and Training Centres (AOCs) and 15 smaller, specialised VET colleges. According to the Association of Colleges the UK has 391 colleges in the FE sector (General FE, Tertiary Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges and Specialist Colleges). See: [http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/about\\_colleges/](http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/about_colleges/) [Accessed 16.08.13]. Of course, any direct comparison would have to take into account the differentials between both countries, not least those of population size and land mass.

A typical ROC will:

- run over 150 VET courses;
- have circa 10,000 VET students; and
- have circa 2,500 Adult education students.

The ROCs deliver sectoral VET, which has been designed by knowledge centres, through a wide variety of training, in a regional dimension. Essentially knowledge centres identify the competencies required by industry and these are fed to the ROCs. In essence, the knowledge centres determine **what** is to be done and the ROCs determine **how** this is to be done. ROCs have significant flexibility in achieving this as long as: (a) their core remit is fulfilled, as defined by the WEB Act; and (b) they deliver what is required by the knowledge centres' development plans (Sung et al., p.65).<sup>16</sup>

With regard to their cooperation with employers, it is in each ROC's interests to have close relationships as they depend on them for training opportunities for their students.<sup>17</sup> This provides a strong driver for the study content to be relevant to the workplace and, in conjunction with the knowledge centres, to ensure students receive the most relevant, up to date work experience.

ROCs have their own representative body to collectively represent their interests. The **Association for Vocational and Adult Education** (MBO Raad) acts as a national umbrella organisation for all 42 ROCs and the rest of the government funded institutions providing secondary VET and adult education.<sup>18</sup> It promotes the collective interests of the sector and acts as an intermediary between its members and government and other social partners. Focusing on its role with ROCs, it provides guidance and advice on policy issues as well as promoting innovation and professionalisation (MBO Raad).<sup>19</sup> According to Henson & Frommberger, it has played a "major role in the remodelling of vocational education to competence based vocational education and training" (p. 646).

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<sup>16</sup> Knowledge centres are subject to financial audit and are required to show that they met their aims (Sung et al, p.65).

<sup>17</sup> For instance, ROC Midden Nederland has a bank of around 19,000 accredited training companies.

<sup>18</sup> There are a further 12 Agricultural Education and Training Centres (AOCs) plus 15 smaller, specialised VET institutions (covering areas like maritime). The AOCs are represented through the AOC Raad.

See: <http://www.aocraad.nl/> [Accessed 05.07.13].

<sup>19</sup> The MBO Raad is mainly funded through subscriptions from institutional members.

### **3 MBO Training**

The Dutch education system encourages young people to think about VET, as well as other academic options, at secondary education level. The range of choice they have to consider is explored below. The remainder of the section focuses on the VET pathway, otherwise known as MBO training, which is taken by the majority of post-secondary education students. It identifies the training levels and the different (school or work based) pathways which can be taken. How MBO training is designed and delivered is then examined. Finally, the assessment and quality assurance of MBO training is briefly covered.

#### **3.1 Learning pathways**

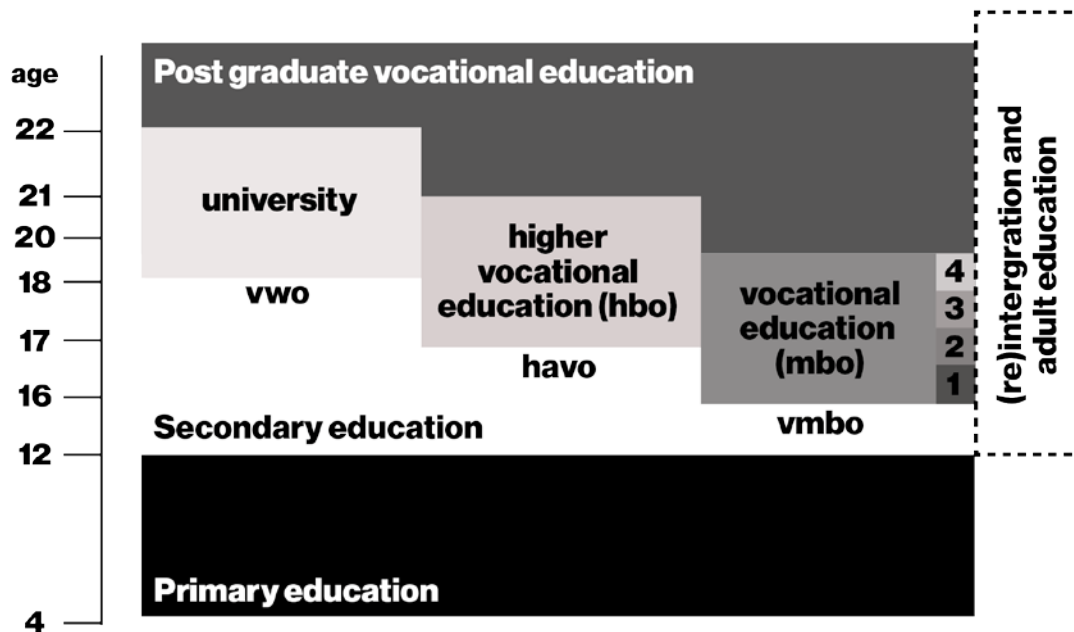
Once a student enters secondary education at 12 years of age, the Dutch education system requires them to choose one of three main secondary pathways: VWO, HAVO or VMBO. Students start their secondary education with a period of basic secondary education, which lasts around two to three years. At the end of their second year they can choose, with advice from their school, which pathway to take.<sup>20</sup>

The decision they make, at this relatively early age, will determine the type of education they receive at post-secondary level and, potentially, what type of career they will have. A further consideration in their decision making is that whilst they can leave full time education at the age of 16, they must be in part time education until the age of 18 years old.

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<sup>20</sup> The Netherlands does not have a national IAG Careers service and at this age students are dependent on schools as well as their family for advice. IAG will typically be provided by a teacher rather than a dedicated professional in that field (MBO Raad).

Figure 1.1 – Dutch education systems



Source: MBO Raad

From left to right in Figure 1, VWO pre-university education prepares a student to go to university at 18 years old to study for an academic qualification in a higher education institution. These typically focus on academic subjects, such as law or medicine, in a research oriented environment. Alternatively, students can choose to undertake a more applied, vocational higher level qualification (HBO), such as in nursing or mechatronics, at another type of higher education institution (somewhat similar to the former UK polytechnics). Students will undertake HAVO general secondary education to get there. The third pathway is VET or MBO training. Students undertake preparatory vocational secondary education between the ages of 12 to 16 years (VMBO) to start senior secondary vocational education and training.

Once a student has chosen their pathway they tend to stay on it but it is possible to move across pathways. The most typical move at secondary level would be transferring between HAVO and VMBO. After their MBO training (after completing MBO Level 4) individuals can also move from MBO to HBO to get a degree qualification.<sup>21</sup> Moving across the spectrum (e.g. from MBO to HBO and then to VWO) is also possible but rare.

The proportion of students (post 16) between each stream is roughly:

- MBO (VET) 55 per cent.
- HBO (Vocational/applied HE) 30 per cent.

<sup>21</sup> Representatives of some SME employer bodies have been lobbying for another level of MBO training so that it would go up to MBO Level 5. In some quarters it is argued that the gap between MBO Level 4 and a HBO degree is too big to bridge (MBO Raad).



- VWO (Academic HE) 15 per cent.

Therefore, most students take the MBO pathway in the Dutch education system.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.2 MBO training levels

Qualifications are at the heart of MBO training, which is based on four levels, irrespective of whether the student takes a work based or school based pathway to VET (Sung et al., 2006). MBO training can take up to four years to complete.<sup>23</sup> The levels are:

- Level 1 – assistant training (a trainee is expected to assist others at work under supervision).
- Level 2 – basic vocational training (a trainee is expected to perform standard tasks without having supervision at all times).
- Level 3 – vocational training (a trainee is expected to work independently and also organise and plan work).
- Level 4 – middle management training OR specialist training (equivalent to first year of HE, a trainee is expected to supervise and coordinate activities within the workplace).<sup>24</sup>

### 3.3 MBO training pathways

As mentioned each student takes the same qualification, whether they are on the work or school based pathway. The two pathways under MBO training are:

- **School based training** (Beroepsopleidende Leerweg aka BOL) - students typically spend four days a week at a ROC and one day at an employer's on a work placement. The proportion of time spent in a work placement can vary between 20 to 60 per cent. This will be dependent on the type of course, its level and the ROC's pedagogical approach. Students can receive student grants for their study and can also receive discretionary payments for their work placement (e.g. stages, traineeships) from their employer.<sup>25</sup>
- **Work based training** (Beroepsbegeindende Leerweg aka BBL) - students typically spend four days a week at work placement and one day at a ROC. They have the status of an apprentice, in that they have an employment contract with their

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<sup>22</sup> In 2011, 484,900 students were undertaking MBO training (OCW).

<sup>23</sup> From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015, it has been proposed that MBO courses, which take four years to complete, be reduced to three wherever possible. See: <http://www.s-bb.nl/recent-policy-advise.html> [Accessed 11.06.13].

<sup>24</sup> These levels are broadly equivalent to National Qualifications Framework/Qualification and Credit Framework levels.

<sup>25</sup> For instance, one SME employer in Bunschoten, which designs and manufactures industrial machinery, pays its BOL work placement students, or "stagiaires", €150 per month for one day per week of work.

employer and receive a minimum wage. In sectors of demand some employers even attract students by offering extra pay (e.g. five days pay for four days work).<sup>26</sup> It is the student's responsibility to secure their BBL work placement.<sup>27</sup>

Irrespective of the pathway taken, students must have a workplace component in their training at an accredited employer (Sung, pp.23-24). An employer must be accredited by its knowledge centre, which will perform a quality check on its ability to offer training. Otherwise it cannot take advantage of publicly funded VET.

Due to the parity of status given to school and work based pathways, the Dutch system can switch provision relatively easily to ensure short and long term sectoral needs are fulfilled, whatever the economic situation (Sung, p.24). The majority of students (about 80 per cent) are school based and this has increased since the global economic recession. Its impact has invariably led to fewer employers being able to offer apprenticeships. Consequently, fewer students are on the BBL pathway and are relying instead on the BOL pathway.

The system is very flexible and it is even possible for a student to switch between BOL and BBL pathways during their training. As to which MBO pathway is most relevant to an employer, whilst both pathways lead to the same qualification, BBL involves a greater proportion of a trainees' time in the workplace and this may give it the edge.

### **3.4 Design of MBO qualifications**

The responsibility for qualifications design is held by the knowledge centres. In their design of qualifications, knowledge centres have to take into account four quality principles. Each qualification should be: transparent; recognisable to industry; practicable and feasible; and flexible and sustainable (Hensen and Frommberger, p.646).

Employers input into their design via occupational and qualification profiles, which are collected and collated (sometimes by a third party e.g. a research institution) and are used as the basis for a new design. This process sees an occupational profile developed, based on identifying what an experienced professional would do in their role. Following this, the types of competencies, which someone would need to start their professional career, are then mapped out to create a qualifications profile. This approach results in a competence based qualification structure.

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<sup>26</sup> Some students are even offered job guarantees from employers in sectors (e.g. construction, technical) where there is huge demand for new labour (ROC Midden Nederland).

<sup>27</sup> To assist with this over 223,000 accredited employers are listed on a public website, where MBO students can search for BBL or BOL pathways offered by employers, as well as internships. All 17 knowledge centres contribute listings, which are updated daily. See: <http://www.stagemarkt.nl/> [Accessed 11.06.13]

To anticipate labour market demand in sectoral VET, data supplied by the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt aka ROA), at the University of Maastricht, is utilised. ROA produces labour market forecasts every other year – to forecast skills needs for each of the sectors (Anderson & Nijhuis, p.105-106). The ROCs also use this to adjust their course offerings and capacity to meet labour market needs. (Anderson & Nijhuis, pp.105-106). Sung et al., report that knowledge centres will also collate and provide data to the ROCs “about the kinds of training programmes that are most likely to lead to employment and the regions in which certain skills are in particular shortage” (p.65).

Each knowledge centre will then send its qualification to the SBB, which assesses the qualification and ensures it complies with the qualifications dossier framework (Toetsingskader kwalificatiedossiers MBO) used for all qualification design in MBO training. Such a framework makes it easier to compare qualifications against each other (e.g. identifying the common skillsets and key competencies between two different qualifications. Qualifications are then submitted to OCW for formal approval).

A trend in the design of qualifications over the last decade has been the reduction of qualification dossiers by focusing on key competencies across occupations, of which 25 key competencies have been identified.<sup>28</sup> Over 700 dossiers have now been reduced to 237 (as of 2012). These dossiers provide the basis for the current 612 nationally recognised MBO qualifications, for over 5,000 professions, in existence.<sup>29</sup> These are used by both BBL and BOL pathways.

The relevance of some qualification content can depreciate quickly, given developments in the workplace. Subtle changes to existing qualifications can also be made on an ongoing basis, according to the SBB, and these can be made within an academic term. Qualifications are formally updated every three years.

### **3.5 Delivery of MBO training**

ROCs have individual responsibility as to the pedagogy they employ to deliver MBO training. For instance, there is no compulsory schedule of lessons to be met. There are, however, rules regarding the proportion of work placement which a student undertakes.<sup>30</sup> This differs according to the nature of the course and the pathway taken. In BBL, students must be in work between 60 to 80 per cent of their time; for BOL this is 20 to 60

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<sup>28</sup> Key competencies include: presenting and communicating information; learning; writing and reporting; meeting customer expectations; applying technology; coping with pressures and setbacks; entrepreneurial and commercial thinking.

<sup>29</sup> OCW. The qualifications dossiers can be accessed at: <http://www.kwalificatiesmbo.nl/start.html> [Accessed 11.06.13]

<sup>30</sup> MBO Raad.

per cent, depending on the type of course. There are also a compulsory number of student contact hours which ROCs have to adhere to.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, within these parameters, a single national qualification can be taught in multiple ways.

In work placements, each student has a designated work supervisor, who is a member of staff of the host employer. They provide on-the-job guidance and help set and oversee learning outcomes in conjunction with the trainee's ROC supervisor (praktijkbegeleider). As well as providing supervision, the ROC supervisors will also organise the BOL work placement for the student (Hensen & Frommberger, p.646). Throughout the student's training, it is expected that a triangle of communication is established and maintained between the student, work supervisor and ROC supervisor.

To support local and regional needs, and be flexible in their provision of sectoral training, ROCs can adapt up to 20 per cent of the national curriculum to meet the training needs of local labour markets (Sung, p.24). They also can provide continuing VET, if required. In such a scenario employers would approach the relevant knowledge centre to discuss their requirements. Taking into account overall sectoral needs the knowledge centre could then approach the relevant ROC to create a specific, tailored programme of training.<sup>32</sup>

At the regional level, there are also Industry Advisory Committees (bedfifsadviescommissie). These consist of representatives from ROCs (usually the respective praktijkbegeleider), the knowledge centre(s) and employers. It is a forum to develop and maintain working relations, increase understanding between parties and improve aspects of MBO training (Hensen & Frommberger, p. 646).

In its delivery of MBO training, a ROC can be in competition with other ROCs in the vicinity. This is the resultant effect of a regionalised training provider infrastructure combined with deregulation of the market and decentralisation from government control.<sup>33</sup> Of course, the level of competition will normally be dependent on a student's radius of commuting. Those ROCs offering specialist courses can attract students from further afield.

The delivery of Adult education is a different matter. This has been a declining income stream for ROCs. There has been a steady reduction of state financial support and a change in policy emphasis. Education at this stage is increasingly about the self reliance

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<sup>31</sup> MBO Raad.

<sup>32</sup> In such a case the training would be funded by the employer not the state (Sung, 2010, p.24).

<sup>33</sup> The government is re-examining this structure as it is very expensive for several ROCs, in the immediate catchment area of a student, to offer such a wide variety of courses. Therefore, more institutional specialisation may be required in the future (OCW).

of the individual, based around basic education.<sup>34</sup> As a consequence, ROCs face very strong competition with private training providers.

### **3.6 Assessment and quality assurance**

In terms of assessment, there is no set system of quality assurance for exams under MBO training. ROCs set their own exams as external awarding bodies are not involved. They set both school and work based assessment. They also issue the diplomas and certificates (SBB, p.2). Completion rates for MBO training are very high at 93 per cent (Vogler-Ludwig et al., p.113) and graduates of MBO training have a very good chance of permanent employment afterwards.<sup>35</sup>

ROC's, are monitored by a national Inspectorate of Education (Inspectie van het onderwijs). It performs visits, the frequency of which depends on a ROC's previous performance grading (similar to Ofsted). It also performs a similar function on knowledge centres. Furthermore, a College for Examinations (College voor Examens) maintains standards in the qualification framework.

There has been ongoing concern about the quality of examinations for some time according to Hensen & Frommberger, who state that the government seeks to "strengthen external legitimacy" of the exam system (p. 646). There have also been issues with the monitoring of quality. For example, in 2007 the Centre for Quality of Examinations (Kwaliteitscentrum Examens aka KCE), had its responsibilities for monitoring the quality of MBO examinations removed by OCW.<sup>36</sup>

ROCs are now "obliged to involve external, independent examination centres in the examination of at least 51 per cent of the training programme" (SBB, p.2).

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<sup>34</sup> For instance, learning Dutch as a second language (NT2) is now the responsibility of economic migrants themselves, rather than the state. Nonetheless, an adult can undertake secondary education (VAVO) and be fully subsidised if they have not yet achieved the minimum level (OCW).

<sup>35</sup> In 2011, the youth unemployment rate (i.e. the percentage of the youth labour force, aged 15 to 24 years) was 7.7 per cent. Correspondingly, the rate was 20 per cent in England. OECD (updated July 2012). See: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/youth-unemployment-rate\\_20752342-table2](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/youth-unemployment-rate_20752342-table2) [Accessed 11.06.13]

<sup>36</sup> See OCW press release of 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/persberichten/2007/09/06/toezicht-examens-mbo-naar-inspectie.html> [Accessed 11.06.13]

## 4 Funding of VET

Central government expenditure on VET is administered by OCW, aside for agricultural-related VET, which is the concern of the EL&I. It is the OCW which directly funds the parties who design and deliver mainstream VET in the Netherlands. In 2011 it spent close to €3.5bn to fund Regional Education and Training Centres (Regionale Opleidingscentra aka ROCs) to deliver training. A further €99m was provided to fund the 17 knowledge centres, which determine what VET is required for their sectors.<sup>37</sup> Another €115m was provided for Adult education, although this funding goes straight to municipalities (local government) and has been steadily declining.

As mentioned, the recession has had a severe impact on the Dutch economy, which is still “going through heavy weather” (De Nederlandsche Bank, 2013). It is forecast to further shrink this year, followed by only modest growth in 2014. Responding to the fiscal and economic challenges it faces, the second Rutte cabinet has announced severe cuts in the OCW’s budget from 2014/15. This includes a reduction in the budget for funding the knowledge centres of an eye watering 80 percent from 2015 (OCW). Therefore, this section provides some detail on the funding situation as it stands, as well as briefly illustrating other income streams each institution-type can potentially access.

### 4.1 Knowledge Centres

Funding for knowledge centres is dependent on the number of employers they accredit for workplace training and the number of qualifications they develop and maintain (Sung, p.29). On the former point, the activity of accrediting employers is funded by the state. Employers are not charged for getting accredited. And on the latter point this does not mean an aggressive growth of qualifications. On the contrary, as seen in section 3.4, qualifications growth appears to be controlled. Employers contribute, in any systemic fashion, to the funding of knowledge centres. Therefore most knowledge centre income is derived from the state.

As funding is tied to the volume of training activities, individual knowledge centres may have incomes many times that of their counterparts in the UK and other countries (Sung et al., p.65). Additional income streams are also possible, such as providing consultancy services and products to other stakeholders, such as labour market intelligence (Sung, p.65) and offering careers IAG to employers and individuals. Compared to their UK counterparts, knowledge centres work much more closely with individuals.

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<sup>37</sup> In comparison, in 2010/11, 25 UK SSCs received combined funding of £55.2m (UKCES Business Plan 2010/11).

Funding can also be derived vicariously from training levies. Known as the Training Development Funds (Onderzoek en Ontwikkelingsfondsen aka O&O Fonds) these levies mainly fund continuing vocational training (Anderson & Nijhuis, p.106). In such a scenario a knowledge centre would have to receive this funding from an employer as levies pay out directly to the employer rather than other parties, such as knowledge centres. More information on Training Development Funds is provided further on in the paper.

The trend, initiated by government, to reduce the numbers of qualification dossiers by focusing on key competencies has meant knowledge centres, in some cases, have had to compete against each other to determine who will develop and maintain such a standard (Sung et al., p.30).

## **4.2 Regional Education and Training Centres (ROCs)**

ROCs receive funding directly from government (OCW) for providing MBO training. This is based on a 'T minus 2' model.<sup>38</sup> Each ROC receives base funding, determined by how many students it had two years ago. This 'smoothing mechanism' provides stability in financial planning. A ROC will receive 80 per cent on a student's enrolment for MBO training and a bonus payment of 20 per cent, per student, successfully completing their course.<sup>39</sup> ROCs also receive around 10 per cent of their total student budget for infrastructure (buildings etc.).<sup>40</sup>

Whilst the majority of a ROC's income will be derived from MBO training provision, it will also have income streams, to varying degrees, from adult education and continuing VET.

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<sup>38</sup> OCW, MBO Raad.

<sup>39</sup> A ROC would receive around €5,000 for a student on the BOL pathway (MBO Raad).

<sup>40</sup> MBO Raad.

## 5 Financial incentives for employers and individuals to participate in VET

There are currently a range of direct and indirect financial incentives available to encourage employers and individuals to engage in MBO training or other forms of continuing VET. Incentives range from tax rebates to sectoral training levies. All are offered by the state apart from training levies, which are employer generated and based on collective agreements with social partners.

But as a consequence of the recession the Dutch government has had to re-assess its support for state funded incentives. Since the second Rutte cabinet was established some major changes have been proposed. With this in mind the incentives currently available are described. And where appropriate they are accompanied with commentary on any proposed changes. Tax rebates for employers and individuals are examined first, followed by a ‘vitality package’ policy, which was established to assist economic recovery. Training levies, which are sector driven and independent of state, are then explored.

### 5.1 Employer tax rebate for training: Wet Vermindering Afdracht loonbelasting en premies volksverzekeringen Onderwijs (WVA)

The WVA is an employer tax rebate available when training contracts for new or existing employees are provided. Employers must be accredited by the knowledge centres in order to provide training places and to gain the rebate (Sung et al., p.20-21), which is deducted from the employer’s payroll tax and social insurance contributions. There are various categories of rebate available, depending on the training level/status of the trainee.

**Table 1.1 – Employer tax rebate categories**

Amount	Comment
€2,738 per year (max.)	For training employees in an apprenticeship programme (MBO training between Levels 2 to 4) or a programme in higher vocational education (HBO training, Level 4) on the work based (BBL) route to VET. Training takes between two and four years.
€3,337 per year (max.)	For training employees who were previously unemployed and unqualified, who start a qualifying programme at MBO Level 2. Training takes two years.



€1,322 per year (max.)	For training of MBO students (Levels 1 and 2 only) on the school based (BOL) route to VET. <sup>41</sup>
€332	For enabling an employee to get their prior work experience tested and validated in accreditation of prior learning (APL). This incentivises the employer to encourage an employee to achieve a qualification.

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Source: SZW

Some points of interest regarding the table above:

- Firstly, there is no limit to the number of trainees an employer can claim a rebate for.
- Secondly, the employer receives the rebate at the start of the tax year (1st April) rather than on the start or completion of the person's training.
- Thirdly, the level of payment, up to the maximum, is calculated on the length of the person's training within the tax year.

"This creates a massive cost differential between those who train and those who do not" (Sung et al., p.20).<sup>42</sup> Both the employer and the employee wins. The employer can reduce the cost of training through a tax refund and trainees gain because they are assured of a sufficient standard of quality of training through accreditation. Sung et al. comment that "few employers are likely to take on entry level workers through other non-training routes" (Sung et al., p.63).

From 1st January 2014, the WVA will cease to exist. It will be replaced by a 'subsidy for practical learning', managed by OCW. Reasons for the abolition of WVA include the excessive increase in the budget (estimated to increase from €200 to €400 million in the next five years) and some abuse of the present arrangements. The OCW is drafting the regulations for the new subsidy, which will be published in autumn 2013. Design of the criteria for the subsidy, regarding eligibility and procedures, is underway but nothing is publicly available as of yet.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The exact amount of the rebate is established by: hours of practice per week and the length of the practical period, e.g. a practical period of 12 hours per week during 6 months gives a rebate of  $12/36 \times \text{€}110.17 = \text{€}36.72$  per month (36 refers to a full time working week in hours) (SZW).

<sup>42</sup> The maximum tax reduction for an employer taking on a full time employee is €2,753 (OCW).

<sup>43</sup> SZW.

## 5.2 Employer tax rebate for training costs

Employers may **deduct training costs** from their gross profit. This policy is typically used for short courses, not leading to qualifications. Depending on an employer's gross profit levels they can receive back of approximately 20 – 25 per cent of the training costs.

## 5.3 Individual tax rebate for training costs: individuele scholingsaftrek

Individuals **can deduct training costs** between €250 and €15,000 from their income tax for training purposes and claim the costs back in their annual tax submission. Basic income tax rates are set, according to annual income earned in four bands, and go up to a rate of 52 percent. Individuals can claim back their respective band rate from training, subject to the minimum and maximum thresholds above.<sup>44</sup> This means that those on the higher rate benefit more from this policy.<sup>45</sup>

## 5.4 Sustainable employability package: Vitaliteitspakket

In response to the recession, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid aka SZW) began developing a '**vitality package**' of new policies, known as Vitaliteitspakket. The package contained regulations to stimulate training, mobility and healthy behaviour to keep people in work and increase productivity. These support measures were due to be launched in January 2013.

However, the policy has since changed and the measures, including a **work-to-work budget** (whereby workers at risk of redundancy could claim an individual right to training from their employer), **intersectoral mobility** (whereby workers would be encouraged to move to less attractive employment sectors, such as healthcare and teaching<sup>46</sup>) and a special **savings scheme for individuals** (to assist them when not in work (aka Vitaliteitssparen), will not be implemented as they were originally intended. Instead, some of the budget allocated for the Vitaliteitspakket will instead be utilised for activities as agreed in the recently established Social Agreement on 11th April, 2013.

The Social Agreement between the state, employers and employees will introduce a range of measures to support job creation in the labour market. It will enable economic sectors to apply for subsidies to address their sector plans around policy themes

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<sup>44</sup> Further information on income tax band rates is available here: [http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/job-search/taxes/netherlands/employed\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/job-search/taxes/netherlands/employed_en.htm) [Accessed 14.06.13]

<sup>45</sup> If you are up to 23 years of age and do not have entry level qualifications, you cannot claim state benefits. However, the state will financially support someone to attain an entry level standard qualification (ROC Midden Nederland).

<sup>46</sup> An issue facing the Dutch education system is attracting students to certain 'unfashionable' sectors. As in the UK, individuals have freedom of choice, which can make the labour market difficult to manage.

including intersectoral mobility, work-to-work arrangements and assisting the inflow of young people into technical training. For 2014 and 2015 up to €300 million per annum will be available on the basis of co-investment. Details around the implementation and regulation of this are expected to be published in autumn 2013.<sup>47</sup>

## **5.5 Training and Development Funds (TDF): Opleiding & Ontwikkelings Fonds (O&O-fonds)**

There are around 100 training levies, known as Training and Development Funds (TDFs), in existence. TDFs can engage in a variety of activities including training, research and labour market intelligence, supporting new entrants into their respective sectors etc. They exist to financially support specific training to meet short-term sectoral needs of employers. In regards to training activities, TDFs do not generally provide the training, unless provision cannot be sourced. In some instances they can be involved in developing courses too. They also act in an advisory capacity to employers on training and development matters.

TDFs are established voluntarily through collective bargaining agreements, between social partners, within sectors (such as construction, steel, catering, healthcare, etc.). Agreements normally run for three years or more before they are reviewed (OTIB). As such, TDFs are independent of the government, led and managed by the sectors themselves, without regulation by law for their existence (Cedefop, p. 131). Employers collectively pay into sectoral training levies to raise skills collectively. This can be a mandatory or voluntary requirement, depending on the respective collective agreement in situ (OTIB). Some funds have built up large funding pots (€50m and €100m) from employer and employee contributions.

Enterprises pay a certain percentage of the total wage and salary bill into their respective sectoral TDF. The rates are set by each TDF and vary. For example, the OTIB (Technical Installation sector TDF) agreement for 2013 is to commit one percent of employers' payroll on training and development activities.<sup>48</sup> Unlike in the UK (in the construction and engineering construction training levies), where payroll thresholds determine employers' level of contribution, TDF's do not have thresholds. All employers pay the same percentage, irrespective of company size. (Cedefop, p. 133). As well as training costs, some TDFs allow employers to claim for non-productivity costs, while their staff

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<sup>47</sup> SZW.

<sup>48</sup> See: [https://www.otib.nl/over\\_otib/algemene\\_uitleg/cao\\_heffingspercentage/](https://www.otib.nl/over_otib/algemene_uitleg/cao_heffingspercentage/) [Accessed 05.07.13].

undertake the training funded by the TDF.<sup>49</sup> This will vary between TDF but could be up to as much as 70 per cent of an employee's salary (hourly rate).

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<sup>49</sup> For example, one sectoral fund offers a fixed rebate of €160 per day. The rebate is restricted to two days per worker per year. An employer may use the allowed rebate in a flexible way e.g. an employer with 20 workers is entitled for a rebate of a total of 40 days per year. However, some workers do not need training in a particular year, whilst others need more than two days. The employer may divide the days over fewer workers, although a rebate for one worker cannot exceed six days (SZW).

## 6 Summary and conclusion

This briefing paper has explored how Dutch employers drive the vocational education and training (VET) system, primarily through sector bodies, in this case Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven or knowledge centres. These are similar to UK Sector Skills Councils, in that their remit is to promote skills development in a specific economic sector. They also ensure that training meets the needs of employers as well as government objectives. Employers' interests are established in legislation, in a social partnership along with employees, at the heart of VET. These interests are supported and advanced on a sectoral basis through knowledge centres. Here employer influence appears strongest in the design of qualifications and its shaping of on-the-job training.

Employers have a high degree of collective input because knowledge centres have responsibility for the design of national qualifications. And through the work based learning component of MBO training, particularly the apprenticeship (BBL) pathway, they have the opportunity to train new and existing members of their workforce to their own requirements. Furthermore, they are financially incentivised by the state to do this. Due to the culture of consensus based politics, employers and employees also invest in adult workforce development through initiatives which are independent of the state. Over 100 sectoral training levies exemplify a culture of employer ownership of skills.

### **Employer ownership and social partnerships: the strengths of the Dutch VET system**

- **A culture of consensus ensures social partners work together** – this engenders strong working relationships between employers, employees, training providers and their representatives as seen in the recent establishment of a new strategic policy organisation by partners, the SBB.
- **The institutional landscape is relatively straightforward to navigate** – strategic leadership is provided by the government, qualifications design is the responsibility of 17 employer focused knowledge centres and training delivery is conducted by 42 Regional Education and Training Centres. Both of these institution-types depend on government funding.
- **The arrangement of vocational training is highly flexible and coherent** – the system can accommodate changing macroeconomic circumstances; when there are fewer employers able to offer apprenticeships, such as in a recession, students can switch from a work based to a predominantly school based training approach and receive exactly the same qualification. Flexibility is also apparent in delivery, where

colleges can adapt a proportion of the national curriculum to meet local and regional employer needs. Moving from up from intermediate to higher skilled vocational training is easy because the system was coherently designed to allow this from the start.

- **Vocational training curricula, designed from occupational and qualification profiles, provide a competence based qualification structure** – qualifications are based on key competencies across occupations; this leads to a broader based curriculum.
- **Vocational training is clearly promoted to young people as a credible alternative to an academic education** – from their early teens, young people can choose a vocational route, which prepares them to take an apprenticeship from 16 years of age. And most do. Although they can leave full time education at 16, they must continue part time education until 18. This increases the attractiveness of the vocational route.
- **Getting experience in the workplace is fundamental to vocational training** – Irrespective of whether a student takes a work based or school based pathway, they must receive training in the workplace with an employer; this can range from 20 to 80 per cent of their time depending on the pathway they take, and the level and type of course. It requires colleges to work closely with individual employers as they depend on them for work placement opportunities.
- **Every single employer is quality assured before being allowed to offer and access publicly funded vocational training in their workplace** – without being accredited employers cannot train new entrants or existing staff via apprenticeships or work placements, which are publicly funded; nor can they access the financial incentives on offer to do this. This reassures employees/trainees as know they will receive good quality training from employers.
- **Employers and employees take ownership for the development of workforce skills** – this is demonstrated by the numerous voluntary sectoral training levies in existence; established by collective bargaining agreements between social partners, these are independent of government.

As for the challenges employers face, there is the perennial issue of representing a large, diverse employer population (in terms of size, sector) to counter the interests of education. The interests of the latter are invariably easier to organise and represent compared to a heterogeneous labour market. Another challenge for employers concerns labour market supply. It can be difficult

attracting individuals to work in sectors deemed 'unfashionable'. The education system in the Netherlands grants the individual significant freedom of choice and this means that, without the support of a national information, advice and guidance careers service, poor choices can be made. Again, as we have seen, the government provides financial incentives to promote the intersectoral mobility of labour.

Another challenge regards the ability of employers to secure their interests in the delivery and assessment of MBO training, as this is mainly the responsibility of training providers. Here, ROCs individually determine how they deliver national qualifications. Consequently, it appears that employer influence is at its weakest regarding the teaching style employed to deliver qualifications and the resultant examination process.

Despite these challenges the Dutch VET system is characterised as being employer driven. The model of VET described in this paper enjoys strong commitment from firms, as well as other social partners, in the investment of workforce development. But it is not yet clear how the proposed government budget cuts and the subsequent redesign of aspects of the system will affect employers' roles, if at all. For instance, what are the implications of the budget cuts on knowledge centres for employers? What will be the impact of reduced financial incentives (e.g. the abolishment of WVA) on employer demand? And, as a consequence, will employers take on more commitment and responsibility (e.g. through mechanisms such as TDFs)? We should begin to see the answers to these questions later in the year.

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## Appendix One

### ROC Midden Nederland

Website: <http://www.rocmn.nl/>

ROC Midden Nederland (Central Netherlands Regional Education and Training College - ROC MN), one of 42 ROCs throughout the Netherlands, is the largest college in central Netherlands. Based around Utrecht (the fourth largest city in the Netherlands), it has 25,000 students (aged from 15 to 80 years old) and over 2,000 staff. It has a turnover of €140m and its budget is around €150m per annum of which:

- 75 per cent is received from government for MBO training;
- per cent is received from municipalities for Adult education; and
- 15 per cent is received from employers.

ROC MN offers 350 vocational courses over a wide variety of subject areas (e.g. automotive, beauty, construction, security and defence, sports, ICT etc.) and also some specialised courses, which attract students from all over the country (e.g. parquet floor laying). Courses are delivered from 52 locations around Utrecht.

Regarding the delivery of its vocational and educational training, ROC MN has:

- around 10,000 apprentices on the work-based (BBL) pathway;
- and around 10,000 apprentices on school-based (BOL) pathway.

The proportion on each pathway has changed due to the economic climate. ROC NM reports there are less students on the work-based pathway due to the recession and also because there are fewer students, due to demographics. Nonetheless, as has been seen in the main report, the Dutch system is well positioned to accommodate a change from BBL to BOL training due to the VET system being based on a single qualification, irrespective of the MBO training pathway taken.

End.

## Appendix Two

### Kenteq knowledge centre

Website: <http://www.kenteq.nl/>

Kenteq is one of the largest of 17 knowledge centres, each of which have a pivotal role in Dutch VET. Its closest comparison in the UK would be a Sector Skills Council. It represents the technical sector in Dutch industry and its sectoral footprint ranges from distribution technology, to electrical and mechanical engineering, to metalworking.

Based in Hilversum, in the centre of the Netherlands, Kenteq also has offices in three other locations as part of its local and regional network. It employs 300 staff and has around 100 training advisers. Its role is primarily laid down by statute but it can also offer services beyond this remit. The range of services consists of:

- Developing the qualification structure within its footprint
- Accreditation of companies with training places
- Recruitment of new training companies
- Matching supply and demand of company training places
- Monitoring and improving training quality
- Guidance of companies and practical trainers
- Labour market research
- Careers IAG (for employers and individuals)

It is steered via a social partnership model and its strategic board consists of representatives from:

- employers (x2)
- trade unions(x2)
- VET institutions (x2)

Within its sector, Kenteq has around 19,000 accredited training companies, with 22,000 on-the-job trainers. There are about 38,000 VET students in the sector. Of these, 58 per cent take work based training (BBL) and the remaining 42 per cent are in school based education (BOL). On one BOL course alone (an MBO L4 for middle management in engineering, there are 10,000 students).

Kenteq is responsible for 76 qualifications within the sector and over 100 technical courses. Of the 68 publicly funded VET institutions (including ROCs, AOCs and specialised VET schools) in the Netherlands, Kenteq deals with 40 of these.

End.

Author: Paul Casey, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is a social partnership, led by Commissioners from large and small employers, trade unions and the voluntary sector. Our mission is to raise skill levels to help drive enterprise, create more and better jobs and economic growth.

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UKCES  
Renaissance House  
Adwick Park  
Wath-upon-Deerne  
Rotherham  
S63 5NB  
T +44 (0)1709 774 800  
F +44 (0)1709 774 801

UKCES  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith St.  
Westminster  
London  
SW1P 3BT  
T +44 (0)20 7227 7800

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© UKCES 1st Ed/11.12  
ISBN: 978-1-908418-52-4