

Please cite this publication as:

Brouwer, P.; Westerhuis, A.; Cox, A. (2016). *Supporting teachers and trainers for successful reforms and quality of vocational education and training: mapping their professional development in the EU – Netherlands*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

[http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/ReferNet\\_NL\\_TT.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/ReferNet_NL_TT.pdf)

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This thematic perspective was prepared based on data/information from 2015.

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Thematic perspectives are cofinanced by the European Union and ReferNet national partners.

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## Table of contents

1. Introduction .....	4
1.1. Characteristics of VET in the Netherlands .....	4
1.2. Characteristics of VET teachers in the Netherlands .....	5
1.3. Place of VET teachers and trainers in the national policy agenda .....	6
1.4. Country-specific challenges in relation to teachers and trainers .....	7
1.5. Policy and practice developments of the last five years.....	8
1.6. Main categories of teaching and training professionals .....	9
1.7. Country-specific definition of IVET .....	9
2. Teaching and training professionals in school-based settings.....	10
2.1. National and institution level legislation, strategic documents, implementation provisions that regulate or guide professional development of teachers and trainers.....	10
2.2. Qualification and/or competence requirements VET teachers.....	10
2.3. Entry into teaching force in VET.....	11
2.4. Available data on numbers, qualifications, CPD of VET teachers and trainers .....	12
2.5. Requirements for and organisation of CPD of VET teachers.....	12
3. Apprentice tutors or practical training instructors in companies (work-based settings).....	13
3.1. Legislation, strategic documents, and implementation provisions and requirements for qualifications and/or competences.....	13
3.2. CDP provisions and organisation of CDP for apprentice tutors or practical training instructors .....	13
4. Cooperation and partnerships between the world of education and the world of work in support to teachers and trainers' CPD .....	14
4.1. Arrangements or examples of practice that provide opportunities for teachers to update their knowledge of the latest developments in their industry or occupation(s) and refresh their relevant competences, for in-company trainers to acquire or improve their pedagogical competences or to be informed about qualification requirements in their field.....	14
5. National and EU-funded projects to support VET teachers' and trainers' professional development .....	14
6. Conclusions .....	15
References .....	16

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of the article is to gather updated information regarding systematic national approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuing professional development (CDP) of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work based settings in the Netherlands. The article describes the situation in the Netherlands; it gives a clear snapshot of the teaching professionals that work in initial VET – in terms of individual characteristics, national CDP policy and the implementation of CDP policies and measures- including apprenticeship schemes and how their professional development is organised and supported. The article describes general approaches and frameworks applied to support CDP of VET professionals in the Netherlands.

### 1.1. Characteristics of VET in the Netherlands

Vocational and educational training (VET) is in the Netherlands the main supplier of skilled employees to the labour market and is the joint responsibility of government, social partner organisations and educational institutions. The business community plays a relevant part in developing national qualifications and providing work placements. The educational design of VET in general is built around the profession and the competences relevant in this profession. Competences are combinations of knowledge, skills and behavior. To ensure the learning output suitable for the labour market, labour market and VET institutes together determine the output of VET in terms of qualifications to be validated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The educational design is based on this output and is fit to regional labour market demands.

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

The VET system in the Netherlands is developed without a distinct difference between IVET and CVET. CVET in the Netherlands is aimed at people over 18, at qualifying them for work or preparation for further training. CVET in The Netherlands is a broad field with many options, depending on what path a person desires to follow in his/her career or in what area a person wants to deepen his/her knowledge. Many training providers are active in non-formal CVET (off-the-job) market for employees. Most are private commercial training providers covering 84% of the training market and a smaller

number are publicly funded VET providers that offer contract activities paid by contractors (around 16%).

VET- students can choose between two learning pathways in which students combine work and study: a school-based route (minimal 20% to maximum 60% in practice in a learning company) and a work-based route, (minimal 80% in practice in a learning company). The two learning pathways in upper secondary VET lead to the same diplomas. They operate like a system of communicating vessels so that the learning pathways' volume of intake can respond to economic trends: increase of students in the school-based pathway during a period of economic recession and decrease in the dual pathway; and the opposite during a period of boom.

Educational institutions are given a high degree of freedom to design vocational programs as they see fit. The provision of the VET programs is decentralised and organised by the VET providers, because of the strong regional orientation of VET. The VET providers determine themselves, within the legal requirements, which programs they offer. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science lays down the conditions for education. The VET law (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs*) provides a broad framework only outlining some key elements at system level; institutions receive a lump sum for their tasks.

Teacher training institutes at professional higher education level (second-degree qualified teachers) offer a general program which is not specifically aimed at VET. As of the school year of 2013/14 two graduation tracks have been integrated into the teacher training curriculum: track one aimed at general education; track two aimed at vocational education.

## 1.2. Characteristics of VET teachers in the Netherlands

Along with the implementation of competence-based learning in VET around the year 2000, working in teams was introduced at VET institutions. The basic rationale is in order to deliver competence-based vocational education, a variety of (teaching) disciplines is needed. The concept of teams being the basic organizing unit in VET institutions was ratified in the 2009 agreement between social partners and educational institutions – i.e. collective terms of employment and professional statute. Teams are responsible for delivering educational programmes of one or more subgroups of students. Teams have a mutual responsibility for a wide range of team tasks: developing and delivering the educational programme, study and career counseling, supervising workplace placements (internships), mentoring, certification, but also the development of the team as a group of professionals as well as individual professional development, the coordination of teaching activities, quality assurance, innovation of the curriculum. The implementation of the concept of working in teams is an ongoing process and VET institutions are at different stages of adoption.

VET institutions in the Netherlands are private foundations. Teachers are employed directly at the VET institutions (and not at the state).

### 1.3. Place of VET teachers and trainers in the national policy agenda

The education professions act (*Wet op Beroepen in het Onderwijs*) which came into force on 2006 regulates competence standards for teachers and other educational staff in primary, general secondary, vocational and general adult education. The legislation requires the competent authority to maintain a teacher competency document for each individual teacher. The teacher competency document details teacher's competencies and activities aimed at maintaining and improving these competencies. The education professions act does not apply to trainers in the workplace context.

Professionalisation of teachers is a pivotal political issue, in which over the past few years substantial resources have been invested to raise professional standards. Policies, formulated in the action plan 'Teachers 2020: a strong profession' (*Actieplan Leraar 2020 – een krachtig beroep!*), are based on the following developments: shortage of teachers is expected in years to come, especially in secondary education; Dutch students' learning achievements are still above average in international rankings, but fail to reach the top five in any category. Student achievement is even declining for a number of indicators; there are concerns about teacher quality. The Action Plan Teachers 2020 contains three action lines. 1) Strengthening quality of current and future teachers by introducing a professional register. It will encourage teachers to maintain and improve their professional competencies. By 2018, registration will be compulsory for all educational staff. 2) Encouraging schools to become highly professional organisations by introducing an ambitious, results-based culture and by stimulating professional HR policies. This means: giving teachers sufficient opportunities for professional growth, providing avenues for professionalisation, showing appropriate appreciation for excellent teachers and rewarding it. School boards will receive additional funding to promote teachers to higher positions with appropriate remuneration. This is what is meant by improving the 'salary mix' (differentiation of responsibilities and remuneration). 3) Improving quality of teacher training courses, by educating new teachers to a higher level and to more exacting standards.

In addition to the action plan 'Teachers 2020: a strong profession' the ambition of teacher policy is laid down in the Teacher Agenda (*Lerarenagenda 2013-20*) and National Education Agreement (*Nationaal Onderwijs Akkoord*): this entails improving the quality of the current and future VET teaching staff. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science works with government agreements (*bestuursakkoorden*) which set out the priorities/ focus areas for the coming governing period. The ambitions for

VET teachers are elaborated with social partners in sector agreements such as Sector Agreement Professionalisation (*Bestuursakkoord Professionalisering*).

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

#### 1.4. Country-specific challenges in relation to teachers and trainers

Challenges as described in the Teacher Agenda (*Lerarenagenda 2013-20*) include:

- (a) the quality of the future students of teacher training institutes. A high rate of student-dropouts due to insufficient foreknowledge, motivation or incorrect image of the educational program and profession;
- (b) quality of teacher training institutes. To strengthen the quality of teacher training institutes, knowledge bases are introduced;
- (c) routes into teaching. More routes into teaching are stimulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (see below for an elaboration);
- (d) the beginning teacher. The dropout rate of beginning teachers is high. Measures have been formulated in order to guide beginning teachers during their induction phase (*inductiefase*);
- (e) the school as learning organisation. To stimulate the school as learning organisation, peer-review amongst teachers and teacher teams is encouraged;
- (f) competent and authorised teachers. There is a shortage of skilled/competent and authorised teachers. The professional register will stimulate teachers to maintain and improve their professional competencies.

Other VET specific challenges include:

- (a) VET is an increasingly ageing sector as the percentage of educational personnel over 55 years of age is relatively high;
- (b) another challenge includes the need for a responsive working population to meet the needs of an ever-changing labour market. People have to be flexibly employable, socially skilled, creative, and continue to learn throughout their lives, which will mean setting high standards for the vocational education system. To increase people's versatility, the Netherlands will have to transition from being a knowledge economy to what the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) terms a 'learning economy';
- (c) a learning economy will require skilled workers and citizens to be more resilient and flexible. Training students for the job market means not only ensuring that

they have the knowledge and skills they will need for a specific profession, but also preparing them adequately to acquire new knowledge and skills later in their careers in order to keep them flexibly employable. This requires a lot of the VET teaching force in terms of keeping one's own competences updated. It remains questionable whether VET teachers are up for this challenge;

- (d) routes towards the teaching profession in VET vary. The first and most 'traditional' route towards becoming a VET teacher is via the teacher training institute ('first career teachers'). The second and most used route is lateral entry (*zij-instroom*) into the teaching profession, intended for experienced people from industry or business ('second career teachers'). The result of varying routes is that teachers that are qualified aren't necessarily competent and that competent teachers aren't necessarily qualified.

### 1.5. Policy and practice developments of the last five years

The main policy and practice developments of the last five years include the following:

- (a) during 2010-15 the teacher policy agenda has been implemented. The policy agenda focused on the ambition of improving the quality of the current and future VET teaching staff and was presented in the Teacher Agenda (*Lerarenagenda 2013-20*). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science determines the 'what' of the ambition via measures/actions resulting from the policy agenda. VET institutions and the educational sector determine in what way they will realise measures and actions from the policy agenda, in short they determine the 'how'. Measures/actions from the Ministry are included with an financial impulse for VET institutions thereof;
- (b) a new supervision framework was introduced by the inspectorate of Education in 2012. New was the introduction of a seventh quality domain aimed towards the quality of teaching. Other quality domains include instructional process, examinations and certification, output, quality assurance, compliance with legislation and regulations, and financial continuity. With this framework the Inspectorate intends to introduce a new approach for the VET sector based on the experiences in recent years with proportionate supervision, the state of affairs of upper secondary vocational education and the development phase of quality assurance in MBO. The supervision of the Inspectorate is based on the principle of earned trust;
- (c) with the policy action plan 'Focus on workmanship 2011-15' (*Focus op Vakmanschap 2011-15*) new measures are introduced, primarily focusing on raising VET efficiency. The action Focus on workmanship (*Focus op Vakmanschap*) 2011-15 is paving the way towards attractive and more challenging vocational education and training (VET) and ensuring that VET education will continue to play its important role in society and economy in the Netherlands.

Measures to accomplish these goals include: combined learning pathway; improved quality of apprenticeship; revised qualification framework; experiment with crossovers; innovative public-private partnerships; excellence;

- (d) as a supplement to the action plan 'Focus on workmanship' an administrative collective agreement was reached between social partners, the 'National Education Agreement' (*Nationaal Onderwijsakkoord*). The National Education Agreement deals with specific agreements and mentoring compliance with those agreements and providing support for improving quality.

## 1.6. Main categories of teaching and training professionals

VET teaching professionals operate in the school context (VET institutions). Job categories include:

- (a) teacher (*leraar*);
- (b) student teacher (*leraar in opleiding*);
- (c) teaching assisting jobs (*onderwijsassisterende functies*), i.e. teacher assistant, care jobs (*zorgfuncties*), instructor (*instructeur*);
- (d) management with teaching task (*management met onderwijskundige taak*).

## 1.7. Country-specific definition of IVET

The Dutch term *Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs* (MBO) refers to upper secondary vocational education. Three structural elements determine this type of education: differentiation according to level, programme orientation and learning pathway: a) level: upper secondary vocational education has four levels corresponding to EQF levels 1 to 4. At which level students start depends on what prior education they have and the diploma obtained. There are no minimum admission requirements for levels 1 and 2 in this type of education; however, this will change in the near future. From summer 2014 onwards, only the level 1 programmes will be without a threshold. It is possible to move (upwards) within upper secondary vocational education and the highest level 4 (EQF 4) gives access to associate degree or bachelor programmes in higher professional education (HBO) offered by universities of applied sciences; b) programme: vocational training programmes are offered in four sectors; green/agriculture, technology, economics and care and welfare. There are a total of 237 dossiers that describe interrelated qualifications; there are 612 different diplomas; c) learning pathway: upper secondary vocational education has a school-based pathway (BOL) and a dual pathway (BBL). In the school-based pathway, students spend at least 20% of their time on work placement. In the dual pathway, students have jobs that they combine with a course of study (apprenticeship); this often involves four days' work a week and one day at school.

## 2. Teaching and training professionals in school-based settings

### 2.1. National and institution level legislation, strategic documents, implementation provisions that regulate or guide professional development of teachers and trainers

Strategic documents on national level are aimed at guiding the professional development of teachers. Documents include: a) 'Teacher 2020 a powerful profession' (*Leraar 2020 een krachtig beroep*). The Action Plan Teachers 2020 contains three action lines: to strengthen the quality of current and future teachers by introducing a professional register; encouraging schools to become highly professional organisations by introducing an ambitious, results-based culture and by stimulating professional HR policies; improving the quality of teacher training courses, by educating new teachers to a higher level and to more exacting standards. b) In 2009 an agreement between social partners in upper secondary education was reached on the introduction of a Professional Statute. In this Statute the internal right of say is established for the teacher and his team on pedagogical and quality issues in the institute. In combination with the Teacher 2020 action plan and the various sector collective bargaining agreements in VET (Sector Agreement Professionalisation), these developments are to produce a more modern HRM policy in the VET institutes.

VET institutions have relative freedom in their approach of professional development of teaching staff. For professionalisation activities, teachers are entitled 59 hours of training and professional development annually. The employee is responsible for justifying these hours to the employer. In addition, there are 107 training hours available per FTE per team. The team determines the content and allocation of hours among the employees concerned, in consultation with the employer. Trainers responsible for the work-based learning of students in companies (both in the apprenticeship and the work-based learning track) are trained by the Knowledge Centres for VET. These trainers should have didactic skills such as being able to instruct, guide, motivate and assess the students/apprentices. The Knowledge Centres regularly provide (commercial) courses to train these practical trainers in the various branches of industry.

### 2.2. Qualification and/or competence requirements VET teachers

Minimum requirements for teachers (in terms of competence) are regulated in the Professionals in Education Act (*Wet op Beroepen in het Onderwijs*) from 2006. The Act regulates the standards of competence for both teachers and others working in education-related jobs. This legislation requires the competent authority to maintain a teacher competency document for each individual teacher. The teacher competency

document details the teacher's competencies and the activities aimed at maintaining and improving these competencies. Competence requirements include: Interpersonal competence, Pedagogical competence, Subject knowledge & methodological competence, Organisational competence, Competence for collaboration with colleagues, Competence for collaboration with the working environment, Competence for reflection and development.

### 2.3. Entry into teaching force in VET

Teachers in upper secondary vocational education need to have either a second or first-degree teaching license or a teaching certificate. This teaching certificate requires a higher education diploma and can be obtained by following a work-based course of one year (640 study hours), covering both pedagogical and educational subjects. This means there are two main routes of teacher training for VET teachers:

- (a) the route of entering the teaching profession from university of professional education (second degree teaching license) or university (first degree teaching license). To be admitted to a higher vocational institute to attend a teacher training programme students must have a degree of higher secondary education from pre-university education, senior general education or upper secondary vocational education. Many programmes have additional requirements, mostly related to profiles offered in upper secondary education;
- (b) the route of entering the teaching profession from another career background (*zij-instromers*). Adult students coming from other professions and part-time students (older than 21) undergo an admission interview. If the assessment is positive they can reduce studies to two years, but have to fulfil a job as a salaried - but still not qualified - teacher in a school. These persons need to: have a higher education diploma or demonstrate previously acquired competences on a higher education level; have three years of work experience; and within two years will complete a personal route offered of 3 to maximum 24 months to gain a regular degree (PDG; *pedagogisch-didactisch getuigschrift*) at a teacher training college or to attend a part-time course at a private institute providing the same technical qualifications as the standard course. Approximately 25 percent of teachers that recently entered VET took this route.

In 2012 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science announced three measures with the aim of more and better trained VET teachers: (a) introduction of two graduation tracks (general education and vocational education) at second degree teacher training institutes; (b) increasing the quality of persons entering the teaching profession from another background (*zij-instromers*) by introducing quality criteria for the personal route; (c) addressing new target groups by introducing the educational minor 'Vocational education' aimed at university of professional education students outside of the teacher training institute.

## 2.4. Available data on numbers, qualifications, CPD of VET teachers and trainers

Systematic data on qualifications, CDP of VET teachers is limited. VET institutions own some data, however a limited amount of this data is centralised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Availability of steering information on national and institute level is below the desired level. This is caused by:

- (a) the use of different definitions on employment in publications;
- (b) the use of various job categories of teaching staff;
- (c) inflow and outflow of teaching staff is not insightful;
- (d) the education and thus qualification of older teachers is unknown.

VET teaching staff in numbers (reference date October 1 2014): 30.570; VET teaching staff in fulltime equivalent (FTE) (reference date October 1 2014): 24.438. In charge of these data is the Education Executive Agency (DUO; *dienst uitvoering onderwijs*), part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. No data are available on numbers, qualifications, CDP of VET trainers in the workplace.

## 2.5. Requirements for and organisation of CPD of VET teachers

VET institutions have relative ample freedom concerning the recruitment policy of CDP of VET teachers, however the following requirements are in place:

- (a) requirements in the collective agreement between social partners. For professionalisation activities, teachers in upper secondary education are entitled 59 hours of training and professional development annually. Employees are responsible for justifying these hours to their employer. Also, there are 107 training hours available per FTE per team. The team determines content and allocation of hours among employees concerned, in consultation with the employer. Teachers in higher professional education make individually personal development plans agreement with their employer. At least 59 hours of professional development time is available for teaching staff to realise their PDP. Employees also receive a personal budget for professional development of 0.8% of their annual salary;
- (b) requirements in national law. The Professionals in Education Act (*Wet op Beroepen in het Onderwijs*) from 2006 requires the competent authority to maintain a teacher competency document for each individual teacher. The teacher competency document details the teacher's competencies and the activities aimed at maintaining and improving these competencies. Standards of competence. In addition to the standards of competence, a professional register will be introduced. It will encourage teachers to maintain and improve their professional competencies. By 2018, registration will be compulsory for all educational staff.

### 3. Apprentice tutors or practical training instructors in companies (work-based settings)

#### 3.1. Legislation, strategic documents, and implementation provisions and requirements for qualifications and/or competences

The 1996 national law on VET states that companies offering work placements to VET students has to be accredited as venues for learning through an accreditation process by Foundation for Cooperation between Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB). One of the criteria for accreditation is the availability of a trained supervisor or tutor (*praktijkopleider*). Tutors must be qualified at least at the same level for which he/she is supervising work based learning. Furthermore, tutors must be able to share their working expertise with students and have to be pedagogical competent (validated by diplomas/certificates).

The education professions act does not apply to trainers in the workplace context. Therefore, no legally based competence requirements for apprentice tutors or practical training instructors in companies exist. However, at Centres of Expertise on VET (*Kenniscentra*) competence profiles for apprentice tutors or practical training instructors are in place. However, the function and role of the Centres of Expertise on VET is in transition.

#### 3.2. CDP provisions and organisation of CDP for apprentice tutors or practical training instructors

Trainers responsible for work-based learning of students in companies (both in apprenticeship and work-based learning in school based track) are trained by Centres of Expertise on VET (*Kenniscentra*). These trainers should have didactic skills such as being able to instruct, guide, motivate and assess students/apprentices. Centres of expertise regularly provide (commercial) courses to train these practical trainers in various branches of industry. There is no national, or standard program for tutors, but most have identical topics, concentrating on didactic skills: instruction, motivation and assessment skills.

As indicated above, the function and role of the Centres of Expertise on VET is in transition. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science announced a restructuring of the Centres of Expertise on VET. It is yet unclear what the consequences of this restructuring are in terms of professionalisation of apprentice tutors or practical training instructors.

## 4. Cooperation and partnerships between the world of education and the world of work in support to teachers and trainers' CPD

### 4.1. Arrangements or examples of practice that provide opportunities for teachers to update their knowledge of the latest developments in their industry or occupation(s) and refresh their relevant competences, for in-company trainers to acquire or improve their pedagogical competences or to be informed about qualification requirements in their field

An arrangement is 'training in the school' (OidS; *Opleiden in de School*), regional partnerships between VET institutes and teacher training institutes. The practical component (practice of VET institutes) plays an important part in the training of future VET teachers. Teacher training is becoming increasingly work-based. Hence the aim of 'training in the school' is to increase the practical component of second degree teacher training institutes in cooperation with VET institutes. OidS initiatives are subsidised by Ministry of Education, Culture and Science with the arrangement 'reinforcing collaboration VET institutes and teacher training institutes. Eight formal partnerships exist, next to many informal partnerships. Recently the knowledge network training in the school (*kennispunt OidS*) has been formed, an initiative of the Netherlands Association of VET Colleges (*MBO Raad*). The association represents all government-funded colleges for upper secondary vocational education and training and adult education in the Netherlands.

An additional way in which teachers can stay up to date with recent developments at work is by means of teacher apprenticeships (*docentstages*). VET institutions are free to organise these apprenticeships.

## 5. National and EU-funded projects to support VET teachers' and trainers' professional development

A national funded project to support VET teachers' professional development is 'training in the school' (OidS; *Opleiden in de School*), regional partnerships between VET institutes and teacher training institutes. The practical component (practice of VET institutes) plays an important part in the training of future VET teachers. Teacher training is becoming increasingly work-based. Hence the aim of 'training in the school' is to increase the practical component of second degree teacher training institutes in cooperation with VET institutes. OidS initiatives are subsidised by Ministry of Education, Culture and Science with the arrangement 'reinforcing collaboration VET

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## 6. Conclusions

The report of the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) refers to the arising quality problem concerning (future) teachers. A shortage of teachers is expected in years to come, especially in secondary education; Dutch students' learning achievements are still above average in international rankings, but fail to reach the top five in any category. Student achievement is even declining for a number of indicators. Concerns exist about the (future) level of VET students, hence the Netherlands invest in improving the quality of teachers. To this end arrangements have been developed and implemented in the action plan 'Teachers 2020: a strong profession' (*Actieplan Leraar 2020 – een krachtig beroep!*). Measures/actions from the Ministry aimed at improving the quality of the current and future VET teaching staff are included with a financial impulse for VET institutions. For three reasons it should be seriously questioned to what degree these steering mechanisms are effective at improving the quality of the current and future VET teaching staff. The first reason is that in the decentralised system in the Netherlands, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science stimulates teachers' CPD with (relatively) soft steering mechanisms. It's up to the VET institutions whether and how they take up these mechanisms. Effectiveness of CPD instruments strongly depends on the specific context in which they are implemented. The second reason is that the policy agenda on teachers of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science covers only part of the problem. The policy agenda is largely aimed at teachers teaching general subjects and less at teachers teaching vocational subjects. Measures targeted at teacher training institutes only apply to students trained to become teachers on general subjects, as there are no teacher training institutes for occupations such as baker and barber. With regard to VET this is problematic, as a big part of teachers enter the VET teaching profession as a second career teacher: 52% of teachers have a second degree teaching license and 24% of teachers gained a PDG (teaching certificate) because they entered the teaching professional from another career background. CPD policy measures do not reach these second career teachers. The third reason is that there is limited monitoring of policy measures. Hence approved effectiveness is hard to establish.

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