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Snoek, Marco

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6 The Teaching Profession in the Netherlands: From Regulative Structures to Collaborative Cultures¹

Marco Snoek, professor of Teacher Learning and School Development
Centre of Applied Research in Education
Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

Introduction

In the Netherlands, as in every country in the world, the quality of education is an issue of major concern, as education is a key factor in maintaining and developing the economic and social stability of a country. It is a key responsibility of the government to maintain and develop that quality. After all, educational quality is not a static concept, as education needs to adapt itself continuously to changes and new needs in society.

This chapter focuses on the way in which educational quality and development are supported in the Netherlands and the role teachers play in these. Three perspectives on that role are presented, one in which teachers are recipients from government measures and follow system structures and regulations, one in which individual teachers are seen as the key actors in defining and realizing educational quality and one in which educational quality is considered the result of close collaboration of teams of teachers.

The chapter shows how government and local policies in the Netherlands have moved from the first to the second perspective and are now, slowly, evolving to the third perspective.

Educational Quality and Innovation as a Result of System Structures

The governmental responsibility to guarantee the quality of the educational system and, through this, to safeguard the education of every pupil in the Netherlands is a complicated responsibility. It raises the question whether and how the ministry can control the educational practices provided by 234,000 teachers in 7700 schools for primary, secondary and vocational education.

In the 70s and 80s, the general policy of the government was based on quality control by regulations issued by the ministry. Educational quality was regulated by a policy of central laws and detailed regulations, with little room for decisions made by schools and teachers. These laws and regulations focused on the finances and personnel policies of the schools, on general demands regarding the quality of education and on centralized conditions of employment. Governmental control dealt with the goals and exam criteria and with the number of teaching hours per subject. Curriculum innovations were initiated by the government using the RDD model (Research-Development-Diffusion). In this model, research has the task to develop knowledge that can be applied in realistic educational situations, this knowledge is translated into teaching practices through mediators like curriculum experts and educational publishers who develop teaching materials and curricula, and finally the results are diffused to teachers who are supported in the use of the materials through teaching guidelines and in-service training (Broekkamp & Van Hout-Wolters, 2007).

¹ To be published in *The Dutch Way in Education. Teach, learn & lead the Dutch way* (May 2017).

In the 80s and 90s, quality control based on government regulations was considered ineffective, as this approach reduced school principals to administrative managers with little influence on the quality of education in their schools, it slowed down educational innovation and it hindered schools to be flexible and adapt their teaching to local needs. In the 90s, a process of deregulation was started in which responsibility for the quality of teaching, finances and organization of education was shifted to the school authorities (local authorities or independent school boards). Basic idea is that decisions on the process and organization of teaching in a school need to be taken at institutional level, to enable adaptation to local circumstances. Within the governance of education, a shift was made from steering by rules and regulations to steering by goals and accountability on outcomes. In this shift towards accountability of school authorities, a stronger role was given to the Inspectorate of Education.

This change increased the responsibility of school authorities to set up innovation, finance and personnel policies. Educational policies became based on the understanding that the government was responsible for the 'what of education' – the aims and content of the curriculum – through curriculum and exam guidelines, and that schools were responsible for the 'how of education' – the pedagogics, didactics and logistics of teaching (Commissie Parlementair Onderzoek Onderwijsvernieuwingen, 2008).

This shift in responsibilities and division of tasks created an increase of the autonomy of school authorities, it made the schools the focal point of educational policies, it created space for more variation and diversity between schools, and it inspired schools to be more competitive and innovative. At the same time, it increased the responsibilities of school boards to find answers to societal needs and to adapt to changing circumstances. This shift fitted well within the development of the 'Polder Model', the social-economic strategy that was dominant in the Netherlands in the 90s and the first decennium of 2000, in which developments in society were seen as a collaborative responsibility of the government and social partners. The Polder Model is characterized by *'organized and autonomous groups that are embedded in political structures that recognise – even depend upon – the legitimacy of these particularistic institutions and provide a political space for negation and compromise between sovereign authority and subsidiary institutions'* (De Vries, 2014, p. 101). With the increased autonomy of school boards, national bodies of school leaders and school boards were created and strengthened that could act as counterparts for the ministry in finding consensus on national education policies. In this way, safeguarding educational quality became a shared responsibility for the ministry and schoolboards.

This shared responsibility was also applied to the quality of teachers. The quality of initial teacher education was a main responsibility of the teacher education institutes (universities and universities of applied sciences), but in the 90s and first decennium of 2000, school boards became partners in school-based teacher education, while the ministry kept close supervision on the quality of newly qualified teachers graduating from teacher education and initiated several improvement measures regarding the quality of teacher education programmes. The quality of teachers after graduation became the full responsibility of school boards: to create support programmes for novice teachers, to stimulate continuous professional development, to organize teacher appraisal, etcetera.

However, despite this process of deregulation – with a reduced role of the ministry to control the work of teachers – many teachers felt that their autonomy actually decreased. Given the fact that school boards were held accountable for the outcomes of the learning processes within their

schools, the boards felt a responsibility to intervene in educational processes within their schools and to control the work of teachers. The same steering paradigm that was used by the government was now being used by the school authorities. This also impacted in-service professional development of teachers. School boards tried to align professional development activities to processes of school development and set up school-wide professional development strategies and programmes. On the one hand, these strategies and programmes aimed to strengthen coherence within the school and alignment with school development, while on the other hand, again, individual teachers felt that their autonomy regarding their professional development was reduced.

The government, too, intervened with the work of teachers. To stimulate and safeguard the quality of teaching at system level, the ministry stimulated the use of regular performance testing of pupils based on standardized tests, so teachers could work more data-driven and compare the results of their students to results of students in other schools. A national policy was introduced to stimulate school authorities to promote 'learning outcome oriented' teaching in their schools (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2011).

As the RDD model was no longer officially used, schools had more freedom to experiment with new innovative approaches in teaching, shifting responsibility to pupils. Sometimes, these experiments were teacher-driven, sometimes school board-driven to increase the competitive attractiveness of the school for parents and students. In response to the sometimes 'wild' experiments, some universities² started to promote the notion of 'evidence-based teaching'. They wanted teaching and innovations in teaching to be based on empirical evidence of effective practices that resulted from educational research based on high academic standards according to the golden standard of randomized control tests (CPB, 2016). This focus on evidence-based teaching could be considered a revival of the RDD model, where the outcomes of academic research define the work of teachers in the classroom (Biesta, 2007).

Dilemmas

In this perspective, the quality of education is mainly considered as something that is defined by national policy makers at ministries, by local policy makers within school boards or by educational researchers. Teachers are expected to meet external standards in their work with pupils. In the opinion of many, this led to a 'deprofessionalization' of the teaching profession, as teachers were reduced to deliverers of ready-made curricula, written down in school methods and controlled by standardized tests.

In response to this approach, a group of critical teachers was formed in the 90s³, voicing complaints about the reduced autonomy of teachers, and criticizing authoritarian school boards and the way in which they used educational specialists from outside to develop curriculum concepts and neglected the professionalism of teachers (Verbrugge & Verbrugge-Breeuwsma, 2006).

This critical response from teachers to national and local policies that focused on system structures fits into the Dutch anti-hierarchical and individual culture. In the Netherlands, there is little respect

² E.g. the Top Institute for Evidence Based Education Research of Maastricht University, University of Amsterdam and University of Groningen.

³ Beter Onderwijs Nederland, Better Education Netherlands

for hierarchical authority. A higher position does not automatically lead to respect from people lower in the hierarchy, and many teachers were suspicious of the introduction of independent school boards led by CEOs. The introduction of company cars with chauffeurs for CEOs in some very large school boards didn't fit in a country where the prime minister takes a bike to the Parliament buildings and where a king tries to mingle with the people as often as possible. As a result, decisions are often criticized and teachers who disagree with them, tend to simply ignore them, using a practical veto within their own individual and isolated teaching practices.

Educational Quality and Innovation as a Result of Professionalism of Individual Teachers

Renewed Attention for the Role and Quality of Teachers

The focus on structures and control led to many complaints from teachers. The call of teachers to restore their professional freedom and to be regarded as the key professionals in teaching and learning was heard widely from 2006, leading to a report on the teaching profession (Commissie Leraren, 2007).

According to the report, the professional role and authority of teachers should be restored by raising salaries, stimulating further professional development of teachers and connecting that professional development to career steps. Additionally, the profession as a whole needed to be strengthened by the creation of one professional body that could represent the voice of the teachers both to the outside world – e.g. as a formal partner in negotiations with the ministry – and to the inside world of the profession – by setting professional standards for the members of the profession.

The proposals from the report were picked up by the government and translated into a number of initiatives (Ministry of Education, 2007). Salaries were raised and new career steps were introduced. A bursary system was introduced in 2008 (the '*Lerarenbeurs*'), in which every teacher could apply for a one-time subsidy to do an in-service post-graduation course, mostly at master's level. This subsidy covered study costs and study time (up to one day a week), with a maximum duration of three years. In 2010, a professional teachers' body was created (the '*Onderwijscoöperatie*'⁴), in which several teacher collectives (teacher unions and professional associations of subject teachers) collaborated. The Onderwijscoöperatie had four main aims: to represent the profession in meetings with other stakeholders like the government and educational employers (on other issues than employment conditions), to strengthen the self-awareness of the profession, and to safeguard the quality of its members and strengthen its public image. By creating the Onderwijscoöperatie, the Ministry stimulated the introduction of a new stakeholder within the debates on the teaching profession, representing the voice of teachers. In addition to the teacher unions, mainly concerned with working conditions for teachers, the Onderwijscoöperatie was developed as a body of, by and for teachers focused on the content and the development of the profession.

From the start, two formal tasks were given to the Onderwijscoöperatie: to propose standards for the teacher profession ('*bekwaamheidseisen*'), and to create a professional register for teachers, based on their professional development activities ('*Lerarenregister*').

Additionally, the government initiated a programme to stimulate the establishment of academic development schools ('*academische opleidingsscholen*'). The academic development schools are

⁴ www.onderwijscooperatie.nl

partner schools to teacher education institutes and engage in a combination of educating teacher training students, involvement in practice-oriented research and stimulating professional development of their teachers. As such, the academic development schools are similar to the concept of PDS, professional development schools (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

These initiatives had a strong impact on the teaching profession in the Netherlands. Through the Lerarenbeurs, the number of master-qualified teachers and, as a result, the number of teachers that had basic research skills and an inquiring mind set, increased. Several academic development schools set up their own research agenda and initiated studies on topics that were connected to dilemmas teachers encountered within their daily practices or to the innovation agendas of the schools. Even though most academic development schools collaborated closely with universities and teacher education institutes, research was no longer the exclusive domain of researchers. Through the Lerarenbeurs, the autonomy of teachers regarding their professional development was restored: teachers could apply for a subsidy, and the school was expected to facilitate this by reducing the teacher's teaching hours.

A Focus on the Individual Professional

As a whole, the call to strengthen the autonomy and quality of the profession was translated into initiatives that supported the autonomy and quality of the individual professional. Teachers could only apply for the Lerarenbeurs as an individual, which resulted mostly in individually motivated choices for a specific master's programme without much consultation with colleagues or school principals. As a consequence, teachers in master's programmes often initiated individual graduation research projects which were to a limited extent embedded within the school (Snoek & Volman, 2014). Within some academic development schools, research was seen as one of the possible specialization areas within a teacher's career, and therefore considered as an individual task. The Lerarenbeurs also gave teachers the chance to think about their individual career tracks, as it created opportunities to gain access to higher salary scales.

Moreover, the teacher register strengthened the focus on the individual professional. From the start, it has been set up as an instrument to account for individual professional development. The teacher register has no relation to school development processes and the main focus is on keeping track of individual participation in formal continuous professional development (CPD) activities like courses, trainings and conferences. Powerful informal collaborative learning activities like lesson study (in which teachers collaboratively plan, observe and evaluate lesson designs with a strong focus on the activities and the learning outcomes of pupils), peer feedback or other collaborative activities of teams of teachers that stimulate professional development were more difficult to register.

Teachers with innovative ideas who wanted to redesign teaching and learning processes within their classes and school, often depended on support from their school principals. Many teachers felt that this support was limited, leading to frustration. This was recognized by the ministry and the Onderwijscoöperatie, who set up an innovation programme '*Onderwijspioniers*', which enabled teachers with innovative ideas to apply for grants to put those idea to practice. The main aim of the program was to strengthen the profession as an innovative profession, to foster innovative ideas of individual teachers and to stimulate innovation within schools.

Dilemmas

With more focus on the professional quality and the professional autonomy of teachers, many teachers felt recognized. The profession became more attractive through the possibility of career steps, opportunities for further education at master's level, a stronger diversification of teacher tasks, including practice-based and teacher-led research, and opportunities to engage in the development of the profession by joining activities of the Onderwijscoöperatie. Teachers who felt constricted by the limited opportunities that were offered by their schools, could engage in activities for professional development and innovation outside their schools. Through master's programmes, teachers could develop their teacher leadership capacities. Many teachers felt challenged to publicly account for their professional quality through the Lerarenregister⁵.

At the same time, this created tensions. The focus on system and school structures had frustrated collaborative professional cultures in schools. In many schools, individual accountability for teaching and for learning outcomes dominated. This individual accountability easily led to professional uncertainty where interference by other teachers was felt as threatening. In many schools, teachers were not used to intervention in their teaching by other teachers. A proposal from the Dutch Education Council to recognize excellent teachers in schools, give them a temporary salary raise and reduce their number of teaching hours so they could support colleagues (Onderwijsraad 2011), was met with cynicism and criticism by the unions and many teachers. In their opinion, it would divide teacher teams and, as there were no clear criteria available to define 'excellence', it would create arbitrariness within schools. This illustrated the Dutch non-hierarchical culture in which people react allergically to people standing out. This allergy was strengthened by the top-down structures of the system approach, which has led to a strong division between 'us' (teachers) and 'them' (management). Many teachers had become very sensitive to anything that could come close to professional scrutiny, either by the school principal or by colleagues. This allergy to interference in the practice of teaching, often lead to professional loneliness of teachers (cf. Vermeulen, 2009). The possibility as an individual teacher to apply for a Lerarenbeurs to start a master's study, strengthened the opportunity to follow personal ambitions and learning needs, but also led to professional development that was disconnected from school or team ambitions and school policies (Snoek & Volman, 2014). The same disconnection exists for the Lerarenregister, as it was only designed as an instrument for keeping track of personal professional development, not linked to teams or schools.

With the lack of collaborative professional cultures, the development of individual professionalism of teachers through master's programmes and through engagement in teacher inquiry and research and in innovation projects had limited impact and created new problems. Often, teachers could only impact their own practice and not reach into the practice of colleagues. Teachers who developed their teacher-leadership capacities and felt that they could contribute to school- or department-wide innovations, often lacked a position to do so within the school. In schools without a culture of shared leadership, they didn't feel recognized and lacked opportunities to put their leadership qualities to practice. As a result, the increased focus on teacher professionalism sometimes led to frustration, as school cultures didn't change (Snoek, 2014).

⁵ In 2014, 18,000 teachers voluntarily registered. In 2016, 33,000 teachers were registered (Visser, 2016).

Educational Quality as a Result of Collaborative Cultures

Towards Collaborative Professional Cultures in Schools

The dilemmas around the isolated role of teachers within schools became gradually recognized. The awareness that on the one hand, effective development and innovation in schools should not be externally imposed, but should be initiated and adopted from within the school, while on the other hand, effective development and innovation in schools could not be a matter of individual teachers, led to a stronger focus on collaborative professional cultures within schools. At several levels, activities were initiated to strengthen collaborative professional cultures in schools and to initiate and support teacher-driven school development and innovation.

The support program *Onderwijspioniers* recognized that innovative plans of teachers could only be successfully implemented within schools with the help of the school principal and colleagues. Within this programme, more attention was given to engaging school principals (by inviting them to programme sessions) and to the development of teacher leadership qualities (e.g. on implementation issues like how to gain grass root support from colleagues, how to engage colleagues, and how to get support from school principals). In the follow-up of *Onderwijspioniers*, the Teacher Development Fund (the '*LerarenOntwikkelfonds*') founded in 2015, it is also possible for teams of teachers to send in innovation proposals. Alongside *Onderwijspioniers*, the *Onderwijscoöperatie* initiated pilots on peer feedback, in which teachers visit each other's lessons to analyse and discuss the quality of teaching, to give feedback or to develop lessons collaboratively. With the implementation of the Bachelor-Master structure in higher education, new master's programmes have been introduced in the area of education. The most prominent one was the master's programme on Learning and Innovation. Since 2008, this programme has been offered at several universities of applied sciences. Key aim is to support teachers to become leaders of innovation and change within their schools. The curriculum covers not only topics concerning students' teaching and learning and research skills, but also theories on organization, change, innovation and on collaborative teacher learning. But most importantly, the programme contributes to a change in the professional identity of teachers, shifting their mind set from being an individual subject teacher to being a member of a wider community and a change agent in schools. Through this master's programme, a strong impulse was given to the creation of collaborative and innovative school cultures.

Within such post-initial master's programmes, initiatives are taken to involve school principals more intensively in the master's programmes and professional development of their teachers. Meetings are being organized for teachers in the master's programme and their school principals, school principals are engaged in the thesis research projects, schools are stimulated to enrol several teachers as a group into the programme, and educational institutes are experimenting with tailor-made master's programmes that are adapted to the context and needs of a specific school or school board (Snoek, Enthoven, Kessels & Volman, 2017). Through these initiatives, stronger connections are made between the aims of the master's programme, the individual aims of the participating teachers and the development agenda of the school as a whole.

To stimulate school principals to link professional development of individual teachers more closely to the development and innovation in the school as a whole, several support programmes have been started, focusing on professional development of school principals on issues such as human resources, teacher development, innovation theories, and collaborative cultures.

This has resulted in many school-level initiatives to stimulate collaborative professional cultures in schools. Almost 500 schools have joined an initiative to create innovative cultures in schools (*'Stichting Leerkracht'*⁶) by teams focusing on clear and shared goals, collaborative preparation of lessons, peer observation and feedback, and feedback from pupils. 150 schools joined a government-supported innovation programme (*'InnovatieImpuls Onderwijs'*⁷) in which the teaching process was defined as a collaborative process with forms of team teaching, the use of teaching assistants, the use of teacher development teams in which teachers from different schools took shared responsibility for the preparation of learning materials, and co-teaching by pupils (Snoek, Sligte, van Eck, Schriemer & Emmelot, 2014). Within academic development schools, post-initial master's programmes and initial teacher education programmes, research is increasingly seen as an intervention within a school, leading to a stronger focus on quality criteria for research projects that include quality criteria for effective system interventions, rather than quality criteria solely for academic research (cf. Anderson & Herr, 1999). As a way of collaborative professional development, lesson study has become increasingly popular, in which teachers plan, observe and evaluate lesson designs with a strong focus on the activities and the learning outcomes of pupils.

The Voice of Teachers

Maybe the most important impulse for the development of collaborative professional cultures came from teachers themselves. While the focus on national or local structures to safeguard quality of education had alienated many teachers and led to a lot of complaining and frustration, it also created room for dissenting voices of teachers who recognized their own agency and responsibility to contribute to improvement in schools. Some of these teachers had the opportunity within their own schools to initiate new approaches or to create new cross-curricular subjects together with colleagues. Others, who felt isolated in their schools, looked for likeminded colleagues outside their schools and created national movements like Teachers with Guts (*'Leraren met Lef'*⁸) or professional associations for teachers in vocational schools. Although these groups represented much smaller groups than the traditional teacher unions, they voiced a different message, emphasizing the positive contributions that teachers could and should give to improving teaching and learning in schools. Because of this different message, several of these movements have been recognized by the ministry of education as important voices in the debate on improving the teaching profession and improving education.

Within the process of strengthening the voice of teachers, social media such as blogs and twitter, played an important role. Especially through twitter, a small but growing group of teachers have become important representatives and role models for the profession and are widely heard by colleagues, politicians and the minister. Some of them became national spokespersons, appearing at conferences and TV-shows or publishing books (e.g. Evers & Kneyber, 2015).

Through social media, teachers organized events where teachers from different schools could meet. Local groups of teachers started to organize professional development events, to which they invited colleagues with interesting initiatives, to share innovations and to inspire fellow teachers. Without

⁶ www.stichting-leerkracht.nl

⁷ www.innovatieimpulsonderwijs.nl

⁸ www.lerarenmetlef.nl

the need for support from school principals or school board, teacher education institutes or in-service training providers, teachers in Rotterdam started regular local meet-ups which are gradually copied by teachers in other cities (Pijl, 2017). In Amsterdam, a local group of primary school teachers⁹ organized local debates with school principals and local politicians, through which they became recognized as important stakeholders in the development of local education strategies.

Towards a Moral Profession

One of the issues that keeps coming up in teacher-politician debates is the complaint that teachers feel restricted in their professionalism by a regime of educational standards, exams and testing. This regime leaves little room to deviate from the curriculum, to adapt to the needs and interests of pupils, or to bring issues from current events to the classroom. Moreover, it leads to 'teaching to the test'. This general discontentedness with the focus on measuring educational outcomes became more focused through the work of Gert Biesta who emphasized three key domains for education: qualification, socialization and subjectification (Biesta, 2014, [see chapter 500 in this book](#)). The work of Biesta resonated strongly in the Netherlands, as many teachers felt that he gave them the words and concepts to voice their concerns more effectively and to start to formulate alternatives. Concepts like Bildung, the moral purpose of teachers, and child-centred pedagogies are fuelling debates amongst teachers. These concepts give teachers tools to rethink their daily work, to re-evaluate their main purpose as teachers and to start looking for ways that are more closely connected to their passion for their jobs as teachers. At the same time, many teachers and schools realize that creating a more balanced curriculum – recognizing aims regarding qualification, socialization and subjectification – cannot be a task for individual teachers, but needs to be taken up collectively and school-wide. The Dutch freedom of education and the open system of school choice make it possible for schools to redefine their curricula and to develop new educational paradigms that try to strike a new balance between the three aims of education. Several experimental schools in which teachers try to reshape education collaboratively, have opened their doors to pupils and parents emphasizing the development of individual talents, creativity, collaborative skills, curiosity, 21st century skills, etcetera¹⁰. In such schools, pupils are given more freedom to set out their own challenges, and the development of social community and the fostering of individual talent are emphasized.

The Development of Teacher Leadership in the Netherlands

In the past five years, there has been a strong shift in the image of the teaching profession, both in the outside world and within the profession itself. The self-awareness of teachers has grown and the voice of teachers is heard. This has led to many new initiatives by teachers within schools and across schools. This shift is not yet system-wide and varies between schools, but it is growing. Several policy initiatives that have been mentioned in this chapter have reinforced these developments.

⁹ www.meesterschappers.nl

¹⁰ See for example www.schoolofunderstanding.nl, www.agoraroermond.nl, www.vinseschool.nl, www.spinoza20first.nl.

The Lerarenbeurs has been an important mechanism to increase the number of master's qualified teachers in schools. These teachers have— to a greater or lesser extent —developed skills for teacher leadership and have strengthened their moral understanding of the profession. They often act as initiators of innovation and of networks in and across schools.

Many European countries have chosen to increase the quality of the teaching profession by raising the initial qualification level of teachers to the master's level. Compared to this, the strategy of the Netherlands to focus on stimulating post-initial master's programmes for teachers seems rather weak. However, the combination of these programmes and the Lerarenbeurs has been highly effective. First of all, post-initial master's programmes define the teaching profession as a profession of lifelong learning. Teachers can— or are expected to— follow new qualification courses after a number of years of teaching. Secondly, the impact of post-initial master's programmes can be very strong. Within these programmes, participants can combine new insights on educational concepts and theories with five, ten or even more years of experience, creating a powerful mixture to initiate changes in school practice. As these teachers have already an acclaimed position within the school hierarchy, they are able to use their thesis research as an intervention that can reach beyond their own subject and classroom (Snoek, 2009).

The LerarenOntwikkelfonds creates opportunities for teachers to get support, both financially and in time, for new initiatives. Through this, the teaching profession becomes more creative, innovative and attractive, and new impulses for school improvement are initiated.

The Lerarenregister is still somewhat problematic. On the one hand, it creates opportunities for teachers to develop a stronger professional identity and professional pride by making their professional development more explicit to the outside world. On the other hand, many teachers are suspicious of the register and feel that it is a new government initiated and imposed mechanism to exert external control over the profession. For this sentiment to be reduced, the register needs to be changed from a tool for recognizing individual professional development to a tool for collaborative professional dialogue and development, so that it can be more meaningful for teams of teachers. All these initiatives contribute to the development of teacher leadership, not to be interpreted as formal hierarchical leadership or as leadership based on individual roles or positions, but as community-based leadership, which is embedded in a team of teachers, with roles of leaders and followers possibly changing over time (Murphy, 2005). Within several schools in the Netherlands, teachers and school principals explore the implications of this type of shared leadership for their schools. At the same time, this teacher leadership requires a new identity and new qualities of teachers. This need is recognized in teacher policies, in teacher support programmes and in master's programmes in the Netherlands. And the challenge to develop that new identity and those new qualities is taken up by many teachers, individually and collectively.

Educational Quality and Innovation as a Shared Responsibility

In this chapter, I have shown how the understanding of the dynamics of educational quality and change, and of the role of teachers in this, has developed over the years in the Netherlands. In the deregulation process in the 80s and 90s, responsibility for educational quality and innovation was shared between the ministry and school boards. From the 90s, the crucial role of teachers was acknowledged as key players in safeguarding quality and initiating and designing innovation. And

finally after 2000, the recognition grew that this process cannot be a task for individual teachers, but requires collaborative cultures in and across schools.

This development has led to a strong belief that educational quality and innovation cannot be defined or directed by the government, but that they need the intense involvement and commitment of all key stakeholders – government, school boards and teachers. As a consequence, the governance structure in education needs to be based on collaborative governance, characterized by dialogue, consensus and collaboration between the key stakeholders (Working Group Schools, 2015).

Although the government has a constitutional responsibility to safeguard the quality of education, there is a strong realisation that this cannot be imposed top-down. It can only be realized when the ministry, schoolboards and teachers individually and collectively, understand that they all have a role and responsibility in this process. In the Netherlands, this awareness has grown in the past twenty years but still needs strengthening. The awareness of mutual interdependency of ministry, school boards and teachers and the willingness to take and share responsibility might be one of the key secrets of 'the Dutch way in education'.

Key Questions

- How can we create a system of collaborative governance within education in which each stakeholder is committed and responsible; and what does this require from each stakeholder?
- How can teachers be prepared and supported to be leaders of a curriculum which extends beyond the 'measurable' and includes the 'valuable'?
- How can leadership of teachers be developed and strengthened and what does this require from school cultures and structures?

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Author

Marco Snoek is professor of Teacher Development and School Innovation at the Centre of Applied Research in Education of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences in The Netherlands. He has been involved in many innovation projects in teacher education in the Netherlands and has published various publications in Dutch and English on teacher education, teacher development, and teacher leadership. From 2005, he has been a member of the European Commission working groups on teachers and teacher education as part of the Education & Training 2010/2020 agendas, representing the Netherlands.

Contact: M.Snoek@hva.nl.

