

## Sound Supervision

### Recommendations on the memorandum on Variety and Assurance

**The Education Council calls for sound supervision of education. The Education Inspectorate must have a clear and active role in monitoring the basic quality of educational institutions, and should encourage them to attain the highest possible quality standard.**

*22 October 1999*

This advisory report is a response to the memorandum on *Variety and Assurance* (Variëteit en waarborg) by the Minister (Hermans) and the State Secretary for Education (Adelmund). In the memorandum, they make proposals for a new balance between the autonomy and the accountability of schools. The proposals include strengthening the role of Education Inspectorate.

The Education Council believes that the key responsibility of the Education Inspectorate is to monitor compliance with the legal requirements. This monitoring role has a high priority, even in a period of deregulation and increasing autonomy for schools. Derived responsibilities include encouraging an increase in the quality of education and evaluating and reporting on this.

#### **Maintain ministerial responsibility**

The Education Council is unclear about how the principle of ministerial responsibility for the supervision of education is compatible with the proposal to look into increasing the autonomy of the Education Inspectorate. The Education Council believe that responsibility for the operation of the Education Inspectorate should remain with the Minister. The Inspectorate should remain a deconcentrated central government agency.

#### **Establish a framework and criteria**

This new generation of supervision will require a sound legal framework within which the Education Inspectorate can operate. The professionalisation of supervision could be improved, for example, by introducing basic starting requirements and professional standards for inspectors, and by making periodic training compulsory.

#### **Observe only one type of quality requirement**

The memorandum proposes that the Inspectorate should be able to confront educational institutions with two types of quality requirements: requirements that carry funding sanctions and requirements that do not carry funding sanctions. The latter category, for example, includes additional requirements (not established by law) for the pedagogical climate at school, or the teaching behaviour of teachers. The Education Council believes that this is confusing for schools, and proposes that the inspectorate should only issue its quality assessment on the basis of a single type of quality requirement, preferably one that is defined in the relevant education act and is subjected to periodical reviews.

The Education Council wishes to extend certain aspects of the current quality requirements so that the inspectorate can assess more facets of the quality of an individual school. In particular, we are thinking of requirements in the area of learning standards, the available learning time, the improvement of the expertise of school leaders and teachers, the functioning of internal consultation structures, and the effective deployment of staff and material resources.