



Colophon

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Education Council
Nassaulaan 6
2514 JS The Hague
tel +31 (0)70 3100000
fax +31 (0)70 3561474
email secretariaat@onderwijsraad.nl
www.onderwijsraad.nl

Educational Infrastructure. Recommendation of the Education Council issued to the State Secretary of Education, Sciences and Cultural Affairs, dated July 2001.

The recommendation (in Dutch) can be ordered by using order number 20010341/565

Summary of recommendation

The Educational Infrastructure

On 5 July, the Education Council presented the minister of education, culture and science with its advice on the educational infrastructure in the form of a report titled *Serving the School's Needs*. The minister had asked the council to provide advice on the entire educational infrastructure considering the current situations of the teacher

education programmes, the structure of educational provision and research.

The support provided to the schools by the organisations within the educational infrastructure relates to education provision, school guidance, curriculum development, assessment development, continuing education and (education) research.

To prepare for this advice, the Education Council commissioned the Institute for Social-Scientific Research and Policy Advice (IVA) in Tilburg to conduct a study into the history of the (policy) developments regarding this structure and into the current state of affairs. This study, entitled "The Educational Infrastructure", was published concurrently with the advice.

The advice request does not contain a problem definition. However, this is not to say that there would be no problems with regard to the support functions in relation to the processes in the schools.

The council observes that over the past years the primary and secondary schools and the vocational education and adult education institutions (here after referred to as the schools) have developed to the extent that they should be able to exert more influence over their use of supporting services.

In addition, there is a considerable lack of equivalence between the institutions which offer these support services. This particularly concerns the relationships between the general support services institutions (especially the school guidance services and the national pedagogical centres) and the teacher education programmes. There are no or hardly any productive relationships between these institutions.

The fragmentation of and segregation within the support structure is beginning to create a hindrance to the increasingly professionalised schools. As a result, co-creation efforts are hardly likely to bear fruit.

In order to resolve the problems which have been observed the council advises to develop a combination of market co-ordination and supportive government interventions. The market acts as a co-ordination mechanism and the government intervenes to support the development, performance and continuity of this mechanism. The underlying idea is that all the players in the demand and supply education market will more than in the past be held accountable (by the government in particular) for identifying opportunities and fulfilling their responsibilities. As a result, the client roles for the schools, the equivalence of the provider roles for the support services and the roles for the government in the entire process of optimal alignment between the parties involved, can be explored more fruitfully. This approach, which is in keeping with developments

already under way, should in the opinion of the council be applied more explicitly and systematically.

As to the initial teacher education programmes, schools should also be given a bigger say in the process. There are opportunities here for 'co-productions' between schools and teacher education programmes or for the schools to establish their expectations of teacher education programmes. The council draws the line at the allocation of public funds to schools to enable them to play a steering role, a stance mainly motivated by the quality watchdog role which the government plays in the education sector.

The above assumes a transition process from directing provision to co-ordinating the market. Some initiatives have already been developed here, but there are still a great many requirements to be satisfied before this situation is reached. The government plays an important role in this process. The requirements to be fulfilled are, for instance, more budgetary freedom for the schools, a stronger client positioning for the schools (if necessary) and enhanced transparency in the provision of services.

Once a market co-ordination situation has been reached, the government is to fulfil an important role in ensuring that the situation which it has promoted will be maintained.

In addition to creating a better client positioning for the schools, the suppliers should be offered similar opportunities to improve their positioning as providers. Thus, it is essential that knowledge is shared and that this knowledge-sharing would be a condition for the allocation of funds. It is conceivable, for instance, that in the collaborations between the national pedagogical centres / the Centre for Educational Innovation (CINOP) and teacher education programmes the innovation funds for the teacher education programmes and the innovation funds and think-tank funds for the national pedagogical centres / CINOP are to be jointly used for the promotion of knowledge-sharing. The objective is to offer both organisation types equal provider positions.

Finally, in its advice the council pays attention to the government in its role as market player. The government fulfils this role when major and costly (innovation) projects are undertaken. The council recommends that these projects be put out to public tender. The school's degree of control over the development and implementation of such innovations should be an important allocation criterion.

The same argument applies to major, more or less permanent tasks commissioned by the government such as the construction of examinations. These too should be put out to tender periodically.

Actual participation of schools should be an important allocation criterion.

Recommendations

In this advice the council's starting point is the school's control over the prerequisite conditions determining its performance. The school should be hindered as little as possible by resource constraints. To achieve this objective, modifications in different areas are to be implemented.

Recommendations for the government and the schools

- Give schools more control over, in the sense of a bigger say in, the supporting services and products they need, in this case the functions within the educational infrastructure;
- Different forms of control are conceivable such as exercise of contract powers, transfer of financial resources, introduction of (partial) co-production duties and transfer of (partial) duties.

Recommendations for the government and the providers of support services

- Further strengthen the current client orientation of the support services institutions;
- Promote the development of equal starting positions for providers of support services to (initial and post-initial) teacher education programmes and to general support institutions;
- To achieve this run joint activities to promote knowledge-sharing, using innovation funds (teacher education programmes), think-tank funds (national pedagogical centres / the Centre for Educational Innovation CINOP) and government tenders. The national pedagogical centres and CINOP are to play an important part in the sharing of knowledge with the teacher education programmes;
- Develop new innovation strategies to enable co-creation between the parties involved which allow for knowledge present in the schools to flow to the teacher education programmes and support services;
- Ensure that in a self-regulatory process integral product information and services information respectively is made available. Provider organisations and teacher associations may be able to play an important role here.

Recommendations for the government as market co-ordinator

- Ensure adequate purchasing power and budgetary freedom for the educational establishments;
- Enhance, where necessary, the client skills of school and teachers;
- Provide client-relevant advice and information;
- Enhance the transparency in the provision of services;
- Support transition process initiatives to equalise the positions of support services and products such as the teacher education programmes and the pedagogical centres;
- Stimulate the participation of teacher education programmes in education innovation initiatives;
- For the government knowledge-sharing between the national pedagogical centres, the school guidance services and the teacher education programmes through joint activities is a requirement for subsidy allocation. Innovation funds (teacher education programmes) and think-tank funds are to be jointly used;
- Monitor the demand and supply processes.

Recommendations for the government as market player

- Put major projects and assignments out to public tender; all the providers of support services and products, including the teacher education programmes, should be able to submit expressions of interest.
- Use as an important allocation criterion the extent to which schools involved in projects have a say in the development and implementation of these projects.