

THEMATIC PROBE. Primary Education: an International Perspective

Country Description: Netherlands

Note: This country description was compiled from the *INCA* Archive (www.inca.org.uk). Additional comments were received from Dr Jos F M Letschert, Head of the Primary Education Division at the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) in the Netherlands.

1. Organisation of school phases=

How are the early years and primary phases organised? (3-5yrs? 5-11yrs?)

Primary level education in the Netherlands lasts for eight years and caters for four- to 12-year-olds. Although education does not become compulsory until the first school day of the month following a child's fifth birthday, most four-year-olds attend their local primary school (*Basisschool*).

Primary education is divided into two cycles:

- the first cycle, Years 1 to 4, children aged four to eight years (the first year is optional) is referred to as 'junior classes'; and
- the second cycle, Years 5 to 8, children aged eight to 12, is known as 'senior classes'.

Although there is universal state-funded education provision for four-year-olds in primary level education, none is specifically provided for children younger than four. To fill this gap, the Netherlands relies heavily on playgroups, many of which receive some government funding, although parental contributions towards costs are required in addition. Playgroups cater for children aged from two or three years. Day nurseries also exist catering for children aged from six weeks to four years.

What are the points of transfer between phases?

Pre-compulsory playgroup (or day nursery)	Primary education	Lower secondary education
2- to 4-year-olds (0- to 4-year-olds)	4-12 years of age *	12-15 years

* Although education does not become compulsory until age five, most four-year-olds (98 per cent) attend primary school.

2. Locus of control

What degree of control over curriculum content and other aspects of primary schools exists at the national, regional, local and/or school level?

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

The Dutch education system combines a unified education system, regulated by central laws, with decentralised administration and devolved management of schools.

Overall responsibility for public- and private-sector education lies with the State, represented by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

The Ministry is responsible for the structure and funding of the system, the management of public-sector institutions, inspection and examination procedures and financial aid to students. It determines:

- standards for the establishment of public- and private-sector schools;
- types of schools;
- the length of courses;
- compulsory and optional school subjects;
- the minimum and maximum number of lessons and their length;
- any class size standards;
- the examination syllabus and national examinations; and
- the qualifications, salaries, status and teaching hours of teaching staff.

In principle, funding for all levels and types of education comes entirely out of central government funds. Under the terms of the Constitution, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science funds all schools - public- *and* private-sector - on an equal basis, provided that they observe statutory conditions and regulations. Teachers in public- and private-sector schools have the status of public servants and are paid by central government according to the same salary scales and terms of employment.

Some 70 per cent of Dutch students attend a wide variety of private-sector schools which, within the statutory framework, have freedom regarding curricular content, method, material and the appointment of staff who agree with the school's religious or ideological tenets. The private-sector education system includes denominational schools (Catholic, Protestant etc) and non-denominational schools organised according to specific ideological or pedagogical principles, such as Montessori schools.

Since the early 1980s, the administration and management of schools has been devolved to the *competent authorities*, which have greater accountability to the local community. The municipal authorities are the local authorities for all schools in the area. They are also the *competent authority* (see below) for public-sector schools, whilst the founding body or association of each private-sector school is the *competent authority* for that school.

Local authorities (municipalities)

The municipal authorities have a dual role. As local authorities for all (public- and private-sector) schools in the area, they:

- ensure compliance with the Compulsory Education Act, with statutory regulations and funding provisions;
- ensure that there are enough schools, by setting up public-sector schools or approving the establishment of private schools;
- ensure that students are not refused admission because of their beliefs;
- plan and coordinate primary school accommodation, facilities and equipment and appoint additional staff;
- ensure maximum use of secondary school buildings; and
- account to the municipal council for management activities.

In addition, as *competent authorities* for public-sector schools they have the responsibilities outlined below.

Competent authorities

The *competent authorities* for public-sector schools are the municipal authorities and, for private-sector schools, the administration boards, associations or institutions which established them. There are approximately 6,300 *competent authorities*. The *competent authority* has responsibility for the governance of the school within the statutory framework in the following areas:

- management and administration of financial resources;
- use of school buildings;
- appointment and dismissal of teaching and non-teaching staff;
- student admission and expulsion;
- school hours;
- preparation of the school plan (see below) and annual activity plan (for approval by the Inspectorate); and
- curriculum, timetable (number of lessons per compulsory or optional subject) and choice of teaching materials.

The school plan provides an insight into the teaching and developmental objectives of the school, the choice of subject matter and teaching methods, the organisation of the school and the way in which student progress is assessed and reported. The school plan is submitted to the Education Inspectorate for its approval (see below).

The day-to-day management of primary and secondary schools may be delegated to the headteacher, but ultimate responsibility rests with the *competent authority*.

All schools also have a participation council, in which parents can make known their views about the school's policies. Most also have a parents' council or a parents' committee.

The Inspectorate

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science is charged with the inspection of education. This role of ensuring compliance with statutory regulations is carried out, under the Minister's authority, by the Education Inspectorate.

Curriculum

As indicated above, the national Ministry of Education, Culture and Science sets out the minimum requirements that a school must meet in order to receive government funding. This includes attainment targets which indicate the minimum that a school must teach in each subject of the curriculum. In formulating such guidelines for the curriculum, the Minister is required to consult the Education Council (a permanent advisory board) and the Consultative Committee for Primary and Secondary Education (POVO), comprising elected representatives of the competent authorities, headteachers, teachers, students and parents. In addition, the Minister receives advice from the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) which has a remit to provide the Government with independent, professional advice on curriculum development and implementation.

The curriculum for each school is drawn up, in accordance with the above guidelines, in the form of a school plan featuring teaching and development objectives. Each year this overarching, strategic school plan is further developed into an annual activity plan, setting out the students' activities for the year in question and the duties of the teaching staff, as well as the teaching time, holidays and other free days. The school plan and the activity plan must be submitted to the Inspectorate for approval.

Are there any shifts in the distribution of control between these different levels? (Is it possible to assign percentages to each level, to reflect circumstances in each country?)

Evaluation and inspection

At the national level, there is a tendency towards increased autonomy for the national Inspectorate (see above). Legislation passed in mid-2002 aimed not only to make the Inspectorate more independent, but also to increase its role from one of purely monitoring education, to one which encompasses contributing to quality improvement in schools. As a result, the Inspectorate will now monitor the following aspects of quality:

- Outcomes of education
 1. the results of the learning process;
 2. the progress in the development of students.

- Organisation of the learning process
 1. curriculum content;
 2. the pedagogical climate;
 3. the school climate;
 4. the didactical approaches to learning and teaching;
 5. the didactic behaviour of teachers;
 6. the care taken of students; and

7. the content, level and conduct of tests or exams.
(Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

If, as a result of its monitoring, the Inspectorate concludes that there is a lack of quality in a school, specific areas for improvement are identified and a subsequent inspection visit takes place to ensure that the process of improvement has begun. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

At the local level, institutional self-assessment is becoming increasingly important, particularly in view of the fact that parents are increasingly aware of the standards of education provided in individual schools. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

Curriculum

For a long time, there were no official regulations with respect to the content of education in the Netherlands. In nursery schools and elementary schools (the former separated parts of what is now a continuous system of primary education for children from four to 12 years of age), teachers were expected to secure children's sensory development, and to teach arts and crafts, arithmetic, language, history, geography and a few other subjects. There was no legislation; what teachers taught was a matter for individual schools. However, as the pace of change in society quickened and knowledge was subsequently useful for a decreasing period of time, schools began to make their individual choices from an increasingly wide range of options, and education in individual primary schools began to vary more than previously. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

At that time, it was felt necessary to specify the content of primary education beyond a simple list of subjects. In 1993, for the first time, core objectives (attainment targets) were formulated and introduced (see below). These specified the compulsory minimum content or subject matter which had to be taught in every primary school. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

Subsequently, these first core objectives were critically evaluated and reviewed on the basis of experience in schools and, in August 1998, revised core objectives were introduced. A five-year cycle of review is now in place. That is, the first set of core objectives/attainment targets were in use for the period 1993-1998; the second set is currently in use for the period 1998-2003. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

Core objectives describe the main outlines of the education to be provided in primary education, but further detail is necessary for their implementation. As a result, the core objectives are further developed in textbooks in a variety of ways, and teachers choose whether or not to use such textbooks. There is no central prescription about the way core objectives are to be converted into schemes of work; this is left to the discretion of schools and teachers. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

The third revision of the core objectives/attainment targets is currently taking place. Implementation will begin in 2003. The committee established to look at this review

has proposed that the core objectives should allow more autonomy for individual school policy and priorities in matters of the curriculum. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

Curriculum policy is no longer exclusively an educational issue and schools are not the sole stakeholders in education. Curriculum policy is strongly linked to social, political and economic factors and related to contemporary trends such as: internationalisation, developments in technology, changes in the labour market, increasing cultural diversity, and an increase in social differences. Moreover, curriculum policy is, more than ever before, subject to the influence of parents, pressure groups, and students themselves. There are many stakeholders outside the school walls. In the Netherlands, there is also a growing phenomenon of 'community schools', 'broad schools' or 'window schools', that is, schools which are not restricted to the formal programme and school hours, but whose windows and doors are open to the community. Such schools provide a place where children can stay throughout the day, where parents can meet, where learning is a natural process for different community groups, and where society and school meet. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

At what intervals is the curriculum reviewed? (eg are there established review cycles?)

The primary level curriculum is expressed in terms of compulsory subjects, overall time allocation and attainment targets. These attainment targets (core objectives) are reviewed every five years and have been in place for the periods 1993-1998 and 1998-2003. Consequently, implementation of revised attainment targets is expected in 2003 (see above).

Additionally, at the school level, it is expected that curriculum review should be a continuous process. However, any review is very strongly tied to the revision of textbooks, which currently have a life cycle - in primary education - of approximately ten years. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

3. Curriculum content

What does the statutory curriculum consist of?

The following subjects must be taught to all children in primary school, where possible in an interdisciplinary form:

- Dutch;
- arithmetic/mathematics;
- English (at least in the final two years, children aged 10 to 12);
- a number of factual subject areas, usually under the title 'environmental studies', including aspects of: geography, history, science and the environment, technology, and social/civics education (which includes, at this level, social and life skills such as road safety, self-reliance and healthy behaviour);
- physical education; and

- 'expressive activities', including the use of language, music, drawing, art and crafts, and drama (play and movement).

**What other aspects of the curriculum/teaching in schools are statutory?
Are time allocations for subjects statutory?**

Schools in the province of Friesland must also teach Frisian (unless they have applied for and successfully received dispensation).

All public authority schools must make arrangements for students to receive religious or ethical instruction during school time (up to 120 hours per year) if requested by parents. (Where such instruction is provided, individual students can opt out and, in such cases, study other activities during this time.)

There are also cross-curricular objectives which aim to develop children's general skills. The cross-curricular core objectives are grouped around the following themes:

- attitude to work;
- working according to a plan;
- use of a diversity of learning strategies;
- self-image;
- social behaviour; and
- new media.

In addition, all schools may teach subjects additional to those which they are required to teach by law (see above). Through the school's participation council (see above) parents can influence these subject areas.

Children from a non-Dutch background may, under certain circumstances, have lessons in their own language. These lessons are held in addition to the normal curriculum, that is after school hours or as part of an extended school day for such students.

Time allocation

Schools are free to decide how much time they devote to each subject area, but must provide a minimum number of teaching hours each year (see below). The school plan, drawn up by the *competent authority* of the school (see above), sets out the distribution of teaching over the eight years of primary education. In general, during the first two years of primary school (aged four to six years), children receive an average of 22 hours of lessons each week. During the remaining six years of primary education (aged six to 12), they have an average of 25 hours of lessons each week. Children receive a maximum of five-and-a-half hours of lessons a day (excluding breaks) although Wednesday afternoon is usually free. There are no rules as regards the length of lessons, but in general they last for around 60 minutes. See below in addition.

Are there statutory timings for the length of the school day/week?

The school year runs from 1 August to 31 July, and the minimum number of school days per year is 200. The school week runs from Monday to Friday, but Wednesday afternoon is generally free.

The Government lays down the minimum number of hours each year children should spend in school. Younger children (in the first four years of primary school, the first cycle - aged four to eight years) are not required to spend as many hours at school as older children. By law, children must receive at least 3,520 hours of teaching during this first cycle and at least 4,000 hours during the second cycle (Years 5 to 8, aged eight to 12).

The school day normally runs from 8:30 or 9:00 am to 3:00 or 3.30 pm, with a lunch break lasting an average of one to one-and-a-half hours. Although the school board decides when school will start and end each day, in consultation with parents, children may not receive lessons for more than five-and-a-half hours each day.

What changes have there been to the statutory/non-statutory elements of the curriculum?

See below regarding trends in the curriculum.

What government/other initiatives have been introduced? What has been their impact?

Specific initiatives concern the pre-compulsory phase of primary education (four- to five-year-old children) and for children younger than four in pre-compulsory early years provision. Pre-schooling, as a whole, is an issue and targeted programmes have been developed for specific groups of underachievers, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those with language problems. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

What other trends are emerging in curriculum development? (eg new subjects/areas of learning being introduced)

Computers are being used increasingly in primary schools. However, schools decide for themselves what role computers play in the curriculum. They may use them chiefly as sources of information, or might prefer to use them as word processors.

Proposals from the committee charged with reviewing the core objectives/attainment targets for implementation from 2003 include a focus on a new method of organisation of curricular content. The committee has suggested that, instead of the traditional set of subjects (detailed above), content should be organised around the following areas: Dutch language, mathematics, civics, science, art education, and physical education (PE). (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

There is some dissatisfaction with the current organisation of educational content, which stems from a belief that its 'disconnectedness' means that it has a lack of

relevance for children. There is also a belief that, in terms of the organisation of learning and teaching, educational practice does not pay enough attention to ensuring greater coherence in content, ensuring challenging learning environments and to closer links to the individual abilities of children. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

What other levers may be having an impact on curriculum content? (eg international studies: PIRLS, IEA, PISA, TIMSS)

The influence of international studies such as TIMSS or PISA is essentially indirect. The results influence the work of textbook authors and curriculum developers, which subsequently influences educational practice. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

4. Organisation of the curriculum

What are the common features of curriculum organisation in the primary phase? (single subjects? planning subjects as 'topics'?)

It is generally recommended that subjects at primary level should be taught in an interdisciplinary way.

Many of the subjects taught at primary school do not exist in isolation. The school will therefore try to make the links between different subjects apparent. Topics from history and geography might, for instance, be linked to current events. These subjects are sometimes taught together under the name 'environmental studies'. See below in addition.

How are subjects labelled?

The curriculum is expressed in terms of compulsory subjects, sometimes known as 'learning areas', an overall time allocation (a minimum annual number of teaching hours), and attainment targets/core objectives.

What examples are there of 'areas' rather than subjects?

What examples are there of clusters of subjects (eg Humanities, made up of geography and history) being brought together?

The current primary curriculum includes two specific subject areas which encompass a variety of individual disciplines. These are:

- 'environmental studies': usually includes aspects of geography, history, science and the environment, technology, and social/civics education (which includes, at this level, social and life skills such as road safety, self-reliance and healthy behaviour); and

- 'expressive activities': the use of language, music, drawing, handicrafts/art and craft, and drama/play and movement.

What are the common features of timetabling? (eg weekly lessons in each subject, English and mathematics taught daily)

Although, in primary education, there are regulations regarding the length of the school day, school week and school year (annual number of recommended teaching hours), there is no prescribed timetable. Individual schools allocate the available time to the learning areas. In spite of this freedom, there are few significant differences between schools, because tradition and the textbook steer the process of time management. Consequently, in most schools, there are weekly lessons in each subject. From time to time there are project activities where individual subject content is integrated across the topic. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

Alternatives in the use of time and the organisation of curricular content can be found in schools such as those following the Petersen, Montessori or Freinet philosophies. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

5. Assessment

What is the purpose, nature and scale of assessment? (eg end of phase assessment, statutory, published test results, optional, national, local, timed tests, teacher-assessment)

The primary education attainment targets define, in general terms, the minimum targets that schools should aim to achieve in their teaching and in terms of the knowledge, understanding and skills that children are expected to acquire by the end of their primary schooling. The assessment and monitoring of progress towards these targets is not prescribed by the authorities, but is the responsibility of the individual school and its teachers as described in the school work plan.

Continuous assessment is now the general rule. It has primarily a diagnostic function, namely to help guide children through the system.

Continuous assessment

Teachers keep a record of how each child is progressing by monitoring homework, oral tests in class, and pieces of classwork, for which a mark is often given. In addition, many schools use standard tests to measure and compare performance. These tests are often supplied with the textbooks or other teaching material used for a particular subject.

National primary school leaving test

Following the eight-year primary school programme, in the final year of primary school - children aged around 12 years - a primary school achievement test is used in around 80 per cent of schools. This attainment test, devised by the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), and often known as the 'CITO test' (its official

name is the 'Final Test of Primary Education'), can be an important factor in determining the type of course most suited to a child following their primary school education (see below). Use of the 'CITO test' is optional for schools.

Other CITO tests

In addition to the 'Final Test of Primary Education', CITO also develops tests to measure performance throughout primary education. The 'Student Monitoring System tests', which are optional for teachers and schools, provide a means of evaluating the progress of children in all the years of primary education, and give the teacher an overall picture of the standard reached by his/her class and by individual children. Schools are increasingly able to compare their results with other schools. Comparison with other schools in this way can help to highlight areas where improvements in teaching are required. CITO tests for pre-school children (aged three onwards) and specific tests for children in the first two years of primary education (aged four to six years) are also available.

Reports

Most schools issue a report on each child's progress three times each year, detailing performance in each subject or part of a subject/subject area. Schools are free to choose whether they award marks/grades or indicate children's level of achievement in some other way, for example, by describing their progress and results in writing. Where numerical marks are given, a scale of 1 to 10 is generally used, where a mark of 1 is 'very poor', while 10 is given for 'excellent'.

Consequences of assessment

The results from continuous assessment, national tests where these are used, and/or the 'CITO test' are used by teaching staff to make recommendations to children and parents on the type of secondary education best suited to an individual. Parents and children do not have to follow this advice. Secondary schools do, however, generally pay considerable attention to such advice, even though they too do not have to act on it.

Continuous monitoring of progress occasionally results in a child repeating a year. This is usually avoided as far as possible and only one to two per cent of children nationally repeat a year each year.

Student assessment and system evaluation are closely related. Primary education assessment results are also used to evaluate system goals.

How far is the curriculum driven by assessments? (eg evidence of teacher preparation for testing, 'booster' or 'catch-up' classes in schools)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

6. Teaching profession/training

What changes can be identified in initial teacher training programmes?

Teachers in Dutch primary schools are generalists. They attend a four-year training course at a Training College for Primary Education (PABO). PABO students may specialise in the teaching of younger or older primary children (Years 1 to 4, aged four to eight years, or Years 5 to 8, aged eight to 12 years). On completion of their training, they become a class teacher and are expected to teach all subjects of the primary curriculum. Exceptions are sometimes made for subjects requiring specific training or a special teaching approach, for example movement and music. Some primary schools have specialist teachers who only teach those subjects throughout the school. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

There were previously three distinct categories of teacher in a primary school: the director (head), the class teacher and the subject teacher. Today, there is an increasing differentiation of functions and tasks with, for example, some teachers in primary schools undertaking roles as counsellors with specific responsibility for children with difficulties throughout the school, or others taking on responsibilities as ICT-specialists. Class teachers sometimes devote part of the week to tasks and functions in which they have specialised. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

As a result of the above trend, in initial and in in-service teacher education, there is a focus on task differentiation. One example is the role of coordinator for a specific subject or educational issue. There are also two retraining programmes focusing on the roles of language coordinators and mathematics coordinators. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

See below for information regarding the 'Storyline' approach in initial teacher training in the Netherlands.

In view of the current teacher shortage in the Netherlands, a pilot scheme has been launched to attract people from industry, science and technology, or with other backgrounds, to teaching. A specific training programme has been developed to assist such applicants in developing the necessary expertise. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

What kinds of continuing professional development/on-going training are provided?

See above regarding in-service teacher education for subject coordinators.

To what degree are teachers'/schools' planning subject to scrutiny?

To what degree are teachers using electronic formats to plan?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

7. Pedagogy

Which teaching approaches are dominant or developing a higher profile, and which are receding? (eg collaborative work, whole-class instruction)

The most dominant teaching method is whole class instruction, but this alternates with several other ways of working, including group work and topic studies. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

Increasing attention is being paid (especially in teaching training institutes) to the (originally Scottish) model of integrating content, known as the 'Storyline' approach to learning and teaching. This is based on constructivism and on context based theories about interactive learning and teaching. It is intended to increase student motivation. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

What is the impact of ICT in teaching practice? (eg use of electronic whiteboards, intranets, managed learning environments/ local grids)

The use of ICT is increasing in Dutch primary schools, but there is a lack of good educational software and educational publishers do not consider the market to be significant enough to warrant intensive development. The Government is promoting the *Kennisnet*, which is an Internet-based electronic environment for teachers and students (see below). (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

To what degree are teaching approaches focusing on developing thinking skills, creativity and building on children's learning styles?

Primary schools are required to foster the development of social, cultural and physical skills, including the skills of expressing oneself, listening to others, working independently, and problem solving (either independently or in groups).

The Primary Education Act states: "primary education secures the continuous development of the children in its care". Freely interpreted, this means that the task of primary education is to ensure that the cognitive, social, emotional, physical and creative competencies of children are steadily developed and increased. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

In the current core objectives (attainment targets), there are expectations with regard to learning styles. The cross-curricular objectives are grouped around the following themes:

- attitude to work;
- working according to a plan;
- use of a diversity of learning strategies;
- self-image;
- social behaviour; and
- new media. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

8. Resourcing

How far are resources to support teaching made available via government/central/local agencies?

How far, and in which subjects, are resources statutory/ recommended/ subsidised? (eg textbooks, courses, lesson plans for teachers, web-based materials)

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science prescribes the educational targets to be attained (attainment targets), but does not prescribe - or produce - specific teaching materials.

Textbooks

Textbooks (for children, and teaching manuals for teachers) are produced by commercial publishers and purchased by schools on the free market. Schools are free to determine precise curriculum content (in pursuit of the attainment targets) and, consequently, to choose appropriate teaching methods and materials. Teachers and headteachers select the textbooks to be used in class.

Primary teachers in the Netherlands may occasionally produce their own materials, but in by far most cases, teachers make use of materials developed by educational publishers. (Dr Jos F M Letschert, National Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.)

The National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) produces a consumer guide to teaching materials to help schools compare existing and new products.

The SLO is also commissioned by the Government to analyse textbooks for mathematics and the Dutch language on a regular basis. The results are published on the Internet. The analysis uses the following criteria:

- Are the demands of the core curricular objectives addressed in the textbook?
- What is the didactic quality (that is, how useful is the textbook as a teaching and learning aid)?
- Does the textbook allow for differentiated teaching within a group?
- Are there specific indications for evaluation and assessment?
- How does the textbook deal with the complexity of the multicultural society and the different social and cultural backgrounds of children?
- What does the textbook say about gender issues, equity and equality?
- How manageable is the textbook for the teacher?
- How much time is required to complete the tasks required by the textbook?

School textbooks are the property of the school and are loaned to children free of charge.

Other resources

The 'Knowledge Network' (*Kennisnet*) is an Internet-based electronic network for the education sector. All schools are linked to it, giving them access to the Internet. The *Kennisnet* website is available at <http://www.kennisnet.nl>.