

>> HOW TO INFLUENCE NATIONAL POLICIES ON TEACHER EDUCATION? THE DUTCH POSITION
POSITION PAPER OF THE DUTCH ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS (VELON) ON EDU-
CATING TEACHERS IN THE NETHERLANDS²

'Teacher Educators Matter'¹

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Preface

Although teacher educators play a crucial role in maintaining and raising the quality of education by strengthening the professional quality of teachers, they are hardly recognized as participants in national debates on education and on teacher policies.

Neglecting the voice and contribution of teacher education can frustrate teacher educators and can lead to blind spots in educational policies.

To strengthen the participation of teacher educators in policy debates on the quality of education and of teachers, it is necessary that teacher educators have a voice. To be effective, this voice can not just be an individual voice, but teacher educators need to have one shared voice.

Therefore teacher educators need to have a shared identity. An association for teacher educators can create such an identity.

The Dutch Association for Teacher Educators VELON is such an association. Existing for more than 25 years and with more than 1000 individual members, the VELON focuses on the quality of teacher educators.

The main activities of the VELON include:

- Publication of a journal for teacher educators (4 issues a year)
- Annual two-days conference (400-600 participants)
- Irregular publications
- A professional standard for teacher educators
- A professional register for teacher educators including an assessment procedure

In 2005-2006 the VELON developed new ambitions to strengthen its activities and to create a more professionalized organization. Part of the new ambitions was to strengthen its involvement in policy debates. VELON's participation in debates on teacher education was rather incidentally.

However, to be taken seriously, it is necessary to have a clear position.

For that reason the VELON started a process to write a policy statement on teacher education in Spring 2005. Draft versions were discussed during the annual conference in March 2005 and during the general assembly in June 2005. Based on the feedback received, a final policy statement was made.

Since associations for teacher educators and also the ATEE as a European association for teacher education, might have a similar ambition, it might be useful to study the Dutch policy statement.

For that reason we translated the document. The full version can be found below.

The impact of the document can not yet be evaluated, since the document was finalized in September.

However, we welcome comments from colleagues and are interested in similar documents from other countries.

The importance of teacher educators

Justification

Both the quality of education and the success of educational innovations are largely dependent on the quality of the professional in the classroom. In recent years this insight has led to increasing attention for the role and the quality of teachers and, as logically follows, the quality, role and function of teacher education institutes within the education system as a whole.

Recent developments have led to new questions about the education of teachers. For instance: with new standards of competence for teachers in place, what will the consequences be for the curriculum and organization of existing teacher education programmes? Increasing autonomy within schools has led to new ideas about the influence and involvement of

schools in teacher education. Both major and minor innovations in schools lead to questions about teachers' involvement in these innovations and the competences this involvement will require. All of these are issues which teacher educators and teacher education institutes can not afford to ignore.

As an organization of professionals the Dutch association for teacher educators VELON is committed to the enhancement of the professional quality of teacher educators. We define teacher educators as anyone who makes a substantial contribution to the professional development of teachers, whether initially or post-initially. In this respect we do not distinguish between educators appointed at universities, colleges of higher education or schools. The VELON is an association of individual teacher educators. Therefore it is independent from schools, universities and colleges and their institutional interests; it is primarily concerned with offering professional support to educators. In working towards improving the quality of these educators, the VELON hopes to contribute to improving the quality of teacher education.

An important element in this is the relationship between educators within teacher education institutes and those within schools.

The processes of school development and educational innovations as described here will have consequences for both the quality of teacher educators, and the role that teacher education institutes and teacher educators play in these processes themselves.

In this document we analyse today's situation and recent developments in the area of educating teachers. In this we take the teacher educator's perspective, focussing both on the need for professional quality of the teacher educator and on the context and conditions for his work. From that perspective we comment on recent developments and debates within teacher education in The Netherlands. These comments are translated into recommendations for the government, schools, institutes for teacher education and for teacher educators as a professional group. In this way we hope to contribute to the development of teacher education. At the same time, we define the agenda for the association in the coming years.

Analysis: Teacher education in The Netherlands

Education: A shared responsibility

Compared with other countries, the quality of education in the Netherlands is high (for reference, see European studies such as PISA and the OECD monitor 'Education at a Glance' as well as the recent report by the Education Council of the Netherlands 'De Stand van Educatief Nederland'). However, this is no reason for complacency. Results still differ from school to school. Additionally, social developments require schools to remain constantly alert. This is equally the case for teacher education institutes. After all, they are responsible for preparing future teachers for their role in a dynamic society.

In recent years teacher education institutes and teacher educators have demonstrated alertness in a variety of areas. In some aspects, teacher education institutes are among the most innovative organizations within higher education, both in the Netherlands and in comparison with teacher education institutes in the rest of Europe. These aspects include:

- developments towards greater flexibility in curricula and the recognition of prior and non-formal learning, which make it possible for professionals from other disciplines to stream efficiently into teacher education programmes;
- developments in sharing responsibility for teacher education with employers (in other words, educating

teachers within schools),

- a shift to education based on the actual needs of schools; and
- the development of new types of teacher education programmes.

All of these developments have led to the questioning of traditional assumptions behind teacher education and to the exploration of experimental educational concepts.

Still, as recent inspections within teacher education institutes have shown, there is much room for improvement. In this respect teacher education institutes differ little from other educational institutions and from schools. One school or programme may be more advanced than the other, and change is often complex, difficult and slow.

The challenges which the Dutch educational system presently faces will require the cooperation of all parties involved. This cooperation is all too often hampered by the existence of conflicting interests and the unnecessary division of responsibilities. School development and educational innovation, the education of educational professionals and their continuous professional development, and development of knowledge with respect to learning of pupils and learning of teachers, they are all interrelated and should enhance each other. Cooperation, recognition of each others' expertise and a common agenda for schools, teacher education institutes, government and other supporting bodies will eventually prove more productive than compartmentalization and competition.

The many projects facilitating partnerships between teacher education institutes and schools on school based education of teachers are a good context for intertwining processes of education and training, school development, school innovation and research and diffusion of knowledge that is available in all these areas to all who may benefit from it.

Teaching as a profession

A teacher's main task is to stimulate and support pupils' learning processes. In doing so, teachers have to be both a specialist at the content level and an educator and instructor. Over the past few years there has been great discussion and disagreement about which of these two elements deserves most attention within teacher education programmes. However, process and content can never exist one without the other: that which is to be learned is wholly dependent on the learning process itself; conversely, no learning process can take place if there is no material to be learned. However much the balance or accent may shift, for instance based on a teachers' interests and affinity, the two can never be separated within one teacher.

A teacher's intense involvement in pupils' development places great demands on him. Teaching not only depends on cognitive expertise (the ability to use knowledge and skills with respect to the content to be taught and with respect to the teaching and learning process), but also on attitudes, personality, beliefs, identity and involvement. All of these elements taken together determine the quality of the teacher.

In discussions on teaching, increasing attention is being given to the development of a wider scope of professionalism. Teachers are not only key players in pupils' learning but also in developments within schools. In a process set in motion by the Commission for the Future of Teaching (1993), competence requirements are being described explicitly in such a way that the teacher's role is not limited to the directing of learning processes of pupils in the classroom. Together, teachers determine the pedagogic climate within a school; they are the driving forces of school development processes and play key roles in the development of norms and values and the enhancement of social cohesion. Education, then, is

teamwork.

A school is not a closed system, and teachers must be open to the world outside it: pupils' parents, the local infrastructure for youth affairs and social work and the spheres of employment and further education.

This relationship between school and society demands certain roles and competences from teachers. It requires them to justify their own political and social consciousness and to comprehend and deal with social concepts such as multiculturalism, European unity, new media, a knowledge-based society and so on.

A teacher must take a clear stand on his role in pupils' development, in collaborative processes of school development and in defining the school's place within society. In order to enter into dialogue with pupils, parents, colleagues and other parties, the teacher must be able to describe and justify his vision on education taking into account knowledge gathered from educational theories.

No one teacher can embody all of the competences required of teachers in general. At the beginning of their careers teachers can be expected to have basic competence. The greater the varieties of backgrounds present in a teaching team, the richer and more complete the competence of that team. Diversity, then, will produce a broad range of competences at the level of the individual school. This diversity should be facilitated within teacher education institutes. Recently much attention has also been given to collaborative learning processes at the level of the school organization. These learning processes demand a connection between education, developments in the school, and research or knowledge development. A teacher is a member of a team in which all three of these elements must be represented.

These processes also imply a single line of development from initial through post-initial phases. Each professional is responsible for his own professional development; the form this takes and the way in which it occurs should be related to the individual learning style and learning needs. However, this responsibility entails also that a teacher has to account for his professional development towards three parties: towards pupils (as role model for their learning), towards colleagues (as a contribution to the collective learning process) and towards the team leader or school management.

Supporting teacher educators in their learning

The acquisition, maintenance and further development of both essential competences and underlying theoretical structures ask for continuous professional development of teachers.. How this process takes place depends on the learning style of the (student) teacher, the teacher educator's or facilitator's vision on education and opportunities offered by the learning environment.

In guiding this learning process the roles of the teacher education institute and the school should complement each other. Initial teacher education and integrated personnel policies in the school should go hand in hand and preferably be based on the same vision on education. This requires close cooperation between the teacher education institute and the school, something which is becoming increasingly common.

For institutions supporting schools, a focus on the needs of the schools as professional organizations has become a key issue. This may suggest one-way communication between school and teacher education institute: the school sets its demands and then looks for the supplier who will best be able to satisfy those demands. However, over the past years balanced partnerships have developed which are characterized by shared commitment and responsibility.

In partnerships such as these, training and professional development, school development, educational innovation

and research (after the model of Professional Development Schools) can all take shape together, leading to powerful learning communities. In order to be able to participate in learning communities with schools, teacher education institutes will need to transform into joint centres of expertise which combine teacher education, research and educational support.

The roles and tasks that schools and teacher education institutes take on in the education of new teachers can vary widely. How this works out in the context of a specific situation is less relevant. What is important is that newly-trained teachers can make a range of choices and that they have access to a rich and inspiring learning environment both within the teacher education institute and in the school. This learning environment must meet set criteria regarding:

- methodology, e.g. the opportunity for student teachers to regulate their own learning, a culture that stimulates reflection, the possibility for the student/teacher to demonstrate vulnerability in his learning process, the presence of people with expertise in the learning processes of new teachers;
- organization, e.g. the relationship between professional development, developments in schools and knowledge production;
- practical aspects, e.g. time, facilities, rewards; and
- environment, e.g. space, appreciation, the encouragement of collaborative learning.

The quality of teacher educators

An important aspect determining the quality of the new teacher's learning environment is the presence of educators with expertise regarding teachers' learning processes and the criteria for their competence and knowledge. These teacher educators can come from either a school or a teacher education institute.

The standards set for teacher educators are high. In contrast to teachers and educators in other areas of tertiary education, the nature of these educators' work has double significance: in their teaching and coaching they also function as role models for new teachers. For this reason it is essential that teacher educators behave with integrity and that they can use their own behaviour to demonstrate and justify their own choices in matters of pedagogy, didactics and subject-related competence.

Teacher educators play an important role in guaranteeing the quality of teachers. For this reason they should be able to justify their choices to students, employers, government and educational regulatory bodies and to function as 'gatekeepers'. Transparency and clarity in quality criteria, for instance in the form of examinations, are essential. Additionally, teacher educators are responsible for educating sufficient numbers of new teachers, which in turn implies enhancing the accessibility of education programmes and the success rates of these programmes.

To support teacher educators and to help assure their quality, the VELON has developed a professional standard for teacher educators which is linked to a professional register and registration procedure. This standard does not distinguish between teacher educators in teacher education institutes and in schools. Together, the standard and the registration procedure form a tool that educators can use to assess and develop their professional competence and that schools and teacher education institutes can implement in their personnel policy and use as an instrument in guaranteeing the quality of their programmes.

With more and more teachers being educated within schools, coaching (potential) fellow teachers in their

professional development is becoming a regular part of many teachers' daily work. In many projects in schools attention is paid to the education of these in-school teacher educators. However, many beginning teacher educators both in schools and in universities and teacher education colleges do not meet the necessary professional standard. The VELON hopes to work together with schools in investigating the need for differentiation in levels within the professional standard for teacher educators: a starting level for new educators, a level for experienced educators and an expert level. With the existence of three different levels, educators can be stimulated in their professional reflection and development and schools and teacher education institutes will be better able to develop their personnel policies and to enhance quality. Additionally, different levels will help attune the various courses and education programmes for teacher educators to each other and make the relationships between them more clear for teacher educators.

The previous section of this document stressed the importance of solidifying the relationship between teacher education on the one hand and school development on the other. This process has consequences for teacher educators as more complex demands are placed on them. To perform adequately in various roles involving teacher learning, school development and research, teacher educators need expertise in teachers' learning processes, in processes of school development and innovation, in research and in providing support in response to specific needs of schools. In the long run this should lead to a shift in focus within the professional standard for teacher educators.

The role of teacher education institutes in the educational system

The VELON is an association for professionals in teacher education and as such does not cater to the interests of any institution. However, because teacher education institutes are largely responsible for the context in which these professionals work, a few remarks about these institutes must be made.

Considering the government's push to increase the autonomy of schools, the question arises as to whether the government should or can impose any standards on the quality of teachers. After all, giving schools the scope to make their own choices regarding the type of educational experience they offer their pupils and the way in which they organize this, will certainly lead to a huge range of different needs of schools in terms of the roles and quality of teaching staff. Still, the government remains responsible for the accessibility and affordability of education and is ultimately responsible for the quality of the Dutch educational system as a whole. Great care will have to be taken in processes of deregulation in order to prevent undesired side-effects.

The formation of standards of competence for teachers, together with new legislation on teaching professions, has provided a framework for the teaching profession. The Dutch Platform for Professions in Education will continue to fill in this framework. One important element in this legislation is the requirement that teaching positions in schools exist within an interrelated, balanced structure of qualifications and functions. Supporting positions, such as those held by different types of assistant teachers, could be part of a more balanced system of hierarchy in teaching positions. It is important that the competences required for these various positions are related in a way which stimulates progression and mobility among them. This in turn will require cooperation between teacher education institutes, including regional training centres, university colleges for higher education and universities, with regard to the content and methodology of their programmes.

As a consequence, the VELON should extend its scope so

that it is not only an association for educators of teachers, but for educators for all professions in education in general, including educators which educate assistant teachers within regional training centres.

Over the past years, the framework offered by the present system of qualifications has been widely discussed. Schools working from an autonomously determined standpoint regarding content and organization, and applying this standpoint to their personnel policies, have indicated a need for new types of teachers and have turned to teacher education institutes to provide them. The requests from schools might be in conflict with the formal regulations and qualifications set by the government. This will put teacher education institutes in a difficult position: some will work towards guidelines set by the government and thus be considered by schools not to be fulfilling their needs, while others will respond to the needs of schools and so perhaps come into conflict with government-set requirements. Recent discussions on the idea of teachers trained specifically to teach in basic-level secondary vocational education has already led to a great difference of opinion between teacher education institutes. This debate has become increasingly complex since the focus of discussion has shifted from what type of teachers the country needs to who should be allowed to train them, which is not at all constructive and has even damaged the image of the institutes. This situation could be ameliorated if teacher education institutes would cease to feel responsible solely for their own programmes and the schools with which they work and instead take on shared responsibility for the continuity and quality of the entire teacher education system.

Teacher education institutes have a role to play in balancing the interests of schools and government where these seem to be opposing. This will require them to be alert to developments in educational theory on the one hand and the needs of schools on the other, and to integrate both into the education programmes and guidance they offer to teachers. They will have to guarantee a cohesive, affordable system of education programmes which lead to nationally recognized qualifications and which can continue to exist in the long term. For example, there should not be a myriad of small-scale new programmes for specific educational niche markets, but a structure of broad programmes within which students are offered the opportunity to specialize their knowledge.

Making all of this possible places new demands on teacher education institutes, schools and the government. The teacher education institutes will have to work decisively together in order to decide on a common position in relation to the government, schools and other educational partners. Finding a balance between short-term interests and long-term solutions to the most basic daily problems will be of great importance. Schools will have to allow the teacher education institutes to balance their short term demands concerning teachers in their schools. Legislators and the government will have to recognize the importance of the teacher education institutes in the process of long term educational and staffing policies. For instance, the government will have to reconsider the role that the institutes can play in projects aimed at educating teachers within schools, and in the activities of the Platform for Professions in Education where teacher education institutes are excluded.

At present, decisiveness and collaboration between teacher education institutes are still lacking. The institutes are united in a variety of cooperative contexts at national level, including organizations for teacher education institutes at primary level, lower-secondary level and university level. However, the vitality of these organizations and the cooperation and communication between them are as yet far from adequate. In order to function as an equal sparring partner to schools and

government it will be essential for the institutes themselves as well as their sectoral organizations to concentrate on identifying their common interests.

Guaranteeing quality

These common interests should not be focused on protection from competing players in the educational world but on collaboration and mutual reinforcement resulting in enhanced quality and durability.

An example of this is the issue of teacher education within schools. The question of whether schools should be given permission to educate teachers themselves should not be approached from the angle of the interests of a particular institute, or other market-related factors, but by asking how essential aspects regarding the quality of teachers can be guaranteed. One factor by which quality is defined is the requirement that qualification as a teacher remains dependent on the completion of tertiary education (at bachelor or master level); this is important in a social context, with regard to the image of teachers as professionals, and also to the professional ambitions of teachers themselves. However, matters such as efficiency and the possibility of official national recognition of the various qualifications of graduates should also be considered. All of this means that the teacher education institutes should avoid concentrating on a particular school and instead strive to be sectoral education institutes whose educational programmes, whether they take place in the context of schools, universities or vocational training schools, are accredited by the Dutch and Flemish Organization for Accreditation (NVAO).

Teacher educators carry a large portion of the responsibility for the quality of both the teacher education institutes and the graduates of these institutes. This requires a transparent system of quality controls in which the focus is on continuity. Teacher educators should have a clear understanding of the definition of quality and should be prepared to justify explicitly their own performance according to this standard.

Guaranteeing the quality of graduates and the quality of the support given to schools will also have financial consequences for the teacher education institutes. Many institutes for initial teacher education, especially for lower-level secondary and adult education, face financial difficulties. The past several years have seen an emphasis on efficiency, with curricula, organization and logistical processes pared down and personnel cut back. The result of this is a situation that is far from optimal: there is minimal room for innovation, the workload for most staff is unreasonably high and many teams are too small and therefore unstable. A reason for this weak situation is the way in which teacher education programmes differ from other programmes in tertiary education:

Compartmentalized educational programmes

The structure of teacher education, especial in secondary and adult education, is essentially different from that of other sectors. As a result of the finely compartmentalized system of subject specific teaching qualifications in The Netherlands, there are a huge number of programmes for each subject with varying structures, for example full time programmes, part time programmes, career-switch programmes for professionals from other disciplines and so on. In addition to these are the myriad special programmes developed at the request of the government or partners in the field which cater to target groups often limited to twenty participants. No other sector in tertiary education offers programmes as specific and compartmentalized as this and this means that student populations are small while administration and accreditation weigh disproportionately heavy.

Complex relationship with the field of work

Many sectors have powerful sectoral organizations of employers with whom agreements can be formed regarding the content of educational programmes, but this is not the case for teacher education institutes, which deal with a highly varied field of work. Sectoral organizations in primary or secondary education do not exist as such; rather there are a large number of special-interest groups all placing their own demands on the teacher education institutes: associations of school heads, unions, pedagogical centres, various national, regional and local platforms, etcetera. The result of this is that teacher education institutes are forced to operate within a highly complex network of relationships. Another result of the absence of a sectoral organization is that the institutes are required to be oriented to individual employers, which involves a great deal of work.

Special relationship with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

The influence exerted by the minister of education and the Parliament on teacher education institutes is another complicating factor. Although as a result of deregulation policies neither the Minister herself nor the Educational Inspectorate is directly involved in higher education, the Minister, because of her responsibility for education and policymaking regarding teachers, is highly involved in the affairs of teacher education institutes. The special responsibility of the Ministry of Education for these institutes gives the Inspectorate an explicit role in checking and monitoring policy within the teacher education institutes. What complicates this situation further is that the Minister is actually involved on two different levels. As Minister of Education she is the employer on behalf of the educational sector; conversely, she is also responsible for policy concerning higher education itself. In some cases this leads to a conflict of interests, as happened when the Minister suggested that activities undertaken by schools to promote teacher education in schools should be funded by the teacher education institutes instead of the schools themselves. As a result of this, the teacher education institutes have developed a different relationship with the Minister of Education, as compared with other sectors in higher education, and will have to invest more in their relationship with the Ministry and the Inspectorate.

Relationship to societal needs and other pedagogical facilities:

Finally, education is increasingly seen as a form of social service. It is deemed responsible for solving a range of societal problems and requested to organize itself in such a way that problems are addressed or prevented. Solving the social problems of young people in society is seen as the school's responsibility. If they do not succeed in solving these problems then this is put down to the poor quality of teachers which in turn results in the teacher education institutes being seen as inadequate.

All of this has resulted in the image of the profession becoming tarnished. To remedy this, the teacher education institutes will have to work continuously to pick up the signals of these kinds of developments, to make clear that other pedagogical partners have their own responsibilities in these matters and to invest in solid public relations.

Because of the special position occupied by teacher education institutes in relation to other sectors within higher education, and in consideration of the key role played by teachers in social cohesion and economic viability within society, it is essential to invest in their education at a national level.

The teacher education institutes' financial difficulties

have regularly led to the conclusion that solutions should be sought in changes to the infrastructure of the education programmes. These changes could involve the concentration of programmes, the spread of elements of the programmes over other institutes or faculties or the strengthening of the teacher education institutes by the creation of regional centres of expertise. All of these possible solutions are characterized by wishful thinking and are not based on any clear analysis of their effects on day-to-day practice, on the attractiveness of these changes for students and/or educators, on the productivity of the programmes or on the quality of graduates. The possible consequences of any scenario for improvement should be exhaustively investigated.

Guaranteeing quality implies meticulous attention to developments in the content and methodology of the education programmes. Recently teacher education institutes have shown a positive attitude towards innovation. There are many similarities in the innovations within the various institutes, especially in the area of competence-based learning and education within schools. This could lead to institutes aping each other and innovations being mainly the result of market forces or political or social priorities. Probing questions about the actual effects and possible pitfalls of competence-based learning and on-the-job training have the risk of being marginalized. Guaranteeing quality implies researching, monitoring and evaluating innovations in curricula in order to expand knowledge about how teachers (including teachers in training) learn and to further enhance the quality of the teacher education institutes.

Finally

The above considerations have been formulated based on the situation in The Netherlands, where discussion on education is largely conducted at national level. The steadily increasing influence of European cooperation and unity will ultimately change this. The implementation of the bachelor/master system is the first step towards the harmonization of educational systems on a European level, and has already had an effect on teacher education programmes.

In the context of the European ambition to become the world's most competitive economy by the year 2010, educational ambitions have also been formulated with regard to the quality and education of teachers. Workgroups have already begun to draw up frameworks of European standards of competences for teachers; such standards could have a huge impact on schools and teacher education institutes. In this respect it is essential that the teacher education institutes follow developments taking place abroad very closely and join the debate, to avoid that the voice and perspective of teacher education is missing in political decisions on teacher education and teacher quality on a European level. From that perspective the VELON wishes to stimulate collaboration with other educational organizations on a European level such as the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) and the Association for Teacher Educators in Flanders (VELOV).

Recommendations

Based on the analyses as described in section 2 of the above, the VELON has formulated the following recommendations:

General

1. Government, schools, teacher education institutes and supporting institutions should stimulate the greatest possible interrelationship between school development, educational innovation, professional development of

educational staff and the development of new knowledge. This will require cooperation between schools, teacher education institutes, research institutes and supporting institutions.

2. Government and schools should offer teachers more opportunities to become involved in processes of school development, research and the development of new knowledge. This will contribute to the attractiveness and quality of the profession and will contribute to a more positive image for teaching professions.

Recommendations for government

3. There should be scope for pluriformity and diversity among teachers so that schools can assemble varied teaching teams and so that students can make intrinsic choices during their education in order to define their own specializations.
4. In descriptions of competence requirements, it is important to address the need for knowledge about pupils, about teaching and learning and about subject content, for specific attitudes and personal qualities. These competences, and the teacher's foundation of knowledge, should not simply serve the primary process within the school but should be directed towards a contribution to educational innovation, school development and the development of new knowledge.
5. The various professions and positions in education as a whole should be interrelated. These relationships should concern intrinsic requirements for qualification as well as the way that education programmes are structured and also the possibility to progress from one position to another. This will require cooperation between educators for all professions, including regional training centres, university colleges and universities.

Recommendations for the teacher education institutes and training schools

6. The teacher education institutes and the schools in which students are educated should be part of broader centres of expertise in which education, research and educational support are united. Each centre of expertise should expand its own portfolio in order to facilitate educational innovation and research.
7. The educational environment for trainee teachers should facilitate the development of a broad professionalism and stimulate participation in processes of educational development and the development of new knowledge.
8. The teacher education institutes and the schools in which students are educated should stimulate the interrelationship of the various education programmes in order to enhance flow among the programmes and increase transparency. This will require cooperation with the regional training centres that train for supporting positions in education, in order to harmonize methodology and requirements for qualification. This cooperation could also contribute to the development of a common foundation of knowledge about teacher education.
9. The teacher education institutes and the schools in which students are educated should actively and scrupulously investigate the efficacy of new methodology, including aspects of operational management, attractiveness of the programme for students and educators, productivity and the quality of graduates.

Recommendations for teacher educators

10. Because teacher educators are an ever-present role model for trainee teachers, they should behave congruously. Their pedagogical and methodological choices should be

explicitly justified for trainee teachers.

11. Teacher educators should contribute actively to educational innovation and the development and dissemination of new knowledge. This should concern not only the development of learning by pupils in schools but also the learning processes of teachers during their education and professional development.

Points of particular attention for the VELON

12. Together with teacher educators in schools and in teacher education institutes, the VELON should investigate the usefulness of developing different teacher educator profiles within the professional standard for teacher educators, for example for beginning teacher educators, in order to enhance the process of professionalism for (beginning) teacher educators as well as quality and staffing policy within training schools and teacher education institutes.
13. The VELON should contribute to the evaluation of existing knowledge of teacher educators in regard to teachers' learning processes, developments within schools, research and school support.
14. The VELON should expand its association of teacher educators to become an association of educators for all professions in education and to include educators who are involved in the education of educational assistants at regional training centres.
15. The VELON should actively and carefully follow developments taking place at the European level with regard to educational and teacher policy; it should inform its members and cooperate with related European organisations such as VELOV and ATEE in the exchange of experiences and in determining where and how to exert its influence on policymaking bodies.

Notes

- ¹ After a recent report by the Organization for Economical Co-operation and Development OECD entitled 'Teachers matter'.
- ² A draft version of this position paper was discussed with VELON members at the annual VELON conference on 14 and 15 March 2005 in Groningen, the Netherlands, and at the VELON annual meeting on 23 June 2005.

