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2021

2020

2019

Quality agendas: all MBO schools ready for the next step

News item | 27-05-2019

Over the next few years, all secondary vocational schools will be working to improve the quality of vocational education. Jointly with other schools and businesses in their region, they have drawn up quality agendas setting out their ambitions for the future. The independent MBO Quality Agreements Committee has now advised education minister Ingrid van Engelshoven to approve the agendas and allocate the earmarked funding.

The quality agendas are based on the administrative agreement made in February 2018 between the minister and the Secondary Vocational Education Council. This agreement gives schools in a region more scope to decide how to improve secondary vocational education, in partnership with the regional business community, municipal authorities, teaching staff and students. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has budgeted a total of €1.6 billion for a four-year period.

In recent months, the MBO Quality Agreements Committee, an independent advisory body chaired by Michiel Scheffer, evaluated the quality agendas. Committee members also visited all the schools involved and discussed their plans at length. The Committee has now positively assessed all the quality agendas. On Monday 27 May the Committee presented its positive advisory opinion to the minister during a working visit to the Summa College.

Own choices based on regional characteristics

Committee chair Michiel Scheffer is pleased with the results. 'We now have 61 ambitious quality agendas,' he said, 'all of which clearly bear the stamp of their region. Some are dealing with population shrinkage, others with population growth. In some regions innovation in the manufacturing industry is really taking off, while others are seeing huge growth in demand for healthcare workers. This means schools have different priorities, which they have addressed in their tailor-made plans'.

The minister also expressed satisfaction. 'It's vital for schools to be able to make their own choices,

and they've made good use of that opportunity. Of course, the agendas also address a number of common themes such as equal opportunities and support for vulnerable young people. But the key element is that schools have formulated their own ambitions for their own regional themes. I am proud of our secondary vocational education sector and have every confidence that these ambitious plans will make it even better in the future.'

The schools have worked closely with the regional business community in developing their plans. And that of course leads to a much better match between what businesses need and what schools deliver,' Ton Heerts, chair of the Secondary Vocational Education Council, said. 'Not only does this benefit businesses in the region, it also boosts students' prospects. I'm convinced that they will be able to reap the benefits for years to come. They will be even better equipped for their future occupations and be able to play a successful part in society and benefit from lifelong learning. Dutch secondary vocational education is already sound, and achieving these ambitions will make it even better.'

Quality agreements

To implement these quality agreements, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has budgeted a total of €1.6 billion for a four-year period (2019-2023). A quarter of this sum is provisional: it is only paid to schools that achieve their intended results. There will be a midterm review of progress in 2021 and a final evaluation by an independent committee in 2023.

Pilot project for new MBO training courses

News item | January 2019

MBO schools are to be given scope to develop new training courses in partnership with employers. The curricula of these new courses will have national and regional components and possibly an optional component that is region-specific too. Region-specific components can be designed in consultation with local employers. The aim of the pilot project is to strengthen the link between training and the job market.

Negative financial incentives in secondary vocational education (MBO) scrapped

News item | January 2019

Following a legislative amendment in January 2019, the funding system for secondary vocational education (MBO) will no longer take account of the time students take to complete their training. Currently, the longer students take to complete their MBO courses, the less money the school receives. The amendment will give MBO students more time to obtain their qualifications.

2018

Clarity about school costs for MBO

News item 10-07-2018

Should a student buy a chef's knife or hairdressing scissors himself, or can the student go to the educational institution for that? These kinds of questions now belong in the past. MBO institutions make available to students the type of resources that are necessary to follow education, take examinations and thus obtain the diploma. These items remain the property of the educational institutions. That is the outcome of consultations between JOB, the MBO Council and the Ministry of Education. Education basics that are the property of students, such as books and a laptop, basically acquire students themselves. Because of this outcome, there is clarity for everyone about school costs in MBO. Students now know where they stand and educational institutions know what is expected of them.

Education Minister Van Engelshoven is pleased: "It is good that there is clarity. Because through this clarity we make MBO even more accessible. Everyone must be able to follow education. Even if your wallet is less well filled. "

Ton Heerts, chairman of the MBO Council: "These agreements are an addition to the actions that schools already undertake every year with the student councils to keep school costs for everyone as low as possible. As a student you can still purchase your own supplies, from chef's knives to specific licenses for creative education. If you do not want that, the school will help you. "

Timon van Engen, chairman JOB: "JOB is very pleased with the agreement in which schools take responsibility for the teaching materials the student needs in order to follow his education. This makes MBO more accessible. Everyone should be able to study and money should not play a role in that."

Also during an internship

The required materials a student needs during an internship are made available to him or her in a training company. The training company often already has a lot of tools and instruments. If this is not the case, then the training company, the educational institution and the student will discuss the matter. If they fail to make an arrangement, the school is responsible for guiding the student to another internship.

Laptop and books

In addition, there are educational materials that the student must purchase. Those items are the property of the student. The specific items depend on the training, but they include for example a laptop and books. It is important that the costs do not become too large. That is why educational institutions determine together with the student council which items are needed. This can and may mean that there are differences between MBOs. The student chooses where he buys the supplies. Students may not feel pressured to buy additional supplies.

For some families the costs of these educational requirements are too high. That is why educational institutions have separate financial resources for low-income families. As a result, it is always financially possible for students to take a course.

In addition, JOB, the MBO Council and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science have confirmed once again that events that cost money may not be an obligatory part of the study program. An example is an excursion for which costs are charged.

Periodic evaluation

Educational institutions periodically review whether all requirements are really needed. They adjust the lists of what students need accordingly. This prevents students from having to purchase items they do not use.

More scope for regional initiatives in secondary vocational education (MBO)

News item | 15-06-2018

MBO schools have been given more scope to decide for themselves how to improve quality, enabling them to cater for the specific situation in their own region. It will be up to the institutions themselves to decide whether to focus on the link between training and labour market demand, lifelong learning or a different theme entirely. Their main partners in this are the business community, the municipal authorities and other educational institutions. The idea is to create more opportunity for regional initiatives in MBO, in accordance with the voluntary agreement between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Secondary Vocational Education Council. The framework under which MBO schools will draft their ambitious quality agenda was published today. A total of €1.6 billion will be allocated for these plans from 2019 to 2022.

‘This strategy shows that we have great confidence in the sector,’ said education minister Ingrid van Engelshoven. ‘And MBO schools have certainly earned it. They can now focus on those areas where they feel they can make a difference. I’m convinced that MBO schools will come up with ambitious plans, which will ensure that students are even better prepared for the future.’

‘MBO is at the heart of society and the labour market,’ said Ton Heerts, chair of the Secondary Vocational Education Council. ‘And these agreements will help schools to work with their partners to improve the standard of education, at both national and regional level. The professionals in the schools – managers, teachers and instructors – really do know best how to improve quality.’

Quality agenda

Jointly with their main partners, secondary vocational schools and specialist colleges will apply the three national priorities to their specific situation. These three priorities are ‘vulnerable young people’, ‘equal opportunities in education’ and ‘education that prepares students for the job market of the future.’

The MBO Quality Agreements Committee will assess whether the quality agendas are sufficiently ambitious and have been drafted in partnership with the region or relevant sectors. The Committee will advise the education minister, and will be responsible for evaluating the agreements, both during implementation and on completion. Funds will be allocated on the basis of these evaluations. Each year, the Committee will inform the minister, the Secondary Vocational Education Council and MBO schools which initiatives are effective and which could be improved.

Government scraps negative financial incentives in MBO

News item | 08-06-2018

The cabinet has agreed to a proposal submitted by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science to change the MBO funding system. Currently, the longer students take to complete their MBO courses, the less money the school receives. From next year, the time students take to complete their training will no longer be taken into account. The change will give MBO students more time to obtain a

qualification. The proposal is now with the Council of State.

The current funding system was introduced to encourage greater efficiency in MBO schools. If students take longer than average to complete their courses, the school receives progressively less funding. This financial incentive may ensure that schools train students as quickly as possible, but it can also be a reason for them to deny students access to certain courses, fostering inequality. The government plans to end this system of funding as of next year.

New funding system

In early February, education minister Ingrid van Engelshoven reached agreement with the MBO sector on scrapping the current funding system. The budget for MBO schools will be allocated differently, since no account will need to be taken of the length of time MBO students take to complete their training. This means that schools will have a different budget.

Action for strong, accessible vocational education

News item | 28-05-2018

Education ministers Ingrid van Engelshoven and Arie Slob plan to strengthen vocational education and foster equal opportunities through regional agreements on improving the link between pre-vocational education (VMBO) and MBO, by investing an extra €100 million in engineering and technology at VMBO level, ensuring continuous learning trajectories from VMBO to MBO, and merging the theoretical and combined programmes in VMBO.

In a letter to the House of Representatives, the two ministers point out that the consequences of declining pupil numbers are now becoming evident and that providing sound, accessible vocational education is an ongoing challenge for vocational schools. Fifty per cent of young people in the Netherlands attend vocational schools and their job market prospects are good. At the same time, the link between VMBO and MBO is an ongoing concern.

Continuous VMBO-MBO learning trajectories

For more than 10 years, schools have had the opportunity to experiment with continuous VMBO-MBO learning trajectories. Now they will become a permanent feature.

With these continuous trajectories, young people are given the opportunity to complete MBO-2 level basic vocational training at their VMBO school. By allowing them to carry on learning in a familiar environment there is less risk of them leaving school unqualified. The MBO partner school is responsible for examinations and awarding certificates. Another route is for pupils to start their MBO training at their VMBO school, and then gradually transfer to the MBO school. This makes the transition smoother and provides scope for more in-depth or speedier vocational training. The relevant bill will be drafted next year.

"In the years to come, continuous learning trajectories must become available in every region," said Ms Van Engelshoven. "By improving the link between VMBO and MBO we will help young people to successfully complete their training and foster equal opportunities."

From four to three programmes in VMBO

With the addition of a practical subject to the current VMBO theoretical programme (informally known as MAVO, or junior general secondary education) in 2021, the distinction between the theoretical programme and the combined VMBO programme will no longer exist. This means that VMBO will offer three programmes instead of four.

'We need to clear up the persistent misunderstanding that the theoretical programme or MAVO is at a higher level than the combined programme,' said Arie Slob. 'Subjects in the two programmes are taught at the same level. Pupils sit the same exams, are issued the same leaving certificates and have the same access to senior general secondary education (HAVO) and MBO.'

The advantage of the combined programme is the inclusion of a practical subject in addition to general subjects, making the transition to MBO easier. For the transition to HAVO, Mr Slob is drafting legislation specifying that pupils with a combined or theoretical VMBO certificate may not be refused admission, provided they meet certain conditions, e.g. that they have done an extra subject at VMBO level. He plans to submit the relevant bill to parliament this autumn.

Joint action

All these plans will be fleshed out by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in consultation with the educational institutions, the Secondary Education Council, the Secondary Vocational Education Council and the private sector.

Bid by education minister to abolish financial disincentive in MBO

News item | 06-03-2018

Education minister Ingrid van Engelshoven wants students in secondary vocational education (MBO) to have more time to obtain a qualification. Currently, the longer students take to complete a course, the less funding schools receive from central government. It is felt that this could cause schools to rush students through their MBO training. The bill proposing to change this aspect of MBO funding is now available for consultation online.

The minister aims to promote equal opportunities in MBO through this measure. 'By scrapping the current funding system we will create greater scope for students to acquire multiple qualifications consecutively or switch courses,' she said. 'We want them to obtain qualifications that make them more employable. And most importantly, I believe MBO students should be able to study at their own pace.'

Current system of funding

The current system of funding was introduced to encourage students in secondary vocational education to pursue their studies efficiently, obtaining a qualification within the set time frame. If students take longer than average to do this, their school receives progressively less funding. This works as a financial disincentive, and can result in schools pressuring students to finish as fast as possible or even deny them entry to certain courses. The minister wants to abolish this system in 2019.

Proposed new system of funding

Ingrid van Engelshoven's plans are encapsulated in the agreement she made with the MBO sector in early February. The current funding system will be abolished in favour of a different allocation formula that does not depend on the time students take to complete their course. This will have consequences for individual schools' budgets, so the new system will be phased in over a three-year period.

Internet consultation

The internet consultation (available in Dutch only) lasts four weeks and will close at the end of March. The minister will then consider the responses received. The draft proposal amending the order in council is likely to be submitted to the Council of State for an advisory opinion before summer 2018.

A stronger position for instructors in secondary vocational education

News item | 19-01-2018

A large number of teaching staff in secondary vocational education (MBO) previously had a career in trade and industry. This is true of many teachers but in particular of practical training instructors. They are invaluable because they can share firsthand experience of the world of work with their students while helping students practise their occupational skills. From 1 August 2018, new requirements for subject-matter and educational competences will apply to instructors in secondary vocational education. The cabinet recently approved proposals to this end by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Ingrid van Engelshoven. The competency requirements were developed by the professional association for vocational education instructors.

The Minister regards the new competency requirements as an acknowledgment of the good work currently being done by MBO instructors. 'Because future instructors will have to meet these requirements, you'll know for sure that they not only have the right skills and expertise, but are also capable of passing these on to students,' she said. 'This consolidates instructors' position as fully-fledged members of the teaching staff and ensures good teaching.'

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