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ABSTRACT

The ways in which the educational structure in The Netherlands has consequences for educational administration are described in this paper. The introduction discusses the concept of educational effectiveness and stresses learning outcomes as a primary goal and the next section outlines the structure of The Netherlands' educational system, particularly the administrative aspect, which is characterized by educational freedom and central regulation with decentralized execution. The final part offers experiences that illustrate the relationship between the administrative bodies and educational effectiveness. The push for decentralization may catch many principals unprepared for their new roles of greater responsibility, which raises the question of whether to grant greater principal authority or provide more staff development. The paper raises the question of whether there is some influence of higher administrative bodies, such as school boards, on educational effectiveness. A conclusion is that student-teacher interaction in the classroom is the most important factor in student learning outcomes. The contributions of other levels in education by providing and facilitating conditions for what happens on the classroom-level is fairly small. (6 references) (LMI)

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ADMINISTRATION AND EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: SOME EXPERIENCES IN THE NETHERLANDS

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1. Introduction

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The title of this paper includes two ambiguous concepts: administration and effectiveness. Both have quite distinguished definitions, e.g. sometimes the management is something outside the school above the school-level. Another definition of administration suggests that it is almost synonymous with educational leadership in the school. The same holds for 'effectiveness': some definitions refer to effectiveness on the school-level and all the factors contributing to effectiveness are defined on the school-level. Other definitions, however, include almost everything that happens in education within schools that may lead to effectiveness.

I do not want to go into detail in the conceptualization of educational administration. We will treat it as a component or part of an organized enterprise concerned with facilitating and supporting the accomplishment of the operations and the purposes of the enterprise in question. The goal of administration is to direct the utilization of limited resources of time, people, supplies and working-techniques in the realization of the enterprise. This definition leads to questions as: how is the education organized on the macro-, meso- and micro-level? What are the linkages between the different levels? What are the tasks and responsibilities of the different bodies in charge of administration? What are the processes that are going on in administration? The main processes of the management of organizations are planning, monitoring, controlling of education and processes like decision-making, financial management, staff-development and so on. Here the questions arise what this means in education, and what kind of relationship there is with the primary process, the teaching-process, and the results of it: learning outcomes.

The structure of the educational system, especially the division of responsibilities and power is quite specific in The Netherlands. This may be the reason why in some countries it is sometimes seen as an example of how education can be organized, e.g. with respect to the discussion in the United States about the choice in education. For others, it is a museum where you can find all the types of education that do not exist in the 'real world' or it is the object of great concern, especially for policy-makers. The specific structure of education in The Netherlands has some consequences for the administration/management of education, and for the influence different parties have or may have on educational effectiveness. For that reason, we shall, after giving a short description of what we think educational effectiveness is, provide a outline of the structure of the educational system in The Netherlands, especially the administrative part of it. After that, we shall describe some of our experiences of the relationship between the discerned administrative bodies and educational effectiveness.

All the different concepts of educational effectiveness stress the point that ultimately education has to do with effects, with outcomes, although one can discuss the kind of outcomes education has to strive for. In our opinion, the output of the primary process of

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the school as an organization should be learning-outcomes: the value schools add to the entering-behaviour of pupils. The above-mentioned outcomes can be of all kinds, although we point out the fact that a restriction to a well-defined set of outcomes increased the chance that a school is able to reach these. We speak about a restricted set of goals that should be cognitive outcomes, but, fortunately, we have some research in The Netherlands that demonstrates the relationship between the well-being of students and these cognitive outcomes (Brandsma, 1992, Knuver, 1992).

Educational effectiveness especially has to deal with the question what contributes to learning outcomes, or, in other words, what can explain the differences in learning-outcomes schools achieve with the same set of students. After two decades of research we have learned that the amount of variance is fairly small, and up to now we are not able to explain enough with the factors we discern.

We have also learned that the factors can be found on different levels in the school, on the level of the classroom, the school and levels outside the school. That especially conditions on a level above the classroom can supply the conditions for the classroom-level, where teaching and learning takes place (e.g. the influence of the school-level factors declines when factors on a classroom-level are introduced into the analysis).

The context of the school in a country is very important, so we need theoretical models or frameworks that take the factors on this level into account. When learning takes place on the classroom-level in the relationship between students, teachers and textbooks, then a specific role of the administration is to create the conditions that improve and facilitate what goes on in the instructional process. On a school-level this may be done by the principal or the board, and on a district or, in The Netherlands, on a national level by the government in her administrative task.

3. The administration in the Dutch educational system

The Netherlands are famous for their educational freedom (see Glenn, 1990). Our constitution guarantees the freedom to provide education and explicitly to appoint teachers and select a curriculum. Governmental oversight is restricted to quality and the moral character of the teachers. On the primary level, almost 70% of the students attend ungovernmental schools, and about 30% of the students attend public schools. About 28% go to protestant schools and 37 % to Catholic schools, while the rest attends 'neutral schools'. All these schools receive a public subsidy for all operating costs.

The Dutch society goes quite far in protecting the basic right of educational freedom, e.g. the average Dutch school has 150 students, and schools with less than 50 students are kept open. Recently, throughout The Netherlands Islamic schools were set up, because they could prove that the denomination or direction (in Dutch: richting) within the educational system was not desirable. One can also start a school with a desirable pedagogical direction, e.g. the 'free schools-movement'. So, there is a great freedom in establishing schools with a specific character. However, for the management of instruction, the management of schools, a framework of extensive governmental regulation is available. These regulations concern the financial management and personnel affairs and

the time-schedule of the curriculum (the minimum number of lessons per week, the length of the lessons) Furthermore, the class-size norms, the required competence of teachers, salaries and rights and the ways in which student-achievement is measured at key transition-points.

In a recently carried out study in The Netherlands about decisive factors in the choice of primary education in a representative sample of Dutch parents, the results were as follows:

- The character or direction of the school (22%)
 - The distance between home and school (21%)
 - The quality of education (49%)
 - Does not know/Cannot choose (7%)
- (Bank, 1991)

Aspects of the quality of education in the opinion of parents are the following:

- Pleasure of the pupil (95%)
 - Preparation for secondary education (87%)
 - Learning results in basic subjects, such as reading (33%)
 - Arousing the interest of the pupil (73%)
 - Special care for children who need extra attention (90%)
 - Orderly climate (75%)
 - A permanent teacher for each group of students (72%)
 - Good relations with parents (93%)
 - Extra-curricular activities (37%)
 - Specialized teachers for subjects like gymnastics, music etc. (47%)
- (Bank, 1991)

Now we will sum up some of the characteristics of Dutch education:

1. Educational freedom in the direction of schools and parental choice
2. Important central role of the government and extensive regulation with respect to financing, personnel affairs, but also with respect to educational matters, such as the requirements for teachers, curriculum-schedules, requirements for achievement-tests and so on. In fact, it is a central regulation and decentralized execution of education.
3. Within this framework of regulations, schoolboards have the responsibility for financial, personnel and instructional matters. Especially in schools with a specific character (denominational or pedagogical), but also in public education. More than in the past, schools operate under responsible authorities instead of the municipal government (there is even a discussion going on about the privatization of public schools).
4. Especially in smaller communities and schoolboards with only one school, there is no professional knowledge with respect to education. In fact, the principal is the person in power and responsible for what goes on in the school. But again, in the consensus society of The Netherlands and especially the Dutch education, the power and responsibility of the principal are limited.

4. Some experiences

1. Deregulation and enlarging school-autonomy

All over the world, deregulation is taking place. One would expect that this is not necessary in The Netherlands, where educational freedom is so great. As mentioned before, the influence of the central government is enormous. Throughout The Netherlands the idea arose that the government cannot be responsible for everything that goes on in education by providing roles, regulations and sending out letters day after day. Especially experiences with the educational innovation in The Netherlands lead to the conclusion that the central government should have a more restricted and modest role in education. This new role should be introduced in financial and personal matters and in the instructional management of the school. Financial and personal matters are closely connected with each other, because in the future schoolboards will receive a specific lump sum-budget to work with. So, in the opinion of the government the influence of schoolboards should be enlarged, since they are responsible for the financial and personnel matters and even for the instructional arrangement within the schools. The board should hand over the responsibility for the instructional arrangement to the principal and the schoolteam.

What is likely to happen in The Netherlands is that the influence of the national organizations of schoolboards increases, because many schoolboards do not have the knowledge how to work in this new situation. Big organizations for Catholic, Protestant and 'neutral' education take advantage of this situation to enlarge their influence by providing assistance for financial and personal affairs as well as for the instructional pedagogical arrangement of education within the schools. However, even when the schoolboards take the responsibility and the power, most of the time the tasks are carried out by the civil servants, who are hired to do this, or by the principals of specific schools who get more and more administrative and managerial tasks. This means that the task of a principal who used to be the first among equals is changing and gets more and more managerial components. One may doubt the professionalism of principals with respect to these tasks.

In the past, there were no special courses to increase the administrative competence of teachers, but that is changing now. Like in other countries, in The Netherlands we create a group of people within education who are in charge of administrative tasks. One can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such an organization of education in the specific situation of The Netherlands. At present, the principal is equal, so his influence in educational and instructional matters is limited, as we can see from the research-results of Van der Grift (1990) and Van der Grift and Houtveen (1991). The contribution to educational effectiveness in The Netherlands by the principal is not very great. The question is whether or not we should provide the principal with the authority he needs for educational leadership or emphasise the staff-development and the consensus democracy in Dutch schools which is connected with that.

Finally, we may ask the question if there is some influence of higher administrative bodies, such as schoolboards, on educational effectiveness. According to results of Hofman (1992) there is some indirect influence of school-boards on educational effective-

ness by means of hiring personnel, especially the principal. But again, the experiences in Dutch education due to this specific system enhance the results of other research on educational effectiveness. The contribution of the educational system to learning-outcomes is especially established in the classroom in the interaction between teachers and students. The contributions of other levels in education by providing and facilitating conditions for what happens on the classroom-level is fairly small.

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