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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the effects of senior secondary-education reform in The Netherlands and the effects that these changes have exerted on teachers. It focuses on the way that changes, such as profiles, new exam programs, and alterations in "study house," interacted with and influenced teachers' tasks. The paper provides an overview of the reforms and the move toward autonomy as government came under increasing pressure to reduce its controlling role. One result of reform is the improved link between secondary education and higher education, leading many teachers in secondary education to renew their relationship with a university or college in their region. The increased emphasis on attainment levels and the raising of standards also exerted change on teachers' jobs. Teachers use subject matter that is defined in more detail, and a standardized exam narrows the possibilities for teachers to place their own emphasis on certain aspects of the subject matter. Independent learning has been heightened with the reforms, which lightens teachers' involvement but undermines a centralized pedagogy that can help maintain class discipline. Teachers also find their tasks more differentiated and see themselves as becoming more accountable with the ascendance of local control. (Contains 25 references.) (RJM)

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RESTRUCTURING SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS:  
BETWEEN CONTROL AND AUTONOMY

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Paper presented at AERA 1999, Montreal

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# RESTRUCTURING SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS: BETWEEN CONTROL AND AUTONOMY

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In recent publications about changes in education considerable attention is being paid to the interplay between control and extended autonomy (Hargreaves, 1994; Hartley, 1997).

Similar processes of control and extended autonomy are at play on three levels:

- between government and the individual school;
- between school and the individual teacher;
- between teacher and student.

It concerns the relation between a top-down and a bottom-up approach in education. Major questions regarding this interplay are: what goals are to be achieved, how could processes still be directed and controlled, who exercises control over goals and processes, how extensive is the autonomy of schools/teachers/students, will self-direction and autonomy really be effectuated?

The government in the Netherlands, like in most Western Countries, wants schools to be more autonomous, but at the same time government wants to remain responsible for the overall quality of education. This means that government on the one hand delegates more responsibilities to the schools, and on the other hand intensifies control of the schools. This control is obvious from the greater number of national tests, 'quality cards', the restructuring of the national school inspectorate etc.

We see a similar process within the schools. The school stimulates the professional development of the teacher. The teacher must take more initiative, he has to tailor his teaching to the individual student and he is required to continuously develop his pedagogical and didactical skills. At the same time, the teacher is required to adapt more to school policy in order to make the school function better as a whole. The teacher is more guided in his job, more monitored and evaluated.

Lastly, we see this process in actual education. The student is required to act more independently, has to take on more responsibilities and has to show more self-direction in his behavior. The teacher must enhance this development of autonomy by an adequate pedagogical and didactical assistance and by continuously monitoring and controlling the progress of the development of self-regulation by the student.

Publications of the Dutch ministry of education, of other government bodies, as well as public opinion, often stress that schools are becoming more autonomous, that teachers are more professional and that students are able to bear more responsibilities. But the mechanisms of control and regulation are mentioned less often; and it are these mechanisms that determine the extent of the autonomy of the schools, the professionalism of the teachers and the responsibility of the students. In this article we focus on the position of the teacher within this area of tension in senior secondary education as it is currently presented in the Netherlands.

This article is based on 10 years experience with the coaching of a large network of schools. The network has reported its progress with the reform of senior high school in several books (Veugelers and Zijlstra, 1995, 1996b, 1998b). It also draws from a research project at the request of the ministry of education into the implementation of the study house in six pioneer schools (Riemersma and Veugelers, 1997a; 1997b).

'High school' is used here as a generic term for that part of Dutch secondary education that prepares students for advanced studies in higher education. Junior high school has a 3-year curriculum; senior high school in the Netherlands can either have a 2-year or a 3-year curriculum. The first one mainly prepares students for advanced vocational training, the second for university study. While junior high school basically offers the same curriculum to all students, senior high school offers specialized curriculums with a choice of subjects that are tailored to the individual student's interest and ideally also to his choice of a future advanced study or profession.

## THE REFORM OF SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

The changes in senior secondary education in the Netherlands are usually referenced with the term 'Study House'. The 'Study House' is not a clearly defined educational concept. The study house implies that the school organization and the didactical approach of the teachers are such, that the independent learning of the students is enhanced. An analysis of the study house concept showed that there are no unequivocal criteria for distinguishing the study house from a normal school or for establishing the extent to which a school can be seen as a study house (Riemersma and Veugelers, 1997a; 1997b). The term study house is more a metaphor than a clear educational and organizational concept. Schools can give their own interpretation to the study house.

In the study house, the teachers schedule includes lessons, hours for coaching and some times for mentoring. The teacher discusses the planning and coordination of subject matter and testing with colleagues from his own section and from other sections. In the study house, the work of the teacher is more varied and the cooperation amongst teachers is enhanced. The study house as educational concept shows many similarities with the concept 'restructuring education' (Newmann, 1993; Lieberman, 1995). Both concepts emphasised the interplay of stimulating self regulated learning and making the schoolorganization more flexible. The concept studyhouse is more focused on the didactics necessary for self-regulated learning. Its theoretical background is more in modern theories of learning and instruction (See for example: Mc Cormick and Presley, 1997; Prawat, 1998) than in schoolorganization or cultural theory.

But the 'study house' is only part of the changes. The restructuring of secondary education also involves a profiling structure in subjectchoice, new exam programs, and the measuring of study load in the number of hours estimated to be required for learning the material. The 'study house' may have met with the strongest reactions, but the profiles and the new exam programs are much more fundamental and they exercise a major influence on the possibilities of the study house.

In this article we analyze the effects these changes have on the task of the teacher as an educator and as a member of the school team. In particular we focus on the way these changes (profiles, new exam programs, and study house) interact and influence the teachers task.

As we said the reform of senior secondary education in the Netherlands comprises more than the introduction of the study house. The introduction of a profiling structure means that the former freedom of the student in the choice of subjects is now being replaced by a consistent package of subjects that is specifically tailored to several advanced studies. The number of subjects that is required for all students is enlarged. Most subjects now have a new exam program which is modernized in content and which places, apart from knowledge, more emphasis on skills.

The actual introduction of the reform took place during the summer of 1998. The study house, as an educational concept, was already introduced in 1992. The preparation of this restructuring of secondary education in fact stems from 1988, when the then state secretary of education published her views on modularization in secondary education (Veugelers, 1989). These ideas were further developed by a process management committee for secondary education (the PMVO) that acted as an intermediary between the educational community and the ministry of education. Process managements play in the Netherlands an important role in the preparation of reforms and in the coaching of its introduction. The committees are relatively autonomous: they advise the ministry, they develop plans and they have to mobilize support for these plans. The government however, makes the political decisions. The process managements have to implement the changes.

Schools are allowed more freedom in the reformed senior classes to determine how they offer their teaching. The former compulsory list of lessons, for instance, is replaced by a listing of study loads. This listing does not specify the number of hours that a student has to be in class, but the amount of time that the (average) student has to spend on a given subject. On the basis of their own vision on education, schools will have to develop the proper organization and the pedagogical and didactical methods for their teachings.

Schools have prepared for this reform during a number of years. Often they cooperate in networks of schools in order to learn from each others experiences and to explore possibilities together (Veugelers and Zijlstra 1996a; 1998a, See also Lieberman, 1996). The support for the school networks is usually provided by the schools of education of the universities. Several networks have publicized their experiences in a book, our network has publicized three books (Veugelers and Zijlstra, 1995; 1996b; 1998b). The process management has also developed examples. This committee publishes a monthly journal that portrays schools. Every year there is a fair ('Building the Study House') where schools and networks present their experiences.

It is remarkable that this reform is hardly supported by scientific research. Bolhuis and Kluvers (1997) and Riemersma and Veugelers (1997a) researched the implementation of the study house. There is also some research into aspects of the study house like learning skills, transition problems, school organization, and didactical reform (for an overview see Van der Akker, Pieters, Visscher-Voerman and Wald, 1998).

It has been suggested, e.g. by the strong emphasis on practical experiences and examples of good practice, that the reform is mainly supported by schools and teachers who refuse to passively implement it and, on the contrary, actively design the changes according to their own views. In other words, that the chosen strategy is a bottom-up strategy. But the study house and especially the other reforms in senior secondary education are being stimulated top-down. The introduction of the study house can basically be seen as a top-down stimulation of a bottom-up

approach.

## REFORMS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Senior secondary education forms the most recent crystallization point of the educational reforms. At present it is the place in the Dutch educational system where several areas of reform meet:

- link-up with advanced studies;
- accentuating attainment levels and raising standards;
- students that learn more independently;
- differentiation in teachers tasks.

We first discuss these four points separately and show their implications for teachers. Next we join these areas and show that it is the combination of these four reforms that influences educational practices in senior high school and the task of the teacher there.

### **Link-up with advanced studies**

An important aspect of the reform of senior secondary education is an improved link-up of secondary education and higher education. The success rate in higher education was considered to be too low, students progress slowed down too much and they switch subjects too often. The success rate in higher education could be raised by improving the input, which means: higher entrance levels; coordination of didactical methods in secondary and higher education; better subject choice by the student with respect to his advanced study, and better choice of the advanced study subject. Higher success rates are considered to be important for the educational institutions as well as for the students.

The clustering of subjects into profiles that have a relation with sectors in training and job markets was seen as an important link-up of secondary and higher education. The four profiles are: Science and Technology, Science and Health, Economics and Society, and Culture and Society. Their introduction have improved the connection of subjects in secondary education, for instance in the profile Science and Technology between the subjects mathematics, physics and chemistry, and in the profile Economics and Society between the subjects economics, geography and history. For the teachers, profiling means that the connection between these subjects can be improved. The exam programs also exert some pressure towards establishing connections between subjects because they require the acquisition of interrelated skills plus a paper that is related to two subjects from the profile.

In the original plans for this system, a profile was supposed to grant the exclusive right for intake in a certain group of advanced studies. In practice such would mean that young people would already in the third year of their secondary education have to chose for a certain sector in the job market. But at the age of 15, students are still exploring their interests. For that reason they like keep as many perspectives as possible open for themselves.

Universities and colleges prefer students to have made a considered choice for a certain study subject. Most studies in higher education, though, do not like too many restrictions with

regards to the chosen subjects in secondary education because they want to offer as many students as possible a chance to choose their program. Because of this criticism from the perspective of the student, and even more so from higher education, this early selection was dropped from the plans. The profiles are introduced in secondary education, but the intake restrictions in higher education focus mainly on the level a student has acquired in mathematics and in some cases another science subject. A Science and Technology profile still offers a choice from most advanced studies.

At the outset, many teachers favorably remarked on these plans for senior high school. They especially liked the orientation on advanced studies. In senior secondary education most teachers are 'first grade' teachers that are university graduates themselves. They disliked proposals for a comprehensive school and the introduction of a basic curriculum in junior secondary education because they considered these to be mainly focused on weaker students and disregarded better students. In their opinion, this transformed junior secondary education into a mere extension of elementary school. The plans for senior secondary education on the other hand looked forward to advanced studies, universities and colleges. This might mean higher attainment levels and a better perspective for active and interested students. The first grade teachers self-confidence was raised. This also meant a stronger demarcation of junior and senior high school. Senior high school, to the satisfaction of most first grade teachers, was effectively separated from other forms of secondary education and was placed at the gate of higher education.

Although a formal link-up of secondary and higher education was not achieved with the profiles, the cooperation between secondary and higher education has remarkably improved over the past five years. The students orientation on higher education has developed from the occasional information fair at the university to a special program in which teachers from higher education cooperate in the teaching at high school, whereby university students coach small groups of high school students, and whereby high school students regularly visit universities and colleges (Hofmeister, 1998). In many regions there is also a regular consultation between teachers from secondary education and teachers from higher education with regard to didactics in secondary and higher education, the mutual expectations and the start-up of master courses that give teachers insights in recent scientific developments. Many teachers in secondary education have renewed their relationship with a university or college in their region. The teacher has gained a better understanding of the total learning career of students and his own place within it.

### **Accentuating attainment levels and raising standards**

Higher education prefers students that can learn independently, have a broad understanding of basic subjects, and on top of that the correct subjects for the specific advanced study. Higher education supported the new emphasis on teaching skills for independent learning and for incorporating more mathematics and modern foreign languages into the curriculum. Business also supported the reform of senior high school. Future employees ought to be able to learn throughout their lives and must feel responsible for maintaining their own qualifications. Mathematics is considered to be a basic subject with regard to most advanced studies, especially from the perspective of information technology.

Modern foreign languages are seen as important subjects in a trading country like the Netherlands: all students in reformed senior high school study three modern foreign languages with special emphasis on speaking and listening skills. Literature is considerably less important

in the new curriculum, although most language teachers were opposed to this and criticized the diminished role of literature. It is remarkable that this criticism suggested that the introduction of the study house – a different didactical method – was the cause for this, while in fact it was the preference for a technical and instrumental view on language education that changed the balance between the instrumental function and the cultural function.

The original reform plans also mentioned a new subject 'Management and Organization', which was basically a management course in secondary education. This proposal was motivated with reference to the importance of organization and management for future society. Surprisingly, this proposal met with little support from society itself. Was business management opposed to the notion that students in secondary education were prematurely introduced into the secrets of organization studies? Or did management realize that such a subject in high school would not be very substantial? Or did everybody fear that the students would use their knowledge of organizations for criticism of their own educational situation? In the end, 'Management and Organization' has been introduced as a choice subject, but it contains considerable business economics.

The process management for the reform of senior secondary education wanted to broaden the curriculum and the relevance of education to society by establishing links between subjects, by having the students practice research skills and by preparing them for a broad cultural and social participation. Therefore the committee proposed three new subjects for all students: Cultural Studies, General Science and Man and Society. Teachers and school management with an open mind to change were very pleased with this proposal, which meant that cultural subjects would be introduced in the science curriculum and science in the humanities curriculum. But the associations of language and history teachers argued that teaching time would be better spent on the subjects themselves than on a vague integrated program. Therefore the introduction of the integrated subject Man and Society has been postponed.

The associations of teachers for the different subjects have played an important role in the discussion about curriculum reform. These associations combine the development of subject matter with the promotion of teachers' interests. But it is remarkable that – except for the discussions about history and literature – there has been no broad discussion in society about subject matter in secondary education. The discussion focused on the study house!

The ministry of education supported the wish to incorporate more mathematics and modern foreign languages into the curriculum and to substitute the free choice of subjects by a choice of profiles and a broadening of teaching offered to all students. The incorporation of more mathematics and foreign languages and the introduction of profiles gave higher education and business the raised level of secondary education that they desired. The educationalists that sought a broader orientation on society and integration of subjects got their new subjects Cultural Studies and General Science. Most associations of teachers, except the teachers of social studies and business economics, were pleased with the results.

All this has in the end led to an increase of the number of subjects in senior high school: in the 2-year curriculum that prepares for vocational training from 8 to a minimum of 12 and in the 3-year curriculum that prepares for university from 9 to a minimum of 13! All students study more subjects and the teachers are now confronted with more students for which they have less teaching hours.

#### *Attainment levels*

Education as a public organization has to specify its goals and the way the attainment of these



goals is being tested. Most people will agree with this. But in educational practice, this leads to a constant refinement of goals and newer, supposedly objective tests for the attainment of these goals. Every 'generation' of attainment levels shows more refinement and therefore further fixes the subject matter in education. The justified aim to objectively record the attainment of goals narrows these goals even further and at the same time disqualifies goals that are difficult to test. Each subject has to participate in this rat-race for attainment levels and tests in order to maintain its position within education.

The attainment levels were defined during a period that school subjects were fighting for their position and allotted teaching time. The proposed attainment levels were developed by groups of individuals with close ties with the teacher associations. In a formal sense, these teachers and educationalists were nominated as individuals, but that does not exclude the promotion of certain interests. These groups for the development of subject matter were assigned to modernize subject matter and to include skills for independent learning into the program. All groups defended their own subject's position; the new programs grew much broader and more difficult than the former programs. The new programs are often much better than the older ones, but they require more of the students, usually in a shorter period.

#### *More output control on teachers*

In reformed senior high school, the exam programs are even more detailed than in the past. The external control of the final attainment level of students is therefore refined. For teachers, this means that subject matter is defined in more detail. There is a national exam besides a school exam. The national school inspectorate concluded that there were too many differences between the various school exams. To narrow these differences, the new exam programs have centralized many parts of the school exams. Therefore the school exam is no longer a tool for the schools to place their own emphasis, but merely a conglomerate of things that can not adequately be tested with the centralized exams, like speaking skills and papers. The increased regulation of the final product narrows the possibilities for teachers to place their own emphasis on certain aspects of the subject matter. There is more control on the interpretation of the curriculum by the teacher. The authority of teachers over their own curriculum is placed under external control (Apple, 1982; Veugelers, 1989).

#### **Students that learn more independently**

Advanced studies and modern society require people that are inquisitive, are able to organize their own learning processes and can develop their own knowledge and skills (Ranson, 1994). Higher education demands that students have an inquisitive and reflective attitude, plus the necessary skills. The modern work organization demands that employees are flexible, are able to keep their job qualification up-to-date and can cope with the dynamics of modern times. Secondary education has to prepare students for this life-long learning, it has to teach them what is called 'learning to learn'. Differing from traditional learning, 'learning to learn' focuses on teaching the skills for an independent direction of one's learning process. Regulatory functions of learning have to be transferred step by step from teacher to student (McCormick and Presley, 1997).

The organization of the teaching, the pedagogical and didactical methods of the teacher, and the teaching materials ought to enhance this development of independent learning by the

students. This means that the teacher has to concentrate more on the learning process of the individual student and that he must offer students the possibility to learn and practice independent learning. This referred to as student-directed education, such in contrast with teacher-directed education. Attention to every individuals learning process implies attention to individual learning routes, learning styles and possibilities. It also means attention to a broad diversity in learning processes that have to be coached by the teacher. The school organization can often enhance this independent learning by offering classes in which the students can choose the subject they want to work on and the teacher they prefer to coach them.

In reformed senior high school in the Netherlands the teaching materials have been adapted because the attainment levels have changed and a new emphasis has been placed on skills for independent learning. The teaching materials now focus more on goals and planning of the learning experience and on skills for learning that help students to independently master subject matter. Teachers supplement the learning materials with study guides that describe the planning of the subject matter for the student and the choices the student might make.

Of course, teachers prefer students that are able to learn independently and therefor they support independent learning. Surveys indicate broad support from teachers for the abstract concepts of the study house. Who would dare to oppose independent learning? But teachers see many problems with the development of independent learning, also for themselves. Teachers usually have limited experiences with differing didactical methods. This lack of didactical skills is seen as a major obstruction to the introduction of the study house by many non-teachers, like school management, educationalists, the process management, and the ministry of education. But this disregards a managerial explanation. Class and teacher-directed education are an easier form of classroom management for controlling discipline than education that focuses on the individual learning process and the differences between students. Teachers often indicate that this risk of losing control steers them away from differentiation in methods. The importance of classroom management has been underestimated in restructuring senoir secondary education in the Netherlands.

Also, many teachers feel threatened by any criticism of their methods that indicates that things have to change drastically and that disqualifies their pedagogical and didactical past. Many teachers support the importance of independent learning. But the views on how to achieve this 'learning to learn' in the classroom differ considerably.

### **Differentiation in teachers' tasks**

Until recently, education was organized relatively simply and systematic. The schedule contained units of 50 minutes each. Teachers and students were organized in subjects and classes. The schedule showed where teachers and students could be found. The teacher was, within the allotted time, responsible for teaching a scheduled group of students and was responsible for his own subject. This seemed to be an efficient organization, but the introduction of student coaching dealt the initial blow. Because the curriculum in junior high school was split up into ten or more subjects, the student met many teachers but he had to connect the different lines of learning individually and without coaching. Therefore, more and more schools introduced coaching classes into the schedule in which the teacher coached as mentor students regardless of the subject. The mentor therefore also developed a different relationship with his colleagues of the subjects. The subject teachers complement each other, but the mentor breaks through this: the

mentor hears details from students about the teaching practices of his colleagues and he sometimes reacts to this. In this way student coaching breaks the horizontal, collegial relationship between teachers (Veugelers and De Kat, 1998).

Another difference was formed by the introduction of choice classes. Sometimes students wanted to pay more attention to a certain subject or they wanted to receive extra coaching from a teacher. More choice also increases the self-responsibility of students. Montessori and Dalton schools already have a long tradition with classes for independent learning. These choice classes imply for the teacher that he has to 'recapture' his students. If a choice class of a certain teacher is only attended by few students, this might indicate that this teacher already supplies adequate coaching during his normal classes, but it might also indicate that the subject is too easy or that the students do not appreciate the coaching of this particular teacher. Therefore, teachers like to have many students in their choice classes. The struggle for students is not only fought between schools but also within the school between subjects and between teachers. This not only when a subject has been chosen, but almost constantly when study classes are being chosen.

Freedom of education means in the Netherlands that schools can choose their own educational concept. The schools can develop their own pedagogical and didactical methods. In the past, schools had to comply with the compulsory listing of classes and any diversions from 50-minute schedule had to be well-founded, but now, through a change that made the study house possible, schools use the 'study load' system. Every student has to work annually for 40 weeks of 40 hours each week.

Each year the students have learning tasks for a total of 1600 hours with the added obligation that during a minimum of 1000 hours there is some form of teaching or coaching. The obligations per subject are no longer defined in the number of classes but in the number of hours that students have to devote to a lesson. The school can make its own decisions with regard to the number of hours teaching and coaching is offered and what form of teaching and coaching. The schedule of students and teachers shows new organizational structures and many new terms: lectures, classes, practicals, work groups, choice classes, study hours etc.

The duration of a teaching unit may also vary. Earlier there was a tendency to shorten the units to, for instance, 40 minutes, but nowadays more schools introduce lessons of 60, 70 or 80 minutes. The reasoning is that longer lessons are more relaxing for students and teachers and that they offer the teacher a choice for a variety of methods (see Veugelers and Zijlstra, 1996b; 1998b). The teachers tasks become more varied, either within longer teaching units or spread out over distinct activities. The larger units allow for more flexibility in the learning process, but they also place more responsibility on the teacher and the student. Flexibility is thus not enforced by the organization, but is determined by the participants (See also Canady and Rettig, 1995).

### *Differentiation in functions*

A second form of differentiation for teachers is the differentiation in functions. A more differentiated form of teaching and more cooperation between school subjects demands coordination and direction. The reform of senior high school has been an impetus for the creation of middle management in schools. With respect to the organization there are now school unit managers, coordinators per year level, and profile coordinators. With respect to specific aspects there are coordinators for Information Technology, Cultural Studies and multimedia center. The functions of mentor and counselor are also enhanced. On top of this, there are more teaching support functions in practicals, the multimedia center and the study rooms. The teacher unions have exacted that the school must provide teaching or coaching during 1000 of the 1600 hours

study load, but the people that provide this teaching and coaching are not restricted to teachers. Schools that grow larger and hire more staff have therefore enlisted teaching assistants and assistants in the multimedia center.

The reform of senior high school stimulates the differentiation of functions in education in a strong way. Proponents of this reform that were already in an early phase committed to school development and who participated in school networks, are nowadays often in middle management as well as in teaching. It is of course good that these people were able to pick the fruits of their commitment and enthusiasm, but the risk is there that this intermediate layer between top-down stimulation and a bottom-up approach will side with the top-down tendency. Middle management supports change and reform strengthens their position. It is these middle managers who are the ones that are confronted most by tensions between top-down and bottom-up, while at the same time they join in with the directive approach of school management and they themselves are involved in a process of upward mobility. The balance between top-down and bottom-up, though, favors as little verticalisation of the school organization as possible, by a spreading of non-teaching activities over as many people as possible, and by quick changes in tasks and functions.

## THE TEACHERS' WEB

Hargreaves (1994) describes secondary education as the height of modernism. All tasks are broken down and divided and the teacher is monitored individually. In present (postmodern) society, individuals and organizations are supposed to take on more responsibilities, cooperate in often changing networks, constantly redefine goals, and be conscious of effects and market position. High demands are being placed on the reflective skills of people and organizations (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994). In our postmodern society there remains the problem of coordination and direction. Or is it, just like in national economics, that the market exercises its influence and that government withdraws? In national economics, the government wants to refrain from interference as much as possible because of its respect for the influence of the market. In education, government wants to introduce certain aspects of the market, but on the other hand government also wants direct a cultural policy and refuses to totally leave the development of qualifications to the market. Government is confronted with coordination and direction problems in education. Government needs to find a balance between top-down stimulation and a bottom-up approach. The school needs to find a similar balance with the individual teacher, and the teacher with the individual student.

Schools that really want to enhance the students independence have over past years tried to diminish the influence of top-down stimulation (see Veugelers and Zijlstra, 1996a; 1998a) by:

- arguing for a reduced importance of centralized exams and a reinforcement of school exams;
- pointing out that the study program is overcrowded because skills have been added without removing older parts;
- schools have however not criticized the large number of subjects because they too support a better link-up with higher education, but they also wanted educational reforms to be realized in the new subjects;
- schools have often pointed out the dangers of a strict selection amongst students because that might have a negative impact on immigrant students.

It is remarkable that many schools that have started with the reforms in senior secondary education do not declare that they have introduced the 'study house', but merely the 'reforms'. They do this, of course, to avoid the negative associations of the term study house. But they realize that reform means more than the study house. Some teachers report that before the introduction of profiles and the new overcrowded programs they were in a better position to work at the study house than at present. There was more time and space to reflect on educational methods, to coach students and to choose other forms of teaching and learning!

The building blocks of the study house seem to be demolished by the overcrowded program and the detailed control. In December 1998 the ministry of education proposed to reduce the program, but teachers fear that these proposals do not stretch far enough and that the study house activities will suffer. The ministry justly commented that the introduction of the study house will take a long time and that the schools will have to 'grow into it'. But schools, teachers and students need the freedom to take on their own responsibilities. Top-down control has to be slackened. The public discussion centers on the freedom that students would have in the study house. But in daily practice at the schools, processes of intensification and control curb teachers and students alike.

In this analyses we have shown that government, but also school management, are under pressure to reduce their controlling roles. It seems that there is a discontinuity between the autonomy modern society demands and the control that is mainly an intensification of regulative philosophy. Of course it is good that in education market ideology is not the sole factor and that government wants to direct a cultural policy as well. The school has a pedagogical mission that engages the teacher and the teacher has a pedagogical task with regard to the development of the student (Veugelers and De Kat, 1998; Veugelers, in press). In our analysis we have tried to show that government control of schools, as well as schools' control of teachers and teachers' control of students, hinders the development of school 'autonomy' as well as the professional development of the teacher and also the chances at self-responsibility of the student. In senior high school reform, the balance between top-down stimulation and bottom-up approach has been upset and the bottom-up approach is seriously curbed.

This article does no justice to all those teachers who in spite of testing conditions try to enhance education, in cooperation with colleagues, by working at reforms that enable students to actively shape their own learning processes. This article aims at broadening the possibilities for this form of teaching.

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