



Effective
Education for
Employment:

The Netherlands Interview Series



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This interview provides an overview of how education in the Netherlands is evolving and, perhaps, more importantly, where it should go.

Findings

- Although vocational education in the Netherlands has a good reputation, it is still seen by many as a staging post to a more academic educational pathway
- There is a whole generation of people now in the labour force who will need new skills, new competencies and new learning as a result of 'the changing nature of work'
- Generic competencies that are increasingly seen as vital to every individual leaving education are not, currently, taught in any explicit way.
- The internationalisation of higher education across Europe has increased the challenges and opportunities around inter-cultural understanding.
- ICT offers real potential for extending the personalisation and adaptation of the learning process.

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Regardless of the option taken – vocational or academic – problems begin when formal education ends:

The problem comes when people leave formal education and go into the workplace – training on the job is lousy. When formal education stops, bad education starts.

There are some fundamental problems with the quality of on-the-job training in the Netherlands:

On-the-job training is an industry. The people who offer training on the job are typically not very well trained in terms of pedagogy: really good training requires someone who knows about education.

“Learning should follow the learner – learning should not end at school.”

Policy makers currently place too much emphasis on those currently in education or those beginning their educational careers:

Learning should follow the learner – learning should not end at school.

There are some general competencies that are increasingly seen as essential in the workplace, but these are not explicitly developed during formal education:

Universities should just have classes on competencies – how to collaborate in inter-cultural teams, how to deal with information, that kind of thing. These things – generic competencies - should be offered at university level to all students.

Many schools in the Netherlands are truly international:

Around half the population in Rotterdam are of non-Western origin. We have about 130

nationalities here. The international element is there in society... We’re a really small country and as such we’re very dependent on our ability to work internationally... So developing inter-cultural skills is really important.

Countries across Europe are missing opportunities presented by the internationalisation of higher education:

Universities are sensitive to cultural issues but it tends to be seen as a problem – they don’t look at the opportunities of learning from working in diverse teams. We don’t talk about the strengths. This is untapped potential.

The future of education will be shaped by the application of technology within the classroom.

You cannot think about the future of education without thinking about ICT. The traditional classroom setting – 30 students and one teacher - is ridiculous. ICT can free up resources in the classroom.

ICT is key to the personalisation and adaptation of education

..The core problem with education is that it’s so standardised – we can’t cope with children on the margins, either gifted or slow.... ICT can provide a safe collaboration environment for autistic kids. This is very difficult to do in a traditional classroom setting.

Education has to connect with the pervasive of technologies – particularly gaming - in children’s lives:

Why is the gaming industry not more involved in formal learning?

“You cannot think about the future of education without thinking about ICT”