

How to increase teacher professional autonomy to reduce workload at Dutch schools? Time for focus.

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Outline presentation

- The Dutch educational system
- The Dutch Educational Council
- Teacher workload at Dutch schools
 - Problem analysis (including two case descriptions)
 - Increasing professional autonomy as a solution to control workload
 - Recent developments

The Dutch educational system

- Almost all primary and secondary schools receive government funding
- Dutch schools have a great deal of autonomy (OECD, 2016)
- However, all schools must obey government laws and policies
- Also they must conform to educational policies of schoolboards

The Dutch Educational Council

- Since 1919
- Independent strategic advice by council of experts
- Balance between autonomy of schools and government's responsibility for education

Teacher workload at Dutch schools

- **Parliament: How to reduce teacher workload?**
 - Primary school teachers experience high levels of work-related stress
 - Relatively high number teaching hours (930 per year compared to OECD average of 771 hours)
 - Reducing teaching hours too risky for educational quality
 - Teacher shortages contribute to high workload and stress, but even more important is the burden of administrative tasks

Problem analysis

- Schools often mistakenly believe that administration is legally required when it is not
- Workload and stress varies greatly between schools
- Schools with less workload and stress show reflective autonomy (Vangrieken & Kyndt, 2020). Schoolteam sets priorities together.
- Example, School A: professional standards create a sense of calm
- Example, School B: distributed leadership for educational development

Increase professional autonomy in collective ways in order to control workload

- Teachers
- School leaders and administrators
- Central government

Advice to teachers

- Set priorities together
- Focus on teaching and developing education
 - Designing and implementing lessons, teaching materials and tests
 - Analysing and evaluating lessons
 - Including administration only when it really helps the students
- Differentiate tasks among teachers
- Delegate tasks to supporting staff

Advice to school leaders and administrators

- Help teachers stay reflective and focused
- Establishing a culture and structure for this
- Act as a bridge and buffer between school and environment
- Share leadership with teachers

Central government

- Reduce teaching hours by structural investments in teachers and support staff
- Train teachers and school leaders to work as reflective professionals

Recent developments

- Extra but not structural funding to tackle excessive work pressure
- Dutch 2025 study confirms: administration tasks are a burden for teachers, but schools greatly vary in administrative workload

Conférence de comparaisons internationales

Le métier d'enseignant

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