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## **EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF THE NETHERLANDS IN THE ISSUES OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE SPHERE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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In these turbulent times, governments should go about achieving major public policy goals like a better education system, in the face of dramatic technological and social change. Public-private partnership is increasingly perceived as an innovative approach to provide education for all. PPP arrangements cover a broad range of policy options and follow diverse rationales, some of which are not necessarily novel within education reform agendas. In education, there are open disputes about the key principles and arrangements that PPPs should have. In the case of PPPs, the aim is for schools and companies to set goals and decide on activities jointly, to fund these jointly, implement and evaluate them together, share the risks and continue their partnership over the longer term.

PPP can be broadly defined as arrangements between public and private actors for the delivery of goods, services and/or facilities. In many different settings, PPPs are increasingly perceived as an innovative policy approach to provide education for all, and especially to provide the most vulnerable

population with new educational opportunities. Many governments, international organizations and other key education stakeholders consider that, by partnering with the private sector, countries can expand their education systems in a more efficient, flexible, and effective way (Robertson et al., 2012). Nonetheless, PPPs are demanding, sophisticated, and challenging forms of governance both for private agents and, especially, for governments (Hodge and Greve, 2010). In addition, PPP frameworks might cover a broad range of policy options and follow diverse rationales, which places PPPs in an ambiguous policy category. According to Klijn (2010), in both academic and practitioner circles, PPPs are a confusing policy approach: it is not clear what PPPs exactly mean, for which reasons countries should adopt them, and what is the best form they should take.

The vocational education and training system in the Netherlands is one of the best in the world according to the OECD (Westerhuis, 2018). This level was achieved thanks to changes in industrial policy, which in turn led to the emergence of more than 160 public-private partnership (PPP) centers in institutions that provide vocational education and training (VET) and higher professional education (HPE) in cooperation with private companies from various sectors of the economy.

Dutch government and the private sector have joined forces to accelerate change and make timely changes to professional qualifications to keep pace with innovation and meet the demands of the labor market. As a result, dynamic centers of regional and industry partnership were created: centers of excellence in the field of HPE and centers for innovative craftsmanship and the Regional Investment Fund (RIF) in the field of VET (European Training Foundation, 2020).

PPP centers facilitate cooperation between local business, vocational and technical institutions, higher professional educational institutions, and Dutch government. Joint investments by both public and private parties help develop business models that ensure their financial viability. Diversity and autonomy are key characteristics of such centers. Each of them creates its own niche and market value. Thanks to the cooperation of PPP centers with educational institutions, new ideas, methods, and educational programs become available to a wider audience of educational service recipients.

The main task of PPP centers is to build strong ties between institutions of VET and HPE and business; in the training of professionals in their field, masters with innovative skills; in ensuring lifelong learning and timely retraining; in accelerating and improving the ability of companies to innovate.

PPP in upper-secondary vocational and higher professional education has deep historical background in the Netherlands. Both parts of the educational system are founded on cooperative forms and networks that originated in the guild structure of the mediaeval period. In 1919, the Craft Education Act set out the first dimensions of partnership in the modern era. Since the World War II, VET and HPE have become well established within two separate systems: a system of upper-secondary professional level education (VET), established under the WEB Act of 1996, and a system of higher professional education (HPE), founded under the WHO Act of 1986. In the legislative process associated with the most recent reforms, schools received substantial autonomy. Since then, a process of scale enlargement has led to the merging and rationalization of schools. In addition, article 23 of the Dutch constitution guarantees freedom of education independent of the government, making VET colleges and HPE universities autonomous organizations. This also applies to private companies and private education (European Training Foundation, 2020).

In Dutch secondary VET, representatives of business and labor traditionally play a role in the definition of qualifications and access to workplace learning. Social partners (employers' associations and trade unions) work together with VET colleges to describe qualifications and set examination criteria. They are also jointly responsible for the recognition and quality assurance of 230 000 companies where apprentices fulfil their obligations to complete on-the-job learning. As a result, the upper-secondary VET system guarantees an institutional position for private-sector representatives of the labor market. This stands in contrast to higher professional education, where the linkages are less deep-seated and not regulated by law. The curriculum for HPE is not defined by a qualifications structure determined jointly with companies. Instead, it is assessed by the government.

The activities of PPP centers began in 2010 with several pilot projects that were based on existing initiatives and networks. However, the legislative basis for the operation of such centers became possible thanks to the creation in 2004 of the Scientific and Technological Platform (Platform Bèta Techniek), which was created on the initiative of three ministries of the Netherlands (Economy, Social Affairs and Education). Since then, several recruitment campaigns and programs for innovative cooperation between companies and educational institutions have been launched, and new types of educational

programs have spread and expanded to promote technical and technological education of all types and at all levels.

Nowadays, there are 160 PPP centers, which fully operate across the country, involving over 9 800 companies, 5 000 teachers and 84 000 students. An average PPP center involves 35 companies and other organizations. Participation is open to all companies that are willing to make the investment. The centers are also allowed to provide paid services to the private sector. Diversity and autonomy are key characteristics of the centers approach. The idea is for each center to create its own market niche and value.

To establish a PPP center a business plan needs to be drafted with a series of conditions:

- Partners must define a joint ambition and the urgency to establish a new physical learning environment.
- At least 50% of the budget must come from the partners and 50% of that amount must come from participating businesses.
- Operational and financial aspects are the joint responsibility of the VET colleges or HPE universities of applied sciences on one hand and their private partners on the other hand, but the secretariat of the partnership must remain with the schools.
- The PPP centers must continue to follow the formal state-supported requirements for their respective levels of education.
- The business plan must include a long-term financial sustainability plan, and each center must become financially independent within five years.

Dutch government launched three experiments between 2011–2016 in order to tackle the issues of PPP. They focused on establishing regional PPP involving vocational education colleges and companies.

The distinguishing features of all three experiments were:

1. The government provided a substantial financial incentive for achieving long-term cooperation between the schools and the companies.

2. The schools and companies were given a great deal of freedom to choose the goals of their partnership and the activities that they would engage in. There were few rules, procedures, or targets, other than that the partners needed to cooperate and contribute financially.

3. There was a great deal of emphasis on learning, experimenting and developing, with new approaches being tried out in each experiment, such as learning programs, peer reviews and ‘critical friends’.

Since the launch of the Centers in 2011, several policy reports on competitiveness and innovation have pointed in roughly the same direction. The most authoritative report stems from the report Towards a learning economy (Naar een lerende economie). The report argues that knowledge circulation between institutions is crucial in order to maintain economic competitiveness and prosperity in the Netherlands. It also offers far-reaching recommendations for educational institutions: “Universities of Applied Science have, to date, been seen too much as regular schools. They need to become knowledge institutions, and to find a new balance between the transfer of knowledge and contributing to solutions for societal problems” (WRR, 2013).

Following the report, several other government advisory boards: Advisory Board for Science, Technology and the Rathenau Institute also addressed this subject. In general, the role of vocational and, especially, higher professional education is the subject of increasing debate regarding competitiveness and innovation. It was recommended that the government should “emphasize the Centers of Expertise as a platform for promoting cooperation between universities of applied sciences, other public institutes of knowledge and SMEs”. In 2019, in its evaluation of the ‘Top Sector’ program in the Netherlands, which is designed to promote competitiveness and innovation, the Rathenau Institute recommended that in order to solve major challenges such as the energy transition, Centers of Expertise and similar initiatives should be encouraged, rather than using fiscal instruments to encourage innovation as is currently the case. Under the new innovation policy of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, known as Multi-Year Mission-Driven Innovation Programs (MMIPs), there is more focus on the participation of vocational and higher education in these innovation programs.

**Keywords:** Public Private Partnership (PPP), PPP center, vocational education and training (VET), higher professional education (HPE).

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## **EUROPEAN INTEGRATION BENCHMARKS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF UKRAINE: CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

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**T**he globalization processes of the 21st century, political and economic changes in the world, the rapid development of technologies and the search for new values have intensified the integration of Ukraine into the European space.