## Special needs education in the Netherlands

Sip Jan Pijl

### Education in the Netherlands, some facts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>16.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary education (4-12) incl. pupils with SEN</td>
<td>1.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education (12+):</td>
<td>.95 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils with SEN (4-12):</td>
<td>81000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils with SEN (12+):</td>
<td>53000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban / rural spread</td>
<td>13.7 vs 3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPD per capita</td>
<td>42,333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regular and Special schools

- Separate laws and regulations for regular and special schools
- Special schools as a highly specialized system
- Negative effects of special school placement limited
- Growing attendance in Special Education

Criticising special schools

- Growing international pressure
- Growing expenditure
- Concerns about segregation
- Parents pushing for inclusion
- Pressure valve for regular education? Or: who is protected?
New laws:

• Law on primary education (1995) introduced the ‘Together to school again’ policy

• Law on the Expertise Centres (2002) introduced the ‘Back-pack’ policy
Together to school again

- About 25 regular schools, 1 LD school and 1 MMR school in a regional cluster
- Half of the funding for the two special schools to the cluster
- Funding based on population data
- Each school appointed an internal support teacher
- Each cluster has an assessment team

Back-pack policy

- 10 types of special schools reorganized in 4 types of Expertise Centres
- Regional assessment committees decide on granting back-packs
- National rules and criteria for assessment
- Funding follows pupil
- IEP is obliged
- Parents can choose (?)
Back-pack policy: Eligibility for funding:

- Apply for funding at the Regional assessment committee
- The committee uses national rules and criteria
- Criteria largely based on psycho-medical criteria e.g. > 80 dB hearing loss, IQ < 60 or DSM IV criteria.
- Argued deviation from the rules
- National committee evaluating the decisions of the regional committees

Effects

Figure 3.1 – Percentage leerlingen in het sbo en in rec-so, 1992-2002
Effects 2

- Untill 2002 the percentage of pupils with SEN in clusterschools went down
- Untill 2002 the percentage in special schools went up.
- After the introduction of the back-pack policy the percentage in special schools and the percentage of pupils with SEN in regular education exploded (5 to 20 % per year).

New developments:

- Schools will have a duty to care
- Abolishing the special schools in clusters
- Stopping the growth of special education
- Reorganizing all schools into large regional clusters
- Throughput funding to the clusters
Obstacles in making education in the Netherlands more inclusive:

- Freedom of schooling
- No detailed national curriculum
- Standard assessment tests
- Both public and other school boards
- National Inspectorate has limited power
- Population density

Progress in:

- Education policy
- Legislation / regulations
- Funding
- Regional organization of education
- Teacher training
- Awareness in society
- Daily practice?
# International trends and statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% SEN</th>
<th>% SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>&lt; 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>&lt; 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Has education become more inclusive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>96-98</th>
<th>99-01</th>
<th>02-04</th>
<th>05-06</th>
<th>07-08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eurostat, 2005; European agency data

## Lies, damned lies and statistics

Under Dutch special education legislation:
- 3.1 % in schools for LD and EMR +
- 1.8 % in all other schools for special education =
- 4.9 % total in special schools

New Dutch legislation in regular education:
- All schools for LD and EMR part of regular school system

Result: only 1.8 % pupils in special schools! (now: ≥ 2.2)
Some more tricks:

• Transfer responsibility for e.g. pupils with behaviour problems to another department
• Widen the age ranges
• Place pupils in special classes in regular schools
• Stop diagnosing and labelling pupils

What do these data tell us?

• The percentage of pupils in special schools is at least 0.3 per cent
• In most countries however it is >1 per cent
• In some it is close to or above 5 per cent
• Implementing inclusive education seems to halt
Inclusion: Criteria for success?

- Percentage of pupils with special needs not in segregated settings
- Percentage of pupils with special needs socially included in their peer-group
Social participation of pupils with special needs in regular schools

• Being in a regular school is a huge advantage:
  easier to have relations with peers

• However,
  being in a regular school is not automatically:
  being included

Being socially included is:

• Accepted by peers

• Having friends

• Belonging to an in-class network

• Pupil’s own evaluation of being accepted and having friends
## Data collection

Sample: pupils from 15 regular elementary and lower secondary schools in Trondheim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N pupils with special educational needs (SEN)</th>
<th>N pupils without special educational needs (NSEN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>42 (8,6%)</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>37 (7,4%)</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>79 (8,0%)</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Social position – 2) reciprocal choices

The number of reciprocal choices
Social position – 2) reciprocal choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>No friends at all (%)</th>
<th>≤ 1 friend (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Non SEN</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Non SEN</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social position – 3) in-class network

- Memberships in cohesive subgroup
- A set of at least three individuals, who have more links with members of the group than with non-members
Social position – 3) in-class network

Isolate 1: 17, 19, 27, 34
Isolate 2: 22, 24
Liaison 2: 3, 5, 12, 29, 40, 42
Tree: 30
Group members: 28, 38, 33, 25

How many are socially excluded?

• Overrepresented by a factor of 2 to 3 in the at-risk categories

• Based on acceptance scores at least 15 – 25 % excluded (peer group 3-4 %)
Conclusion:

• Many pupils succeed in finding a position in the peer group
• For the others is physical integration only a very basic condition
• Becoming part of the group is not an automatism
• Some pupils need extra support