

EVALUATION OF TEACHER TRAINING 2000-2001



Ministry of the Flemish Community
Education Department

Report of the steering group
of the evaluation of teacher training

with

policy recommendations

addressed to
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Flemish Minister for Education and Training

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CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

Following a general introduction, the report first deals with eighteen themes to clarify the mission and their execution, to serve as a reminder of the genesis and principles of the minimum competencies, and to describe the most important conclusions in a general way in a number of clusters, accompanied by some comments leading towards policy proposals.

The report concludes with a series of policy recommendations and an appendix with data on the student population training at colleges of higher education.

THEMES

1. Mission	4
2. Reflections on the accomplishment of the mission	5
3. Government responsibility	8
4. The minimum competencies	10
5. Conclusions/reflections on the basic principles	13
6. Conclusions/reflections on the minimum competencies	15
7. The common profile	17
8. The excessive demands on teachers	18
9. Who still wants to become a teacher: the intake	21
10. Teaching practice: the Achilles heel	24
11. The gap between training and the school-based teaching practice	26
12. Supervisors	28
13. Students and newly-qualified teachers: their views	30
14. Training the trainers, supervisors and school management teams	31
15. The teaching competence of a lower secondary school teacher	32
16. Starting a career: induction period	34
17. ICT, flexibility, innovation	35
18. Special conclusions	36
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	38
Appendix	44

INTRODUCTION

As we present this report, it is appropriate to express our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to it.

Firstly, we want to express our gratitude to the training institutions which participated in the evaluation in a very straightforward manner. They did not conceal anything and clearly expressed their concerns.

Secondly, we would also like to extend a sincere word of thanks to the chairpersons, the people who compiled the report and the members of the various evaluation teams who performed their task extremely well within the imposed boundaries with a view to improve teacher training.

The people who compiled the report also deserve a separate word of thanks as they accomplished the very difficult task of producing a report on established lines in order to facilitate the overall processing.

Obviously we would also like to thank the general rapporteur, Professor Henri Eisendrath, who tried to find a continuous thread in all the conclusions of over fifty individual reports.

The steering group carefully monitored the whole process from a distance, and, in the evaluation teams, the individual members gained a clear insight into the situation.

Marleen Deputter, Assistant to the Director at AHOWO, deserves a separate word of thanks, because she did excellent work in co-ordinating the entire operation.

Jan Adé, Director-General of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Administration deserves special merit. He has an outstanding and thorough knowledge of the teacher training system and holds a clear view on its position in higher education as a whole.

*Georges Monard
Secretary-General – chairman of the steering group*

1. MISSION

In the context of the Government of Flanders' policy objectives concerning the (re)appraisal of the teaching profession, it was essential to evaluate teacher training. However, this was to be an evaluation of a policy and not a series of external reviews, audits and inspections of the training as provided by the institutions themselves. In other words, the Government of Flanders wanted to know what effects the most recent policy (Government of Flanders Acts) had had on the training. This clearly concerned two Acts straightaway: the first, of 16 April 1996 on teacher training and in-service training, and the second, of 19 December 1998 laying down the career profiles and minimum competencies of teachers. Obviously teacher training should be viewed as being incorporated in the universities (1991 Act), in the colleges of higher education (1994 Act) and in the centres for adult education (1999 Act).

From the very beginning it was clearly stated that the evaluation of teacher training in question would focus on the implementation of minimum competencies. Obviously, the studies carried out in this context could never be totally unlinked from all the other aspects and the evaluation teams would also have to take this into account however without pronouncing any judgement on a specific training provided by a specific institution.

In order to adequately emphasise the aspect of the policy evaluation, the steering group viewed the schedule of the evaluation visits each time in such a way that all the participants would be involved, including the students, alumni and the recruiting schools. From the start, the contacts with these schools proved extremely valuable, and therefore the steering group decided, after paying all the visits, to intensify the contacts with the schools for primary and secondary education. These "provincial" days were limited in terms of the size of the public concerned, but nevertheless the information collected was extremely relevant, particularly with regard to teaching practice and professionalisation. These results are included in the report.

As indicated earlier, the evaluation of the teacher training was only one aspect (though admittedly a rather important aspect) of the evaluation process. The first very important milestone in that process concerned all the hearings organised by the Committee for Education of the Flemish Parliament with all the possible parties and sectors directly or indirectly involved (30 March, 3 and 6 April 2000). The report on the hearings and the conclusions of the members of the committee are an interesting working document that is of great importance from a democratic point of view. Many visions of teacher training are identified in this document, though without converging into a co-ordinated picture. In fact, this could hardly be expected, because the parties surveyed represent many sections of society whose interests and desires do not always correspond. Nevertheless, the great expectations with regard to training applied to all of them and this is more or less the core of the problem. After all, transferring or projecting all social expectations with regard to the upbringing of children onto teachers and their training is not a realistic starting point.

Various questions and recommendations about the training were addressed to the steering group through all sorts of channels, obviously also the office of the education minister. The range of messages was very impressive.

Some recommendations are broader and more relevant than others, but if all of these expectations have to be met the training would amount to six or seven years. These recommendations also set the tone. It is principal task of policy makers to establish what is reasonably feasible after a training the duration and/or study load of which is in reasonable proportion to the teacher's core task and consequently does not deter potential applicants.

The steering group clearly defined its tasks but emphasises already at the very beginning of its report that policy recommendations related to training are inextricably linked to the induction period of teachers, in-service training and further training. In fact, the co-ordination of all these components of teacher training is one of the aspects of the professionalisation of teachers advocated by many.

2. REFLECTIONS ON THE EXECUTION OF THE MISSION

It was decided beforehand that every organised training course would be evaluated in all the institutions providing these courses. It was decided to carry out an evaluation per institution, though with sufficient attention for each individual training course organised there. Where necessary, the evaluation team even makes a distinction in terms of the different sites of the institution.

This is also a reason for emphasising already that if colleges of higher education have different sites where the same training is delivered, the uniformity with regard to the concept of training is hampered in most cases. Several evaluation teams discovered this fact. Therefore what initially was to a concession to tackle the worst consequences of the mergers has now proved to cause a problem situation. The steering group no longer considers that it is justified to maintain sites if this cannot guarantee that all students, irrespective of the place where they actually follow the training, can follow the same curriculum in accordance with identical rules and procedures.

Finally, almost fifty evaluation teams engaged in the evaluation process each time for at least one day, but in general for two entire days. It was the intention to compose heterogeneous teams so that all the training courses and recruiting schools would be involved to a large extent.

The steering group believes that this comment should be presented to the minister as a particular point for attention. The institutions have no real tradition yet of collecting and co-ordinating interesting policy data. Depending on the parties interviewed in the same institution, different responses were also given. Therefore there is still a great deal of work to be done in this respect.

At the minister's request, a general rapporteur was appointed (Professor Henri Eisendrath, Vrije Universiteit Brussel). It was his task to carry through a thorough analysis of all the reports of the various teams, and finally produce a synthesis of all the results, so that the necessary policy recommendations could be formulated on this basis. The general rapporteur submitted his final report on 29 June 2001. A first reading revealed that in terms of technicalities and content, it certainly contains the essential aspects of all the individual reports and adequately discloses the key

obstacles. The data produced are merely copied from the individual reports. However, the office of the Minister of Education asked the steering group to present a document for policy preparation that would be universally intelligible and could be used for launching the policy debate.

As the evaluation teams did not review the institutions and their training themselves, it was clearly agreed that the steering group would not provide any individual reports per institution.

It is obviously up to the Flemish Education minister to decide how she will proceed with the steering group's report. It is certainly expected that the Flemish Parliament will examine it, together with the possible policy proposals which the minister will distil from the report. The steering group also recommends the minister to confront the various sections that were consulted with this report and, for example, to organise an important symposium on this subject.

*As described in its mandate, the steering group will formulate a series of policy recommendations. It will do so in a realistic way, and in relative terms. It warns everyone at this stage that the issue of **teaching practice** is an essential point for improvement and that all the attempts to resolve this at a fundamental level will be completely void if no **budget** is provided for this. In this respect, the steering group does not wish to designate right away who will provide this budget (new or compensation), but merely states that a substantial structural financial means will have to be provided. It may seem rather harsh to put this so bluntly, but the steering group would like to avoid any unnecessary frustrations after the reading of this report. In other words, if no funds are specially allocated to the problem of teaching practice, the rest of the dossier may only be a useful theoretical approach that could remove a series of misunderstandings and serve as a starting point for partial improvements, but it could only lead to tangible results to a limited extent.*

The steering group points out that all the teacher training courses were actually covered, but that two groups call for some annotations.

The first concerns teacher training at an academic level. It involves the former secondary school teaching qualifications, which were organised in some colleges of higher education in the past for their long courses. Their number and special position means that the reports of the evaluation teams do actually provide the expected information, but on the other hand, that making statements which are too rigid should certainly be avoided.

A similar comment can be made with regard to teacher training courses delivered by the different colleges of higher education in the arts.

There is no doubt that the institutions concerned take their specific teacher training very seriously (in fact, many graduates will later serve as teachers in part-time education in the arts), but the problems which were identified differ widely from the rest. As might be expected to some extent, art teacher training concentrates very strongly on the aspects related to content, and therefore their recommendations are usually related to this.

Another comment could also be made on teacher training in adult education, known as GPB training (certificate of teaching competence). The issue of career profiles and minimum competencies only arose in this type of education when the evaluation process was started, so the evaluation more or less was restricted to following up the

theoretical approaches which just had been introduced. Nevertheless, the contact with these training courses was fairly relevant, because it identified the strong connection with the specific problems of technical and vocational secondary education. One of the aspects which should be particularly emphasised in the GPB training is the modular structure which was introduced in 1987 on the advice of the then Council for teacher training colleges. The DVO is now working on updating these modules in relation to the minimum competencies.

Although the whole evaluation each time focused on a particular training course (depending on the type of teacher), the evaluation also tried to take into account the climate in the institution. The evaluation teams came across hardly any problems in doing this and were generally hospitably received. The institutions completed their self-assessment reports with varying degrees of success, but some were below par, in the sense that from the start, they provided insufficient material to enable the members of the team to draw up a picture about the training and prepare a number of questions on this basis.

This report tries to formulate the overall outcomes and recommendations as far as possible, without having to differentiate in every case in terms of the character of the training or the training college. When relevant differences occur in this context, the distinction is obviously made.

There is one final comment. The evaluation that was carried out was not an inspection, nor an audit. Therefore it is quite separate from the quality control of the training institutions. Although the act on university education clearly provides for external reviews of all the courses, the university initial teacher training courses have not yet been tackled. This is a comment rather than a criticism. It is well known that the universities chose to wait for the outcomes of the current evaluation. In the meantime, the Flemish Interuniversity Council has programmed the external review concerned for 2003. In the colleges of higher education, the audits have come to an end just when nursery teacher training was to be examined. Primary school teacher training had been tackled a few years before, while secondary teacher training was one of the last in line, though still in the period preceding the implementation of the minimum competencies. Furthermore, it can certainly be said that the existing audit reports relate to the old style teacher training, viz., dating from before the 1996 reform. Therefore the steering groups did not really make use of these reports, particularly as regards the individual institutions. Where the GPB training is concerned, in fact nothing had been provided for in the field of quality control.

3. GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The government set up the teacher training evaluation in the context of the important policy plan on the appraisal of the teaching profession. The evaluation teams based their visits on the feasibility and implementation of the minimum competencies. The act on teacher training officially determines the career profiles and minimum competencies as the translation of the concerns and expectations of the government (on behalf of society) with regard to teachers and their training.

The final report adequately shows that, irrespective of the value of the minimum competencies, the government's aim has not really been achieved. This is not only because of the fact that the formulation of these minimum competencies was too vague and non-operational, or because their scope was overestimated, but is related above all to their unenforceable character. Obviously a provision imposed by act can by definition be enforced, but officially this is not the case with regard to minimum competencies, because they have not been formulated in a sufficiently operational and measurable way.

This general finding is the reason for a more general approach to the role and responsibility of government with regard to establishing the quality requirements for teacher training.

The general government policy with regard to education providers has been clearly inspired in the last ten years by the conviction that teacher training colleges have the final responsibility for their quality, and that they must have the greatest possible freedom and autonomy to achieve this. This was certainly very explicitly stated in the creation of the acts on university education (1991) and on the colleges of higher education (1994). Over the years, no arguments have emerged to deviate from this policy line – in fact, the opposite is true. As corrections were made (quite apart from the specific staffing problems which did give rise to further regulations), the path which had been taken was consistently followed. No one took another position when teacher training was reformed because the government's interests were translated in the career profiles and minimum competencies.

The completed evaluation reveals that this expectation has not really been met. It should not immediately be concluded that the training institutions did not attempt to fully collaborate. Criticisms probably in the first instance concern the concept itself and the elaboration of the career profiles and minimum competencies. Quite apart from all the other measures which could probably contribute to improving the concept of teacher training, the Government of Flanders will have to decide on the fate of the career profiles and minimum competencies which have already been drawn up. On the one hand, it is certainly appropriate to work out a more realistic approach, and on the other hand, to ensure the operational aspects and possibilities of measurement.

Nevertheless, the steering group would also like to place the scope of government responsibility in a broader perspective. This raises an extremely important starting point, viz., the link between the diploma (and therefore the training) and the possibility of entering into the profession.

Belgian - and subsequently Flemish - education has always implicitly submitted and accepted that the intended tie was fairly close, to some extent even for academic courses of study, although the universities would probably wish to deny this approach. This Belgian tradition is also noticeable in a concrete way in the compulsory operationalisation of all sorts of professional requirements for the various different courses, formulated by the sectors concerned. For a number of professions these requirements have even been translated into European directives with a binding character. The most obvious examples can be found in the medical and paramedical

sectors, although it must be admitted that this is accompanied by all sorts of strong feelings and disputes. The economic and financial sectors would also like to see their professional requirements incorporated in the training (e.g., in accountancy). However, this is not a universal approach and certain countries do not even include the training for certain professions in education, but under separate specialist ministries. In fact, before the Second World War, this was also the case in Belgium for a number of training courses, such as the training for social worker. Apart from this, it is not possible to identify another link between training and the exercise of a particular profession. In a by no means insignificant number of cases, the training is related to a particular profession, but actually entering this profession will only take place after completing a broad work experience placement under the supervision of people in the profession themselves. The best-known examples are in architecture and in the magistrature. In fact, it could also be said that all the medical specialist areas are arranged in this way. Therefore all these cases involve in-service training or initial supervision.

As regards the training and professional position of teachers, the Flemish minister competent for education is in a rather hybrid position. On the one hand, she is responsible for the training and for its quality, but on the other hand, she is also involved at a very basic level in recruiting the trained teachers. In other words, as education minister, she is undoubtedly authorised to determine the job requirements of teachers and to make entering the profession dependent on meeting these requirements; as education minister, she is also obliged to ensure that the training institutions provide the job requirements in the training. Therefore she is, in rather simple terms, both a producer and a client.

Various models of interactive approaches are conceivable. There is no doubt that the education minister determines the job requirements in every case. However, it is essential that she does so in the capacity of a 'client', and not as 'the funding authority'. To this end, she relies on regular contacts with the recruiting schools, so that she can keep her finger on the pulse at all times.

With regard to teacher training, the training colleges will apply the same principles of quality control to all their other courses. Nevertheless, the government will have to intervene in the traditional external review process to some extent, particularly as regards the composition of the review committees, and as regards the intervals between reviews.

As regards the composition of the committees, the message is clear: the clients should be able to play a substantial role in this, amongst other things, so that the relationship between job descriptions and minimum competencies (see below in this report) can be emphasised in a more operational way. The intervals will undoubtedly have to take into account the requirements of the accreditation in the new structure of higher education.

Nevertheless, it would be advisable to draw up a report on the situation on the basis of a training review, at least every five years. It is the only way for the government to adequately monitor the training, and where necessary, adapt it in consultation with clients and trainers.

Thus the steering group recommends that the education minister should conclude an agreement with the trainers on the minimum intervals between reviews, and on the structural incorporation of a sufficient number of representatives from the recruiting schools in the composition of the review committees.

According to the steering group, the best way in which these two areas of responsibility of the education minister can be achieved is through the establishment of professional requirements (career profiles, minimum competencies – new version) and through the conclusion of an agreement with the training colleges about the intervals between the reviews.

This should also be accompanied by an operational agreement regarding the structure of teaching practice and a realistic content of the induction period. All the parties will be involved in this: the government with regard to professional requirements, the trainers and schools for teaching practice, and the recruiting schools for the induction of newly qualified teachers. Obviously the government is also obliged to provide the funds to ensure that the principles which have been outlined can be achieved.

4. THE MINIMUM COMPETENCIES

In 1998, the Government of Flanders laid down its interpretation of the job requirements for teachers in an act on career profiles and minimum competencies. There can be no doubt about the task and the competence of the government with regard to establishing these job requirements. In other words, the application of the freedom of education can never go so far that anyone can interpret the requirements with which teachers must comply differently, according to their own insights.

The whole evaluation of teacher training was focused on establishing whether the minimum competencies were realistic and achievable. The evaluation also had to provide information about the way in which these minimum competencies established by act were communicated. The evaluation examined the objectives described in detail. It provides detailed information depending on the type of training (nursery school teacher, primary school teacher, lower secondary school teacher, formerly known in Belgium as “regent”, upper secondary school teacher, formerly a teacher trained with an academic degree, teacher holding a GPB certificate, and depending on the persons involved (school governing bodies, teachers in educational theory, subject teachers, students, former students, schools organising teaching practice). Before referring to the results and drawing general conclusions, it is appropriate to recall the starting points for the design of the career profiles and minimum competencies.

According to the 1996 act, the career profile is the description of the knowledge (K) the skills (V) and the attitudes (A) of a teacher while exercising his profession. It comprises two basic components: those elements which apply to all types of teacher (the common professional requirements) and those elements which apply to a specific type of teacher.

The same act describes the minimum competencies as the K-V-A in the career profile which a teacher training graduate must have as a beginning teacher and further develop to meet the career profile.

Finally, the act states that the training colleges determine the training programmes on the basis of the minimum competencies.

In particular, the act also provides that the training for nursery school teachers, for primary school teachers and for lower secondary school teachers must contain a common core of minimum competencies for at least 45 course credits (one quarter of the total training volume). The formulation of a common core does not mean that any statement is made on the way in which it has to be put into practice in the course.

The VLOR must advise on the career profiles on the basis of a proposal from the DVO (department for educational development). On the proposal of the Government of Flanders, the Flemish Parliament has the final say.

The body of career profiles and minimum competencies which apply now are based on three clusters or levels of responsibility of the teacher:

1. to the learner
2. to the school and the educational community
3. to society

The responsibilities referred to in these clusters are further specified by defining a number of job specifications (in the career profiles) and job components (in the minimum competencies). The denomination of the job specifications and job components are identical. The operationalisation of the job specifications and job components takes place on the basis of establishing the skills to be achieved, together with the knowledge elements and attitudes required for this. Therefore the emphasis is clearly on the skills. First, the skills are determined, and then a search is carried out into the knowledge elements and attitudes needed to carry out the skills. As a rule, this last principle is generally accepted, except where lower secondary school teacher training is concerned.

It is appropriate to formulate already the doubts of the lower secondary school teacher trainers about the priority of skills at this stage, because this says more about the situation of the training than about the minimum competencies. The tension between the content in terms of knowledge and the level to be achieved in this, and the general approach to skills applies in this training at all times. Most of the parties responsible for this training defend the opinion that the government should not impose a hierarchy between skills, knowledge and attitudes. Nevertheless, the steering group does not see any real argument for not applying the general starting point to a specific training.

The designers of the career profiles and minimum competencies (this report is limited to the minimum competencies, because this was the essential concern) clarified their views on the basis of two general starting points.

The first is the widened concept of professionalism of teachers, and in this professional development process, it places particular emphasis on:

- accountability to himself
- a vision of education

- bearing responsibility for designing and practising education
- a cross-curricular approach
- autonomy, complementary to fellowship and collaboration
- sustained learning.

The second puts the emphasis on the active and constructive learning by the student, in a powerful learning environment organised by the teacher. This takes place in a concrete way on the basis of a number of antitheses:

specialisation	→	general education
pure knowledge	→	applied knowledge
cognitive learning	→	all-round education
subject-oriented structure	→	cross-curricular education
sequential structure	→	exemplary instruction
short-term learning	→	long-term learning

Schematically, the survey of the training took place on the basis of the minimum competencies in accordance with the framework imposed by the act.

Cluster/level	Job component	Number of skills
vis-à-vis the person learning	1. The teacher as monitor of the learning and development processes	9
	2. The teacher as educator	6
	3. The teacher as subject expert	3
	4. The teacher as organiser	4
	5. The teacher as innovator-researcher	3
vis-à-vis the school/ educational community	6. The teacher as partner of the parents/carers	4
	7. The teacher as member of a teaching team	4
	8. The teacher as partner of external parties	1
	9. The teacher as member of the educational community	2
vis-à-vis society	10. The teacher as culture participant	1

In addition, 10 attitudes are generally formulated.

During the evaluation, all the job components were thoroughly covered. In every institution that was scrutinised, attention was concentrated on two job components, which led to a broad range of information.

5. CONCLUSIONS/REFLECTIONS ON THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

5.1 The widened concept of professionalism

The evaluation revealed that theoretically there is a sufficient consensus on this, although most of the people that were questioned do consider that the structure idealises the teacher as being superhuman and a jack-of-all-trades.

When it comes to converting this professionalism into concrete acts, the trainers quote a series of arguments to show that the feasibility is seriously jeopardised. A number of differences become apparent, depending on whether they concern universities, colleges of higher education or centres for adult education. Nevertheless, the following arguments can be broadly summarised as being representative:

- students usually have an image of the profession that does not correspond very closely to the theoretical description currently put forward
- the training is too short
- there is not enough opportunity for self-assessment and self-reflection
- the social status is not in proportion to the demands made by society
- teacher trainers do not have to comply with specific requirements, and as a rule, their behaviour is the antithesis of the example they could be expected to provide
- very often, there is little evidence of a widened concept of professionalism at the school where teaching practice takes place.

5.2 The shifts of accent in the educational principles

It is generally agreed that the trainers actually accept and apply most of the desired shifts of accent, although not usually really providing an explanation. The act certainly provides an additional incentive to explore them in a more explicit way, and relate the training concept to the shifts more effectively. However, a in-depth evaluation of the effects of the shifts of accent which have gradually been introduced is lacking.

Nevertheless, two findings deserve special attention.

In the first place, students (and consequently also their trainers) complain that the new principles do not permeate the field in which they have to learn their profession. Secondly, students state that their trainers mainly approach the innovations from a theoretical point of view, and refer the practice to the end of the training.

On the other hand, a survey of the educational field (provincial meeting days and the contact with teaching practice schools during the evaluation) reveals that in this field:

- innovations are rarely welcomed with much enthusiasm
- the teaching staff receive insufficient in-service training
- there are serious complaints about classes being too large and staffing levels being too low
- educational innovation is still not really penetrating into schools
- the ICT potential is having little effect because of a lack of infrastructure and experienced teachers in that area.

That is why there are certainly some large gaps in the innovation process. Consequently the steering group must point out to the education minister that it will never be sufficient to improve only teacher training in relation to the desired developments, but that special attention must also be devoted to the people working in the field themselves.

5.3. An emphasis on the acquisition of skills

As indicated above, the principle of departing from skills when implementing the job components of the minimum competencies is by no means self-evident, particularly for the training of secondary school teachers. It follows that this training course dedicates more attention to the job component, 'teacher as subject expert', than other training courses. This argument is stressed most strongly in the technical secondary teacher training, but it is a point for attention in itself.

Nevertheless, the analysis reveals that defining the skills in concrete terms is a useful procedure which can certainly result in a solid agreement between trainers and people working in the field. This is also a suitable starting point for the agreements between the government and trainers, on condition that (as was underlined by many people during the evaluation) these skills are realistic, achievable, and formulated in such a way that they can be measured.

The steering group very strongly underlines the conclusion that an efficient and developed communication strategy is needed for introducing the starting points. Moreover, the communication should take the language used by the users into account. In fact, this language should be used straightaway when formulating the profiles and competencies. Furthermore, an emphasis is laid in this respect on the need to monitor the implementation and adjust it, if necessary. Although a discussion could arise about who should be responsible for this monitoring, the steering group considers that it would be appropriate for the government to continue to play a monitoring role in this.

6. CONCLUSIONS/REFLECTIONS ON THE MINIMUM COMPETENCIES

It has not been a small job to assess the minimum competencies. This is due to the fact that although a consensus quickly can be achieved on the main principles, it is not easy to translate them into concrete terms in practice. Where minimum competencies are concerned, this translation is in terms of skills. Apart from the debate about the principle of the dominant character of skills in relation to knowledge elements and attitudes, there was a general conclusion that the description of the skills is too general. As a consequence their scope is lost and it becomes virtually impossible to measure the extent to which they have been achieved. In so far as the minimum competencies will continue to be used to determine the agreements between government and trainers, far-reaching improvements are therefore essential.

It was unambiguously established, either directly or indirectly, that across the board, the minimum competencies as a whole were not achievable for the training. In the list of job components, only 'the teacher as culture participant' is really a matter for debate. For a large number of people, it is not obvious that the training should provide this. This debate arises particularly in the GPB training, and to some extent also in university teacher training. Even more research is needed to determine whether the fact that some minimum competencies are not considered to be achievable is the result of objections in principle (this was only detected for the teacher as culture participant), or the result of practical objections.

It is certainly clear that the first four job components are approved for all types of training (*the teacher as monitor of the learning and development processes, as educator, as subject expert, as organiser*), although the criticism of the way in which the concrete goals are formulated still applies. In fact, it was found that, in virtually all cases, the trainers already took them into account in their training concept in a more or less explicit way, even before the implementation of the minimum competencies. In fact, a number of trainers says that they have not waited for these minimum competencies to adapt their training to the needs of the future.

For the other five job specifications (*the teacher as innovator/researcher, partner of parents, member of a teaching team, partner of external parties, member of the educational community*), the evaluation reveals that they give rise to serious doubts, particularly as regards their implementation and the extent to which they can be achieved. The students emphasise the fact that they are given at most a theoretical approach and are often not confronted with these aspects in their teaching practice because their mentors restrict their tasks to a great extent. In so far as the training did provide this, there is still a danger of a gap between theory and practice. Nevertheless, there is a real and urgent demand from students for their training to provide sufficient experiences of all the aspects of the teaching profession. However, the training period appears to be too short to include effective training for the related skills. The steering group warns that this conclusion is certainly not meant to anticipate the specific demand to extend the length of the training. However, there is a need for developing a new and creative training model. Immersing the trainee teacher in the daily realities of education is almost vital, and this certainly applies to every type of training. Serious questions about the feasibility do arise, particularly for

the GPB training, but the concern that was formulated should still apply to the same extent to those trainees as well.

Finally, for many, the non-viable character of the job components discussed above also serves to illustrate society's unrealistic and excessive demands on teachers.

The evaluation teams found that all the discussions concerning the problems that were found, ultimately suggested that the teaching practice was expected to solve many things, and it was felt, particularly by students, that this teaching practice should be broader. In addition, the same discussions almost spontaneously led to many people expressing the wish for an additional differentiation in the whole range (of skills) of minimum competencies, and for a clear summary of the absolute minimum requirements for entering the teaching profession, which was translated into the general term, 'standards'. This can already lead to the conclusion that there is a need for a fundamental revision of the minimum competencies, unless the government decides to draw up the 'standards' in a fairly stringent way, and leave the rest to the discretion of the trainers and to changing circumstances.

The steering group certainly accepts that the career profiles and the derived minimum competencies for teachers laid down by the Flemish Parliament in 1998 was an important contribution in terms of the interpretation of the social task imposed on the trainers by the government. However, it is already quite clear (and this is definitely the absolute added value of the evaluation operation) that:

- 1. the fact of minimum competencies themselves is not in itself contested in principle;*
- 2. they are formulated much too broadly, in an undifferentiated, non-operational way;*
- 3. there are no criteria available to measure their achievement;*
- 4. the training courses do not (yet) explicitly respond to them, for whatever reason or cause;*
- 5. an act is not sufficient for them to be used effectively as a norm;*
- 6. the government must engage in an in-depth reflection on the extent to which they can be enforced;*
- 7. there is a real need to establish 'standards';*
- 8. the government will have to play a monitoring role with regard to their implementation, both in the recruiting schools and in the training.*

At the same time, it was unambiguously established that teaching practice is an absolutely essential component of the training, although it will have to be examined whether in- service training or induction will provide the necessary support.

As regards the teaching practice, it is clear that this should involve complete immersion in a school, with all the related consequences. Therefore a teaching practice can no longer be a cumulative collection of separate lessons.

7. THE COMMON PROFILE

The common profile is referred to twice in the context of teacher training.

The first approach obviously concerns the common job requirements for all teachers, which form the first basic component of the career profile and of the minimum competencies.

For universities and centres of adult education, these common profiles do not in themselves constitute a problem, because they train only one type of teacher. In so far as there could be a problem, this could only apply to colleges of higher education, which generally provide the training of three types of teacher. However, it must be noted at the same time that the officially approved texts of the career profiles and minimum competencies themselves are designed in such a way that the common requirements can be translated in a different way for each particular type of teacher. This means that some of the emphasis on the profile aspects is lost. Moreover, this reformulation often results only in very subtle differences, which are sometimes difficult to explain, except by the authors themselves. Yet it has not been established anywhere that there is any dispute about the common job requirements. The only question is whether the presentation of the minimum competencies would not benefit from a clearer distinction between common and specific aspects (and this corresponds with the general findings, as already indicated above).

The second aspect of the common profile explicitly introduced in the 1996 act concerns the common 45 course credits (one quarter of the credits for the whole training) for teacher training of 1 cycle in colleges of higher education. Proceeding on the basis of the common job requirements for all teachers, it might certainly be quite logical to arrange for a considerable common training component in teacher training itself. The real situation is that this form of common training only exists on paper, and that virtually no college of higher education will even consider systematically organising educational activities for the three types of training together. At some institutions, the evaluation teams recorded a particular occasional exception, usually in project form, and never systematically organised.

Some colleges of higher education immediately go on the defensive by stating that fundamentally, following the specific minimum competencies for each type of teacher, entirely in accordance with the act, also entails that the common job requirements are achieved. Although they might be right on paper, from a theoretical point of view, the teams felt this was an inappropriate argument used by the colleges of higher education to disguise their fundamental objections to any form of common profile. Other colleges of higher education try to justify their decision not to organise common educational activities on the grounds of infrastructure problems. This argument is not always credible either, because this means that the trainers in charge are still using an out-of-date training model as a starting point, in which there is no sign of innovation.

It is not clear to the steering group what attitude they should adopt in the first instance. Certainly, it is clear that the colleges of higher education are missing an opportunity to underline the common job requirements and give shape to them in reality. For the students, it was also often clear that they generally never met each

other. As the government does not really want to interfere in the actual organisation, it will refrain from commenting on this situation in future.

It is more important to ensure that the revision of the minimum competencies will erase the ambiguity between the common and the specific elements and provide sufficient assessment tools to determine in the quality control, whether the common profile referred to in the minimum competencies has actually got through to the graduates.

The steering group insists on placing a strong emphasis on the distinction between the general and specific elements of the minimum competencies. The reviews should detect whether the common profile of the general minimum competencies is actually getting through to the trainees.

8. THE EXCESSIVE DEMANDS ON TEACHERS

The career profiles, minimum competencies, results of parliamentary hearings, and many memorandums and letters addressed to the minister perfectly illustrate the high expectations which society has for teachers and school education in general.

As a number of the points for attention indicated undoubtedly correspond to real concerns in society in general, and with regard to the upbringing and education of children in particular, there are few arguments for failing to confront prospective teachers with this, and it is therefore justified to provide them with a minimum of insight and information during their training, so that they can deal with this appropriately later in the exercise of their profession. However, responding to this during the training implies a fairly large investment of time, which is difficult to fit in the already sizeable curriculum without extending the length of training.

However, in the light of the developments in the views on training structures adapted to the future in general (inter alia, in the light of the implementation of the principles of the Bologna declaration), it is highly advisable not to extend the length of the initial training. In the case of teacher training, the arguments for extending the length of training should certainly be rejected, because it is clear, on the one hand, that the demands are so great that adding one year would still not be enough, while on the other hand, it would be even more difficult to attract people into the teaching profession in relation to career possibilities.

Therefore it will have to be a matter of including the essentials in the basic training, while also accepting that beginning teachers are not able to tackle all the problems at once. With reference to the above-mentioned proposal regarding the establishment of initial standards, which is supported by the steering group, it is clear that this opportunity should be taken to decide definitively what belongs to basic training. All the other problems will then have to be referred to further training (if the scope of these problems is sufficiently great to justify this), or to ad hoc solutions during the first years that the teacher is working. Once again, this reveals the importance of induction and in-service training.

However, the most common questions must be raised, in particular, to ensure that an appropriate approach is adopted in future teacher training, in one way or another.

These include:

- equal opportunities
- participation
- disabilities (and the whole problem of special education)
- gender neutrality
- dealing with difficult children
- migrants
- violence
- sexuality
- drugs
- stress prevention.

This is certainly an impressive list, but teachers are also expected – and this is of rather fundamental importance – to ensure that their pupils are made aware of the importance of lifelong and lifewide learning. This is a demand which relates to both the view on education and to teacher training. At the same time, it contains an element of ambiguity. As the importance of lifelong learning is indeed beyond discussion, the people who make these demands must accept that also teachers must get lifelong training, and that, as a consequence, it is not realistic, nor objective, to lay a too heavy burden on beginning teachers.

There have been many arguments in favour of the professionalisation of teachers, but this corresponds with the basic starting points for career profiles and minimum competencies. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there was a general feeling among a number of mediators that teachers are insufficiently open to the problems with which the pupils are confronted in their environment.

An important series of mediators discuss the status of teachers and concluded that the esteem of the teachers' position by the government starts with the funding of an in-depth training and is then followed by the provision of good quality in-service training. They also call attention to the problems of intake. Along the same lines, others very explicitly argue that the staffing policy in schools should be much more flexible and that the rigorous regulations with regard to certification, redundancy and reassignment of teachers are counter-productive. This is logically followed by arguments in favour of job differentiation.

Quite apart from these probably justified concerns, the steering group also came across all sorts of other desires which are vitally important from the point of view of the training providers, but of relative importance in the context as a whole, and should probably not be immediately integrated in the training.

In most cases, the subject teacher unions came up with these questions with a view to highlighting the importance of their discipline. Professional federations also wished to enter the debate, particularly with regard to the so-called technical secondary teacher training. Along the same lines, the steering group focussed on the controversy regarding the teaching competence of the non-academically trained teacher in

secondary education, and regarding the number of subjects for which he is trained. For many people, specialising in one subject is not achievable. This view was also often defended during the evaluation.

The supporters of modularisation also contributed to the debate. It is clear that this is an important issue, though it is an aspect that is not specifically related to teacher training as it concerns the whole of higher education. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that there is also a group of rather traditionally-minded people who would like to see modularisation being rejected.

The education inspectorate also drew attention to a series of problems which are also strongly related to the issue of subjects and the question of certificates in secondary education.

Finally, the steering group feels obliged to mention quite a few arguments in favour of greater flexibility in the training. Although this matter undoubtedly also concerns the whole of higher education and important steps have already been taken to promote greater flexibility, this aspect has a special dimension for teacher training (in higher education institutions) because it entails an important reference to the common core of minimum competencies for all teachers and the possibility of joint activities in the training of different types of teachers resulting from this.

In view of the many concerns with regard to teacher training, formulated by internal and external bodies, the steering group indicates that the government must have the courage to clearly state that in a number of cases the initial training cannot meet these concerns.

Similarly, certain themes will have to be tackled and it will be a matter of defining the standards in such a way that the necessary guarantees are provided for their achievement. In other words, if certain problems require a thorough approach in initial training, they will have to be reflected in the standards.

Finally, it must be assumed that the minimum competencies will be formulated in such a way that they almost automatically comprise the most important issues. In other words, the emphasis on individual themes should actually be an exception, applied only in the case of a few, very special problems.

After all, one of the most important attitudes of the teacher is to remain alert and react flexibly to new emerging social developments.

9. WHO STILL WANTS TO BECOME A TEACHER: THE INTAKE

The evolution of the population figures for teacher training at colleges of higher education can be followed from the data collected in the appendix to this report.

In the 2000-2001 academic year, the following data were recorded in colleges of higher education.

Absolute numbers of first-year students, per gender and training

	men	women	Total
Nursery school teacher	56	1548	1604
Primary school teacher	623	2452	3075
Lower secondary school teacher	1713	1962	3675

In terms of percentage, the share of the type of secondary education of first-year students training at a college of higher education

	ASO	KSO	TSO	BSO
Nursery school teacher	20.8	3.3	58.7	17.3
Primary school teacher	48.8	1.6	48.0	1.6
Lower secondary school teacher	51.7	2.5	42.7	3.1

ASO : General secondary education

KSO : Secondary education in the arts

TSO : Technical secondary education

BSO : Vocational secondary education

On the basis of the data of the training providers, these data appear to be relatively constant for the last three academic years, except for an increase in the share of BSO in the teacher training for nursery school teachers.

The success rate of first-year students in the 1999-2000 academic year in terms of percentages, again depending on the type of education followed in secondary education

	ASO	KSO	TSO	BSO
Nursery school teacher	67.9	52.9	55.2	28.2
Primary school teacher	68.5	49.2	34.3	12.5
Lower secondary school teacher	62.1	40.3	42.9	27.2

Again, only a number of trends can be discerned, but one has to be very careful as only a long time span and a thorough analysis can lead to a clear insight in the situation. This was not the aim of the evaluation in itself but it is probably an indication that the analysis concerned should be carried out in full before the possible reforms are introduced.

It cannot be denied that the many discussions between the evaluation teams and the different responsible parties, reveal a slightly alarming picture with regard to the so-called quality of the intake. However, in the context of the evaluation of teacher training, the scientific basis provided is not adequate to make any justified judgements on this quality. In general, it was established that as a rule, the first-year teacher trainees training in colleges of higher education were not in the top group students of the final year of secondary education. Furthermore, several questions arose with regard to the type of secondary education attended by these first-year students.

At the start of the evaluation there was a certain degree of confusion about the increased intake of students who had completed BSO in the training for nursery school teachers. This could suggest that these young people had followed an inferior education up to then, for example, with less strongly developed language skills. This matter was raised for discussion during the reviews at the colleges of higher education, but the trainers did not see it as a major problem. They claimed that their quality standards were maintained at a high level, so that it was actually not easy to pass for the first-year students referred to. This is actually reflected in the overall success rates.

The steering group would not like to draw any premature or general conclusions, but focuses the education minister's attention on the fact that these findings sufficiently reveal the importance of the matter of choice of studies (transition from secondary to higher education).

In general, it was established – always on the basis of the findings of the trainers themselves – that the motivation of first-year students training to become nursery school teachers and primary school teachers could be considered good or very good. For the training of lower secondary school teachers, the choice of this training route was the second, if not the third choice, for more than half the first-year students, which probably does not add to their positive motivation.

Where academic teacher training is concerned, the main problem is that intake figures are much too low. The evolution of the total numbers of candidates reveals the following picture.

1996-1997	4259
1997-1998	3727
1998-1999	3588
1999-2000	3408
2000-2001	3149

If the trend noted now continues, there will be an increasingly pressing shortage in academically trained teachers in the next few years. In this context, it is probably appropriate to indicate briefly that there is a clear feeling that the innovations in the former secondary school teaching qualification are partly responsible for the fall in the number of trainees.

In the new (in itself justified) approach, attending a teacher training and the final years of the academic training at the same time is no longer possible. This appears to have a negative effect on the decision to attend teacher training. This was abundantly

confirmed in discussions with current students and a number of former students.

The steering group requested a further-reaching analysis to determine whether this hypothesis is correct. Comparisons are possible as not all the universities involved introduced the reforms at the same time. On this basis, it would be possible to compare the effects with the lapse of time.

The number of trainees in the GPB training is still fairly high.

	men	women	total
1997-1998	1601	1525	3126
1998-1999	1675	1571	3246

From 1999-2000, the act on adult education imposes a new registration with a view determining the number of teaching periods per trainee and the total number of periods allocated for funding purposes. During the transitional period, the reference periods do not allow for a further comparison with the previous period.

On the basis of the findings of the providers themselves, the number of individuals who attend the training should remain constant, if not increase slightly.

The evaluation showed that the population in this training is very heterogeneous and that the training certainly does meet the immediate needs, but that the integration into the system of minimum competencies still had to start. This is not a criticism of the training, because the DVO also only recently launched the preparations for innovating the GPB training. It was very striking that the students in the GPB training were highly motivated.

As an aside, it should be noted that although the regulations on qualifications for secondary education have accepted since 1989 that the certificate of teaching competence for academically trained people could also be the GPB rather than the traditional secondary school teaching qualification, this has only recently become a point for discussion in the past year. The number of candidates in this situation is actually quite unimportant in relative terms, but it is interesting to point this out to avoid this present anomaly in the future.

The steering group would also like to draw the education minister's attention to the evolution in the approach of teacher training depending on whether there is a surplus of teachers on the market, or a shortage. Any intervention in teacher training will only have an effect after at least three years, and consequently this is not the most appropriate approach. Obviously, the greatest challenge arises during the period of shortages and in particular of shortages on the labour market. Experience has shown that the government's emphasis on these shortages does have an effect on the number of enrolments (the reverse is not so clear: when the government indicates that there is a surplus, enrolments do not necessarily fall, as was recently clearly demonstrated with regard to physiotherapy training courses). However, there does not mean that when there is a new generation of qualified people, there will still be such an obvious shortage. Therefore, it is at least equally appropriate to solve the problem through all sorts of incentives to encourage people who already have work experience in education (in those sectors where there are no apparent shortages) or outside education, to retrain or follow in-service training very quickly so that they can take up

teaching posts in those areas where there are acute shortages. This requires a number of temporary measures which will make it sufficiently attractive and socially acceptable for the target group to make these additional training efforts. On the other hand, the training providers will also have to adopt a much more flexible attitude to cope with this extra task and carry it out, albeit on a temporary basis.

In particular, the steering group is strongly insisting that steps should be taken to set up fast-track training of nursery school teachers currently working as primary school teachers (of the nursery school teachers who graduated recently in 2000, 481 started either part-time or full-time as primary school teachers in the 2000-2001 school year, compared with 551 who started as nursery school teachers). The preceding stresses the great need.

10. TEACHING PRACTICE: THE ACHILLES HEEL

For a proper understanding of the problem, it is necessary to return to the time when the former two-year teacher training course in higher education was supplemented with a third year (1984). The advice of the Higher Council at the time was clear: half of the third year would consist of teaching practice, while the volume of teaching practice in the second year of training would remain virtually the same. The education minister also approved the model course programme, quite convinced that these would keep the training on the right track. However, the institutions (which varied widely, depending on the network to which they belonged) interpreted the teaching practice hours in a very specific way. In many cases they calculated these as four or five teaching periods, so that the real volume of hours spent in class would be reduced. In this way the situation went off the tracks and this sort of thinking is still in evidence. The belief in the importance of teaching practice has still not been completely established.

It is almost impossible to blame the governing boards at that time, because the government had not really provided any measures for the supervision of teaching practice – and that applied to all teacher training courses. The trainees were seen as a burden by the schools where the teaching practice was carried out and they did not experience any added value from the contact with trainers. The trainers themselves did not see it as their task to ‘visit’ the students on teaching practice and the supervisors had to undertake this task without any reward.

The evaluation of teacher training clearly confirmed that the great diversity in ideas on teaching practice is one of the reasons why teaching practice is not always a great success. In general, trainers, students and mentors have very different views on this issue.

In theory, everyone agrees that the minimum competencies with regard to the school and the educational community are best developed in direct contact with the real working field. Nevertheless, there are very different emphases. In some way, all the trainers respond in the same way: students will only really learn, when they – i.e., the trainers – can intervene adequately. This concern is reflected in different ways by the universities, colleges of higher education and centres for adult education.

The last group most readily accepts that the public they are serving are generally professional and that it is above all a matter of refining the teaching skills. During the teaching practice, the teacher ‘in training’ is usually in a situation he can only face on the basis of his technical, subject-related knowledge. The problems with which these teachers are confronted are of a completely different nature compared with those of their colleagues training at colleges of higher education and universities. The GPB training mainly tries to respond to this, and largely succeeds, though often in quite a heuristic way, rather than through the support of an educational strategy. In fact, the experiences of the various teams which followed GPB training varied enormously.

University teacher training courses should not interfere either with the subject matter training of potential teachers. In this sense, it is very similar to the GPB training, though it can be assumed that the preceding university training guarantees a number of socio-communicative skills. Therefore it is striking that the university teacher training courses mainly emphasise the positive processing of practical experience

(reflection), and the individual contribution of the students themselves. Two comments should be made in this respect.

First, the expectations with regard to socio-communicative skills are not always met. Secondly, teaching practice in this training is almost, by definition, limited to teaching a series of lessons.

The training at colleges of higher education and lower secondary school teacher training in particular is constantly confronted with the conflict between purely subject matter based training, on the one hand, and professional training, on the other hand. This has also repercussions on teaching practice, particularly as regards the assessment. The views on teaching practice are least positive amongst trainers at colleges of higher education. Many still see teaching practice as a burden and have not yet been able to turn the tide to make it a positive experience. Learning to deal with the minimum competencies certainly has had a positive influence on the views of teaching practice and many trainers have given more thought than they did in the past to a more effective integration of teaching practice, but there is still a long way to go. In this respect, the problem of the independent teaching practice is typical.

The assessment of teaching practice is also an important point for attention. Although the trainers themselves should undoubtedly have the last word regarding the assessment of students, the views of the mentors should not be ignored. In general, it has been found that the interaction between trainers and mentors depends entirely on local practice. Several different models have been discovered, some more systematic than others. There is certainly no institutionalised system. In a number of cases this leads to conflicts. Sometimes a student receives conflicting signals in the assessment of his trainers, on the one hand, and his mentors, on the other hand. In general, students are very critical of the way in which their trainers assess their teaching practice. They dispute the fact that these trainers can reach a final decision after a visit that lasts, on average, no more than ten minutes. Obviously this sort of average is subject to all the criticisms which apply to averages in general, but this finding also means that some students are not visited at all by the trainers during their teaching practice. The danger also exists that the emphasis on certain less satisfactory aspects of the training results in the underestimation of the whole training. It is worth stating that the evaluation teams found in general that there is still a great deal of enthusiasm among trainers and certainly among students. The evaluation did not incorporate an audit and therefore the teams certainly cannot make any pronouncements on the quality of the training. If they had wished to do so, this would have had to be supported by operational criteria which exactly reflect the objectives of teacher training. This would then complete the circle, because the minimum competencies were an attempt to achieve precisely that operationalisation.

From the evaluation and in particular during the subsequent provincial meeting days with the representatives of the schools involved (primary and secondary education, centres for adult education and part-time art education) it clearly appeared that many primary and secondary schools are prepared to take on trainees for teaching practice and provide their supervision, as long as this takes place in a win-win situation. For the management teams of these schools, this means that the student teachers take a full part in school life for a longer period, so that they actually work with the teachers. Obviously, this means that the own school culture also determines what the student teacher is asked to do and that the predominant role of the training provider is greatly reduced. Not everyone is convinced by this system, but at the very least, it is recommended that this should be a possibility.

In addition, it also emerged that teaching practice involves all sorts of formalities, paper work and planning for the students. Most supervising schools believe that this could certainly be reduced. The evaluation teams also found that educationalists and subject teachers in the training institutions held different views in this field. Again it is not possible to tar all the training institutions with the same brush, but this aspect certainly deserves some attention.

11. THE GAP BETWEEN THE TRAINING AND THE SCHOOL-BASED TEACHING PRACTICE

In the comments on teaching practice, it has already been indicated that the co-ordination between trainers and the schools where students practice teaching is not always very smooth.

However, this is a general comment which is not limited to teaching practice. At the risk of defending a one-sided opinion, the evaluation teams generally said that they were under the impression that the training providers do not always sufficiently take into account the developments in the field for which they are training teachers. They recommend that measures should be drawn up to systematically bridge this gap. The attainment targets and developmental objectives in primary and secondary education are a typical case in point. While the aims for these education levels are constantly evolving, teacher training does not appear to respond completely to these evolutions. The question is whether this is feasible, but on the other hand, newly-qualified teachers will be confronted with them straightaway and that is why training providers cannot afford to ignore them.

Listening to the representatives of primary and secondary education, the important, well-known areas of attention quickly emerge: vocational education, special education, the issue of extending pastoral care, concentration schools, participation etc. The almost exaggerated expectations of society with regard to teachers and to school education in general, are fairly easily transposed by the responsible parties to the inadequate preparation of newly-qualified teachers. This is reflected in comments like, 'How can we tackle these problems if new teachers are not prepared?' The teacher training is attacked in a rather one-sided and partly unjustified way, because the virtually impossible situation of education itself is largely passed on to the training institutions.

In this respect, the following comment should be made. The problems (which should perhaps be seen as challenges) confronting the field are not uniform and depend largely on the socio-economic and cultural context. For example, aspects that are a challenge for a typical inner city school hardly apply to a small rural school. Therefore no matter how positively the trainers tried to tackle these challenges, their attempts would always be fragmentary and incomplete, and the criticisms of the schools where students practice teaching would continue to apply. In fact, clients

have always complained about the products they are offered. After all, their criteria are based on a generally broader experience, and it is impossible to expect this from teachers starting out on their career.

Therefore without wishing to deny the gap, it is appropriate to temper the criticisms with regard to the training. It is not a matter of who is right, the trainers or the schools where students practice teaching – this is not the real conflict. Both parties are confronted with the same problems, viz., the high expectations of society. Passing the buck is not the solution. Quite the contrary is necessary: the trainers should constantly remain in touch with the ‘clients’. That is why the section on the role of the government so strongly emphasised the fact that the review committees should include representatives of the clients.

This quickly brings us back to the core of the problem: what can society reasonably expect from education, and by extension, from teacher training? The description of the career profile and the minimum competencies should provide the first official answer to this question, but the whole evaluation was actually organised to determine whether this aim has been achieved. As already indicated, this does not really appear to be the case, and many developments will be needed to achieve the improvements which are considered necessary.

Meanwhile, job descriptions have been drawn up to implement the adapted staffing regulations for compulsory education, and the Flemish Parliament has also taken positive note of these. These job descriptions were drawn up entirely with a bottom-up approach. They are the systematic translation by the profession of the different types of educational tasks.

On the other hand, the career profile was created from the top down. Now it has been established that the link between job descriptions and career profiles has never been discussed. Therefore it would be appropriate for the revision of the minimum competencies to be accompanied by a thorough evaluation of their connection with job descriptions, and vice versa.

At the same time, this clearly shows that teaching practice, the induction, in-service training and further training are inextricably linked, because the logical synergy between these forms of training and further professionalisation are probably precisely the most appropriate way of tackling the problems that arise.

In this same context there is therefore certainly also sufficient reason for arguing that experienced teachers in compulsory education or adult education should be involved in the training itself. Different working models are conceivable, but one should depart from the idea that these teachers should continue to accomplish their job themselves, on the one hand, while working part time or temporarily in teacher training. The steering group is convinced that this could lead to special added value, and could also contribute to a better synergy between the training and the recruiting schools.

The steering group emphasises that it is not enough to establish career profiles and minimum competencies. It is of paramount importance that standards be defined and, in a second instance, that greater transparency be introduced regarding the growth

opportunities between the different stages of professionalism, in relation to the job descriptions. It is obvious that this matter is linked to the possible development of job differentiation and the evaluation of teachers in their jobs. In the long term, this will require a very important change in the approach to the teaching profession. Although this line of thought undoubtedly started a few years ago, it is necessary to be aware that it partly determines the vision of teacher training.

The steering group also argues for the incorporation of experienced teachers from the recruiting schools in the training. For this to be possible in an organic way, the existing staffing regulations will have to be adapted. The introduction of a flexible mobility system with the assurance of returning to a job is necessary for this.

12. THE SUPERVISORS

Before being more definite about the ‘rewards’ for supervisors, it is obviously necessary first to redefine the teaching practice itself. However, in order to avoid the chicken and egg syndrome, it should be possible to begin with a few definite starting points.

Although the term ‘supervisor’ is often used, the evaluation revealed that the term is certainly not interpreted in a uniform way, even though no fundamental differences were recorded. Basically the supervisor is a teacher (or in exceptional cases, one of the head teachers) of a school where the student teachers practice teaching. This teacher will have the first and closest relationship with the trainee. Therefore this supervisor will describe the student teacher’s tasks, supervise the preparation and execution, provide the first feedback, and where necessary, monitor the student.

Thus the supervisor takes on the student teacher, who also brings along all sorts of theoretical principles and practical instructions from his training. Many discussions with supervisors have shown that there are also large gaps which need to be bridged. The most typical example concerns lesson preparation. The reactions to this vary enormously. Some are extremely negative, and even aggressive. These supervisors do not agree with the theoretical preparation for lessons by the student teachers, and only want them to do what they consider useful and necessary. Fortunately, they are in the minority. Most supervisors respond in a more neutral way and accept that the student teachers must respect the rules of the training. They only monitor the student when it is clear that there is a danger that the results aimed for will not be achieved in the class concerned. The third group is generally interested, and even say that they expect to learn something from the trainers (through the student teachers). A good reason for introducing a system for the collaboration between trainers and schools where students practice teaching.

Improving the role of the supervisors certainly means that there should be a possibility of defining who is responsible for what in consultation between the school and the training institute. When the teaching practice is organised in such a way that

it amounts to a complete involvement of the trainee in the life of the school, these agreements are particularly essential. However, it is by no means self-evident how this should be done. Some argue for a general guideline (if not directive) to streamline the situation as far as possible along the same lines. Others argue for leaving this matter to negotiations between the supervising school and the training institution. In the current climate of the importance of initiative and autonomy, the second way seems the obvious choice.

However, whatever position is adopted, the basic common condition is that the expectations which training institutions place on the shoulders of the supervisors should be balanced by a formal recognition of their professionalism, and by their being materially rewarded. The evaluation teams were pleased to find that, despite not being paid, many supervisors still make many efforts, sometimes rather begrudgingly and complaining slightly, but always prepared to be of service. These characteristic voluntary aspects are typical of our system, and it would be a pity to lose them. Therefore it is important for a government measure to arrange for the 'status' of the supervisors. The government certainly does not have to introduce any new regulations for this, but it will have to provide funds in the budget to strengthen the interaction between supervising schools and training institutions, for example, by providing a financial reward for supervisors. This was already stated in the introduction to this report, and is again confirmed here.

Whichever model is chosen, additional funds will inevitably be required. There are three obvious models.

1. The supervisor supervises the student in addition to his normal tasks, and receives an additional payment for this. This model could be incorporated in the approach to job differentiation and an assessment of the tasks concerned.
2. The supervisor maintains the volume of his normal tasks, but is exempted from some of the tasks, which are passed to another teacher, so that he can carry out his supervisory tasks. In this case the additional costs consist of the payment of his replacement.
3. The supervisor is given an opportunity to attend free in-service training at the training institution. In this case, the additional cost is covered by the training provider, which generates costs for the development of the in-service training.

It could be considered to leave the choice of the model to be used to the supervisor himself, obviously with the agreement of the school where the teaching practice takes place. These modalities will have to be the subject of negotiations at a later stage.

13. STUDENTS AND NEWLY-QUALIFIED TEACHERS – THEIR VIEWS

The evaluation teams were not really able to find out how the representatives of the students and alumni were selected. However, in most cases it is quite clear that the head teachers and lecturers did not influence the process in any way. Furthermore, the accounts of students and alumni generally came across as being fairly realistic. Their comments, probably coloured in some cases by their youth, were nevertheless very illuminating. Three main clusters of comments emerged.

Before examining these, it is appropriate to describe the overall conclusions of the teams. As a rule, they found that the students training for nursery school teachers were extremely well motivated and enthusiastic. The same applied to the lecturers. This was slightly less apparent in the training for primary school teachers, though the teams generally encountered a positive attitude. As a rule, motivation was also excellent in the GPB training, and most lecturers revealed a great affinity with their students. In most cases, students in university teacher training had made a conscious choice, although they do hesitate occasionally when they compare their situation with that of colleagues who did not opt for a career in teaching. As the groups are generally fairly small, the group effect between these students is relatively large. The situation appears to be less positive with regard to students training as lower secondary school teachers. The fact alone that more than half of them had already had to abandon one or two other choices of study because they failed courses certainly means that the motivation of these students is not very high. The members of the evaluation team also found that the lecturers in this training were the least inspirational, and that this group also made the least constructive criticisms. Perhaps this is partly related to the almost impossible task of training these teachers in this day and age.

The first set of comments by students and former students concerns the shock of teaching practice. Both the first long teaching practice of the training (and this is not actually the teaching practice the steering group has in mind), and the first few months of an actual teaching job clearly revealed that the training had hardly dealt with - or had even totally ignored - the many daily problems, as well as even the more universal social problems which have repercussions on education. The shock resulting from this discrepancy is often very disillusioning

In fact, the students believe that their teaching practice should be organised completely differently, in such a way that this shock could be largely anticipated (entirely in the sense meant by the steering group)

Quite apart from all the other theoretical reflections on teaching practice, the steering group certainly advises the minister of education to take this message of the students into account.

Secondly, the students bring up a traditional sore point. They blame most of their lecturers for not practising what they preach in their courses and lessons. They indicate that the lecturers in teacher training certainly do not serve as an example in their job. Occasionally there are exceptions, but these are rare. Therefore it is

important to point out that this not only concerns the teaching itself, but actually mainly concerns the lecturers' attitude to their students.

One particularly apposite example was the situation in which a lecturer argued at length for class differentiation, but then refused to apply this in his own situation... because the group was too large. Finally, the students complained about the lack of ICT support and related matters. In this respect, teacher training is certainly different from other training courses (particularly in colleges of higher education and the GPB training). This requires an additional comment.

Although many efforts have been made in recent years to adapt higher education to today's – and above all, tomorrow's – needs, there is still a very long way to go in this respect. As regards ICT applications, problems related to the budget could be given as an excuse as a last resort. However, this does not apply to innovation and flexibility. Although this was not their explicit task, the evaluation teams found that teacher trainers are certainly not the greatest innovators. Despite their expertise and commitment, they still hold fairly conservative views on what happens in education, information technology is still seen as a gadget that is occasionally useful, and flexible attitudes are virtually non-existent. With regard to this last aspect, the colleges of higher education particularly blame the regulations. To some extent, they are justified in doing so, though they modify their attitude, depending on the part of the regulations concerned. This general conclusion is probably unjust with regard to some of the excellent initiatives which the teams encountered, though these are certainly the exceptions to the rule.

The steering group believes that the government must continue to make efforts to ensure the incorporation of innovation and flexibility in higher education. Individual efforts with regard to teacher training might be desirable, though in fact there is no real reason for this, as long as teacher training continues to be part of the whole of higher education.

14. THE TRAINING OF THE TRAINERS, SUPERVISORS AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS

The problem of training the trainers was indirectly touched upon in the previous section. Traditionally, the trainers of teachers were in theory 'selected' teachers. However, this only applied in theory, because in so far as there were any regulations, they were of a purely official nature, and there was absolutely no valuable quality control. Does it make sense to impose higher demands on teacher trainers, and if so, what must be provided in return?

In the light of the preceding approach regarding the professionalisation of teachers, it is obvious to extend this professionalisation to all possible teaching jobs and tasks. It applies in particular to trainers and supervisors. This remark is certainly not evident today. Going one step further, it is even more obvious that 'school managers' are certainly not born with all the necessary gifts and that they will also have to develop

their professionalism, partly on the basis of experience, and partly with additional training.

The problem addressed here is obviously beyond the context of this report on the evaluation of teacher training, but is nevertheless directly related. After all, there could be no training without good and competent trainers, no supervision without experienced supervisors, and no schools without head teachers who combine adequate management skills with a heart for education, training and bringing up children.

15. THE TEACHING COMPETENCE OF LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Lower secondary school teachers once had a special place in Belgian teaching staff, but are now one of the main problem groups.

The difficult relationship between the former lower secondary school teachers and teachers graduated from academic training courses has been the subject of discussion for more than forty years. However, in the past ten years, the debate has acquired an additional dimension. Quite apart from the question whether it is still realistic aim to train lower secondary school teachers who can successfully perform the tasks assigned to them, the representatives of education (organising authorities and trade unions) have turned this into a matter of principle. Unfortunately, their views did not coincide, and consequently the whole thing ended in the traditional compromises which were subsequently interpreted in different ways. This is exactly what happened in 1996 and was reflected in the teacher training and in-service training act. The fight between lower secondary school teachers and teachers graduated from academic teacher training courses for their own territory had theoretically come to an end. Subsequently, it became apparent that nothing could have been further away from the truth, and that the teaching competence of the former (and present) lower secondary school teachers related to possible subject combinations and specialist subjects, is still the object of interpretation and controversy.

The various evaluations revealed that trainers were not very prepared to talk about these problems. In fact, many trainers opted for one side or the other, and were apparently afraid to deviate from the traditional norm. Nevertheless, some trainers were very open about stating that they certainly were not able to meet the principles of the 1996 act satisfactorily. The criticisms mainly concerned specialist subjects and the proliferation and imbalance of subject combinations (clusters). The reports contain too little material on this to produce a majority viewpoint, but the problems are certainly acute. The point of view with regard to specialist subjects is slightly clearer. In so far as the training heads were able or willing to comment on this, they always gave the same message: get rid of them, we cannot take responsibility for a good training.

A comment is appropriate here. The steering group considers that the issue of specialisation for certain training components should not be part of the initial training. This is based on the conviction that lifelong learning (LLL) should be a key factor in our knowledge society, and that specialisation should be seen in that context.

Furthermore, the efforts will be more successful if the teacher has experience in and/or outside education. Here too, skills acquired elsewhere should be valued.

The education partners of a particular group may demand that lower secondary schools teachers should be qualified to teach all their subjects in the first years of ASO, TSO and KSO, and even for all the years of BSO, but the reality of the training illustrates that it is impossible to achieve. However, this debate is based on principles, and is separate from the real possibilities.

Therefore there is a great need for a new approach which could put an end to these sorts of disputes, which lead only to Pyrrhic victories. To some extent, this debate goes beyond teacher training itself, because it will first be necessary to sort out secondary education. However, this problem is like a snake biting its own tail. What arguments should have priority? If the demands of secondary education with regard to the training of lower secondary school teachers are too high, the training will have to respond by extending the time spent on it, if it is to maintain standards. This cannot be the intention. A different approach is required, which will probably have to be supported by a much greater degree of autonomy of school boards with regard to the appointment of their staff. In this case, achieving the quality of education (attainment targets) is what is at stake, and if the norms are not achieved, a debate can start on the instruments.

The steering group's point of view is reflected in this last approach. Give the school governing bodies greater freedom, determine only the level of the required diploma, and assess schools on the basis of the quality of the work delivered. If this point of view does not produce a successful outcome, and the teaching qualifications for secondary teachers, lower stage, are officially left fairly extensive, the consequences for training will have to be accepted, both in terms of the quality of the intake and as regards the views of the training itself.

During the evaluation, special attention was also devoted to the more technically-oriented clusters (the former technical secondary school teachers, lower stage). It has certainly been established that the lecturers are generally much more enthusiastic than their colleagues who teach general subjects. On the whole, students are also better motivated because they are generally following their first choice.

It has also been established that lecturers and students do try and make the best of things, although the education inspectors have made some extremely alarming criticisms regarding the competence of technical secondary school teachers, lower level, in relation to content. While one might think that the training institutions themselves would put an end to training which was no longer considered viable, the opposite is actually happening. Some colleges of higher education have introduced new clusters, which often require new infrastructure, as in carpentry and building. The rationale behind this seems to have lost its way, but listening to the very enthusiastic lecturers in these subjects made many people doubt about the grounds for the principles reflected by this point of view.

16. THE START OF THE CAREER: INDUCTION PERIOD

At first sight, the evaluation does not oriented so much towards academic teacher training, but appearances are deceptive. In the first place, there are obviously only a very limited number of these types of training, and secondly, they cover a relatively clearly outlined field. Most of the attention and efforts are undoubtedly focused on general secondary education, and in particular, on what is traditionally described as the general subjects (including physical education).

As indicated above, the former academic training has been trying to get rid of its old image since 1996, and establish a training model that is capable of meeting the needs of the future. Curiously, this has been accompanied by a marked decline in the number of students. There are serious signs that there is a causal link between the reforms in the training and its appeal. In the past, students still often saw a way of completing teacher training at the same time as doing a master's degree. Today this is only possible in theory. The serious nature of the new training means that an additional year of study is required, which means that basic training graduates are placed in an impossible competitive position. Those who do not opt for teaching can start straightaway in a job, while those who do will have to study another year without any sort of compensation, either during the additional training or during their later career. Today's traditional view, described as 4+1, is not really tenable, particularly when there are no changes in the views on the way in which basic training (4) is organised.

There is no obvious solution to this problem and in the present structure it cannot really be solved without adversely affecting the quality and purpose of university teacher training. A different line of thought should be followed. The implementation of the Bologna Declaration could be an appropriate opportunity for this.

Teacher training which follows on the current courses of two cycles at colleges of higher education could perfectly follow the model which will be developed for academic training in the future. This also applies to teacher training following on the courses at colleges of higher education in art-related disciplines.

In theory, the GPB training should be the equivalent of the former academic training, though wholly focused on the teaching of technical subjects and practice. Basically this is still the aim, though there is a risk that the boundaries will become blurred. However, the strength of adult education is actually that it can respond well to the demands of adults, and it would be unfortunate if this were lost by incorporating the intended training in a new structure so that it was at risk of losing its individual character.

On the one hand, it is crystal clear to the steering group that teacher training following basic training must remain limited in terms of time, while on the other hand, these time restrictions will affect what can actually be learnt during the teacher training. It is absolutely essential that a newly qualified teacher is supervised in his first post after

graduation (by an induction tutor). Consequently, in that respect, a new culture is needed in the staffing policy of the recruiting schools.

The problems are therefore identical for all teacher training courses which supplement the basic training, although they are always coloured by the individual character of the recruiting schools, They are all confronted with the same problem of the time available for training their applicants. Therefore it is essential to approach this problem differently and place much more emphasis on the induction period.

This also means that it is advisable for the training and the recruiting schools not only to co-ordinate their efforts in this respect, but also to co-operate to some extent.

17. ICT, FLEXIBILITY, INNOVATION

In general, the teams found that ICT was virtually completely absent in teacher training from the instrumental point of view. Obviously, this statement is unfair to the few exceptional and valuable initiatives which deserve to be recognised, but as a rule, things are not promising.

The steering group once again emphasises this point, despite having already referred to it in a previous section, because the situation is rather alarming. After all, ICT has become a vital aspect of our society and is actually one of its essential characteristics. That is why (future) teachers should not only have a thorough mastery of ICT themselves, but should also be able to disseminate and propagate ICT. This will be quite impossible if teacher training fails in this, on the one hand, by employing lecturers who are unfamiliar with ICT themselves, and on the other hand, by failing to integrate ICT systematically in the training,

In accordance with the terminology used here, mastery of ICT in an educational context should be a standard and trainers should do everything they can to achieve this goal as far as possible.

Innovation and flexibility are not exactly the strongest points in teacher training either. This is extremely unfortunate, in view of the expectations with regard to teachers in their exemplary role. The students admit that they are occasionally presented with models, but they particularly complain about the fact that lecturers themselves do not apply what they teach, and still rely on traditional classroom teaching methods.

This is all the more unfortunate, because it means that the training does not really respond to the needs. After all, one would expect that the teacher training itself would take the initiative to help to tackle the apparently acute shortages of teachers in certain sectors. Obviously the development of these measures means moving away from familiar paths and using the available insights and resources in a creative and flexible way. It seems that this is not being done successfully. When trainers in colleges of higher education are asked to develop an initiative so that, for example, nursery

school teachers could be quickly retrained to start teaching in the first years of primary education, they respond with the existing provision of advanced training.

In itself, this is obviously right, but the current further training is full time and therefore cannot be attended by teachers who already have a job. Leaving things as they are is not an example of flexible thinking or creativity. The difficulties caused by the introduction of independent teaching practice was also typical of a relatively strong conservative attitude with regard to training.

The steering group recommends the minister of education to enter into a dialogue with teacher trainers and establish how ICT, flexibility and innovation can become essential characteristics of the training, what incentives should be used, and the period within which this can be achieved.
Drawing up a plan in different stages, with clearly defined goals, is the appropriate way to do this.

18. SPECIAL CONCLUSIONS

The steering group commented on three special conclusions, which certainly deserve special attention in the process of reform.

- a) The different types of education in secondary education
Despite all the efforts that were made, the evaluation revealed that the training for secondary school teachers still actually focuses on general secondary education. This is probably the result of a very long tradition, but it is quite irrelevant today. In this case, the steering group does not want to be unfair either to the lecturers and heads of training who are enthusiastically trying to guide things along the right lines. However, on the whole there is still a great deal of room for improvement. Once again, this problem is also clearly related to teaching practice, which is actually responsible for covering the broadest possible field of action.
- b) Language
In general, the steering group found that lecturers complain a lot about their students' language skills. As language is the basic tool in education, failure in this respect is a serious handicap for a teacher. It is certainly not advisable to return to the exclusions that were common in the past (based on spelling mistakes, etc.), but the trainers should place a much greater emphasis on the fact that the correct and easy use of language is an essential condition of teaching. It can be assumed that this is a starting condition for students, and not an aspect which should be tackled by the training itself. In this case, it is appropriate to refer to other language initiatives, but the trainers themselves will have to monitor the whole process. Perhaps a slight criticism is warranted, all the same. The teams found that many students still have a very strong dialect in their spoken language, and that this applies to many lecturers as well. This is unacceptable, and those responsible for training should take drastic action in these situations.

Listening to point of view of the education inspectorate, which is supported by the conclusions of school audits of compulsory education, the general

recommendation for the whole of education is to really meet the stringent demands with regard to language skills. There is no school and no training provider which can afford not to give strong priority to the language skills of pupils, students, trainees and lecturers in its policy.

c) Graduates

A great deal of attention has been devoted to the quality of the intake of training candidates. Obviously this is justified position and it is a good idea to devote special attention to the possibility of a teaching career in the process of choosing a course of study. On the basis of its responsibilities to the recruiting schools, the minister of education could make clear agreements about this with the CLB. (Pupil guidance centre)

However, there is another aspect to which trainers devote little attention. The facts are recorded, but they are not used to analyse the situation with a view to monitoring it. This concerns the people leaving training. The first group obviously concerns students who leave, following a poor assessment, or when they are disillusioned by teaching practice. An analysis of the reasons given by these students could provide important information about their view of the teaching profession. The second group who leaves training is actually a positive sign for training: graduates accept a job outside education, for which they appear to be considered suitable and are generally valued. This phenomenon provides food for thought, and deserves further research.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In tackling the seventeen themes, the steering group has formulated recommendations several times (shown in italics in a box text). Below, further emphasis is placed on what the steering group considers to be essential for a sustained evolution.

Nevertheless, the recommendations which have not been taken up continue to apply without prejudice.

I. THE MINIMUM COMPETENCIES

It is certainly appropriate to re-examine the minimum competencies and introduce an adapted version.

In the circumstances concerned, the steering group considers that the system of career profiles and minimum competencies is still the most suitable method for the minister of education to explain how the trainers should train teachers in consultation with the recruiting schools.

A new debate is needed on the starting point that the required skills determine the definition of elements of knowledge and general attitudes, particularly with regard to the training of secondary school teachers.

On the other hand, the starting point of broader professionalism is not questioned.

Obviously the recruiting schools should play an important part in this reformulation, but the trainers themselves must also be involved; because of their task, they are in the best position to assess the feasibility of these revisions. Furthermore, the minister of education will have to examine the link which can be made between the minimum competencies/standards and the job descriptions of the teachers concerned, in relation to their evaluation.

In order for the reformulated minimum competencies and standards to serve as the requirements imposed on teachers by government on behalf of society, they must be confirmed again by the Flemish Parliament. On the other hand, an act is in itself not sufficient to guarantee that they will be achieved. The training institutions must allow their training courses to be reviewed by inspection committees at regular intervals, and the recruiting schools should be able to play an important role in this.

The reformulated minimum competencies must comply with the following requirements:

- They must be clearly outlined and differentiated.
- They must be formulated in an operational way, so that it is possible to measure their achievement on an agreed scale. Therefore there is a need for measurement criteria.
- A minimum competency describes what can reasonably be expected of a teacher in the first years of his career and – as the act currently states – the basis for eventually evolving towards the career profile.
- The requirements imposed by the government on the training institutions are described as standards. They must be distilled from the minimum competencies, and should also be measurable. Therefore the standards could be defined as the attainment targets for teacher training, and in every case their achievement will be subject to inspection. This means that the institutions themselves will have to focus on the achievement of these attainment targets in their external quality control. Logically this will also be taken into consideration at a later stage during the accreditation.
- The achievement of a number of standards should probably take place in a real teaching situation, and consequently it is necessary for the minister of education to take appropriate measures to include teaching practice as an essential element of training.

Once the new minimum competencies and the standards based on these have been officially determined, the government must introduce a broad operational communication strategy for all the sectors involved. It will also follow up its implementation and monitor it where necessary.

II. TEACHING PRACTICE AND THE SUPERVISORS

Irrespective of the structure of the training, teaching practice must always be an essential part of it.

Therefore the steering group recommends that the minister of education conclude an agreement with the trainers to determine how the teaching practice can be improved as far as possible. This should include a reasonably uniform decision regarding the volume and nature of the teaching practice, as well as clear agreements on the assessment of the students. The minister of education must support this action by providing the funds to organise and supervise the teaching practice in a professional way.

- The first step is open up negotiations between trainers and schools where students practice teaching to reach an agreement on this. There is no need for a set model, but there should be a consensus on a number of models, including, for example, the independent teaching practice.
- Subsequently, it is necessary to examine under what conditions the government can provide funds to support the supervision of teaching practice, and in particular, to pay the supervisors. As already indicated, meeting this condition is essential for the whole operation.

III. INDUCTION AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Without detracting from the principles recommended by the steering group with regard to teaching practice, it is also clear that the professionalisation of the teaching profession also means that it should be accepted that newly qualified teachers may have mastered the standards, but still need time to gradually grow into their job. What is considered logical in virtually every professional sector, viz., a probationary period, should also be applied to education. The description of the status of a young teacher during his probationary year is necessary for this. Though it should be clear that he/she is certainly a fully qualified teacher, it should be accepted that his performance during this first year is assessed in sufficiently relative terms, and that during this induction he should be able to rely on sufficient supervision and support.

Therefore the steering group advises to take the necessary measures to provide adequate support and supervision for teachers starting out in their career during their first year. Obviously the school is responsible for this; it must ensure that there is an appropriate provision, though of course it is not necessary to provide this within the school itself. In the light of increasing professionalisation, there can hardly be any objections to this. Nevertheless, it will be quite difficult to convince everyone involved. This point of view also entails that a balance must be found between the teaching practice during the training and the induction of newly qualified teachers.

Along the same lines, the steering group considers that developments are also needed to give in-service training a place in the process of complying with the minimum competencies, and, in the longer term, with the career profile. In general, it is important to be aware that the in-service training of teachers should not turn into an excuse to follow all sorts of advanced training. This advanced training must have an official goal, e.g., to officially acquire supplementary qualifications. On the other hand, the modularisation of the training should be able to ensure much more flexible procedures.

In other words, the steering group advises that career development should be linked to a large extent to achieving the minimum competencies and career profile. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the evolution towards this desirable situation cannot really be achieved by regulations. It is part of the process of professionalisation, and in the first instance, the responsible authorities in the school will have to ensure that this happens. It is up to the government to facilitate the process, and if possible accelerate it. Therefore the desired professionalisation of the teacher also means that the evolution towards the career profile is included as a whole in the planned career development.

In this respect, the steering group also advises helping to tackle the problem of the temporary shortages of teachers by encouraging favourable and attractive in-service training initiatives.

IV. THE SOCIAL QUESTIONS

The steering group advises the minister of education to adopt a selective approach in tackling the many questions formulated by society with regard to the way in which teachers work. The revision of the minimum competencies should also indicate what can be included in the standards. If it becomes apparent that responding to some of these many social requirements cannot reasonably be achieved in the standards, and is therefore not feasible in the training, the government should not allow any doubt about this, and should clearly indicate that only experienced teachers should tackle this problem, or otherwise, less experienced teachers supervised by experienced teachers. In this respect, in-service teaching will then be necessary.

In particular, the steering group emphasises the absolute requirement which should be expected of teachers in future with regard to ICT literacy.

V. THE STRUCTURE OF THE TRAINING

As part of higher education, teacher training is clearly involved in the structural reforms which are required in the immediate future as a result of the Bologna Declaration. The Government of Flanders has in principle chosen to introduce the bachelor/master model fairly quickly, linked to the accreditation of the training. In particular, it is linking the introduction of the new structure to the creation of partnerships involving the five large university centres. According to the steering group, it would be highly advisable to examine whether assembling all the teacher training courses in this type of inter-institutional co-operation could create added value. Some even 'dream' of the creation of an overall centre for teacher training. The steering group is convinced that this 'dream' certainly deserves further analysis. Quite apart from this, the steering group is repeating its concern with regard to the different sites where the same training is being delivered.

There do not appear to be any fundamental objections to organising the training for nursery school teachers and primary school teachers on the lines of the bachelor-master degree. In the accreditation process, it may be necessary to be sufficiently cautious with regard to the criteria which apply to the quality of the intake.

The situation of secondary school teacher training is quite different. The steering group believes that it will not be possible to maintain the model of lower secondary school teacher training because the problems that were discovered cannot be resolved without a thorough revision of the whole concept. The fundamental problem of the training for lower stage secondary school teachers is related to the teaching competence which these graduates will be given. Section 14 already indicated the vicious circle of this problem. Today, it is not at all clear whether the partners involved in education will be prepared to discuss the matter again, only a few years after burying the hatchet temporarily. For this reason, it might be appropriate to approach all three levels of secondary education in a more uniform way.

As regards lower secondary education, there are actually only a few possibilities.

- Either the model of integrated training (three years) is maintained, in which case the objectives must be formulated in such a way that it continues to be possible to train teachers who have achieved the standards which are described, and who are able to teach a number of disciplines in the first years of secondary education. In this model, there must therefore be absolute clarity with regard to the subjects and the combinations of subjects, and it will always be necessary to clearly outline which years this teacher will really be able to teach – always within the limits of what is possible. Even if the organising authorities have a much higher degree of autonomy in future with regard to deploying their staff, and in this way responding to the real capacities of their staff, it would still be an absolute requirement for the training to clearly describe what it is training the teachers for, in principle. In this model, this training continues to be the third component in the three levels of nursery, primary and secondary training, and the theoretical principles on the common profiles of these types of training continue to apply unchanged, and even deserve to be strengthened and encouraged.
- Alternatively, the integrated training is abandoned, and it is accepted that within the structure for higher education which will apply throughout Europe by 2009, it will be possible to follow teacher training (for secondary education) after taking a bachelor's degree. Nevertheless, teacher training should also continue to be a possibility after gaining a master's degree. This leads to two sorts of teachers for secondary education. The first, secondary school teachers, lower stage, follow a course, 3+1, the second, secondary school teachers, upper stage, follow a course 3+(1 or 2)+1, in which the '+1' should certainly be seen as all of the 60 course credits, without defining the way in which they should be acquired. This means that there are bachelors+1 and masters+1. The significance of '+1' is then seen entirely in the context of professionalisation, and should be such that the candidates must not feel that they are doing less well than their colleagues who do not opt for the teaching profession. Once again, the emphasis should be strongly placed on the interaction between standards, minimum competencies, induction of newly qualified teachers and the supervision of the teacher in his first post. It is in this context that the steering group urges that the changes to the training should not lead to an actual lengthening of the course.
- One alternative could be to see teacher training as a master's stage. Bachelor + 1 (teacher training) would then lead to a master's degree. Although this avenue should certainly not be rejected, it is clear that the social repercussions would be enormous.

For the GPB training, the situation is slightly different. The public concerned in this case requires an appropriate approach. The system of modularisation which already exists has proved to be useful, but is due for improvement. However, the question is what structure should be used for this training. In the current situation, it is clear that the overall integration of the HOKTSP will not take place as anticipated two years ago. The situation will be revised in the context of the future accreditation of training in higher education. The GPB training will always continue to have a separate place in this, particularly because of part of its target group (students without higher education, and sometimes even students who have not completed secondary education). The rules of training in colleges of higher education cannot simply be applied to these people. As the implementation of the Bologna principles will take place in colleges of higher education and universities in the next six to seven years, it

is therefore appropriate for the GPB training to continue to be part of adult education, and even develop it further in this context. However, it will be necessary to examine whether there is any point in allowing university graduates to enter the GPB training.

VI. THE TIME SCHEDULE

The development of adapted minimum competencies and of the standards which do not yet exist, is a difficult and time consuming business. Therefore the steering group considers that it would be appropriate for the minister of education to start this process very quickly. The steering group's reports contain adequate instructions in this respect.

A start can also be made immediately on developing a suitable strategy with regard to teaching practice, as teaching practice will always have to be an essential element in the training. The steering group does emphasise that the teaching practice should be seen as a longer period of time, during which the student is wholly involved in the school.

Obviously, one important peripheral condition concerns the funds which the Government of Flanders says that it will be able to provide for the payment of supervisors.

The discussion on the implementation of the Bologna Declaration should also lead to a decision on teacher training at colleges of higher education and universities. First, the minister of education will have to decide on a position with regard to the desired evolution of lower secondary school teacher training. This is a difficult matter which will require a great deal of discussion and negotiation. However, this will have to be done before it is possible to make appropriate changes to the training. A similar process will have to take place with regard to the training for upper stage secondary school teachers. This involves the universities, although it is appropriate to examine the whole matter in the context of partnerships, so that the dimension of the problem has a more universal character.

The modifications in the GPB training, which have already started, can continue, and should not wait for the structural reforms in colleges of higher education and universities.

APPENDIX

Evolution of the population in teacher training at colleges of higher education

Total population

	M	F	T
1996-1997	3454	10215	13669
1997-1998	3836	10270	14106
1998-1999	4013	10448	14461
1999-2000	4423	11672	16095
2000-2001	4421	12422	16883

Women account for almost 75% altogether.

Total population of the 1st year

	M	F	T
1996-1997	1822	4503	6325
1997-1998	2055	4638	6693
1998-1999	2072	4771	6843
1999-2000	2458	5889	8347
2000-2001	2392	5962	8354

Here women account for slightly more than 71%.

Total population in nursery school teacher training

	M	F	T
1996-1997	108	3419	3527
1997-1998	111	3292	3403
1998-1999	112	3182	3294
1999-2000	101	3351	3542
2000-2001	105	3319	3424

Traditionally men account for only 3%, while women account for 97%.

Total population in primary school teacher training

	M	F	T
1996-1997	910	3415	4325
1997-1998	974	3283	4257
1998-1999	953	3429	4382
1999-2000	1131	4241	5372
2000-2001	1098	4890	5988

Men account for 18%, women for 82%.

Total population in lower secondary school teacher training

	M	F	T
1996-1997	2436	3381	5817
1997-1998	2751	3695	6446
1998-1999	2948	3837	6785
1999-2000	3191	4080	7271
2000-2001	3218	4213	7431

Men account for 43%, women 57%. The trend is increasing.

Population of the 1st year of the nursery school teacher training

	M	F	T
1996-1997	58	1583	1641
1997-1998	63	1467	1530
1998-1999	59	1414	1473
1999-2000	59	1693	1752
2000-2001	56	1548	1604

The relationship between men and women is virtually constant, but the population has strongly declined in the last year.

Population of the 1st year of the primary school teacher training

	M	F	T
1996-1997	493	1493	1986
1997-1998	537	1419	1956
1998-1999	500	1649	2149
1999-2000	686	2315	3001
2000-2001	623	2452	3075

This certainly shows the increasing trend which looks like it will continue in 2001-2002.

Population of the 1st year of the lower secondary school teacher training

	M	F	T
1996-1997	1271	1427	2698
1997-1998	1455	1752	3207
1998-1999	1513	1708	3221
1999-2000	1713	1881	3594
2000-2001	1713	1962	3675

Again an increasing trend can be seen here.

In the nursery school teacher training, the figures show an increasing trend, at least in the last few years.

