

Consequences of publishing school performance data in The Netherlands

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In Western Europe, there is a trend towards increasing market influences in education. This trend is part of so-called neo-liberal education reforms. Characteristics of neo-liberal education reforms are (1) an increased autonomy of schools, (2) freedom of parental choice, (3) privatisation of the educational system, and (4) quality control.

One of the central thoughts behind neo-liberal education reforms is that the quality of education will increase when the educational system has to act like a market, in which the principle of 'demand and supply' prevail and where competition becomes a major feature of the educational system. When national governments step back in the regulation and supervision of educational systems, the question arises in what way the quality of education can be guaranteed. Therefore issues of quality control and accountability become of major importance. Accountability of schools is an important characteristic of a market-led educational system. Publication of exam-results in daily newspapers, as is the case in some countries, like Great Britain and The Netherlands, is used to provide information about the quality of schools. These publications serve two major goals. First, by presenting their results, schools compete, which may lead to an emphasis on the quality improvement of education. Second, parents as consumers of education are given a tool to choose the best schools. Publication of exam-results is presumed to be helpful for the choice of parents for a certain school.

Experiences in England and France have learned that there are side-effects following the publication of school results: demotivation of teachers in 'bad' schools, strategic and cosmetic behaviour by schools, increasing inequity between parents/students and between schools (as well as polarisation and less cooperation between schools).

Presumably, these effects will occur in The Netherlands as well, since its situation is comparable with that of France and England. In this study, we will focus on the consequences of publishing school performance data in The Netherlands. We will try to grasp these effects on several levels: schools and parents/students.