



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KEY WOMEN EDUCATORS
DELTA KAPPA GAMMA™

EUFORIA

Edition 56, Spring 2021

Dear DKG sisters, in this Issue of Euforia you can read about committee work, school activities, distance learning and the role of the teachers today. Also you can read about the reflect the pandemic had on meetings and activities of the participating countries.

Thanks to all the women who contributed to this issue with their interesting articles. Also many thanks to Unity Harvey (GB) for her proof reading of the articles. Best wishes to you all.

Helga Thorlacius, Iceland



From the European Regional Director

Margarita Hanschmidt

Members are always a priority in DKG.



Tough times! 2020 presented hard but valuable lessons that forced us to re-evaluate the meanings we had been attaching to our lives. Our members were not afraid of change. We learned how to adapt quickly to new circumstances and we learned how to obtain new IT skills which seemed impossible to us some time ago. We paid more attention to our wellbeing; we understood that nothing can be taken for granted and most importantly – we rediscovered the importance of togetherness.

We will beat Covid-19 for sure, at least we know how to fight it! But ... we cannot return to the life we lived before. What happens beyond COVID-19? We have to start planning our life for post-covid time, already, TODAY.

- What will your chapters look like after Covid19?
- What will you take to move forward?
- How might our Society change?
- How will we do things differently?

Here are top strategies for chapter engagement:

- **Keep to the virtual platform that works best for your chapter.** Many chapters have reported that the use of Zoom and other technology has increased meeting participation. Chapters assist early career educators and are involved with women's and children's programmes.
- **Value Your Members.** Stay connected and keep getting to know one another. Profile your chapter members in your chapter blog or on your state website. We recognize these members who make contributions to enhance the development of Europe Region.
- **Get Out of the Program Rut.** Engage potential new members to your zoom meetings. Invite a dynamic teacher from your local area to present to your chapter about what she is doing in her teaching during the pandemic. You can assist early career educators through many variations of the SEE programmes. You can start women's programs that address domestic abuse, assist with career development and work skills. You can support children's programmes and centers.
- **Make WELLNESS a focus in your post-COVID chapter plans.** Take care of your members' good health – walk daily, listen to audiobooks or learn a new skill together. Because a stress free mind leads to a stronger immune system, with a positive mindset we can avoid many physical and mental diseases.
- **Connect with International Committee Members.** DKG Europe has been practicing the strategy since January 2021. You can read more about the first 7 meetings in the ERD's February Newsletter on dkgeurope.org webpage. DKG Europe has become a pioneer in this field of activity. We have set an example to other chapters throughout the DKG Society as below.

Wonderful team-representatives of DKG Germany met Elisabeth Stärner from Expansion Committee.



Representatives of DKG Norway and DKG Great Britain met Björk Nakling from World Fellowship Committee 26th January

Meetings with European Members in DKG International Committees

Time 6 p.m. Reykjavik	European Leader	European State
May 3	Nomination Committee - Eyglo Bjornsdottir , Janny Kisteman	DKG Great Britain, DKG Norway
May 12	ISF Committee – Margarita Hanschmidt	DKG Iceland
May 17	Scholarship Committee - Gitta Franke-Zöllmer	DKG Estonia, DKG the Netherland, DKG Finland
May 19	Editorial Board - Charlotte Lindgren	DKG Germany
May 20	The Chair of Golden Gift Committee - Jona Benediktsdottir	DKG Sweden

- **Get acquainted with Teacher Resources for a Post-Pandemic World.** These resources can be found on **dkg.org** webpage under the layer Art Gallery. Teacher resources can make up an upcoming chapter program or be used for mentoring collegiate members.

- **Use the Headquarters chat** and you can get a quick help in any questions.

- **ZOOM Coffee might just be the New Starbucks! Or even become an anniversary celebration! DKG the Netherlands is celebrating their 35th birthday on 29th May. Congratulations!**

As we move forward, one thing will never change – the relationship and the sense of genuine spiritual fellowship which tie DKG members together. Strategies for chapter engagement in post-pandemic world offer a lot of opportunities to impact upon education worldwide.

Margarita Hanschmidt,
2020-2022 Europe Regional Director
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Germany



European Website



Marika Heimbach

Member of the European Forum committee

Delta Chapter

Germany

This biennium the European Forum created a new committee “The Editorial Board”. The main task has been to explore possibilities to refresh our European website. RD Margarita Hanschmid, EU Forum chair Ewa Johansson, EU webmaster

Eygló Björnsdóttir, Euforia editor Helga Thorlacius, Forum members Marie-Antoinette de Wolf and Marika Heimbach have been working together. Some of our efforts can already be seen on the website.

We would like to encourage our members to send material for publication to Eygló (eyglob@gmail.com), e.g. reports on projects, good ideas for the classroom, chapter programmes, interesting speeches. AND photos are always welcome!



Education is our purpose especially for the link “Educational Topics” on our website we need contributions from members of our very different educational systems which enable us to learn from each other and can enrich work in the classroom and beyond.

On a personal note I would like to state that the internationality of our Society has been a great enrichment for me. One of the most important encounters that my participation in international conferences has made possible is my friendship with Jeanne Morascini from Connecticut.

Ever since I got to know her I have deeply admired her for her great personality and unswerving commitment to serve DKG.

Jeanne has been a member for 55 years. She served in numerous positions in her state, and is still a guiding force and mentor for many members.

In 1985 she founded the standing committee "Curriculum of Hope for a Peaceful World" focusing on promoting peace, protecting the environment, and celebrating diversity. The mission of the committee is to study and promote critical thinking, conflict resolutions and cooperative learning skills which will help to move forward to a peaceful world. Since the beginning the committee has been publishing three newsletters per annum which provide teachers with numerous resources, materials, ideas, and valuable advice to be used for their daily work in the classroom and for organizing projects. In each newsletter the reader finds links to information focused on global peace, human rights, personal skills and environmental issues to foster health, education and a sustainable planet for all humankind.

When still teaching I was grateful for the enormous amount of material and ideas provided in the newsletter, tremendously useful for preparing lessons.

This is the reason why I voted for publishing the newsletter on our website.

To quote Jeanne: " I know this for sure, the hope for a peaceful world depends on each and every one of us. Education leading to interfaith understanding, belief in human rights for all, and respect, caring and compassion for everyone is vital to our survival. Every person on this planet is going to have to stand up and fight the evil that is trying to overtake the good." Timely and wonderful words of wisdom.



Zoom meeting
in Delta
Chapter ,
Germany

International Scholarships can make the Difference

Scholarships impact education worldwide



Gitta Franke-Zöllmer

Member of the International Scholarship Committee

g.franke.zoellmer.vbe-nds@web.de

DKG strives to assist members in their quest to become their best. DKG provides support to women educators throughout their careers and beyond. Life changing scholarship opportunities for advanced degrees and doctorate degrees are available for Delta Kappa Gamma members. Those seeking an advanced degree and who have been a member for at least

one year may apply for a \$6000 scholarship. Members who have been in DKG for at least three years and working on a doctorate may apply for a \$10.000 scholarship. The scholarship does not only alleviate some of the financial stress, it is also a powerful tool to keep you from quitting.

The DKG International Scholarship Committee supports three of the seven Purposes of the Society:

3. To enhance the professional interest and position of women in education.
5. To endow scholarships to aid outstanding women educators in pursuing graduate study and to grant fellowships to non-member educators.
6. To stimulate the personal and professional growth of members and to encourage their participation in appropriate programs of action.

The DKG Scholarship Application will be available at dkg.org on 1st July, each year. The scholarship committee edits the form to be more relevant as well as user friendly for all member countries. Due to the different cultures, it is possible that you can't fulfill some of the requirements you find in the form such as MA graduation, transcripts or current status. It is sufficient to submit an equivalent document. The committee members are offering assistance with filling in the form. I'd like to encourage our European members to apply for a scholarship. Up to now only a few have tried.

Generous donations such as bequests, contribution from estates, stocks, and gifts made in memory or in honor of members provide the funding for DKG scholarships. Any donation will help to stabilize the scholarship fund.

Estonia



The 13th and a Friday

Distance learning experiences in Pre-primary education shared by



Reeli Tänavsuu

Director of
Pärnu Vana-Sauga Kindergarten
Beta Chapter

Friday 13th March 2020 hit Estonians with a state of emergency - everything "locked up". Shops, theatres, museums were closed and schools were sent to distance learning. Kindergartens remained open only when necessary, providing their service to families. Just the children of "frontline" workers were allowed to attend kindergarten. In many cases the children of medical staff were offered 24-hour care.

The kindergarten teachers, who had stayed at work, asked what they could do without children? The parents also asked what the teachers would do if there were no children.

Distance learning was a new way to put themselves to the test. Now the skills and knowledge of teachers in the field of IT became decisive.

Until now, teachers were roughly divided into two – those who were active users of IT tools, and others who found it not important to be exposed to the computer world in kindergarten, they were at home anyway. In addition, there were and still are kindergartens and groups with different technical equipment - from tablets to interactive whiteboards.

Unfortunately, in the new situation, the only way to organize one's work is via various technology possibilities.



We are lucky to have ELIIS (User-friendly early childhood education software <https://eliis.eu/>). Most parents joined the system and could see the plans drawn up by the teachers. However, Facebook became the fastest communication environment.

When planning daily work, the kindergarten teachers must write down the goals of the day and possible resources, activities and /or work environments. It became obvious that few parents start doing the same activities as teachers in the kindergarten. Nevertheless, teachers provide guidance for working at home in both the creative and pre-school fields.

I can give examples of the activities of the kindergartens in which I am working, but in communicating with colleagues, I have now realized that more or less the same methods worked everywhere.

The first week became an adjustment week - teachers learned how to make the planned activities understandable to parents. There was close communication with each other, because now the experts taught both those who had worked with the computer as much as necessary and those who used it as little as possible.

Most concerned were teachers of the pre-school group - whether the children could acquire all the necessary skills to start school safely in autumn. Similarly, parents were worried. It was easier to organize distance learning for pre-schoolers - there are many choices of worksheets and children are more able to work independently.

Thus, teachers shared web links to agendas about nature and science experiments plus ideas for crafts and movement; they sent worksheets directly to their colleagues' homes where possible or by e-mail.

The descriptions of the day outlined the tasks of outdoor learning e.g. find 5 objects in the yard with a name starting with the letter P and make 5 jumps to the next object starting with the letter J.

The short sentences of a teacher with professional knowledge and skills e.g. *writing exercises on lined paper* cannot be equally understandable to parents. We had to write more about what we had in mind. For example:

Daily recipes for moulding dough, *connecting the chain links together develops fine motor and counting skills;*

Reading aloud and discussing the story develops an understanding of the connections;

The child should say his or her first and last name, know his or her age.

It was also important to remind parents to develop skills normally not addressed - self-care like dressing and toileting, eating cleanly and using cutlery. It seems obvious, but everyday life in kindergarten shows that many families do not practice these things at home. That is why they are thought to be practiced in kindergarten.

Suggestions for families to work with their younger children were:

- ✓ make something from scrap material;
- ✓ find objects, similar to geometric shapes, in the surroundings; **(Photo: shapes)**
- ✓ go to the sea, avoid contact with strangers and talk to your child about this and the possible dangers in water and the natural world;
- ✓ do exercises like throwing rocks, rolling something, running and jumping;
- ✓ walk through the forest or park, compare thorns and cones, touch the softness of moss and listen to the sounds of nature.



The music teacher added links of the music and children's songs in the descriptions of the day, wrote lyrics to be memorized at home.

Several families did the recommended walks, took pictures of nature activities and crafts, and passed the pictures on to the teachers. Some parents sent back pictures of completed worksheets.

Feedback on distance learning in kindergarten came primarily from families with a single child of kindergarten age or from those who had been able to combine their home schooling and kindergarten activities because they found a work rhythm suitable for a larger family. There were families, who reported that there was enough work with older schoolchildren and the young at kindergarten had to manage on their own - no more planned activities with them...

What did the teachers learn? Computer-cowards had to start searching and share materials with recommendations and be more active users than before; crucially everyone learned to increase their planning review from a parent's point of view.

Today, we have learned from a year's distance learning to plan goals by describing them, guiding parents in finding possible activities and asking for feedback. Organizing individual development interviews online is not a problem for more proficient IT users.

Asking for and receiving feedback depends on both the teacher's skills and the parents' willingness. Above all, the relationship is decisive - the more parents trust teachers the better and more adequate the feedback will be.

You can also ask child for feedback, but the teacher must be able to distinguish whether the child is actually talking about what happened or fantasizing about it.

Teacher asked, "Tell me, what is an emergency?"

"Mmm, mmm ... you cannot go shopping, you cannot go to work and you cannot go to granny's. When the CoVid goes away?" (Robin, 6 yr.)



Lessons from Distance Learning: Viewpoint of the Secondary School Students in Estonia



Anu Joon,

Tartu Private School

Terttu-Triin Tomusk,

Saue Gymnasium

Estonia



Many articles have been written about the experience of distance learning lessons during this past year - at least in Estonia and surely it is the case in other countries as well. Any new experience, at least new on the current time scale, calls for the observations and thoughts of those going through it.

This past year has been a difficult time for the Estonian pupils. For most of them it has been an experience in forming new study habits and learning to plan their time. A good example is the second trimester of the current school year. Out of the eleven weeks of school, for most of the pupils at least five were spent at home distance learning and only six at school. For the upper secondary classes, the amount spent at distance learning was even bigger - seven weeks out of eleven.

The research carried out by the Estonian Ministry of Education shows that 41% of pupils consider distance learning as efficient as contact learning in classrooms; 31% of pupils think that distance learning is more effective; 28% of pupils think that learning in classroom is better.

When asking the pupils of different schools about their thoughts and impressions, we, the authors of this article, found out that the biggest concerns centered around either the web-lessons or missing interactions with friends and teachers.

The pupils brought out the following things that they liked about distance learning. They can sleep longer, develop self-discipline, plan their time and environment for studying and relaxing, and of course enjoy better food at home.

Disadvantages were having technical problems or being physically tired from too many consecutive webinars, tired eyes etc. Pupils also named the lack of motivation to study or excel in studying as there was usually no quick feedback. As one pupil stated, "In class I can see from my teacher's eyes when I have done good, but that is not possible over web."

There had already been a need for new approaches and solutions with quick reactions to changed conditions with unexpected problems. All in all, this massive distance learning period has definitely been a learning experience for all the parties involved – pupils, parents, teachers, local government and national government too.

Distance learning on a massive scale has changed the way we view learning and teaching - at least effective learning and teaching. No matter what is in the future, distance learning has come to stay.

Norway



A brief greeting from Norway.



Astrid H. Bie Skaaland,
State President

Hello DKG sisters!

After a dark and long winter, with a lot of concern and focus on the pandemic-situation in the world, spring is eventually getting its grip here up north. The days are longer and the sun is stronger. Also the vaccination program has started.

It was so unexpected that a pandemic like this one could happen, although we knew it theoretically. But when it did come, we were somehow unprepared, all of us.

We know that schools have had great challenges to protect the pupils, as well as the teachers - at the same time to provide proper education.

As a retired teacher myself, I have the greatest respect and admiration for all working teachers who have found good ways to cope with the situation.

For our organisation as well, there have been different ways of solving the challenges.

Most of the work and meetings have been digital. We have met on Zoom and Teams - and by e-mail. We have also arranged some outdoor-meetings, but as the winter here in the north has been wet and cold, this opportunity has been limited.

On 13th April my chapter was having an outdoor board-meeting. It was a chilly day, but the sun shone. We had to prepare for our state-meeting on 17th April.

This meeting was implemented via Teams and all three chapters in Norway were able to participate. All the papers were sent to all members in advance with good time and all cases were well prepared.

We were sorry for not being able to meet personally face to face, as we always enjoy meeting and feeling the good energy and spirit between us.

It was also sad, for the same reasons, that all international events had to be cancelled this year.

We are still all optimistic and impatient for life to go back to “good old days”. As the vaccination is advancing now, we can see the “light in the tunnel”. Let us hope that we soon will get control over the virus and we, over our lives. Therefore, we are now looking forward to meeting in Finland 2023.



Sweden



Some reflections on Covid-19 after discussions with members over 70



Charlotte Lindgren,
past president, Epsilon,
Uppsala, Sweden

In Sweden, quite quickly at the beginning of the pandemic, the government decided to place those people who are "70 years and over," called "70+", in a kind of quarantine. This was to protect them from the virus. This lasted until mid-autumn, when the restrictions in theory were no longer in place. In practice however, it was more or less the same, since Sweden was facing a second wave of the virus. A certain part of our membership in Uppsala belong to this 70+ group or to a health risk-group. As the restrictions limited the number allowed at meetings, our Chapter Epsilon decided to have the meetings on Zoom. We offered to help people, who wanted to participate, to log on to Zoom if necessary. In late autumn I spoke with some 70+ members to get their views on how the Chapter had handled the situation. The Board knew that some did not participate at all, neither on Zoom nor in the only meeting outside (organised in August), while for others the participation remained the same.

Here are some comments that I would like to share with you. The members with whom I spoke had a lot of reflections about the past year. Some said that they might have hesitated at the beginning, or thought that they might not make it. In the end, however, they managed to connect to zoom, with or without any help. Furthermore, being able to participate online

has several positive points according to them. First of all, they felt happy and proud to be able to participate, secondly they felt at ease, that they didn't have to risk their health by participating in a meeting in a room. Other points were:

they could concentrate on the person(s) making a presentation, without being disturbed or distracted by something that is happening in the room, they felt at home;

without having to make a trip, they met guests from all over Sweden and even from abroad and

finally they were happy that the Chapter has not completely stopped all activity because of the pandemic.

Of course, there is a lack of chatting and social contact, and even when the chairwoman divides the members into small groups, it is not the same situation as IRL (In Real Life).

Will the meetings remain on Zoom in the future or will there be an alternation of meetings on site, on Zoom or sometimes outside, in the natural environment? That remains to be seen. It would be interesting to exchange our Best Practices on what works well in online meetings and what works less well, taking into account the 70+ members but also, of course, all the others. We have sometimes exchanged advice among colleagues, sisters from Delta Kappa Gamma, about online teaching for pupils and students suddenly having school from home online, but such advice is also interesting for our own chapter meetings. The *Collegial Exchange* journal (2020) has shown how interesting it is to share our experiences of meetings during the pandemic.

Here are some examples of questions:-

Is it necessary to take time out of the meeting to explain and test the technical issues?

The Zoom programme requires the user to make certain choices: should time be spent on it?

Is it necessary to systematically go around the table with the participating members?

Should participants be systematically sent to small rooms to discuss?

Is the possibility to invite participants from other chapters only a positive thing?

Is it important to stay 'among us' to strengthen the links within the Chapter, without involving guests from other Chapters or countries?

Is there a risk that international participation may give too much space to presentations and discussions in English which is not the mother tongue of many of us in Europe? Or, on the contrary, are online meetings a unique opportunity to be able to communicate regularly between countries?

Should guest lectures be longer, shorter or adapted in other ways?

One experience I can share, is that singing together, because of the slight differences in connection time, gives an incredible cacophony! We tested it at Christmas and we all have fond memories of it.



International meeting with a golden taste



Anna Levrén,

Epsilon chapter, Uppsala

On the 8th of April 2021 our chapter Epsilon in Uppsala, Sweden had a Zoom-meeting. The meeting was visited by DKG members from the Netherlands, Estonia and Germany.

The Golden Gift

Golden Gift recipient, Jeannine de Jong from the Netherlands, presented the program. She enthusiastically told us about the once in a lifetime possibility of receiving the Golden Gift which enables leadership training for empowering women leaders.

The purpose of the Golden Gift is to:

1. Create diverse ways to conduct leadership training
2. Empower members to take leadership roles
3. Provide networking opportunities for existing and emerging leaders internationally

Jeannine also informed us of how the application is to be made. After Jeannine's presentation an interesting discussion followed. Golden Gift recipient 2016, Daniella von Essen from Germany told us about her experience of participating in the Golden Gift Seminar in the United States.

Jeannine and Daniella warmly recommended us to apply for the scholarship!

Magazines

Finally Charlotte Lindgren, a member of the editorial board and Epsilon, informed us about the magazines of DKG reaching Europe and urged us to submit our own articles. They are:

- The Bulletin, that focuses on research based and documented works.
- Collegial Exchange, that focuses on articles based on practice and experience related to education, the Society, women, and children, as well as personal reflections and creative works.

All in all, it was a very interesting meeting with inspiring information about some of the possibilities within DKG.

Iceland



Leadership April 2021

Ingibjörg Jónasdóttir

Member of International Leadership Development Committee 2020-2022



The International Leadership Development committee has met a few times this winter, of course through the internet. Our main project this winter was to put together a training program for the incoming officers at state level. We are not inventing the wheel, since we have very good material from the previous Leadership Development committees.

But of course we are facing different times every year and therefore constantly improving and moving forward.

The committee has been working in groups, focusing on what to present and how - building your own leadership teams, how to support and strengthen chapters, how to expand membership and the membership experience plus how we strengthen our society with revitalization. That details matter and knowledge the constitution and business of the

Leadership Development

Composed of one member from each region plus a chairman, members plan a leadership development conference for state organization presidents and new executive secretaries preceding each regional conference. The committee plans and implements leadership sessions for state organization and chapter presidents held at the international convention.

Focus Areas Based on Society Strategic Plan:

1. Develop leadership connections (1 A.2)
2. Expand offerings in native languages of events and in publications (1 C.2)
3. Study and share leadership styles represented in member countries (3 A.2)

 Linda Hall Chair	 Dr. Alejandra Mata SV	 Claire Swanson SV	 Ingibjörg Jónasdóttir SV	 Katy McInyre SV
 Patricia Belknap SV	 Becky Szowski 2020-2022 International President	 Nita Scott Executive Director		

Society is important, have also been kept in mind. Not least, we have emphasized strategic planning, technology, communication and connections. Head Quarters will be in contact with those who are eligible for the training, in good time.

In the beginning of the year I met with a group from Sweden and we had a very good and fruitful discussion. Also I met some European members who have been serving on Leadership Development committees for 10 years. That was also very interesting and I am looking forward to telling you more about that in the next Euforia.

Good contact between regional members and committee members is important. We can now seek contact through virtual media, whereas before we had to rely on conferences and email. We want to reach out to members internationally, searching both for existing good leadership training and for places where there is a need and desire for it. Here I am relying on your input and looking forward to hearing your ideas.

“Leadership and social skills are most important in education today“.



The Netherlands



DKG during Covid-19.



Marie-Antoinette Hubers de Wolf

Member of the Forum Committee
Epsilon Chapter
Netherlands

More than a year ago we faced a total lock down and now we, in DKG, are still in contact with each other. All our chapters have meetings and we join on a state level. We, in Epsilon chapter, have a meeting every month although we can't see one another face to face.

Twice a month we organize a meeting with an educational or European topic. In March, after an invitation from Epsilon chapter, we had a meeting with Margarita Hanschmidt our Regional Director, Ewa Johanson, Marie-Antoinette Hubers from the European Forum and Daphne Cagle from California Expansion Committee. We talked about the European Forum and how the RD can help the chapters as well as how we can help each other to get new members. The connection we have across borders was also a topic we discussed. Daphne told us about the way California managed to get 7 new chapters in one year. It was very inspiring to hear what they had done. Daphne is willing to join chapter meetings to tell her story.

This is all because of the increase in use of information technology during this Covid pandemic. We now have the opportunity to meet with people all across the globe.

Chapters of the Netherlands are connecting with chapters in Mexico, Ecuador and Guatemala. We are hoping that there will be a possibility to meet them virtually in the near future.

I am pleased to announce that we have formed a new Administrative Board with both young and relatively new members.

Unfortunately, we cannot celebrate our 45th anniversary on May 29 so we have to postpone it until next year. We hope that some of you are able to join us in May 2022.

Stay safe and I hope to see you all in the near future.

Is being a teacher in the Netherlands still attractive?



Author Nora Schade,

Published on behalf of the Epsilon Chapter, Netherlands

Various recent newspaper articles in the Netherlands on the profession of teacher show that the appeal and status of teaching has been strongly undermined in the Netherlands over the past 30/40 years. Alarming figures about the growing teacher shortage reach us almost every day. The consequence is an increasing concern about the effects on the quality of education.

- **Women's profession**

A frequently cited cause of the undermining of the status of the profession is sought in the negative image of being a teacher; *"It is a women's profession"* and *"The salary is low"*. These are regularly recurring comments in public opinion.

The predominant presence of women (90%) in primary education has reinforced this image. As a result of this overrepresentation of women, it is mentioned that the quality of education has deteriorated. However, many studies in the Netherlands and abroad do not provide any evidence that students perform less with female teachers than with male teachers. There has been no evident decline in the quality of education. This is pure framing, outright discrimination and disqualification of the profession of teacher.

- **Male teachers are not in schools to stay**

Freshly graduated male teachers quickly drop out of their jobs. Their motivation to teach is not sustainable, despite their optimism and passion for the profession.

The first year as a teacher is decisive for leaving the education sector. The outflow of teachers is then at its highest: 15 to 26 percent leave primary education, secondary education and secondary vocational education after one year of teaching. In subsequent years, the outflow will increase more gradually. After five years, 18 percent of starting male teachers has left primary education, 31 percent from secondary education and 45 percent from secondary vocational education¹.

¹ Source: Nieuws, AOb, 21 Sept 2018.

De AOb is the largest education association and therefore plays an important role in consultations between government, school boards and other interest groups. Regularly put the AOb the tone in the social debate. The union looks beyond just the terms of employment. The union also likes to interfere with all other matters that are necessary for good education. The AOb represents the interests of the teaching staff, for example through excellent contacts in The Hague politics, but also at school and municipal councils the AOb is active. Moreover, the pursuit of good education extends beyond national borders, also in an international context AOb a prominent role. Ref: <https://www.aob.nl/en/>

Male teachers are looking for better career opportunities outside of education and for more (and more competitive) rewards, which are significantly higher than teaching salaries. Or they make the switch to the growing number of private schools established by the highly educated middle class. Not a good development in view of the current growing contradictions and social inequality in society. Education had and still has an essential task in promoting social cohesion in our society.

- ***The impoverished role of the teacher***

As a result of the big and more complex societal changes, school organisations are led by management teams, who determine how educational practice should look like. The regulations, directed from above, suffocate and demotivate the professionals in the classrooms. Teachers more and more have become “implementers” of teaching methods and protocols. A development that was set in motion in the public sector, 30 years ago by the neoliberal policy in the Netherlands. Countless budget cuts were made under the guise of so-called educational reform. Unattractive for teachers, who want to find out for themselves how they can achieve the educational goals. Teachers have lost ownership of the teaching-learning process.

Due to the expansion of the multiple tasks of teachers, the workload has increased in an irresponsible way in the last 20/30 years.

Due to illness, dropout and departure of teachers, colleagues have to work overtime in classes that are too large. In primary education, 27% of the teachers suffer from burnout complaints. The national average is 17%.

It is also difficult to resist parental undermining attitudes and criticism. The parents are no longer standing beside the teacher: the teacher who is burdened by the culture of responsibility, offering “appropriate education”, taking care of students who are in danger of dropping out, etc.

The image of the super teacher or ‘teaching hero’ is showing more and more scratches. It becomes more difficult for teachers to be enthusiastic and motivated in front of the class and to give students individual attention. Or to resist the public grumbling in the media, from the highly educated parents, including from the teachers themselves.

- ***The alarming reports of the teacher shortage show that it will seriously increase in the near future***

First, a few figures and facts about the shortages: nationally there are currently more than 1,400 vacancies in primary education, in secondary education there is a shortage of more than 600 teachers, for the subjects computer science, Dutch, some modern languages,

mathematics and science. In 2019, according to the P.O.-Council², of 3,500 vacancies 1,400 had not yet been filled at the beginning of September.

It has been calculated for Amsterdam only, that in 2025 there will be a shortage of 830 primary school teachers.

The consequences of the aging population will soon become visible: 40% of the teachers will retire within a few years, 33,000 teachers, many of whom are women³. 57% of older teachers have already indicated that they want to stop earlier.

- ***Are there solutions for the growing teacher shortage? In the short term, in the long term?***

In the Netherlands many women are working part-time (78% in primary education). Would one more day a week be a solution? A cultural change should precede this. The Netherlands is unique in Europe in terms of the number of women who have part-time jobs in education.

The institute for side entry into education⁴ has made an important start, but the shortage of teachers is not decreasing, a.o. because of insufficient coaching on the job.

There is optimism about a growing number of PABO⁵ students, more side entrants, even more male students. Are the recruitment campaigns paying off? Or does a highly qualified training make the difference? Or do the proposals for a salary-increase cause the growing number of starting students?

It is clear, however, that the influx to the PABOs cannot fill the teacher shortage at this moment.

There are also struggles with shortages in neighbouring countries. It is striking that Finland is a big exception.

- ***How can the quality of education be improved if there are not enough people?***

This is painful, when we realise that Dutch education has dropped to the international middle bracket (see the 2018 OECD ranking, AOb figures).

The Education Inspectorate has already indicated that the results of language and mathematics education of primary school students have deteriorated over the past 20 years. (The state of education, Report Inspectorate of Education, 2019). However, it only remained an observation.

- ***What do teachers themselves do about it?***

In January 2020, teachers from primary to university education have demonstrated against their huge work pressure, the underpayment of teachers and against the growing teacher shortage. These demonstrations showed the increasing demand for a better pay, for

² P.O.-Council. The PO Council is the sector organisation for primary education (PO). The association represents the common interests of the school boards in primary education, special primary education and (secondary) special education. The PO Council focuses on three major areas: funding, employership and the main points of the education policy. Members are involved in determining the position of the PO Council through visits, network meetings and the General Meeting of Members.

³ CBS Statistical Trends, 2018. CBS is the Dutch economic data and statistics agency. <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb>

⁴ Side entry means that people are leaving other jobs for entering a (new) job in education.

⁵ PABO is the name of the higher education training institutes in The Netherlands for training primary education teachers.

structural changes, for greater autonomy of teachers in determining their own education and teaching to inspire their pupils and students, our future citizens.

It is interesting to look at a number of remarkable insights from a so-called 'reflection week' of 16 primary schools in Amsterdam in December 2019. They closed their doors for a week to find an answer to the question: what do we as professionals in education need? Until now, the attention and care of the teachers has always been directed towards the pupils. It was striking that it took a lot of effort for the teachers to formulate what they needed to do their work well. How quickly teachers (especially women) think: "We will buckle down and give it our best and we'll put our shoulders back to it" or "We will adapt and take over the work from our colleagues again".

- ***What do teachers need today?***

What are the best conditions for teachers to teach? Society must ask itself how to meet those conditions.

1. More appreciation and recognition of the profession is needed, with associated quality requirements and consequences for people who do not meet them. More challenges within the profession itself and a motivating career perspective. Teachers must regain influence on the educational vision of their school again and on the contents of the subject they are teaching. More time, space and facilities are needed to make changes together within a professional learning community. Will the [curriculum.nu](#)⁶ provide an educational offer, which will improve the quality problems? Will it not be a political decision again despite the consultation in the educational field? Is feasibility of all the plans and proposals critically monitored and evaluated?

Who takes the lead in order to improve the quality? Shouldn't the movement of decentralisation and deregulation (1990s) be revised with all its consequences? The new government, together with an enthusiastic minister and together with educational organisations and the people in the workplace, will have to develop an education strategy that raises the quality of education to a higher level and repair the damage suffered, and, at the same time, fundamentally tackles the inequality of opportunities. To start with smaller classes that serve the interests of the teachers and the students and almost automatically increases the quality of education. (proposal from the AOb).

It is good to study and compare the Finnish and Estonian education systems with the Dutch system. When doing so, pay attention not only to the highly developed digital education, but also to the appreciation of the teachers, the autonomy of a school team, the educational offer and quality assurance, the working conditions, and especially the structure of teacher training courses.

⁶ [Curriculum.nu](#) is a national body, supporting the revision of the curriculum of primary education. A scientific curriculum committee has been set up to advise the minister. A core team (existing of representatives of primary and secondary schools) will develop the curriculum building blocks for primary and secondary education into concept core goals in one year. The ultimate goal is a curriculum to keep equipping students for further education and participation in society.

2. More flow of teachers from primary to secondary and higher vocational education and vice versa is needed.

Years ago, a transfer from primary education to secondary education was a common career perspective for ambitious teachers. By obtaining certificates one could easily change to another education sector or level. The best secondary school teachers even made it to professor in university.

A good development is that teacher training courses for both primary and secondary education are being expanded: "Masters of the future".

However, little perspectives are offered for a career. That will have to change. Teachers with experience in primary education should be encouraged to retrain with the perspective of a career in secondary education. Conversely, it should also become attractive for teachers in secondary education to switch to primary education.

In these times of corona crisis and teacher shortages, it has become more clear than ever how important the teaching profession is.

Digital education has grown enormously and teachers have developed creative and resourceful curricula online in a matter of weeks. Perhaps these new teaching methods will become an essential part of future education. Meetings from home, teaching from home with instruction programs and mentoring hours in the classroom. No overcrowded classes!

With the appreciation for the efforts of teaching in corona-times, the profession was placed in the category of vital professions within a few months.

Let's hold on to this and use it for a future-proof education!

Nora Schade, April 2021, on behalf of the Epsilon chapter of DKG in the Netherlands

Additional information (although these articles are all in Dutch):

- Klaas van Veen, "*Weg met schoolbesturen, die zoveel financiële beslissingen kunnen nemen*" Trouw, 31 maart 2021.
- F. Cörver, Mommers, A e.a. "*Status en imago van de leraar in de 21^{ste} eeuw*" ROA Maastricht en Rotterdam, 2017.
- Ruud van der Aa e.a., "*Met een blik op het verleden van eerdere projecten en maatregelen ter vermindering van lerarentekorten in het po, vo en mbo*", CAOP Den Haag, 2017.
- The Dutch Education Inspectorate, *De staat van het onderwijs*, 2021.