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Evaluatie Kwaliteitsimpuls politieonderwijs Caribisch Nederland

Summary



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Summary

Background

The Caribbean Netherlands Police Education Quality Boost initiative (*Kwaliteitsimpuls politieonderwijs Caribisch Nederland*) is a temporary measure introduced by the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice. In the period 2016–2019, this Ministry provided special funding to the tune of €350,000 per year, in order to encourage the professionalisation of the Dutch Caribbean Police Force (KPCN) and contribute to improving cooperation between the different police forces. The Minister of Security and Justice recently took the decision to continue the Quality Boost initiative for a further four-year period from 2020 to 2023 (Memo, Ministry of S&J, 10 November 2015).

Key questions for the study

The aim of the evaluation study was to examine the results of the Quality Boost initiative and identify any points for improvement. The study was conducted by a consortium of researchers from the Kohnstamm Instituut, Oberon and the University of Curaçao and was commissioned by the Ministry's Research and Documentation Centre (WODC). The WODC formulated a series of research questions which formed the basis for the study. Summarised briefly, this concerned three main points:

1. Which policy theory forms the basis for the Caribbean Netherlands Police Education Quality Boost initiative?

2. How successful was the implementation of the Quality Boost initiative, what results were achieved and what issues were there, according to the various stakeholders?
3. To what extent is the Quality Boost initiative meeting its intended objectives and what key points should be considered if it is potentially to be continued?

Method

The Explanatory Evaluation method (*Verklarende Evaluatie*, Pater, Sligte & Van Eck, 2012) was used for the evaluation of the Caribbean Netherlands Police Education Quality Boost initiative. This method focuses on identifying mechanisms that form the link between the intervention on the one hand and the results on the other. Based on that objective, data is collected according to a step-by-step plan that starts by reconstructing the policy context and defining the assumptions that underlie the supposed effect of the policy measure. This policy reconstruction then forms the assessment framework for the fieldwork conducted among direct stakeholders: the target groups and parties responsible for implementing the policy measure. For this reason, the study is made up of two subsidiary studies.

Subsidiary study 1 is a document analysis exploring the policy as envisaged, together with the underlying assumptions. Subsidiary study 2 took the form of field research involving a total of 74 respondents who participated through individual and group interviews and a questionnaire. The field research was conducted in both the Netherlands and the Caribbean, in the period from September 2019 to January 2020. The respondents were: policymakers, representatives of police forces, police staff who had taken part in the training programmes, lecturers at the Police Academy, and other parties involved (such as Public Prosecution Department staff).

Results of policy reconstruction

The Quality Boost initiative was prompted primarily by the constitutional reform of the Kingdom of the Netherlands that took effect on 10 October 2010. At that time, the Caribbean islands of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba (BES islands) became 'special Dutch municipalities' and the separate police forces were merged to form the Dutch Caribbean Police Force (KPCN), under the responsibility of the Minister of Security and Justice. Curaçao and Sint Maarten became independent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as was already the case for Aruba. These islands have their own police forces: the Aruba Police Force (*Korps Politie Aruba*, KPA), the Curaçao Police Force (*Korps Politie Curaçao*, KPC) and the Sint Maarten Police Force (*Korps Politie Sint Maarten*, KPSM) and their management falls under the responsibility of their own ministers of Justice.

According to Sections 40 and 41 of the Kingdom Act (Police Force)/*Rijkswet Politie* from 2010, the islands share joint responsibility for the police force. However, the policymakers involved highlighted several issues: they saw gaps both in terms of capacity (the size of the workforce) and the professional quality of the different police forces, and the organisations were neglected. Because the separate police forces were too small to have all the expertise in-house that they need, there was mutual dependency. There were also serious levels of criminality and poor law enforcement in the region. They identified two key routes for resolving this issue: firstly, a need for more regional cooperation between the police forces and increased mutual deployability and, secondly, improvement to police education.

In order to improve cooperation and mutual deployability, five joint competency profiles were compiled (for both executive and management positions) by the Police Education Committee (date unknown). In order to improve police education, a needs analysis was conducted and a joint multi-annual plan formulated for an

initial and post-initial training programme. It was decided that there would be a focus on competency-based education and that jointly-agreed attainment targets should be used that reflect the tasks and activities that need to be executed. The ACOA system – a competency-based qualification structure for professional education, compiled by the Labour Market Education Advisory Committee (*Adviescommissie Onderwijs Arbeidsmarkt*, ACOA) – was to be used for the attainment targets in order to ensure they reflect the Police Academy working procedure and are in line with European standards and international levels for qualifications in professional education.

Ultimately, the problem analysis led to a temporary policy initiative: the Quality Boost for Police Education in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom for the period 2016-2019. As a result of this initiative, the Ministry of Security and Justice is providing annual funding to cover the lecturers' salary costs and daily allowance for 3.5 FTE of Police Academy capacity (by means of an additional annual payment of €350,000). This capacity is being deployed as follows: 2 FTE for the leeward and windward islands, 1 FTE for post-initial training for all countries and 0.5 FTE for Integrated Professional Skills Training (*Integrale Beroepsvaardigheden Training*, IBT) for KPCN. It was agreed that participating countries and stakeholders would cover their costs for lecturers' travel and accommodation, training facilities and students' travel and accommodation. The funding is subject to several important conditions, including the stipulation that the Police Academy must be the main supplier of the training courses and responsible for examining and the curriculum must reflect both the Caribbean context and initial police education in the Netherlands at MBO (senior secondary vocational) level. There must also be mutual coordination with regard to post-initial training needs and each year's training must be focused within a specific theme.

In advance, the expectation was that the Quality Boost initiative will contribute to: (a) lasting improvement in the quality of police work and (b) cooperation and mutual deployability between police forces and (c) potentially also to strengthening regional training programmes.

Field research results

- Scope of implementation

In total, 22 courses were offered to the different forces. Altogether, 329 police staff from the different forces took part. The training courses offered were: Basic Police Education (BPO), Integrated Professional Skills Training (IBT), Sexual Offences, Complex Investigation Work (RIMOZ), Technical and Occupational Leadership – Caribbean (TOL-C) and Analysing Visual Information/Structuring and Visualising Information (AVI/SVI). Several of the courses are still running. For this reason, it is difficult to draw conclusions on precise figures for success rates and drop-outs. Based on the incomplete figures, it would appear that almost all students who do the BPO, IBT, Sexual Offences and RIMOZ courses complete them successfully. In the case of the courses on TOL-C, and AVI/SVI, the 30% drop-out rate is relatively high (10 drop-outs, 22 passes).

- Results of Police Academy quality evaluations

The quality evaluations conducted by the Police Academy on five training courses (in 2016 and 2017) show that the quality of the courses is rated as good overall by police staff who participated in them. This applies particularly to: course content, learning resources, study load, lecturers and examination assignments. Students are relatively or highly satisfied with regard to all of these points. The evaluations revealed two points for improvement: practice support and supervision and the provision of information (including via Blackboard). The Police Academy has now switched to *itslearning* as its electronic learning environment.

- *Training course quality as experienced by various groups of stakeholders*

Participation in the courses is mainly prompted by participants' desire to meet the formal qualification requirements for their position (BPO and AVI/SVI), improve knowledge and professional skills (RIMOZ, Sexual Offences and TOL-C), or to gain a recognised diploma at a higher level (BPO, primarily for participants on Sint Maarten who have worked as special enforcement officers (BOA) for several years).

In general, students are satisfied with the quality of the courses. They are particularly positive about the lecturers, the interactive teaching methods, the practical examples, the opportunity to learn in practice and the content level of the courses. The information provided in advance is also cited as a strength. Students feel that the competencies they acquire on the courses can be effectively applied in their own work situations, with the exception of AVI/SVI students who did not have the technical facilities at their disposal at work to enable them also to put their new knowledge and skills into practice.

The lecturers are also satisfied with the way the courses went. They see the teaching methods – interactive, practical and focused on learning in practice – as a key strength of the courses. The approach to teaching is different from what the students are accustomed to, but is a good match for the way in which work is done within the police. In the lecturers' experience, the students are also enthusiastic about this.

The police commissioners feel that the content of the courses effectively matches the intended learning outcomes and that the modules equip the students with current knowledge and effective skills, both in terms of theory and practice. Knowledge is conveyed in a well-structured way, making it easier to apply in practice. Feedback from students reveals that the interactive teaching

methods are seen as stimulating and that courses also cover the local context of police work in the Caribbean Netherlands and other Caribbean countries in the Kingdom. The police commissioners are positive with regard to the quality, deployment and flexibility of the lecturers on the different courses. In addition, the lecturers are well prepared for the local context and differences in legislation, both with respect to the Netherlands and between the Caribbean countries themselves (including the Caribbean Netherlands).

Several areas for improvement were mentioned by both students and lecturers.

- Specific areas for improvement for both lecturers and students include: the use of Dutch as the language of instruction (especially for windward students taking legal modules) and above all the quality of and pressure of work among practice supervisors: the shortage of staff makes it difficult for the practice supervisors to provide effective support/supervision and mentoring in addition to their day-to-day work (especially on Sint Maarten, but also on other islands). In the meantime, several practice supervisors have received training in the Netherlands, as a result of which they are better able to fulfil their supervisory duties.
- Practical issues raised by both groups include: the lack of the right licences for digital information analysis programs at their own workplace and the lack of suitable training locations and facilities (e.g. for shooting practice and self-defence).

Other issues raised by the lecturers include:

- Since participation on the courses has an impact within the police organisations themselves, this places an important responsibility on the managers within the forces to promote the application of the improvements in practice.
- Teaching in the Caribbean calls for specific competencies on the part of the lecturers in terms of their ability to improvise,

being open to a different culture (without losing sight of one's own standards and values) and a willingness to take an interest in the background of students who are less used to asking questions and engaging in discussion with the lecturer.

- *Contribution made by the Quality Boost initiative to improving quality and cooperation*

The students feel that they have achieved personal growth in terms of several key points and, in their view, this has also improved the quality of police work. They say that they have been able to achieve personal development, acquire new knowledge, carry out the work more effectively and now feel more confident in work situations. There is a mixed picture with regard to the question of whether there is better or more frequent cooperation with colleagues from other forces and this tends to depend on the work experience of the various respondents: some students said that applying the same standards and the same training did indeed make cooperation easier, whereas others argued that they already knew each other and that taking the same course together resulted in a slight improvement to that contact at best.

The lecturers noted that the Quality Boost initiative has resulted in more structure in terms of the provision of training courses and to a higher level and higher percentage of participation in IBT. The lecturers who regularly teach modules within the BPO or IBT were especially likely to see progress in terms of the quality of their students' police work. In many cases, the lecturers spend only a short period on the islands, which means they have less overview of the results of the Quality Boost initiative in terms of cooperation between the different police forces.

The police commissioners, course coordinators and practice supervisors feel that the Quality Boost initiative has brought about a significant improvement in professionalising the forces and in the quality of the police work. In some police forces, there was a

significant training and refresher course backlog. In their view, the Quality Boost initiative has generally had a positive impact in terms of the general education, motivation and attitude to work of police force staff. Improving knowledge and skills boosts job satisfaction and attitude in the broadest sense and contributes to a more professional police force. In addition, a self-confident and professional attitude on the street has a favourable impact on the enforcement of public order and the image of the police. The Quality Boost initiative has also contributed to the collective desire for further improvement of knowledge and skills.

In general, the respondents from the Public Prosecution Service and the Public Prosecutors take a less positive view. The public prosecutor's offices of the BES/Caribbean Netherlands, Curaçao and Aruba point out that the police forces still have significant quality improvements to make, especially when it comes to compiling police reports, and more broadly in terms of collecting and processing information and proactive and project-based investigations. In their experience, investigating officers have insufficient knowledge of the law. On Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, there are language issues when it comes to compiling official reports: police interviews generally take place in Papiamentu and this then requires translation into Dutch for the official report. On the other hand, the public prosecutor's office in Sint Maarten is exceptionally satisfied with the quality of current police work: investigation takes place effectively and reporting is of good quality. The translation problem is not an issue here: police interviews are conducted in English and the official report is also compiled in English based on a model (with a heading and conclusion in Dutch).

With regard to intensifying collaboration and providing mutual support, the police commissioners, course coordinators and practice supervisors identified a minor effect from the Quality Boost initiative: coordination between the forces on the shared

training needs results in more intensive contact between them and taking courses together enables staff from different forces to become better acquainted with each other and makes it easier for them to engage in contact. The level of equality in terms of knowledge and skills acquired and working procedure will be an important ingredient for success in terms of intensifying collaboration and the provision of mutual support in the future. One stakeholder from the Coast Guard said that cooperation between the Coast Guard and the KPCN has intensified significantly since the Quality Boost initiative, even at a lower, operational level and especially with Bonaire. The Coast Guard and the KPC have been collaborating intensively for a long time. The introduction of the Board of Police Commissioners (*College van Korpschefs*) is also contributing to more intensive collaboration between the forces.

- *Issues and suggestions for improvement*

- a. The police commissioners are calling for a greater financial injection via the Quality Boost initiative. In their view, the money could be used both to achieve and maintain the general basic level and for more urgent improvements required in specialist knowledge. (The demand and need for training is many times greater than what is possible within the Quality Boost budget). A key issue for the police commissioners, with the exception of the KPCN, is the lack of financial resources from their own countries).
- b. Stakeholders from the KPCN, KPC and KPA would like to base provision on the (joint) training needs agreed in consultation with the Police Academy rather than on the annual range of courses offered by the Police Academy. There is a need for more training courses and training places, a more bespoke approach and a focus on the specific needs of each police force (also with regard to the number of available training places and the balance between BPO and specialist/post-initial

courses). For this reason, the KPCN is exploring the possibility of additional courses at the Police Academy. The KPCN has the financial resources to do this.

- c. The course coordinators and practice supervisors point out that the Quality Boost initiative could have a greater effect if coordination and the quality of practice support and supervision were improved within their own police forces. Currently, the police forces are lacking both the staff and an integrated strategy to meet this need. This applies to a lesser extent for KPCN.
- d. According to the respondents, the Quality Boost initiative has not yet resulted in a substantial and structural intensification of cooperation and the provision of mutual support. The explanation for this is two-fold: firstly, it is too early for this intended effect and the police forces' main focus is on improving their own levels of quality and professionalism. Secondly, the respondents argue that there was already a certain form of cooperation and provision of support based on the previous constitutional structure. Despite this, the police commissioners concede that the new consultative body, the Board of Police Commissioners, encourages mutual cooperation, coordination and, where necessary, uniform standards within the different police forces and that there is intensive collaboration between the police forces and the Special Police Taskforce (RST).
- e. In the long term, it will be important to invest in the development of an accredited basic regional police training course, in order to reduce the police forces' dependence on the Quality Boost initiative. This would make it possible to shift the focus of the initiative to the specialist courses and to improving cooperation and the provision of mutual support. It would be worthwhile investigating whether the law

enforcement and security training institute (ORV) on Curaçao and/or the police training institute on Aruba would be able to make a substantial contribution to this.

- f. Organising joint courses inevitably involves challenges. The suggestion has been made to appoint a local coordinator for the Quality Boost courses to act as a permanent point of contact within the Police Academy.
- g. The Coast Guard appears no longer to be happy with the structure of the Quality Boost initiative, both because of the (modular) curriculum and because of its independent status, which means that only leftover training places are available. This in particular is inhibiting progress in the internal process of quality improvement and professionalisation.

Conclusions

Summarised briefly, the objectives of the Quality Boost initiative were:

- a. to achieve lasting quality improvements in the police forces,
- b. to professionalise the police forces,
- c. to improve mutual deployability/support and promote cooperation between the forces,
- d. to improve regional training courses through the professional development of lecturers (train the trainer).

To a large extent, the Police Education Quality Boost initiative is meeting these objectives formulated at the outset. With regard to the quality of police work, the police forces themselves have seen a significant improvement. Course participants also say that they are better equipped to carry out their police duties after following one or more of the courses within the Quality Boost initiative. The lecturers have also seen improvements in the quality of police work. At the level of the Public Prosecution Service, the quality improvement has not (yet) been felt in all countries. With the

exception of the Public Prosecution Service on Sint Maarten, they are generally relatively negative about the quality of the police work in the broadest sense. Extending the Quality Boost initiative could change that over time.

As far as the objective of professionalisation is concerned, this has seen a significant injection. The police forces have done considerable catching up by raising the qualification and competency level of police staff, ensuring they now have accredited and standardised qualifications at least at the level of MBO-3. It would appear that this process of catching up has not yet been completed, which is a key reason for extending the Quality Boost initiative. Additional training capacity has been provided, the level of the courses on offer is generally good, and the same applies to the lecturers and the extent to which the courses link in with practice. A wide range of training courses has also been provided. Finally, the Quality Boost initiative has made a positive contribution to the motivation and attitude to work of police staff, which also appears to have had a positive impact on the image of the police in society.

As far as increasing cooperation and mutual support are concerned, it should be noted that these were not key aims of the Quality Boost initiative. However, the expectation was that the joint provision of courses could implicitly facilitate achieving this. The study has not provided any clear results on this matter. Some students feel that they now have closer links with colleagues from other forces, whereas others argue that these contacts already existed before the introduction of the Quality Boost initiative. The study did not reveal any intensification in project-based or structural cooperation. Although the Board of Police Commissioners promotes cooperation at strategic and policy level, this consultative body was not set up as part of the Quality Boost initiative. What the Quality Boost initiative does achieve is uniformity in terms of the qualification levels of the police forces,

which in turn can implicitly facilitate cooperation and mutual support.

In the end, the Quality Boost 2016-2019 did not include a focus on improving regional training courses by such methods as the professional development of local lecturers. As a result, this objective was not achieved.