

Summaries

Justitiële verkenningen (Judicial explorations) is published nine times a year by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Justice in cooperation with Boom Juridische uitgevers. Each issue focuses on a central theme related to judicial policy. The section *Summaries* contains abstracts of the internationally most relevant articles of each issue. The central theme of this issue (nr. 6, 2006) is *Truants and school dropouts*.

History and backgrounds of compulsory education

Th. Storimans

Compulsory education consists of two obligations: school enrolment and school attendance. Both were first made law in the Netherlands in 1900. At that time the focus was on enrolment, since banishing child labour and preventing child neglect were priorities. Now, more than a century later, the emphasis lies on educating children for constructive participation in society. Therefore, the main purpose of the current 1969 Compulsory Education Act is to stimulate regular school attendance and prevent truancy. However, especially over the last few years the idea has risen that a broader purpose is needed. After all, making sure that children are physically in the building is much less important than creating an environment that is inviting and constructive. That is, if truancy and premature school departure are to be successfully suppressed. A renewed Act and quality improvement of education are then paramount.

Dropouts: numbers, bottlenecks and high-risk groups

L. Herweijer

This article discusses the development of the number of early school dropouts in the Netherlands, their social backgrounds and bottlenecks in their educational career. The number of dropouts has slightly decreased over the past years. The pace of decline, however, seems to be too slow to attain the 50 percent reduction target for 2010, set by the Lisbon agenda. In comparison to other EU countries the performance of Dutch education with regard to early school leaving is just average. The transition from lower to higher secondary education appears to be a bottleneck in the

educational career of early school dropouts. Frequent truancy, often a forerunner of early school leaving, is most severe in the lower strata of secondary education. Youngsters from low status groups, from ethnic minorities, from single parent families and youngsters in metropolitan environments run a higher risk of dropout.

The relation between truancy, dropout and delinquency

F.M. Weerman and P.H. van der Laan

In this article the authors review the scientific literature about the relation between truancy / dropout and delinquency. How strong is the association and can we interpret the relation as a causal one? Empirical studies convincingly show that truancy and dropout are associated with delinquent behaviour. However, there are many common background factors for school absence and delinquency, suggesting that at least part of the associations is spurious. It is also uncertain if truancy or dropout is followed by the beginning or an increase in delinquent behaviour: findings from different studies contradict each other on this matter. An important finding is that the behavioural consequences of leaving school may depend on the reasons for it. Especially an aversion to school seems to increase the chances on offending, while leaving school to get a job or getting married seem to have less or no impact on delinquency.

Truancy and penal law

R. Teijl

It takes a combined effort of many organizations to tackle truancy effectively. In a complex setting where each local organisation sets it's own goals, cooperation is difficult to establish. Inspired by the network theory the use of horizontal agreements between local organizations is recommended. In addition, national organisations can strengthen cooperation by setting standards and exercise supervision. These general principals are used to describe the conditions for effective use of penal law in order to reduce truancy. For truants without severe problems it's enough to reinforce the rule. For others penal law is used to enforce acceptance of various forms of professional aid. If the use of penal law is necessary, schools and supervisors of the Compulsory Educational Act 1969 should work together closely to report truants as soon as possible. That enhances the chance that truants can finish their education.

Learning environment and learning career; a new vision on school-dropout

M.L. Schravessande

Underlying the new school-dropout policy of the Dutch minister of Education are two key-notions. The learning-environment and the learning-career. The notion of the learning environment **spatially** broadens the visions on school-dropout. Not only the school-environment is considered in problem analysis and solutions, but also the home-environment (including the 'street', sports clubs, etc.) and the working-environment. The notion of the learning-career broadens the vision on school-dropout **in time**. There we consider not only problems en solutions directly linked to the moment drop-out takes place, but events and background variables over the entire learning career of a child.

The notion of learning environment leads to focus in the drop-out policy on enforcing connections between the different learning environments, for example by creating various smart combinations between working en learning. The notion of the learning career brings focus on the importance of bridging gaps in the learning career. This is done for example by making schools responsible for a successful transition from one school-system to another.

Multi-Service Schools; a plea for the integration of youth policy and education

A.F.D. van Veen

Demographic, social and cultural changes have provided the impetus for governments to examine the impact of the new social realities on the family, children and youth, and to adapt or change service delivery systems to meet the needs created by those realities. In the Netherlands the current system of child-related service delivery is fragmented, often characterised by duplication and lack of co-ordination. This creates major difficulties and risks, especially for vulnerable children who come to school with multiple problems that cut across conventional health, social and educational systems boundaries; problems that schools are ill equipped to handle alone. Too many of them fall through the cracks and don't get the services they need. The focus in this article is on the development, objectives and features of multi-service and community schools and on the promises they hold to improve results for children and youth at risk.