

A personal development plan? Belgians seek inspiration in the Netherlands



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In the spring of 2018, a delegation of Belgian teachers and civil servants visited several schools in the Netherlands to find inspiration for a personal development plan for students. Read on to find out what they have learned.

Task

The delegation was tasked by the Belgian government to develop a personal development plan for students. A system whereby, among others, parents could also monitor the development of their children. In search of inspiration, they visited schools in four countries, including several schools in the Netherlands. Schoolinfo organised part of the programme and took the delegation to the following schools: Het Kwadrant, Philips van Horne, and Het College.

Freedom

It was nice for the Belgium delegation to have a look in The Netherlands because they gathered new ideas at each school. The delegation noticed that Dutch teachers and school leaders enjoy a lot of freedom when it comes to structuring education. For an explanation of

the [Dutch education system](#) visit. In Belgium, for instance, the government imposes more guidelines.

For students, by students

At Het Kwadrant, third-year student Samantha gave a presentation on her personal development plan. “The personal development plan is written by the student under supervision of the coach of his/her class and submitted to the parents every 6 weeks. The paper version is then scanned and deposited in Magister, an electronic platform, to which the parents, the pupil and teachers have access. Parent-student-coach meetings are organised by the students themselves. All groups have 8 hours of Personal Learning Time (PLT) with their coach, who is also one of their teachers”, the delegation explained afterwards.

Learning difficulties

At the Phillips van Horne School, the focus was on a so-called ‘initiative class’ of the HAVO (senior general secondary education). A number of students are given the opportunity of flourishing in smaller classes for two years before joining a normal HAVO class. These students receive individual guidance along with a personal development plan with which parents and teachers are closely involved. “It seems as though every child settles in nicely, even those with learning difficulties. The ‘initiative class’ comes with a lot of tools to help the students”, said one of the Belgian participants. “Time is spent on music, painting, expression, sport. Students have time to learn by themselves, but they can also attend class-based lessons. Students seem happy and self-confident.”

Having a vision as a starting point

The Belgian delegation also noticed that all the schools referred to a school vision that forms the foundation of everything else. For example, at Het College they work based on the vision that students get to determine their own course in the learning process. Students have many options and receive guidance from the same coach throughout their school career. This gave the Belgian delegation something to think about. They are going to examine whether a personal development plan should be part of a broader educational vision.

A Real Personal Development Plan

Het College uses the platform Learning Portal. The students use it to determine their own goals for each course. Once again, the Belgians were impressed. “The student is supervised by two teachers who play the role of coaches: they guide the student in relation to his learning methods, his working speed, et cetera. A 15-minute meeting is scheduled each week. So, we see a real personal development plan here and not a personal remediation plan!”

For more information on personal development plans: [A digital portfolio: where to start?](#)

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