

Summary

A calling for vocational training

Insiders on the responsiveness of Dutch senior secondary vocational education

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Summary

Senior secondary vocational education and the changing labour market

The central theme in this report is the responsiveness of Dutch senior secondary vocational education (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* – MBO), i.e. its ability to respond quickly and effectively to new circumstances so as to equip students as adequately as possible for the labour market, today and in the future. According to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, the current situation on the Dutch labour market, with jobs disappearing, being created and changing at an ever faster rate, demands a flexible vocational education system which is able to respond rapidly to the changing demand for different types of knowledge and skills. The Minister argues that one of the tasks of senior secondary vocational education (MBO) is to ensure that young people, who may encounter increasing difficulties in finding work in the future, are well prepared for this increased dynamic (TK 2015/2016c). This means that MBO training must be capable of responding to the changing demand for skills as a means of increasing the economic labour market opportunities of newly qualified students.

The Minister sees a role for the sectoral committees in identifying changes on the labour market and indicating their significance in terms of the skills needed to ensure the sustainable employability of workers (TK 2015/2016b).

This report describes how the MBO system is trying to meet this challenge. The study was based on surveys of MBO teachers, managers and students, as well as on data on former students. We also interviewed representatives of the sectoral committees, which function as intermediaries between vocational education and training and the labour market.

The focus of this study is on MBO itself, based on the perspective of the stakeholders in relation to the central theme.

Brief answers to the research questions

The central research question was as follows:

How do those involved in senior secondary vocational education feel about the way the MBO system is meeting its social mission of equipping students with the professional skills they need and ensuring their sustainable employability on a changing labour market?

In other words, how responsive do stakeholders feel the MBO system is?

The following three constituent questions were also investigated:

- 1 What efforts are made to keep MBO programmes topical, relevant and innovative? To what extent is cooperation sought with prospective employers and centres of expertise, is the training offer adapted, and are systems in place for knowledge-sharing and professionalisation of teaching staff?

- 2 What do stakeholders feel constitutes a good skill set to ensure that students are well equipped to enter the labour market, and what are the views of former students on this?
- 3 Which skills do stakeholders consider important for employment in the future, and how do they rate the importance of lifelong learning?
- 4 How do those involved in senior secondary vocational education view recent changes in the MBO system? What is going well in terms of responsiveness and where are the points of concern?

Topicality, relevance and innovation mainly ensured through systematic collaboration with employers

There are various ways of keeping vocational education and training topical and relevant. One is for professionals and colleges to keep abreast of the latest developments by cooperating with prospective employers and with (other) centres of expertise. According to teaching staff and managers, there is already a high level of cooperation within senior secondary vocational education and the sectoral committees, especially with (prospective) employers, but also with (other) centres of expertise. Representatives of the sectoral committees also point to the often very wide and long-standing differences between sectors in the degree of cooperation between MBO and (regional) businesses. The main purpose of this cooperation is to optimise the match between vocational education and training and the labour market. According to most professionals, the cooperation is also used as a means of exploiting new knowledge and insights to ensure that the education and training remains up to date, though this is very rarely the explicit motivation for the cooperation. Cooperation is also used as a means of creating internships and apprenticeships. The emphasis in the cooperation with centres of expertise is not so much on innovation as on optimising and smoothing the transition and match from preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO) to senior secondary vocational education (MBO) and higher professional education (HBO). Whilst there is already a good deal of cooperation, it is not yet happening to a sufficient degree everywhere and is not always structurally embedded. More than half the professionals surveyed (teaching staff and managers) acknowledge a need to improve the cooperation with a view to keeping the training up to date. They report that many MBO colleges have changed the education and training they provide in recent years, but feel that, while MBO has become more responsive and demand-led, there is still some way to go.

Changes in the programmes offered have also resulted from the mandatory reduction in the number of qualification files and qualifications. The professionals interviewed cited both minor and major changes, such as the use of new teaching resources and materials, or the scrapping of certain programmes altogether. Some programmes have also been broadened, relaunched or made more specialist in nature. New learning pathways and new programmes spanning several sectors have also been developed, but were cited less frequently. Respondents report that the main driver for these changes is the focus on the labour market, though financial considerations also play a role.

According to respondents, it is still unclear whether the introduction of student options will increase the responsiveness of MBO. Some believe that reserving part of the curriculum for options will make the system more flexible and create more opportunities for customisation; others have concerns that the options may bear too little relation to what employers would like to see in a vocational training programme. Whether broadening programmes increases responsiveness is also debatable. On the one hand, every reform – and therefore also broadening the programmes – creates opportunities to incorporate new developments in the programme and therefore improves its responsiveness. There is also a feeling, especially among representatives of the sectoral committees, that broad training often equates to broad employability. On the other hand, there is a perceived risk that broadening programmes will make them less recognisable for both students and prospective employers.

One aspect of responsiveness is a proactive attitude. How proactive are those working in senior secondary vocational education? Teachers regard it as important to stay informed, to conduct internship visits and to take part in projects and courses to keep abreast of new developments in their discipline or field. The knowledge they gain in this way is used mainly for their own teaching or development, or is shared informally with one or more colleagues. Teachers are also encouraged to carry out internship and work placement visits, but this is by no means always compulsory, and participation in other activities to keep up with new developments is also often not a mandatory requirement.

MBO colleges thus use various means in a bid to embed topicality and innovation in their programmes, but according to respondents, there is room for improvement here. They believe that MBO is insufficiently demand-led and is too inflexible, and that it often takes a long time to implement innovations. Whilst we observed that professionalisation of teachers is encouraged, it is not always compulsory. The sharing of knowledge by professionals and prospective employers and between professionals themselves is fragmented and lacks any structural or formal embedding.

Broad skill set needed to enter the labour market

What do students need to ensure a successful start on the labour market? What mix of skills makes MBO and MBO students responsive? According to the OECD (2010; 2014), a balance should ideally be struck in the training programmes between what students would like and are able to do and what the labour market needs. In a bid to identify that perfect mix, we submitted a list of skills to the professionals in our survey. The MBO professionals were found to consider everything important; whilst there is some nuance, this is merely a matter of gradation. These professionals feel that personality characteristics (social and emotional skills), higher order (intellectual) skills and job-specific skills are extremely important for a smooth transition to the jobs market. Teachers and managers differ slightly on their views here, with teachers placing more emphasis on the importance of job-specific knowledge and skills, and managers more on social, emotional and higher order (intellectual) skills. Representatives of the sectoral committees also place caveats alongside the importance of job-specific skills, stressing that less specialisation actually leads to broader

employability. They also emphasise the importance of social, emotional and higher order (intellectual) skills. MBO professionals regard numerical skills, financial skills and entrepreneurship as slightly less important than other skills. By contrast, some representatives of the sectoral committees consider financial skills and entrepreneurship to be extremely important in view of the growing number of self-employed workers and small businesses. MBO professionals draw a distinction between the importance of skills for the different MBO levels. The differences are once again a matter of gradation, though an example of a striking difference is citizenship skills, which are considered more important for the lower than the higher MBO levels. Similarly, skills such as metacognition (the ability to shape one's own learning process), problem-solving ability and critical thinking are considered more important for the higher tracks than the lower levels. Generally speaking, higher demands are placed on these competences for students in the higher MBO tracks. Respondents also see some differences depending on the sector, with social and emotional skills being considered slightly less important for students on technical programmes, for example, than for those in other sectors.

MBO graduates themselves, interviewed 18 months after leaving, report that personality characteristics and job-specific knowledge are the most important skills in their current jobs, but that the other skills are also important. Only basic skills (e.g. arithmetic and language) are considered less important. Strikingly, despite the highlighted changes in the labour market, former students from the period 2004-2015 do not feel that there have been any material changes in the requirements of employers as regards their command of their skills. They also feel that the match between vocational training and the labour market has not changed over that period. A large majority of former students feel that their vocational training prepared them well for their present job. Based on what they say they need in their work and how they assess the match between vocational training and the labour market, the broad range of skills needed appears to be reasonably robust.

MBO professionals and sectoral committees representatives differentiate by sector and level, and thus appear to seek a balance between the wishes of the market and the wishes and capabilities of students. According to former students, they are successful in this: they believe that MBO equips students adequately for a good start on the labour market, despite the major changes that have taken place in recent years and are still taking place.

Based on what former students say they need in their work and how they assess the match between vocational training and the labour market, vocational education and training in the Netherlands appears to be reasonably responsive.

Required skill set for long-term employability and lifelong learning

The characteristic elements of responsiveness – resilience, adaptability and a proactive approach – are in reality qualities that will also help MBO students to cope with future changes on the labour market and to respond to those changes effectively. The professionals in our study believe that students need a broad skill set to ensure they are adequately prepared for the future. They regard communication skills, the ability to cooperate with others, job-specific and social and emotional skills, problem-solving ability and critical

thinking as important skills for the future. Slightly less prominent in their view, though still important, are 21st-century skills, career skills, metacognition and basic and citizenship skills. There is virtually no difference in what respondents consider important for the present and future employment of MBO students. That is of course not very surprising: by definition, education is about preparing young people for the future. At most it might be expected that career skills, including lifelong learning, would be placed somewhat higher in the ranking of skills that are important for future and lasting employability.

Students believe that their job-specific skills will prove to be the most important for their future employment, though social and emotional skills, for example, are almost as important in their view. As the importance of highly job-specific skills diminishes later in a person's career, placing too much emphasis on these skills could lead to vulnerability in the longer term. The more generic competences could also prove to be of particular importance for intersectoral mobility (Kans et al. 2016). The students interviewed in our study are however realistic: they too think they need to possess a wide range of skills, and more than 80% believe that lifelong learning is important for their future. They also attach a good deal of importance to perseverance as a key quality for getting on in life. A striking and somewhat disconcerting finding of the study is that more than half the students surveyed are concerned about their future and uncertain that there will be work for them. These worries apply more for students in the care and welfare sector than for those on technical programmes. The main competition for students at MBO level 4 (the highest level) is from students on higher professional education programmes (HBO). In fact, the economic climate for many MBO students is currently rather more favourable than at the time of the study though, given the apparent mismatch that sometimes occurs between demand and supply, this does not apply for all MBO students.

Uncertainty about the future is one of the factors prompting a large portion of students to continue studying. More than half would like to do so immediately following their present programme, possibly in combination with working. The main driver is the desire to attain a higher qualification (MBO or HBO). Another key finding is that almost two-thirds of students say they want to continue learning out of interest and a desire to continue their development. Those who are still unsure about their next step say they might be willing to continue learning at a later stage if this would help them in their career. According to the key persons surveyed, this is a good basic attitude: continuing to learn and to invest in yourself is becoming increasingly important in the view of the sectoral committees representatives. Whether the current crop of students will actually convert their intention to learn in the future into action remains to be seen, but the great interest in follow-on courses makes it clear that many students are aware that following one course of training will probably not be enough to see them through their lives.

Changes in MBO: good prospects for the future?

Generally speaking, MBO professionals, the sectoral committees representatives and students themselves are fairly optimistic about the future prospects for MBO graduates, believing that there will always be work for genuine professionals. Roughly half the MBO

professionals believe that the programmes provide students with sufficient knowledge and skills to enable them to remain in work in the future. Others cast doubt on this optimistic view. There are doubts about the responsiveness of students in the lower MBO levels, whilst in the upper MBO tracks there are fears of job displacement by HBO graduates. One concern for the future for MBO graduates is the continuing decline over a number of years in the percentage of students following a work-based learning pathway (e.g. day release programmes) (SER 2016b), though the percentage has recently begun rising slightly again. It has to be borne in mind that the labour market position of these students often compares favourably with those who have followed full-time vocational training, and this also applies for those in MBO level 2, even though their labour market position is often not strong in terms of the number of hours and type of work (CMMBO 2017). In general, however, according to the MBO professionals the work placement system is under pressure: the number of internships is by no means adequate everywhere and the space allocated for work placements in the curriculum has in many cases been curtailed. This is not only a result of the reduction of most four-year programmes to three years, but also of the allocation of extra time for general subjects such as language and arithmetic. MBO professionals feel that the time and attention this takes is at the expense of vocational subjects, and that imposing stricter achievement standards for these general subjects puts certain groups at a disadvantage, especially those in the lower tracks with a migration background.

A majority of MBO students are confident that there will always be work for those with vocational qualifications. Notably, students on MBO level 2 programmes, about whom other stakeholders expressed concerns, are optimistic about the value of their MBO qualification.

The majority of MBO professionals and sectoral committees representatives also believe that senior secondary vocational education will continue to have a role in the future. They see professionalism and training for a good occupation as being at the heart of senior secondary vocational education, and therefore believe that MBO will continue to play a role in the system in the future. Only a small minority of professionals believe there will no longer be a place for MBO if the jobs market for people with a secondary education qualification contracts. There is however a perceived need for adaptations to increase both the robustness and flexibility of MBO. The question then is whether these are to some extent two conflicting aims.

A difficult challenge: looking for a balance

Senior secondary vocational education faces a difficult challenge in meeting the changing requirements of the labour market, taking into account the other goals of MBO and also of the profile of students in terms of their capabilities, interests and talents. At the same time, education will always lag behind developments in the field, and the long-term interests of MBO students will not always correspond with the short-term needs of prospective employers.

We may conclude that the MBO system is reasonably responsive, but that there is room for improvement. The cooperation between MBO and prospective employers often falls some-

what short or needs to be embedded more strongly, and the same applies for knowledge-sharing between prospective employers and MBO colleges, as well as between teaching staff/teams. The skills with which students are equipped have thus far proved to be reasonably robust in recent years. The question is whether this will continue to be the case in the future.

Pointers for policy

The views of stakeholders on the responsiveness of MBO and MBO students exposed a number of focus areas for policy in related areas. The most important are highlighted below.

Level 2: basic qualification level?

It became clear in this study that those involved in senior secondary vocational education are very concerned about students in MBO level 2. They regard some programmes at this level as having little relevance for the labour market and therefore fear for these students' chances of finding work. The sectoral committees representatives also expressed a view that the future labour market position of students in levels 3 or 4 could in some cases be rendered more vulnerable due to displacement. However, the sectoral committees also expressed concerns about level 2: is this level adequate to give qualified students a good start on the labour market? In other words, is this level equivalent to the national basic qualification level?

Other research has shown that level 2 students are not a homogeneous group, and that there is wide variation in the labour market-relevance of different vocational programmes at this level. The same research also showed that level 2 MBO students are often keen to progress to a higher MBO level (Meng & Sijbers 2017).

Progression to a higher level fits in with the notion of lifelong development and will undoubtedly increase the opportunities of students initially qualifying at level 2. It is therefore crucial that the ability to progress to a higher MBO level is retained. The cascade funding in MBO, whereby the college receives less funding the longer a student is enrolled, is at odds with this and undoubtedly constitutes a risk for this group. The opportunities to progress to higher levels within MBO and from MBO to HBO are moreover impeded for some students by the stricter requirements being placed on basic skills, and also by factors such as the scrapping of the basic student grant. There are also limits to the learning capacities of some students.

Vulnerable groups

One major concern relates to students in the lower levels and vulnerable young people: the MBO system is still too unresponsive for these (partially overlapping) categories. The professionals surveyed expressed concerns about whether these young people, who need additional care or attention, can be adequately prepared for and guided towards the labour market. Responsiveness works in two directions: towards (regional) businesses and

prospective employers, and towards MBO students. A vocational programme not only has to provide what prospective employers want, but must also qualify all students, in all their diversity, for paid employment (Onstenk & Westerhuis 2017). Does senior secondary vocational education make this group of students sufficiently self-reliant? More cooperation with prospective employers would seem to be necessary in order to provide extra support to this vulnerable group, including in the work situation.

Career orientation

One important skill is ‘learning to learn’: young people have to be taught competences, preferably at an early age, to give them the tools to acquire knowledge and skills. It is important that students ‘learn to learn’ and are therefore able to help shape their own careers, so that they are able to find work in the future if the occupations for which they initially trained disappear or change (Christoffels & Baay 2016). Good career orientation and guidance for MBO students is of great importance in this context (Onderwijsraad 2012). Space has certainly been allocated for this in the curriculum; the question is whether this is adequate and sufficiently up to date in its present form. Moreover, many MBO students would benefit from career orientation even after qualifying and beginning on the labour market.

Professionalisation essential

Government policy is already strongly focused on training and professionalisation of teachers and teams. The introduction of a teachers’ register, with a requirement to undertake regular in-service training, could also provide a further boost for professionalisation and knowledge-sharing. More (compulsory) work placements for teachers could also increase their knowledge of current developments and therefore improve the responsiveness of MBO.

MBO needs a period of calm

The professionals in our study made clear that MBO will benefit from a period of calm. This is not an uncommon attitude in the face of change in the education sector, and the MBO system has undergone a great many changes within a short period. The professionals reported that they were unable to keep up with either the number or pace of the changes in recent years. Now that the qualification files have been revised and options introduced, this appears to be a good moment to monitor the results before introducing yet more new measures.

Conclusion

It is important to bear in mind there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution for senior secondary vocational education: MBO is too diverse for this, with all its programmes, levels and learning pathways. At the end of this chapter, we look at some of the dilemmas facing the MBO

system as a whole. Not all of these dilemmas may be new, but this study has given them a new dimension.

Broad or narrow training?

One of the major dilemmas in MBO is how broad or narrow the programmes need to be in order to be responsive. This is a debate that has been ongoing for years (Bronneman-Helmers 2011; Karsten 2016), but it is placed in a new light in this study. In this report, the MBO managers and sectoral committees representatives tend towards a broader training, while teachers tend to favour narrower, more specialised training. Whilst we must of course beware of overly broad generalisations, it may be that narrow, job-specific training programmes will put students in a better starting position on the labour market. In time, this could prove to be something of a dead-end, if jobs in these disciplines disappear or change radically. Broader training programmes would then offer more guarantees. The broadening of programmes is not based solely on a labour market perspective; financial considerations also play a role. MBO colleges are not always able to maintain a wide range of specialist training programmes. Moreover, this study shows that proponents of broad training consider this preferable not only with a view to the longer term, but particularly for students' ability to make a start on the labour market, because students with a broader training profile can be considered for more jobs than those with a narrower profile.

Broader training programmes are less recognisable for both prospective employers and students. There are some students who do not yet know precisely which is the most appropriate profession for them, and there is a group who have their sights set on a specific occupation right from the start of their training. These students are motivated mainly by the job-specific character of the training programme; that is what motivates them: they come to college in order to learn a trade or profession. Programmes need to continue devoting sufficient attention to meeting these wishes, perhaps by drawing the work-based learning pathway more explicitly to the attention of these 'job-motivated' students. They will then receive direct practical experience in the workplace whilst being able to broaden their practical knowledge with the theoretical background gained at college. Another possibility would be to devise the options in close cooperation with prospective employers so that they are highly practical and deepen the student's knowledge and skills.

Generalisation of MBO? Vocational training under pressure

There are major concerns among MBO professionals about the growing emphasis being placed in senior secondary vocational education on language and numerical skills and the standards being imposed in this regard. MBO must also ensure that students are well versed in these basic skills, but this could put some students at a disadvantage as well as have an impact on the specific character of vocational education. Earlier research by SCP on the significance of professionalism in MBO showed that future professionals in senior secondary vocational education are motivated primarily by their chosen profession or occupation (Turkenburg 2014). Students were also found to develop self-confidence and

something akin to professional pride as they progressed through their training. For some students, the general subjects could create an obstacle in the vocational training process. Attempts are already being made to link these general subjects to the vocational training, or even to integrate them within it. It may be that further gains could be made here; an integrated application of these skills within different subjects would then pay the biggest dividends (Onderwijsraad 2012; WRR 2013).

A better command of basic skills will undoubtedly contribute to the employability of MBO students and is also likely to increase their chances of progressing to higher professional education (HBO). The question is whether the balance between vocational training and general subjects is not shifting too far. Together with the trend towards broadening training programmes, placing great emphasis on general subjects begs the question of how distinctive vocational education really is. How appealing will an ever more generalist vocational education, with stricter requirements regarding the mastery of basic skills, be for students who have deliberately opted for a practical training programme?

Priority for motivation or job opportunities?

Another dilemma relating to responsiveness is how much MBO colleges should seek to steer students in their choice of programme. Colleges have a statutory duty of care to provide training that is relevant for the labour market, to inform prospective students about this and therefore not to offer training programmes for which there is no demand (macro-efficiency). This appears to be a clear criterion, but in practice this is not always the case. MBO colleges sometimes receive conflicting signals about the demand – and therefore the opportunities – for students in particular programmes. Employers, for example, may say that they have no work in a particular field or at a particular level, whereas the students concerned do in fact find work. In the light of such conflicting signals, it is difficult to decide whether a particular programme should be maintained or cancelled.

MBO colleges also have difficulty in denying access to certain courses to motivated students based on this macro-efficiency requirement. Motivation (and especially intrinsic motivation) is after all an important factor for successful study, and MBO professionals are aware of this. Although dropout rates from MBO have fallen sharply in recent years, from 9% in 2006/07 to 4.6% in 2015/16 (OCW 2017), this is still a large number of young people. Rejecting a motivated student and trying to persuade them to embark on a different programme that appears to offer a better chance of finding work carries the risk that the student will drop out without completing their course and possibly that they will enter the labour market without a basic qualification. And whilst the national basic qualification is not a guarantee for success, it is clear that having a certain initial level and associated qualification offers young people better prospects than not having these assets. Moreover, preventing educational deficits from occurring is preferable to trying to put them right later, when the costs, and probably also the threshold to be overcome by the person concerned, are higher.

What is a good basis? Lots of strands, but a broad and varied skill set appears to be key

An important question in this study relates to which skills MBO students need to possess in order to continue learning and be sustainably employable. While the debate on this is still in full swing, and each organisation places its own emphases, there are wide correspondences.

To be successful on the present, dynamic labour market, young people must possess adequate cognitive as well as social and emotional skills (OECD 2015a). The degree to which someone possesses certain knowledge and skills is a good predictor of their chance of finding work, having a permanent employment contract and the level of their salary. Sufficient flexibility, adaptability and learning capacity are important in ensuring that students are able to continue finding work in the future (SER 2015). The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) has already highlighted the importance of skills such as problem-solving reasoning, analytical thinking, cooperation and 'learning to learn' (WRR 2013). According to the WRR, employers are looking for employees who not only possess certain knowledge, but also have personal skills such as perseverance, resilience, discipline, an awareness of social norms, the ability to deal with authority, motivation, self-awareness, and the ability to cope with setbacks (WRR 2013). The attention for personal skills is also in line with research findings emphasising that an overly one-sided focus on cognition is something to be avoided, because personality and motivation are also found to be key predictors of someone's chance of finding work, the salary they will earn and the number of years they will invest in education (CPB 2014: 3). The Education Council of the Netherlands (*Onderwijsraad*) stresses the importance for the future of skills such as digital literacy, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, the ability to cooperate and communicate and the ability to steer one's own learning (Onderwijsraad 2014). An exploratory study by the Dutch research organisation TNO found that, in addition to job-specific knowledge and skills, companies are also increasingly looking for employees with social and communication skills, flexibility, entrepreneurship, proactivity, cooperation, the ability to see the big picture and an understanding of their own contribution in the total process (Gründemann et al. 2015).

It would appear to be virtually impossible to determine which skills will be needed in the future. However, two thoughts can serve as a guide in making this judgement. First, former students have shown in practice over the years that the skills they need in their (first) jobs are fairly robust despite the fact that the labour market and the work in different sectors has changed. Evidently, MBO prepares young people well to begin life as professionals: roughly 80% of former students report a good match between their training and their work.

A second consideration is that, given the lack of clarity about precisely which skills will be needed in the future, a report such as that by the OECD (2017) may well offer the best strategy. The report focuses on risk reduction, and the OECD proposes developing a balanced portfolio of skills and knowledge: 'High levels of cognitive skills, social and emotional skills and job-specific skills are needed to ensure that individuals and society are resilient and adaptable in the context of change' (OECD 2017: 32). This is particularly rele-

vant if we consider that the initial training in senior secondary vocational education is merely the beginning of a process of lifelong learning. The respondents in this study reach more or less the same conclusion: what is needed is a broad skill set in which ‘transferable skills’ (i.e. skills that are not just important for one occupation or sector) are a key component.

Initial and post-initial

Absolute responsiveness in MBO is not feasible: the programmes are too short for this, and future developments on the labour market too uncertain. Not all the skills needed can be – or need to be – taught or developed within MBO. The respondents in this study stress that MBO students are trained as *beginning* professionals; their further learning and development will take place largely informally and at a later time, on the job. Even now, students say they learn many skills outside of the context of college. It is therefore important that a solid basis for a good beginning is established during the initial phase, on which MBO students can continue to build throughout their careers.