

The Professional Teacher

How Teachers experienced the Status and Prestige of their Profession in
the Netherlands in the late Nineteenth Century.

Inge Pot

i.j.pot@student.rug.nl

s2682583

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Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences, University of Groningen

Primary Supervisor: Prof. dr. B.A.J. Westberg

Second Assessor: Dr. D.D. van Bergen

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Abstract

A common sentiment nowadays is that teachers in the past used to have a higher status, which begs the question of what the position of teachers in the past actually was. In this thesis, the status of teachers in the late nineteenth century in the Netherlands has been further investigated. The research question was what elementary teachers perceived to be their desired status within the schools and in Dutch society from 1889-1895. To gain insight into the experience of the teacher, a journal called *De Bode* was used. This journal was published by a teacher union called “Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers”. Teachers were in fact very dissatisfied with the status and prestige of their profession. Their main complaints regarding status were topics on salary, the relationship with the government, teacher training and lack of independence within the school. The position of head teacher turned out to be essential to how teachers saw their own status. In comparison to the head teacher, teachers had little influence in the school and were much less appreciated. The one underlying theme to all of these complaints was the dissatisfaction with their status and prestige within society and within the school. These teachers felt underappreciated, even though their occupation had professionalized significantly during the nineteenth century. Teachers experienced that both their occupation status and occupational prestige was low, there was a clear discrepancy between how they perceived their own profession opposed to how they were treated.

Samenvatting

Er wordt vaak gezegd dat onderwijzers vroeger een hogere status hadden. De vraag is wat deze status vroeger nou echt was. In deze thesis staat de status van onderwijzers van het eind van de negentiende eeuw centraal. De onderzoeksvraag is hoe onderwijzers van de basisschool in Nederland hun status ervoeren in de maatschappij en in de school van 1889-1895. Om dit te onderzoeken is gekeken naar het tijdschrift *De Bode*, dat werd uitgebracht door de onderwijzersbond “Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers”. Onderwijzers bleken in deze tijd erg ontevreden te zijn over hun status. De meest genoemde klachten waren salaris, relatie met de overheid, opleiding en de hun onzelfstandige positie in de school. In vergelijking met de hoofdonderwijzer hadden onderwijzers erg weinig invloed in de school en kregen ze een stuk minder waardering. De relatie met de hoofdonderwijzer was belangrijk in hoe de onderwijzers hun eigen positie zagen. Het onderliggende thema van al hun klachten was de ontevredenheid met de status en prestige in de maatschappij en in de school. De onderwijzers voelden zich ondergewaardeerd, zelfs al was hun beroep inmiddels al behoorlijk geprofessioneerd. Onderwijzers ervoeren dat hun beroepsstatus en -prestige laag was, er is een duidelijke discrepantie tussen hoe onderwijzers hun eigen professie zagen en hoe ze volgens hun door de maatschappij werden behandeld.

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1. Introduction

In the past few years, primary school teachers in the Netherlands have increasingly voiced their unhappiness with their working conditions, which led to several strikes in 2019 and 2020. The main goals for the strikes were a higher salary, reduction of their workload, and more autonomy for the teacher.¹ It is often presumed that the status of the teacher profession has declined over the years. There have undoubtedly been many changes to the teacher profession in the past two-hundred year. But a decline in status might not necessarily be true. When reading these news articles about how teachers nowadays experience their status, it begs the question of how teachers in the past looked at their own (desired) status.

During the nineteenth century, a great deal of expansion happened in the educational field. Several school acts were passed which changed the way education was organized and made education accessible and, by the turn of the century, mandatory to all children. The role of the teacher played an important part in this process. Their education and examination were subjected to numerous changes and developments in the nineteenth century.² These changes all contributed to a more standardized national education system and marked the advent of mass schooling in the Netherlands.³

When talking about the educational field of the Netherlands during the nineteenth century, the so-called ‘schoolstrijd’ (school struggle) usually dominates the discussion. It was a conflict regarding the freedom of education, whether public and private schools should receive equal funding from the government. The beginning of the conflict can already be dated to 1801 when the first school act was passed, even though clear ‘sides’ cannot be identified yet at that point. The conflict ended more than a hundred-years later with the constitution of 1917 which equalized public and private education, both would be funded by the government.⁴ Public schools in the nineteenth century did not adhere to one specific Christian denomination, but

¹ A. Deems, “Waarom staken de leraren ook alweer?” *De Volkskrant*, January 29, 2020, Accessed December 6, 2021, from <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/waarom-staken-de-leraren-ook-alweer-b47f7c26/>

² N. Bakker, J. Noordman and M Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland: Idee en Praktijk* (Assen: Koninklijke van Gorcum, 2010), 548-559.

³ J.J.H. Dekker, H.T.A. Amsing and I.J.M. Wichgers, “Education in a Nation Divided: The Contribution of School Acts to the Development of Dutch Mass Schooling in the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling: Education Policy in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. J Westerberg, L. Boser and I. Brühwiler (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 93-111.

⁴ P. Th. F. M. Boekholt and E.P. de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1987), 136-145.

they did have a general Christian identity. This was in accordance with the idea that the nation-state was guided by a general Christianity identity which would unite the nation; public schools were an important tool in this process.⁵ The identity of a school would often reflect their surroundings to meet local needs and avoid dissatisfied parents.⁶

The nineteenth century was, of course, more than just the stage for the struggle for freedom of education in the Netherlands. Public education for all children was seen as a tool for cultivation and enlightenment of the nation. The teacher was a key player in this educationalization process. The teacher would need to, as an example, act as a perfect citizen. The reality, however, was different, they had to survive on a low salary and with a high workload.⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a desire for better education for teachers. Teacher training would have to become more standardized and professionalized. The teaching occupation would need to be seen more as a profession. Even though many voiced this opinion for years, reorganization of teacher education would not happen until 1920. The reason for the need for improvement of teacher training was, among other things, that the status of the teaching profession was low.⁸ Male teachers were mainly recruited from lower to middle class families, which did not help their image. Teaching was mainly seen as a good option for a child who did well in school, but whose parents would not be able to afford any other education.⁹

In addition to the standardization and the advent of mass schooling, teachers would also start to work together more during the nineteenth century. They would found teacher organizations, first at a regional level and by the end of the nineteenth century also on a national level. Within these organizations, teachers could exchange knowledge, experience, but also work together towards a common goal: gaining a better position in society. By working together, teachers were a lot more powerful; examples are demonstrations but also boycotting a certain municipality because of their mistreatment of teachers. Teachers started to no longer see each other as competitors but instead as colleagues.¹⁰ So just as schooling

⁵ Dekker, Amsing & Wichgers, *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden*, 548-549.

⁶ S. Braster, "Het openbaar onderwijs als kameleon," in *Tot burgerschap en deugd: Volksopvoeding in de negentiende eeuw*, ed. N. Bakker, R. Dekker and A. Janssens (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 134.

⁷ M. van Essen, *Kwekeling tussen akte en ideaal: De opleiding tot onderwijzer(es) vanaf 1800* (Amsterdam, Sun, 2006), 164-167.

⁸ Van Essen, *Kwekeling tussen akte en ideaal*, 167-171.

⁹ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 163-166.

¹⁰ J. Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisatie: Overzicht van het optreden van de algemene vakorganisaties in en om het onderwijs* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1981), 26, 83.

was organized on a national level, teachers also started operating and working together on a national level. One of these teacher organizations was “De Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers” (The Union of Dutch Teachers) or in short referred to as “De Bond” or “BNO”. This organization started operating on a national level from 1889. It was the first organization that acted as an advocacy group for teachers. They had suborganization in many regions and cities where teachers could meet. From 1889 the BNO also published a journal called *De Bode*. The BNO was a union for teachers working in public education. One of the main discussion points, especially in the first twenty years of the existence of the BNO, was the lack of influence teachers had within the schools as opposed to the head teacher of the school. The head teachers felt that their position was in danger with the founding of the BNO and thus organized themselves in an association as well: *Vereniging van Hoofden van Scholen* (Association of Heads of Schools).¹¹ This conflict of power makes the journal *De Bode* an interesting source to study the perception teachers had of their current and desired position in the schools.

There has not been a lot of research that focuses on how teachers in the nineteenth century experienced their own status and the status of their occupation in the Netherlands. There has however been a lot of research on closely related topics. Bijl published a dissertation on, among others, social mobility and income of teachers in public schools in Groningen from 1850 to 1920. Bijl notes on the relationship between the teacher and the head teacher that the head teacher was more of a boss instead of a mentor. Bijl also mentions that the role of teachers changed during the nineteenth century from being an assistant to being an independent teacher with their own classroom. About class, she notes that male teachers are mostly from working class families and female teachers from the upper bourgeoisie.¹² In *Geen trede meer om op te staan* the social status of teachers in Belgium during the nineteenth and the twentieth century is researched. With their shared history, the situation in Belgium in the nineteenth century is similar to that of the Netherlands. The book describes among other topics teachers background and their legal position. It concludes that at the end of the nineteenth century, there was a discrepancy between the intrinsic value of the teaching

¹¹ Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisaties*, 84-93.

¹² G.A. Bijl, “Loopbaan en levensloop van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen: Sociale mobiliteit, Huwelijk, Inkmen, Benoemingen en ontslag in het openbaar lager onderwijs in Groningen, ca. 1850-1920” (PhD diss., University of Groningen, 2014), 237-238, 242-243.

profession and the actual living circumstances of the teacher.¹³ Van Essen comments on the discrepancy between the ideal image of the teacher and the reality. Teaching was hard work and teachers would get little recognition for their work.¹⁴ Dasberg researched the attitude of teachers in the nineteenth century regarding education using educational journals. This research focuses on the many different aspects of what teachers thought about their role as a social and cultural worker.¹⁵ Wolthuis describes the general history of the teacher unions in the Netherlands including the BNO. He describes the different topics the BNO was involved with and the way the BNO operated through the years.¹⁶ In an international context, there have been many studies on the role and position of a teacher in society. For example, in an article by Bergen the effort of teachers to be recognized as professionals in England from 1870 until 1910 is discussed. One of the struggles for elementary teachers to be considered professionals was that there was no official register of teachers in the nineteenth century. Class conflict and class lines were a barrier for elementary teachers that they did not seem to be able to overcome.¹⁷

In this thesis, the perception teachers had of their status will be the central concept. Status is commonly referred to as the position of someone in relation to others, or their social standing. The desire for a better salary and having teaching be elevated to a profession reflected on the teachers' perception of their desired status within society. When describing the social characteristics of primary teachers in Belgium, Depaep & Simon made the distinction between the real social prestige and teachers' self-image as a group. Teaching was seen as a vocation by society and the government. However, teachers wished for it to be recognized as a profession. This image was in line with the desires of society, teachers were useful in teaching a new generation to fit into the social system.¹⁸ Status and prestige are sometimes used interchangeably. Hoyle makes a distinction between prestige, status, and esteem when talking about the position of a teacher. This thesis will use the concepts of occupational

¹³ M. Depaep, "Rechtspositie, arbeidsvoorwaarden en loopbaanperspectieven," in *Geen trede meer om op te staan: De maatschappelijke positie van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen tijdens de voorbije eeuw*, ed. M. Depaep, M. De Vroede and F. Simon (Kapellen: Pelckmans, 1993), 139.

¹⁴ M. van Essen, "Een werk van verheffing en verlichting: Over de betekenis van de onderwijzer(es) voor de volksopvoeding, 1860-1920" in *Tot burgerschap en deugd: Volksopvoeding in de negentiende eeuw*, ed. N. Bakker, R. Dekker and A. Janssens (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 142-143.

¹⁵ L. Dasberg, "De visie van de negentiende-eeuwse onderwijzer op zijn taak als maatschappelijk en cultureel werker 1840-1905," *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 92, no. 2 (January 1977): 244-245.

¹⁶ Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisatie*, 83-139.

¹⁷ B.H. Bergen, "Only A Schoolmaster: Gender, Class, and the Effort to Professionalize Elementary Teaching in England, 1870-1910," *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1982): p1-2, p16-18.

¹⁸ M. Depaep, and F. Simon, "Social Characteristics of Belgian Primary Teachers in the Twentieth Century," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 27, no. 3 (1997), 391-404.

prestige and occupational status as defined by Hoyle. Occupational prestige is defined as the public perception of the relative position of an occupation in a hierarchy of occupations. In this specific case, it would mean how the public saw the position of teachers compared to other occupations, including how primary school teachers were compared to other types of teachers. Occupational status refers to a category to which knowledgeable groups allocate a particular occupation. In the context of teachers, Hoyle specifies that the category would refer to whether teaching was seen as a profession by for example civil servants, politicians, or social scientists. The meaning of profession is a type of occupation that requires special education. As it is difficult to define exactly when an occupation could be called a profession, I will be using the semantic status of teaching, meaning whether others (e.g. politicians, other professionals) saw teaching as a profession. One way for teachers to improve their status was through professionalization, the process through which occupations become increasingly profession-like.¹⁹

My research question is to find out what elementary teachers perceived to be their desired status and prestige within the schools and in Dutch society from 1889-1895. I will focus on the period 1889 until 1895 because the first edition of *De Bode* was printed in 1889. This time period was also an important time period for education as child labour had just been (partially) abolished and compulsory education would soon follow. This meant that most children in the Netherlands would attend school by the end of the nineteenth century, making the teachers an indispensable aspect of mass schooling. To answer my research question, I will use the following sub questions:

1. How did teachers experience their (social) position and prestige in society and how could it be improved according to them?
2. How did teachers experience their status and prestige within the schools and how could it be improved according to them?

First, in chapter 3, the methodology will be presented. Afterwards, the results of subquestion 1 can be found in chapter 4 and the results of subquestion 2, in chapter 5, at the end there will be the conclusion and discussion.

¹⁹ E. Hoyle, "Teaching: Prestige, Status and Esteem." *Educational Management and Administration* 29 (2001), 139–152.

2. Methodology

I will use the journal *De Bode* which was the journal published by the BNO. This journal was distributed to all members. As stated above, *De Bode* is interesting as a source because the BNO was distinguished itself from other organization because only teachers could join. In contrast to other unions or organizations where the heads of the schools were also welcome as members. The articles were written by teachers for the biggest part as well.²⁰ The founders and members of the BNO felt that in these other organizations teachers could often not speak their mind because the heads had too much power.

One of the goals of the BNO was to minimize this power and for teachers to gain autonomy. Bimonthly and later weekly, the BNO published a journal called *De Bode*, which would be a platform by and for teachers only. Their main goal can be summarized as follows: To promote by lawful and appropriate means the interests of education and of all the teachers of our country who are employed in public schools.²¹ In general, a journal like *De Bode* is a good source for exploring an ongoing debate. Articles are frequently written as a reaction or discussion on a previous article. This gives us a broader perspective on some topics discussed and an idea of which topics were more controversial between members.

The researched time period is between 1889 and 1895. This was a period when more and more children would attend school. Child labour had been abolished and in 1900 compulsory education would be introduced. These events indicate an increasing interest and appreciation of education and marked the importance of all children attending school. 1889 was also the first year that *De Bode* was published. These first years of the existence of the journal will give an insight into why these members thought a journal and union like the BNO was even necessary. A period of six year to research was chosen, as by that point saturation was reached.

De Bode is a great source to get an insight into the experience of teachers. However, it is important to keep in mind that the journal might not reflect the opinion of all teachers in the

²⁰ Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisaties*, 89-90.

²¹ Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisaties*, 85-88.

Netherlands. Only teachers at public schools could become a member of the BNO. In addition, the BNO is an organization interested in change, and it can thus be expected that its members were also unhappy about their current situation. The results of this thesis will thus reflect the opinions and experiences of teachers in public schools who were in favour of change in the education field. Another characteristic of the researched demographic is that the contributors of the journal were mostly men, and in the researched time period a woman was never part of the board of the BNO. By the twentieth century, more female teachers were members of the BNO.²²

The Bode first appeared monthly, from 1891 bimonthly, and from 1897 weekly. Occasionally an extra edition was published called a propaganda edition. The purpose of a propaganda edition was to clearly define the goals of the BNO and was an easy way for members to spread the program of the BNO among colleagues. Researching the period 1889-1895 resulted in a total of 146 journals. The average journal has about four pages worth of articles, and one or two pages consists mainly of advertisements and announcements. For this thesis the pages containing the articles were used as they would reflect the opinions and discussions among members of the BNO. The articles consisted of opinion pieces, decisions made by the board, and reports on meetings. All articles were read and the relevant articles were read more in depth and coded. The authors of the articles could be board members of the BNO, board members of one of the numerous departments, members of the BNO. Each journal also has a section of submitted articles, they often do not provide a lot of context on the author of the article and might not even have their real name underneath it. These articles can be either written by members of the BNO but also by outsiders, like for example a head teacher or a politician. Both the official statements and the more anonymously submitted articles are interesting as they provide a wider spectrum of opinions and ideas and give insight into what was discussed and why the BNO took certain decisions.

The articles of the journal *De Bode* will serve as a way to get an understanding of the experience of the teachers concerning their status. The approach of this research is of a qualitative nature. All articles in the journal within the time frame were read. Only the passages relevant to the research questions in the articles in *De Bode* were coded using the method of inductive thematic analysis. With this method patterns within the data are

²² Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisaties*, 117-118.

identified and analysed.²³ The codes will encompass the problems and experiences of teachers in relation to their status and prestige, and position in society and the school. The themes that were identified are semantic themes, as they identify the explicit meaning of the texts. After the initial analysis of the data, more latent themes, or underlying ideas, were found.²⁴ The overarching themes are represented in chapter 4 and 5 as subheadings.

²³ U. Flick, *An introduction to qualitative research* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 421.

²⁴ Flick, *An introduction to qualitative research*, 421.

3. Background

3.1 Teacher Training

In general, there were three ways in which someone could become a teacher. The first one would be a “normaalschool”, the pupil would work at a school all day and outside of school hours they would be trained for obtaining a teaching certificate. The second was called an “opleidingsklas” which was associated with a primary school. The head teacher of the school would train the pupils to become a teacher. The third was called a “rijkskweekschool”, which were government funded schools. The first three rijkskweekscholen were founded in 1861 in Groningen, Haarlem, and Den Bosch. The motivation behind a government funded teacher education was that it would help elevate the quality of public schools. The program for prospective teacher had a duration of four years. Initially, each rijkskweekschool would have had a total of fifty government funded scholarships, which would cover most costs for a student. The number of scholarships would increase over the years as more rijkskweekscholen were being founded and number of students increased. By the 1880s there would be 140 scholarships available each year, but as there were over 450 candidates, not everyone was selected. The selection was based on an entrance examination, where only the best were admitted.²⁵ In the second half of the nineteenth century, teacher training would occur more and more at these “kweekscholen” and “normaalscholen” instead of the prospective teachers being trained by a head teacher. This made teacher training more controllable and thus would generally improve the quality and professionalize the teacher profession.²⁶

After a teacher obtained a teaching certificate, there was the possibility to also gain a head teacher certificate. To obtain this certificate, a teacher would need to study a minimum of three years, but the average time it took was five years. The teacher would study in his spare time for the head teacher certificate next to duties working as a teacher.²⁷ There were a couple of initiatives to set up formal training for head teachers, but none were very successful. In practice, teachers had to rely on self study. After a teacher got a head teacher certificate, he

²⁵ Van Essen, *Kwekeling tussen akte en ideaal*, 85-89.

²⁶ L. Dasberg and J.W.G. Jansing, *Meer kennis meer kans: Het Nederlandse onderwijs 1843-1914* (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck), 67.

²⁷ Bijl, *Loopbaan en levensloop van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen*, 41.

would have been able to apply for a head teacher position in a school. Another option was to get a better teaching job in a school in a bigger city instead of a village school, as elementary schools in the cities usually were more prestigious.²⁸

3.2 Head teacher and teacher

Through the nineteenth century, different types of teachers can be distinguished. In the school act of 1857 four ranks of teachers were differentiated. The fourth, the lowest rank, required basic knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The requirements for the other ranks were increasingly more demanding. The first rank was only rarely given to the most capable and experienced teachers. At this point, a teacher of every rank could in theory become the head teacher of a school. In practice, it was common in rural areas that the (head)teachers had a lower rank: the fourth or third. In cities, the head teacher more commonly had the second or even first rank.²⁹ With the education law of 1857 the four ranks got reduced to two: head teacher and assistant-teacher. Both had to take an exam in all school subjects and were trained in pedagogical skills, but with the head teacher certificate having higher requirements than that of an assistant-teacher. Later, in 1878, the assistant-teacher would simply be called teacher.³⁰

Every school was required to have a head teacher, a position usually reserved for men only. In the case of a small village school with a maximum of 30 students, this could mean that there was only one teacher who was also the head teacher. Subsequently, for every 40 students, an extra teacher was required.³¹ The function of the head teacher could vary from school to school. In some cases, the head teacher would teach a class next to his other tasks, like administrative tasks. In other cases, the head teacher did not have any regular teaching duties and was more busy with other activities necessary to keep the school running.³² The position of head teacher was solidified with the school act of 1878 when his tasks now officially were laid down: drawing up a curriculum, dividing the students and teacher up into different classes, deciding on school hours and holidays, and deciding which books would be used in which grades.³³

²⁸ Bijl, *Loopbaan en levensloop van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen*, 42-43.

²⁹ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 110.

³⁰ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 150-151.

³¹ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 152.

³² Bijl, *Loopbaan en levensloop van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen*, 44.

³³ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 152.

3.3 Women in the teaching profession

Women officially became a part of the teaching staff with the school act of 1857, where needlework lessons for girls became a part of the optional curriculum for elementary education. These lessons would be given by women. With the school act of 1878 the position of women in teaching positions was reinforced. Needlework became part of the required curriculum for girls.³⁴ Most women who became teachers were from the higher classes in society. For them, teaching was one of the few ways to be able to study and have a career.³⁵ The school act also stated that it was preferable that a woman would teach the lowest grades. This law often got misinterpreted as meaning that women were only supposed to teach the lower grades, which made it difficult for women to progress beyond a teaching position at the lowest grade for a long time.³⁶ It also meant that the position of head teacher was mostly unattainable for women, as it was common practice for the head teacher to teach in the highest grade. Even though from the education law of 1878 women were allowed to obtain a head teacher certificate, not many actually did.³⁷

Women were allowed into the BNO, they were even actively encouraged, as can be read in *De Bode* a couple of times.³⁸ From the beginning women were allowed to become members and this was never a topic of discussion since. However, in the early years of the BNO not many women were members yet.³⁹ Since this research is about the first years of the BNO the number of articles mentioning women in education is very limited let alone articles focusing on topics specifically regarding women in education.

3.4 Wages

With the education act of 1857 a minimum wage for teachers was introduced. This was *f* 400,- per year for a head teacher and *f* 200,- for a teacher. Boekholt and de Booy state that the introduction of a minimum wage meant that the teaching profession gained official recognition and that there was the expectation that a teacher should be able to make a living

³⁴ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 151-152.

³⁵ Dasberg, *De visie van de negentiende-eeuwse onderwijzer*, 252-253.

³⁶ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 151-152.

³⁷ Bijl, *Loopbaan en levensloop van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen*, 40.

³⁸ For example in *De Bode* (1890-02-15), 3. and *De Bode* (1890-12-15), 4.

³⁹ Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisaties*, 90.

from teaching only. This wage was the minimum and did not necessarily mean that it was enough to make ends meet, as living expenses in a city would have been more expensive than in more rural areas. The municipalities were responsible for public elementary schools and would also decide the amount of salary. This meant that there was constant negotiation between teachers and municipalities regarding their pay.⁴⁰ By 1893 the minimum wage was f 700,- for the head teacher, f 600,- for a teacher with a head teacher certificate, and f 400,- for a teacher.⁴¹ By 1900 a teacher would make at least f 550,- a year. The teacher salary compared to that of workers moved further apart from each other over the years. A worker would have earned around f 500,- a year.⁴²

3.5 De Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers

Before the *BNO* was officially established in 1889, there was already the *Openbare Hulponderwijzers-verening* (Public Teacher Assistant Association), founded in 1872 and active in Amsterdam. Other cities in the Netherlands had similar associations with the goal of improving the livelihood of the teachers. In 1873 there were the first attempts to establish a national association for teacher assistants. In 1875 this resulted in a collaboration of the associations of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and 's Gravenhage. However their cooperation soon faded again in the 1880s due to lack of interest or disagreements about the nature of their organization.⁴³ There was a turnaround when some members did feel the need to have a national association to stand up for all teachers. One of the motivations for this was a teacher in Apeldoorn who was fired in 1886 for being too politically active in the opinion of the school inspection of the municipality. A minority of members felt that it was necessary to take a stand in this matter. Slowly more members started to see the benefit of a national association who could stand up for the rights of the teacher and who could improve their position. 1889 could be seen as the official start of *De Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers* (BNO).⁴⁴ The number of members and departments would grow rapidly, as can be seen in table 1 below. The number of women in the BNO is unknown for the first few years. In 1895 the number of women was around 350, which would be around 10% of the total number of

⁴⁰ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 162.

⁴¹ *De Bode* (1893-09-16), 2.

⁴² Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 163.

⁴³ E.J. van Det, S Karsten and H. van Setten, *De bond van Nederlandse onderwijzers: Nieuwe uitgave van zestig jaren bondsleven, deel I en II* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1983), 55-62.

⁴⁴ Van Det, Karsten & Setten, *De bond van Nederlandse onderwijzers*, 62-65.

members.⁴⁵ This number would grow over the years, for example in 1906 around 30% of the members were women. Corresponding with the ratio of female teachers which was around 35%.⁴⁶ The total number of female teachers was 2277 in 1889, compared to 8654 male teachers, which amounts to 20%.⁴⁷ Women were, at least during the first six years, underrepresented in the BNO.

Table 1, Number of members and departments of the BNO, 1889-1895.

Year	Members	Number of Departments
1889	+/- 330	2
1890	641	7
1891	1192	21
1892	2328	70
1893	3256	113
1894	3495	112
1895	3438	106

Source: Data from Jan Wolthuis, and Jan van den Bosch (1981), *Onderwijsvakorganisatie: Overzicht van het optreden van de algemene vakorganisaties in en om het onderwijs* (Amsterdam:SUA), 204.

⁴⁵ Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisaties*, 204.

⁴⁶ Van Essen, *Kwekeling tussen akte en ideaal*, 181.

⁴⁷ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 160.

4 Position in society

Teachers were dissatisfied with how they were treated by society and how their status compared to others in society. This dissatisfaction was mainly expressed in *De Bode* through the topics of salary, relationship to the government, role in society, struggles within the BNO, and teacher training.

4.1 Salary

A low salary was a continuing complaint found in *De Bode*. One of the ways to point out why their salary was disproportionate, a comparison with the salary of other professions was made. First and foremost was the comparison with the head teacher's salary. The differences between their salaries said something about how the teachers regarded themselves in comparison to the head teacher. They wanted to be seen as more equal to the head teacher, salary included. In the propaganda edition, in which the BNO provided an overview of their program in order to gain more members, of 1891 *De Bode*, salary was the first addressed topic. When comparing the teacher's salary to that of the head teacher's it was called ridiculous, referring to the significant differences between the two.⁴⁸ In an article from 1895 explaining the BNO standpoint on teacher's salary, even the salary of the head teacher was regarded as too low. They wrote that if that was how the head teacher was treated, it was no wonder that teachers had even more to complain about.⁴⁹

Secondly, some comparisons were made with jobs with a similar wage. Like in one of the propaganda editions of *De Bode* where their pay was compared to that of a shepherd, worker, or farmhand. In the same article, the connection between salary and status was made. They explained that for a while, education was not highly valued by the public and thus the status of the teacher was low as well. Salary was directly connected to this low status. According to the article, the income of a worker was thus seen as sufficient for a school teacher as well.⁵⁰

Thirdly, in the same article, a comparison was made with other civil workers. A teacher's wage compared to that of other civil servants was lower.⁵¹ In an article submitted by "G. O."

⁴⁸ *De Bode*, "Propagandanummer" (1891), 1.

⁴⁹ *De Bode* (1895-06-01), 2.

⁵⁰ *De Bode*, "Propagandanummer" (1891), 1.

⁵¹ *De Bode*, "Propagandanummer" (1891), 1.

teacher's salary was compared to that of a civil servant with a similar level of education. Most are paid a better wage than teachers according to this article. The author even stated that "commiezen" (a title used for a rank of civil servants) working at the tax office earned more than teachers. These commiezen only had to take a very light exam according to this author, in contrast with the more difficult exam necessary to obtain a teacher certificate. The author argued that this discrepancy was caused by the fact that teachers were paid by the municipalities and not the central government. According to the article, the government could not force a higher minimum wage than *f* 400,- because that would be impossible for smaller municipalities to afford. In the opinion of the author, teacher's salaries should for this reason be provided by the central government instead of the municipalities.⁵² Not only were teachers compared to civil servants working for the central government, they were also compared to civil servants working at the municipalities. The department of the BNO of Rotterdam published a letter that they had sent to the municipal council requesting a higher salary. To reinforce their statement that teacher's salary was too low they made several comparisons with other higher paying jobs which included civil servants working for the municipality of Rotterdam.⁵³

Fourthly, the teacher's salary was compared to that of others working in education. Most commonly, a comparison was made with the wage of the head teacher. But also the wage of a teacher in secondary education was mentioned in *De Bode*. In the propaganda edition of *De Bode* in 1893 the wages of the two were compared to each other. It was stated that a salary of *f* 2000,- a year for a teacher in secondary education was seen as appropriate for the work he did. However, a teacher in primary education asking for *f* 1500,- a year was apparently seen as "stupid" or "impertinent", although it is not clear who exactly the author refers to in this sentence. The author followed with a rhetorical question whether anyone could prove that teachers working in secondary education were responsible for progressing humanity more, required more knowledge and dedication, or were of more importance than a teacher working in primary education.⁵⁴

Another reason these teachers felt they deserved more salary was because they thought the salary was not in proportion to the importance of their job. In the article from 1895

⁵² *De Bode* (1895-08-01), 3.

⁵³ *De Bode* (1892-04-01), 2.

⁵⁴ *De Bode*, "Propagandanummer" (1893), 2.

explaining the BNO's stance on salary, we read that teachers had often been told that the future of the nation was in their hands. The author wondered then why teachers were not rewarded accordingly.⁵⁵ So even though the importance of teachers seemed to have been recognized, it did not translate to any improvements in the lives of teachers. Another reason, pointed out in a general meeting held in Amsterdam in 1891, was that the salary of teachers was not in proportion to their level of education.⁵⁶ In the 1890s, numerous teachers would already have been formally trained at a 'normaalschool' or 'kweekschool'. Which consisted of a training program of at least four years. The professionalization of teacher training was an important goal for the BNO, as will be further discussed in the teacher training section of this chapter.

Not only were the low salaries seen as unfair, in several articles of *De Bode* there were advantages found in giving the teachers a better salary. In a meeting held in Amsterdam, Teunissen points out that as long teachers were burdened by worries and needed to get additional jobs outside the school to increase their income, there would be no improvement of the quality of education. A teacher burdened by worries would not have passion for his job. So increasing salary would also be beneficial for the quality of education.⁵⁷ Another example of this can be found in an announcement from the board, where they wrote that insufficiently compensated public servants would deliver insufficient work.⁵⁸ The BNO even sent a letter to the queen in 1893 explaining that the current minimum salary for teachers was too low and that they requested a higher salary. A teacher who was worried about getting enough food could not possibly be expected to be excellent at their job. Another consequence of low salary according to this letter was that the teaching profession was not a popular choice as poor prospects and uncertainty led to few people feeling attracted to the profession.⁵⁹

The salaries were regarded too low during the 1890s as in several articles it becomes clear that it was pretty common for a teacher to earn some money on the side. The department of Amsterdam wrote a reaction to the municipality of Amsterdam, who had discussed the salary issue of teachers. According to the article, the salary of the teacher was often not enough to make ends meet. Many teachers apparently worked extra in the evening hours. The ideal

⁵⁵ *De Bode* (1895-06-01), 1.

⁵⁶ *De Bode* (1891-01-15), 2.

⁵⁷ *De Bode* (1891-04-01), 3.

⁵⁸ *De Bode* (1890-09-15), 2.

⁵⁹ *De Bode* (1893-09-16), 2.

situation according to this article would have been that the teacher could focus all his energy on only his teaching duties. To make this happen, a higher salary was essential.⁶⁰ In the annual meeting held in Amsterdam the program of the BNO was discussed. In the report of this meeting, we read that the first point on the agenda was the low salary for teachers. The speaker stated that the minimum salary was already too low, but even in municipalities like Amsterdam where teachers earned far above minimum wage, the salary was typically still not enough to meet the needs of their families. This caused the teacher to search for opportunities to earn some extra money on the side. According to this speaker, this could only have negative consequences on the quality of education this teacher would be able to provide to its students, this statement was met by applause from the attendees of the meeting.⁶¹ The editors of *De Bode* published an article in 1895 as a reaction to an article published in a journal called *Nieuwsblad*. This article apparently proposed something to the extent of teachers having the possibility to look for secondary jobs if their salary was not high enough. This clearly led to some outrage by the editors of *De Bode*. In a sarcastic tone, they wrote that teachers indeed had 130 out of 168 hours a week left, which would be plenty of time to supplement their low teacher salaries. There were absolutely no worries that this would negatively affect their teaching job or prevent them from studying.⁶² Overall the members of the BNO seemed to be in agreement with each other concerning side jobs. It should not be necessary for a teacher to supplement their wages with secondary jobs. A teaching job should be their sole occupation.

By making a comparison with other professions, it is clear that the members of the BNO found that they were underappreciated and that their status was too low for the kind of work that they were doing. Teachers felt they were on the same level as head teachers, teachers in secondary education and government officials. Compared to these groups, the teacher salary was lower. Boekholt and de Booy do question whether the financial situation of teachers was really as bad as source materials like *De Bode* sometimes seemed to suggest.⁶³ Teacher salary in 1850 was comparable to that of a labourer. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the working conditions would improve for teachers and cost of living barely increased. The main takeaway being that teachers might have had a sufficient salary but that

⁶⁰ *De Bode* (1892-02-16), 1-2.

⁶¹ *De Bode* (1891-01-15), 1.

⁶² *De Bode* (1895-07-06), 2.

⁶³ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 150-151.

the main issue was that their salary was lower than that of professions of, according to the members of the BNO, a similar status.

4.2 Relation with government

A major concern for the BNO was how they were treated by the central government. In 1895 J.G Kuykhof held a speech during a general meeting of the BNO department of Utrecht. He argued that teachers were too humble. According to him, teachers were praised in meeting rooms, but this praise did not translate to actual deeds like a higher salary. Humility, he said, was a good virtue, however it had led to teachers being too “sedated”. Teachers could not expect any support from the government and thus would need to conquer their own desired position in society. Interestingly, Kuykhof argued that the lack of appreciation for teachers was an extension of a lack of appreciation for education. He accused the Netherlands of being a plutocracy. A capitalist would have no interest in a worker, a part of the machine, to be more educated. An enlightened worker would only be more unsatisfied with their situation. In order to gain more appreciation for education and with that also more appreciation for teachers, the BNO would need to get involved in politics and build an actual democratic society.⁶⁴

Whether the BNO should get involved in politics was, however, a topic of discussion within *De Bode*. Where some members believed that politics should be left out of the BNO completely, others thought political involvement was necessary to obtain their goals.⁶⁵ Van Kuijkhof argued that if the goal of the BNO was to gain an independent position in society, the BNO should use any legal means in that society to obtain that goal, including become involved in politics⁶⁶ The department in Zuidhorn wrote that it was unavoidable to be political for the BNO to achieve their goals, trying to avoid it would only inhibit the BNO in their efforts to make changes.⁶⁷

The municipalities were important to teachers and influenced their status in several respects. The education act of 1857 gave municipalities more responsibilities and authority regarding the public schools. Municipalities decided how many schools were necessary, they appointed

⁶⁴ *De Bode* (1895-09-01), 1.

⁶⁵ Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisaties*, 128-129.

⁶⁶ *De Bode* (1895-04-16), 2.

⁶⁷ *De Bode* (1893-11-16), 1.

teachers, determined the teacher's salary, regulated the school fees, and appointed local school committees. The financing of public schools was now also the responsibility of the municipality.⁶⁸ It is then no surprise that the relationship between teachers and municipalities was a frequently discussed topic. *De Bode* turned out to be a good medium for influencing policies in municipalities. If a municipality would not be up to BNO standards, there might be a warning published in *De Bode* for teachers to not apply there until the problems were resolved. This occurred, for example, in 1895 when the municipality of Rheden had apparently problematic regulations regarding salary and promotions.⁶⁹ In another article, teachers were discouraged from applying for any jobs below f 500.⁷⁰ This way the BNO used *De Bode* as a platform to warn teachers for malpractices and thus forced municipalities to improve.

4.3 Role in society

An aspect of how teachers perceived their own status in society was how society treated them. One way of expressing their dissatisfaction regarding their status in society was by emphasizing the importance of their role in society. The teacher's perceived role was not limited to merely teaching. Teachers were vital in educating and elevating the people. In a meeting of the Amsterdam department of the BNO in 1890 the role of the teacher was described as the "educator for the youth", the teacher would raise children into citizens. It was the teacher that would bring civilization to the people.⁷¹ In the propaganda edition of the journal in 1893 the importance of the teaching profession was affirmed. Teachers were supposed to be raising and educating the youth. The appreciation for teachers should thus be in proportion to that.⁷² In an article written by Kuijkhof, a member of the BNO, the current status of the teacher was being called "depressing". According to him, if people appreciated the supremacy of the task of the teacher more, the teacher would also be more appreciated by society. According to Kuijkhof, the lack of appreciation was the consequence of a lack of appreciation for education itself.

Teachers had an important role in society, which was not limited to their working hours in school. G. Severijn called on all teachers to become socially engaged in an article on the

⁶⁸ Boekholt and de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland*, 151.

⁶⁹ *De Bode* (1895-09-16), 1.

⁷⁰ *De Bode* (1895-05-01), 1.

⁷¹ *De Bode* (1890-06-15), 2.

⁷² *De Bode*, "Propagandanummer" (1893), 2.

importance of sociology. He explained in his article on the importance for society to care about social problems. According to him, teachers had a critical role in making society a better place. This role extended beyond the school, as he encouraged teachers to join local organizations who were concerned with societal issues. He stated that teachers, because of their job, should be on the front lines dealing with these issues.⁷³ In a speech held by Kerkdijk, a member of parliament, the importance of the role of a teacher in society was discussed. Kerkdijk stated that the role of the teacher extended to outside the school, to the society. A teacher should engage the public by reading with them and discuss matters of science and art with them. This way the teacher could make a difference in the, sometimes, depressing living conditions of the public. This way the teacher was able to share some of his riches with the people who are poorer in spirit. Interestingly, Kerkdijk really placed the teachers above the commoners in his speech. According to him, teachers had something that the common people did not, and it was the teacher's task to share that.⁷⁴

4.4 Struggles within the BNO

The status of the teacher was not only discussed in terms of society. There are plenty of articles in *De Bode* discussing the behaviour of its members. It seemed that not every teacher would adhere to the expectations of the BNO. The attendance of meetings was a common point of discussion. Members not showing up to meetings was interpreted as members not caring about the BNO's ideals. In an article submitted anonymously, the behaviour of a part of the members within the BNO was being discussed. The author stated that some of the members were meek and cowardly. Even the members who did frequently attend the meetings, only a fraction would had an active attitude. The author claimed that making these meetings more attractive was not the solution, the BNO was a union after all and these meetings should not focus on entertainment alone. Members would need to show more care for the ideal of the BNO.⁷⁵ Even if the living conditions seemed to have been improved, at least temporarily, the members should still stay active and alert. In an article written by the editors of the journal, teachers were being warned not to "sleep" when they had finally received a good salary. The decision for a higher salary could easily be reversed in only a couple of years. Members of the BNO needed to stay sharp at all times.⁷⁶

⁷³ *De Bode* (1895-04-15), 1-2.

⁷⁴ *De Bode* (1895-02-16) 1.

⁷⁵ *De Bode* (1895-01-01), 1-2.

⁷⁶ *De Bode* (1895-04-01), 1.

The lack of women within the BNO was a continuous annoyance. In an anonymously submitted article, women were addressed directly. The author called it commendable that these women had chosen an independent life. However, he urged women to also participate in meetings, as what was being discussed was also about their interests. According to this author, women, just as well as men, should be fighting for a better position. At the end of this article, men were asked to spread this journal as much as possible to their female colleagues to persuade them to join the BNO.⁷⁷ In a journal in 1890 an appeal by two women was submitted to *De Bode*. They wondered why so little women were present at the meetings. In the article they assured women that it was also their interests that were being represented. If they wanted to be treated as equals to their male colleagues, then they should also actively participate in the BNO. They concluded with the sentence “only those who took part in the battle will taste the fruits of its victory”.⁷⁸

4.5 Teacher Training

As was mentioned in chapter 3, there were a couple of different ways of becoming a teacher. This was not to the liking of the BNO. They rather saw that teacher training would become a national affair instead of all several different institutions that concerned themselves with teacher training. In 1892 the executive board published a list of questions about whether education, including teacher training, should become solely a state affair or if improvements in the current system were sufficient.⁷⁹ In a reaction to these questions, Leenheer wrote an article on how, in his opinion, teacher education should become the responsibility of the national government. The organization should not be in the hands of the municipalities as the current teacher education, the *opleidingsklassen*, organized by the municipalities of Leiden, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam apparently lead to numerous complaints. According to Leenheer, a reform of teacher education was best done by the national government instead of the current fragmented system.⁸⁰

One way teacher training could be improved according to various articles in *De Bode* was to dedicate enough time in their training to practical skills. In a meeting held in 1891 in a speech

⁷⁷ *De Bode* (1890-02-15), 3.

⁷⁸ *De Bode* (1890-12-15), 4.

⁷⁹ *De Bode* (1892- 11-01), 7.

⁸⁰ *De Bode* (1893-01-16), 1.

about teacher training, H. Broere talked about the *practical teacher*. He criticized the *normaalscholen* and *kweekscholen* as, in his opinion, they only focussed on the theoretical side of teaching and not the practical side. To illustrate this, he pointed out that for four years these students were taught a respectable amount of knowledge and not even half a year was being spent on actually learning to teach.⁸¹ In an article sent in by the department of Rotterdam clarifying their requests for the improvement of teacher training. Their ideal picture of the training of a prospective teacher was a five-year-long scientifically focussed program followed by a three-year long vocational program that was dedicated to the theoretical and practical side of teaching. According to the department of Rotterdam, learning the practical side of teaching was insufficient in all the types of teacher training. The lack of guidance being the main problem. These students were either only observing during the lessons, or they were being treated as an extra pair of hands for the teacher. According to the author, the goal of teacher training should be that at the end of their training, the new teacher should be as well-prepared as possible.⁸² The necessity of guidance was also brought forward in a proposal of the main board of the BNO for new legislation. Their proposal was that trainees should not be allowed to teach without supervision. The goal of doing an internship was making the act of teaching their own, for this they would need continued guidance. For this reason, in the proposal, it said that trainees should only be allowed to do an internship in schools with enough staff to prevent a situation where a trainee was forced to teach on their own.⁸³

The desire to better prepare the future teachers was not only to the advantage of these students, but would also help with the image society had of teachers. One of the main goals for the BNO was for the teacher to gain a more independent position within the school. To achieve this, teachers should also be prepared properly for them to feel capable enough for an independent position. Teacher training should thus according to BNO better prepare their students for this role. In an article written by H. Broere on reforming teacher training where, among others, he proposed that future teachers should be better prepared for teaching. In his article, he summed up several of the advantages this would have. One of these was that a better trained teacher would be more confident to take an independent position in the school.⁸⁴ The reasoning being that teachers who were better trained, would perform better,

⁸¹ *De Bode* (1891-03-01), 2.

⁸² *De Bode* (1895-03-16), 2.

⁸³ *De Bode* (1889-08-15), 1.

⁸⁴ *De Bode* (1891-03-15), 2.

and thus society would also gain respect for them as professionals. Broere also mentioned as an advantage that the teaching profession would gain in prestige and status when teachers were more confident.⁸⁵ Teacher training was thus seen as a good way of improving the status of teachers in society.

⁸⁵ *De Bode* (1891-03-15), 2.

5 Position within the school

The position within the school was an important aspect to how teachers experienced the status and prestige of their profession. Especially their position in comparison to that of the head teacher proved to be a fruitful topic of discussion for the members of the BNO. The main sentiment being unhappiness about the amount of power the head teacher had in the school. The BNO wanted teachers to gain a more independent position within the school.

5.1 Head teachers as members of the BNO

The fact that head teachers were not allowed to become members of the BNO is already an indication of the unhappiness regarding the relationship teachers had with head teachers. In 1889, H. Tegelaar, chairman of the BNO, wrote that teachers often felt like they could not express themselves in front of the head teacher fearing the possible consequences, for instance losing their job. Tegelaar said that teachers were thus often forced to hide their opinion and give up their independence.⁸⁶ In other teacher organizations, the board typically consisted of mainly head teachers. This would have prevented teachers from being able to voice their opinion and stand up for their own interests.⁸⁷

To have a platform for teachers where they were able to discuss matters regarding the improvement of their profession, it was deemed necessary to prevent head teachers from becoming members of the BNO. The interests of the teachers, especially regarding influence within the schools, would conflict with the head teacher's interests. In the report on the general meeting held in 1891 it was stated that for this reason it would not be possible to have one association representing both group.⁸⁸ But even by preventing head teachers from becoming members, their influence was still present within the BNO. A membership with the BNO could still get a teacher into trouble. An example is found in an article written in 1890 by Tegelaar, claiming that some teachers were even too afraid to become a member of the BNO because they believed it might negatively affect their chances for getting a promotion.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *De Bode* (1889-05-15), 1.

⁸⁷ *De Bode* (1889-01-15), 5.

⁸⁸ *De Bode* (1891-01-01), 2.

⁸⁹ *De Bode* (1890-03-15), 3.

Whether the head teachers were or were not allowed into the BNO was not an opinion shared by all members. This can partly be explained by the difference in relationship that teachers in rural areas had with the head teacher as opposed to teachers in the cities. The antagonism between teacher and head teacher was less prominent in rural areas.⁹⁰ In the annual general meeting held in 1891 the question whether head teachers should be allowed in the BNO was discussed. The department of Stadskanaal proposed that head teachers should be allowed to become members as well. Stadskanaal is a village located in the province of Groningen, a rural area. Their arguments in favour of allowing head teachers to become members were that only head teachers who would agree with the ideals of the BNO would become members, they were thus wondering what the harm was in permitting these head teachers a membership. Another argument was that according to the department of Stadskanaal, the BNO was not against head teachers but against the current head teacher system. Notably, they mentioned the complaint about head teachers placing themselves above teachers and treating them as servants. However, the department of Stadskanaal was not able to relate to this complaint themselves. They mentioned that such situations might be true in some schools, but it should not be an argument to not allow any head teachers at all into the BNO. In the end it was beneficial for the BNO to have more members who share the same goals according to this article.⁹¹ In a reaction to that Oosting from Groningen responded with some counterarguments. He stated that giving the teachers a voice through the BNO was a very recent development. It would be too early to already allow head teachers, who were the ones who had taken away the teacher's voice, into the BNO. He added that teachers should bring about change on their own strength and that they did not necessarily need the help of the head teacher.⁹²

5.2 Unequal relationship

The fact that all head teachers had previously been teachers as well led to a feeling of betrayal among teachers. In 1890 during a meeting in Amsterdam this topic got discussed and the speaker, Tegelaar, expressed his disappointment that head teachers seemed to be ignoring teachers. He used the apt Dutch expression of the ox who had forgotten he was once a calf.⁹³ The relationship of teacher and head teacher was seen as an unequal one. In a report of a

⁹⁰ Van Det, Karsten & Setten, *De bond van Nederlandse onderwijzers*, 85.

⁹¹ *De Bode* (1891-12-15), 1.

⁹² *De Bode* (1892-02-01), 1-2.

⁹³ *De Bode* (1890-06-15), 2.

meeting held in Amsterdam in 1890 we read that only few head teachers considered the teachers in their schools qualified enough to make decisions regarding for example teaching methods and the state of affairs within the school.⁹⁴ As also mentioned before, the teachers often saw the relationship between teacher and head teacher as servant and master. In 1895 *De Bode* published an article by H. Onnen on the relationship between the teacher and head teacher from another educational journal called *Het Onderwijs*. The content of this article was according to the editors of *De Bode* deemed relevant for the BNO and was thus published in *De Bode* as well. In the article, the teacher was called a tool in the hands of a head teacher. Onnen wrote that in the country that was frequently called the ‘cradle of freedom’, of all government officials very few were as dependent on their chief as teachers were. The chief in this case was of course the head teacher, he would have had the power to give teachers a raise and his decision was highly regarded in the application procedure of teachers.⁹⁵ In 1894 an article was sent in by “Piet van Delft” about a specific example of a problematic relationship between a teacher and an “arrogant” head teacher in a school in the city of Delft. This head teacher acted very disrespectfully to the teachers according to the author of the article. He had insulted and cheated the teachers at his school and he had defamed them behind their backs to school inspectors and the school board. In this article, a specific incident was mentioned of a teacher who wanted to apply for a job at a different school. To do this, he had to request leave for one day. The head teacher did not approve this request, even though there were enough teachers available to cover for him. The author then pointed out that this head teacher himself was absent from the school for seven to eight weeks each year. For his job as an examiner, but also to pay visits and even to go shopping. The teacher, according to the author, presumably did in the end take the day off without permission to apply for a job elsewhere.⁹⁶

As mentioned in the previous section, there might have been differences in the relationship between the head teacher and teacher in rural areas as opposed to cities. This distinction was also made by a member of the BNO in a submitted article. The author mentioned that there was this belief that the relationship between the head teacher and teacher was not too bad in the more rural areas. Since both the head teacher and teacher usually had a low salary, they were forced to work together to “survive”. The idea was that this would lead to a mutual appreciation. The author, however, argued that this was definitely not always the case. He

⁹⁴ *De Bode* (1890-06-15), 2.

⁹⁵ *De Bode* (1895-03-16), 2.

⁹⁶ *De Bode* (1894-01-01), 7.

acknowledged that in some schools the relationship might be good, in others however, the head teacher stood “metres above” the teachers. The head teacher and the people both saw and treated the teacher as a servant in these cases. The author even stated that the relation between status in the school and status in society was more visible in villages than in cities. At the end, he urged all teachers from villages as well to work together to officially gain a more independent position in the school.⁹⁷

5.3 Ambulantism

The BNO was against something that they called “ambulantism”, which referred to a specific position of a head teacher in a school. Ambulantism meant that the head teacher was not teaching a class himself but instead did administration tasks, supervised other teachers and occasionally would have taught in case of illness. Ambulantism was most prevalent in the bigger cities. These ambulant head teachers were accused by teachers of interfering too much in other teacher’s classes, and even of barely doing any work.⁹⁸ The redundancy of this type of head teacher was also highlighted in an article from 1895. The author used examples from other schools and other countries where teachers were given more responsibilities without it causing any problems at all. For instance, in secondary education, each teacher would bear a part of the responsibility of these tasks. The author also claimed that in Berlin teachers in primary education shared all the head teacher tasks among themselves and had no need for a head teacher. Even in rural areas of the Netherlands a head teacher would have had no problems leaving the school for a couple of weeks to attend other duties, for example to perform his duties in an examination board. The author wondered why it then was necessary to have a head teacher if his absence did not make a difference.⁹⁹ In an article submitted anonymously to *De Bode* in 1893, the author compared the head teacher with other school directors. The author stated that in secondary education and teacher training schools, it was completely normal for them that they would have had teaching duties as well. It then does not make any sense that there are head teachers who are not teaching as well. The author also mentioned that this system of ambulant teachers only required the school to hire more teachers, and thus it was more expensive to have a head teacher who did not teach.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ *De Bode* (1893-01-16), 3.

⁹⁸ Wolthuis, *Onderwijsvakorganisaties*, 107.

⁹⁹ *De Bode* (1895-08-16), 3.

¹⁰⁰ *De Bode* (1893-05-01), 3.

Some members of the BNO rather saw the position of head teacher disappear completely. As “Victor” stated in an article he submitted in a reaction to some proposals from the department of Alkmaar concerning the position and salary of the head teacher. When the department of Alkmaar discussed the tasks of the head teacher, Victor dismissed all of them as being easy. The tasks mentioned are implementing whatever had been decided in a meeting, keeping an eye on the teachers, giving advice in the job application procedure, and acting as an intermediary between school and municipality. The author sarcastically comments on how easy all of these tasks were. In the example of visiting other schools to assess an applicant the author commented that it was especially easy if the weather was nice. The author mentioned that maybe it would have been more fair if teachers would earn more than the head teacher as they had to work so much harder. Victor proposed that the word and the concept of head teacher should disappear completely. As the tasks of a head teacher could have been done by a teacher who would get elected by their colleagues.¹⁰¹

5.4 Independent position

The BNO had made obtaining an independent position within the school one of their main goals, this was also verbalized as giving the teacher a voice.¹⁰² Though not everyone seemed to share this sentiment, as can be found in an article from 1891. Even though the identity remains unknown, a well regarded member (and with them several other members) held the belief that the BNO should not strive for “theoretical” goals like gaining a more independent position. The BNO, according to him, needed to focus on practical matters like salary. The reaction to this opinion was however clear. In an article presumably written by the board of the BNO it was stated that practical matters were not the main focus of the BNO. The position of the teacher should remain the top priority. One of their arguments in this was that it was important in reformations to focus on ideals first and not on materialist matters. If one focused on materialistic goals like salary only, reformations would never happen.¹⁰³

The goal of gaining an independent position within the school was not only an attack on the position of head teacher. It was also a way to gain acknowledgement for the professionalization of the teaching profession. In an article describing how teachers and head teachers needed to work together, the author described what independence of a teacher meant.

¹⁰¹ *De Bode* (1894-01-16), 3.

¹⁰² *De Bode* (1891-01-01), 1.

¹⁰³ *De Bode* (1891-03-01), 1.

It meant that the teachers were given the trust of the head teacher to be able to do their job. It meant that the head teacher did not consider himself to be above the teachers. A good head teacher should be able to be humble when he realizes one of the teachers knows more than him on a certain topic.¹⁰⁴

The members of the BNO wanted to have a more equal position to the head teacher. In an article from 1891 the anonymous author wants to see commitment and appreciation of teachers and head teachers toward each other.¹⁰⁵ One of the ways to give teachers more power within the school was to hold school meetings where every teacher was present and had a voice.¹⁰⁶ In a meeting of the department of Haarlem, the topic of school meetings was discussed. Several head teachers, school inspectors, and the principal of the kweekschool were invited to the meeting as well, it was noted that they behaved well in comparison to some of their colleagues in other towns. A shameful example for the members of the BNO, as only a third of the members of this department had shown up. The topic of school meetings was actually introduced in this meeting by a head teacher. In his opinion, the head teacher should try to provoke teachers instead of placing himself in the foreground. The head teacher should come to the meetings with certain convictions, but these had to be subject to change within these meetings. These meetings would have had a positive effect according to him, as they would bring more certainty in direction and unity of mind to the entire education system. He pointed out that there were also benefits for the head teacher, it would be easier to know what was going on within the school as it was currently impossible for a head teacher to keep an eye on everything. However, the speaker did indicate that these meetings would only be possible when there was a good relationship between the head teacher and its personnel, mutual appreciation was essential.¹⁰⁷

5.5 Professionalization

The professionalization of the teacher profession also caused a linguistical change. For a large part of the nineteenth century, teachers would be mainly referred to as teacher's assistants, assisting the head teacher. But as the teaching profession professionalized, the now derogatory terms "hulponderwijzer" or "ondermeester" (assistant teacher) were no longer fit.

¹⁰⁴ *De Bode* (1891-04-01), 1.

¹⁰⁵ *De Bode* (1891-08-15), 2.

¹⁰⁶ *De Bode* (1895-02-01), 1.

¹⁰⁷ *De Bode* (1894-07-16), 2.

After the education law of 1878 the terms were no longer used in official documents from the government. From then on, all teachers, except for the head teacher, would be referred to as “(klasse-)onderwijzer” (teacher)¹⁰⁸

This change in terminology was also mentioned several times in *De Bode*. The terms not being used officially anymore, did not mean that what they referred to also disappeared. Even though they were no longer assistant teachers, teachers still felt like they were treated as one. In an article from 1895 written by K.A. Borren and C. Van Twisk it was mentioned that the terminology might have changed officially, but the work relationship between the teacher and head teacher it represented had in fact not.¹⁰⁹ The teacher was still treated as an assistant, while the head teacher was well regarded by society. To highlight the general opinion about teachers, the teachers liked to compare themselves in articles with other professions that they deemed lower class than themselves. For example, in reaction to the municipality of Amsterdam putting the head teacher in charge of applying for a pension fund for all teachers, the author then jokingly stated that this proved again to the people of Amsterdam that the head teacher was everything and the teachers do not really have any say. The author then went on and compared the head teacher-teacher relation to a bricklayer and its chief.¹¹⁰ In a meeting held in Amsterdam, this relationship was described as a servant and its lord.¹¹¹ Teachers thus felt like they were still treated as the assistant teacher, even though that terminology was no longer officially used. Instead, teachers wanted to be seen as a fellow employee by the head teacher, as can be read in an article on cooperation between teachers and head teacher within a school.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Dasberg and Jansing, *Meer kennis meer kans*, 70.

¹⁰⁹ *De Bode* (1895-08-16), 2.

¹¹⁰ *De Bode* (1895-09-01), 2.

¹¹¹ *De Bode* (1890-06-15), 2.

¹¹² *De Bode* (1891-04-01), 1.

6. Conclusion

The articles of *De Bode* show us numerous topics the members of the BNO were concerned about. With the main issues being low salary, a troubled relationship with the government and society, low-quality teacher training and little influence within the school. For all of these topics, there is one underlying theme; the dissatisfaction with how they were treated by society, the government, and the head teacher. The job of a teacher had professionalized in different areas, however their status, according to the members of the BNO, did not reflect this change. The sentiment that teachers were ‘better’ than people from the working class is found in many articles of *De Bode*. Society, however, seemed not to have caught up to that idea (yet). They felt that they were not appreciated enough by society for their work. When taking in account the historical context, it is notable that the teacher profession had indeed changed significantly in the second half of the nineteenth century. A growing number of prospective teachers were receiving formal training. The teachers were no longer called assistants of the head teacher. Teaching had become more and more of a profession, one that required knowledge, training, and experience. Teachers saw themselves as professionals but felt that many others did not. They experienced both their occupational status and prestige as being too low. Both the public opinion of their profession and the opinion of professionals on their profession was low.

An important aspect to how teachers experienced their status both within society and within the school was their relationship with the head teacher. The BNO made a clear statement with not allowing head teachers to become members. Their antagonism is based on the power the head teacher had in the school. The head teacher being the person who would get to make all decisions. The members of the BNO wanted to be seen and treated more as equals, they were no longer assistants to the head teacher and wanted to be treated as the professionals that they had become. Regardless of whether the head teacher did or did not abuse his power, the members of the BNO wanted to reduce the amount of power the head teachers had and increase their own. Again the occupational status and prestige of their profession was too low according to the teachers.

The introduction started with the assumption people commonly have about the status of teachers in the past. It turned out that at least at the end of the nineteenth century teachers

were, in fact, very dissatisfied with their own status. Even though the educational field has changed drastically in the past century, many parallels can be drawn between the late nineteenth century teacher and their status and a teacher in current times.

7. Discussion

This thesis focused on the opinions and experiences of the teachers themselves. The drawbacks of the research method used is that it does not necessarily reflect the opinion or experience of every teacher during this time period. The opinions are mostly those of members of the BNO. Presumably most members, especially those that sent in articles, would have had strong opinions on these topics. This means that there are also voices that are unheard with this research, there might have been teachers who were more content with their circumstances. Another silent voice within this research is that of female teachers. Even though they were members of the BNO, and the BNO seemed to be mostly in favour of equal treatment of men and women, their voices are not found in *De Bode* during the researched time period. Difficulties and their specific struggles are not represented within the used source material. For future research I would recommend a more in-depth look at the status of women in the teaching profession during this time period. As would be using different source materials to gain a different perspective, for example, focusing on the experience of teachers in private education. Lastly, it would be intriguing to look at the teacher status during a different time period, for example how their status changed during the twentieth century.

The research method focused mostly on the experience of teachers. Events might had been exaggerated to strengthen a certain argument. This means that the articles in *De Bode* might not always accurately reflect the actual situation. Further research would be necessary to compare the statements made in *De Bode* to the more factual situation, for example by collecting data on the salaries of (head) teachers in different municipalities in the Netherlands.

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