



Project plan NC AL

'Basic skills and labour market participation at regional level'

Report 2 | 'Development of data model and factsheets for municipalities'

Publication details

Title	Project plan NC AL 'Basic skills and labour market participation at regional level' Report 2 'Development of data model and factsheets for municipalities'
Author	Ina den Hollander, Matthieu Mes en Miryam de Hoo
Version	01
Date	28-10-2015
Project	'Basic skills and labour market participation at regional level' (13651.01)



Stichting CINOP
Postbus 1585
5200 BP 's-Hertogenbosch
Tel: 073-6800800
www.cinop.nl

© CINOP 2015

No part of this publication may be reproduced or published through printing, photocopying or by any other means without the prior written consent of the publisher.

DISCLAIMER

This project has been financed with support from the European Commission. Responsibility for this publication (communication) lies exclusively with the author; the Commission cannot be held liable for use of the information which it contains.

Inhoudsopgave

Summary	2
Introduction	3
1 Context and aim of the project	4
1.1 Aim of the project.....	4
2 Reason for the research	5
3 Request to researchers, aim of the research	6
4 Approach adopted by research	7
5 Appendices	8
6 Feedback on the factsheets	9
6.1 Overview of feedback up	9
7 Recommendations	12

Summary

In the context of the European Agenda for Adult Learning, in 2015, CINOP launched the 'Basic skills and labour market participation at regional level' project. This project comprises two parts: a description of the criteria for success and good practices in the approach to and collaboration around basic skills and low levels of literacy in the regions of Friesland, Twente and West-Brabant, and a pilot study to increase the volume of knowledge around low levels of literacy at regional level. Separate sub-reports have been produced for both parts of the project.

This sub-report on the pilot study around low levels of literacy at regional level comprises of a description of the research around the development of a data model, which takes the form of a standard factsheet and a database with factsheets on low levels of literacy for the municipalities of Smallerland, Enschede and Breda. The factsheet answers questions like: what exactly are low levels of literacy, to what extent do they occur in our municipality (by gender, age, ethnic origin, level of education)? What do we know about the labour market status of people with low levels of literacy in our municipality? How does the number of people with low levels of literacy in our municipality compare with regional and national figures, and how can we, as a municipality, make policy choices based on this data?

The development of the data model and the database in this pilot may be the first step in a growth model. After active feedback sessions with municipalities and stakeholders in September and October, the usefulness of the database and the factsheets was reviewed and the need for continuation of this research within municipalities or in the context of the Language Matters project was assessed.

This result has been produced in a short space of time and with a great deal of effort by the research bureaus E,til, Kohnstamm Instituut, ROA and UWV Arbeidsmarktonderzoek (the labour market research department of the employee insurance agency). We would like to thank them in particular for their efforts. We are also very grateful to all those who have contributed to this research through their feedback.

Ellen Hanselman
CINOP

Introduction

This sub-report 2 is part of the Project Plan NCAL 2015 'Basic skills and labour market participation at regional level' and relates to the section on 'Research around the development of a data model and factsheets for municipalities'. Sub-report 1 contains a description of the criteria for success and good practices, as obtained from the three regions (Friesland, Twente and West-Brabant), describes the approach taken and presents conclusions and recommendations. Both sub-reports and the reports for each region form the final output of the project.

The structure of this sub-report 2 is as follows:

Section 1 outlines the context and aim of the Project Plan 'Basic skills and labour market participation at regional level'. It also describes how the research around the development of a data model for municipalities correlates with the descriptions of criteria for success in the three regions and how both sub-reports can help municipalities make policy choices in the field of basic skills in the region.

Section 2 outlines the developments which have led to municipalities expecting to need information and data on low levels of literacy which is more specific to their regional situation than the information and data that is currently available from existing research and publications. This constituted the reason for the research into the data model to be developed.

Section 3 describes the request submitted by CINOP to the three research bureaus and the Labour Market Research department of the employee insurance agency UWV. Section 4 outlines the main features of the proposal which was developed jointly by the research bureaus. The full version of this proposal can be found in Appendix 1.

As an interim result of the pilot research, three sample factsheets were produced, which can be created using the database developed. These sample factsheets for the municipalities of Smallerland, Enschede and Breda are contained in Section 5. The factsheets were discussed at a number of different feedback sessions with municipalities, the three regions analysed in this project and the stakeholders: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Reading & Writing Foundation and the programme management of the Leerwerkloket training advice centres. The feedback can be found in Section 6.

The final section describes what was done with the responses received during the ongoing project period and the recommendations to the client with regard to a possible continuation of the research and the possible further development of the data model into a national, automated database, as proposed by the research bureaus.

1 Context and aim of the project

The European Commission makes grants available to the member states for one- or two-year projects in the context of the European Agenda for Adult Learning. In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) acts as National Coordinator for Adult Learning. In the context of this European Agenda for Adult Learning, in 2015, the Ministry asked CINOP to implement the 'Basic skills and labour market participation at regional level' project. The Reading & Writing Foundation (Stichting Lezen & Schrijven), as implementer of the National Action Plan for Literacy 2012-2015 and the Taal voor het Leven (Language for Life) pilot schemes, and the National Programme Management of the Leerwerkloket training advice centres, which provide a link between training and the labour market in the region, were involved in the project on account of their role in the labour market regions.

1.1 Aim of the project

The aim of this project is to help develop a sustainable regional infrastructure for the teaching of basic skills to those with low levels of literacy and low levels of education, which will enable them to participate to a greater extent in society and the labour market. This is achieved in two different ways:

- 1 By describing the criteria for success and pitfalls and good practices in three different labour market regions.
- 2 By conducting research into the development of a data model which contains key data on the regional labour market and low levels of literacy, which can be used to make policy choices at regional level.

Criteria for success and potential pitfalls were analysed on the basis of interviews and documentation supplied by the stakeholders in the region itself.

In other words, it is not about describing and comparing results within the regions on the basis of objective data but rather about outlining criteria for success and pitfalls which have been highlighted by the stakeholders themselves and which can be used for the further development of a sustainable regional infrastructure for the teaching of basic skills to those with low levels of literacy and low levels of education, such as, for example, in the Language Matters initiative.

The research around the development of a data model aims to help municipalities make better informed policy choices in the field of education and basic skills. What essentially is the nature of the target groups in our municipality when it comes to low levels of education and low levels of literacy? What should we then, as a municipality, focus our policy on? What is the nature of the labour market in our municipality? What is the relationship between low levels of literacy and the labour market in our municipality? Whilst the data model primarily provides support for policy choices for target groups, the description of good practices offers tools for an efficient and effective approach.

2 Reason for the research

As a result of the decentralisation of policy responsibilities in the field of education, the social domain and healthcare and a parallel process of regionalisation of policy and execution, the need for key data and policy information at local and regional level is increasing. For example, as far as the approach to low levels of literacy is concerned, municipalities and regional stakeholders want to know how many people have low levels of literacy and to what extent the problem mainly occurs in specific target groups. Municipalities can then use this information to make policy choices in the context of their decentralised responsibility.

In both Europe and the Netherlands, adult education is increasingly about citizens' participation in the labour market and will increasingly be linked to the Life Long Learning agenda. This also means that there is a growing requirement at regional and national level for information around low levels of literacy according to labour market sector and citizens' labour market status, e.g. those in work, those on unemployment benefits (WW), those on work and social assistance benefits (WWB) and those who are partially unfit for work.

In the Netherlands, there are a number of studies and publications which provide such information. These include the publications 'Laaggeletterdheid in Nederland' (low levels of literacy in the Netherlands) (Fouarge, D, Houtkoop, W. & Van der Velden, R. (2011) and 'Laaggeletterdheid in kaart' (low levels of literacy in focus) Buisman, M. and Houtkoop, W., (2014)).

At national level, the main research around the prevalence of low levels of literacy and poor basic skills in the Netherlands and how they manifest themselves in specific target groups such as those in work, jobseekers, the elderly and foreign nationals or on the basis of characteristics such as gender and age is the PIAAC study 'Kernvaardigheden voor werk en leven' (core skills for work and life) (Buisman, M. Allen, J. Fouarge, D. Houtkoop, W. & R. van der Velden (2013)) The problem, however, is that the national PIAAC data provides valid information for the population as a whole at national level but not on a smaller scale, i.e. regions or municipalities. The number of observations in the survey (5,000) is too small for this.

At municipality level, in 2015, Maastricht University's Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) conducted research into levels of literacy at regional level in the Netherlands on behalf of the Reading & Writing Foundation. This involved the use of 'small area estimators', which make it possible to obtain a more accurate estimate of the percentage of people with low levels of literacy in a municipality or region than is possible with other research methods. The report on this research, 'Regionale spreiding geletterdheid' (regional distribution of literacy), will be published in November 2015 and, consequently, was not yet available when this sub-report was delivered. According to the researchers, the publication provides accurate estimates but does not provide information on the make-up of specific target groups.

3 Request to researchers, aim of the research

In order to get a better understanding of the prevalence of low levels of literacy among the population and to be able to relate this to labour market participation, there is a need for accurate information on low levels of literacy at regional level, for target groups which are as specific as possible, in combination with labour market data.

In this context, CINOP asked the research bureaus E,til and Kohnstamm Instituut and the employee insurance agency UWV to jointly investigate the options for providing data on the extent and nature of low levels of literacy at the level of municipalities and labour market regions. They were also asked to consult and make use of the aforementioned ROA study, 'Regional distribution of literacy'. The reason several bureaus were asked to collaborate on the development of a data model was because, that way, the bureaus' different areas of expertise would be exploited to the full and they would be challenged to find creative solutions to potential problems together.

- The aim of the research to raise awareness among municipalities and other regional stakeholders by identifying how many people in their region have poor literacy skills and among which groups poor literacy skills are relatively common. This information may help authorities make (better) policy choices for adult education at regional level.

4 Approach adopted by research

This section outlines the nature of the proposal put forward by the research bureaus consulted. The full version of the proposal, justifying the choices which it makes, can be found in Appendix 1.

The bureaus concerned have proposed an approach which is based on a growth model. It is proposed that the research will result in the establishment of a database for municipalities which can be used to produce a factsheet on low levels of literacy at local, regional and national level. A key feature is that municipalities can use the database to compare their own data with regional and national figures.

In consultation with CINOP, it was decided (partly due to the limited budget and to the fact that the 'Basic skills and labour market participation at regional level' project would end in November 2015) to start by developing a standard database and, as part of a pilot study, to create a database and produce three factsheets for three municipalities (Smallerland, Enschede and Breda). The advantage of working with a growth model is that municipalities and stakeholders can evaluate the usefulness of the data model on the basis of a concrete example.

The debate around the development of a possible national database for all municipalities, the expansion of the existing database to include other data (e.g. on health, poverty or debt problems) and the ability of municipalities to generate automated reports can then take place on the basis of a more realistic estimate of the requirements of municipalities and stakeholders.

5 Appendices

This section contains the interim results of the research: the creation of the factsheets for the municipalities of Enschede, Smallingerland and Breda.

The factsheet has a fixed structure and layout and comprises the following components:

- National facts and figures on functional illiteracy;
- Functional illiteracy in the municipality;
- Regional differences in functional illiteracy;
- Functional illiteracy and the labour market;
- Non-working jobseekers and those entitled to unemployment benefit with no basic qualifications;
- Implications for policy;
- Sources, method and follow-up research.

To provide our interested European colleagues an idea of the content of the factsheet, one of them has been translated and can be opened by double-clicking on the relevant PDF logo.

Enschede



7_Factsheet
Enschede_ENG.pdf

Smallingerland



Factsheet
Smallingerland.pdf

6 Feedback on the factsheets

The factsheets have now been presented to various user target groups. During these presentations, feedback was collected. This took place at the following meetings:

- the Festival of Learning: to a target group of regional and national stakeholders from regional community colleges (ROCs), libraries, the employee insurance agency UWV and the Leerwerkloket training advice centres (held on Friday 18 September 2015);
- a meeting of the adult education advisory service Steunpunt VE: for coordinating municipalities (held on Thursday 24 September 2015);
- the regional meetings with stakeholders from the three regions investigated: Friesland, West-Brabant (mid-October 2015) and Twente (to be held at the end of November 2015);
- a national themed meeting for members of the LVO (education policy officers working for municipalities) and coordinating municipalities (held on Tuesday 13 October 2015).

In addition, the draft sub-report, including the factsheets for feedback, was submitted to the Reading & Writing Foundation, the national programme manager of the Leerwerkloketten training advice centres and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

At the feedback sessions, stakeholders were asked to give their views on the content of the factsheet, its usefulness and the need for follow-up research or further development of the database into a national database.

6.1 Overview of feedback up

6.1.1 Feedback on usefulness

Generally speaking, according to prospective users, the main added value of the current factsheet is that it allows them to quickly obtain an insight into the situation in their region and to directly compare the situation in their own municipality with the situation at national and regional level. Municipalities often ask for the ability to benchmark in this way. In practice, municipalities rarely to never make the effort to analyse the data themselves. It involves a fair amount of work and they often lack the experience and knowledge to do so. In this context, the product is very much welcomed.

Importance was also attached to the inclusion of this information in a database which is constantly updated with new data and which can be consulted on an ongoing basis. It is important to note that the factsheet is not suitable for use as a tool to measure the effectiveness of policy on literacy. The margins with which accurate statements can be made are too broad for this. It is an estimate based on derived data. The factsheet does however give a good indication of the characteristics, make-up and origin of the functionally illiterate target group in the municipality and region.

By asking educational practitioners to report on the characteristics of course participants and their results, a municipality can however gain an insight into the extent to which

these target groups and intended goals have actually been reached. This will enable it to evaluate the impact of the policy.

A number of different municipalities have since approached CINOP to ask whether it would be possible to obtain a factsheet for their own municipality straight away or to request that one be produced for them. There were requests for both the standard factsheet (West Friesland, Nijmegen, Friesland region cumulatively for all municipalities together) and for customised sheets (two G4 municipalities, Rotterdam and Amsterdam).

6.1.2 Content-related feedback

A number of municipalities and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science said they were interested in an expansion of the content of the factsheets, e.g. to include data on poverty and health in relation to low levels of literacy.

Another requirement that was mentioned was the possibility of combining data. The municipality of Amsterdam, for example, would like to see the data for foreign nationals combined with level of education. This would enable it to identify the more highly educated expats, which would give it a clearer idea of the percentage of people with low levels of literacy by origin.

Larger municipalities in particular say that they would like to see factsheets broken down by urban area, borough or district. This can be achieved accurately with a population of at least 40,000 people. For smaller municipalities, this lower limit means that, through clustering with other small local authorities, they can still obtain a reasonably accurate estimate of low levels of literacy by specific target groups on a scale which is relevant for policy at local level.

Some municipalities say that it could be interesting to be able to relate income data to age category. Some municipalities have a large number of relatively affluent elderly people, which means that the figures for low levels of literacy may be estimated higher than they actually are. It is not clear to what extent the use of 'small area estimates' already makes this impact sufficiently clear.

There was also criticism of the content of the factsheet. Restricting the age categories to the age of 65 in the report on low levels of literacy was regarded by municipalities as a shortcoming. Although not directly relevant to labour market participation, insight into the extent to which low levels of literacy occur among the elderly is important for other municipal policy areas such as welfare, healthcare and social support (WMO) and e-government services.

However, the main content-related criticism of the current factsheet is that those eligible for benefits cannot be identified as a separate target group. Almost all municipalities base their policy strongly on the characteristics of this particular target group.

Given the crucial importance of this information, it was decided to ask the research bureaus to revise this part of the current factsheet. Scope was found for this within the existing contract.

7 Recommendations

It is clear from the initial responses that the factsheets fulfil a need for more specific information on the make-up of the functionally illiterate target group by municipality. The ability to compare the situation in their own municipality with regional and national figures also appealed to the municipalities consulted during the feedback sessions.

The research bureaus said in their proposal that they regard the pilot research around the development of a database and the factsheets as a growth model. If there appears to be a requirement for the database and products derived from it, it could be investigated through more detailed additional research which more in-depth or additional analyses are required.

The proposals in this respect relate to:

- 1 Expansion of the database to include all Dutch municipalities, where appropriate with additional data for more and more specific groups.
- 2 Development of an online platform which municipalities can use to access the factsheets for the 393 municipalities and 35 labour market regions.
- 3 Functional illiteracy within a municipality (districts or urban areas).
- 4 Addition of new variables to the PIAAC variables through CBS microdata files.
- 5 More detailed research around other core skills such as numeracy and problem-solving skills.

Based on the initial responses, we recommend that the following be investigated further:

- 1 Which of the above-mentioned proposals actually have the support of central government and municipalities, and development of these in the short term.
- 2 The cost of developing and maintaining the national database and an online platform in particular.
- 3 Which parties wish to take financial responsibility for this and which business models are appropriate for operation and maintenance (subscription, national basis set up by government, customised by municipality, etc.).
- 4 What would be a useful model for implementation of a database or platform (management, matching supply and demand, support for analyses and policy choices).

The database and factsheets have been developed in an unconventional way. There was no tendering whereby one party is awarded a contract and it is ascertained which party can deliver the contract at the lowest cost.

Instead, parties:

- were approached on the basis of their different areas of expertise and experience;
- were challenged to develop a joint proposal;
- were asked to produce something which would be of use to a recognisable target group (policy officers working for municipalities).

It was also decided to work in phases, with a small product being developed at low cost initially and then evaluated by users.

It is recommended that this approach also be adopted for any further research.