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Author: Gageldonk, Kees van

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Summary

This dissertation contains a history of the debate on the type of research that Dutch *hogescholen* or universities of applied sciences (UAS) as they are referred to in English, should do. This debate took place in the context of the binary system of higher education in the Netherlands. Like several other European countries Dutch higher education is divided in universities and UASs. In the Netherlands this system prescribes by law a different orientation for universities and UASs. Universities offer courses of an academic nature while UASs offer courses that are practice orientated. The bachelor-master-system, introduced following the Bologna Declaration, is subject to this difference in orientation as UASs are not allowed to award the Master of Arts or Master of Science degree. Several actors participated in the debate. Among them the Ministry of Education and Sciences, the Parliament, the *HBO-raad* (Dutch association of UASs) the associations of employers, the Advisory Council on Science and Technology (AWT) the association of Dutch universities and from the international perspective the OECD.

This history is divided in four episodes. The first episode covers the period until 1986. Until 1970 higher education consisted only of universities. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century the universities in the Netherlands (and in Europe) remained institutions with a curriculum that dated back to the Middle Ages. This curriculum was of a theoretical nature with little or no interest in practical application. This changed in the nineteenth century, but the incorporation of more practical orientated disciplines like technology met with much resistance from the universities. Eventually the technical disciplines were organised in technical universities, but many other disciplines remained outside the universities. In the Netherlands many of the so called minor professions (such as teacher training, nursing and social work) did not become part of the universities curriculum. As a result more than 60% of the students in higher education in the Netherlands are in the UASs, the highest percentage in Europe.

The UASs were legally part of secondary education that had no research task. They were organised in mostly small institutions with little autonomy. By contrast, the universities were much larger institutions with a considerable degree of autonomy. Their focus on research increased markedly during this period. The gap between universities and UASs was considerable. From 1970 the UASs were seen as higher education in policy documents of the Ministry of Education and Sciences.

From 1970 the policy of the Ministry of Education and Sciences with regard to higher education focussed on two priorities. The UASs should be incorporated in a binary system which emphasised the separate but equal nature of universities and UASs. At the same time UASs should cooperate with universities, particularly in the field of allocation of students and later on in the field of research. This policy of the Ministry was not very successful. The universities were not overly interested in cooperation with the UASs, mainly because the gap between them.

It took more than a decade to adopt a law that legalised the status of the UASs as higher education. Parliament passed the law in 1986. This law also granted the UASs the right to conduct research, but this new task was not funded. The period from 1986 to 1999 saw the rapid establishment of large and autonomous UASs, that in terms of institutional organisation began to resemble the universities. This development to more autonomy was part of a larger trend of deregulation and privatisation that took place in the Netherlands and many other European countries. This resulted in a decreasing role of the government in many sectors of society, which among others led to the privatisation of many government

owned companies like the Telephone companies. In the education sector the UASs were the first to be granted more autonomy which in turn led to the merging of the small schools into large *hogescholen*. Other sectors in education were soon to follow.

The law of 1986 only partly closed the gap between universities and UASs. Cooperation between the two remained of little importance. The fact that research at the UASs was now possible, did not change this. In fact, research did not become a major activity in UASs. This was partly due to the fact that it was not funded and had to rely on the proceeds of contracts with industry and other institutions. But an important factor were the opposite trends in the make up the staff. University staff were increasingly required to have a PhD degree, while in the UASs the qualifications of the teaching staff dropped. At the beginning of the twentieth century less than 5% of the teaching staff of the UASs held a PhD degree and less than 50% held a master degree. This situation was not conducive to the emergence of a research culture in the UASs. The central management of the UASs had other problems to attend to than research. They had to cope with budget cuts resulting from an increasing number of students that was not matched by funding by the Ministry of Education.

In the early nineties the *HBO-raad* attempted to abolish the binary system following the incorporation of the British polytechnics and the Australian colleges of advanced education in 1992 in the university system. The Dutch ministry of Education and Sciences blocked this attempt. The *hogescholen* should be confined to practice orientated higher education and not become too theoretical, a view supported by the employers and the universities.

The third episode covers the period from 1999 to 2006. By 1999 the economy in the Netherlands had improved to the point that additional funding for higher education became possible. At the same time important changes in Europe took place regarding higher education. Higher education in the European Union (EU) had long been restricted to funding of research and student mobility. The EU had no involvement in matters of education, which was left to the members states. In 1999 and 2000 the ministers of Education of the member states agreed on a harmonisation of the degrees in higher education (the Bologna Declaration) and on the need to stimulate research across all higher education institutions in view of the growing importance of the so called knowledge economy in the EU. This meant that research should not be restricted to universities. In the Netherlands this resulted in the funding of a new type of staff in the UASs, the *lectoren*, the equivalent of professors in the universities.

The initiative to the *lectoren* did not come from the *HBO-raad*, but from the head of the Inspectorate for Education, Ferdinand Mertens. The Inspectorate was a autonomous agency of the Ministry of Education and Sciences, that was not normally involved in policy making. In a speech in 1999 Mertens draw attention to the 'impoverished state of the teaching staff in the UASs' as he called it. According to him the teaching staff had lost much of its professional autonomy, which resulted in resentment against the management of the UASs. Combined with the declining level of qualifications this had led to the impoverished state. Action had to be taken in the form of the introduction of a new type of staff, the leading teacher. Mertens succeeded in convincing the president of the *HBO-raad* Frans Leijnse that the additional funds the Ministry had promised, should be used to introduce this new type of staff, which Leijnse named *lector*. The time was ripe for this *lector*. Within two years the allocation of the funds took place and by the end of 2001 the first *lectoren* were appointed by the UASs.

The legal basis for the introduction of the *lector* was a Covenant between the Ministry of Education and Sciences and the *HBO-raad*. This covenant laid down the basic rules for

the allocation of the funds, which was not done by the Ministry or the *HBO-raad*, but by an independent agency founded by the *HBO-raad* and called SKO by its Dutch abbreviation. The introduction was successful. All UASs applied to the SKO and almost all applications were approved, although in many cases the initial application had to be revised by the UAS before the SKO could approve it. In the following years the number of *lectoren* grew steadily. The SKO was eager to monitor the introduction closely. For that purpose three evaluating committees were set up. These committees found that the management of the UASs initially had no clear vision of what a *lector* was and how he or she should function in the UAS. In fact, according to the first committee the introduction took place in an atmosphere of benign neglect by the management. This can be seen as a symptom of the lack of a research culture in most UASs.

In 1999, just before the decision to introduce the *lectoren*, the AWT, in cooperation with another advisory council, had published a report on research in the UASs, to be followed by two others in 2001 and 2005. In these reports a thorough analysis was presented of what research in the UASs should constitute. Before the AWT the only other substantial contribution to the debate came from Van Kemenade, minister of Education and Sciences from 1973-1977. During the rest of the period the debate on research in UASs was superficial. The AWT coined the term 'design and development' to designate research in the UASs and consistently refused to use the term research. The *HBO-raad* responded to these reports by adopting them, including the term design and development. No effort was made by the *HBO-raad* until 2006 to elaborate a definition of their own. This lack of initiative is consistent with the fact that not the *HBO-raad* but Mertens introduced the concept of *lector*.

Around 2005 following another initiative by the European ministers of Education and Sciences (the Declaration of Berlin) the Dutch minister took the initiative to allow the UASs to award a PhD degree under certain conditions and restrictions. The *HBO-raad* embraced this plan, but it met with little enthusiasm in the universities and was abandoned soon after a new minister took office.

The fourth episode runs from 2006 to 2010. This period marks the end of the funding of *lectoren* by the SKO. The national budget of all UASs was raised by equivalent of the budget of the SKO under the condition that a system of quality assurance for research was established. The *HBO-raad* undertook to set up this system, which set out rules for the way individual UASs should conduct their own system of quality assurance. It also gave an extensive analysis of the type of research in UASs, resulting in a definition that still is in use. In this definition the views of the AWT on research explicitly were rejected. The *HBO-raad* had finally shed off its reluctance to formulate its own definition of research.

By raising the national budget out of other funds than the budget of the SKO, the minister of Education and Sciences left room for the *HBO-raad* to propose a goal for the budget the SKO had not spent until 2006. Eventually a new funding programme for research projects by UASs called *RAAK Pro* was approved by the minister. The SKO was charged with the implementation of this programme.

The response of the universities to the introduction of *lectoren* was indifferent and in some cases hostile. Gradually this attitude changed. The reluctance of the universities to cooperate with the UASs in the field of research ceased very gradually. The abandonment of the plan to allow the UASs to award a PhD played a role, but also the fact that the new programme *RAAK Pro* encouraged cooperation with universities.

By 2010 *lectoren* were firmly established in the UASs, but their numbers were small. They were successful in practice orientated research, but had problems reaching the students because of their small numbers. Cooperation with universities had become normal and based on the recognition that practice orientated research could be complementary to university research. In this respect the fact that the binary system in the Netherland continues to exist might be beneficial to the further development of research in UASs. If funding is gradually increased, UASs could develop their own niche in higher education research without being forced to compete with the better equipped universities. In the long run all research could benefit from this.