

WILL THE UNIVERSITIES SURVIVE THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?

Higher Education Policies in the EU and in the Netherlands
before and after the Bologna Declaration

By Chris Lorenz

Introduction

To all appearances higher education in both the EU and the US has turned into a more fashionable topic for politicians and journalists than it was ten years ago¹. Since rumor has it that in the ‘age of globalization’ we are living in a ‘knowledge society’ and that our economies are basically ‘knowledge economies’, higher education has sometimes even made it to the front pages. These new buzzwords have been spreading inside and outside academia with some success and belong to the very heart of European higher education policy discourse since a decade².

Seen from a historical perspective this sudden public career of the idea of ‘knowledge society’ and ‘knowledge economy’ is pretty surprising, because European thinkers from the Enlightenment onwards – from Voltaire over Comte and Heidegger to Foucault and Habermas – have been emphasizing that the systematic production and application of knowledge is *the* specific characteristic of ‘modern’ – European-type – societies³. So given the fact that ‘knowledge economy’ and ‘knowledge society’ have been known to ‘civilized’ Europeans for more than some 250 years, this idea could hardly be presented as a new message. Therefore one can expect that the new meaning of ‘knowledge society’ is

¹ See The Economist 10 September 2005, ‘The Brains Business’; The New York Times 3 November 2005 ‘The Truth about the Colleges’; The New York Times 3 December 2005, ‘Imported brains’; The New York Times, 9 February 2006, ‘Panel explores standard tests for colleges’.

² See Gerard Delanty, ‘Ideologies of Knowledge Society and the Cultural Contradictions of Higher Education’, *Policy Futures in Education*, 1 (2003), (1), 71–82; Peter Scott, ‘Universities and the knowledge economy’, *Minerva* 43 (2005), (3), 297–309.

³ See Fritz Stern (ed.), *Varieties of history. From Voltaire to the present*, (New York: MacMillan 1970), and Patrick Gardiner (ed.), *Theories of history*, (New York: The Free Press 1959).

pretty different from the traditional one rooting in Enlightenment thought.

This expectation is confirmed when one discovers that its new proponents represent universities as enterprises and academics as entrepreneurs. Simultaneously, *real* entrepreneurs are now represented as the evident ‘stakeholders’ of the ‘McUniversities’, entitled to populate their ‘boards of trustees’.⁴ The ideology of the ‘knowledge economy’ thus simply means that the domain of knowledge production is economized: *homo academicus* is modeled after *homo economicus*.⁵ Capitalist economy no longer finds its ideological legitimization in scientific terms, as was the case in ‘late capitalism’ according to the influential diagnosis of Jürgen Habermas, because science itself now has to justify itself in economical terms.⁶

In this article I will go into European and Dutch higher education policies before and after the Bologna Declaration in order to trace the theory and practice of ‘knowledge economy’. I will basically argue that the Netherlands have been introducing key elements of the ‘Bologna process’ earlier than most other EU-countries. Therefore the Dutch case can in principle be seen as a foreshadowing of what lies ahead of the other EU-countries – if the Bologna agenda will be ‘successfully’ implemented, of course.⁷

⁴ See for the Dutch case: ‘Topondernemers controleren de universiteiten’ (‘Top entrepreneurs control the universities’), NRC-Handelsblad 07-03-2006.

⁵ See M. Parker and D. Jary, ‘The McUniversity: Organization, Management and Academic Subjectivity’, *Organization* 2 (1995), (2), 319–338; George Ritzer, ‘McUniversity in the Postmodern Consumer Society’, *Quality in Higher Education* 2 (1996), (3), 185–199; D. Hayes and R. Wynwyrd (eds.), *The McDonaldization of Higher Education*, (Westport and London: Greenwood Press 2002); Richard Horton, ‘The Dawn of McScience’, *New York Review of Books* 11 March 2004; Henry Etzkowitz, ‘The evolution of the entrepreneurial university’, *International Journal of Technology and Globalisation* 1 (2004), (1), 64–77. See also Nieuwe wetgevingsnotitie Wet Hoger Onderwijs (New legislative memorandum on Law on Higher Education) Ministerie van OCW, <http://www2.minocw.nl/persbericht.jsp?pageID=7022&jaar=2005>, where universities are redefined as ‘societal enterprises’ (‘maatschappelijke ondernemingen’), 11. In the Netherlands Twente University – where CHEPS is located – has labelled itself an ‘entrepreneurial university’.

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, ‘Technology and Science as ‘Ideology,’ in: Steaven Seidman (ed.), *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: a Reader*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press 1989), 237–265.

⁷ The ‘vanguard’ position of the Netherlands in this respect is related to the circumstance that the Dutch higher education policy discourse is not open to *any* public debate. Practically *all* policy advices to and policy evaluations of the Ministry of Education are produced by *one* ‘expert centre’: the Centre of Higher Education Policy Studies of the University Twente (CHEPS) and by ‘reflective practitioners’ of the Ministry of Education itself, like Roel in ‘t Veld and Walter Kickert. The ‘input’ and ‘output’ of the Dutch educational ‘policy system’ are simply *directly* connected.

The article is divided in three parts:

- I. First, I will present a description and analysis of the Bologna Declaration itself, issued at the 19th. of June 1999 by the joint Ministers of Education of the EU-countries.
- II. Second, I will analyze the historical setting of the Bologna Declaration, notably the declaration of Lisbon, the declaration of Paris and – last but not least – the activities of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in general and of the General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT) – and of the General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS) – in particular.
- III. Third, I will present a description and analysis of the Dutch policies of higher education of before and after the Bologna Declaration. In the process I will argue that Dutch higher education policies since the 1980's have basically been *anticipating* the Bologna process by adopting an economic view on education earlier than most other European states, although there remain a couple of other Dutch peculiarities.

I. The Bologna Declaration

First I want to take a closer look at the Bologna Declaration itself and its accompanying declarations. The first page of the Bologna Declaration already is referring to the Sorbonne or the Paris declaration of 25th of May 1998, where the initiative for Bologna was taken, and to an earlier declaration in Bologna in 1988.

Now what does the Bologna Declaration of the joint European Ministers of Education exactly state?⁸ The following eight objectives are clearly identifiable:

1. the creation of one 'higher educational space' in Europe' – what this means is not specified.
2. 'The objective of increasing the international competitiveness of this European higher educational space' – and this turns out to be the leading idea.

⁸ See for the political context: Jürgen Schriewer, 'Bologna und kein Ende. Die iterative Konstitution eines Europäischen Hochschulraumes', in: R. Hohls a. o. (eds.), *Europa und Europäer. Quellen und Essays zur modernen europäischen Geschichte (Europe and the Europeans. Sources and essays in modern European history)* (Stuttgart: Steiner 2005), 461–469. See for the historical context: Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, *Nieuwe wijn in oude zakken, of toch niet? De Bolognaverklaring in historisch perspectief*, Amsterdam 2002

3. 'The adoption of a system of easily readable, compatible and comparable degrees, in order to promote European citizens employability and the competitiveness of the European higher education system'.
4. 'The adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate' (BA and MA). This system is better known as the Anglo-Saxon model, although the declaration itself avoids this label. The first cycle should last at least three years and also be relevant for the labor market.
5. 'The establishment of a uniform system of credits – later known as the ECTS system – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility'. Why mobility is good, is not argued. Credits, remarkably, can also be acquired in *non*-higher educational contexts.
6. 'Promotion of mobility for both students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff'. Why this is good is not argued either: in the age of globalization mobility just seems to be a good in itself. This is also reflected in the omnipresence in policy documents of the notion of flexibility.
7. 'Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view of developing comparable criteria and methodologies'. What 'quality control' consists of and why a separate 'quality assurance' apart from the professional mechanisms of quality control is good, is not argued. External controls on the teaching and researching faculty are simply presented as a natural phenomenon and nobody even asks what ever happened to the idea of professional autonomy of the faculty and to the idea of academic freedom. The new emphasis on control is reflected in the omnipresence in policy documents of the notions of accountability, efficiency and of quality controls.
8. 'Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research'. What these 'European dimensions' would consist of, is not made explicit

So, all in all, the Bologna Declaration calls for the integration of all the national systems of higher education in the EU into one European educational system with the major aim of increasing its 'international competitiveness'. In order to achieve these goals the basic structures of the national systems must be made uniform, with the same cycles and degrees and last but not least, the same mechanisms of control of the faculty.

The last couple of lines of the Bologna Declaration are ominous, because there we read that this declaration is not just meant to be a policy

statement or a policy event, but a continuous process, that will be with Europeans to stay. In Bologna the EU took a conscious decision to keep the systems of higher education in Europe in a state of permanent supervision and reform. So much for the Bologna Declaration itself.⁹

Now we need to take a closer look at the historical context in which the Bologna Declaration was formulated because its meaning can only be established by its context. This context, as I stated before, consists of a couple of other declarations, starting with the Paris declaration of 1998.

II. The Paris and Lisbon Declarations, the WTO, GATT and GATS

The Paris declaration of 1998 is the direct precursor of the Bologna declaration. This Paris declaration airs serious European concerns about the competitiveness and the global attractiveness of European higher education, especially in comparison to North America and Australia – accidentally both English speaking global regions. The competition on the ever growing and promising Asian student market is being lost by Europe, according to this declaration – with the UK as the only exception.¹⁰

The ‘exceptional’ success of UK higher education probably explains why ‘the’ Anglo Saxon structure of higher education was accepted in Bologna as the general European model without much discussion. The possibility that the exceptional English ‘success’ on a global scale might be explained by the exceptional global position of the English language and not by the formal structure of their educational institutions, has not been considered seriously. The language issue in European higher education is hardly ever discussed at policy level. My hunch is that this is due to the fact that the linguistic domain is a domain that is very resistant to policy measures *as such*, and policymakers don’t like that idea. One simply cannot change a language in an educational system by decreeing it in policy documents, so the issue of language is usually simply left out (except for those occasions where higher education is presented as an export commodity, because then the use of the English language in education is simply taken for granted).

Now the European worries about the global market in higher education in Paris were primarily *economically* motivated, although symbolic

⁹ Remarkably, the legal status of the declaration is fully obscure. See: Hauke Brunkhorst, ‘So wird Sachzwang gebaut’, in: Die Tageszeitung, 12 August 2006.

¹⁰ According to The New York Times editorial ‘Imported brains’, 3 December 2005, in 2004 565,039 foreign students contributed about \$13.3 billion to the United States economy.

references to European culture were not missing. The economic motive and agenda was even more open at the EU-gathering in Lisbon in March 2000.¹¹ Given the perceived successes of the US and of Australia in producing substantial 'export value' in the domain of higher education, the EU decided that the European inferiority on the global educational market could no longer be tolerated.¹² In Lisbon the EU formulated its bold intention to become 'the most dynamic and competitive economic bloc in the world' – nothing more and nothing less, and not in the long run, but *subito* – before 2010.

Given the idea that the global economy is basically a 'knowledge economy', and given the idea that we are also all living in a 'knowledge society', the EU inevitably came to the conclusion that European higher education had to become the most dynamic and most competitive in the world too!. Therefore the EU- Ministers of Education translated this intention in 2001 into an ambitious agenda for the educational domain. Predictably the 'Lisbon process' has as yet only resulted in serious disappointments, because anno 2005 it was already crystal clear to even the greatest EU-policy optimists that its objectives would not be met even approximately.¹³ The remedy for this 'delay' is of course sought in speeding up the 'Lisbon process' in all EU- member states, and in shifting away of the responsibility for the 'process' to the EU-member states.

So the Paris Declaration of 1998, the Bologna Declaration of 1999 and the Lisbon Declaration of 2000 are three of one pair. This leads me to consider a treaty seldom mentioned in the EU-declarations, the GATS. Just like in a bad marriage, in the EU (and its policy papers) the things *not* discussed are often more important than the things that are discussed. I already pointed at the language problem in this context.

As we have seen, all the European declarations and plans considered so far basically contain an economic view of education, by treating higher education primarily in its function for the European economy and in terms of a marketable commodity. This is more apparent in the Paris and Lisbon Declarations than in the Bologna Declaration itself, although there too is an emphasis on the function of higher education for the labor market. Therefore the transformation of a great number of very diverse national systems of higher education into *one* competitive European

¹¹ Typically, only the *economic* policy goals of the EU are transformed into policy practice. See the trade unions criticism in European Trade Union Confederation, The European's Union's Lisbon strategy, at: <http://www.etuc.org/a/652>.

¹² It is interesting to observe that in the US exactly the opposite worries are formulated: fears of loosing the international educational market to the EU, Canada and Australia due to the barriers erected after '9/11'. See 'Imported brains'.

¹³ The constant reification of the political agenda and its transformation into an 'objective' force is one of the characteristics of managerial discourse.

'educational market' is the primary objective of all declarations considered. How this objective is to be realized *in practice* is far less clear, the more so because the national governments remain responsible for the implementation of these objectives. To all appearances the EU is already facing serious problems in this respect.¹⁴

So the basic idea behind all educational EU-plans is economic: the basic idea is the enlargement of scale of the European systems of higher education, just as has been realized with the economic systems in Europe before, in order to enhance its competitiveness by cutting down costs. Therefore a Europe-wide standardization of the 'values' produced in each of the national higher educational systems is called for. The introduction of the European Credits Transfer System – of ECTS-points – in order to make all European grades compatible and comparable can thus be compared to the introduction of the euro, because the 'value' of higher education all over Europe will in the future be calculated, compared and exchanged in terms of the same credit points – at least in theory and if we abstract from minor practical issues like the language problem. In contrast with the introduction of the euro, however, the introduction of the ECTS has *not* taken place at one point in time, but is a process with very different speeds in the different European states – with the Netherlands taking the lead.¹⁵ The overall intention and direction of the process is nevertheless clear: to create *one* European market for higher education in order to become more competitive in the global struggle for the well paying (especially Asian) students.

This leads me to consider the WTO and the GATS as the global contexts of the Bologna Process.

A very important background of the European developments in higher education – though seldom mentioned in the EU-declarations – are the policies of the WTO since its foundation in 1995 and the GATT in general, and the GATS in particular. The reason for the absence of WTO-,

¹⁴ See 'Time to move up a gear' – Commission President Barroso presents Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs at <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/press-ReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/71&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>. Typically for the neo-liberal EU-view on education is Barroso's statement on p. 2 that 'entrepreneurship education should be provided as part of the school curriculum for *all* pupils', 25 January 2006.

See for the Dutch situation: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek Webmagazine Maandag 7 November 2005 10:00, 'Nederland en de Lissabonafspraken: de stand van zaken', at: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/macro-economie-financiele-instellingen/nationale-rekeningen/publicaties/artikelen/2005-1798-wm.htm>. The EU-document, A new start for the Lisbon Strategy, concluded rather euphemistically that halfway the 'Lisbon process' – in 2005 – 'the results are not very satisfactory'.

¹⁵ See for an actual overview of the ECTS-situation per country: <http://www.esib.org/wg/education/ECTSSurvey.htm>.

GATT and GATS-regulations in the EU-policy statements may be that these regulations are not subject to any parliamentary control, so actually they look bad for democratic business.¹⁶ And contrary to the Bologna regulations, the GATS regulations *do* have the status international treaties, enforceable by international law and international courts. This characteristic makes them pretty important in practice.

The aim of the WTO is to get rid of all regulations and measures that are impeding a worldwide free trade. This policy is based on the assumption that an uninhibited free trade will lead us to the best of all possible worlds. GATS is applying the same free trade principle to services, and in our context it is crucial to realize that higher education is defined by GATS as one service among others, along with utilities like energy and water supply, health care, housing and social security, that is: domains that used to be seen as the core of the public sector in Europe.

The neo-liberal GATS point of view will have far reaching consequences for the citizens of Europe: higher education, instead of being a right of citizens of nation states, laid down by law, may be redefined as and transformed into a commodity – into an international service that must be sold and bought from any international provider. For US-citizens this point of view may not look revolutionary, but for most Europeans it surely is.

But on second sight the implications of the GATS-view may even surprise US-citizens, because GATS, among other things, prescribes the so-called ‘national treatment rule’. This rule prohibits the national governments, that subscribe to the GATS-regulations concerning education, to treat providers of services *inside* the national borders differently from providers from outside the national borders. Although this rule also contains a few clauses for exceptions, it may easily induce future outside providers of higher education to sue national governments for subsidizing their institutions of higher education on grounds that subsidies are impediments for open market competition and therefore are frustrating the free and international trade¹⁷. This is what we already are witness-

¹⁶ The European Commission is the political body negotiating about GATS. As is well known, the European Parliament does not have an effective authority to control the European Commission. Political control outside the European parliament over GATS is even more opaque because higher education is still predominantly the domain of national Ministries of Education, that do not have a direct link with or access to the European Commission. See for this problem in a general framework: John Morijn, Addressing Human Rights concerns within the World Trade Organization. A perspective on Human Rights and Trade and its application to Article XX of GATT, Lisbon – Coimbra 2002, and John Morijn, A Human Rights perspective of Liberalisation of Education Services within the WTO & EC, (unpublished paper).

¹⁷ See for the clauses of exception: Morijn, Addressing Human Rights.

sing in the domain of agriculture, and a similar pressure may one day lead to the end of all publicly financed higher education, or at least bring it into the danger zone in which it is forced to legitimize itself as a 'non-market service'. So the free trade principle may make some victims on its way to the best of all possible worlds.

Another GATS-regulation is the so-called market access rule, prohibiting national governments to refuse access to their service market for any reason. Although this rule too contains a few clauses of exception, this may lead to a situation in which for instance an openly racist institution will start to supply educational services without the possibility of banning it because this would also constitute a breach of free and open market competition. Or a situation in which Tom Cruise and John Travolta will join financial forces in creating the first 'Scientology University'.

So by redefining higher education as just a service like any other – as a marketable commodity – the WTO and GATS are basically eroding all effective forms of democratic political control over higher education. As far as GATS-regulations allow for exceptions to the basic economic rule, these still have to be considered and justified in terms of their *economic* consequences. Small wonder there is so little discussion in the EU and the US about that. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the economic view on higher education recently developed and formulated by the EU-declarations is similar to and compatible with the view developed by the WTO and by GATS.¹⁸

In the end, the EU- and the GATS –views will probably also have similar implications. The so-called 'Bolkestein rules' concerning freeing the trade in services in the EU are unmistakably pointing in this direction. The only exceptions concerning the free trade of services that are mentioned in the original and in the revised EU-proposals on services are financial services, telecom services and 'services' connected to the public administration of the EU-member states because they are already regulated by other EU-rules. Education is only mentioned *once* in both the original and in the revised proposal.¹⁹ So EU-member states may and

¹⁸ Interestingly this economic definition of education is being imposed at the same time that economists are questioning the economic value of 'educational investments', both at the individual as on the collective level. See 'Economic View: What's the Return on Education?' in: The New York Times 11 December 2005.

¹⁹ The revised proposal states in recital 16 on p. 12. 'The assessment of whether certain activities which are publicly funded or provided by public entities constitute a "service" has to be carried out on a case by case basis in the light of all their characteristics, in particular the way they are provided, organized and financed in the Member State in the context of its duties'. See the Council of the European Union 5161/05, Interinstitutional file 2004/2001 (COD) at <http://www.dienstenrichtlijn.nl/richtlijn/>. All Dutch governments since the 1980's have been representing higher education as a 'service'.

probably will categorize higher education as a service while keeping elementary education outside the domain of services.

Now after this first analysis of the European context it is time to take a closer look at the Dutch situation, where we can already observe some of the policy ideas about the 'knowledge economy' put into practice.

III. Peculiarities of dutch higher education policies before and after the Bologna Declaration

In order to understand Dutch higher education policies in relationship to the Bologna Process, in this paragraph I will identify six characteristics of Dutch higher education policy since the 1980's:

1. the radical economization of higher education
2. the political preference for changing the educational institutions from public into private institutions;
3. the political preference for the enlargement of scale of the institutions of higher education (including their constituent parts) and the impending merger of universities and professional schools;
4. the political preference for the total control over the educational institutions of the managerial class ('managerial colonization');
5. the political preference for saving policies, whatever the costs;
6. the political preference for 'talking up quality'.

1. The radical economization of higher education

Since the 1980's Dutch higher educational discourse basically *defines* all educational qualities in terms of economic quantities. The educational quality of institutions and their constituent parts has simply been defined in terms of the quantitative 'output' or 'production' of 'credit points' by the faculty and the 'efficiency' (alias 'economy') by which this 'production process' is organized.²⁰ And what's more important: the institutions are financed by the state on basis of a mix of quantitative 'output' indicators (the number of 'produced' credit points, of dissertations, enrolments etc.). This economic view of education redefines the very selection of student performances by the faculty on basis of their

²⁰ See my Van het universitaire front geen nieuws (No news from the academic front), (Baarn: Ambo 1993); idem, 'Is dit beleid of is erover nagedacht?' "Van het universitaire front geen nieuws" vijf jaar later'(No news from the academic front: five years after'), in: De Gids 160 (1998), (4), 281–291; idem, 'The Myth of the Dutch Middle Way', in: *Wissenschaftsrecht* 33 (2000), 189–209.

professional criteria as a 'loss of production' and as a 'lack of efficiency' – with all its mind-blowing consequences for the professional autonomy of the faculty and its professional criteria of quality in the traditional sense. So the economic definition of education implies the de-professionalization of the faculty – not accidentally but necessarily.

As soon as education has been redefined in the economic terms of the 'production' and 'consumption' of 'credit points, the process of 'production' and 'consumption' can be completely controlled by management by means of setting and monitoring the parameters of production for the faculty and the parameters of consumption by the students – including their prices of course. So the economic redefinition of higher education, the managerial take over of the institutions of higher education through control mechanisms like audits, and the de-professionalisation of the faculty, all are directly interconnected.

Completely in line with the economic view the new Dutch law on higher education only specifies the students (as the 'consumers' of education) and the Dutch employers (as the future 'consumers' of educated 'consumers') as direct 'stakeholders' in the Dutch universities – the faculty has simply been dropped out of the picture of the 'modern' university²¹. It also goes without saying that in the economic view disciplines don't have an equal academic value. Since 'the market' is the only mechanism determining academic values it goes without saying that philosophers and historians cannot expect similar payment and facilities in 'modern' academia as fiscalists and accountants²².

Even a pessimist analyst of the modern university like Max Weber, who was the first thinker to warn for the insatiable appetite for power of managers in general and for their blind logic of instrumental (goal – means) rationality in particular, did not consider this economic deformation of the university as a possibility.²³ The (post-Christian) 'modern condition'

²¹ Wet Hoger Onderwijs, 7.

²² Egbert de Weert, 'Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands', *Higher Education* 41 (2001), 95, typically suggests that "professors should be better paid if they teach useful, profitable courses". See also the report of the Center of Higher Education Policy Studies, *Een basis voor een Sterkte Zwakte analyse van het Nederlands hoger onderwijs in internationaal perspectief* (A basis for an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Dutch higher education in international perspective), Twente 2001, 74, where the rhetorical question is posed whether the Netherlands need 'specialists in Old- Egyptian languages'.

²³ See Max Weber, *From Max Weber. Essays in sociology* (translated, edited and with an introduction of H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills), (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP 1958), 147–148 and 131.

In recent times Habermas diagnosed the 'proletarianization' of the professionals. See Jürgen Habermas, 'What does a crisis mean today? Legitimation problems in late capitalism', in: Seidman (ed.), *op.cit.*, 279: "Moreover, fragmented

Weber diagnosed in 1918 as ‘an unceasing struggle of the gods with one another’ – alias the co-existence of irreconcilable value-domains in differentiated societies – now seems to have come to an end, however: the god of the capitalist economy – including the ‘spirit of capitalism’ in the dress of a completely blind craze for ‘efficiency’ – appears to have won the ‘war’ under the guise of neo-liberalism since the 1980’s.²⁴

After ‘the death of God’ and after the era of Nietzschean ‘polytheism’ of values that Weber diagnosed, we are now witnessing the birth of a new monotheistic religion worshipping the god of neo-liberal market fundamentalism. Nothing is more telling of this fundamental change than the fact that Weber’s explicit warning that the emphasis on enrolments is at odds with the constitutive values of the idea of the modern university, is now running up plugged managerial ears. As I pointed out earlier, in the Netherlands enrolment numbers have been transformed into the very basis for financing universities²⁵. So the ‘icy polar night’ Weber predicted in 1918 looks a bit different from the one he envisaged – outside and inside the universities.

2. The political preference for changing all educational institutions from public into private institutions

In the new Dutch law on higher education, that according to plan will be enacted in 2007, the neo-liberal Dutch preference for privatization of education will take on its final form. After having implemented a rigorous privatization policy since the 1980’s, *all* institutions of higher education will become private institutions in a *legal* sense, putting an end to all public higher education while still being financed by public means. Therefore the meaning of the notion of ‘private’ in the Dutch educational context is very different from elsewhere: traditionally a ‘private’ institution of education does not mean ‘oriented towards profit’, but ‘of religious origin’.²⁶ This peculiar situation dates back to the so-called ‘school

and monotonous work processes are increasingly entering sectors in which previously a personal identity could be developed through the vocational role. An intrinsic motivation for performance is getting less and less support from the structure of the work process in market-dependent work areas”. See also Ritzer, ‘McUniversity’.

²⁴ Weber, op.cit, 152.

²⁵ Weber, op.cit, 133: ‘Almost everybody thus is affected by the suggestion of the immeasurable blessing and value of large enrolments’[-]. ‘After rather extensive experience and sober reflection, I have a deep distrust of courses that draw crowds, however unavoidable they may be’.

²⁶ Ministerie van OCW, Funding and recognition. A comparative study of funded versus non-funded education in eight countries, at <http://www.minocw.nl/bhw/92/10.html>.

struggle' of the 19th. and early 20th. century between the (secular) Dutch state and the churches over the control of education. This struggle ended after the Dutch state had conferred equal financing to both secular and religious educational institutions between 1917 and 1920.

The new 'Dutch Revolution' in the making, which amounts to the abolishment of *all* public higher education in a legal sense, is internationally without parallel as far as I know.²⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that this 'privatization' of Dutch higher education is in principle fully in line with the WTO and the GATS-policies, because financial privatization may easily follow the legal privatization in due time.

The 'legal privatization' of the Dutch universities, made possible by the new law, will allow for the removal of the last legal remnants of the period of self-governance of the faculty – remnants that represent impediments to the new mode of managerial governance. In order to become 'flexible' – and more 'sensitive' to managerial control – the faculty will first have to be robbed of its present 'job security' alias the tenure²⁸. This will be effected by the (legal) privatization and the accompanying transformation of the civil servant status of the faculty into a private employee status, simply because the private status does not allow for tenure.²⁹

The transformation from the civil servant status into a private employee status for the faculty after 2007 will also be used to introduce a new 'merit based' type of payment. How 'merit' will be defined and measured is a job for the managers no doubt. Given the fact that 'efficiency' is defined by management as cutting down costs, the chances are high that 'merit' will be defined in a parsimonious way and will manifest itself predominantly in further increasing workloads and in growing work pressure for the faculty. Most likely, management will present new faculty with new 'market conform' labor contracts, just like the Thatcher government did in the UK in the 1980's, and will try to get rid of old 'inflexible' faculty members.³⁰

²⁷ Wet Hoger Onderwijs, 12. Neither did the recent complete privatization of health care in the Netherlands attract much attention abroad.

²⁸ de Weert, op.cit, 97, euphemistically predicts that not all faculty members will be happy with their 'modernization': "Tensions may occur between the claims of the professorate and the framing of imperatives set by management". In the UK tenure was abolished for new faculty by the Thatcher-government in the 1980's.

²⁹ See my article 'Myth', 189–209. This is a major difference with Germany where professors actually as yet are civil servants *beamtet auf Lebenszeit*.

³⁰ For the effects of the ever rising work pressure on the faculty see Elisabeth Berg, Jim Barry and John Chandler, 'The New Public Management and Higher Education: a Human Cost?', in: Mike Dent, John Chandler and Jin Berry (eds.), *Questioning the New Public Management*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2004), 161–175.

*3. The political preference for the enlargement of scale
of the institutions of higher education and the 'illegal' merger
of universities and professional schools*

As expected, the Dutch system of higher education is comparatively small: there are 14 universities in the Netherlands – compared to 76 in England (and more than 100 in the UK), 104 in France and 106 in Germany. Nevertheless the policy makers of the Dutch university system have high ambitions. Next to those 14 universities there are some 40 'hoge scholen', that is institutions for professional education. Traditionally, the majority of higher education students (more than 60% of the total of about 450.000 students) enroll in the professional schools and 40% in the universities.

To give some idea of scale in relationship to North America: qua number of students the Netherlands can well be compared to the state of Michigan where some 500.000 students were enrolled in higher education (in 1998) in some 108 colleges and universities. And like in Michigan, practically all higher education in the Netherlands is financed by the state.³¹

The exact number of professional schools is difficult to determine due to ongoing mergers between them. In the 1980s, a merger operation was set in motion by the Dutch government, requiring a certain minimum size for the professional schools, but since then mergers have continued to take place – up to the present day. So the Dutch system of higher education is still a so-called binary system, characterized by a fundamental distinction between universities with a legal monopoly to confer PhD-degrees and with state funded research at the one side, and institutions of professional education without the PhD-conferring capacity and without state funded research at the other side.

The binary system has been constantly under attack of the management of the professional schools since the 1990's. Their claim to the title and status of university is known as the 'academic drift' and they have been pretty inventive in pursuing this aim, (among other things by U-turn constructions with former polytechnics in the UK which were upgraded to universities after 1988). Although this academic drift has traditionally met staunch resistance of most Dutch universities, there are now clear signs that the professional schools will be upgraded to universities by the Dutch government within the next 5 years. This merger of professional schools and universities would be the logical next step in

³¹ Next to the public higher education system is a number of private higher education institutions mostly offering professional higher education. The total enrolment is unknown but is estimated to be approximately 35.000 students. Source: Ministerie van OCW, Funding and recognition.

the policies of enlargement of scale pursued by all Dutch governments since the 1980's.³²

The reason behind this policy is very simple, although it has seldom explicitly been stated: enlargement of scale, so the economic argument goes, produces a lowering of 'production costs' and thus an enhancement of 'competitive capacities'. Whether this schoolbook argument also holds in educational reality is of course another question. This question is never asked in Dutch policy circles, because the *supposed* truth of this economic theory is the very foundation of all Dutch higher educational discourse. Neither is the question ever raised whether enlargement of scale in education produces unintended consequences outside the economic sphere. Enlargement of scale is simply supposed to be the highest good in it self, because it lowers educational costs – at least in theory. Therefore the discourse on educational policies in the Netherlands since the 1980's has been a fundamentally economic discourse. In this respect the Netherlands have been ahead of the general European trend as formulated by the declarations mentioned earlier on, and only in *this* sad respect there is some factual basis for the traditional Dutch claim to be a vanguard – 'gidsland' – for other nations.³³

Now, with the Paris and the Bologna Declarations, the European discourse on higher education policies has started to *converge* remarkably with the Dutch discourse since the 1980's. The main ingredients of the Dutch educational policies since the 1980's, now showing up in the European policy discourse, have been: the economic market as the organizational model for higher education, the idea that the enhancement of 'competitiveness' of higher education is primarily effected by a policy of continuously cutting the costs, the idea that costs can effectively be reduced by a continuous enlargement of scale, and – last but not least – the idea that all power in higher education must be transferred to a managerial class. Although these policies are part of what is called 'New Public Management' (NPM) and thus have effected other countries than the Netherlands – especially the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Sweden – nowhere has this policy been pursued with such a rigor and consistency as in the Netherlands.³⁴ The effects of this

³² I have predicted this merger in 1993 in my *Van het universitaire front geen nieuws*, 42–43.

³³ *Koers op kwaliteit. Internationaliseringsbrief hoger onderwijs* (Steering a course for quality. Memorandum concerning the internationalization of higher education), presented by the Minister of Education to the Parliament, 12 November 2004, 6–8.

³⁴ For the 'official' policy picture of 'the Dutch model' and its origins: de Weert, *op.cit.*, 77–101; Walter Kickert, 'Steering at a distance: a new paradigm of public governance in Dutch higher education' in: *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 6 (1995), (1), 135–157.

type of policy can therefore also be better observed in the Netherlands than elsewhere.

*4. The political preference for the total control
over the educational institutions by the managerial class*

The political preference for the total control over the educational institutions of the managerial class and the total disappearance of the faculty from the policy and organizational picture is the fourth peculiarity of the Dutch system in a European comparative perspective. This preference got its legal and organizational form in 1998 in the law ‘Modernisering Universitair Bestuur’ (‘Modernization of the University Administration’) that introduced the management model in university administration and that abolished the very idea of self-governance of the faculty. Since 1998 the faculty is robbed of its institutional means of influencing university administration and has retained a consultative voice at best. The fusion of administration and management, intended by this law, has succeeded in a formal sense, meaning the total take over of administration by management alias the ‘managerial colonization’ of the Dutch universities.³⁵

The new law on higher education that will be in place from 2007 will complete the managerial take over of university administration by eliminating *all* regulations that reserved specific administrative functions – e.g. the position of dean – for the faculty. Managers may become deans in the future, a logical consequence of the present situation in which deans are called upon to act like managers. To my knowledge there is no other European country in which the faculty has been so completely and silently robbed of its traditional administrative hegemony in the university and where the faculty has been transformed into just employees like any other.

The new law contains lengthy paragraphs dealing with the position and the rights of the administration and management – actually they have become identical – and lengthy paragraphs about the rights of the students (‘the consumers’ of higher education), but significantly there is no single line in this law devoted to the position and the rights of the category of personnel that traditionally represented the university’s ‘core business’: the job of doing teaching and research.

³⁵ See de Weert, *op.cit.*, 97: “The new governance structure implies a shift from the collegiate model towards an integrated management model with deans as professional managers”. For a comparison with the German situation see: Uwe Schimank, “New Public Management and the academic profession: reflections on the German situation”, in: *Minerva* 43 (2005), (4), 361–376, and ‘Bronxfornd in Deutschland. Die Hochschulen zwischen Glanz und Elend’, in: *Das Parlament* Nr. 03, 16. 01. 2006.

This is quite symptomatic for the Dutch situation and represents the end station of the process of de-professionalisation and de-skilling of the faculty that is inherent in the economic view of education, because the only recognized values in Dutch higher education discourse are quantifiable 'economic' values.

In Dutch higher education policy discourse only what can be counted, counts, and the fact that the reduction of academic quality to quantifiable indicators has been factually proven to be wrong, does not count.³⁶ Content does *not* count and therefore a process of de-differentiation at the level of teaching is another symptom of this process of de-skilling, carefully camouflaged as a process of 'interdisciplinary innovation' and of 'tearing down the walls between professorial kingdoms and between isolated specializations'.

For rationally inclined minds this constant and blatant denial of the fact that modern science means differentiation and specialization, as Max Weber already remarked in 1918, does not make life easier³⁷. This de-differentiation clearly signalizes that 'modern' university management is simply at odds with the constitutive principles of modern science and that as far as science continues as usual this is happening in spite of and not because of 'modern' university management.

Predictably, the result will be that those sciences, which have the greatest cash value from the economical point of view, will be 'rescued' from the 'modernized' universities because they are directly functional for the economy. It is also predictable that the economically least valuable sciences – that is the humanities as they were traditionally conceived – will be left to the 'discipline and punish' regime of 'modern' university management.³⁸ This implies that they will be subject to further de-skilling processes – a process well under way in the form of innovative policies like the modularization of teaching, e-learning, 'life long learning', the 'professionalisation' of teaching etcetera.

³⁶ See Rachele L. Brooks, 'Measuring University Quality', in: *The Review of Higher Education* 29 (2005), (1), 16: "Studies of university research and scholarship have a minimal ability to assess the productivity of faculty in many fields, especially those in the fine arts and humanities, due to the limited frame of reference inherent in the measures". Translating the meaning of quality into quantity 'is where the greater difficulty lies'.

De Weert (CHEPS) typically presents in his overview of the recent history of the Dutch universities the managerial takeover as 'the modern conception' of the university and its adversaries as 'the traditionals'. See: de Weert, *op.cit.*

³⁷ Max Weber, 'Science as a vocation', in: *op.cit.*, 135: "A really definitive and good accomplishment is today always a specialized accomplishment". See also 134 where Weber states that 'science has entered a phase of specialization previously unknown and that will forever remain the case'.

³⁸ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish. The birth of the prison*, (London: Penguin 1977).

The new law on higher education takes this process of academic de-differentiation to a higher stage, rejecting state responsibility for the level of departments and faculties and lumping them together in so-called 'domains' ('domeinen'). Of course this process is represented as an increase of the 'freedom' of the universities – as increasing 'deregulation', 'flexibility' and 'innovative capacities' – and as a measure to cut down on bureaucracy.³⁹ So, the Dutch state will in the future no longer take any responsibility for the supply of any specific 'educational services'. When future university managers, for instance, would decide that education in foreign languages is no longer needed in the Netherlands, then education in foreign languages in the Netherlands would simply vanish.⁴⁰

This silent abandonment of state responsibility for the supply of 'educational services' – as always cloaked as increasing 'steering at a distance' and as increasing 'freedom and flexibility' – is reflected in the change in the mode of state control. The Dutch system of educational 'quality control' is now developing into a two layered process, in which the educational institutions themselves organize the first layer of direct control followed by a second layer of 'meta-control' – yes indeed: the central national control over local controls. The new law on higher education states that the Ministry of Education will restrict itself to this type of 'meta-control', just like it will delegate all controls of 'efficiency' to the local managers and restrict itself to the control of 'macro-efficiency'. ('macro-doelmatigheid' is the new Dutch buzzword).⁴¹ It is not hard to predict that in the future a third – European – layer of 'meta-meta-control' will be installed on top of this control apparatus, by which the national controls will be controlled. Although occasionally the text of the new law pays the usual lip service to 'reducing the costs of bureaucracy', these costs will predictably rise further – at the expense of the faculty.⁴²

This increase of managerial costs is, among other things, connected to the planned 'decomposition' of the faculty and the planned increase in 'Human Resource Management'. This HRM-plan aims at the further take over of control over professional standards and amounts to nothing less

³⁹ Wet Hoger Onderwijs, 5 – 10.

⁴⁰ This example is not unrealistic because in the 1990's the Dutch Ministry of Education itself formulated this proposal in order to cut down on costs.

⁴¹ Wet Hoger Onderwijs

⁴² This Orwellian inversion of reality – managers hiding their own financial interests and costs – is also a general characteristic of managerial discourse. For the situation in the UK see Andrew Laird, 'The Wrong Idea of the University', 2: 'The most preposterous claim the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency, CL) has made is that it wants to cut back on bureaucracy and red tape in universities'.

than the intentional and total 'decomposition' of the academic profession. This 'decomposition' is, as everything in the managerial cosmos, not seen as an event but as an ongoing 'process' – leading to a planned 'reconsideration of academic scholarship' – and the process is only at its very beginning⁴³:

'It has been questioned', according to CHEPS-author Egbert de Weert, 'whether the present system of academic ranks and chairs, based on criteria derived from research performance is still appropriate or whether this should not be replaced by a more flexible system that acknowledges different task components'. Instead of the 'traditional' academic orientation on research the 'modern' university is advised to create 'task packages that encompass a broader terrain than teaching and research'.⁴⁴ (sic, CL).

This decomposition of the former faculty tasks has the obvious advantage that it will bring more management and more managerial control: 'The model gives an impetus to human resource management, whereby agreements concerning task assignments and results, staff assessment and appraisal schemes, as well as merit pay constitute the core components'.⁴⁵ Of course no financial figures of management costs are ever supplied.⁴⁶

So, to all appearances, the process of de-professionalisation and de-skilling of the faculty, also taking place in some other countries, will have been completed in 2007 in the Netherlands.⁴⁷ This most threatening and disturbing fact is somewhat obscured by the circumstance that quite a few members of the managerial class carry academic degrees themselves.

Similar shifts of power from the professionals to the managers have been going on in the area of health care where medical doctors are directly controlled by health care management that determines their medi-

⁴³ According to De Weert, *op.cit.*, 99, this process is still in its 'prenatal stage'.

⁴⁴ De Weert, *op.cit.*, 98.

⁴⁵ De Weert, *op.cit.*, 98. Compare for the UK Laird, 'Wrong idea of university', 3, citing Bruce Charlton, 'The stated goal of improving teaching was and is simply a convenient excuse for imposing top-down regulation of academics by managers. QAA is taking this further'.

⁴⁶ The denial of its own material interests is a general characteristic of managerial discourse, showing interesting historical parallels with the identical denial by the managers of the former communist parties under the conditions of 'state socialism'. Max Weber already identified this characteristic as inherent in all bureaucratic organizations.

⁴⁷ See Keith Roberts and Karen Donahue 'Professing professionalism: bureaucratization and deprofessionalization in the academy', *Sociological Focus* 33 (2000), (4), 365–383; Jim Barry and Mike Dent, 'New Public Management and the professions in the UK. Reconfiguring control?', in: Dent, Chandler and Berry (eds.), *op.cit.*, 7–24.

cal ‘output- parameters’, in the area of justice where Dutch courts now are financed on basis of the number of verdicts ‘produced’, and in the area of the police where parameters have been introduced as to the number of tickets to be ‘produced’ and ‘quota’ as to the types of crimes to be dealt with.

How the ‘managerial colonization’ in higher education functions in practice can be illustrated by the recent reorganization of all the functions in Dutch universities, the so-called *UFO-operation* (‘Universitaire Functie Ordening’ or ‘University Function Management’). During this reorganization all university positions have been redescribed by management in such a way, that they fit in their favorite organization model.⁴⁸

Officially the rationale behind this organization model was to create a greater ‘uniformity’ and a greater ‘flexibility’ of all personnel but *de facto* a new hierarchy was installed in which the managers were officially put at the top of the university organization at all levels. In fact the reorganization was meant to lower the labor costs *for the faculty* because the existing structure was simply *defined* as being ‘top heavy’. This policy is completely in line with the constant lowering of the salaries of the faculty beginning since the mid 1980’s and the constant shifting of professional costs of the faculty – related to traveling, publishing, conferencing and the like – from the employers to the employees.⁴⁹ This trend appears to be to be international – with the Dutch case simply being ahead of other European countries – because a similar trend is manifesting itself recently in Germany and in France.⁵⁰

A ‘more balanced mix of positions’ was needed according to management, basically implying – given the assumption of being ‘top heavy’ – a general down scaling of the faculty. The model used – the so-called Hay-method – basically repositioned all functions on basis of the number of persons who were managed by its incumbent, so it was pretty predict-

⁴⁸ The Association of Dutch Universities – the VSNU – informed the faculty that the reorganization would be based on the Hay –method, recently rediscovered for the public domain but sadly outdated for the rest of society. Hay’s Guide Chart-Profile Method is based on three factors: know-how, problem solving and accountability. Person-focused analyses tend to examine a person’s work in relational terms – to whom she / he reports, whom he / she supervises. The Hay system is person-focused. Positions are classified in 31 levels and ranked between Level 1 and Level 31 according to their HR Points.

⁴⁹ In the Netherlands the effects of shifting professional costs to the faculty have been severe because from 2000 onwards these costs stopped to be tax deductible for the faculty.

⁵⁰ In Germany in 2004 the salaries of the professors have been seriously lowered and have been connected to ‘achievement indicators’ – especially the ‘achievement’ of mobilizing money in the market. For France see Pierre Jourde, ‘L’université française est morte’, in: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 2003.

able that the managers would end on top because they are managing *everyone*. Last but not least: the salary scales were rescheduled accordingly.

The UFO-reorganization produced a decrease in the budget for the faculty and an increase in the budget for the non-faculty within the university budget. This shift was only to be expected because whoever says management essentially means bureaucracy (recognizable by its formal procedures, presently advertised as ‘accountability’, and its craze for paper documentation, now advertised as ‘transparency’). Therefore the typical anti-bureaucratical phraseology of management discourse is both cynical and hypocritical.⁵¹

The first major problem with UFO was that as far as the faculty was concerned, there was no fit at all between the model and reality. Most functions and tasks of the faculty were described in the model in such a way, that they bore little or no similarity to what faculty members *actually* did. Faculty members (so-called ‘Universitaire docent’ or assistant-professors), some of whom had been teaching independently for decades, were suddenly informed that according to their new job description they could only go on teaching after submitting plans on paper (for teaching and for research) to and approval on paper of their immediate superior in rank. These are supposed to check whether these plans ‘fit’ in the latest managerial ‘mission statement’ and they in turn are checked by the dean (who in turn is checked by the board of directors).⁵² So, remark-

⁵¹ See for similar conclusions for the UK: Bruce Charlton, ‘Audit, accountability, quality and all that. The growth of managerial technologies in UK universities’, in: Stephen Prickett and Patricia Erskine-Hill (eds.), *Education! Education! Education! – Managerial ethics and the law of unintended consequences*, (Thorverton 2002).

⁵² This is a concrete example of the process of de-skilling and of de-professionalisation of the faculty by university management. For the Netherlands see also Gerard van Tillo, *Dit volk siert zich met een toga. Achtergronden van het academisch onbehagen (Backgrounds of the academic discomfort)* Amsterdam 2005. For France see Luigi Del Buono a.o. *Livre Noir sur les universités françaises (Black book on the French universities)*, Paris 2003. For the Germany see: Wolfgang Löwer, ‘Normen zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Arbeit’ (Norms that guarantee sound academic quality), in: *Wissenschaftsrecht* 33 (2000), (3), 220 – 242.

For the UK see: Charlton, ‘Audit, accountability, quality and all that’; Richard F. Gombrich, ‘British higher education policies in the last twenty years; the murder of a profession’, at <http://www.atm.damtp.cam.ac.uk/people/mem/papers/LHCE/uk-higher-education.html>; Aidan Foster-Carter, ‘Deliver us from the quality police’, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 27 March 1998; Michael Loughlin, ‘Audititis...whatever that means’, in: *Times Higher Education Supplement*, March 22, 2002, 20; Frank Furedi, ‘Why the QAA should RIP’ at <http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/0000002D210.htm>; Macalpine and Marsh, *Perversity and absurdity in ‘high’ managerialism: the role of management educators*, Paper presented to 3rd International Conference on Connecting Learning and Critique, Queens’ College, Cambridge, July 2002.

ably, the ‘academic freedom’ of the faculty – the backbone of the traditional, Humboldtian idea of the university – has already been abolished in the Netherlands without *any* public discussion and without *any* official announcement simply by adopting the ideology of the ‘knowledge economy’.

Another problem with UFO was that it was management and not the faculty that decided who would fit in where – without providing a shred of justification for their reshuffling of the faculty. So after talking about ‘achievement’ and ‘output’ for some twenty years, managers did not pay much attention to any of the *actual* ‘achievements’ of faculty members and simply claimed a free hand reordering ‘their’ universities. They simply ‘filled in’ their organizational schemes, using this self created opportunity to remunerate their ‘allies’ and to punish their ‘foes’ among faculty members.

This case study in ‘managerial colonization’ also provides a clear example of how ‘modern’ management keeps university personnel in a state of permanent reorganization in order to extend its control.⁵³ Predictably the UFO resulted in a tremendous frustration and waste of time of the faculty and an avalanche of complaints and appeal procedures of faculty members because they had arbitrarily been ‘repositioned’ – all in the name of ‘efficiency’. Compared to for instance Germany and the US it is striking that the very idea of self governance by the faculty has *completely* disappeared from Dutch higher education discourse. Dutch professors nowadays are at best seen as belonging to ‘middle management’.

So, in summary, one could say that both the recent UFO-reorganization and the new law on higher education have made abundantly clear that the faculty in the Dutch universities *itself* has turned into a UFO in the *original* sense, that is into an ‘Unidentified Flying Object’.

5. *The political priority of saving policy, whatever the costs*

The fifth peculiarity of Dutch higher education policies in a comparative European perspective is the radical nature of Dutch saving policies, exemplified by the near bottom position of the Netherlands in the EU in terms of the percentage of its state budget spent on education, especially on higher education. This peculiarity can be illustrated by the Dutch government’s actual handling of the ‘Europeanization’ of its system of higher education since Bologna. Although the verbal dedication of Dutch policymakers to European ideals and decision-making is usually

⁵³ For the notion of ‘managerial colonization’ see Dent, Chandler and Berry, ‘Introduction: Questioning the New Public Management’, in: idem (eds.), *op.cit.*, 2.

flawless, this dedication stops right there where European guidelines demand a *higher* financial commitment from the Dutch state than the existing level.

A good example of this Dutch peculiarity is the duration of the master's cycle as introduced by the Bologna Declaration. Although the masters cycle in the future EU – model will take two years – depending on the length of the bachelors-cycle – the Dutch policymakers simply avoid to discuss this aspect of the future European model. The reason for this refusal is obviously a financial one because the EU-norms would commit the Netherlands universities to an extension of the existing duration of the master's course by one year. So where clinging to uniform European norms clashes with the Dutch saving policies, European uniformity is silently but decidedly sacrificed. This even holds true now increasing problems have been signalized with the European recognition of Dutch master's degrees because of their shorter duration.⁵⁴

Characteristically, the solution for this self created problem by the Dutch state is *not* sought in the *only* logical direction of extension of the masters cycle, but in transferring the final responsibility for financing education to the institutions of higher education themselves. This (financially motivated) 'trick' is the same one that the Dutch state played on the universities with the introduction of the concept of 'steering at a distance' in the 1980's. The 'autonomy' granted to the universities at that time was mainly the autonomy to cut its own budgets.⁵⁵ This probably is one of the major reasons why the present Dutch government is in such a hurry to adopt the new law on higher education (and wants to privatize all public institutions of higher education as soon as possible) and why the Dutch organization of university managers – the VSNU – is opposing this idea openly (although not the idea of privatization as such).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Wet Hoger Onderwijs, 28. The problems to get the Dutch masters degrees recognized outside Dutch borders has been signalized both by the European Universities Association and by the Educational Inspection (Inspectie van het Onderwijs), but this has *not* had led to an adaptation to the European norm. In Dutch higher education discourse normal logic simply remains subordinated to economic logic.

⁵⁵ This is even admitted by one of the Dutch architects of 'steering at a distance', Kickert, *op.cit.*, 135–157. See 145: 'Education, particularly university education, was a low financial priority, and universities had to cope with a large increase in student enrolments while their budgets both in relative and absolute terms decreased'. See also 144: '[-] the need to economize played a role. The responsibility to decide how savings were to be made was delegated to the institutions themselves. They were in effect granted the power to perform painful cut-back operations on themselves – not the most desirable autonomy one could imagine'.

⁵⁶ VSNU, Een nieuwe wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Onderzoek? Position paper VSNU, 10 June 2005.

6. *The political preference for ‘talking up quality’*

The last peculiarity of Dutch higher education policy discourse is its permanent preference for ‘talking up quality’. Dutch policy makers always express their ambition of the Netherlands to belong to ‘the top’ (of the EU, of Europe, of the West, and of the world). ‘We are internationally ahead of all others’, the chairman of the organisation of university managers (VSNU) stated in the year 2000 in an interview; ‘Students from abroad will flock to us because of our quality’.⁵⁷ Dutch policy makers also claim to be the new Columbuses in the domain of higher education with their version of the NPM-concept and its heavy use of output control-mechanisms⁵⁸.

As far as the *facts* are concerned, there is no basis for Dutch managerial ‘talking up quality’ whatsoever. The Dutch universities (being heavily underfinanced since the 1980’s, almost at the bottom of the OESO’s-ranking of national higher education budgets per capita and having lost more than 30% of its faculty positions since the 1980’s⁵⁹), do *not* belong to *any* of the known rankings of the European top – and even less of the world top.⁶⁰ On closer analysis Dutch managerial ‘talking up quality’ is essentially economically motivated and a ‘communications’ and public relations discourse based on a glaring denial of the relevant facts.⁶¹ In essence Dutch ‘talking up quality’ is the modern manifestation of a traditional Dutch character trait: the wish to reap benefits without having to pay for them. (‘voor een dubbeltje op de eerste rang willen zitten’). Characteristically too, when ‘talking up quality’ occasionally comes into

⁵⁷ Interview with R. Meijerink, ‘Wij liggen internationaal op kop’, Ad Valvas 20 January 2000, 4. In *fact* Dutch universities rank at the bottom region of the EU when it comes to attracting foreign students, so this statement is simply false.

⁵⁸ See esp. Kickert, op.cit.

⁵⁹ For the figures concerning the reduction of the faculty see: de Weert, op.cit, 95. It is quite typical for the self-referential character of Dutch higher education discourse that it is also immune to critique of the OECD-reports on Dutch policies. See Kickert, op.cit, 154 – 5.

⁶⁰ The most recent (2005) Top 500 World Universities, published by the Institute of Higher Education of the Sjanhai Jiao Tong University, contains just 2 Dutch universities in its top hundred: the University of Utrecht on place nr. 41, on par with the UCLA at Davis, and Leiden University on nr. 72. The Shanghai ranking of Top 100 European Universities contains 8 Dutch universities: on place nr. 6 (Utrecht U.), nr. 22 (Leiden U), 2 shared positions on nr. 35 – 56 (Amsterdam U. and Groningen U.), 3 shared positions on nr. 57 – 79 (Erasmus U., Free U. Amsterdam, and Wageningen U.) and 2 shared positions on nr. 80 – 123 (Delft U. and Nijmegen U.).

The most recent ranking of the world’s top 200 universities by The Higher Education Supplement, 28 October 2005, contains 4 Dutch universities in its top hundred but none in its top 50: Delft U. at nr. 53, Rotterdam U. at nr. 57, Amsterdam U. at 58 and Eindhoven U. at nr. 70. Leiden U. that has been trying to foster a self-image as ‘Harvard in Holland’, is sadly located on place nr. 135.

⁶¹ See also ‘Hoezo Kenniseconomie?’, NRC-Handelsblad 3 October 2005.

contact with reality, this clash is represented in terms of an ‘image problem’ to be solved by *more* intensive communicative strategies.⁶²

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, to all appearances the Dutch higher education system will retain most of its present peculiarities also after the Bologna Declaration. In contrast to other EU-countries like e.g. Germany, in the Netherlands the Bologna Process only represents an extension on a European scale of the neo-liberal policies that have been ‘implemented’ from the 1980’s onwards. These policies can be summarized under the labels of commodification of knowledge, the marketization of higher education, the enlargement of scale as the primary policy to cut down costs, and – last but not least – the ‘managerial colonization’ of higher education and the simultaneous de-professionalisation of the faculty in the name of a new ‘professionalism’.

Basically the Dutch model represents a radical variant of NPM, although Dutch policymakers usually claim originality and a vanguard role in this respect. I have found no factual grounds for their claim that this line of policy actually enhances the international ‘competitiveness’ of higher education in any way. To all appearances the dismantling of the time worn institution of the research university – including the academic professions – rather points in the opposite direction.

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Abstract

On June 19th. 1999 the joint ministers of education of the EU countries issued a statement which has become known as the Bologna Declaration. Although the declaration itself was only one and a half page long, its impact on the educational landscape of Europe is generally seen as enormous, because it contained a blueprint for *one* unified EU-wide educational system based on "the Anglo-Saxon model". So with some justification, the Bologna Treaty has been presented as the beginning of a new phase in the history of European integration.

In this article I argue, however, that this picture of a "brand new start" in Bologna is completely misleading as far as the Netherlands are concerned. The continuities in Dutch educational policies before and after the Bologna Declaration are far more striking than its discontinuities.

In the first part of the article I go into the Bologna Declaration and its accompanying policy statements, like the Paris and the Lisbon Declarations. I argue that the economic definitions of higher education in these EU-policy statements are basically the same as the definitions followed by the (neo-liberal) World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT) – and GATS – the General Agreement of Trade in Services – in particular. I also argue that this line of policy basically endangers democratic control over higher education.

In the second part of this article I go into the anticipation of the neo-liberal conception of higher education in the Netherlands. Beginning in the early 1980's successive Dutch governments had already embarked on a policy course, in which higher education was basically seen and handled primarily in economic terms and was seen in its function for the 'knowledge economy'. This conception can be traced to so-called 'New Public Management' policy. I analyze these continuities concentrating on: 1. the representation of (higher) education as a 'product' like any other; 2. the representation of educational institutions as "enterprises" like any other, fundamentally obeying to the economies of scale; 3. the transformation of all notions of academic "quality" into quantifiable "output" indicators; and 4. the central importance of managerial control mechanisms.

The article argues that the general relevance of the 'Dutch model' for other EU-countries lies in the fact that the Dutch case broadly foreshadows what will happen to other EU-countries when Bologna policies will be put into practice.