



COUNTRY REPORT – the Netherlands
Social competences in Dutch higher education
Intellectual Output 7

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CHEPS, University of Twente

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1. Preface

Higher education's role in society has two major aspects: it is to contribute to a skilled workforce in economies that have shifted to knowledge-intensiveness, that stand before the 4th Industrial Revolution and that are plagued by almost-insurmountable external problems of demography and environmental change. Higher education must increase its role in turning cutting-edge knowledge to innovations in the economy to address this new and rapidly developing context. At the same time, these problems point to the second role of higher education, namely to prepare students to take up their place in society as thought leaders for the future. In Europe, this means not only participating in a necessarily multicultural society due to its centuries of divisive national languages and animosities, but also due to its welcoming newcomers to avoid greying and shrinking populations. All of this, while maintaining the benefits and values of the democratic, civic society that characterises the best of Europe. No wonder then, that agendas in European higher education focus on modernising it for innovation, employability and economic benefit, as well as on emphasising the social competences that all in society but higher education graduates eminently must possess to maintain cohesive and civic societies.

The Erasmus+ project 'Development, assessment and validation of social competences in higher education' (DASCHE; see <http://dasche.eu/>) underlines the need for such higher education's attending to social competences, understanding it as a realization of the mission of responsible universities and answering the idea of responsible teaching and learning. The context of the DASCHE project is created mostly by the European Higher Education Area, which sees preparation for life as active citizens in a democratic society is one of the main purposes of higher education. EU strategies equally emphasise the need for social competences of higher education graduates, such as the European Qualifications Framework's third pillar 'competences: autonomy and responsibility' (besides the two pillars knowledge and skills), and the EU reference framework of key competences for lifelong learning.

DASCHE partners researched the situation regarding social competences in higher education across six countries. The report before you constitutes the national study of the Netherlands in this framework. It follows the structure agreed for these national reports in the project.



2. Abbreviations and acronyms

NCP	National coordination office (of the NLQF)
NLQF	Netherlands' qualifications framework
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
UAS	University of Applied Sciences
VH	Association of UAS
VSNU	Association of universities
WHW	Higher Education and Research Law



3. Methods: Case selection and methodology

This national report is from one of the six case countries that participate in the DASCHE project. While the set of six countries admittedly constitute a convenience sample, they vary from East to West in Europe, and they represent different higher education traditions. The Netherlands may be typified as having a pre-WWII tradition of universities in the Humboldt tradition, mixed with some elements from the French profession-oriented *écoles polytechniques* (now part of the Grands Écoles) since the establishment in 1851 of what now is the Technical University Delft. After WWII, British and especially US role model universities affected the outlooks of Dutch academics.

Based on the sketch of the developments around social competences in Dutch higher education in the following sections, three case higher education institutions have been selected to study some topical issues in-depth. The basic methodological consideration has been to aim for variety across cases on the independent variables (Eckstein, 1975; Yin, 2003). This resulted in: two research universities and one UAS; study programmes in hard sciences (engineering), social sciences and humanities (SSH), and arts; two cases of different implementation of social competences in the regular curriculum and one on honours education.

Research methods in each of the cases and regarding the national framework included, primarily, document study and, secondarily, interviews (individual as well as group interviews).

4. Higher education in the Netherlands: Two times two types

4.1 Two types: Academic and professional characters

Higher education in the Netherlands has been integrated in the Bologna Process ever since 1999, hence it is compliant with the three-cycle structure (plus short-cycle programmes) laid down in the documents around the Bologna Process. However, a Dutch flavour is given to the degrees—we focus on the two main cycles: bachelor education (first cycle, EQF Level 6) and master education (second cycle, EQF Level 7).

The specific flavours depend on the division of higher education in the Netherlands into research-driven, academic education, mainly provided by institutions carrying the name of universities, and professionally-oriented education, which is mainly taught in universities of applied science (UAS). When closing this report in 2019, only universities have the right to award PhD degrees (third cycle; EQF Level 8); only UAS provide associate degrees (Level 5); while both types award bachelor and master degrees (Levels 6, 7).

Thus, Dutch higher education distinguishes between professional and academic bachelors, and likewise between academic and professional masters. Academic education is based in research and is '...directed to independent exercise of science or to professional application

of scientific knowledge...’ (WHW,¹ art. 1.1c). It focuses in principle on research careers, although the overwhelming majority of university graduates do not enter university or research institute jobs after graduation. Professionally-oriented education in UAS is meant to prepare students for the non-academic labour market and is ‘...directed to transmission of scientific knowledge and development of competences in close connection to professional practice’ (WHW, art. 1.1.d).

University education is usually deemed to be complete only at the master level; university bachelors are not often used as entry grades into the labour market (though it is neither impossible nor unknown). In contrast, professionally-oriented higher education usually terminates at the bachelor level; professional masters are rare in most fields. UAS bachelors regularly continue their education in university masters (a route which often requires them to take 30 EC or 60 EC pre-master programmes to qualify).

University bachelor programmes take 180 EC; normal entry into them is with a six-year secondary school degree. UAS bachelor programmes take 240 EC, but then they can be entered with a five-year secondary school diploma (see Figure 1). Master programmes usually comprise 60 EC; in special areas like advanced nursing, natural sciences, engineering, medicine and dentistry 120 EC or more.

Universities enrol about 30% of new entrants in higher education (2017: 173,000²), while the remaining 70% opt for UAS study programmes (2017: 431,000) (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2018).

¹ WHW is the 1992 Higher Education and Research Law, see: <http://wetten.overheid.nl>.

² Figures include publicly-funded higher education institutions only.

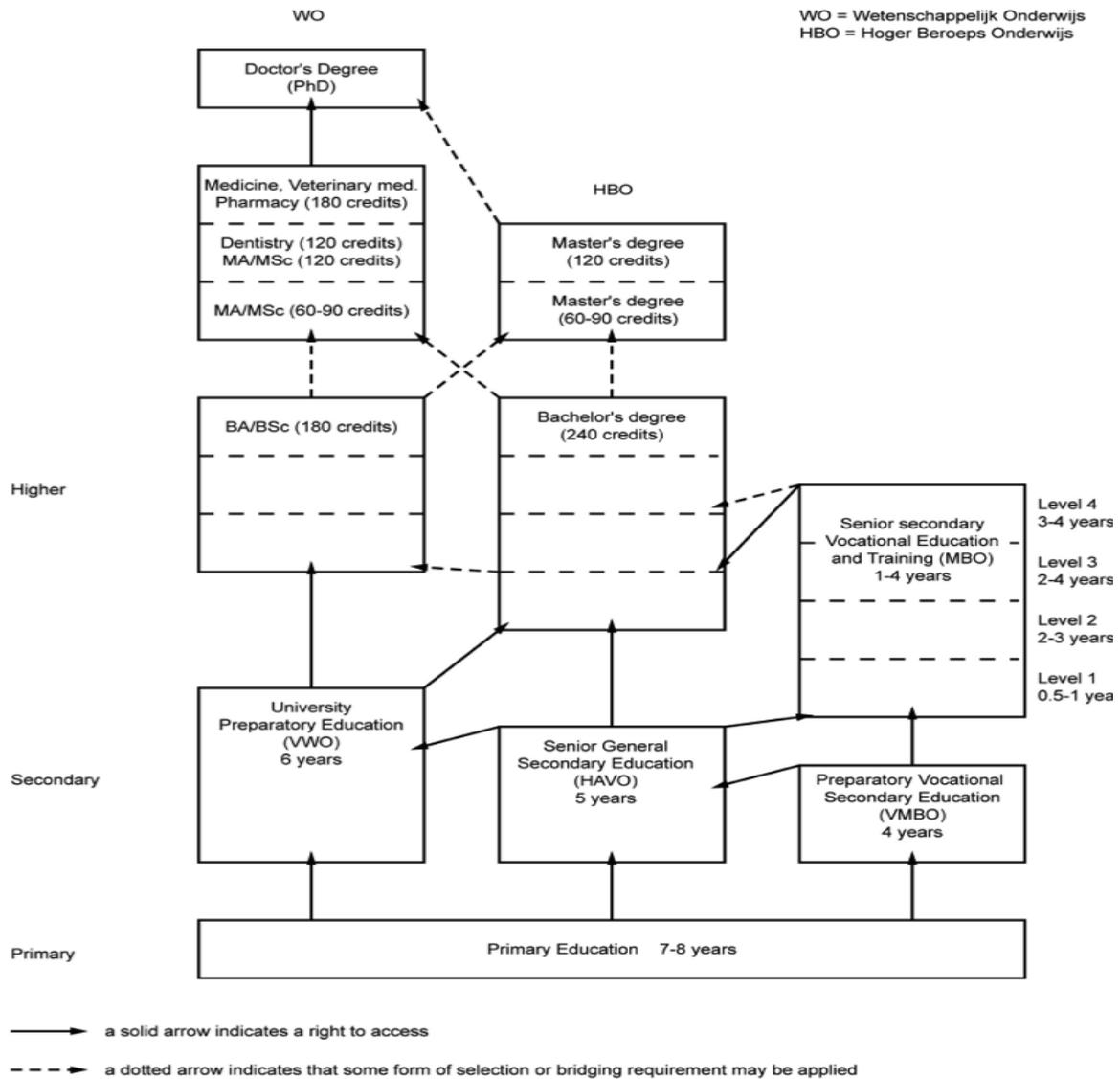


Figure 1 Education system of the Netherlands

4.2 Two types: Publicly-funded and privately-funded higher education

All higher education institutions in the Netherlands are, in principle, organisations largely governed by private law. All higher education institutions need public recognition before they may operate; all study programmes need accreditation by the state agency NVAO before they may award official (associate, bachelor, master or doctoral) degrees. Accordingly, it is not possible to distinguish public from private higher education from this legal perspective. The main difference in the Higher education law (WHW) is between publicly-funded higher education institutions and those that are merely recognised but not funded from the public purse.

The WHW lists seventeen universities, four of which are small-scale seminary-type institutions that train protestant ministers and their humanist counterparts. As a rule, then, the public sector of universities is pictured as having thirteen members: nine more or less comprehensive ones offering education in many disciplines and hosting between 10,000 and 33,000 students, as well as four universities specialised in engineering (including agricultural

engineering). One of the comprehensive universities is a distance-education institution. Universities usually have a single campus or are located in a single city.

The publicly-funded UAS sector counts 36 institutions, the largest of which count over 44,000 students and which consist of up to almost 30 separate campuses in several towns, spread across a large region of the country. At the other extreme some teacher training colleges and art academies exist with a couple of hundreds of students in a single building.

Figures about institutions and students in the private sector are hard to come by. There are about three dozen of institutions recognised for offering bachelor degrees in specific niches, such as management, as well as a smaller number of larger institutions. Most of the latter are active in distance and online education; they cater mainly for part-time, post-experience learners and offer other courses in (continued) vocational training besides bachelor-degree programmes. There is one private business university, Nyenrode.

The higher education institutions in each sector have united to form representative organisations, e.g. to negotiate as collective employers with national trade unions about collective employment contracts, or to lobby with the political system, but also to organise collectively for quality assurance, defining qualifications frameworks. The universities' organisation is the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (Dutch abbreviation: VSNU); the UAS have the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Science (Dutch abbreviation: VH), while 40 privately-funded providers³ of higher education make up the higher education division of the Netherlands Council for Training and Education (Dutch abbreviation: NRTO).

4.3 Unified quality assurance

Accreditation of all degree programmes awarding associate, bachelor or master degrees is unified under the NVAO, as the sole agency that may accredit them (WHW, chapter 5), although the actual evaluations for accreditation may be performed by many different agencies (EQAR-registered and others). The monopoly position of the NVAO pertains to legal consequences of accreditation. The legal consequences aim to make the playing field between publicly-funded and other recognised higher education institutions as level as possible:

- Only accredited study programmes may award associate, bachelor or master degrees (separate accreditation decisions for each level required);
- Students enrolled in an accredited programme of any higher education institution qualify equally for student grants or loans;
- All accredited programmes in publicly-funded higher education institutions count towards determining the amount of their government basic grant (Jongbloed, de Boer, Kaiser, & Vossensteyn, 2018).

³ Some of these are commercial branches of publicly-funded UAS.



5. National context regarding social competences in higher education

5.1 The higher education law of the Netherlands

Citizenship is an explicit element in primary and early-secondary education, as well as in vocational training (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2016), but the higher education law of the Netherlands (WHW) has nothing to say about the content of curricula in higher education, given the principles of academic freedom (WHW, art. 1.6) and institutional autonomy (Groen, 2017; Louw, 2011). However, the WHW states the broad aims of education in higher education institutions. For universities, next to the research-based orientation (WHW, art. 1.1.c), it states that through their education they should ‘...transfer knowledge for the benefit of society’ (WHW, art. 1.3.1), while ‘... education also has regard to personal development and encourages social responsibility’ (WHW, art. 1.3.5). With regard to UAS education, the statement in the law is purely limited to professional orientation, as cited above: ‘... transmission of scientific knowledge and development of competences in close connection to professional practice’ (WHW, art. 1.1.d).

In sum, the law does not say much about social competences explicitly, certainly not for the majority of students in UAS. However, by regulating that students constitute part of the governance councils of study programmes and of the higher education institutions in which they study, the national framework stimulates actual involvement in active citizenship at least for these student representatives. In addition, many higher education institutions have begun to include non-voting student assessors in their executive board and in faculty-level management boards, following student protests in 2015 in Amsterdam, which demanded more student influence on university governance (HOP/PV, 2015). Moreover, students can gain an additional year of state-supported student loans or grants if they participate in the governance of their higher education institutions, student associations and similar university-related organisations (Kaiser et al., 2018b).

5.2 Social Competences in the National Qualifications Framework

The Netherlands’ qualifications framework (NLQF) aims to codify all formal and non-formal qualifications systematically fitting with the European qualifications framework, in eight levels. According to the National Coordination Office (NCP) for the NLQF, vocational training and higher education qualifications together make up 2% of all qualifications in the system (Pijls, van der Sanden, & Dashorst, 2018). Their primary focus is on the labour market relevance of the qualifications, especially those below the higher education levels (5–8) which are relatively well-organised and internationally recognisable anyway thanks to the Bologna Process etcetera (Broek, Buischool, Huisman, & Hendriks, 2017). Both in the NCP-NLQF’s work and in the formulations of the NLQF, social competences beyond the work-related competences are treated summarily (Nationaal Coördinatiepunt NLQF, 2018).

Most relevant are two sets of competences, first the one on learning and development. From Level 5 upwards, spontaneously-initiated reflection is expected, which happens largely autonomously from Level 7 upwards, and which should lead to ‘technological, social or

cultural advances for society’ at Level 8. The other concerns the competence of responsibility and independence. In this regard, from Level 6 upwards, wider aspects are to play a role, i.e. ‘to form an opinion that is also based on weighing relevant social, societal, professional, scientific or ethical aspects’. Yet even at the top level, Level 8, the ‘scientific integrity’ that is demanded is connected with ‘a complex fundamental research project’ –not with the person’s functioning in society broadly.

In the 2017 review of the functioning of the NLQF, the evaluators proposed amongst other things to make the legal foundation of the qualifications framework more solid, and to improve the communication around it (Broek et al., 2017), but they did not recommend any broadening of the level descriptors.

5.3 Competences in the Strategic Agenda for Higher Education

Beyond regulation, policy is also formed by white papers. While the regulations mentioned until now may be seen as the static part of the government’s frameworks for higher education, the dynamic element comes from the white papers. As a rule, every minister of education produces what is currently called a *strategic agenda* for higher education in the next decade or so, to give direction to developments. Accordingly, papers sketching intended strategic developments appear about every four years.

The role of strategic agendas in policy around social competences was explained by the minister in a letter to the parliament (Minister OCW, 2017):

The Minister does not prescribe any substantive frameworks or core objectives for citizenship and Bildung in higher education. It is up to the institutions themselves to determine how they fulfil this task. This fits in with a system in which institutions have a large degree of autonomy. However, the government emphasises its importance and encourages institutions to pay attention to it. In the Strategic Agenda for Higher Education 2015-2025, the Minister announces various measures to promote attention to this theme in education.

The latest strategic agenda at the moment of writing was the 2015 one, called ‘The value(s) of knowing’, which names as socially-relevant goals that higher education should be at the ‘heart of society’, stressing higher education’s contribution to sustainable regional and sectoral developments and to stronger links with the labour market (Minister van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2015). And while higher education was not mentioned in relation to the sub-category of citizenship education in recent policy (Minister van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2019), the strategic agenda referred to ‘socialisation’ and ‘forming of personality’ next to qualification for the labour market as making up the ‘traditional formative task’ of higher education (Minister van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2015, p. 22), thus emphasising broad education also at the tertiary level.

The concept of contributing to sustainable regional development is not specified very much, for not wanting to enforce a certain *grand design*, but rather wishing to stimulate higher education institutions to become more responsive to their environment—and environments differ from each other (Minister van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2015, p. 65). With environment, the minister thinks of the higher education institution’s ‘ecosystem’ of other

schools (secondary, vocational training, etc.), social organisations such as local governments, hospitals, neighbourhood shops or sports clubs. ‘And the business world too has indicated it wants to be more actively involved in education, more to be a partner’ (Minister van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2015, p. 62 – author's translation). The latter quote, just like the reference to the labour market in the previous paragraph, is one of many in the strategic agenda stressing employability, connections with the business world, creation of new jobs and start-ups. Entrepreneurship competence seems to permeate the strategic agenda *and the question arises to what extent social competences are understood in the Netherlands rather as entrepreneurialism?* Entrepreneurship competence is mentioned in the European frameworks indeed, but in addition to—not as part of—personal, social and learning to learn competence and citizenship competence. The stress on employment and entrepreneurialism fits in the dominant discourse since the rise of neo-liberalism, which has been in terms of employability in the knowledge economy. In many public statements of politicians, decision makers, and opinion leaders, students in vocational training and higher education have been exhorted to choose an education that offers career prospects, to stay away from ‘fun studies’ like arts, away from the social sciences and humanities (SSH) that traditionally enrolled most students. And while students’ college choice process remains largely unpredictable, after decades of information campaigns, the number of students enrolling in science and technology studies have increased from 20% to 25% between 2011 and 2017.⁴ We will follow this up in our choice of case studies by contrasting a STEM-area study with one in the arts.

5.4 Broad education taken broadly

The relevance of higher education is perceived among Dutch stakeholders as consisting of three interrelated dimensions: socialisation (social competences), personal development, and qualification (employment-related), although in particular student organisations recognise that the three sometimes may clash rather than correlate with each other. Most stakeholders agree that in recent years that in practice the focus has been on the employment dimension (Kaiser et al., 2018a). However, since the economic crisis that started in 2008 has turned into economic growth again, and ‘under influence of social issues, such as radicalisation and populism, the broad higher education sector realised that the strong focus on economic development was not sufficient for a sustainable development of society. For this also active citizenship and personal development are important’ (Kaiser et al., 2018a, p. 90). This put the question of broad education back on the agenda, and the concept most often associated with that in Dutch higher education has been *Bildung*.

5.4.1 University Bildung

The fact that there is hardly any explicit attention to social competences in Dutch higher education regulation does not mean that higher education in the country ignores them. On the contrary: the vague statement in the WHW that ‘... education also has regard to personal

⁴ Own calculations from 1CijferHO figures, taken from VH and VSNU websites (2018-12); see also (Kaiser et al., 2018a).



development and encourages social responsibility' (WHW, art. 1.3.5)⁵ is rooted in a long-standing tradition of seeing university education in the Humboldtian tradition (as it is understood in this country) of *Bildung*. The term is hardly ever translated into Dutch and may be taken to mean general development of all of an individual's qualities regarding personal development and socialisation. *Bildung* therefore implies not only knowledge but an attitude of intellectual freedom, i.e. autonomy, and moral self-determination (Krijnen, 2013). Scientific-critical thinking in all questions of life is therefore the basis of *Bildung*—it may well require education in the liberal arts rather than in a single discipline. The Minister of Education had it formulated as: 'In the 21st century "Bildung" stands for: a deep understanding of the world, having a strong moral compass and empathy, opening new horizons in terms of thinking and doing, and self-development through curiosity and critical thinking capacities' (Minister van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2015, p. 6).

The term is often contrasted with *Ausbildung*, i.e. narrow vocational training focused on skills and on job-related knowledge in the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). *Bildung* goes against the neo-liberal knowledge economy and against purely employability-oriented curricula that seem to assume that the labour market 'is predictable and stable, and as if all studies train for a specific job' (Krijnen, 2013, p. 63 – author's translation).

How is the *Bildung* idea realised in current universities in the Netherlands?⁶ It has to be realised that most study programmes in Dutch higher education are single-discipline studies, e.g. physics, chemistry, sociology or history, from day one. Specialisation in scientific disciplines was seen as a problem already since the turn of the 20th century; the future leaders of society—apparently the goal of university education in those days too—required broad education overcoming the increasing fragmentation of knowledge (Luining, 2015; Wachelder, 1993). In the interbellum, this gained the form of extra-curricular lectures and seminars open to all students of a university, about the interconnectedness of science across disciplines, art and religion—harking back to the ideal of Renaissance's *homo universalis*. After 1945, in the general spirit of renewal following the end of World War II, this type of *Studium Generale* was contrasted with professional training, and in the first post-war higher education law of 1960 all universities were obliged to offer a *Studium Generale* (Dorsman, 2006; Luining, 2015). In a curious turn, the 1960 law formulated this as education '... promoting awareness of social responsibility' (Dorsman, 2006) rather than in terms of the Renaissance ideal of unified science. In two universities initiated around the time of the 1960

⁵ Original, in full: 'De instellingen voor hoger onderwijs schenken mede aandacht aan de persoonlijke ontplooiing van hun studenten en de bevordering van hun maatschappelijk verantwoordelijkheidsbesef. De bevordering van maatschappelijk verantwoordelijkheidsbesef houdt ten minste in dat de instellingen, met inbegrip van degenen die hen formeel of informeel vertegenwoordigen, zich onthouden van discriminatoire gedragingen en uitlatingen. De instellingen richten zich in het kader van hun werkzaamheden op het gebied van het onderwijs wat betreft Nederlandstalige studenten mede op de bevordering van de uitdrukkingsvaardigheid in het Nederlands.'

⁶ The focus here on universities does not mean that there is no broad education in UAS. One research group in the largest UAS, Fontys, even has *Bildung* as its theme; it is expressed in three values of 'good work' (Gardner, 2002): personal *engagement*, professional *excellence* and public *ethics*. See (in Dutch): <https://fontys.nl/Innovatie-en-onderzoek/Bildung/Over-project-Bildung.htm>, accessed 2019-12-05.

Higher education law, the technical universities in Eindhoven (1956) and Twente (1961), a different approach was taken; the Twente case will be studied more closely below. In the rest of Dutch higher education, however, since the permissive 1960s, Studium Generale focused on linking academic education to art, society and social-philosophical themes. Dorsman (2006) therefore called it ‘social educative work’ and he saw the implementation of the Studium Generale as a ‘failed breakthrough’. For students, it is a voluntary decision to take part in Studium Generale events or workshops—the offer usually does not amount to coherent courses—which are extra-curricular, and do not carry any credits towards their degrees.

In 2019, the association of Studium Generale bureaus spans all universities, including the specialised, technical universities, and it also contains two UAS.⁷

5.4.2 *Liberal arts and honours education: Diversity, not elitism*

A new approach to broad education arose around the turn of the 21st century. In the spirit of neo-liberalism, attention moved from ‘no student left behind’ (to paraphrase the famous US education policy from the 1960s) towards challenging the best students to excel above the average. The traditional, egalitarian approach had regularly shown successes, e.g. in PISA overviews, where Dutch secondary-school pupils rarely made it to the international top, but their average scores nevertheless were high because there were very few low scores.⁸ Yet egalitarianism was replaced by excellence to create ‘hills above the highland’ (as one metaphor used by politicians had it). In undergraduate education, this took two forms, both influenced by ideas of liberal arts education as perceived to be effective in US higher education. Initially, those broad-based liberal arts studies were seen as exceptional, targeted at highly-talented students (van der Wende, 2011; Wolfensberger, 2015).⁹ At that time, there was some resistance against the ‘elitist’ idea, but when over the years the student selection criteria changed in ever more universities from highly-talented to highly-motivated-and-sufficiently-talented students, the idea caught on.

There are two main forms of this new broad education. One is honours education, additional learning opportunities that go beyond the standard curriculum, as an add-on (extra-curricular), or add-in (intra-curricular). As in the idea of the T-shaped professional (see below) honours education may either deepen the students’ competencies in their own field of study, or broaden towards other fields. Usually, honours education is designed as a

⁷ See: www.studiumgenerale.nl, accessed 2018-11-30.

⁸ Surprisingly, from that cultural point of view, is that secondary education separates pupils into streams for vocational training, UAS and university streams already at age 12. This type of inequality has existed ever since a national education system has existed, i.e. since the mid-19th century (Wachelder, 1993). So it is rather cohesion within the classroom embedded in a society that largely maintained harmony among the (also since the middle 19th century) separated ‘pillars’ along religious/ideological lines (Lijphart, 1990). Separation among pillars was only overcome post-1968.

⁹ Broadening some humanities studies, e.g. ‘exotic’ language and literature programmes, into area studies (e.g. Chinese and Japanese getting subsumed under Asia Studies) must be seen as a separate movement, inspired as much by organisational efficiency motives as by employability motives for students—but is never argued from a *Bildung* perspective.

student input of 30 EC spread over the second or third year of the bachelor study (up to 60 EC, if it covers both years), taught in innovative ways and often in otherwise education-free evening hours.

The other form is a more direct copy of the independent US liberal arts college. In the Netherlands, these are ‘university colleges’ that belong to a normal university but are often physically and always organisationally separated from the main university as a residential college with on-campus student dormitories and a liberal arts curriculum for the full 180 EC of the undergraduate degree programme that spans the broad areas of sciences or engineering on the one hand and SSH on the other. The University of Utrecht started this innovation in 1997, and in 2018, nine universities (all are traditional research universities) have separate liberal arts colleges. Some universities offer liberal arts programmes without the college experience, and practically all universities offer honours education. This includes most of the UAS, though honours and broad education take on a different aspect in that sub-sector.

5.4.3 *T-Shaped professionals and Universities of Applied Sciences*

Given their practice-oriented educational mission, the sub-sector of Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) were not included in the *Bildung* debate until recently. However, in the late 20th century, when UAS developed from high-level vocational training under secondary education regulations to a ‘different but equal’ part of higher education, ideas about employability, preparation for a career rather than for a single job and lifelong learning ideas coalesced in the notion of the ‘T-shaped professional’ i.e. deep knowledge of one’s own focal area of knowledge plus broad knowledge of other areas so as to put their professional work in a social context and to remain flexible as well as develop leadership skills (Tiesenga, 2010). The concept of T-shaped ‘man’ first occurred in the late 1980s, in an article significantly entitled: ‘Scientists Become Managers’ (Johnston, 1989). Career development from content to organisational leadership was the aim—quite in line with the mission of UAS.

One might comment that the T-shaped skills remain limited to ‘utilitarian’ areas of knowledge, useful for professional functioning of the graduate. Civic and social competences do not necessarily get attention, though they are mentioned at least sometimes, e.g. in Tiesenga (2010). His article treats the T-shaped professional in the context of honours education in a UAS; the question arises therefore as to the place of teaching social competences in UAS curricula. To what extent does regular education in UAS remain limited to a career-oriented or workplace-oriented understanding of the T-shape, or to what extent does it, to the contrary, include social competences that are life-wide?

5.4.4 *Social competences and internationalisation*

While it was not seen directly as an instrument for broad education, stakeholders in the Dutch higher education debate recognised that internationalisation, in particular student mobility for credits such as in the Erasmus+ programme, contributed to their personal development (Kaiser et al., 2018a). Besides, and more relevant for the large majority of

students who do not participate in international mobility, *internationalisation at home* through adaptations in the curriculum and through international classrooms also add to students' intercultural competences.

5.5 What counts? Incentives in policies

A famous half-truth holds that 'what gets measured, gets done'. Incentives measured or rewarded in Dutch higher education policy include:

- Study programmes need accreditation to assure their continued recognition, student support, and funding (the latter only affects in public institutions). The accreditation framework, as explained above, does not incentivise broad education (interview N A), however there are some discussion points in the agenda of accreditation visits where employment is discussed, either through the requirement to have a platform for gaining feedback on the curriculum from employers (in UAS as well as in universities) or by looking at employment statistics. This makes students' employability a continuous theme in all study programmes.
- Employment statistics for higher education graduates are collected regularly at the national level by the associations of universities (VSNU) and of the UAS (VH); as a rule, those statistics are presented at the level of areas of knowledge, not broken down to separate study programmes. This is done mainly for reasons of comparability and statistical robustness, as alumni response levels tend to be too low to have sufficient numbers per study programme in many areas. This too puts employability on the agenda in higher education institutions.
- The strongest micro-steering of higher education since the start of the 21st century took place in the performance agreements (2012–2016). The common indicators used in this exercise focused on internal efficiency of higher education institutions, not so much on employment, let alone on other social impacts of graduates. One large impact that may benefit education, is that the performance agreements introduced the norm countrywide that teaching staff must gain certification of their didactical competence. This norm became accepted quickly. Beneficial effects are, however, in the long run and not directly connected with broad education.
- On the contrary, 'policy actors indicate that both personal development and active citizenship are hard to measure' (Kaiser et al., 2018a, p. 98) so that these dimensions of relevance are not explicitly rewarded.
- Social well-being indicators are collected by the national government's statistical bureau, but not connected to separate higher education institutions, even though an individual's level of education is often a strong explanatory background factor.
- As will be mentioned in the section on quality assurance, below, neither programme accreditation criteria nor institutional audit frameworks include graduate impacts on economy or society.

6. Validation of Social Competences in Accreditation

Programme accreditation is the leading principle of external quality assurance, although it can be complemented by institutional audits (NVAO, 2016). The accreditation decision is made by the state agency NVAO, based on an evaluation that follows the NVAO's assessment framework. For programme accreditation, the assessment framework specifies a number of standards—eleven fairly specific standards for an 'extended' accreditation procedure, and four, broader defined, standards for a 'limited' procedure if the institution successfully underwent an institutional audit focusing on institution-wide aspects of quality assurance. The curriculum-related standards (see Table 1) do not mention anything about the content of the curriculum, beyond pointing to vague norms 'level and orientation', 'expectations' of certain stakeholders, and 'appropriate ... skills' (also, interview N A). There is some link to the employment dimension of relevance, in that each study programme must show explicit linkages with contemporary developments in the associated field or profession and in its knowledge domain. However, on the social competences connected with socialisation and personal development, the accreditation framework remains utterly silent (also, interview N A).

Table 1 Curriculum-related accreditation standards

Extended accreditation procedure	Limited accreditation procedure
Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.	Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.
Standard 2: The curriculum enables the students to master appropriate (professional or academic) research and professional skills.	
Standard 3: The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment ... enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
Standard 4: The structure of the curriculum encourages study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	

(Source: NVAO, 2016)

With regard to 'orientation', we are referred back to the law in its distinction among universities and UAS. With regard to 'level', the authoritative source is the Netherlands' qualifications framework, which distinguishes, as in all EHEA countries, (short,) first and second cycle levels.

The Dutch qualifications framework has a more extended set of descriptors at each level than the EQF to which it refers. However, the extension is in the specificity, not in the width of their coverage. The only reference at Level 6, the Cycle One or bachelor-degree level, is to 'learning to learn': 'Develops her-/himself through self-reflection and self-assessment of own (learning) results' (www.nlqf.nl/nlqf-niveaus – author's translation.)

6.1 Field-specific regulation

As an example of a private qualification recognised at Level 6, let us look at the fifteen-page brochure detailing the expected learning outcomes of specialised operation-room nurses. The recent brochure (Opleidingscommissie Operatieassistent/Medewerker Operatieve Zorg, 2018) contains standards for communication, cooperation and ‘social action’, but all of that is meant in the context of the job: communications and cooperation with colleagues in the operation room, as well as communication with and care for patients during and around the operation. In the communication with patients, mention is made of awareness and empathy with patients and their family with their cultural, social and religious norms and values. The curriculum that is specified for these standards, 145 hours (5 EC, out of 680 hours or 24 EC of theoretical courses) are dedicated to ten ‘General supporting subjects’, two of which are ‘communication’ and ‘philosophical orientation and ethics’ – hence we may expect these topic, the only ones that might claim to be a social competences course, will be awarded about 0.5 EC of attention each.

In another Level 6 example, the website for a course on Professional ethics for financial professionals¹⁰ is not as detailed as the previous example, but the online presentation focuses exclusively on competences needed for professional behaviour and communication with clients.

In sum, these examples suggest that broad social competences beyond the immediate professional sphere do not play a role in Dutch educational requirements at Level 6.

7. Case Studies on Social Competences in Higher Education

At the national level, there is little by way of authoritative definition of social competences in higher education in the Netherlands; the Bologna Process did not influence legal missions of different types of higher education institutions. Nor are social competences a conspicuous part of the policy debate around higher education, although there is a public debate about broad education. Broadening students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes is seen as relevant to their careers in the first place, although especially in research universities and in honours education the idea of life-wide *Bildung* is a recurrent theme as well.

The borders between research universities and UAS do not strictly correspond to *Bildung* versus T-shaped professionals. There are UAS that shape their education with the aid of *Bildung* ideas (Schutte & van der Lei, 2018) and equally there are research universities in which T-shape professional ideas contribute to their vision on broad education (see e.g. the University of Twente case, below).

As this debate about social competences is embedded in debates about the higher education curricula as a whole, special units to propagate social competences *per se* do not exist in Dutch universities. At the same time, it should be emphasised that educational innovation

¹⁰ www.ipd-opleidingen.nl/opleidingen/beroepsethiek/226/beroepsethiek-voor-financieel-professionals-efq-niveau-6, accessed 2018-11-12.

has been stimulated in Dutch higher education since the 1960s, with education centres giving pedagogical support (on a voluntary basis) in every research university and since the 1990s also in most large UAS. Currently, such centres often get missions to stimulate excellence in education (learning and teaching). Active and student-centred learning approaches have been fairly widely practiced as a result (Westerheijden & Lugthart, 1999). Also, internships have been common in UAS (obligatory, 30–60 EC) and are not unknown in research universities' first-cycle study programmes (often elective, with minors or international exchange as alternatives, often 15–30 EC). In this way, team-based and communication skills have been integrated into many higher education curricula in the country since long before debates emerged about 21st century skills or social competences.

7.1 Case ArtEZ Institute of the Arts – Entrepreneurialism

7.1.1 *Brief characterisation of ArtEZ*

ArtEZ is a UAS specialised in arts education, with three locations, which give the capitals A-E-Z in the name: Arnhem, Enschede, Zwolle, i.e. three major towns in the eastern region of the Netherlands. Each location is relatively specialised in certain arts; the locations largely complement each other's study programmes rather than duplicate them although there are some study programmes that students can enrol in at several locations; thus there are twenty different degrees awarded, but 31 study programmes (with locally varying specialisations). ArtEZ houses 2,876 students and 435 staff members (ArtEZ, 2016); this makes it a small UAS compared with the broad institutions, but it belongs to the three large arts academies in the Netherlands.¹¹

Like in all UAS in the Netherlands, a large majority of ArtEZ students are enrolled in the ten bachelor-level programmes (2,565 or 89%), 291 entered into nine master-level programmes, and the remaining 20 students follow the two-year associate-degree study (ArtEZ, 2016, p. 74).

Against the principle of unrestricted access that reigns in most of Dutch higher education, art academies select their students through programme-specific procedures focused on their talent and motivation in dance, music, design, or other area, as arts are not part of the standard curriculum in secondary schools.

7.2 Social competences in ArtEZ

7.2.1 *Main competence: Entrepreneurialism*

ArtEZ aims for its students to become graduates who '... know their position and strength, have developed their artistry and craftsmanship and *know – in cooperation with others – to give it social meaning*. They are *prepared for a professional existence at the highest level within an international context*' (ArtEZ, 2016, p. 5; emphasis added – DFW). This implies, in reverse

¹¹ Besides the three art academies with about 3,000–4,000 students each, there are three small arts academies (700–1,000 students) and some art schools as part of large multi-sectoral UAS.



order from the quote, that ArtEZ pays attention to the competencies that give artists the possibility to exist professionally, and to do so in a social context, communicating and cooperating with 'others'. The stereotype about artists might be that they are either very extrovert, social people, not in need of learning to communicate and cooperate, or very introvert geniuses, on their own and not at all interested in social connections, hence impervious to teaching about communication and cooperation. What can ArtEZ teach its students, then? The key in all Dutch art academies in the first decades of the 21st century seems to lie in the 'professional existence'. On the one hand, increasingly, arts are becoming part of the creative industry: mass media, internet, game industry, fashion, etc. A world of small, alternative 'start-up' companies as well as international tech giants (think Disney). Functioning in such a world requires new skills to be taught. On the other hand, with the reduction of the welfare state due to the neoliberal turn since the 1980s (cf. e.g. Harvey, 2005), subsidies for independent artists have shrunk and artists also in traditional branches, such as music, painting, sculpture, theatre and dance, increasingly have to learn how to carve out an existence in sometimes 'cut-throat' market conditions (Másdóttir, 2017). Unemployment under graduate artists is relatively high (4,2% after 18 months while the average is 3,2%; 2017 data) and their typical income levels are low (Allen, Belfi, & Mommers, 2017; Vereniging Hogescholen, 2018). Most ArtEZ alumni are self-employed (ArtEZ, 2015). In short, entrepreneurialism has become a key social competence that artists need. In that respect, the art academies may be seen as an extreme case or least likely case (Eckstein, 1975; Palinkas et al., 2015): if even in such a case entrepreneurialism has taken hold as the core social competence, where would it not have penetrated and perhaps superseded other social competences? That makes art academies a very suitable object of study in the DASCHE project.

The creative class has been touted as the part of society that would make the difference in the 21st century as innovators (Florida, 2006). At the same time, there are debates in the literature about the neoliberal tendencies of entrepreneurialism and how artists can (or must?) oppose this through, e.g., socially engaged arts and aesthetics. Win (2014, p. 8) takes a middle position in the debate and extensively cited Bishop in that respect, who had stated that 'the urgency of this *political* task has led to a situation in which such collaborative practices are automatically perceived to be equally important *artistic* gestures of resistance ... While I am broadly sympathetic to that ambition, I would argue that it is also crucial to discuss, analyze, and compare such work critically *as art*.'

ArtEZ's vision maintains that its education '... is aimed at the artistic, intellectual and personal growth of students, so that our students are well prepared for a successful career in which art, knowledge and creativity are central' (ArtEZ, 2016, p. 5). When it comes to 'strengthening the ties with society' — one of ArtEZ's goals in its strategic plan — it mentions a single operational means: 'In every bachelor study programme of ArtEZ at least 10 credits [=EC's] can be traced back to entrepreneurship' (ArtEZ, 2016, p. 6). Apparently, entrepreneurialism is the only explicit social competence taught in ArtEZ. The main unit with expertise to advise about entrepreneurialism in ArtEZ's curricula is the ABC: ArtEZ Business Centre, in existence since 2008.

The senior teaching staff in ArtEZ maintain a broad interpretation of ‘entrepreneurialism’, with a clear openness in the direction of social competences. See (Rookus, 2018 – translated by author):

It is striking that the heads [of study programmes] ... generally choose non-formal entrepreneurial skills in the first place, such as having an entrepreneurial attitude and taking initiative, choosing a professional position in the work field, being independent of others, 'daring to stick out from the crowd' and acting for the future. One even says that these skills form the basic attitude of the study. If we compare this finding with the purpose of the best practices, it fits seamlessly with this vision. Projects challenge and stimulate an entrepreneurial attitude, promote self-reliance and stimulate the ability to work together.

7.3 Role of the ArtEZ Business Centre

The ArtEZ Business Centre (ABC), with a staff of five, operated several programmes and activities supporting students, alumni and staff of ArtEZ in their entrepreneurial activities:

- Maintain ArtEZ’s alumni programme
- Advise starting artists in setting up an enterprise and performs feasibility studies for start-ups, e.g. through matchmaking between new artists and established ones who act as mentors (‘Bridging the Gap’ programme 2015-16; interview ArtEZ A1)
- Develop incubators for alumni (studios, coaching)
- Initiate cooperation in the creative industry
- Activities in collaboration with provincial authorities’ subsequent policy programmes stimulating entrepreneurialism and innovation

While these activities are mostly directed at alumni, two of ABC’s lines of activity affect current students:

- Facilitate Entrepreneurialism education in study programmes
- Act as intermediary between ‘practice companies’ and principals/contractors

The former is the main activity of the ABC with regard to teaching students: to advise study programmes about how to teach entrepreneurialism. Study programmes are free to ask the ABC for advice, or to design their curriculum themselves (interview ArteZ A1). In 2017, the ABC has compiled an overview of the practices regarding entrepreneurialism from the 31 heads of study programmes, which uncovered a large variety of approaches (interview ArteZ A1). It should be noted that the ArtEZ norm, introduced institution-wide in 2012, requires 10 EC ‘traceable to’ entrepreneurialism – not necessarily separate courses with that title. Some five years afterwards, many study programmes have developed their own approaches to teaching entrepreneurialism to their students, while some programmes are still in initial phases of implementation. The range of approaches varies from separate courses (e.g. Musiconomy) to embedded entrepreneurialism throughout the programme.

7.4 Teaching Entrepreneurialism: Musiconomy

The clearest examples of entrepreneurialism education are when it is a separate unit. The ArtEZ website¹² (also interview ArtEZ B) summarises what is taught about entrepreneurialism in the study programme for performing musicians in jazz and pop in Zwolle:

... at the Academy of Music, the required course Musiconomy covers topics pertaining to taxes, forms of collaboration, and contracts.

This is a second-year course is obligatory for all students. It focuses on elementary skills for students who must count on becoming independent professionals or partners in small-scale enterprises (especially pop and jazz bands), sometimes according to standard business models for SMEs, sometimes in looser cooperation forms. Getting the competence to manage one's own or SME affairs correctly, neatly and efficiently is a skill that does not come naturally but needs to be taught (interview ArtEZ B). This is taught in a practice-oriented way, amply using real-life examples next to textbooks, also because many students are already part-time artists themselves (interview ArtEZ B). Besides administrative and tax issues, entrepreneurialism for these students means they have to be able to get performances with appertaining contracts, which in their professional practice largely depends on the eminently social skill of networking, which is taught about in another obligatory course on marketing. The teachers of the two courses coordinate to ensure interlocks between them (interview ArtEZ B).

Assessment of the Musiconomy course involves an end-of-term test, besides in-course assignments (interview ArtEZ B).

Interested students may in addition take an elective advanced course Music Management and Musiconomy, focusing on developing their own business plan, in the last year of the bachelor curriculum (interview ArtEZ B). Courses similar to Musiconomy exist in the Art & Design academy ('Art Economy').

The more embedded approach to learning entrepreneurialism in ArtEZ show also on the institution's website:¹³

Entrepreneurship is also addressed in various projects. For instance, students are involved in the organisation of their own music, dance, and theatre festivals.

Thus, fashion students follow a more practice-based approach as they developed their own collections, which at least for some time have been marketed as the *Collectie Arnhem* (also: interview ArteZ A1).

¹² <https://www.artez.nl/en/entrepreneurship>, accessed 2019-09-09.

¹³ <https://www.artez.nl/en/entrepreneurship>, accessed 2019-09-09.

7.5 Institutionalisation of entrepreneurialism

Informal student feedback about the Musiconomy course seems quite positive, and a number of students consult their teacher on business administration matters even after graduation (interview ArtEZ B).

Nevertheless, in 2018 students of ArtEZ judged their satisfaction with the preparation their study gave for their future career on average 3.4 out of 5, while the national average for this aspect among conservatory students was 3.8.¹⁴

Concerning the teaching staff at ArtEZ, the ABC has initiated a Community of Practice on Cultural Entrepreneurialism in 2018 (interview ArtEZ A2), in which a score of teachers exchange their experiences. The coordinator of the Community of Practice observed that *grosso modo* the younger generation of teachers understand entrepreneurialism as a general competence or as an attitude towards many aspects of social life, while the older generation of teachers tend to hold a more limited view of the concept, more directly focused on enterprising attitude distinct from their professional art practice. Also, the latter group tends to see entrepreneurialism as something forced upon artists by an increasingly difficult social environment (interview ArtEZ A2).

Emerging good teaching practices from the Community of Practice are being communicated to all teachers in ArtEZ through internal channels. However, it is recognised that written communication like e-mails and newsletters is not as effective as first-hand experience with entrepreneurialism education in changing teachers' attitudes and practices. Study programme leaders play an important role in disseminating good practices to their teachers. (It should be noted that in art academies study programme leaders belong to the small core of permanent staff, while most teachers are art practitioners, engaged in education only part-time.)

7.5.1.1 Other social competences

Probably driven by internal motivation from students and teachers rather than by explicit policies of the UAS, social outreach activities take place in many arts study programmes at ArtEZ. For instance, dance workshops have been held in homes for the elderly, graphic designers used comics to explain issues in health care for special target groups (interview ArtEZ A1). Also, in one of the main areas of ArtEZ, fashion design, every year students spontaneously debate issues around working for sustainability against working in the mainstream fashion industry, and quite a few alumni opt for less remunerative, more sustainability-led career paths.

¹⁴ <https://www.studiekeuze123.nl/opleidingen/895-muziek-artez-hogeschool-voor-de-kunsten-zwolle-hbo-bachelor>, accessed 2019-05-28. The website did not inform whether this difference was statistically significant. Note, however, that the statistics pertain to all music students of ArtEZ as a whole, not just to the students of the bachelor Jazz & Pop music programme but also those in classical music.



7.5.1.2 Conclusions about social competences at ArtEZ

- From a legal perspective, ArtEZ, being a UAS, does not have a mission to enhance students' social competences
- It includes formally a single competence beyond the professional core, i.e. entrepreneurialism, which is (and from the legal perspective: must be) connected to graduates becoming better and more effective practitioners in their area
- Entrepreneurialism is defined broadly, as an attitude of innovativeness and resilience in real-life situations, although there is a clear emphasis on practically developing and running businesses in the arts sector
- Ways to teach entrepreneurialism differ across the study programmes in ArtEZ, largely related to characteristics of the field. Teaching entrepreneurialism in a separate course has as advantages, a.o.:
 - Explicit attention of students for the aspect
 - Possibility to teach systematically about practical skills
 - Easily accountable to external stakeholders
- Teaching entrepreneurialism throughout the curriculum has obverse advantages, e.g.:
 - Integrates the value as an attitude in all activities
 - Repetition helps to engrain knowledge, skills and attitudes about entrepreneurialism in students
- It is beneficial to bring interested teaching staff together in a Community of Practice on Entrepreneurialism.

7.6 Case Radboud University – Honours education

7.6.1 Brief characterisation of Radboud University

The Radboud University (RU) is one of the two (former) catholic universities in the Netherlands. Currently, it is a public research university under the same regulatory framework as the other thirteen research universities in the Netherlands, though it was established in 1923 as a private, catholic university.

The RU is located in Nijmegen, a major city in the east of the country, which was established during the Roman empire on the *limes* at the river Rhine.

The RU is a comprehensive university, offering bachelor, master and PhD degrees in seven faculties across all major areas of knowledge, from sciences and medicine to social sciences and humanities—except engineering. Its educational strategy is firmly based in traditional, mono-disciplinary study programmes with an equally firm research orientation.

Total enrolment in RU is around 22,000 in 2018,¹⁵ making it a medium-size university in the country. The faculty of Social Sciences—the focus of this case study—has almost 3,700

¹⁵ Cf. <https://www.ru.nl/over-ons/overradboud/feiten-cijfers/>, accessed 2019-01-07.

students (in 2017).¹⁶ It offers 8 of the in total 37 undergraduate programmes of study. Due to its location near the border, RU attracts a large proportion of students from Germany. They make up most of the 10.6 per cent (in 2018) of international degree enrolment.

7.6.2 *Social competences in Radboud University's honours education*

The RU was selected as a case to investigate how some innovations even affect this highly classical university (as a 'least-likely case', cf. Eckstein, 1975), and how those innovations are adapted in such an institution to the prevailing educational strategy. The innovation in question is honours education, described above as the widely-adopted manner to make university education challenging for highly-motivated and (reasonably) gifted students. The case proceeds from the university's policy regarding honours education and will zoom in on the honours programme in the faculty of social sciences for a concrete illustration.

At RU, honours education is intended to provide excellent students with broadening or deepening of learning, aiming to enhance their inquisitiveness, their ambition 'to know and to research' (Radboud monitor Sirius, 2012, p. 48 – translation by author). It initiated honours education already in 2002, originally for 2nd and 3rd year bachelor students. Since 2009, honours programmes within a single discipline or faculty have been added to the portfolio; in 2011 honours education was extended to the master phase and in 2012 to first-year bachelor students. When in 2013 the national subsidies ('Sirius programme') were terminated, the RU decided to fund the Radboud Honours Academy from its own budget (Radboud annual report 2015). Honours education at RU is organised as extracurricular programmes, i.e. not counting towards the degree. Acknowledgement of successfully completing honours programmes takes the form of a separate certificate or special mention on the student's degree certificate.

Honours education at the RU is organised by the Radboud Honours Academy, which consists of a university-wide coordinating office supported by an officer in each faculty. This administrative structure is integrated with the academics at both levels, as well. The university's Dean of Honours Education is the rector magnificus, i.e. the senior academic, who is one of the three leaders constituting the Executive Board of the university. In each faculty, a programme board of academics, chaired by a full professor, is responsible for the content of honours education. The RU has consciously decided not to develop a separate residential honours college in order to maintain contact between honours students and 'regular' students (Radboud annual report 2011).

Over the years, the concept of 'excellent students' who are eligible for selection into honours education was broadened from a focus on highly-achieving students in terms of their examination results to 'talent in a broad sense', i.e. 'highly motivated student with an impressive grade average'.¹⁷ In practice, this means that while only students with fairly good examination results and who are on schedule for finishing their study in the nominal time-

¹⁶ Cf. https://www.vsnu.nl/f_c_ingeschreven_studenten.html, accessed 2019-01-07.

¹⁷ Cf. <https://www.ru.nl/opleidingen/bachelor/psychology/programme-outline/honours-programme/>, accessed 2019-01-07.

to-degree are considered, their motivation and their ambition to develop themselves further have become crucial selection criteria. Originally aiming at the top 10 per cent of students, in fact, about 6 per cent participate in honours education (RU definitief eindadvies RC, 2016, p. 3).

The portfolio of honours programmes has evolved not only in terms of years covered, but also in terms of student commitment. Originally, there only was a programme across two academic years. Responding to student demand, increasingly shorter options were developed; the most recent form of 'Honours Labs' last only several weeks or months working on 'a hot topic in academics or a subject that is frequently in the news. An interdisciplinary approach always comes first'.¹⁸ While the programmes are extra-curricular, they are not easy, and they require about 8–10 hours additional study effort weekly.¹⁹

In the Faculty of Social Sciences, two main honours programmes are available, one in psychology, the other originating in educational science but broadened into covering a wide variety of issues in social sciences. The latter programme is open to students from all of RU's faculties.

The competencies aimed at in the psychology honours programme, as an example of a deepening programme, are definitely directed at academic research: besides taking part in a special course on recent topics in research in the discipline, students engage in a research internship in the university's psychology laboratories, leading to a fairly independent piece of research, written up in a draft for a publishable article including a literature review and supported by an additional course on academic writing. Visiting an international research conference or international university partners is also part of the process.²⁰

The social science honours programme emphasises the students' future role as social scientist in the contemporary knowledge society. Students from the three schools existing within the Faculty collaborate and will become familiar with four different perspectives: an individual, group, societal and normative perspective on topical issues in the disciplines.²¹ The programme contains (1) research seminars in which students from the three different schools work together with PhD students on some of the big current social scientific questions, (2) conceptual and normative reflection on the relation between science and society, and (3) individual research projects in which students develop their own approach and end product, either at RU or abroad. Topics offered are connected with academics' current research interests and may change every year.

In the interdisciplinary, university-wide honours programmes, students are expected to share their results with society beyond the university by way of a 'giving back' principle.²² In 'think tank' groups, they are to visit schools, care homes for elderly people, or projects of

¹⁸ Cf. https://www.ru.nl/honoursacademy_english/honours-labs/, accessed 2019-01-07.

¹⁹ Cf. https://www.ru.nl/honoursacademy_english/bachelor/, accessed 2019-01-07.

²⁰ Cf. <http://www.ru.nl/honoursacademy/bachelor/psychologie/programma/ap/>, accessed 2018-03-13.

²¹ Cf. <http://www.ru.nl/honoursacademy/bachelor/social-sciences/>, accessed 2018-03-13.

²² Cf. https://www.ru.nl/honoursacademy_english/bachelor/beyond-borders/programme/, accessed 2019-01-07.

their own choice in the region of Nijmegen. Communication skills are trained towards that goal, e.g. science journalism or storytelling.

Honours education is effective in widening student experiences, both in terms of content—whether deepening towards new types of questions and knowledge in students’ original discipline or by getting to know other disciplines’ perspectives on complex issues—and in terms of more activating approaches to learning. Especially the recent Honours Labs are meant as a testbed for pedagogical innovation that benefit both teachers and students.

Challenging and educative for students is that honours education does not proceed from frontal teaching, but uses activating pedagogy, and is to a large extent open to initiatives from students themselves—in RU but also in other universities in the Netherlands (Allen et al., 2015).

A major local innovation in the social science honours programme was an internship outside the university. This was so successful that after some years it was integrated into the regular study programme. Which on the one hand raised the question how to maintain attractiveness of the honours programme when innovations become part of the regular curriculum. On the other hand, this makes the learning and actual exercise of social competences available to all students rather than to the selected ones taking part in honours programmes.

7.6.3 Conclusions about social competences in Radboud University’s honours programmes

- Through honours education, students at RU get involved in small-scale and activating education more than would be the case otherwise. This may be expected to enhance students’ social competences in terms of teamwork competences, project planning and learning to learn competence.
- This stimulates several competences, mostly directed at RU—more than in some other higher education institutions in the Netherlands (Allen et al., 2015)—towards their critical thinking in the role of university researchers, but also as academics in contemporary society. Research skills are taught here, more than directly aiming at social competences in a narrow sense.
- Yet the spill-over of the knowledge and skills enhanced through honours education is meant to be used for ‘giving back’ to society, too. Associated communication skills are given due attention (science journalism and storytelling were mentioned).
- More importantly, perhaps, students from early on gain practical experience in behaving in those academic roles through internships inside and outside the university, academic exchanges and conferences, dissemination of results beyond the university, etc.
- Development of social competences may not always be an explicit aim of honours education at the RU, but it does contribute to broad education for motivated students.

7.7 Case University of Twente – education for engineers 21st century style

7.7.1 *Brief characterisation of University of Twente*

The University of Twente (UT) is one of the smallest research universities in the Netherlands, with (in 2019) around 11,000 students and 3,000 staff members in five faculties, four of which cover engineering areas and the fifth is in social, behavioural and management sciences. It is the youngest but one of the research universities in the country and was founded in 1961. It states its core values to be: societal impact, synergy [among its disciplines], entrepreneurial, and internationalisation.²³

As is the case with all other universities in the country, all the UT's study programmes are accredited in the 'limited procedure' by national agency NVAO, since the quality assurance of the university has been audited favourably.

7.7.2 *Social competences in the University of Twente's engineering education*

From founding to Bologna

As mentioned in the section on the national context, university *Bildung* can be interpreted in many ways. Alternative approaches from the common interpretation of the 1960 higher education law were experimented in the two technical universities that were founded around the time of that law, in Eindhoven (1956) and Twente (1961). Especially in Twente, an 'experiment in the wood' was initiated, consisting of the first campus university of the Netherlands, providing an all-round education-and-life experience to enable integration of first-generation students into the academic culture (Groenman & Bekius-Wilkens, 1991). Currently, the combination of engineering and broad education is expressed in the slogan 'high tech, human touch'. Back in the 1960s, the 'experiment in the wood' meant that first-year students had to live on campus; later they might rent rooms in the adjacent towns or commute from home.

The curriculum at the then new university had to ensure engineers' formation of personality, auto-reflection and overcoming prejudice, insight in social aspects and in economic and organisational aspects of their future work (Groenman & Bekius-Wilkens, 1991, p. 54). This approach went beyond the general Dutch higher education framework, and was based on a 1958 committee's arguments that the new technical university in Twente ought to include not only broad education but also the 'general-personal capabilities, required to fulfil a leading position and/or to work in teams' (quoted in de Boer, s.a., p. 7). Notwithstanding scepticism and resistance among some academics—the graduates should not become 'amphibians' (de Boer & Drukker, 2011, p. 15)—the means towards this goal originally included a common propaedeutic year for all (engineering) students, a meaningful intermediate degree, i.e. the Bachelor of Technological Sciences degree (while in other universities a long single-cycle degree system existed with only a nominal *candidate* intermediate diploma), and 15% of SSH education in each curriculum. After 1968, the general

²³ <https://www.utwente.nl/en/facts-and-figures/#our-core-values>, accessed 2019-02-26.

propaedeutic year was given up and the SSH percentage reduced to 10%, because although in the 1968 'protests and speeches, the serving role of universities [to society] gained a fair share of verbal support. In practice, gaining or maintaining power was just a little more interesting' (Groenman & Bekius-Wilkens, 1991, p. 15) to the professoriate, and the share of discipline-centred education rose. When in the late 1970s the Baccalaureus degree was also scrapped due to lack of social recognition, the University of Twente's curriculum was almost normalised to the Dutch standard, although 10% SSH (reduced from the original 15%) and a watered-down version of the campus life philosophy remained (the obligation for freshers to live one year on campus was abolished, though student dorms continued to be available). This remained the basis of the University of Twente education profile until the early 2010s.

It also explains why this technical university includes a faculty in social, behavioural and management sciences. This faculty started out as the providers of SSH course units useful for engineers: organisational sociology, organisational psychology, management in enterprises, as well as philosophy and ethics.²⁴ Engineering students had to include some electives from those areas in their study programme. More recently, technological elements of medical education were added, eventually leading to the introduction of degrees in Technical Medicine according to the medical education model (3-year bachelor plus 3-year master).

Moving to project-based learning: The Twente Education Model

The almost-traditional pedagogy of the UT's study programmes was revolutionised in 2013, when all undergraduate programmes were reformed according to the Twente Education Model (abbreviated in Dutch TOM), which was based on principles of project-based and student-driven learning (interview UT B):²⁵

In the Twente Educational Model students work together in projects where they apply and even develop new knowledge and skills. All bachelor programmes are structured in 12 modules of 15 EC. Within these modules, students not only learn to be skilled researchers, they are educated to become designers and organizers as well.

Each semester is split into two quarters. In each quarter, first more or less traditional courses are given to provide knowledge and skills (10 EC), which the students then must apply in a 5 EC group project that synthesises the previous courses and at the same time is an exercise in project planning, project execution and group work. The block's assessment consists of tests for the courses and a grade for the project result (a paper, a design, etc.).

As a result, bachelor students become 'T-shaped academics': professional academics with a profound grounding in at least one academic discipline, who at the same time can communicate with and relate to other academic disciplines that are relevant for the solution of a given societal, often 'wicked', scientific problem. Understanding technology *and* society

²⁴ Since the late 1970s, degree programmes in SSH areas were added to the gamut offered at the University of Twente, though with a (social) engineering twist, focused on application of SSH in business and society. For instance, the UT in the 1970s added a Technical Business Administration programme and it initiated the first Dutch study programme in Public Administration, but does not offer 'pure' sociology, political science, law or economics (constituent disciplines in Public Administration).

²⁵ <https://www.utwente.nl/en/ces/celt/what-we-do/innovation-implementation/>, accessed 2019-02-26.

should be a key characteristic of Twente graduates. This has been translated into three roles for which the UT educates its students. During the bachelor cycle, education is designed to encourage students to discover which of these three role(s) suits them best. In Dutch, the three roles are abbreviated as *OOO: Onderzoeker–Ontwerper–Organisator*; in English: Researcher-Designer-Organiser. Besides, the UT fosters an entrepreneurial attitude in its students, which comprises more than entrepreneurship. Thus, the UT wants its students to dare to step out of the box, to look for new ways, to experiment and to take responsibility, and also to dare to take responsibility for their own learning process.

SSH in Electrical Engineering in the Twente Education Model

How does the TOM philosophy affect students' learning of social competences? As perhaps a 'least-likely' case a traditional engineering programme is chosen, electrical engineering (EE). It was the second programme to adopt the TOM, one year ahead of the institution-wide adoption in 2013/14, so that there is ample experience in this programme. Electrical Engineering advertises itself as follows to prospective students:²⁶

The English-taught Bachelor's programme in Electrical Engineering will equip you with knowledge and skills that are essential in almost all areas of technology (electronics, data storage, communication, antennas, user interfaces, energy storage, sensors, control, signal conditioning, robotics and optics). You will study and work on high-tech applications, such as robot arms for surgery or sensors for health applications. Electrical engineers are highly employable, largely because their training encompasses a branch of science rather than a specific profession. Whatever career path you decide on, as an electrical engineer you will invent your own future. This is one of the best programmes you can take in terms of the excellent job opportunities it provides.

This text highlights interdisciplinary application of electrical engineering in the health area, as well as employability.

In the regulations defining the curriculum and examinations, the final attainment targets (learning outcomes) of the programme include among others:

Knowledge:

8 Have knowledge of methods for planning and management of individual and team-based projects (EWI, 2018, art. A2).

Skills:

- 14 Can independently function in a disciplinary as well as in an interdisciplinary collaboration with a professional attitude.
- 15 Is able to communicate academic problems and solutions to peers and non-specialists or partners and users.
- 16 Can translate academic knowledge and skills into practical problem solving.
- 17 Is able to study another academic field and is able to identify research and/or design in that field.
- 18 Can identify own learning needs and structure their own learning in different learning environments.
- 19 Have insight into another academic field and can use different approaches for research or design.
- 20 Takes account of the temporal and social context of science and technology and is able to integrate this into his or her scientific work projects. (EWI, 2018, art. A2).

²⁶ <https://www.utwente.nl/en/education/bachelor/programmes/electrical-engineering/>, accessed 2019-02-26.

From this listing it may be concluded that one (out of eight) knowledge elements can be said to address social competences, while about half the skill definitions do so. All these elements are formulated in relation to the students' scientific and professional (work) operation; they neither target entrepreneurship nor citizenship or society broadly, apart from taking 'account of the temporal and social context of science and technology'. And note that the regulations do not include a third category of 'competences' besides skills and knowledge.

Actual priority in broader competences is given to profession-related skills like working in teams, actively shaping problem definitions and becoming a 'reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1983). An EE lecturer uses the term 'design yourself' for this (interview UT A), because that is an effective way to reach the design-oriented minds of EE students. At the same time, this is an engineering-oriented interpretation of an entrepreneurial attitude (interview UT A, B). This is integrated into practically each TOM module (interview UT A, B), although it is to some extent up to the teaching staff in each module to emphasise these higher and broader learning approaches (interview UT B).

In this perspective, it is also important for students to learn to philosophise about their discipline and about their acting as an Electrical Engineer; the actual course on philosophy is scheduled in the master phase, but it is being prepared in the bachelor phase in a course REflection on Science, Technology and Society (RESTS; common to all engineering study programmes). The programme is careful to draw students into this direction in a way that does not put them off—which would be a danger if one 'forced' students with an interest in engineering to follow a formal course in 'soft' sciences (interview UT A), as it happened in the pre-TOM approach with the obligatory SSH-component in each curriculum.

Further room for non-electrical engineering modules can be found in the 30 EC reserved for electives. Students are informed about the electives that:²⁷

You broaden your horizon by choosing a course from another discipline (*technology, philosophy or humanities*) or you go deeper into a specific aspect of electrical technology. It's your choice. ... you may also use these two modules to study abroad for half a year. Besides you can use the twenty weeks to follow courses that you need for a specific master programme...

Looking at the list of minors the Electrical Engineering students may choose from, 11 are 'deepening' (i.e. offered by their own faculty), 40 are interdisciplinary within areas of technology or medicine, 28 are in social sciences and 2 are in humanities (art and philosophy). Students are free to choose among this list; their freedom precludes the programme director from using the minor to shape the curriculum in a certain direction (interview UT A).

Besides, '[f]or those students who are looking for more than the usual academic challenges, extracurricular activities are organised in the Honours programme' (EWI, 2018, art. B8), which represents an even more student-driven form of education (interview UT B)—but on honours programmes we have another case study.

²⁷ <https://www.utwente.nl/onderwijs/bachelor/opleidingen/electrical-engineering/studieprogramma/studiejaar-3/#modules-9-en-10-keuzevakken>, accessed 2019-02-26; author's translation, emphasis added.

7.7.3 Evaluation of TOM after five years

In 2018, the UT made a comprehensive overview and evaluation of all feedback, especially the regular quarterly evaluations and annual reports, and monitoring research that had been generated about TOM since its inception (SP/CELT, 2018; see Table 2). The evaluation also provided input to sharpen the UT education vision in its strategic plan 2021–2030.

Table 2 Summary of TOM evaluation conclusions

TOM successes	Points for further improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and teachers appreciate every module's working in (group) projects • Cohesion and integration within the modules are highly valued by teachers and students • Accreditation committees are positive about specific aspects of TOM, like the T-shaped academic • National surveys show that students are satisfied with TOM-related aspects of their education. On specific points, like learning to work together, students are highly satisfied. Also, UT results in the national programme ranking 'Guide for Choice' ('Keuzegids') have improved, with in 2019, 8 top bachelor programmes and 14 ranking best in their field (out of 20). • Since the start of TOM in 2013, study progress improved. Of cohort 2015, 77% of the students graduate within 4 years. Compared with the other technological universities in the country, the graduation rate increased highly • Drop-out seems to be shifting from year 2 and 3 to the first 6 months: students in TOM know sooner if they are in the right place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UT wants to stimulate students better to direct their own learning process (student-driven learning). • Occasionally, assessment is not in line with integration and student-driven learning, as originally intended. • In modules where an integrated design was not achieved or not possible, sometimes practical problems arise (e.g. limited validity of results of the module parts' exams). • About 50% of students apply to the Examination Board for individual study paths rather than the regular programme • Work pressure for teaching staff remains high

The evaluation results show that TOM has become engrained in the university's quality culture: team teaching is no longer an innovation but an overall highly-appreciated standard way of working, as is project-based learning. It has positively influenced student progress through the curriculum and satisfaction among students and teaching staff alike. While social competences were not addressed explicitly in this evaluation, the positive valuation given to the project work points in the direction of satisfaction about the larger social competence component in the learning process. Nevertheless, points for improvement were also identified and as a major outcome of the evaluation, later in 2018 it was decided to initiate 'TOM 2.0'. Besides increased flexibility regarding courses in each quarter that some study programmes demanded, TOM 2.0 will focus on strengthening self-directed learning

and on how assessment can be more focused on learning as well as be executed more efficiently (decrease work pressure for teaching staff).

7.7.4 *Conclusions about social competences in University of Twente's Education*

- Social competences are interpreted in the TOM approach to education in close relation to the core of the curriculum: the focus of intended learning outcomes is on becoming a reflective, critically-thinking professional in one of three roles: researcher – developer – organiser. In other words: the main curricular emphasis is on 21st century skills in the immediate professional environment of graduates.
- Gaining broader defined social competences is more prominent in other parts of the (extra-)curricular offer at the UT. The UT, still operating from its original philosophy, offers more opportunities in this direction than most other Dutch universities, e.g. through honours education (somewhat similar to the Radboud University case, above), through the DesignLab, the Science Shop and the Student Union.
 - The DesignLab²⁸ offers (extra-curricular) educational programmes in which students from across the UT work in transdisciplinary teams to address complex societal challenges together.
 - The Science Shop SMART,²⁹ part of the knowledge exchange office of the UT, Novel-T, offers students opportunities to acquire real-world experiences in research or internship-like projects with organisations (business, non-profit and public organisations, civic entities, etc.)
 - A university-wide Student Union may be common in other countries, but it is unique among Dutch higher education institutions. It promotes broadly-academic competencies and well-being of the UT students, e.g. through its responsibility for management of part of the campus, of further facilities on campus and in town, and for coordination of student engagement in university decision making. It also organises broad-education events, such as the annual two-day Create Tomorrow think tank³⁰ tackling challenges from the business world within the sustainable development goals.
- The UT's profile of an entrepreneurial university is interpreted for students as developing an entrepreneurial, inquisitive attitude, not necessarily leading to students' massively engaging in setting up their own businesses (interview UT B)—although that does happen at the UT more often than in other Dutch universities.
- TOM was a new start and an innovative, though after five years overall accepted, approach to education, defining the learning outcomes for students as T-shaped academics, in the form of the three roles of researcher, designer and organiser in the different study programmes; it constituted a radical revival after the somewhat watered-

²⁸ <https://www.utwente.nl/en/designlab/>, accessed 2020-01-15.

²⁹ <https://novelt.com/en/services/smart/>, accessed 2020-01-15. Note that SMART is a collaborative structure of the UT and the nearby UAS, Saxion.

³⁰ <https://createtomorrow.nl>, accessed 2020-01-15.



down original UT approach from the 1960s. In its strategic plan towards 2030, the UT intends to maintain this drive and take it further at all levels of education (TOM was limited to first-cycle, bachelor, study programmes), in research and in the university's 'third mission'.

- TOM explicitly focuses profession-related social competences of students such as learning to learn (self-directed learning), engaging with (wicked) real-life problems, teamwork and project competences.
- TOM does not necessarily address civic or citizenship competences, although some modules' projects or other elements in education may involve community engagement, addressing social needs of more vulnerable groups in (regional or global) society (see also Westerheijden, Veidemanne & Farnell, 2020).

8. Findings and Results

8.1 Conclusions across cases and nationally

- There is little policy with regard to social competences in higher education at the national level in the higher education law (WHW) or in the national qualifications framework (NLQF). Most social competences education proceeds therefore from initiatives at institutional levels (not 'bottom-up', though, because there is little trickling up to the 'uppermost' levels of national policy).
- Excellence education or honours education is an exception, because it soon gained national policy support: its institutionalisation across many higher education institutions was largely an outcome of the national subsidy programme Sirius (2008–2013). But institutionalisation remains a question of translating the national opportunities to local circumstances, i.e. the vision of Radboud University as a classical university based on deep disciplinary knowledge affected how it shaped its honours education as an approximation of social competences in higher education.
- The long national debate on *Bildung* left strong traces in the foundation of the University of Twente in the middle of the 20th century; since then, and most recently revived with the introduction of TOM in 2012–2014, it gained new, unique impetus. The social competences inherent to TOM are associated with 21st century workplace skills and competences such as teamwork and self-directed learning. Broader views on the UT's education role are influencing other educational offerings (e.g. DesignLab, student think tanks) and becomes more prominent in its new strategic plan, *Shaping 2030*: spurred by the UN's SDG, the UT intends to become a 'people-first' engineering university that educates tomorrow's global citizens and that distinguishes itself as a university with high public engagement. However, our research is limited to the current situation.
- Social debates about employability, together with the legal but also engrained understanding of a UAS as providing profession-oriented education, were the main drivers for ArteEZ. Behind that education policy context, broader concerns about government policy influenced the developments in ArteEZ: there was a large reduction in funding for the cultural sector from government in recent years. Behind that lay the neo-

liberal ideology that focuses attention on gainful employment, citizens' own responsibility to shape their lives etc. and which reduces the role of government in society. Artists are increasingly forced to attend to their labour market situation, which would explain their focus on entrepreneurialism.

- We observe diverse forms of social competences education: all are home-made, as local approaches to locally-perceived problems for diverse student populations in very different areas of knowledge and different orientation of programmes. This suggests that we should not look for one-size-fits-all, uniform models of social competences education. Hence, we must be careful when suggesting recommendations.

8.2 Costs of social competences education

- In the case of ArtEZ, there are no additional costs of teaching apart from the one-time development of Musiconomy: it does not so much change how, but rather what is being taught.
- Honours education has many elements with a high intensity of staff input and are therefore not easily scaled up.
 - Note: CHEPS and partners are studying dissemination and mainstreaming of elements from honours education in another nation-wide project, which will be published in 2020. Early results indicate that several elements of pedagogy and assessment are amenable to spreading to regular education depending on local circumstances, but dissemination mainly takes place in a peer-to-peer network mode, not very visible from the outside and not very amenable to management.
- The UT case of TOM seems a counterexample to the former point, but fits with other cases where radical pedagogical and organisational changes such as Problem-based or Project-based learning have necessarily been introduced across a whole institution.
 - Note also that much more radical ideas of challenge-based education with an even higher degree of self-directed, learner-driven learning are being piloted in the immediate environment of the UT. The UT is one of the constituent partners of the ECIU University,³¹ which since the middle of 2019 is one of the first 17 European Universities.
- One intention of introducing TOM was to make teaching less costly, through more self-directed learning and by including peer learning. That proved not true.
 - Team teaching carries a higher amount of coordination costs among teachers even where 'traditional' lectures and seminars remain the pedagogy.
 - Small-group supervision of projects makes intensive demands on teachers' time
 - There is more frequent and intense preparation of (often renewed, practice-related) projects that also is costly.
 - Note that increasing student satisfaction with many elements of the education process since the introduction of TOM is considered to be an (intangible) benefit that offsets the costs.

³¹ <https://www.eciu.org/eciu-university>, accessed 2019-10-10.

- Note that in most or all Dutch higher education institutions, centres for pedagogical innovation and excellence were already available; a reform like entrepreneurialism, honours education or the TOM model does not carry additional direct costs in terms of developing pedagogical expertise in the institution. There are of course costs for retraining teaching staff to apply new pedagogies, and for redevelopment of course modules (but that ought to be done regularly in a good higher education institution, anyway). It is more a matter of providing leadership to redirect attention and energy towards such a large-scale reform.

9. Recommendations

With the proviso that changing education always is a local translation of general principles or models, so that uniform, one-size-fits-all recommendations cannot be given, let us suggest a number of lessons that may be drawn from the Dutch case studies.

9.1 To case higher education institutions

9.1.1 *ArtEZ*

- Continue monitoring effectiveness of different forms of entrepreneurialism education by the ArtEZ Business Centre (ABC), and implement its conclusions, which seem to point in the direction of integration of entrepreneurialism throughout the curriculum, as it seems to lead to more satisfaction of alumni with their preparation for the labour market.
- Open a discussion across ArtEZ about formally stimulating other social competences to give students more self-confidence in their social engagement. This discussion may fruitfully build upon students' and teachers' own initiatives across the years.

9.1.2 *Radboud University*

- RU has an interpretation of honours education and its organisation that fits its vision and mission with regard to education.
- Attention in the case study was rather on how honours education can maintain its advantage and attractiveness relative to regular programmes, but let us also appreciate that (local) innovations do spread from honours to regular education. RU is considering conscientiously which innovations are suitable for such dissemination.

9.1.3 *UT*

- In TOM 2.0 but also in the reconsideration of the MSc curricula that is starting in 2019/2020, include (some) social competences into the rubrics for assessment of final projects. The primary supervisors and where relevant supervisors in the workplace should be able to judge these, largely process-oriented, elements, while secondary supervisors/readers must verify the assessments of the final products (thesis, design, solution) rather than the process. This assessment model is applicable even in potential challenge-based education models.

- Discuss feasibility of including social competences rubrics into each TOM module's assessment.
- Connect the choice of TOM projects more explicitly to the 'people first' and public engagement aims of the UT.

9.2 To national policy

- Institutional umbrella organisations VSNU and VH could put the role of higher education in social competences education on the agenda for member institutions and for teaching staff. A conception of social competences that includes *constructive citizenship* and *thought leadership* as expected graduate attributes ought to be put on the table.
 - In the vocational education & training sector (VET, in Dutch: mbo), the national council of VET school (*mbo Raad*) hosts a network that brings together expertise on civic education and that supports the VET schools with, e.g., curriculum development with regard to civic education.³² This might be a viable example for the higher education sector.
- There is no reason for putting requirements regarding social competences education into *programme* accreditation standards, because they are not defined at such level of detail.
- NVAO might consider making social competences education part of the question on the *institutional* mission and vision with regard to quality of education in its institutional audits.
- The WHW might add a notion of broad education also in the mission of UAS beyond narrow professional formation (WHW art. 1.1.d).
- The Coordination Point of the national qualifications framework (NCP NLQF) might consider broadening the phrasing of level descriptors regarding Responsibility and Independence with expected learning outcomes on the person's functioning in social situations beyond the workplace. Or it could include the broader social responsibility of providers of education in a preamble.
- National actors including the education ministry (OCW), the accreditation agency (NVAO) and the umbrella organisations (VSNU, VH) might profitably raise awareness levels in the higher education sector about European frameworks and references regarding key competences, not as a bureaucratic requirement from 'Brussels' or 'Bologna' but as an increasing—and increasingly relevant—practice in higher education across Europe and worldwide.

9.2.1 To European level

- The European Commission and the BFUG could assist member/EHEA countries to raise awareness levels in their higher education sector about European frameworks and expectations with regard to social competences through:
 - Making information easily available

³² <https://burgerschapmbo.nl>, accessed 2020-01-15.



- Funding: including social competences and higher education institutions' community engagement among the areas stimulated in Erasmus+ and following programmes for (higher and vocational) education
- Organise follow-up research and dissemination to DASCHE (in order to create/expand networks focusing on social competences (instrument type: organisation))

9.2.2 All levels

- A pedagogy little used in Europe is *service learning* in higher education. Actors at all levels might study how effectively it would make students gain social competences and social responsibility awareness. Inspiration may be found in several universities in the USA or in universities in Hong Kong (HK Baptist University, in particular).³³
 - Service learning may encounter resistance among teachers in higher education institutions as they could portray it as 'taking away time from core disciplinary learning'; it therefore requires a broader debate about the role of initial higher education in relation to life-long learning that has not yet gained much ground among academe in many European higher education institutions.

³³ <https://cisl.hkbu.edu.hk>, accessed 2020-01-15.

10. Executive summary

This study looked at how social competences were part of the national framework for higher education in the Netherlands and it studied three purposely different cases of broad education. All three cases were selected to showcase good practices on certain dimensions of social competences education. They may inspire others, though transfer of good practices always requires their translation to fit the local contexts. The fact that three cases were studied, only was a consequence of practical limitations for this study; more good practices could have been found in many higher education institutions across the country.

It was found that at the national level, social competences—beyond work-place competences—get minimal attention in either the higher education law or the national qualifications framework. In higher education institutions, different conceptions of social competences are held, from entrepreneurialism in an art school to broad *Bildung* in two universities. In the technical university, in practice the focus is largely on work-related 21st century skills like project and team working skills, with some examples of community engagement, and learning to learn. In the ‘classical’ university, the focus is on academic knowledge and skills in other disciplines, and to some extent on engagement with society.

There is a need for a national debate to put the role of higher education in social competences education on the agenda; a conception of social competences that includes constructive citizenship and thought leadership as expected graduate attributes ought to be put on the table. The active role in the vocational education & training sector (VET, in Dutch: mbo) of the national council of VET school (*mbo Raad*) regarding citizenship networks could be an interesting example for the higher education sector.

Such a national debate could profitably raise awareness levels in the higher education sector about existing European frameworks and references regarding key competences. It might also include the question to what extent *service learning* in higher education is suitable to make students gain social competences and social responsibility awareness.

The NVAO and other authorities in charge of the national qualifications framework might consider if and how the Dutch qualifications framework needs adaptation to include social competences more explicitly in the competences-‘pillar’ as responsibility for higher education institutions. There is no need for national regulation of social competences in higher education, although the WHW might add a notion of broad education also in the mission of UAS beyond the current narrow professional formation (WHW art. 1.1.d).

The report contains further conclusions and recommendations to the three case institutions.



Interviews

ArtEZ A – (1) 2018-05-03; (2) 2019-09-24 – case study + review of results

ArtEZ B – 2019-09-25 – case study

N A – 2019-07-08 – national policy + review of results

UT A – 2019-03-06 – case study

UT B – 2019-03-07 – case study group interview

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