

Will the universities survive the European Integration? Higher Education Policies in the EU and in the Netherlands before and after the Bologna Declaration

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To all appearances higher education in both the EU and the US has turned into a more fashionable topic for politicians and journalists than it was ten years ago¹. With some frequency readers of the daily and the weekly press are informed about what is going on in 'the brain business' in the *first* half of their newspapers and journals – a topic that used to be covered by journalists at the very beginning of their career or by journalists who simply did not understand what the average reader finds interesting. Being a very complex and an utterly unsexy topic (moreover with a complex history), higher education usually just does not capture the public's eye and imagination.

What makes matters even worse in Europe is that the whole terrain of (higher) education is covered by a thick and almost impenetrable layer of official policy documents and 'academic' justifications of policy documents, presumably informing their readers about what is going on in this field, but actually their connection to reality is strained to say the least. The relationship between information and disinformation in these documents is comparable to the relationship between White House documents on the 'war on terrorism' and this war itself, because in both cases access to reality is extremely difficult, time consuming and complicated². Moreover, in contrast to the journalism on the White House, the record of journalism on higher education policy

¹ See for instance; *The Economist* 10 September 2005, 'The Brains Business'; *New York Times* 3 November 2005 'The Truth about the Colleges'; *The New York Times* 3 December 2005, 'Imported brains'; *NRC-Handelsblad* 3 October 2005, 'Hoezo Kenniseconomie? .

² In the Netherlands the higher education policy discourse is not open to *any* public debate because practically *all* policy advices to and policy evaluations of the Ministry of Education are produced by *one* 'expert centre': the Centre of Higher Education Policy Studies of the University Twente (CHEPS) and by 'reflective practitioners' of the Ministry of Education itself, like Roel in 't Veld and Walter Kickert. The same monopoly-situation pertains to the Dutch Ministry of Interior Affairs, where practically all advices, reports and evaluations concerning 'conflict resolution' are produced by *one* institute of 'conflict resolution': the Conflict Research Team, attached to the University of Leiden. Monopolist tactics – an early Dutch specialty in comparative perspective - guarantee *a priori* that policy advices and policy evaluations don't conflict with one another. The 'input' and 'output' of the 'policy system' are simply *directly* connected and this feature of the Dutch political system probably contributes to the *image* of the Netherlands as a 'consensual' nation. In this best of all possible management worlds no 'noise' from outside the policy discourse can interfere. So the outside world of these institutions is simply transformed and observed in terms of the institutions' discourse, thereby producing clear examples of constructivist Luhmannian and Foucauldian theories. The self-referentiality of policy discourse also explains why critique of policy is hardly observed, and when it is, why it is increasingly being discredited as an illegitimate form of 'cynicism'.

knows of no ‘deep throats’ and of no Monika Lewinsky’s, so chances of attracting public attention were usually not too good.

However, since rumor has it that in the “age of globalization” we are living in a “knowledge society” and that our economies are basically “knowledge economies”, higher education has attracted more public attention than it did before. These new buzzwords have been spreading outside academia with some success and belong to the very heart of European higher education policy discourse since a decade. They most certainly belong to the very core of higher education policy discourse in the Netherlands since the early 1980’s.

Seen from a historical perspective this sudden public career of the idea of ‘knowledge society’ and ‘knowledge economy’ is pretty surprising, because European thinkers from the Enlightenment onwards – from Voltaire and de Condorcet over Comte, Mill, and Heidegger to Foucault and Habermas - have been emphasizing that the systematic production and application of knowledge is *the* specific characteristic of ‘modern’ – European-type - societies. So given the fact that ‘knowledge economy’ and ‘knowledge society’ have been known to ‘civilized’ Europeans for more than some 250 years, this idea could hardly be presented as a new message³. Therefore one can expect that the new meaning of ‘knowledge society’ is pretty different from the traditional one rooting in Enlightenment thought.

This expectation is confirmed when one discovers that its new proponents represent universities as “enterprises” and academics as “entrepreneurs”. Simultaneously, *real* entrepreneurs are now represented as the evident ‘stakeholders’ of the universities, and entitled to determine its course directly⁴.

So the notion of ‘knowledge economy’ basically does *not* mean the restructuring of the economy according to scientific knowledge. To the contrary, it means that the domain of knowledge production is economized: *homo academicus* is now modeled after *homo economicus*⁵. In comparison to the traditional Enlightenment-view the relationship between science and economy is actually put on its head: the economy is no longer represented as the domain in which science demonstrates its applied ‘success’ - based on its truth - but the economy is represented as the domain that *determines* whether ‘intellectual production’ is ‘scientific’ or not. So basically the notion of ‘knowledge economy’ presents the economy as the legitimation of science instead of the other way around.

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

⁴ See Henry Etzkowitz, ‘The evolution of the entrepreneurial university’, in: *International Journal of Technology and Globalisation* vol. 1 (2004), nr. 1, p.64-77. See also Nieuwe wetgevingsnotitie *Wet Hoger Onderwijs*, Ministerie van OCW, <http://www2.minocw.nl/persbericht.jsp?pageID=7022&jaar=2005>, where universities are redefined as ‘societal enterprises’ (‘maatschappelijke ondernemingen’), p.11. In the Netherlands Twente University – where CHEPS is located – has labelled itself an ‘entrepreneurial university’.

⁵ See M. Parker and D.Jary, ‘The McUniversity: Organization, Management and Academic Subjectivity’, in: *Organization* 2 (1995), 2, 319-338. See for an illustration from the US: Richard Horton, ‘The Dawn of McScience’, *New York Review of Books* 11 March 2004.

The notion of 'knowledge economy' thus represents the theoretical program of what might be called 'capitalist constructivism' in the 'scientific field' without formulating it as such: to be in the field of truth, to speak with Foucault, is simply defined as being *in* the field of capitalist economy; and 'true' is whatever works economically. So capitalist economy no longer finds its ideological legitimization in 'scientific' terms, as was the case in 'late capitalism' according to Jürgen Habermas, but science *itself* now has to justify itself in economical terms⁶. In summary, 'knowledge economy' nowadays does *not* mean the old idea that knowledge is systematically applied to economy or society, but the very new idea that all 'scientific' knowledge worthy of the name first has to prove its 'economic' value.

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

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

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" in: Steaven Seidman (ed.), *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: a Reader*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989, pp. 237-265. Habermas' idea c.q. hope that administrative planning in the educational domain would need some 'discursive' form of legitimation has thus turned out to be wrong because under the conditions of neo-liberalism the ideology of the market seems to do the job. See Jürgen Habermas, 'What does a crisis mean today? Legitimation problems in late capitalism', in: Steaven Seidman (ed.), *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: a Reader*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989, pp. 266-283.

The Bologna Declaration.

First I want to take a closer look at the Bologna Declaration itself and its accompanying declarations. This is necessary, because like bugs and ‘killer hurricanes’, policy documents on higher education never show up alone; most modern educational policy documents position themselves clearly in relationship to *other* policy declarations. Therefore policy documents on higher education can be said to form a (more or less) coherent system of speaking and acting or a discourse. Moreover, educational policy discourse is an excellent example of what the German sociologist Niklas Luhman has labeled a ‘self-referential system’ because its policy documents basically refer to one another and not to the outside world. Small wonder therefore that the first page of the Bologna Declaration already is referring to the Sorbonne or the Paris declaration of 25th of May 1998, where the initiative for Bologna was taken, and to an earlier declaration in Bologna in 1988.

Now what does the Bologna Declaration of the joint European Ministers of Education exactly state? Well, as this is just a policy statement and *not* an international treaty with enforceable obligations, the declared objectives are *essentially vague*. The same holds for its time path and the means by which the objectives are to be realized⁷. So, the Bologna declaration is an essentially political document, full of ‘empty containers’, which make it useful for application in any national setting. Nevertheless the following eight objectives are clearly identifiable, if only because the objectives are printed *in bold* in the original declaration:

1. “the creation of *one ‘higher educational space’* in Europe” – what this means is not specified.
2. “the objective of *increasing the international competitiveness* of this European higher educational space” – and this turns out to be one of the leading ideas.
3. “the adoption of a system of *easily readable, compatible and comparable degrees*, in order to promote European citizens employability and the competitiveness of the European higher education system”. (It transpires here that not everybody likes difficult reading).
4. “the adoption of a system essentially based on *two main cycles*, undergraduate and graduate (read: BA and MA)”. This system is also known as ‘the Anglo-Saxon model’, although the declaration itself avoids this label, probably in order not to arouse national sensitivities. The first cycle should last at least 3 years and should also be relevant for the labor market⁸.

⁷ See The National Unions of Students in Europe, *Introduction to the Bologna Process*, <http://www.esib.org/BPC/intro/introbologna.html>

⁸ For the Dutch case it is noteworthy that no minimum is specified for the second - masters - cycle; see p.25-26.

5. “the establishment of a *uniform system of credits* – later known as the *ECTS system* – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility” Why mobility is good, is not argued. Credits, remarkably, can also be acquired in *non-higher education contexts*⁹.
6. “promotion of *mobility* for both students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff”. Why this is good is not argued either: in the age of globalization mobility just seems to be a good in itself. ‘Keep on moving’ just is good, both for individuals and for organizations. This is reflected in the omnipresence in policy documents of the notion of ‘flexibility’.
7. “promotion of European *co-operation in quality assurance* with a view of developing comparable criteria and methodologies”. What ‘quality control’ consists of and why a separate ‘quality assurance’ apart from the professional mechanisms of quality control is good, is not argued. External controls on the teaching and researching faculty are simply presented as a natural phenomenon and nobody even asks what ever happened to the idea of professional autonomy of the faculty and to the idea of academic freedom. The new emphasis on control is reflected in the omnipresence in policy documents of the notions of ‘accountability’, ‘efficiency’ and of quantitative ‘quality controls’.
8. “promotion of the necessary *European dimensions in higher education*, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research”. What these ‘European dimensions’. would consist of, is not made explicit

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

The last couple of lines of the Bologna Declaration are ominous, because there we read that this declaration is not just meant to be a policy statement or a policy event, but a *continuous process*, that will be with us Europeans to stay. I quote: “Convinced that the establishment of the European area of higher education requires *constant support, supervision and adaptation* to the continuously evolving needs, we decide to meet again within two years to assess the progress achieved and the new steps taken”. These lines reflect a conscious decision to keep the systems of higher education in Europe in a state of *permanent supervision and reform*. So much for the Bologna Declaration itself¹⁰.

⁹ The managers of Dutch professional schools have been reading this clause carefully.

¹⁰ The constant reification of the political agenda and its transformation into an ‘objective’ force is one of the characteristics of managerial discourse. The same holds for referring to *other* policy reports in order to back up and legitimize the managerial agenda.

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

2. The Paris Declaration, the Lisbon Declaration, the WTO and the GATT(S).

The Paris declaration of 1998 is the direct precursor of the Bologna declaration. This Paris declaration airs serious European *concerns about the competitiveness* and the *global attractiveness* of European higher education, especially in comparison to North America and Australia – accidentally both English speaking global regions. The competition on the ever growing and promising Asian student market is being lost by Europe – with the UK as the only exception. ‘The Chinese are coming!’ is nowadays not meant as a warning in educational contexts, but as something (educational) policymakers welcome and want to stimulate – as long as the Chinese are willing to pay, of course.

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

Now the European worries about the global market in higher education in Paris were primarily economically motivated, although symbolic references to ‘European culture’ were not missing¹¹. The economic motive and agenda was even more open at the EU-gathering in Lisbon in March 2000. The EU-representatives in Lisbon observed that the ‘exported-value’ of higher education in the US represented at least hundreds of millions of dollars per year, and that in Australia higher education even takes the fifth place in terms of total ‘export-value’¹². Given these perceived ‘successes’ of the US and of Australia, the EU decided that the European inferiority on the global educational market

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

¹² According to the *New York Times* editorial ‘Imported brains’; 3 December 2005, in 2004 565,039 foreign students contributed about \$13.3 billion to the United States economy.

could no longer be tolerated¹³. And just like in the former Soviet-Union, the solution to this problem was immediately obvious to everyone present: a new plan and new policy documents. So in Lisbon the EU formulated its bold intention to become “the most dynamic and competitive economic bloc in the world” – nothing more and nothing less, and not “in the long run”, but *subito* - before 2010.

Given the idea that the global economy is basically a “knowledge economy”, and given the idea that we are also all living in a “knowledge society”, the EU inevitably came to the conclusion that European higher education had to become the ‘most dynamic’ and ‘most competitive’ in the world too!. Therefore the EU- Ministers of Education translated this intention in 2001 into an ambitious agenda for the educational domain¹⁴. Predictably the ‘Lisbon process’ has as yet only resulted in serious disappointments, because anno 2005 it was already crystal clear to even the greatest EU-policy optimists that its objectives will not be met even approximately. The remedy for this ‘delay’ is of course sought *in speeding up* the ‘Lisbon process’ in all EU- member states, and in shifting away of the responsibility for the ‘process’ to the EU-member states and in the production of *more* policy reports.¹⁵

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

¹³ It is interesting to observe that in the US exactly the opposite worries are formulated: fears of loosing the international educational market to the EU, Canada and Australia due to the barriers erected after ‘9/11’. See ‘Imported brains’.

¹⁴ See the Official Journal of the European Commission, 14.6.2002, *Detailed work programme on the follow up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe (2002/C 142/ 01)*. See also the European Commission policy document *Education and training 2010. Diverse systems, shared goals*, http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/201-/et_2010_en.html.

¹⁵ See “Time to move up a gear” - Commission President Barroso presents Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs’ at <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/71&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>, esp. p.2. “Entrepreneurship education should be provided as part of the school curriculum for all pupils”., 25 January 2006.

See for the Dutch situation: *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek Webmagazine* Maandag 7 november 2005 10:00, ‘Nederland en de Lissabonafspraken: de stand van zaken’, at: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/macro-economie-financiele-instellingen/nationale-rekeningen/publicaties/artikelen/2005-1798-wm.htm>. The EU-document, *A new start for the Lisbon Strategy*, concluded rather euphemistically that halfway the ‘Lisbon process’ – in 2005 – “the results are not very satisfactory”, and continued, in a surprising way: “The implementation of reform in Member States has been quite scarce. The reform package consists of 28 main objectives and 120 sub-objectives, with 117 different indicators. The reporting system for 25 Member States adds up to no fewer than 300 annual reports. *Nobody reads them all!*”. The rather obvious conclusion that the EU would benefit from less policy and less reports is not drawn because this conclusion would violate the presupposition supporting all policy discourse: *policy as such is good and more policy is even better*. See http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/intro_en.html. Compare Blair’s speech - in his capacity as the new chair of the EU - to the EU-parliament in ‘Blair renews call to modernize EU’, in the *International Herald Tribune* 27 October 2005, p.8: “Our university sector isn’t competing in the way it needs to with the United States”.

As we have seen, all the European declarations and plans considered so far basically contain an economic view of education, by treating higher education primarily in its function for the European economy and in terms of a marketable commodity. This is more apparent in the Paris and Lisbon Declarations than in the Bologna Declaration itself, although there too is an emphasis on the function of higher education for the labor market. Therefore the transformation of a great number of very diverse national systems of higher education into *one* competitive European ‘educational market’ is the primary objective of all declarations considered. How this objective is to be realized *in practice* is far less clear, the more so because the national governments remain responsible for the implementation of these objectives. To all appearances the EU is already facing serious problems in this respect.¹⁶

So the basic idea behind all educational EU-plans is economic: the basic idea is the enlargement of scale of the European systems of higher education, just as has been realized with the economic systems in Europe before, in order to enhance its ‘competitiveness’ by cutting down costs. Therefore a Europe-wide *standardization* of the ‘values’ produced in each of the national higher educational systems is called for. The introduction of the European Credits Transfer System - of ECTS-points — in order to make all European grades compatible and comparable can thus be compared to the introduction of the euro, because the ‘value’ of higher education all over Europe will in the future be calculated, compared and exchanged in terms of the same credit points – at least in theory and if we abstract from minor practical issues like the language problem. In contrast with the introduction of the euro, however, the introduction of the ECTS has *not* taken place at one point in time, but is a process with very different speeds in the different European states – with the Netherlands taking the lead¹⁷. The overall intention and direction of the process is clear: to create *one* European market for higher education in order to become more competitive in the global struggle for the well paying (especially Asian) students.

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

A very important background of the European developments in higher education – though seldom mentioned in the EU-declarations - are the policies of the *World Trade Organization* (WTO) since its foundation in 1995 and the *General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs* (GATT) in general, and the *General Agreements on Trade in Services* (GATS) in particular. The reason for the absence of WTO-, GATT and GATS-regulations in the EU-policy statements may be that these regulations are not subject to any parliamentary control, so actually they look bad for democratic business¹⁸. And

¹⁶ See for the Dutch situation: *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek Webmagazine* Maandag 7 november 2005 10:00, ‘Nederland en de Lissabonafspraken: de stand van zaken’, at: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/macro-economie-financiele-instellingen/nationale-rekeningen/publicaties/artikelen/2005-1798-wm.htm>.

¹⁷ See for an actual overview of the ECTS-situation per country: <http://www.esib.org/wg/education/ECTSSurvey.htm>

¹⁸ The European Commission is the political body negotiating about GATS. As is well known, the European Parliament does not have an effective authority to control the European Commission. Political control outside the European parliament over GATS is even more opaque because higher education is still

contrary to the Bologna regulations, the GATS regulations *do* have the status international treaties, enforceable by international law and international courts. This characteristic makes them pretty important in practice.

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

The neo-liberal GATS point of view has far reaching consequences for the citizens of Europe: higher education, instead of being a right of citizens of nation states, laid down by law, is redefined as and is being transformed into a commodity – into an international service that must be sold and bought from any international provider. For US-citizens this point of view may not look revolutionary, but for most Europeans it surely is.¹⁹

But on second sight the implications of the GATS-view may even surprise US-citizens, because GATS, among other things, prescribes the so-called ‘*national treatment rule*’. This rule prohibits the national governments, that subscribe to the GATS-regulations concerning education, to treat providers of services *inside* the national borders differently from providers from outside the national borders. Although this rule also contains a few clauses for exceptions, it may easily induce future outside providers of higher education to sue national governments for subsidizing their institutions of higher education on grounds that subsidies are impediments for open market competition and therefore are frustrating the free and international trade²⁰. This is what we already are witnessing in the domain of agriculture. The same argument and pressure may one day lead to the end of all publicly financed higher education, or at least bring it into the danger zone in which it is forced to legitimize itself as a ‘*non-market service*’. So the free trade principle may make some victims on its way to the best of all possible worlds.

Another GATS-regulation is the so-called *market access rule*, prohibiting national governments to refuse access to their service market for any reason. Although this rule too contains a few clauses of exception, this may lead to a situation in which for instance an openly racist institution will start to supply educational services without the possibility of banning it because this would also constitute a breach of free and open market

predominantly the domain of national Ministries of Education, that do not have a direct link with or access to the European Commission. See for this problem in a general framework: John Morijn, *Addressing Human Rights concerns within the World Trade Organization. A perspective on Human Rights and Trade and its application to Article XX of GATT*, Lisbon – Coimbra 2002; John Morijn, ‘Economic Liberalisation of Education Provision within the EC % WTO: a Human Rights Perspective’, in; *Croatian Yearbook of European Law and Policy 2006* (forthcoming).

¹⁹ Interestingly this economic definition of education is being imposed at the same time that economists are questioning the economic value of ‘educational investments’, both at the individual as on the collective level. See ‘Economic View: What’s the Return on Education?’ in: *The New York Times* 11 December 2005.

²⁰ See for the clauses of exception: Morijn, *Addressing Human Rights*

competition. Or a situation in which Tom Cruise and John Travolta join financial forces in creating the first ‘Scientology University’ – with very competitive prizes and very attractive (male) teachers of course.

So by redefining higher education as just a service like any other – as a marketable commodity – the WTO and GATS are basically eroding all effective forms of democratic political control over higher education²¹. As far as GATS-regulations allow for exceptions to the basic economic rule, these still have to be considered and justified in terms of their *economic* consequences. Small wonder there is so little discussion in the EU about that (nor in the US, for that matter). Nevertheless, it is obvious that the economic view on higher education recently developed and formulated by the EU-declarations is similar to and compatible with the view developed by the WTO and by GATS. In the end, the EU- and the GATS –views will probably also have similar implications.

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

3. Peculiarities of Dutch higher education policies before and after the Bologna Declaration.

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

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

1. The radical economization of higher education

²¹ See Attag-RUG, *De Bologna-verklaring (en de GATTS). Europese hoger onderwijsruimte of Europese onderwijsmarkt?*

Since the 1980's Dutch higher educational discourse basically *defines* all educational qualities in terms of economic quantities. The educational quality of institutions and their constituent parts has simply been defined in terms of the quantitative 'output' or 'production' of 'credit points' by the faculty and the 'efficiency' (alias 'economy') by which this 'production process' is organized²². And what's more important: the institutions are financed by the state on basis of a mix of quantitative 'output' indicators (the number of 'produced' credit points, of dissertations etc.). This economic view of education redefines the very *selection* of student performances by the faculty on basis of their professional criteria as a "loss of production" and as a lack of "efficiency" – with all its mind-blowing consequences for the professional autonomy of the faculty and its professional criteria of quality in the traditional sense. So the economic definition of education *implies* the de-professionalization of the faculty - not accidentally but necessarily.

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

Completely in line with the economic view the new Dutch law on higher education only specifies the students (as the 'consumers' of education) and the Dutch employers (as the future 'consumers' of educated 'consumers') as direct "stakeholders" in the Dutch universities – the faculty has simply been dropped out of the picture of the 'modern' university²³. It also goes without saying that in the economic view disciplines don't have an equal academic value. Since 'the market' is the only mechanism determining academic values it goes without saying that philosophers and historians cannot expect similar payment and facilities in 'modern' academia as fiscalists and accountants²⁴.

Even a pessimist analyst of the 'modern' university like Max Weber, who was the first thinker to warn for the insatiable appetite for power of managers in general and for their blind logic of instrumental (goal – means) rationality in particular, did not

²² I have dealt with these aspects in more detail in my *Van het universitaire front geen nieuws*, Baarn 1993, in: 'Is dit beleid of is erover nagedacht?' "Van het universitaire front geen nieuws" vijf jaar later', in: *De Gids* 160 (1998), nr. 4, p.281-291, and in: 'The Myth of the Dutch Middle Way', in: *Wissenschaftsrecht* vol.33 (2000), p.189-209.

²³ Nieuwe wetgevingsnotitie *Wet Hoger Onderwijs*, Ministerie van OCW, <http://www2.minocw.nl/persbericht.jsp?pageID=7022&jaar=2005>, p.7.

²⁴ De Weert, 'Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands', p.95, typically suggests that "professors should be better paid if they teach useful, profitable courses". See also the report of the Center of Higher Education Policy Studies, *Een basis voor een Sterkte Zwakte analyse van het Nederlands hoger onderwijs in internationaal perspectief*, Twente 2001, p.74, where the rhetorical question is asked if the Netherlands need specialists in Old- Egyptian languages: "Heeft de Nederlandse maatschappij behoefte aan een topkwaliteit in onderzoek in de Egyptische taal- en letterkunde?"

consider this *economic deformation of the university* as a possibility²⁵. The (post-Christian) ‘modern condition’ Weber diagnosed in 1918 as “an unceasing struggle of the gods with one another” - alias the co-existence of irreconcilable value-domains in differentiated societies - now seems to have come to an end, however: the god of the capitalist economy – including the ‘spirit of capitalism’ in the dress of a completely blind craze for ‘efficiency’ – appears to have won the ‘war’ under the guise of neo-liberalism since the 1980’s²⁶.

After ‘the death of God’ and after the era of Nietzschean “polytheism” that Weber diagnosed, we are now witnessing the birth of a new monotheistic religion worshipping the god of neo-liberal market fundamentalism. Nothing is more telling of this fundamental change than the fact that Weber’s explicit warning that the emphasis on enrolments is at odds with the constitutive values of the idea of the ‘modern’ university, is now running up plugged managerial ears. As I pointed out earlier, in the Netherlands enrolment numbers have been transformed into the very basis for financing universities²⁷. So the ‘icy polar night’ Weber predicted in 1918 looks a bit different from the one he envisaged – outside and inside the universities.

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

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

²⁵ See Max Weber, *From Max Weber. Essays in sociology* (translated, edited and with an introduction of H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills), New York and Oxford 1958, p.147-148 and p.131. Weber's essay 'Science as a vocation' goes back to a lecture he held in 1918, together with its twin essay 'Politics as a vocation'. An example of the fateful extending of values beyond their own domain Weber analyses – the extending of the values of religion in the domain of science – also has an unexpected actuality related to the fundamentalist – Christian attempts, especially in the US, to redefine science in order to include ‘theories’ of ‘creationism’ and ‘intelligent design’. See ‘Philosophers Notwithstanding, Kansas School Board Redefines Science’, in: *The New York Times* 15 November 2005.

In recent times Habermas diagnosed the ‘proletarianization’ of the professionals. See Jürgen Habermas, ‘What does a crisis mean today? Legitimation problems in late capitalism’, in: Steaven Seidman (ed.), *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: a Reader*,. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989, pp. 279:

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

²⁶ Weber, *From Max Weber*, p.152

²⁷ Weber, *From Max Weber*, p.133: “Almost everybody thus is affected by the suggestion of the immeasurable blessing and value of large enrolments”[-]. “After rather extensive experience and sober reflection, I have a deep distrust of courses that draw crowds, however unavoidable they may be”.

towards profit', but 'of religious origin'²⁸. This peculiar situation dates back to the so-called 'school struggle' of the 19th. and early 20th. century between the (secular) Dutch state and the churches over the control of education. This struggle ended after the Dutch state had conferred equal financing to both secular and religious educational institutions between 1917 and 1920.

The new "*Dutch Revolution*" in the making, which amounts to the abolishment of *all* public higher education in a legal sense, is internationally without parallel as far as I know²⁹. Nevertheless, it is clear that this 'privatization' of Dutch higher education is in principle fully in line with the WTO and the GATS-policies, because financial privatization is likely to follow the legal privatization in due time. This total 'privatization' of higher education is made possible because in the Netherlands - somewhat similar to in the US - from the 1980's onwards one can observe an increasing and paradoxical convergence between Christian social-economic policies and neo-liberal market fundamentalism³⁰.

The 'legal privatization' of the Dutch universities, made possible by the new law, will allow for the removal of the last legal remnants of the period of self-governance of the faculty - remnants that represent impediments to the new mode of managerial governance. In order to become 'flexible' - and more 'sensitive' to managerial control - the faculty will first have to be robbed of its present 'job security' alias the *tenure*³¹. This will be effected by the (legal) privatization and the accompanying transformation of the

²⁸ Ministerie van OCW, *Funding and recognition. A comparative study of funded versus non-funded education in eight countries*, <http://www.minocw.nl/bhw/92/10.html>

²⁹ Nieuwe wetgevingsnotitie *Wet Hoger Onderwijs*, Ministerie van OCW, <http://www2.minocw.nl/persbericht.jsp?pageID=7022&jaar=2005>, p.12: "De huidige WHW gaat bij de vormgeving van de wet uit van openbare instellingen: voor bijzondere instellingen zijn er afwijkingen geregeld. De nieuwe wet zal bij de vormgeving van de wet juist de bijzondere instellingen al uitgangspunt nemen". Neither did the recent complete privatization of health care in the Netherlands attract much attention abroad.

³⁰ In the Netherlands the Christian democratic premier Jan-Peter Balkenende (CDA) represents this, from a historical perspective remarkable, convergence. The government headed by him has consistently been implementing the neo-liberal agenda, emphasizing 'individual responsibility' in all domains of societal life. His government has recently adopted the complete privatization of Dutch health care. See e.g. 'Niet Hoogervorst aan de basis van nieuw zorgstelsel, maar Balkenende', and 'Laat dat maar aan de markt over' in: *NRC-Handelsblad* 17 December 2005. Balkenende basically has adopted the neo-liberal 'self-help agenda' as his political program: "de trits van zelf-doen, zelf-financiering, zelf-regulering". Even the traditional Christian care for those who cannot take care of themselves seems to have evaporated under neo-liberalism.

³¹ Egbert de Weert, 'Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands', in: *Higher Education* vol. 41 (2001), p.97, euphemistically predicts that not all faculty members will be happy with their 'modernization': "Tensions may occur between the claims of the professorate and the framing of imperatives set by management". Paradoxically he also observes on p.100: "For universities it is increasingly important to attract and keep a well motivated and well-qualified staff". In the UK tenure was abolished for new faculty by the Thatcher-government in the 1980's. Usually in the Dutch case a generational argument is added to the general flexibility argument in favor to abolish tenure: the argument that the present job-security is an asset of the generation of the "the baby boomers" who are clinging on to jobs actually meant for the younger generation. The 'modern' Dutch labor unions usually subscribe to this representation of the 'baby boomers' as an over-privileged and over-protected cohort of employees, that should be stripped of their 'privileges'. "Modern" managerial discourse has from the 1990's onwards successfully introduced a repertoire of 'arguments' meant to foster resentment among the younger generations towards the older ones in the 'modern' discourse of labor relations. Both Nietzsche and Weber long ago have pointed to the power of resentment as a motivational force.

civil servant status of the faculty into a private employee status, simply because the private status does not allow for tenure³². Since the faculty is hardly unionized – and since the existing unions have no idea of what is going on with the faculty– the future ‘modernized’ job security for the Dutch faculty looks very dim indeed.

The transformation from the civil servant status into a private employee status for the faculty after 2007 will also be used to introduce a new ‘merit based’ type of payment – just like in the 19th. century cookie factories (and also recently introduced at the German universities) – all in the name of ‘accountability’, ‘quality’, ‘flexibility’ and ‘competitiveness’ of course. How ‘merit’ will be defined and measured is a job for the managers no doubt. Given the fact that ‘efficiency’ is defined by management as cutting down costs, the chances are high that ‘merit’ will be defined in a parsimonious way and will manifest itself predominantly in further increasing workloads and in growing work pressure for the faculty. Most likely, management will present new faculty with new ‘market conform’ labor contracts, just like the Thatcher government did in the UK in the 1980’s, and will try to get rid of old ‘inflexible’ faculty members³³.

Given its preference for economization and privatization it is small wonder that Dutch governments have stated their enthusiastic support for both the Bologna and the Lisbon Declaration, declaring on its turn that within Europe the Netherlands wants to belong to the top as far as education and ‘knowledge economy’ are concerned. The former Dutch Minister of Education Loek Hermans stated “Education is a golden market”, and this statement is pretty significant. Higher education in the Netherlands has since the 1980’s persistently been presented as an economic commodity, preferably to be exported just like any other commodity like Dutch bulbs and natural gas.

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

As expected, the Dutch system of higher education is comparatively small: there are 14 universities in the Netherlands – compared to 76 in England (and more than 100 in the UK), 104 in France and 106 in Germany. Nevertheless the policy makers of the Dutch university system have high ambitions³⁴ (see the paragraph on ‘talking up quality’). Next to those 14 universities there are some 40 ‘hoge scholen’, that is institutions for professional education. Traditionally, the majority of higher education students (more than 60% of the total of about 450.000 students) enroll in the professional schools and 40% in the universities.

³² See my article ‘The Myth of the Dutch Middle Way’, in: *Wissenschaftsrecht* vol.33 (2000), p.189-209. This is a major difference with Germany where professors actually as yet are civil servants *beamtet auf Lebenszeit*.

³³ For the effects of the ever rising work pressure on the faculty see Elisabeth Berg, Jim Barry and John Chandler, ‘The New Public Management and Higher Education: a Human Cost?’, in: Dent, Chandler and Barry (eds.), *Questioning the New Public Management*, p.161-175.

³⁴ Small educational systems may produce top institutions, of course, although - all things being equal - this probability is not high. Nevertheless, the small Swiss system has produced the international top University of Zurich, to give one example.

To give some idea of scale in relationship to North America: qua number of students the Netherlands can well be compared to the state of Michigan where some 500.000 students were enrolled in higher education (in 1998) in some 108 colleges and universities. And like in Michigan, practically all higher education in the Netherlands is financed by the state³⁵.

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

The binary system has been constantly under attack of the management of the professional schools since the 1990's. Their claim to the title and status of university is known as the '*academic drift*' and they have been pretty inventive in pursuing this aim, (among other things by U-turn constructions with former polytechnics in the UK which were upgraded to universities after 1988.)³⁶. Although this academic drift has traditionally met staunch resistance of most Dutch universities, there are now clear signs that the professional schools will be upgraded to universities by the Dutch government within the next 5 years³⁷. I dare to play the prophet in this case because the merger of professional schools and universities would simply be the logical next step in the *policies of enlargement of scale* pursued by all Dutch governments since the 1980's³⁸.

³⁵Next to the public higher education system are a number of private higher education institutions mostly offering professional higher education. The size of the private sector and the range of programs offered is considerably smaller than the public sector, but the number of institutions and programs has been rising since 1993. There are about 60 private institutions offering around 500 programs. The total enrolment is unknown but is estimated to be approximately 35.000 students. Source: Ministerie van OCW, *Funding and recognition. A comparative study of funded versus non-funded education in eight countries*, <http://www.minocw.nl/bhw/92/10.html>.

³⁶ See for a typical example of 'modern' managerialism in professional education in practice: 'Een stoomwals die alles snel wil doen. Studenten van Hogeschool InHolland zien niets in daadkracht van bestuursvoorzitter', in the *NRC-Handelsblad* 29 March 2005. The 'top manager' of the professional school 'Hoge School Amsterdam', Jos Elbers, typically mentions having just signed contracts with two universities in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and just having visited Surinam. What use this cooperation with Argentina has *in practice* nobody asks or knows. At the end of the interview it is apparent that everybody seems to be happy with the way in which Elbers runs 'his' educational empire – except for the students and the teaching staff. After some press coverage of the discontent at InHolland the Ministry of Education ordered an investigation which formulated some criticism of Elbers policies. Following this investigation Elbers criticized the Ministry in turn. He announced a new 'independent' and 'scientific' investigation in order to investigate the investigation of the Ministry, thus typically trying to transform the real problems into a 'communications' and an 'image problem'. See 'Inspectie na onderzoek: Vernieuwing ging te snel bij InHolland', in: *NRC-Handelsblad* 6 December 2005.

³⁷ Quite a few managers in higher education have discovered that the most efficient way to pursue your goals is simply to deny that you pursue them. See for an example 'Het HBO wordt gediscrimineerd', *Folia Civitatis* 23 September 2005, p.10-11. Another managerial discovery is that the Ministry of Education is only sensitive for quantitative arguments.

³⁸ I have predicted this merger in 1993 in my *Van het universitaire front geen nieuws*, p.42-43.

There are already several observable facts that the enlargement of scale will remain policy goal nr. 1 in the Netherlands.

1. The first and most salient fact in this respect is the recent (*near*) *mergers between two universities* (the ‘Universiteit van Amsterdam’ and the ‘Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam’) *with professional schools* (the ‘Hoge School Amsterdam’ and the ‘Hogeschool Windesheim’). Fact is that the Dutch government has allowed these (near) mergers, although officially – according to the existing law - the binary system is still in place. So this is a typical Dutch example of ‘*gedogen*’, i.e. of circumventing the law by the institutions that are supposed to uphold, enact and control the law (‘tolerate the illegal’ would be the nearest English translation). In this respect Dutch higher education policies bear a striking similarity to the better known Dutch policy of ‘*gedogen*’ towards soft drugs³⁹. More mergers between universities and professional schools will surely follow in the future in order to make Dutch higher education internationally more ‘competitive’ now ‘Europe’ is moving “from the margin to the mainstream”⁴⁰.

2. The second indication of the impending fusion of the Dutch universities and professional schools is the introduction of the position of so-called ‘*lectoren*’ – lecturers – in the professional schools. Lecturers are supposed to be comparable to university professors and to do research and give guidance to future PhD-students. This introduction of the lecturers is a rather strange and intriguing move, because professional schools usually don’t conduct research and neither do they have PhD-students. So this was a typical example of what sociologists call “anticipating socialization”.

3. The third indication of the impending fusion of universities and professional schools in the Netherlands is the introduction of a so-called ‘professional’ PhD-degree, which is unlike the traditional PhD-degree *not* based on a normal doctoral dissertation, but based on “professional experience”. This kind of PhD-degree also represents a silent and as yet unnoticed revolution in Dutch academia, because policy makers are putting an end to another well entrenched academic practice: the autonomy of the professorate to

³⁹ The most striking example of ‘*gedogen*’ in higher education is the so-called ‘HBO-fraude’ case. Some 33 professional schools had embarked on ‘creative bookkeeping’ concerning the number of enrolments because the institutions of higher education are financed by the Ministry of Education on basis of this number. When this fraudulent practice was revealed in 2002, the Ministry of Education proved very reluctant to investigate this fraud, let alone to take any further action. The fact that the Ministry of Education tried to play this fraud down can be explained by the fact that it clearly contradicted a crucial presupposition of higher educational discourse because the fraud clearly identified *the managers as the problem*. Therefore the fraud case was forcefully repressed at all policy levels. Moreover, the Minister of Education, Mrs. Maria Van der Hoeven, was indirectly involved in the ‘fraud’ problem herself because she was a member of the board of trustees of one of the ‘fraudulent’ professional schools. See my ‘Berichten uit Absurdistan’, in *VAWO-Visie* 35 (2003), nr.2, p.12.

Interestingly the Ministry of Education regards professional education as the sector being ahead of university education and in this respect represents ‘the model’. See Walter Kickert, ‘Steering at a distance: a new paradigm of public governance in Dutch higher education; in: *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, vol. 6 (1995), no. 1, p.135-157, and esp. p.145-6. .

⁴⁰ *Koers op kwaliteit. Internationaliseringsbrief hogere onderwijs*, presented by the Minister of Education to the Parliament, 12 November 2004, p.6-8.

determine academic degrees. According to the Ministry of Education “society” (or better: “knowledge society”) in the Netherlands is just ‘demanding’ more PhD’s, and therefore the Ministry is simply ‘responding’ to ‘societies demands’ by producing more doctoral degrees!⁴¹ Therefore it is now a policy objective to increase the percentage of PhD’s carrying teaching staff at the professional schools from 3% - the present situation – to 20% - the future situation within 6 years⁴². In the managerial cosmos it is just as simple as that, because ‘objective’ professional criteria are just regarded as potential ‘impediments’ for policy goals and not as the very basis of the academic system..

The same story holds for the policy goal of increasing the percentage of Dutch youth with higher education from 40% now to 50% in the near future - presumably because the US advertises 50% as its percentage⁴³. What the increases in ‘output’ levels mean for the ‘educational quality’ at the level of the work floor is not even mentioned although - or because - the answer is pretty obvious. Occasional criticisms of faculty members and observations that the level of education is falling are usually counteracted by *more* ‘talking up quality’ and by *more* policy reports simply denying that there is any problem (the argument that ‘laments about declining levels of education have been usual since Plato’ being one of the major ‘counter-arguments’)⁴⁴.

4. The fourth and most recent indication for the impending fusion of universities and professional schools is the fact that professional schools have very recently been advertising positions for PhD-students – with the degree awarding professors based in partner-institutions in the UK⁴⁵. Just one Dutch professor – typically a specialist in the ‘educational sciences’ - has been contracted in order to confer this revolutionary practice the necessary appearance of academic legitimacy⁴⁶.

5. The fifth and perhaps most fundamental indication for the impending fusion of universities and professional schools is that the financial models, by which the budgets are calculated for the universities and professional schools by the Ministry of Education, have recently been integrated into one model. Universities still get additional funding for

⁴¹ This is an example of both the reification of the political agenda and of the self-referentiality of higher education policy documents noted in note 4. See e.g. Kickert, ‘Steering at a distance’, p.151: “Dependence on the social environment was the main argument for introducing ‘steering at a distance’. Existing government steering was perceived as being an obstacle to the optimal and flexible adaptation of higher education to changing societal demands”. Because reificational discourse tries to camouflage political decisions as properties of reality itself it shows a typical preference for the use of passive verbs.

⁴² See ‘Promotierecht niets voor het HBO’, *Folia Civitatis* 7 October 2005, p.4

⁴³ *Koers op kwaliteit. Internationaliseringsbrief hogere onderwijs*, presented by the Minister of Education to the Dutch parliament, 12 November 2004, p.6-8.

⁴⁴ For the latest reporting on the lowering of education standards in general see ‘Niveau van het onderwijs gedaald’, *De Volkskrant* 21 October 2005, ‘Niveau scholieren gedaald’, *NRC-Handelsblad* 3 November 2005; ‘Leerling rekent beter dan leraar’, in *NRC-Handelsblad* 2 January 2006. For the universities see: Adrienne van den Boogaard, ‘Kenniss is niet zo belangrijk’, in: *NRC-Handelsblad* 26 April 2005 (reprinted in *TUDELT*A, 15 May 2005), and ‘Beta-studenten klagen over zichzelf’, *NRC-Handelsblad* 14 January 2006. The flat denial of all problems not fitting in policy discourse is another remarkable feature of neo-liberal politics.

⁴⁵ See ‘Het HBO wordt gediscrimineerd’, *Folia Civitatis* 23 September 2005, p.10-11; cf. ‘Promotierecht niets voor het HBO’, *Folia Civitatis* 7 October 2005, p.4.

⁴⁶ See ‘UvA levert promotor aan Fonteyns’, *Folia Civitatis* 7 October 2005, p.5.

their research, but as far as higher *education* is concerned both universities and professional schools are already financed as equals.

So, all in all, what is basically happening in the Netherlands, is that the professional schools have been busy repeating the ‘English trick’ of getting rid of their ‘inferior status’ by turning themselves into universities – with the silent cooperation of the Dutch Ministry of Education.

This policy of ‘gedogen’ sure is one of the peculiarities of the Dutch and this awkward situation will only come to an end in 2007 when the new law on higher education will be introduced. This law will remove all “impediments for joint degrees” between professional schools and universities. So the illegal U-turn policies of the professional schools with upgraded English ‘universities’ will be legalized in 2007 after the fact, just like selling soft drugs was legalized after the fact⁴⁷. The saying ‘de aanhouder wint’ – ‘slow and steady wins the race’ – sure has more than a bit of plausibility in the Netherlands.

All in all, *enlargement of scale* has been the major driving force in Dutch higher education politics from the 1980’s onwards. The reason behind this policy is very simple, although it has seldom explicitly been stated: enlargement of scale, so the economic argument goes, produces a lowering of ‘production costs’. Whether this schoolbook argument also holds in educational reality is of course another question. This question is never asked in Dutch policy circles, because the *supposed* truth of this economic theory is the very foundation of all Dutch higher educational discourse. Neither is the question ever raised whether enlargement of scale in education produces unintended consequences *outside* the economic sphere. Enlargement of scale is simply supposed to be the highest good in it self, because it lowers educational costs – at least in theory. Therefore the discourse on educational policies in the Netherlands since the 1980’s has been a fundamentally *economic* discourse. One should not be surprised to see the number of Dutch universities multiply by the factor four between now and 2010. And don’t be surprised either to see the number of Dutchmen calling them selves ‘university students’ and ‘dr. (PhD)’ multiply in a similar magnitude. Enlargement of scale and enlargement of production – including PhD-production – are simply the basic principles of Dutch higher education policies not hindered by ‘qualitative’ considerations.

In this sad respect the Netherlands have been ahead of the general European trend as formulated by the declarations mentioned earlier on, and in *this* sad respect there is some factual basis for the traditional Dutch claim to be a vanguard – ‘gidsland’- for other nations.⁴⁸

Now, with the Paris and the Bologna Declarations, the European discourse on higher education policies has started to *converge* remarkably with the Dutch discourse since the

⁴⁷ Nieuwe wetgevingsnotitie *Wet Hoger Onderwijs*, Ministerie van OCW, <http://www2.minocw.nl/persbericht.jsp?pageID=7022&jaar=2005>, p.17-18. See also the reaction of the VSNU, *Een nieuwe wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Onderzoek? Positionpaper VSNU*, 10 June 2005.

⁴⁸ *Koers op kwaliteit. Internationaliseringsbrief hoger onderwijs*, presented by the minister of education to the parliament, 12 November 2004, p.6-8.

1980's. The main ingredients of the Dutch educational policies since the 1980's, now showing up in the European policy discourse, have been: the economic market as the organizational model for higher education, the idea that the enhancement of 'competitiveness' of higher education is primarily effected by a policy of continuously cutting the costs, the idea that costs can effectively be reduced by a continuous enlargement of scale, and - last but not least – the idea that all power in higher education must be transferred to a managerial class. Although these policies are part of what is called 'New Public Management' and thus have effected other countries than the Netherlands – especially the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Sweden – nowhere has this policy been pursued with such a rigor and consistency as in the Netherlands⁴⁹. The effects of this type of policy can therefore also be better observed in the Netherlands than elsewhere.

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

The political preference for the *total* control over the educational institutions of the managerial class and the *total* disappearance of the faculty from the policy and organizational picture is the fourth peculiarity of the Dutch system in a European comparative perspective. This preference got its legal and organizational form in 1998 in the law 'Modernisering Universitair Bestuur' ('Modernisation of the University Administration') that introduced the management model in university administration and that abolished the very idea of self-governance of the faculty. Since 1998 the faculty is robbed of its institutional means of influencing university administration and has retained a consultative voice at best. The fusion of administration and management, intended by this law, has succeeded in a formal sense, meaning the total take over of administration by management alias the "*managerial colonization*" of the Dutch universities⁵⁰.

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

The new law contains lengthy paragraphs dealing with the position and the rights of the administration and management – actually they have become identical - and lengthy paragraphs about the rights of the students ('the consumers' of higher education),

⁴⁹ For the 'official' policy picture of 'the Dutch model' and its origins: Egbert de Weert, 'Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands', in: *Higher Education* vol. 41 (2001), p.77-101, and Kickert, 'Steering at a distance'. Compare my 'Myth of the Dutch Middle way'.

⁵⁰ See de Weert, 'Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands', p.97: "The new governance structure implies a shift from the collegiate model towards an integrated management model with deans as professional managers". At present an 'evaluation' of the introduction is organized by the Ministry of Education and conducted by CHEPS. One can safely predict its outcome.

but significantly there is *no single line* in this law devoted to the position and the rights of the category of personnel that traditionally represented the university's 'core business': the job of doing teaching and research.

This is quite symptomatic for the Dutch situation and represents the end station of the process of *de-professionalisation* and *de-skilling* of the faculty that is inherent in the economic view of education, because the only recognized values in Dutch higher education discourse are quantifiable 'economic' values⁵¹.

In Dutch higher education policy discourse only what can be counted, counts, and the fact that the reduction of academic quality to quantifiable indicators has been *factually* proven to be *wrong*, does not count⁵². Content does *not* count and therefore a process of *de-differentiation* at the level of teaching is another symptom of this process of de-skilling, carefully camouflaged as a process of 'interdisciplinary innovation' and of 'tearing down the walls between professorial kingdoms and between isolated specializations'.

For rationally inclined minds this constant and blatant denial of the fact that modern science *means* differentiation and specialization, as Max Weber already remarked in 1918, does not make life easier⁵³. This de-differentiation clearly signals that 'modern' university management is simply at odds with the constitutive principles of 'modern' science and that as far as science continues as usual this is happening *in spite of* and not *because of* 'modern' university management.

Predictably, the result will be that those sciences, which have the greatest cash value from the economical point of view, will be 'rescued' from the 'modernized' universities because they are directly functional for the economy. It is also predictable that the economically least valuable sciences – that is the humanities as they were 'traditionally' conceived and those of the social sciences, which have *not* been reduced to state-dependent policy discourses, like the 'educational sciences' and the 'administrative sciences' – will be left to the 'discipline and punish' regime of 'modern' university management⁵⁴. This implies that they will be subject to further de-skilling processes - a process well under way in the form of 'innovatory' policies like the 'modularization' of teaching, e-learning, 'life long learning', the 'professionalisation' of teaching etcetera. If

⁵¹ I will analyze this process of de-professionalisation in more depth in 'Will the universities survive the Managerial Colonization?'

⁵² See Rachele L. Brooks, 'Measuring University Quality', in: *The Review of Higher Education* vol. 29 (Fall 2005), no. 1, p.16: "Studies of university research and scholarship have a minimal ability to assess the productivity of faculty in many fields, especially those in the fine arts and humanities, due to the limited frame of reference inherent in the measures". *Translating the meaning of quality into quantity "is where the greater difficulty lies"*.

Egbert de Weert (CHEPS, Twente U.) typically presents in his overview of the recent history of the Dutch universities the managerial takeover as 'the modern conception' of the university and its adversaries as "the traditionals". Managers like to suggest that 'time is on their side'. See: Egbert de Weert, 'Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands', in: *Higher Education* vol. 41 (2001), p.77-101.

⁵³ Max Weber, 'Science as a vocation', in: *From Max Weber. Essays in sociology* (translated, edited and with an introduction of H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills), New York and Oxford 1958, p.135: "A really definitive and good accomplishment is today always a specialized accomplishment". See also p.134 where Weber states that "science has entered a phase of specialization previously unknown and that will forever remain the case".

⁵⁴ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish. The birth of the prison*, London 1977.

there ever was a ‘revenge’ of the ‘established order’ on the insurgent universities of ‘1968’, this sure looks like one.

The new law on higher education takes this process of academic de-differentiation to a higher stage, rejecting state responsibility for the level of departments and faculties and lumping them together in so-called ‘domains’ (‘domeinen’). Of course this process is represented as an increase of the “freedom” of the universities - as increasing “deregulation,” “flexibility” and “innovative capacities” - and as a measure to cut down on “bureaucracy”⁵⁵. So, the Dutch state will in the future no longer take *any* responsibility for the supply of *any* specific ‘educational services’. When future university managers, for instance, would decide that education in foreign languages is no longer needed in the Netherlands, then education in foreign languages in the Netherlands would simply vanish⁵⁶.

This *silent abandonment of state responsibility for the supply of educational services* – as always cloaked as increasing ‘steering at a distance’ and as increasing ‘freedom and flexibility’ – is reflected in the change in the mode of state control. The Dutch system of educational ‘quality control’ is now developing into a two layered process, in which the educational institutions themselves organize the first layer of direct control followed by a second the second layer of ‘meta-control’ - yes indeed: the central national control over local controls. The new law on higher education states that the Ministry of Education will restrict itself to this type of ‘meta-control’, just like it will delegate all controls of ‘efficiency’ to the local managers and restrict itself to the control of ‘macro-efficiency’.(‘macro-doelmatigheid’ is the new Dutch buzzword)⁵⁷. It is not hard to predict that in the future a third – European - layer of ‘meta-meta-control’ will be installed on top of this control apparatus, by which the national controls will be controlled. Although occasionally the text of the new law pays the usual lip service to “reducing the costs of bureaucracy”, these costs will predictably rise further – at the expense of the faculty⁵⁸.

This increase of managerial costs is, among other things, connected to the *planned ‘decomposition’ of the faculty* and the *planned increase in ‘human resource management’*. This HRM-plan aims at the further take over of control over professional standards and amounts to nothing less than the intentional and total ‘decomposition’ of the academic profession. This ‘decomposition’ is, as everything in the managerial cosmos, not seen as an event but as an ongoing ‘process’ – leading to a planned

⁵⁵ Nieuwe wetgevingsnotitie *Wet Hoger Onderwijs*, Ministerie van OCW, <http://www2.minocw.nl/persbericht.jsp?pageID=7022&jaar=2005>, p.5-10.

⁵⁶ This example is not unrealistic because in the 1990’s the Dutch Ministry of Education itself formulated this proposal in order to cut down on costs.

⁵⁷ Nieuwe wetgevingsnotitie *Wet Hoger Onderwijs*, Ministerie van OCW, <http://www2.minocw.nl/persbericht.jsp?pageID=7022&jaar=2005>.

⁵⁸ This Orwellian inversion of reality – managers hiding their own financial interests and costs - is also a general characteristic of managerial discourse. For the situation in the UK see Andrew Laird, ‘The Wrong Idea of the University’, p.2: “The most preposterous claim the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency, CL) has made is that it wants to cut back on bureaucracy and red tape in universities”.

“reconsideration of academic scholarship” – and the process is only at its very beginning⁵⁹:

“It has been questioned”, according to CHEPS-author Egbert de Weert, “whether the present system of academic ranks and chairs, based on criteria derived from research performance is still appropriate or whether this should not be replaced by a more flexible system that acknowledges different task components” . Instead of the ‘traditional’ academic orientation on research the ‘modern’ university is advised to create “task packages that encompass a broader terrain than teaching and research”⁶⁰ (sic, CL).

This decomposition of the former faculty tasks has the obvious advantage that it will bring *more* management and *more* managerial control: “The model gives an impetus to human resource management, whereby agreements concerning task assignments and results, staff assessment and appraisal schemes, as well as merit pay constitute the core components”⁶¹. So in the Dutch universities of the 21 st. century there can never be enough managerial ‘assessment’ and ‘control’ (of the faculty), also including ‘payment by quantifiable merit’- of course to be determined by the management and *not* the other way around⁶². Of course no financial figures of management costs are ever supplied⁶³.

So, to all appearances, the process of *de-professionalisation* and *de-skilling* of the faculty, also taking place in some other countries, will have been completed in 2007 in the Netherlands⁶⁴. This most threatening and disturbing fact is somewhat obscured by the circumstance that quite a few members of the managerial class carry academic degrees themselves. In this sad respect the Dutch can rightfully lay a claim to the status of being a vanguard nation. Similar shifts of power from the professionals to the managers have been going on in the area of health care where medical doctors are directly controlled by

⁵⁹ According to De Weert, ‘Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands’, p.99, this process is still in its “prenatal stage”. See for the international context: *Towards a Multiversity? Universities between National Traditions and Global Trends in Higher Education at*: <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=700>

⁶⁰ De Weert, ‘Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands’, p.98.

⁶¹ De Weert, ‘Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands’, p.98. Compare for the UK Laird, ‘Wrong idea of university’, p. 3, citing Bruce Charlton, “The stated goal of improving teaching was and is simply a convenient excuse for imposing top-down regulation of academics by managers. QAA is taking this further”.

⁶² In this context it is hardly surprising that in Dutch higher education discourse the topic of citation indexes much debated until the late 1990’s, has more or less disappeared from the managerial agenda. My hunch is that this ‘silence’ is related to the fact that citations are – as yet – beyond the realm of managerial control.

⁶³ The denial of its own material interests is a general characteristic of managerial discourse, showing interesting historical parallels with the identical denial by the managers of the former communist parties under the conditions of ‘state socialism’. Max Weber already identified this characteristic as inherent in all bureaucratic organizations.

That the Dutch managerial class is taking good care of its own material interests can be illustrated with one example. Recently early retirement has been abandoned for all Dutch civil servants under 55 years and a maximum will be introduced. Present top civil servants, receiving early retirements of over 100.000 euro, all belonging to the managerial class, have remarkably been exempted from this maximum, however. See ‘Top ambtenaar boven 55 jaar houdt zijn VUT. VUT blijft zonder maximum’, in; *Volkskrant* 28 September 2005.

⁶⁴ See Keith Roberts and Karen Donahue ‘Professing professionalism: bureaucratization and deprofessionalization in the academy’, in: *Sociological Focus* vol. 33 (2000), no. 4, 365-383; Jim Barry and Mike Dent, ‘New Public Management and the professions in the UK. Reconfiguring control?’, in: Mike Dent, John Chandler and Jin Berry (eds.), *Questioning the New Public Management*, Aldershot 2004, p.7-24.

health care management that determines their medical ‘output- parameters’, in the area of justice where Dutch courts now are financed on basis of the number of verdicts ‘produced’, and in the area of the police where parameters have been introduced as to the number of tickets to be ‘produced’ and ‘quota’ as to the types of crimes to be dealt with⁶⁵.

How the “managerial colonization” in higher education functions in practice can be illustrated by the recent reorganization of all the functions in Dutch universities, the so-called *UFO-operation* ('Universitaire Functie Ordening' or 'University Function Management'). During this reorganization all university positions have been redescribed by management in such a way, that they fit in their favorite organization model⁶⁶.

Officially the rationale behind this organization model was to create a greater ‘uniformity’ and a greater ‘flexibility’ of all personnel but *de facto* a new hierarchy was installed in which the managers were officially put at the top of the university organization at all levels. In fact the reorganization was meant to lower the labor costs *for the faculty* because the existing structure was simply *defined* as being “top heavy”. This policy is completely in line with the constant lowering of the salaries of the faculty beginning since the mid 1980’s and the constant shifting of professional costs of the faculty – related to traveling, publishing, conferencing and the like – from the employers to the employees⁶⁷. This trend appears to be to be international - with the Dutch case simply being ahead of other European countries – because a similar trend is manifesting itself recently in Germany and in France⁶⁸.

A “more balanced mix of positions” was needed according to management, basically implying – given the assumption of being “top heavy” – a general down scaling

⁶⁵ See for instance the management of Dutch disability allowances, where the medical doctors have been put under heavy pressure to meet the ‘output’ figures set by health care management (that is: to reduce the influx and raise the outflow in order to meet the saving objectives). See the typical Orwellian denial of this obvious fact by the responsible Dutch minister De Geus in: *NRC- Handelsblad* 29 October 2005,p.3, “De Geus: geen druk op keuringsartsen’.

The introduction of ‘quota’ for types of crime to be ‘handled’ by the police implies in principle that in case the police corps you are dealing with has already ‘ fulfilled’ its ‘quota’ of the type of crime you have been facing, no further action will be taken. The introduction of ‘quota’s’ for verdicts for courts implies a strong pressure on judges to avoid difficult and complex cases (and as economic crime is always complex, its persecution tends to be avoided). The introduction of ‘quota’s’ for ticketing and the transformation of ticketing into a regular part of the police’s budget has led to a situation in which the police prefers ‘easy ticketing’ and at intervals to random ticketing – if the quota have not yet been ‘ filled’. In all these domains the perverse effects of economic logic, undermining the professional roles and traditions, have been accepted by the political class as ‘the price you must pay’ for a ‘healthy economy’.

⁶⁶ The Association of Dutch Universities – the VSNU - informed the faculty that the reorganization would be based on the Hay –method, recently rediscovered for the public domain but sadly outdated for the rest of society. Hay’s Guide Chart-Profile Method is based on three factors: know-how, problem solving and accountability. Person-focused analyses tend to examine a person’s work in relational terms - to whom she/he reports, whom he/she supervises. The Hay system is person-focused. Positions are classified in 31 levels and ranked between Level 1 and Level 31 according to their HR Points. The Dutch economic historian Jan Luyten van Zanden has correctly observed that Dutch universities have been reorganized after the model of “19th. century cookie factories”.

⁶⁷ In the Netherlands the effects of shifting professional costs to the faculty have been severe because from 2000 onwards these costs stopped to be tax deductible for the faculty.

⁶⁸ In Germany in 2004 the salaries of the professors have been seriously lowered and have been connected to ‘achievement indicators’ - especially the ‘achievement’ of mobilizing money in the market. For France see Pierre Jourde, “L’université française est morte”, in: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 2003.

of the faculty (after having been the object of the rhetoric's of 'career planning' for more than two decades). The model used – the so-called 'Hay-method' – basically repositioned all functions on basis of the *number* of persons who were 'managed' by its incumbent, so it was pretty predictable that the managers would end on top because they are managing *everyone*. Last but not least: the salary scales were rescheduled accordingly⁶⁹.

The UFO-reorganization produced a decrease in the budget for the faculty and an increase in the budget for the non-faculty within the university budget. This shift was only to be expected because whoever says 'management' essentially means 'bureaucracy' (recognizable by its ever-present paper mills and paper traces). Therefore the typical anti-bureaucratical phraseology of management discourse is both cynical and hypocritical⁷⁰.

The first major problem with UFO was that as far as the faculty was concerned, there was no fit at all between the model and reality. Most functions and tasks of the faculty were described in the model in such a way, that they bore little or no similarity to what faculty members *actually* did. Faculty members (so-called 'Universitaire docenten' or assistant-professors), some of whom had been teaching independently for decades, were suddenly informed that according to their new job description they could only go on teaching after submitting plans on paper (for teaching and for research) to and approval on paper of their immediate superior in rank. These are supposed to check whether these plans 'fit' in the latest managerial 'mission statement' and they in turn are checked by the dean (who in turn is checked by the board of directors)⁷¹. So, remarkably, the 'academic

⁶⁹ Since the introduction of the MUB in 1998 the income levels of the 'top' managers in many universities have climbed to 'market-conform' 'top' levels and far above the level of the best paid professors. The managerial regime of control mechanisms like audits also constitutes "a serious financial drain on the universities whose quality of provision those inspections are supposed to promote and support", in the phrasing of Andrew Laird. See his 'The Wrong Idea of the University', p.1.

⁷⁰ See for similar conclusions for the UK: Bruce Charlton, 'Audit, accountability, quality and all that. The growth of managerial technologies in UK universities', in: Stephen Prickett and Patricia Erskine-Hill (eds.), *Education! Education! Education! - Managerial ethics and the law of unintended consequences*, Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2002.

⁷¹ This is a concrete example of the process of *de-skilling* and of *de-professionalisation* of the faculty by university management. Instead of professional skills managers are dependent on an ever expanding number of control mechanisms – especially audits – justified in terms of 'transparency', 'quality control' and 'accountability'. Ad Verbrugge has recently pointed at similar developments in 'Geschonden beroepseer', in: G. van den Brink, D. Pessers, Th. Jansen and Ad Verbrugge, *Geschonden beroepseer*, Amsterdam 2005.

For the Netherlands see also Gerard van Tillo, *Dit volk siert zich met een toga. Achtergronden van het academisch onbehagen*, Amsterdam 2005.

For France see: Pierre Jourde, 'L'université française est morte', in: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 2003; Luigi Del Buono e.a. *Livre Noir sur les universités françaises*, Paris 2003.

For Germany see: Arnd Morkel, *Die Universität muß sich wehren. Ein Plädoyer für ihre Erneuerung*, Darmstadt 2000, and Wolfgang Löwer, 'Normen zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Arbeit', in: *Wissenschaftsrecht* (33) 2000, vol. 3, S. 220 – 242.

For the UK see: Charlton, 'Audit, accountability, quality and all that'; Bruce Charlton, "Shape of Things Coming", in: *Oxford Magazine*, Michaelmas Term 2000; Richard F. Gombrich, 'British higher education policies in the last twenty years; the murder of a profession', at

<http://www.atm.damtp.cam.ac.uk/people/mem/papers/LHCE/uk-higher-education.html>; Aidan Foster-

Carter, 'Deliver us from the quality police', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 27 March 1998; Michael Loughlin, 'Audititis....whatever that means', in: *Times Higher Education Supplement*, March 22, 2002, p.

20. Frank Furedi, 'Why the QAA should RIP' at [http://www.spiked-](http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000002D210.htm)

[online.com/Articles/00000002D210.htm](http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000002D210.htm); Macalpine and Marsh, *Perversity and absurdity in 'high'*

freedom' of the faculty - the backbone of the 'traditional', Humboldtian idea of the university - has already been abolished in the Netherlands without any public discussion and without any official announcement simply by adopting the economic definition of education implicit in the idea of 'knowledge economy'.

Another problem with UFO was that it was management and not the faculty that decided who would fit in where – without providing a shred of justification for their reshuffling of the faculty. So after talking about 'achievement' and 'output' for some twenty years, managers did not pay much attention to any of the *actual* 'achievements' of faculty members and simply claimed a free hand reordering 'their' universities. They simply 'filled in' their organizational schemes, using this self created opportunity to remunerate their 'allies' and to punish their 'foes' among faculty members⁷².

This case study in 'managerial colonization' also provides a clear example of how 'modern' management keeps university personnel in a state of *permanent reorganization* in order to extend its control⁷³. Predictably the UFO resulted in a tremendous frustration and waste of time of the faculty – of course legitimated by the usual appeal to 'efficiency' – and an avalanche of complaints and appeal procedures of faculty members because they had arbitrarily been 'repositioned'. Compared to for instance Germany and the US it is striking that the very idea of self governance by the faculty has *completely* disappeared from Dutch higher education discourse. Professors nowadays are at best seen as belonging to 'middle management'.

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

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

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

managerialism: the role of management educators, Paper presented to 3rd International Conference on Connecting Learning and Critique, Queens' College, Cambridge, July 2002.

⁷² Ad Verbrugge rightly observes that the typical divide and rule tactics of managers and their clientilistic personnel tactics hang together with the circumstance that the modern university manager lacks any authority on professional grounds in an environment mainly consisting of professionals. Therefore their only way to gain power is to come and get it by other 'unprofessional' means. See Verbrugge 'Geschonden beroepseer'.

⁷³ For the notion of 'managerial colonization' see Mike Dent, John Chandler and Jin Berry, 'Introduction: Questioning the New Public Management', in: idem (eds.), *Questioning the New Public Management*, Aldershot 2004, p.2.

where European guidelines demand a *higher* financial commitment from the Dutch state than the existing level.

A good example of this Dutch peculiarity is the *duration of the master's cycle* as introduced by the Bologna Declaration. Although the masters cycle in the Anglo-Saxon – and thus the future EU – model usually takes two years, the Dutch policymakers simply refuse to discuss this aspect of the future European model, let alone introduce it. The reason for this refusal is obviously a financial one because the Anglo-Saxon model would commit the Netherlands universities to an *extension* of the existing duration of most master's courses by one year. So where clinging to uniform European rules clashes with the Dutch saving policies, European uniformity is silently but decidedly sacrificed. This even holds true now increasing problems have been signaled with the European recognition of Dutch master's degrees because of their shorter duration⁷⁴.

Characteristically, the solution for this self created problem by the Dutch state is *not* sought in the *only* logical direction of extension of the masters cycle, but in transferring the final responsibility for financing education to the institutions of higher education themselves. This (financially motivated) 'trick' is the same one that the Dutch state played on the universities with the introduction of the concept of 'steering at a distance' in the 1980's. The 'autonomy' granted to the universities at that time was mainly the autonomy to cut its own budgets⁷⁵. This probably is one of the major reasons why the present Dutch government is in such a hurry to adopt the new law on higher education (and wants to privatize all public institutions of higher education as soon as possible) and why the Dutch organization of university managers – the VSNU – is opposing this idea openly (although not the idea of 'privatization' as such).⁷⁶

A second example of the absolute priority of Dutch saving policies as far as the faculty is concerned is manifest in the total negligence of those parts of the Bologna Declaration, which would involve spending *extra* money on the faculty. Although the Bologna Declaration refers to the promotion of mobility of students, faculty and administrative staff within Europe as one of its explicit policy goals, only students and administrative staff have been allotted extra financial means to do so (especially by

⁷⁴ Nieuwe wetgevingsnotitie *Wet Hoger Onderwijs*, Ministerie van OCW, <http://www2.minocw.nl/persbericht.jsp?pageID=7022&jaar=2005>, p.28: 'Nederland kent voor meer dan de helft van de initiële wo-master opleidingen een cursusduur van één jaar. Deze cursusduur is vaak korter dan die van vergelijkbare masteropleidingen in het buitenland'. The problems to get the Dutch masters degrees recognized outside Dutch borders has been signaled both by the European Universities Association and by the Educational Inspection (Inspectie van het Onderwijs), but this has *not* had led to an adaptation to the European norm. The – short – duration of the Dutch master cycle cannot become an object of discussion because in Dutch higher education discourse and policies '*normal*' logic remains subordinated to economic logic. It is simply a matter of priorities. Whoever does not 'understand' this priority, cannot participate in 'official' Dutch educational discourse.

⁷⁵ This is even admitted by one of the Dutch architects of 'steering at a distance', Kickert, 'Steering at a distance', p.135-157. He admits the severe financial cutbacks in education since the 1980's on p.145: "Education, particularly university education, was a low financial priority, and universities had to cope with a large increase in student enrolments while their budgets both in relative and absolute terms decreased". See also p.144 where he states: "[-] the need to economize played a role. The responsibility to decide how savings were to be made was delegated to the institutions themselves. *They were in effect granted the power to perform painful cutback operations on themselves – not the most desirable autonomy one could imagine*".

⁷⁶ VSNU, *Een nieuwe wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Onderzoek? Position paper VSNU*, 10 June 2005

central funding over the Socrates- and Erasmus-programs). In practice, travel budgets for the faculty have usually gone *down* in the meantime (in an absolute or relative sense), and working abroad temporarily has been made *more difficult* instead of easier because Dutch faculty members are nowadays required not to only finance their own replacement, but also to finance the so-called ‘overhead costs’ for ‘management’ – usually of over 30%. So in order to become *actually* mobile, Dutch faculty members have to finance substantially *more* than their own salary – and have thus been transformed into a kind of ‘milk cows’ of Dutch university management. So all rhetoric’s of mobility since the Bologna Declaration notwithstanding, Dutch university management is actually *impeding European mobility* of Dutch faculty members instead of promoting it. Of course this factual discrepancy between higher education policy discourse and practice cannot be discussed within higher education policy discourse, because it is at odds with the assumption that the managerial interests coincide with the interests of those who are managed.

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

The last peculiarity of Dutch higher education policy discourse is its permanent preference for ‘talking up quality’. Dutch policy makers always express their ambition of the Netherlands to belong to ‘the top’ (of the EU, of Europe, of the West, and of the world). ‘We are internationally ahead of all others’, the chairman of the organisation of university managers (VSNU) stated in the year 2000 in an interview; ‘Students from abroad will flock to us because of our quality’. Dutch policy makers also claim to be the new Columbuses in the domain of higher education with their version of the ‘New Public Management’-concept and its heavy use of output control-mechanisms⁷⁷.

As far as the *facts* are concerned, there is no basis for Dutch managerial ‘talking up quality’ whatsoever. The Dutch universities (being heavily underfinanced since the 1980’s, almost at the bottom of the OESO’s-ranking of national higher education budgets per capita and having lost more than 30% of its faculty positions since the 1980’s⁷⁸), do *not* belong to *any* of the known rankings of the European top - and even less of the world top⁷⁹. On closer analysis Dutch managerial ‘talking up quality’ is essentially

⁷⁷ Interview with R. Meijerink, ‘Wij liggen internationaal op kop’, *Ad Valvas* 20 January .2000, and p. 4. In *fact* Dutch universities rank at the bottom region of the EU when it comes to attracting foreign students, so this statement is simply *false*.

Walter Kickert, ‘Steering at a distance’ ,p.135-157, claims that the Dutch conception of governance in higher education (output control ex post) represents “a completely new conceptual framework of government steering” (p.147) and is nothing less than a “new paradigm” in both a practical and a scientific sense . For readers who will doubt his claim he adds that “the use of the term ‘new paradigm’ appears justified” (p.152). He also is confident that this “new paradigm” has “been convincing enough to prove its relevance for countries outside the Netherlands”.(p.152).

⁷⁸ For the figures concerning the reduction of the faculty see: de Weert, ‘Pressures and prospects facing the academic profession in the Netherlands’, p.95. It is quite typical for the self-referential character of Dutch higher education discourse that it is also immune to critique of the OECD-reports on Dutch policies. See Kickert, ‘Steering at a distance’, p.154-5.

⁷⁹ The most recent (2005) Top 500 World Universities, published by the Institute of Higher Education of the Sjanhai Jiao Tong University, contains just 2 Dutch universities in its top hundred: the University of Utrecht on place nr.41, on par with the UCLA at Davis, and Leiden University on nr.72. The Shanghai

economically motivated and a ‘communications’ and public relations discourse based on a glaring absence of knowledge concerning the relevant facts⁸⁰. In essence ‘Dutch ‘talking up quality’ is the modern manifestation of a traditional Dutch character trait: the wish to reap benefits without having to pay for them. (‘voor een dubbeltje op de eerste rang willen zitten’). Characteristically too, when ‘talking up quality’ occasionally comes into contact with reality, this clash is represented in terms of an “image problem” to be solved by more intensive ‘communicative strategies’⁸¹.

So, in summary, to all appearances the Dutch higher education system will retain most of its present peculiarities also after the Bologna Declaration. In contrast to other EU-countries, like Germany, in the Netherlands the Bologna Process only represents an extension on a European scale of the neo-liberal policies that have been ‘implemented’ from the 1980’s onwards. These policies can be summarized under the labels of commodification of knowledge, the marketization of higher education, the enlargement of scale as the primary policy to cut down costs, and – last but not least - the ‘managerial colonization’ of higher education and the simultaneous de-professionalisation of the faculty. Basically the Dutch model represents a radical variant of ‘New Public Management’, although Dutch policymakers prefer to claim originality and a vanguard role in this respect. Whether the Dutch peculiarities will enhance the ‘competitiveness’ of Dutch higher education in a European and a global context is a question I will not try to answer here, although I surely have given some indications what my answer would look like⁸².

ranking of Top 100 European Universities contains 8 Dutch universities: on place nr. 6 (Utrecht U.), nr.22 (Leiden U), 2 shared positions on nr. 35-56 (Amsterdam U. and Groningen U.), 3 shared positions on nr. 57-79 (Erasmus U., Free U. Amsterdam, and Wageningen U.) and 2 shared positions on nr. 80 – 123 (Delft U. and Nijmegen U.).

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

For the discussion on ranking of educational institutions in general see: *College and University Rankings* on: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/edx/rankbib.htm> and the comment of the *Centrum für*

Hochschulentwicklung ‘Viele Zahlen, wenig Nutzen’ at <http://www.che.de/news.php?id=408>. See also ‘Hoezo Kenniseconomie?’, *NRC-Handelsblad* 3 October 2005.

⁸⁰ See also ‘Hoezo Kenniseconomie?’, *NRC-Handelsblad* 3 October 2005.

⁸¹ For the ‘image problem’ of Dutch higher education see: Koers *op kwaliteit. Internationaliseringsbrief hoger onderwijs*, presented by the Minister of Education to the parliament, 12 November 2004, paragraph 5. This document registers a factual preference of foreign students for universities in the UK and the US: “Het spontaan noemen van de goede reputatie van Nederlandse instellingen komt weinig voor”. “Zo is ons imago weliswaar gastvrij voor het buitenland, maar blijkt dat dat door hier aanwezige studenten in de praktijk niet altijd zo wordt ervaren” (p.10). The suggested remedy is “making top education in the Netherlands more visible”. This can be done, according to the Ministry, by introducing “the selection (of students) and of differentiation of fees” (p.9-10). ‘Centers of excellence’ are to be ‘stimulated’ by policy measures and a “new strategy of communication” is called for: the Netherlands should be presented abroad as “Kennisland” (‘country of knowledge’) including its “selling points” of higher education (p.10). Therefore an extra budget, amounting to one third of the budget for the “Centers of excellence”, is to be invested in “communication strategies” (p.16).

⁸² See my article ‘The Myth of the Dutch Middle Way’, and my ‘Will the universities survive the Managerial Colonization?’ (forthcoming).