

From training 'professionals' towards educating 'professional scholars' (0041)

Until the beginning of this century, the Dutch system staff members of non-university institutions used to have only a teaching task. Since 2001, the non-university institutes are conducting research activities on a larger scale (Ministerie van OC&W and HBO-raad, 2001). And although the expectations were high this would improve professional higher education (Lepori and Kyvik, 2010; Meijer and Van Soest, 2011), the effects so far are very limited. This should be no surprise: the 'myth' of the presumed automatic transfer between research and teaching, has been countered by research in the university context (Neumann, 1992; Barnett, 2006; Brew, 2006; Hughes, 2006; Verburch, Elen et al., 2007). And besides, the Dutch non-university sector is just getting to know using research also as part of their policy making.

This study reports the results of the process of Amsterdam – University of Applied Science (UAS) of creating a more argued relationship between research and teaching for all its educational programs. The goal of this process is to actively create a positive effect of performing research by staff members on the content and process of teaching. The results are based on a study among educational managers (N=68), and shows how different the position and goals of research in educational programs of professional higher education can be, even within one institution.

Increasing research in the curricula of Amsterdam –UAS

The Amsterdam-UAS is striving for research activities to be part of all its educational bachelor programs. The Amsterdam-UAS is a general institute of professional higher education. Its educational programs range from art, design, and construction, to logistics, economics, and nursing. All programs result in an initial occupational qualification for one or more professions on bachelor level.

The Amsterdam process exists of five steps. In the third step a preliminary general qualification profile (formulated in a previous step, see table 1) for all bachelor graduates of the Amsterdam-UAS is tested for compatibility and functionality with the qualification profiles of all individual educational programs. This step is described and results are reported.

Table 1: General profile of Amsterdam-UAS graduates as used in the interviews

<p>All graduates of Amsterdam – UAS ..</p> <p>A. Combine (new) knowledge and their practises by ..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• basing their professional operating on recent knowledge of the professional field, as well as recent scientific results• Knowing what are the possibilities and limitations in applying (new) knowledge of the professional field, as well as scientific knowledge• Knowing why it is important to keep their professional and scientific knowledge up-to-date• Letting the updating of their knowledge part of their daily professional life• Knowing their own limitations in understanding, interpreting and applying (new) knowledge• Asking for assistance when meeting this limitations <p>B. Add to the development of new knowledge by ..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Systematically map their own professional practise• Knowing the ethical limitations of this mapping activity and acting on it• Knowing their own limitations in gathering new knowledge Asking for assistance when meeting this limitations• Being able to conduct a professional analysis and formulate hypotheses in order to have a dialog with professional colleagues and scientific researchers

Research questions:

- a) is the defined general profile compatible with the qualification profiles of all educational programs,
- b) where in the trajectory of current educational programs are aspects of the general profile located, and
- c) what research activities are used in the current programs to increase the ability of students in each of the aspects of the general profile?

Method:

To answer the research questions two hours semi-structured interviews are held with the educational managers of all educational programs (N=68). In these interviews their perception is asked on all three questions. As a base for the interviews the educational managers are asked to provide the following information:

- A written description of the qualification profile of the educational program.
- A filled out standardized matrix which shows where in the four year educational program aspects of the general profile are scheduled.
- A written description of all courses of the educational program (content, goal and method of teaching)

A content analysis (Mayring, 2000) will be executed on the combination of the data gathered to answer the three stated research questions.

Results

The preliminary results show that there are large differences among educational programs, which all result in a bachelors degree. At least three main groups of programs have been found. A group of programs (for social professions), show little research-based knowledge or research activities. As far as they exist, research activities are mainly placed in the last two years of the program. The idea seems to be that students need to gain some sort of (professional) adultery in order to be able to handle or gather new knowledge. These programs seems mostly handbook-based, while educational managers state that also little written sources for systematic professional knowledge are available. The handling of new knowledge in practise, is limited to only day-to-day knowledge and mainly based on personal reflection, and not on a more systematic analysis of the individual or collective practise. Adding new knowledge to the professional field, using scientific sources, or having a conversation about research topics with a scientific researcher, is by the educational managers of these departments considered (far) out of reach for their students. Therefore, only parts of the general profile are applicable for this group of educational programs. Implementation of the whole profile would result in a large adjustment of the programs.

Contrary to the first set of programs of social professions, several educational programs (e.g. applied psychology, nutrition, physical therapy) consider the use of scientific sources as the base for their profession, together with teaching their students how to deal with their own limitations in using this knowledge. These skills are part of the educational program from the first day onward. Also, the ability to report systematically about their professional work, mainly based on 'traditional' research methods, is placed central in the educational program. This is seen as a way to contribute to the grow of the professional knowledge. For these educational programs, (most of) the general profile is applicable. The discussion on implementation will only be found in details.

A small group of programs can be found in between the first two groups mentioned, consisting of programs to educate professionals in the economic sector. In these programs the intention to use sources as a educational base is actively present, as well as teaching students 'traditional' research skills. But the type of sources used are limited to the handbooks provided and practical data gathered by the students themselves. Scientific and professional articles which report recent (research) developments are outside the scope of these educational programs.

During the following period, the data of the technical and design fields will be gathered and analysed. This will result in a broad and more detailed picture of how (differently) educational programs use knowledge and research activities in order to educate bachelor level professionals. The results can be part of the discussion on whether and how research should be part of professional higher education.

Literature

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