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Connecting research and teaching

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Griffioen, D.M.E.; Scholkmann, Antonia; Ashwin, Paul

Publication date

2017

Document Version

Author accepted manuscript (AAM)

Published in

Connecting Higher Education

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Griffioen, D. M. E., Scholkmann, A., & Ashwin, P. (2017). Connecting research and teaching: Comparing the strategies of German, Dutch and English governments to educate knowledgeable professionals through higher education. In *Connecting Higher Education : International perspectives on research-based education* (Connecting Higher Education Series). University College London.

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Connecting research and teaching

Comparing the strategies of German, Dutch and English governments to educate knowledgeable professionals through higher education

Didi Griffioen
Staff Department Research & Education
Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
D.M.E.Griffioen@hva.nl

Antonia Scholkmann
Centre of Vocational and Business Education
Universität Hamburg
Antonia.Scholkmann@uni-hamburg.de

Paul Ashwin
Department of Educational Research
Lancaster University
Paul.Ashwin@lancaster.ac.uk

There is a great concern about the employability of high-level professionals within the 21st Century knowledge economy. As the Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education states, the “higher education programmes, including those based on applied science, to foster innovation” hold the potential to foster innovation across Europe. The acquisition of research competences is stressed as a necessary prerequisite for the current and future functioning of innovative high level professionals in Europe (Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2009). Furthermore, professional practices are increasingly complex and knowledge-based, while societies also expect professionals to be accountable for their professional choices (Griffioen, 2016). The connection between research and education is considered crucial in this perspective (Barnett, 2012; Onderwijsraad, 2014).

Whilst the role of research in higher education has been widely discussed, it has been mainly from the perspective of the design and implementation principles for courses (e.g. Healey, 2005), or curricula (Verburgh & Elen, 2013), to the perceptions of research integration of students (Visser-Wijnveen, van der Rijst, & van Driel, 2016), faculty (Schouteden, Verburgh, & Elen, 2014), and managers (Boerma, Griffioen, & Jong, 2013). While these perspectives are closest to educational practices, governmental guidelines and strategies help to structure the context in which these practices are created. In addition, despite the general conceptual European perspective on the function of research in employability and the function of research (Karseth & Solbrekke, 2016), it remains unclear how different national governments in Europe ensure the provision of knowledgeable professionals that are required for their societies.

In the present paper, we analysed the strategic visions and steering mechanisms of three European governments—the Netherlands, Germany and England—in relation to the role of research in undergraduate higher education. This is in line with the call to provide more comparative studies (Teichler 2014). We analysed national policy documents, which can be interpreted as the respective governments’ agendas for defining the role of research in undergraduate higher education. For the Dutch context, those were the last three of the strategic agenda’s the Dutch government provides for

higher education on a regular basis (OC&W, 2007, 2011, 2015). For the German perspective included were recent policy papers from the German Council of Science and Humanities on the on the relation between higher education and the labour market (WR, 2015; WR, 2014); several papers of the German Rectors' Conference related to the labour market (HKR, 2010), Bologna (HKR, 2010), and instructional reforms (HKR, 2008). Additionally, older documents were included to clarify strands of the discussion that led to the current developments (HRK, 2007; WR, 2007; WR, 2006). The English analysis is based on the recent Green (BIS 2015) and White (BIS 2016a) papers on Higher Education in England, as well as the technical documents that support these (BIS 2016b, DfE 2016), as well as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code (QAA 2016).

The documents were analysed in a deductive-inductive procedure, in which a set of pre-set questions was applied in combination with keyword searches to the material, and additional categories were retrieved during analysis – eventually resulting in category refinement. Initial categories were 1. The envisioned function of higher education in society; 2. the envisioned aims and goal of higher education (“What to educate for?”); 3. The envisioned topics and content of the education (“What to educate?”); 4. The instructional means advocated to reach those goals (“How to educate?”) and 5. The role of research in education.

From a comparative perspective, the results of this on-going analysis show a trend to highly differentiated governmental rationales and strategies regarding the integration of research into higher education. The preliminary results show differences the national governments' view on society, higher education's role in relation to employment, definitions of employability, the role, function and position of research in undergraduate education and mechanisms advocated to reach the envisioned role of research. The German perspective, on the one hand, tends to be normative and input-oriented: the respective documents give ample rationale why research should be considered an integral part of undergraduate education, both with respect to employability and societal implications. The English documents, on the other hand, show a clear picture of outcome-oriented rationales, defining what and why research is desirable in undergraduate education to the demands of employers and the labour market, more specifically. The Dutch perspective shows a middle way in between those two extremes, where societal and educational visions are formulate normatively, however they get reconnected with the affordances of the labour market and the idea of education serving innovation and economic growth.

As a synthesis the impact of commonalities and differences on the role of research in higher education under the three national perspectives will be analysed. In the presentation implications of these analysis will be elaborated and discussed.

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Short Bio's

Didi Griffioen is the program leader of the strategic program 'Research in Education' of Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. This is a university-wide change program which consists of five projects, among which a longitudinal research project. After studying Educational Sciences, as well as Philosophy of Science, in 2013 she received her Ph.D. at the University of Amsterdam on a study with the title: '*Research in Higher Professional Education; A Staff Perspective*'. She is the associate editor of

the eJournal Higher Education Learning & Teaching (HELT), editor of *Tijdschrift voor Hoger Onderwijs* (TVHO; Dutch journal for HE-faculty), and editor of the *Hoger Onderwijs Reeks* (Dutch book series for HE-faculty and students). She has published in national and international journals, and was coordinating editor of the book *'Integratie van onderzoek in het onderwijs'* (2013, 'Integrating Research into Education'). She is a board member of the special interest group Higher Education, of NERA. She initiated was conference manager of the Higher Education Conference 2016 in Amsterdam.

Antonia Scholkmann is a Senior Researcher at the Centre of Vocational and Business Education at Universität Hamburg, Germany. Her research interest are in the area of inquiry-based teaching and learning, both with respect to innovative practice and to underlying educational rationales. She has published on topics such as collaborative learning, video-studies, problem-based learning, approaches to teaching and leadership in higher education. She is a member of the steering board of the German Society for Academic Development (dghd).

Paul Ashwin is Professor of Higher Education and Head of Department at the Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University, UK. Paul's research focuses on teaching–learning and knowledge–curriculum practices in higher education and their relations to higher education policies. Paul's books include *'Analysing Teaching-Learning Interactions in Higher Education'* (2009, Continuum) and *'Reflective Teaching in Higher Education'* (2015, Bloomsbury). Paul is a researcher in the ESRC and HEFCE funded Centre for Global Higher Education, a coordinating editor for the international journal *'Higher Education,'* and co-editor of the Bloomsbury book series *'Understanding Student Experiences of Higher Education'*.