

Poldering a teaching qualification system in Higher Education in the Netherlands: a typical Dutch phenomenon

El modelo de consenso sobre el Sistema de Certificación en Docencia en Educación Superior en Holanda: un fenómeno típicamente holandés

Riekje de Jong

Utrecht University, Países Bajos

Jaap Mulder

University of Groningen, Países Bajos

Paul Deneer

Radboud University, Países Bajos

Hanno van Keulen

Utrecht University, Países Bajos

Abstract

This article describes the process which led to the introduction of a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) at research universities in the Netherlands. Until 2008, the only requirements to get appointed as a lecturer at most Dutch research universities pertained to research competences. This changed in 2008 when all Dutch research universities signed the Mutual Agreement of University Teaching Qualification. In 2005 staff developers of six universities initiated a working group to support the idea of a mutual agreement of the UTQ. Their initiative was taken over by two Vice Chancellors but at that time there was no consensus between all the research universities. This changed by political pressure of the Ministry of Education and student unions. The Dutch UTQ is mandatory, but not by law. The UTQ Agreement describes the scheme that concerns the embedding of the UTQ certification procedures in the participating universities. The mutual recognition of the UTQ is an example of a typical Dutch phenomenon called the Polder Model a strategy of consensus based policy making and a pragmatic recognition of pluriformity.

Key words: University Teaching Qualification; Higher Education; Mutual agreement; Quality assurance.

Resumen

El artículo describe el proceso que condujo a la introducción de un título de enseñanza universitaria (UTQ) en las universidades de investigación en los Países Bajos. Hasta 2008, los únicos requisitos para

ser profesor en la mayoría de las universidades de investigación holandesas se remitían a competencias en investigación. Esto cambió en 2008, cuando todas las universidades de investigación holandesas firmaron el Acuerdo Mutuo de la Universidad de Cualificación Docente. En 2005 los formadores de seis universidades iniciaron un grupo de trabajo para apoyar la idea de un acuerdo mutuo sobre la UTQ. Su iniciativa fue asumida por dos Rectores, sin que hubiera consenso entre todas las universidades de investigación. Esto cambió por la presión política de la Consejería de Educación y los sindicatos de estudiantes. Ahora el UTQ es obligatorio, pero no por la ley. El Acuerdo UTQ describe el esquema que se refiere a la incorporación de los procedimientos de certificación UTQ en las universidades participantes. El reconocimiento mutuo de la UTQ es un ejemplo de un típico fenómeno holandés, el modelo pólder, una estrategia basada en el consenso en la formulación de políticas y un reconocimiento pragmático de la pluriformidad.

Palabras clave: Certificación de la formación docente universitaria, Educación Superior, Aseguramiento de la calidad.

Introduction

The Netherlands is a densely populated country with 17 million inhabitants and 75 institutions of higher education in a binary system of universities of applied sciences and research universities. There is a clear programmatic, organizational, professional and educational distinction between a university of applied sciences (institutes for higher vocational education, in Dutch: hoger beroeps onderwijs) and a research university (in Dutch: universitair onderwijs). Both types of universities have their own association at a national level: the Dutch Association of Applied Sciences (HBO-Raad) and the Association of Dutch Research universities (VSNU). The fourteen research universities offer bachelor, master and PhD programs. Nearly all bachelor students at the research universities proceed to master degree. Five to ten percent continue with a PhD. In 2012 approximately 250.000 students were studying at a research university. The majority of academic staff is researcher and lecturer. There is 40.000 staff in the ranks of full professor, associate professor/senior lecturer, assistant professor/university lecturer, and lecturer. Since 2002, programmes are organized according to the 'Bologna' bachelor-master-PhD system and the European Credit Transfer and accumulation System (ECTS) is used.

Universities of applied sciences offer bachelor degree programmes for a variety of professions. In 2012, approximately 420.000 students were in a bachelor degree programme at one of the 61 institutions for applied sciences. After graduating, most of these students enter the job market. Some proceed with a professional master programme offered by a university of applied sciences. Others proceed with a master programme at a research university, for which they have to comply to additional requirements in a pre-master programme. The universities of applied sciences have 40.000 staff in teaching, management or support.

Dutch research universities are highly competitive. The *Shanghai Academic Ranking* of world universities places eight of the fourteen universities in the top 200. According to the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings* for 2011, even twelve Dutch research universities belong to the top 200. Only the United States of America and the United Kingdom do better.

The research universities all have their own unique and tailor-made University Teaching Qualification (UTQ)¹ system. There is agreement among stakeholders that these systems are equivalent, though. We discuss the process leading to this mutual recognition in 2008 and focus on the numerous consequences for staff development that resulted from the establishment of a mutually recognized system of teaching qualifications. The research universities are the frontrunner in the Netherlands; the Dutch association of universities of applied sciences (HBO-raad) has only recently agreed upon implementation of a system of teaching qualification in the year 2016.

Background of the Dutch University Teaching Qualification

Until 2008, the only requirements to get appointed as a lecturer at most Dutch research universities pertained to research competences. A promotion, publications in peer reviewed journals and other research credentials were the prime and often only source of selection and promotion. This changed in 2008 when all Dutch research universities signed the *Mutual Agreement of University Teaching Qualification*. To understand what the content and the impact of this agreement is, an overview of the main developments leading to this national agreement is provided in this paragraph.

Developments leading to a teaching qualification in higher education

In the 1960s, the first centres for educational development were established at Dutch research universities, indicating that, even in the absence of teaching qualifications, good quality teaching as such was valued and stimulated. Since the 1990s, programmes have become ever more student oriented and staff development was regarded to be a key element for curriculum innovation, and centres for educational development offered courses on teaching and student learning.

In 1996 Utrecht University (UU) introduced major changes in its policy to raise the level of expertise and the quality of educational debate (see also Gibbs, 2005). UU decided on a teaching qualification scheme that obliged all teaching staff to meet basic pedagogic requirements and give proof of this in a portfolio to be assessed in order to obtain tenure. Up till now, more than 2000 UU staff members have obtained a university teaching qualification. This re-appraisal of teaching, in its constant struggle for attention with research, and the successful implementation of a qualification system on university teaching, was an inspiring example for others in the Dutch universities. For example, smaller scale experiments with teaching qualifications and portfolio assessment were conducted at two faculties of Radboud University Nijmegen (RU). By permission of the University Board the Faculty of Management Science imposed a qualification scheme similar to Utrecht's on its newly hired staff and created career development for their academic staff (Gerritsen, de Jong, van Alst, 2004). Dentistry, part of Radboud University, Faculty of Medical Sciences did the same. In 2003 the Free University of Amsterdam (VU) started a university wide mandatory

¹ In Dutch the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) is called BasisKwalificatie Onderwijs, abbreviated BKO.

qualification course for all newly hired staff. All Dutch universities developed courses or teacher training programmes for newly hired staff but participation remained mainly on a voluntarily basis.

A working group of teacher trainers from centres for staff and educational development from several universities, tried to reach consensus on the contents of a competence profile for university teachers, a framework for staff development and a teaching qualification programme. In the discussions on the teaching profile and the teaching qualification programme, proposals for a detailed and unified system were rejected. Not because the proposals were not good enough, but because they were not better than the programmes that already were running in the universities. Also, a generic teaching profile could not do full justice to specific teaching requirements of individual universities. E.g., some universities adhered strongly to Problem Based Learning competences and others to ICT-skills for distance education. One university opted for a mandatory course of 200 hours for all staff, another for peer feedback and supervision, etcetera. It was concluded that focussing on detailed standards and a nationwide identical programme for a university teaching qualification was not a fruitful strategy.

Later, staff developers at RU and UU suggested a framework that focused on the uniformity with regard to the generic principles of the framework and flexibility with regard to the details. This framework could be used to compare the policies and programmes of the teaching qualifications of the Dutch universities. Staff developers of six universities initiated a working group to support the idea of a mutual agreement of the UTQ. In 2007 this initiative was taken over by the Vice Chancellors of UU and RU who discussed it in the National Board of Vice Chancellors (Rector Magnifici). Although the majority of the Vice Chancellors supported the idea of an agreement on a university teaching qualification, there still was no consensus at that moment.

The national context: national policy and student support

The process towards mutual agreement was greatly stimulated by student union activities in 2006, leading to statements of the Dutch deputy minister of education. In a public letter, deputy minister Rutte (currently the prime Minister of the Netherlands), stated he was considering regulating teaching qualifications in higher education by law just as it is the case for teachers in primary and secondary education (the Dutch legislation on Teaching Professions, 2004). At that time, national student unions presented student surveys of the quality of education with highly critical comments on the quality of university teaching and teaching staff. Student unions organized national meetings to discuss requirements for university teachers.

The Association of Research Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and the Board of Vice Chancellors immediately reacted by convincing the government that the universities were already implementing teaching qualifications by self-regulation and that legislation was not at all necessary. Indeed, in 2008 all research universities signed the *Mutual Agreement of University Teaching Qualification (UTQ)*.

Formal, consensus based recognition

For staff development one of the major consequences of the formalized UTQ agreement was that not only new hired staff but also lecturers that were already tenured should obtain a UTQ certificate. With the introduction of the University Teaching Qualification at all research universities it has become easier to the Ministry to use 'lecturer quality' as one of the performance indicators to measure and value the educational quality. All universities agreed upon the percentage of lecturers that have obtained the UTQ by 2016.

The Mutual Agreement of the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ)

All university teaching staff with a UTQ certificate is qualified for academic teaching in all the research universities in the Netherlands. The implementation of the agreement started with the obligation of newly appointed staff to acquire a UTQ. The Dutch UTQ is mandatory, but not by law. The mandate is agreed upon by self-regulation and signed by all Vice Chancellors (Appendix 1: Mutual Agreement University Teaching Qualification). The UTQ Agreement describes the UTQ scheme that concerns the embedding of the UTQ certification procedures in the participating universities. The agreement guarantees the quality of the UTQ regulation at each university, not the quality of its application. The scheme describes the following aspects to be implemented by each university:

- UTQ is embedded in the strategic education and personnel policies of the university;
- Each university has clearly described UTQ standards. The requirements to be met are set by the local teaching practice, which implies paying attention to teaching skills in relevant settings (e.g. large group lecturing, supervision of research students, small group tutoring, et cetera), course and programme design, student assessment, programme evaluation and organisational and professional demands. Teaching standards should be clearly related to the content, pedagogy and organisation of the programmes in which the lecturer has to perform;
- UTQ facilities must be available so that university staff can develop the required teaching competences;
- The University Board is responsible for the UTQ certification procedure, including the assessment, and should see to it that the procedure fits conditions such as transparency and discretion, focuses on all relevant aspects of academic teaching, and is independent from the research competence assessment.

This framework was agreed upon in 2007 and subsequently used to evaluate the UTQ regulations of the fourteen research universities, leading to the mutual recognition of each other's regulations in 2008.

Recent developments and the introduction of targets at a national level

Other universities or institutions for higher education may join the mutual recognition of the UTQ providing that their UTQ system meets the same requirements. A short audit is carried out in order to establish whether the organization is eligible for membership. Antwerpen University in Belgium joined the mutual agreement as well as two smaller institutes for higher education in the Netherlands.

All research universities now have a substantial teaching certificate program available with a variety of courses and support. In general, the most important aspect is the portfolio based assessment in which lecturers have to provide convincing evidence that they are able to teach and guide student learning.

National policy in Higher Education

The political and societal view on higher education has changed in the last decades. Due to the rising numbers of students and the increasing costs of HE, the personal benefit of being higher educated has become a factor, shifting the balance towards less public and more private funding. This changing context is influencing both the universities and the students. Students experience selection, higher demands and diminished financial support. Universities experience higher demands on output and throughput, with accreditation placing greater emphasis on the quality of assessment.

In 2012 each university in the Netherlands (research universities as well as universities of applied sciences) had to make a plan to improve its performance in education and research. This plan was reviewed by a committee of the Ministry of Education, resulting in an agreement between each university and the ministry for the next four years. If the institution does not meet its targets it will receive less funding in the following years. Universities had to use the following indicators:

- *Quality and excellence*: participation of students in honours programmes (or another programme of excellence)
- *Study success*: percentage of students that drop out in the first year; percentage of students switching to a different programme at the same university after one year; bachelor efficiency (percentage of students that obtain a degree within four years)
- *Lecturer quality*: percentage of staff with a University Teaching Qualification
- *Educational Intensity*: hours of contact between students and staff in the first year (minimum is twelve hours).

With the introduction of the University Teaching Qualification at all research universities it has become easier to use 'lecturer quality' as one of the performance indicators, albeit only a quantitative measure: review committees will look at the percentage of lectures that have obtained the UTQ and assume that this percentage is in some way proportional to the quality of teaching.

The Ministry has set a timetable for a Teacher Qualification scheme within the universities of applied sciences and for a Senior University Teaching Qualification scheme to be developed and implemented in 2016. At this time Human Resource

managers of several of the largest universities of applied sciences use the model of the UTQ agreement to discuss their own process towards a teaching qualification scheme.

Quality Assurance of the UTQ

A subsequent development with regard to teaching quality was the development of an external audit procedure to assure the quality of the effectuation of the UTQ. Six universities² piloted this procedure that should help to evaluate and improve the quality of their teaching qualification scheme and to provide the starting point for a national audit system. The external UTQ audit is conducted on the basis of a framework containing the items of the 2008 mutual recognition of the UTQ, supplemented with internal quality assurance items. The audit procedure should be efficient and flexible, and yielding an overview of the UTQ in the university and useful recommendations for improvement. The UTQ systems were audited by an external audit committee in one day sessions. The pilot confirmed that the procedure of external UTQ quality assurance using audits is feasible and effective. It was widely supported by stakeholders in the participating universities because of the close relation of the topics of the audit framework with the frame of reference of the TQ system of the university. Moreover, feedback from the approximately one hundred participants in the audit sessions indicated that the audits were stimulating and inspiring. Time dedicated by university stakeholders (a representative sample of programme directors, lecturers, educational developers, educational policy makers and students) is limited to the one-day meetings, whereas the audit committee needs only little extra time for preparation. This is more than offset by the benefits of the audit results, such as good practices and useful recommendations for improvement. As we know now, many recommendations have in fact been taken up and implemented by the universities. Appendix 2 reports on some of the best practices.

Synergy between institutional policy and national targets. A UTQ case: University of Groningen (RUG)

To illustrate the implementation of the UTQ, a case of the University of Groningen is presented. In 2008 the University of Groningen signed the mutual agreement by having the UTQ mandatory for all new staff members. From that time on the staff development courses also focused on the UTQ competences. In mid-2010 a Committee (the ad hoc “Commissie Docentprofessionaliteit”) on the professional development of lecturers at the University of Groningen made the recommendation that not only new lecturers should obtain a UTQ certificate (as agreed in the mutual UTQ agreement) but also the lecturers that were already tenured. The Committee recommended a University-wide abbreviated qualification programme in which lecturers with more than five years of teaching experience could relatively easily demonstrate their competences. The RUG participated in the external audits of the UTQ and used the audit to discuss this ambition. The Board of the University and the

² University of Delft, University of Eindhoven, University of Groningen, University of Twente, University of Utrecht and the VU University Amsterdam.

Committee of Deans approved the registration procedure in 2010, which means that it is now implemented under the responsibility of the faculties. This was facilitated with centrally provided support for faculties and lecturers. By acquiring the UTQ lecturers fulfill the 'quality requirements' of the University of Groningen. Within the context of a degree programme and field of study a lecturer is able to:

- Design and redesign his teaching for a course unit: selecting and developing suitable learning objectives, working methods and assessment methods that dovetail with the degree programmes learning objectives.
- Teach and supervise students: being widely deployable in the main teaching formats of academic teaching.
- Test and assess: using assessment formats and compiling tests that are consistent with the learning objectives and teaching formats used.
- Evaluate: Evaluating the quality of teaching using a variety of data sources and being able to arrive at a well-reasoned improvement proposal.

The Critical Reflection of the University of Groningen was drawn up in preparation for the Institutional Quality Assurance Assessment for Education in March and April 2013. In this reflection the board of the university states its ambition for the next years with respect to the UTQ, (Board of the University of Groningen: University of Groningen Critical Reflection 2013):

"The University of Groningen attaches major importance to teaching and this is reflected in its active policy on the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) and its follow-up, the Senior Teaching Qualification (STQ). In 2010 agreements were made between the Board of the University and the faculties to ensure that 80% of all academic staff will have a UTQ within five years. This target has been incorporated into the University's performance agreements [with the Dutch Ministry of Education]. The University of Groningen recognizes two externally validated ways of obtaining the UTQ:

› beginning lecturers with less than five years of experience in higher education are eligible for the UTQ programme. This usually involves taking the university teaching skills course offered by the department of Educational Support and Innovation/ESI and then working under supervision to compile a UTQ portfolio;

› lecturers with more than five years of experience in higher education are eligible for UTQ registration. In order to demonstrate that they satisfy the UTQ learning objectives, they must compile a portfolio of their own teaching material, course unit evaluations, student evaluations and other relevant documentation. There is a University guideline covering the portfolio. The portfolio is assessed by a faculty UTQ registration committee.

The central University of Groningen UTQ registration committee, which is chaired by a Dean, monitors the composition and quality of the faculty evaluation committees, the quality and level of the portfolios for UTQ registration, comparability of approach between faculties and the uniformity of University policy. The committee keeps track of faculty progress and reports several times a year to the Board of the University. The Board calls faculties to account on their results during the biannual Administrative Meetings.

Some faculties use the UTQ as a tool for reflecting on and improving the quality of teaching. This synergy has a positive impact on the added value of the UTQ. Management and directors must set an example within the UTQ programme. Within the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, obtaining a UTQ is linked to reflection on the curriculum. In order to increase acceptance, the UMCG/Faculty of Medical Sciences has opted to establish a strong link between quality assurance and the forthcoming Senior Teaching Qualification/STQ.

In 2013 the University plans to flesh out the STQ quality requirements, learning objectives and frameworks and to offer the STQ programme within the University. It will also seek collaboration with German, Flemish and Swedish colleagues within the context of U4, as a way of seamlessly incorporating an international perspective. The University's UTQ registration committee has been requested to advise on this matter. The innovation plans also include two faculty initiatives relating to the development of the STQ.

The University wishes to define the managers role in the UTQ more closely. This is because all lecturers should in principle have this qualification and because the UTQ needs to be permanently embedded in staff policy (appraisal interviews and career development interviews)."

EHON, The network for educational development in Higher Education in the Netherlands

As described above, Dutch teacher trainers played an important role in the process towards the University Teaching Qualification. In 2005 a working group of teacher trainers from centres for staff and educational development from several universities, tried to reach consensus on the contents of a competence profile for university teachers, a framework for staff development and a teaching qualification programme. Later, staff developers of six universities initiated a working group to support the idea of a mutual agreement of the UTQ. In 2007 this initiative was taken over by the Vice Chancellors of UU and RU who discussed it in the National Board of Vice Chancellors (Rector Magnifici). The centres for staff and educational development of the research universities were linked to each other by an informal network called CRWO. Within this network, the heads of the centres had regular meetings. Besides that, seminars and conferences gave staff trainers and educational developers the opportunity to share information and experiences and to discuss (new) developments. The above mentioned working groups of teacher trainers and staff developers were in fact groups within the CRWO network. After a period of almost 40 years CRWO was transformed in a new network called EHON. This paragraph describes the organisation of EHON and an issue rose within this new network, namely the qualification of teacher trainers.

The organization

The 'Expertisenetwerk Hoger Onderwijs' (EHON) was established in January 2010 as the new network for staff and educational developers in higher education in the Netherlands. It is the successor of CRWO, an informal association of university

institutes for staff development that started in the seventies and was based on institutional membership. Its members were the centres for staff and educational development of the research universities. Two important changes were made at the start of EHON. In the first place, the new network is an organization with individual membership and is financed by the individual members. The second change is that the membership is not only open for those working in the field of educational development at research universities, but also for those working at universities of applied sciences. In most cases EHON members have a position as teacher trainer, researcher or consultant on educational development at their university. The members of the board are elected by the members of the network for a period of three years. At present the board has six members. Three are at a research university and three hold a position at a university of applied sciences. In January 2013 the organization has 150 members. The aims of the network are:

- To further improve the quality of higher education, by:
 - Making visible the available expertise on educational development in higher education.
 - Facilitating collaboration and sharing of expertise between the members.
 - Contributing to the development of the discipline of educational development in higher education.
- To obtain formal recognition of the expertise of its members.
- To enhance research on higher education development.

EHON has a number of activities, such as a website (<http://www.ehon.nl>), a journal (called *Research of Education*, with three issues per year) and a series of books for teachers and students in higher education. There is an annual conference, organized in a collaboration of members of a research university and a university of applied sciences. Other activities are the regular meetings of the special interest groups on 'Teacher training', 'Quality and accreditation', 'Educational centres of research universities'; 'Education and Development network of universities of applied sciences' and the organization of seminars and workshops on current topics. Finally, EHON has an annual members meeting in which the policy and the budget of the network are discussed and approved.

A remarkable development in the last couple of years is that a number of centers for educational development at research universities were reorganized or disappeared. In most cases the centers were split up in smaller units which were placed within different parts of the university. There were various reasons to come to these organizational changes but in general it is clear that it weakened the position of the centers and the capacity for quality and innovation of education in the universities. There seems to be a kind of contradiction with the reinforced attention for the quality of education by the agreement on performance improvement between individual universities and the ministry of education.

Qualification of Teacher Trainers

The special interest group on Teacher Training, which started in CRWO and still exists within EHON, is a platform where university teacher trainers exchange information and share experiences. Trainers get a view of each other's activities with regard to teacher training and discuss new approaches and developments.

Along this discussions, a concern raised whether there should be a formal qualification for teacher trainers and consultants in higher education as well. One could argue that this should be the next step in the quality chain of university teaching. A working group of EHON has described a competence profile for university teacher trainers. The profile was discussed in EHON's annual member meeting in September 2012. Broadly speaking there was consensus on the profile of the teacher trainer. After this discussion the working group made some small additions and adjustments in the profile.

The next step in the process will be to start a pilot assessment procedure for a couple of teacher trainers who voluntarily want to have their portfolios assessed. This approach should show whether it is possible or not to come to a fair judgement of a teacher trainers competence based upon a portfolio and an interview between a candidate and two or three reviewers. Even if the outcomes of this pilot are positive, it is not certain that a teacher trainer qualification will be introduced at each research university. There still are differences in opinion between universities regarding the usefulness and necessity of this qualification. Maybe some universities will take the lead and others will follow. This approach was successfully used for the introduction of the university teaching qualification at the Dutch research universities, so it might work as well for the teacher training qualification.

Conclusions and discussion

Consensus based policymaking

The mutual recognition of the UTQ is an example of a typical Dutch phenomenon called the Polder Model (Kranenburg, 1999), a strategy of consensus based policy making and a pragmatic recognition of pluriformity. The UTQ agreement is an example of self-regulation by universities and is accepted as such by the Ministry of Education. The universities of applied sciences are using the UTQ as a framework or model to develop their own agreement. Because of a bottom-up initiative, within a few years there will be a teaching qualification scheme within the whole sector of higher education in the Netherlands. Because ownership is with the universities themselves, assuring what is meant with 'quality of education' and what is agreed upon is important to the stakeholders. They will remain alert and refrain from unrealistically high targets formulated in the performance indicator 'lecturer's quality' as the percentage of lecturers with a University Teaching Qualification.

Continuous professional development

Currently, thinking in terms of the continuous professional development of academic staff and career development through education and not only through research is widespread among Dutch universities. Acquiring a teaching qualification is not a singular event and a probation ritual but can be the start of a lifelong dedication. The UTQ has become embedded in the strategic educational and personnel policies of the universities. The UTQ development is now followed by the development of a Senior Teaching Qualification with a focus on supervising and innovation of programmes. Educational leadership programmes are disseminated by Utrecht University to several other research universities.

Shared responsibility

Staff development or teacher training is broadened. It is no longer solely the concern of staff developers. It is a shared concern with the directors of education in the faculties. So the organization level has become more important. The directors of education in the faculties are seriously involved in creating a context (learning environment) and the facilities to the professional development of academic teachers. It is ultimately the organization that facilitates the academics to develop their teaching skills and to support them in being proud to prove their quality.

Many opportunities for qualification

When a critical number of UTQ certified new and young academic staff has been established and the UTQ is actively promoted within a university the UTQ becomes attractive to lecturers in a permanent position. There are plans afoot in various universities to include also university teaching staff with a permanent position in the UTQ scheme, while otherwise it will not be possible to meet the performance indicators agreed upon with the Ministry of Education. Experienced university teachers (both permanent and new appointees) will resist taking mandatory courses to develop competences they already have, but may be interested in abbreviated programmes. There is a wide variety of support, training pathways and types of assessment possible within the generic framework of the UTQ. External audits can support the coordination between different components and suggest good practices that are useful for specific groups.

Don't forget the dinosaurs

Each university has faculties or degree programs that are relatively lagging behind in terms of UTQ. Although the reasons for this are not always clear, the audits revealed that in all faculties the directors of bachelor and master programmes play a key role in implementing the UTQ scheme. When this officer is supported by respected full professors who attach importance to teaching quality and who encourage their teaching staff to acquire their UTQ, the UTQ policy develops effectively. It all begins with a true commitment to educate the next generation of researchers.

References

- Association of Universities in the Netherlands/ VSNU (2008). *Mutual agreement on a national framework of a University Teaching Qualification System* (Overeenkomst Wederzijdse erkenning Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs: BKO). The Hague.
- Board of the University of Groningen (2013). *University of Groningen Critical Reflection 2013*. Groningen
- Gerritsen, R.J., Jong, R. de, & Alst, J. M. T. van (2004). Toetsen van docentcompetenties: professionaliseringsbeleid voor docenten. *TH&MA*, 2004(5), 53-61.
- Gibbs, G. (2005). *NTFS Report on Utrecht University*. Oxford: NTFS.
- Jong, R. de (2012). Teaching competencies: qualification frameworks and external audits. The Dutch example: how to unite uniformity and flexibility. Lecture presented at the annual RED-U meeting, 02-02-1012 Bilbao, Spain.
- Jong, R. de, & Keulen, H. van. (2007) De lange weg naar competente én gekwalificeerde docenten, *Onderzoek van Onderwijs*, 36/3, 44-47.
- Jong, R. de, Alst, J. van, Andernach, T., Baume, D., Diez, A., Keulen, H. van, Petegem, P. van (2010). International agreement on a Qualification for University Teaching, Let's make a start as experts in staff development. Workshop at the ICED Conference 2010, Barcelona, Spain.
- Jong, R. de, Andernach, T., Barendsen, E. & Mulder, J. (2011). *Externe kwaliteitsborging Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs in de Praktijk, Een onderzoek naar een bruikbaar auditsysteem*. The Hague: SoFoKles.
- Keesen, F., Wubbels, T., Tartwijk, J. van, & Bouhuijs, P. A. J. (1996). Preparing university teachers in The Netherlands: Issues and trends. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 1(2), 8-16.
- Keulen, J.van, Alst, J. van, Jong, R. de, & Halma, A. (2006). *Towards a national system of teaching qualifications in higher education in the Netherlands*. Paper presented at the ICED Conference 2006, Sheffield, England
- Keulen, H. van, Jong, R de, Deneer, P. (2008). *Characteristics of successful faculty development programs*. Paper presented at the ICED Conference 2008, Salt Lake City, USA.
- Kranenburg, M. (1999), *The political branch of the polder model*, *The economist* (May 2002) Modelmakers
- Mulder, J.A., Jong, R. A.H. de & Andernach, J.A. (2012). *University Teaching Qualification: Quality assurance via external audits in the Netherlands*. Paper presented at the 2012 ICED conference, Bangkok, Thailand.

Appendix 1: the Mutual Agreement (Annex included)

Mutual agreement concerning the university teaching qualification (BKO) at Dutch universities

The Board of Vice-Chancellors of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) have agreed, with respect to:

- Drawing attention to the quality of academic education and scholarship in university teaching in the Netherlands,
- Ongoing staff development in teaching within each university,
- Accountability regarding 'quality of staff' and 'staff policy' with regard to the National Framework of Qualifications in Higher Education in the Netherlands,
- Establishing professional standards regarding academic teaching, as is customary in other sectors of education,
- Removing barriers in case of mobility of academics (academic teachers) between universities, that:
 1. Within each university the standards of an academic teacher are laid down in a university wide regulation for a university teaching qualification (BKO),
 2. The university teaching qualification is the result of a formal assessment of the teaching competences,
 3. The regulation is in line with the key features mentioned in appendix 1 so the participating universities acknowledge each other teaching qualification (no new assessment needed)

Signed on behalf of the university

Date, January 28th 2008

By

Appendix 2: Characteristics of the basic university teaching award (BKO) of Dutch Universities

The participating universities attach importance to the mutual agreement of the basic teaching award. They attach importance to uniformity if it is possible and flexibility when it is needed (when autonomy is at stake, e.g. regarding differentiation and / or stressing distinct features).

Mutual agreement of the basic university teaching qualification is possible if the regulations of each of the participating universities reflect the following characteristics.

Characteristics of content:

- Standards for qualification are in term of behaviour (competences) rather than in terms of knowledge and insight
- The requirements to be met correspond with international standards of academic teaching (Dublin descriptors)
- The requirements to be met are set by the professional practice, which implies paying attention to teaching performance, course and programme design, assessment, programme evaluation, counselling and coaching of students and organisational demands (=staff is sufficiently qualified to ensure that the aims and objectives regarding the content, didactics and organisation of the programme are achieved)
- Teachers are researchers who contribute to the development of their subject/discipline.

Characteristics of assessment

- All aspects of the performance of an academic teacher are involved in the assessment
- Concrete criteria are explicit and known in advance
- The extent of the required experience in academic teaching is established
- Reflection on one's teaching practice is a substantial part of the assessment
- The assessment procedure is formalized to assure confidentiality, credibility and conformability
- The expertise of the members of the assessment board is established.

Characteristics of process

- Content, method and size of the staff development programme of university teachers (e.g. training modules, coaching, portfolio development) are deduced from the requirements according to the regulation for university teaching awards
- During staff development courses teachers put educational knowledge into practice
- The university facilitates staff development of university teachers to the level of BKO (basic teaching award).

March 2006

Appendix 3: External UTQ audit at six Dutch universities

Overview of UTQ best practices

Embedding in teaching and staffing policy

One of the universities (4) has formulated a university-wide policy on UTQ certification for both new and incumbent lecturers. The policy specifies targets for numbers of certified lecturers.

At a university (3) the UTQ is embedded in HRM policy. For each stage of the HR cycle (recruitment, selection, appointment, registration, appraisal, development, remuneration and promotion), an overview is drawn up of possible and essential actions and instruments to promote embedding of UTQ in personnel policy.

At a university (2) the UTQ system is embedded in the career framework of ongoing professional development in the field of education and teaching. This framework consists of a Senior University Teaching Qualification (SKO), an educational leadership track offered by a Centre of Excellence in University Teaching, chairs and teaching fellows.

Clear objectives at the right level

All Universities in the pilot project explicitly link their objectives with the result areas in the university job classification system.

All Universities in the project have drafted instructions and requirements stating how substantial the experience in the result areas should be (in the choice of type of material, references of management staff and colleagues, number and type of supporting documents, and range of teaching methods).

Responsible assessment

All Universities in the project use portfolio assessment to acquire the UTQ. They all have a clear assessment procedure and a manual with criteria for portfolio assessment and procedures. The manuals are broadly used. At University 1 & 3 the assessment procedure routinely includes a final discussion of the portfolio between the university teacher and the assessment committee.

Clear responsibilities

One university (4) has compiled a description of tasks and responsibilities of those involved in the UTQ process.

At one university (1) supervision by the faculty coach or mentor and the supervisor from the UTQ training program is closely coordinated, which gives the participants the sense that their programme is tailor-made for them.

At one university (2) a thorough and meticulous evaluation has been rounded off with a coherent package of improvement initiatives and the implementation of improvement measures. The Executive Board has set target figures for the level of

coverage and will encourage faculties to follow this up. Even in times of budget cuts, this university has invested in teacher quality.

Artículo concluido el 4 de Agosto de 2013.

Cita del artículo:

De Jong, R., Mulder, J., Deneer, P., Van Keulen, H. (2013). Poldering a Teaching Qualification System in Higher Education in the Netherlands, a typical Dutch phenomenon. *Revista de Docencia Universitaria. REDU*. Número monográfico dedicado a *Formación docente del profesorado universitario*, Vol. 11 (3) Octubre-Diciembre. pp. 23-40. Recuperado el (fecha de consulta) en <http://www.red-u.net/>

Acerca de la autora y autores



R.A.H. (Riekje) de Jong

Utrecht University

Mail: r.dejong@uu.nl

Senior educational consultant at the Centre for Teaching & Learning of Utrecht University. She was one of the initiators of the mutual agreement of the UTQ and project leader of the pilot project for external UTQ audits.



J.A. (Jaap) Mulder

University of Groningen

Mail: j.a.mulder@rug.nl

Coordinator of staff development and UTQ coordinator. He was member of the steering committee of the pilot project for external UTQ audits



P.M.H. (Paul) Deneer

Radboud University

Mail: p.deneer@ils.ru.nl

Was director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning of the Radboud University and member of EHON board.



J. (Hanno) van Keulen

Utrecht University

Mail: j.vankeulen@uu.nl

Senior educational consultant at the Centre for Teaching & Learning of Utrecht University. He was one of the initiators of the mutual agreement of the UTQ.